

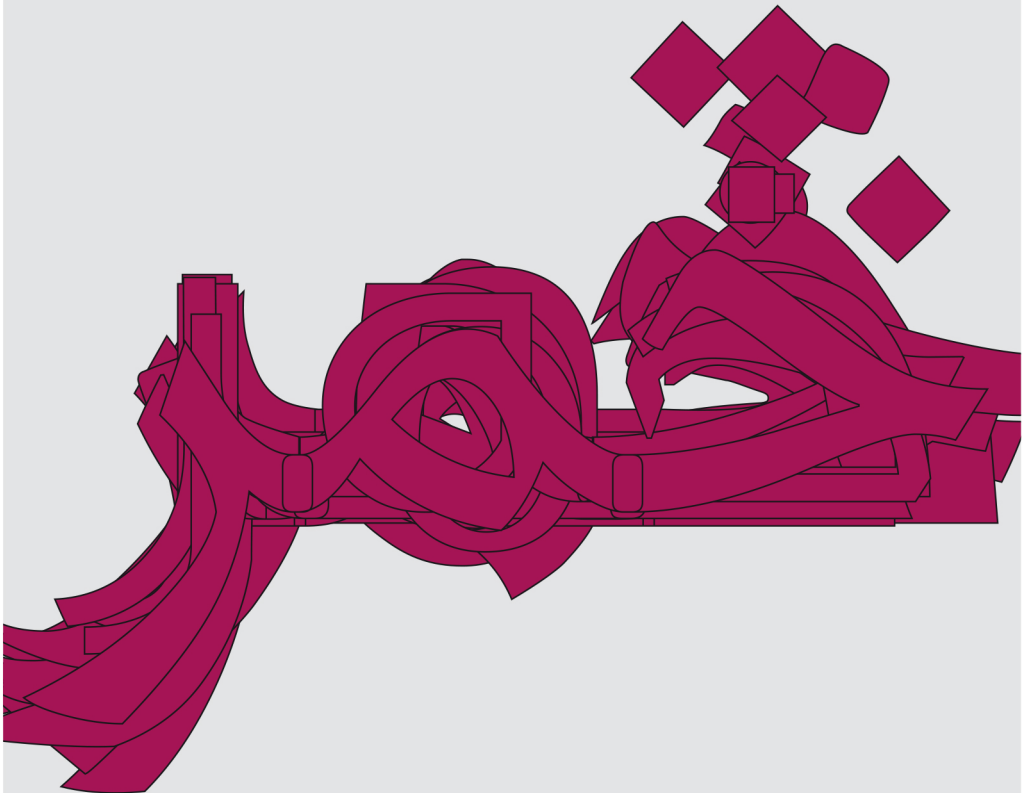
“Passed around by a Crescent”

Wine Poetry in the Literary Traditions of the Islamic World

Edited by

Kirill Dmitriev

Christine van Ruymbeke



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BEIRUTER TEXTE UND STUDIEN

HERAUSGEGEBEN VOM
ORIENT-INSTITUT BEIRUT

BAND 142

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BEIRUT 2022

ERGON VERLAG
IN KOMMISSION

Umschlaggestaltung: Taline Yozgatian

Cover illustration: Ahmad Osman, Beirut, Lebanon

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek:
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der
Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über
<http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie;
detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

ISBN 978-3-95650-908-7 (Print)

ISBN 978-3-95650-909-4 (ePDF)

ISSN 0067-4931

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Die Beirut Texts und Studien werden herausgegeben unter der Mitarbeit von Lale Behzadi, Birgit Krawietz, Sonja Mejercher-Atassi, Birgit Schäßler und Henning Sievert.

Wissenschaftlich betreut von Abdallah Soufan

Ergon – ein Verlag in der Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, Baden-Baden

Gedruckt auf alterungsbeständigem Papier

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Introduction

Approaching the Entanglements of a Literary Network

Kirill Dmitriev / Christine van Ruymbeke

This publication explores the presence of the shared heritage and interdependence of poetry composed around the theme of wine in diverse literary traditions of the Islamic world. The specialist contributions to the volume discuss multiple aspects of the literary polyphony of wine in the premodern Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, Ottoman Turkish, and Urdu literatures during the first millennium of the Islamic era. Presenting these together and in dialogue with one another, the volume offers a comparative perspective on a long, varied, but singularly mutual tradition of wine poetry. We become aware that Bacchic poetry is as grandiose a literary phenomenon in the premodern Islamic world as it is in many other cultures and times. The book traces how this poetry develops, flourishes and matures across linguistic and geographic, confessional and social, aesthetic and artistic boundaries within the regions of the religiously and culturally diverse Islamic world, from al-Andalus to India.

Two fundamental publications have previously introduced a broad comparative horizon to the study of two central poetic genres in the premodern Islamic world: *qaṣīda* and *ghazal*.¹ The present book extends this fruitful comparative approach to Bacchic poetry. The historical context encourages exploration of the emergence of wine poetry in Arabic, Persian and other literatures of the Islamic world, against the background of the multi-coloured cultural mosaic of late antiquity. Indeed, many common features of Bacchic poetry shared by these literatures are rooted in antique and late antique cultural heritage; others express genuine responses to similar or typical social conditions, religious norms and emotional challenges in different societies, and yet others are sparked by an explicit literary exchange. Without regarding them as necessarily dependent on stringent conditions of derivation, all these aspects ought to be understood within the broad phenomenon of cultural cross-pollination. The reason and motivation to study and interpret them in the light of comparative perspectives and questions of ambiance result from their entanglement and encoding in the shared cultural and literary space of Islamic civilization.

¹ Stefan Sperl and Christopher Shackle, eds., *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1996); Thomas Bauer and Angelika Neuwirth, *Ghazal as World Literature*, vol. 1, *Transformations of a Literary Genre* (Beirut: Beirut Texts and Studies 89, 2005); Angelika Neuwirth, Judith Pfeiffer, and Börte Sagaster, eds., *Ghazal as World Literature*, vol. 2, *From a Literary Genre to a Great Tradition: The Ottoman Gazel in Context* (Beirut: Beirut Texts and Studies 84, 2006).

In relation to the rich and diverse corpus of wine poetry in each literary tradition that is reflected in the volume, it is challenging to establish absolute, universal normative criteria for this poetry as a distinctive poetic genre.² Already the Arabic *khamriyya* tradition exhibits such structural, stylistic and thematic variety that it lends itself to a dynamic literary typology rather than inert definitions. Specifying the term *khamriyya* as referring “strictly to a fully independent wine poem”³ clarifies its plausible usage in scholarship. Yet, it represents only the first step in exploring the history and interpreting the content of *khamriyyāt* in the Arabic literary tradition. The manifestations of wine poetry in other literatures of the Islamic world significantly increase the repertoire of literary forms and the palette of poetic techniques associated with Bacchic verse. The development of the *sāqināma* in Persian poetry is a prominent, but by no means exceptional, example of literary metamorphosis that occurs in a creative and responsive literary environment where “poetic forms do not have rigid boundaries and often one genre provides material for the genesis of another.”⁴ Deliberately resisting the temptation to delimit normative aspects of wine poetry as a genre, we look at it as an entangled literary network integrating all its different forms, themes, images, symbols, and functions.

Inclusive and broad as is our approach, we did not attempt to draw a comprehensive historical map of references to wine in the literatures of the Islamic world. There is a large body of previous research around several aspects of literary history related to this phenomenon. The main goal of the contributions to this volume is to explore the vitality of the Bacchic topic itself, as we see wine mutating across poems and texts, from actor, to topic, to catalyst. Drinking poems dynamically reference religious traditions; wine’s close ties with seduction, royalty, mysticism and tavern drinking testify to the multifaceted social and literary networks which were eager to welcome such references embedded within poetry, the most sophisticated of artistic literary expressions. The characters in the poems imagine wine, drink it, describe it, love it, or curse it. In this volume, by bringing together eighteen studies of specific literary works related to wine, we emphasise the interconnections of a network of literary imagery, but also of references to historical and religious practices, spanning individual linguistic and cultural domains.

We have chosen to group the contributions to this volume thematically. This structure acknowledges that the development of wine poetry is not merely a linear progression from earlier to later works, or a one-sided process of one literary tradition’s borrowing from another. We believe that our approach is more meaningful than an arbitrary scholarly exercise mapping out external features of a literary process across time, since it is motivated and directed by the inner dynamics of the mo-

² Compare K. Eksell, “Genre in Early Arabic Poetry,” in *Literary Genres: An Intercultural Approach*, ed. Gunilla Lindberg-Wada (Berlin 2006), 156–198.

³ Ph. F. Kennedy, “Khamr and Hikma in Jāhili Poetry,” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 20 (1989): 97.

⁴ S. Sharma, “Hāfiz’s *Sāqināmeḥ*: The Genesis and Transformation of a Classical Poetic Genre,” *Persica* 18 (2002): 83.

tifs, forms and functions of wine poetry, which are intrinsic to its development as a vital manifestation of a world poetic tradition. One could describe the point of this publication as tracing the inherent comparativeness of wine poetry, which stimulated its wide circulation and shaped its transformations throughout different periods of literary history and across diverse linguistic, religious and cultural milieus. In this sense, comparison is less a contrasting juxtaposition than an interpretative discourse suggested by the entangled history of wine poetry in the context of connate Islamicate cultures, which is deeply rooted in cross-cultural exchange.

The diversity of cultural history is complemented by important literary aspects in the development of wine poetry, in particular the intertextuality and reciprocal relations with other poetic genres. Tropes, themes and imagery are deliberately, self-consciously and explicitly appropriated and reworked, shaping poems that dialogically engage with existing texts and anticipate their own reception and reinterpretation in future works not only of Bacchic poetry but also of other genres, in particular poetry on love, nature and mysticism. Moreover, the kaleidoscope of themes and subjects—intoxication, rebellion, deliberate aesthetic contemplation, mystic symbolism—which shines through the lens of premodern wine poetry and its conventions likewise invites a comparative study of its descriptive and communicative strategies.

Islam is to be considered a crucial cultural denominator of the literary traditions studied in this volume. The attitudes towards wine and wine drinking in Islamic law and ethics, predominantly prohibitive and categorical, have always coexisted with an equivocal social practice and poetics of transgression, as well as with the aesthetics of ceremonial performance and sophisticated enjoyment, not just tolerable but praiseworthy and inspiring. Our contributors comment on poetic works that reflect the improbable paradox of a society that produced a powerful religion, which sternly condemns, and an abundant poetry, which sins self-consciously. The volume opens with an essay by Michael Cooperson, ‘On (Not) Drinking: al-Ḥarīrī’s *Maqāma* 48,’ reinterpreting the cultural and literary ramifications of wine in the context of premodern Islam. Focusing on the text of a *maqāma*, this contribution lies beyond our main subject of wine poetry, yet it illuminates important aspects of literary wine references and suggests stimulating interpretative arguments, which are highly relevant for contextualising the works of Bacchic poetry in classical Arabic and other literatures of the Islamic world.

In the main part of the volume, the contributions are grouped around six discursive avenues of enquiry.

1. Development of Literary Forms and Structures

Within the conventional framework of early Arabic poetry, the emergence of *khamariyya* as an independent genre of wine poetry occurred gradually on the basis of the literary transformation of the polythematic *qaṣīda* form. This development is re-

flected in the thematic as well as structural modifications of poetic texts. Close reading and comparative analysis of two poems attributed to ‘Adi ibn Zayd al-‘Ibādi (d. c. 600), a pre-Islamic Arab poet from the late antique city of al-Ḥira, allow Kirill Dmitriev to reveal the origins of the Arabic wine song as a dynamic literary process manifest not only in the establishment of *khamriyya* as a new genre of early Arabic poetry, but also in its later developments in the history of classical Arabic and other literary traditions of the Islamic world. The Ottoman genre of the *sāqināma* and its development in the seventeenth century is discussed by Sooyong Kim on the example of the poetic works by Ḥāleti (977–1040/1570–1631). Presented in *mathnawī* form and structured around addresses to the cupbearer, Ḥāleti’s *sāqināmas* show close interdependence of form and content. Composed a millennium after the earliest works of Arabic *khamriyyāt* seceded from the structural and thematic ambit of *qaṣīda*, Ḥāleti’s wine poetry demonstrates that the aesthetic re-evaluation and creative reshaping of the correlation between formal and thematic aspects has constituted the history of wine poetry as a literary genre throughout the centuries of its development and across various linguistic and geographic domains.

2. Themes, Motifs and Imagery

Cross-cultural interconnections are evident in the development, adoption and transformation of themes, motifs and images of wine poetry. In his contribution, Ali Ahmad Hussein approaches semantic aspects of Arabic poetry evident in the poetic elaboration on the theme of wine by Abū Dhu‘ayb al-Hudhālī (d. 28/649). Analysing the rhetorical figure of the intellectual trope (*majāz ‘aqlī*), extensively applied in relation to wine, Hussein reveals important aspects of wine motifs and highlights their importance as a connecting thread establishing the semantic coherence of the poem. Central conventional themes and motifs in Arabic *khamriyyāt* are also subject of Christina Ossipova’s reflexions upon the development of classical Arabic wine poetry. Seen in the context of literary creativity and its development including such notions as individual authorship and poetic innovation, Ossipova underlines that the distinction between ethical and aesthetic aspects of literary creativity was fundamental for classical Arabic wine lyrics and the development of its poetic techniques. Many of these have been shared by both Arabic and Hebrew literary traditions. Arie Schippers takes a closer look at the theme of wine and love in the strophic poetry from al-Andalūs, drawing an impressive panorama from Arabic and Hebrew *murwashshahāt* to numerous *azjāl* poems by Ibn Quzmān (d. 555/1160). Tracing further the development of the topic of wine in Arabic *zajal* poetry, Hakan Özkan interprets the work of Ibrāhīm al-Mi‘mār (d. 749/1348), a celebrated poet of the Mamluk era. Despite a significant diminishing of descriptive wine motifs, the theme of wine retains its significance in al-Mi‘mār’s *dirwān* as a favourite expression of joy and satisfaction that is exalted in sharp contrast to prohibitive regulations and other socio-economic constraints.

3. *Cross-Cultural Inspirations, Appropriations and Transformations*

The emotional and social liberation divulged in wine poetry finds its striking expression in the poetic image's projecting of the desire for wine drinking into the hereafter. Agnes Imhof provides comparative investigation of this motif in Arabic and Latin sources. Focusing in particular on the poetry of Abū Nuwās (c. 140–c. 198/ c. 755–c. 813) and Archpoet (c. 1130–c. 1165), her analysis suggests a hypothesis of a cross-cultural transmission of the motif through the mediation of Ibn Quzmān. Instrumental significance of the Andalusian cultural environment is highlighted also in Arie Schippers's second contribution to the volume, on the impact of Abū Nuwās on Arabic and Hebrew Andalusian poetry. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, homoerotic poetry enjoyed great popularity in Muslim Spain. Its aesthetic appeal largely resulted from the adoption and reinterpretation of wine and love themes that were first introduced and promoted in eastern Arabic poetry. Bilingual and biliterary Jewish poets writing in both Arabic and Hebrew were active in the twelfth through fourteenth centuries also in the Islamic Middle East, particularly in major cities like Cairo, Damascus and Baghdad. Joachim Yeshaya scrutinises wine poems written by Joseph ben Tanhum Yerushalmi (b. 1262) in early Mamluk Egypt and re-conceptualises them as the product of literary, cultural and social intersections between Judaism and Islam, which attests to both the continuing impact of Arabic and Hebrew literary ties and the compelling creativity of the Jewish culture of the Mamluk period.

4. *Dialogic Relationship between Literary Texts and Social Practices*

The social dimension of the poetry on wine is evident in its various manifestations in Persian literary universe. Premodern Persian *masnavis* contain narratives of varied character, including epics, mystical teachings, romances and even philosophical treatises. The descriptions of wine drinking scenes and the effects of drunkenness are often incorporated in different thematic clusters of these long poems often counting several thousand verses. Christine van Ruymbeke examines how the themes of wine and drunkenness in Persian *masnavis* echo the society depicted in them and thus offer a tool for decoding the references to wine in shorter lyrical pieces for which we usually lack a context. Considering poetical challenges of a social and religious norms as well as literary cross-pollination beyond historical, geographic and cultural divides, her chapter examines several hitherto-unstudied clusters of wine references linked to royalty and sex in Firdawsi's *Shahnama*. Creative transformation of conventional poetic genres and forms in new linguistic and social contexts defines the spirit of classical Urdu poetry in the seventeenth century. Sunil Sharma traces the changes in the Urdu courtly poetry by Shah Hatim, where wine imagery is almost completely devoid of mystical or purely metaphorical sig-

nificance and is enmeshed in the social life of eighteenth-century Delhi. The imagery symbolizes the enjoyment of the sensory pleasures and thus opens new literary dimensions for the poetic genre adopted from older Persian models to a new urban environment.

5. *Pleasure, Transgression and Religion*

The development of wine poetry as a literary-historical process responsive to social and religious conditions bears a psychological dimension that left its imprint on the works of individual authors. In this respect, a remarkable figure in the context of early Arabic wine poetry is the short-lived Umayyad caliph al-Walid ibn Yazid (d. 6/743). Renate Jacobi discusses his possible contribution to the development of the *khamriyya* genre and investigates the question of how al-Walid's verses reflect his individual taste, creativity, and tempestuous character. Basing her analysis on the texts of the *khamriyyāt* transmitted in the corpus of al-Walid's poetry, Jacobi highlights the unique metrical features and elaborate effects of sound and techniques of musical composition. The defiance of religion and social norms in the wine poetry of al-Walid as well as his "philosophy of existence" expressed in it provide several indications which allow to regard him as a forerunner of the 'Abbāsid *khamriyya* and the poetry of Abū Nuwās, in particular. Jeremy Farrel follows on the question of how to understand the religiosity of Abū Nuwās as reflected in both his *khamriyyāt* and *zubdiyyāt*. Referring to the theoretical concept of transgressive sacrality, Farrel argues that the poetry of Abū Nuwās can be interpreted in light of a coherent religiosity avoiding the supposed paradoxical dichotomy of an Islamic Bacchism. Such reading of Abū Nuwās helps approach early 'Abbāsid wine poetry in its historical and cultural context. The development of Jewish wine poetry in the mid-tenth century, which was largely inspired by the Arabic poetic tradition, provides another fascinating example of the receptive interrelation between socio-religious and literary history. Outlining the main themes and motifs of the wine-drinking party in Hebrew poetry, Raymond Scheindlin pays particular attention to slight but significant differences between Hebrew wine poetry and its Arabic models. These nuances resulted from the different social structure and cultural history of the Jewish minority and voiced modified strategies to balance the duality of *dīn* and *dunyā*, of religion and worldliness, adopted to the aesthetic code and ethical norms of Jewish communities.

6. *Symbolic and Mystical Dimensions*

Mystical interpretation of wine poetry is a prominent aspect of the literary traditions in the Islamic world. In her second contribution to this volume, Renate Jacobi presents and analyses the mystical *Khamriyya* of Ibn al-Fāriḍ (576–632/1181–1235),

one of the most famous and most fascinating poems on wine in classical Arabic literature. Jacobi's interpretation of the poem is based on analysis of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's mysticism and shows how skilfully the poet draws his religious symbols utilising the imagery of Arabic wine poetry in connection with the concepts of Sufism. Additional perspective on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Khamriyya* is offered by Enrico Boccaccini in his study on the Persian mystic Sayyid 'Alī Hamadāni's ((b. 1314) commentary on the poem. Underlining the importance of the intertextual dynamics between primary text and the commentary, Boccaccini illustrates how the transmission of poetry through a commentary adds new meaning, which reaches beyond the literary aspects to include the commentators' philosophical and mystical teachings. At the same time, the commentary translates poetic wine imagery into prose, thus creating a single, multi-layered work proliferating its own mystical and literary dimensions. Re-interpretation of the rich imagery of wine occurs also within the poetic framework of the literary history. Hajnalka Kovacs dedicates her contribution to the analysis of *Muḥiṭ-i a'zam*, a *sāqināma* by the Indo-Persian poet Mirzā 'Abd al-Qādir Bedil (1644–1720). Drawing on the long tradition of wine poetry in Persian literature, but at the same time aiming to transcend it, Bedil utilizes the symbolism of wine not only for the illustration of mystical themes but also for the structural organization of his poem. Highly original as it is, such a treatment of the theme was possible only by the ingenious manipulation of the conventions of the *sāqināma* genre. Focusing on the most prominent images, the wine and the wine cup, Kovacs discusses Bedil's dynamic and creative use of wine imagery in the poem. The symbolism of wine, through which the thematic and formal unity of the poem is achieved, remains in the background throughout the *Muḥiṭ-i a'zam*. However, wine imagery is also employed independent of its symbolic aspect to convey or illustrate a range of themes subordinated to the overall scheme of the poem creating multiple levels of meaning in the individual descriptive, discursive and narrative contexts.

Acknowledgements

The volume includes the proceedings of the collaborative research initiative “*Khamriyya* as a World Poetic Genre: Comparative Perspectives on Wine Poetry in Near and Middle Eastern Literatures”⁵ convened by the editors between 2014 and 2017 in the format of a lecture series and three international conferences held in St Andrews, Cambridge (UK) and Beirut (Lebanon). We would like to express our gratitude to the University of St Andrews, the University of Cambridge, the American University of Beirut, and the Orient-Institute Beirut for hosting the lectures and conferences of our research initiative. We are indebted to the European Research Council, the Honeyman Foundation, and the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies in the University of Cambridge for supporting our project financially. Dar-

⁵ <https://khamriyya.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk>.

win College and the Ancient India and Iran Trust in Cambridge (UK) as well as the Food Heritage Foundation, the Boutique Wineries of Lebanon, Château Kefraya and Château Qanafar (Lebanon) added to our abstract academic perspective on wine poetry an insightful and unforgettable dimension of warm and delightful hospitality. A special word of gratitude is due to Laura Pels Ferra, Götz Karphofer, Petra Chedid, Brigitte Caland and Aida Abbas for their professional and truly attentive support and engagement. The work on this volume and its publication was generously supported by the European Research Council in the framework of the research project “Language, Philology, Culture: Arab Cultural Semantics in Transition”. We are very grateful to Katherine Faydash for proofreading of the chapters and compiling the index for the volume. Anonymous peer reviewers deserve our special thanks for their sharp, detailed and sobering comments and suggestions. We are much obliged to the editorial board of the series *Beiruter Texte und Studien* for expressing interest in our book project and to Christopher Bahl, Abdallah Soufan and Thorsten Wollina for patiently and carefully guiding us between the Scylla and Charybdis of the editorial and publishing process. We would also like to express our thanks to all contributors to this volume and to friends and colleagues who participated in our collaborative research initiative and enriched our discussions with their profound knowledge and inspiring erudition. These include Ramzi Baalbaki, Vahid Behmardi, Gabrielle van den Berg, Dominic Parviz Brookshaw, Orhan Elmaz, Maryam Ghorbankarimi, David Kiltz, Matthew Thomas Miller, Bilal Orfali, Maurice Pomerantz, Asghar Seyed-Gohrab, Rafal Stepień, Ilse Sturkenboom, and Adam Talib. With this book, we are delighted to invite the wider audience of its readers to the fascinating cosmos of wine poetry in the entangled literary history of the pre-modern Islamic world and hope that it will stimulate further research on its immensely rich and polyphonic traditions.

Exordium

On (Not) Drinking: al-Ḥarīrī's *Maqāma* 48

Michael Cooperson (UCLA)

The classical Arabic *maqāma* is sometimes described as the ludic double of religious discourses such as the sermon or the Hadith assembly. Devin Stewart, for example, has argued that “a major and perhaps central concern of al-Hamadhānī was to parody specific genres of Islamic religious discourse, particularly the *ḥadīth*-lecture or *majlis*.” He adds that the name itself may be “an ironic inversion of the term *majlis*”: that is, a “standing” instead of a “sitting.”¹ More generally, the *maqāmāt* are often described as, or simply assumed to be, quintessential examples of *adab*, in the specific sense of a secular practice. Angelika Neuwirth, for example, describes the *udabā'* of al-Ḥarīrī's *maqāma* no. 45 as “celebrating life in the free, ‘secular’ space conceded to poetry and unrestrained aesthetic experience in Islamic society.”²

This characterization turns on a division between the religious and the secular, with literature (*Literatur*, not *Schrifttum*) falling, as if by virtue of some inherent irreverence, into the latter category. But the understanding of *adab* as contrarian strikes me as dependent on a particular construction of knowledge that took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This is the period when the category of a national literature became available to people like Jurjī Zaydān (d. 1914), who filled it with works chosen in accordance with a specific program, that of *Kulturgeschichte*. As practiced by contemporary European scholars, *Kulturgeschichte* read cultural production of all kinds as embodying the spirit of a people or civilization. When Zaydān and others deployed it to construct a secular-nationalist literary history for the *ummah*—a deliberately ambiguous term that might mean “Arabs” or “Muslims”—they privileged cultural production that helped support a linguistic rather than a religious notion of identity. The resulting category of *adab*, now well on its way to meaning “literature” in the European-language sense, did admit works of theology, law, piety, and so on. But it did so only grudgingly, either because works in those genres could be read as self-conscious verbal productions or because they drew on, and sometimes even marked advances in, valorized discourses such as

I am grateful to the organizers, hosts, and attendees of the Beirut *khamriyya* conference at which this chapter was first presented, with special thanks to Kirill Dmitriev and Hans-Peter Pökel. I also thank the two anonymous peer reviewers for their comments and corrections.

¹ Devin Stewart, “The Maqamah,” in *Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period*, ed. Roger Allen and D. S. Richards (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 145–58, at 149.

² Angelika Neuwirth, “Adab Standing Trial: Whose Norms Should Rule Society? The Case of al-Ḥarīrī's ‘al-Maqāma al-Ramlīyah,’” in *Myths, Historical Archetypes, and Symbolic Figures in Arabic Literature: Towards a New Hermeneutic Approach*, ed. Angelika Neuwirth et al. (Beirut: Steiner, 1999), 205–24, at 217n54. I thank Matthew Keegan for this reference.

logic, grammar, and poetry. Positively to be welcomed, in contrast, were works that seemed untainted by religion or hostile to it.³

Following Zaydān, the modern syllabus of classical Arabic literature privileges pre-Islamic poetry, which seems nonreligious by virtue of being pagan. It favors works like al-Jāhiz's *Misers*, whose grounding in social and material reality seems to set it apart from the usual run of books preoccupied with law, theology, or piety. Going a step further, it favors the positively irreverent: the *ghazal* poems of ʿUmar ibn Abi Rabiʿah, the *khamriyyāt* and *ghulāmiyyāt* of Abū Nuwās, the *Thousand and One Nights*, and al-Maʿarri's *Risālat al-ghufrān*. And it lionizes texts—chief among them the *Maqāmāt* of al-Hamadhānī and al-Ḥarīrī—in which religious discourse appears no more meaningful than any other kind: that is to say, not very meaningful at all.

Except for the *Nights*, all the works on this list would have been recognized as *adab* works by premodern readers, and in that sense the category is not a modern imposition. But whether they are nonreligious is another matter. The *muʿallaqāt*, or earlier allomorphs lost to us, may have been pagan hymns; even in their present form, they have very plausibly been read as celebrating rites of passage.⁴ And a robust account of Arab paganism would probably make good sense of ʿUmar ibn Abi Rabiʿah, too. Abū Nuwās may have been toying with a charismatic cult of his own devising, as James Montgomery has suggested.⁵ For his part, al-Jāhiz seems to have been using the self-denying misers to score points at the expense of the proto-Sunni ascetics.⁶ The *Ghufṛān*, irreverent though it may be, describes an afterlife so densely imagined that it cannot but engage with formal notions of theodicy, eschatology, and ethics. And the *Nights* insists on a particular moral order—one based on fortune rather than God, who is nowhere to be seen. The world of the *Nights* is shot through with the supernatural, specifically with jinn and *ʿafārit*, who behave very much like the gods of the Hellenistic novel. This leaves the *maqāmāt*, which, as I argue—following Matthew Keegan—are profoundly religious in their own way, too.⁷

³ Anne-Laure Dupont, *Gurğī Zaydan 1861–1914: Écrivain réformiste et témoin de la Renaissance arabe* (Beirut: Institut Français du Proche-Orient, 2006), esp. 489–541; Thomas Philipp, *Jurji Zaidan and the Foundations of Arab Nationalism* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2014), esp. chap. 5; Michael Cooperson, “The Abbasid ‘Golden Age’: An Excavation,” *Al-ʿUṣūr al-Wuṣṭā* 25 (2017): 41–65, at 47–49.

⁴ Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and Poetics of Ritual* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).

⁵ James Montgomery, “Abū Nuwās, The Justified Sinner?” *Oriens* 39 (2011): 75–164.

⁶ Michael Cooperson, “Al-Jāhiz, the Misers, and the Proto-Sunni Ascetics,” in *Al-Jāhiz: A Muslim Humanist for Our Time*, ed. Arnim Heinemann, John L. Meloy, Tarif Khalidi, and Manfred Kropp (Beirut: Orient-Institut, 2009), 197–219.

⁷ Against the modern Western consensus that there is something irreverent about al-Ḥarīrī's *Maqāmāt*, Keegan argues that for commentators such as al-Panjdihi and al-Muṭarrizī, “the strange and unusual adventures of the Ḥaririyya [that is, of the *Maqāmāt*] are not opposed to Islamic *ʿilm* (knowledge) at all. Rather, they are deeply embedded in the aesthetic, intellectual, and social values that they saw as ‘Islamic.’” See Keegan, “Throwing the Reins to the Reader:

No doubt a religious reading (for lack of a better term) of these canonical *adab* works would produce distortions of its own. But such a reading seems no less plausible than the present-day secularizing one. And the reflexive category of a secular, anti-Islamic *adab* hardly corresponds to any obvious reality on the ground. Rather, the category should be understood as a way of making certain texts readable at particular moments in time—in this case, Zaydān's moment and ours. From this excavation it follows that taking the *maqāmāt* as an example of secular literature tells us little beyond the fact that something about them appealed to nationalist canon builders. The claim that they parody or invert religious discourse is not to be dismissed, but it demands a more careful look at what we ourselves mean by "religious."

If we want to get beyond the premise of a secular literature necessarily indifferent or hostile to religion, one place to start is with Shahab Ahmed's recent *What Is Islam?* There Ahmed argues that wine drinking, Sufism, *falsafah*, and same-sex love are not the Others against which Islam defines itself. Instead, he says, wine drinking, Sufism, *falsafah*, and same-sex love are those things that, in conjunction with their opposites, define Islam. As he sees it, Islam consists in keeping these disparate elements of human experience in balance. In other words, the category *ḥarām* is not a bug but a feature. Or, more exactly, it *was* a feature across what he calls the Balkans-to-Bengal region before the modern period. Today, however, normative—usually legalistic—definitions of Islam have pushed this coexistence out of historical memory.

To exemplify, let us look at what Ahmed says about the almost universally banned practice of drinking wine. Despite the prohibition, wine drinking, he says, has been "a persistent and standard feature" and indeed a "*collective and normative group practice*" in Muslim societies.⁸ In drinking wine, Muslims sought to taste the bliss promised the believers in the hereafter, a bliss for the time being granted freely only to the angels.⁹ In that sense, wine drinking was both reverent and irreverent—either way, it was fully affirmative of God's disposition of the universe. Thus, wine metaphors in painting and poetry were "*meaningful in terms of Islam*" or "Islamically meaningful." Ahmed thus concludes that wine and Islam were "mutually constitutive."¹⁰ Clearly, this is quite different from saying that in one place there was Islam, and somewhere else a "free secular space" conceded to the *udabā'*, as Neuwirth argues with respect to *maqāma* no. 45. For our purposes, Ahmed's argument implies

Hierarchy, Jurjānian Poetics, and al-Muṭarrizī's Commentary on the *Maqāmāt*," *Journal of Abbasid Studies* 5 (2018): 134.

⁸ Shahab Ahmed, *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 62 (emphasis his). I should add that the present paper is not necessarily intended to help make the argument that Islam is *in its essence* the thing Ahmed claims it is. Rather, I am taking his characterization as a literary-critical premise, to be tested for how well it accounts for otherwise puzzling features of a particular text. While one should acknowledge the very real differences between normative and lived Islam (on which see now Reinhart, *Lived Islam*), and between Islam as perceived by believers and non-believers, that acknowledgement belongs to a different order of inquiry.

⁹ Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*, 420–22.

¹⁰ Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*, 71 (emphasis his) and 67.

that literary depictions of wine drinking and other antinomian practices are not inherently irreverent or oppositional, nor are they necessarily parodies or inversions of anything. Rather, they are likely explorations of the interplay between the *ḥarām* (both “sacred” and “forbidden”) and the profane.

Turning to the *Maqāmāt*, specifically those of al-Ḥarīrī, I argue that their enabling concern is the problem of human and divine language. When God conveyed his final revelation, he did so in Arabic. With the end of revelation, Arabic fell from grace: that is, it became a merely human language once again. In that capacity, it can be used to lie, cheat, defraud, swindle, and deceive, as it is in the *Maqāmāt*. But even when put to ignoble uses, Arabic retains its memory of having once been the speech of God. In this sense it resembles Milton’s Satan, who even after his fall displays some of his original God-given beauty.¹¹ It is this numinous character of Arabic that makes Abū Zayd’s verbal marvels possible. Drawing on the residue of holiness that pervades every Arabic word, he can compose sermons without dots, or long poems rhyming in *zāʿ*, or speeches that can be read the same way backward and forward. When he does these things, he is working miracles, and it is for the sake of these miracles that al-Ḥārith follows him across the world, “from Ghana to Ferghana.”¹² In this respect, al-Ḥārith’s obsessive interest in Abū Zayd’s words is a spiritual quest, like that of the early Christians who went into the desert to ask the fathers for a word.¹³ This word is what al-Ḥārith is looking for, although he calls it *adab*, here best rendered as *παίδεία* (*paideia*, “mental culture, learning, education”). On this reading, *adab* is anything but irreverent. Rather, it is one of many practices that seek transcendence. According to Neuwirth, the *maqāma* is defined in part by the search for wonders (‘*ajāʾib*’), which she understands to mean marvels of *adab*.¹⁴ In the literal sense, of course, she is right: Abū Zayd’s audiences want to be dazzled by clever wordplay, which is one of the things *udabāʾ* are good for. But the ‘*ajāʾib*’ may (I would argue) be more productively understood as synonymous with the transformative wonder (θαύμα) of the early Christian texts.¹⁵

¹¹ “[He] above the rest / In shape and gesture proudly eminent / Stood like a Tower; his form had not yet lost / All her Original brightness, nor appear’d / Less than Arch Angel ruind, and th’ excess / Of Glory obscur’d” (*Paradise Lost*, 1:589–94).

¹² [Al-Ḥarīrī,] *Les séances de Hariri*, ed. Silvestre de Sacy (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1822), 85 (*maqāma* 9).

¹³ “In his early days, Abba Euprepus went to see an old man and said to him, Abba, give me a word so that I may be saved.” [Proclus,] *S.P.N. Procli Archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani Opera omnia*, ed. J. P. Migne (Paris: Migne, 1864), Euprepus 7, col. 172; translated in [Proclus,] *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, trans. Benedicta Ward, rev. ed. (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1984), 62. For more examples see [Proclus,] *Procli ... Opera omnia*, Theodore 20, col. 192 (*Sayings*, p. 76); Hierax 1, col. 232 (*Sayings*, p. 104). I thank Claudia Rapp for drawing my attention to this trope and Alexandre Roberts for supplying me with the original Greek texts and page references.

¹⁴ Neuwirth, “Adab Standing Trial,” 211.

¹⁵ See, e.g., [Proclus,] *Procli ... Opera omnia*, Achilles 6, cols. 124–25 (*Sayings*, p. 30); Benjamin 2, col. 144 (*Sayings*, p. 43); John the Dwarf 7, col. 205 (*Sayings*, p. 87).

With these considerations in mind I turn to *maqāma* no. 48, supposedly the first one al-Ḥarīrī wrote, and the only one narrated by Abū Zayd instead of al-Ḥārith. It begins with Abū Zayd's arrival in Basra, which he describes as a place where *bibā mā shi'ta min dinin wa-dunyā*—that is, a place where some people are enraptured by the sound of the Qur'ān and others by music. He goes on to say that if you want to pray there, you can, and if you want to drink, you can do that, too.¹⁶ So here we see quite clearly that the *ḥalāl* and the *ḥarām* are supposed to coexist in a harmonious balance.

Abū Zayd goes to the mosque, with, he says, the intention of running some kind of scam to take the congregation's money. But then the *adhān* rings out and he joins the communal prayer. After the prayer, a man rises to address his fellow worshippers:

Dear friends, I will open to you my whole heart, and tell you of an affliction that surpasses endurance. Once, in a condition of desperate poverty and distress, I made a vow to the Almighty that, if I were delivered, I would renounce, eschew, disown, and abnegate the fermentation of the grape, any convivial tipping, and all giddy inebriety. But my treacherous soul and base appetites soon beguiled me, and I sat with bibbers and bowzers, and I did drink. Laying dignity aside, I sucked at the dugs of the wine-jar, and committed all the outrages of temulence, my pledge of sobriety forgotten, as if made to a dead man. Nor did one night of riot and dissipation suffice me: on Thursday evening, I closeted myself with an aged vintage, and passed the last night insensible, embraced by the foul Fiend. Now I come before you with my vow broken and my dejection plain, for I have poured away my felicity, leaving only the dregs of remorse.¹⁷

In other words, he had vowed to stop drinking but had a relapse and spent the previous night in a drunken stupor. What do the worshippers advise him to do?

So far the scene is comparable to what happens twelve-step programs like Alcoholics Anonymous: the addict identifies him- or herself to others and asks for their help. But the addict's assumptions about appropriate treatment are based on a different model of addiction and recovery. The problem to be addressed is not the drinking, at least not directly; the problem is the broken vow, for which *kaffāra* or expiation must be made. In response, the congregation affirms that making a solemn vow not to drink again is the appropriate course of action, even if it failed the first time the man tried. As an approach to addiction, this emphasis on behavior rather than etiology arguably has something in common with modern cognitive behavior therapies, which seek to reinforce healthy behavior rather than uncover some underlying pathology. In its original context, of course, the whole scenario—

¹⁶ Ḥarīrī, *Séances*, 564–65.

¹⁷ Ḥarīrī, *Séances*, 568–69. This English rendering is from al-Ḥarīrī, *Impostures*, translated by Michael Cooperson (New York: New York University Press, 2020), 448–49. For a more literal translation see Ḥarīrī, *The Assemblies of al-Ḥarīrī*, translated by F. Steingass (London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1898), 166–67.

that is, a public confession of drunkenness—seems quite unlikely.¹⁸ But in the world of the *maqāma*, at least, everyone involved treats the event as entirely normal.

Hearing the man's confession, Abū Zayd (as he tells it) sees his chance: he stands up and tells the penitent that he can expiate his broken vow by giving him—that is, Abū Zayd—enough money to ransom his daughter from captivity. Abū Zayd, it turns out, has come to Basra as a refugee from Sarūj, a town fallen to the Byzantines.¹⁹ Having once been (he says) a wealthy and respected member of the community, he is now reduced to begging for his daughter's ransom. Happy to have found a way to redeem himself, the penitent gives Abū Zayd some money. Later, Abū Zayd confesses to his audience—that is, to his friend al-Ḥārith, and by extension to us—that he spent it not on the ransom (as he does not seem to have a daughter) but on *tharida* and *ʿaṣīda*: that is, bread soup and pudding. Al-Ḥārith finds the deception shocking and reproaches him for it. But Abū Zayd replies as he always does: fate or life (*dabr*) is treacherous, and one must be equally treacherous in order to survive.²⁰ With that admission, he hands us the key to interpreting the story.

By his own admission, Abū Zayd is a liar. So let's assume his account—which, again, is narrated by him to al-Ḥārith, and which we can call the *zābir*—is false. To reconstruct the hidden, true account—which we can call the *bātin*—let's assume that Abū Zayd behaved in Basra as he does in the other *maqāmāt*.

On that assumption, his story contains three omissions. First, he neglects to inform us that the penitent drunkard is a plant or a shill: that is, “a decoy or accomplice, esp. one posing as an enthusiastic or successful customer to encourage other buyers.”²¹ Playing the part of a penitent drinker, the shill tells his story and asks for help. Abū Zayd suggests that he makes a charitable donation. When the man agrees, the bystanders see a chance to gain merit for themselves, so they throw in some money, too. It is this money, not the large sum “donated” by the shill, that provides the scammers with their profit.

Why should we believe that the scene in the mosque is staged? Because similar deceptions appear in other *maqāmāt*. In no. 8,²² Abū Zayd accuses a young man of damaging his property, but the young man is his son, and the suit a pretext to recite clever poems before the judge and collect a reward. In no. 10, similarly, Abū Zayd accuses a young man of murder; when the judge, swayed by the young man's beauty, pays the bloodwit, Abū Zayd and the boy take the money and run. Later we

¹⁸ Katia Zakharia, “Norme et fiction dans la genèse des *Maqāmāt* d'al-Ḥāriri,” *Bulletin d'études orientales* 46 (1994): 217–31.

¹⁹ Pace much of the secondary literature, it is the Byzantines, not the Crusaders, who are meant: see Katia Zakharia, *Abū Zayd as-Sarūjī, imposteur et mystique: Relire les Maqāmāt d'al-Ḥāriri* (Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 2000), 136–40.

²⁰ Ḥāriri, *Séances*, 570–75.

²¹ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “shill.”

²² Henceforth I refer to individual *maqāmāt* by their numbers, which are the same in all editions.

learn the boy is his son. In no. 41, Abū Zayd recites a poem exhorting his audience to repent. As soon as he finishes, a boy—again his son, as we later learn—appears and asks the bystanders to prove their change of heart by giving him money. In no. 47, Abū Zayd plays a cupper who refuses to treat an ailing young man—again, his son, unacknowledged—who cannot pay. Moved to tears by the young man’s pleas, the bystanders shower him with coins. In no. 32, Abū Zayd answers nearly a hundred difficult legal questions and is rewarded. This time, al-Ḥarīrī does not come out and say that the young man asking the questions is Abū Zayd’s son, but this seems the obvious inference. In our text, admittedly, the penitent is not a young man and so does not seem to be Zayd. Then again, Zayd is not his father’s only accomplice: the latter is also seen working with his wife (nos. 9, 40, 45) and an unnamed old woman (no. 7).²³

The second thing Abū Zayd fails to mention is that he probably spent his ill-gotten gains on more than bread soup and pudding. In fact, he probably bought wine, as he does in episodes 1, 28, 35, and 41. He even leaves a clue for those in the know: as Adam Talib has pointed out to me, *tharīda* and *ʿaṣīda* were dishes favored by boozers.²⁴ We can also find support for our *bāṭinī* reading by turning to the supposedly real-life incident that inspired this *maqāma*. The story goes that a judge named Ibn Qaṭarī appeared one day in a mosque in Basra to announce that he had vowed to give up drinking but had broken his vow. What, he asked, was the appropriate penance? Among the worshippers there happened to be a refugee from Sarūj who claimed that the *kāfīrs* had captured his daughter. He said to Ibn Qaṭarī, “Your penance is to give me money to ransom her.” Ibn Qaṭarī offers the Sarūjī ten dinars. The Sarūjī takes the money and disappears into a tavern.²⁵

According to numerous sources, this real-life incident inspired al-Ḥarīrī to write *maqāma* no. 48, which led to all the rest. But this account contains so many absurdities that it can only have been reverse engineered from the *maqāma*.²⁶ Normatively, Islamic law treats confession as determinative of guilt, and so the man’s proclamation would have obliged others to punish him or turn him over to the authorities. Normatively, too, a free man who confesses to drunkenness would be struck eighty lashes. Moreover, such a confession should cause Ibn Qaṭarī to lose his position as a judge. And, as a judge, he should know the *kaffāra* for a broken vow without having to ask a crowd of people in a mosque.²⁷ But this part of the story does not concern us. Rather, the point for our purposes is that Abū Zayd, in the absence of any contrary indication (on which see below), may safely be assumed to spend his takings

²³ To give the full picture, Abū Zayd’s son also appears as himself, albeit under false pretences, in three episodes (14, 23, 37) and as himself, without false pretences, in two others (19, 49). He also appears once in the role of a slave (34) and is once invoked but does not appear (5).

²⁴ Adam Talib, personal communication.

²⁵ [Al-Sharīshī,] *Sharḥ Maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī*, ed. Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Beirut: al-ʿAṣriyyah, 1413/1992), 5:320, citing al-Fanjdihi (d. 584/1188).

²⁶ For a full account see Zakharia, “Norme et fiction.”

²⁷ I thank Joseph Lowry for discussing these points with me.

on wine. So let's say he did, at least in the *bāṭini* parallel text that I'm creating here. But why does he keep this fact from al-Ḥārith?

This question brings us to the third omission: that the struggle between drinking and not drinking, which the story puts into the mouth of the stranger in the mosque, is actually Abū Zayd's own story: in other words, he, not the mystery man in the mosque, is the addict who is struggling with sobriety.

There are two pieces of evidence for this claim. In no. 24, Abū Zayd is offered wine. He turns it down, saying that his white hair forbids him to partake—that is, it is undignified for an old man to drink. He has thus sworn an oath never to drink again (*ālāytu lā khāmaratnī l-khamru*). But his description of the wine is alluring: he refers to “the cups of free-run wine ... sparkling pure wine ... cooled by the north wind” (*kāsāt al-sulāf ... širf musha'sha'a ... masbmūla*). And in the end he rails against old age for depriving him of his pleasures (*abghid bibi ... suḥqan labū!*).²⁸ Arguably, this uncharacteristic abstemiousness is a design flaw: al-Ḥāriri, the author, wanted to include a poem in this genre and so forced Abū Zayd to compose one, even if it contradicts nearly everything else he says and does in the *Maqāmāt*. Within the story world, though, we have to take Abū Zayd as he is, and here he seems to be working hard to stay sober.

The second piece of evidence for my claim that the penitent's speech is really Abū Zayd's is the fact that he (Abū Zayd) elsewhere invents a character and puts words in his mouth. This is no. 43, where he tells al-Ḥārith about meeting a young man who was even more eloquent than himself. When the story is done, al-Ḥārith says: “I will take my oath, that both sides of the question were argued by yourself” (*uqsimu bi-man anbata l-ayk / inna l-jadala minka wa-ilayk*). Abū Zayd then seems to admit that the whole conversation was his invention: “He laughed heartily, like one surprised in some imposture. “If the honey pleases thee,” he said, “ask no more questions, but lick it up!”²⁹ This is an admission that anything Abū Zayd attributes to others, including the penitent's rousing speech about “pouring away his felicity, leaving only the dregs of remorse,” may quite possibly originate with himself, and that the struggle over wine drinking is actually *his* struggle.

So what are the implications of our *bāṭini* reading?

First, Abū Zayd, as a character in his own story, actually keeps his promise, which is to comfort the poor sinner who relapsed into addiction. This he does by taking the man's money. At a higher level of abstraction, the *maqāma* keeps its promise as well. It does not forgive the sin, or redeem the sinner, but it affirms that the one who offers to help you may be a drinker, too. In other words, if you are an addict, you're not alone. As drinkers, or even as addicts, the members of the audience remain members of the community. Far from being “a free secular space conceded to po-

²⁸ Ḥāriri, *Séances*, 247–48. Free-run wine is made from the juice that leaks from uncrushed grapes.

²⁹ Ḥāriri, *Séances*, 499.

etry and unrestrained aesthetic experience,” this *maqāmāh*, at least, creates a space in which sin is identified and censured while the sinner himself is embraced and his self-respect restored—a process that, as Shahab Ahmed might argue, makes sense only in terms of Islam.

Second, if we want to understand how healthy and unhealthy relationships with alcohol were understood in the world of the *maqāmāt*, we can study the difference between Abū Zayd and his sidekick, al-Ḥārith ibn Hammām. Abū Zayd, as he never tires of telling us, embraces the conjunction of opposites. So it is that, after presenting himself as a pious shaykh for days on end, he needs to right the balance, as he does in this rollicking scene from no. 12:

There [says al-Ḥārith] I found the sheykh, wearing a raiment gaily dyed, sitting amidst the amphorae, near a wine-press. About him were goodly cup-bearers, blazing candles, wreaths of myrtle and daffodil, and merrymake of string and flute. Now he cried for a bung to be bored in a jug, and now for the musicants to chant more lustily; now he held a spray of myrtle to his nose, and now cast amorous glances at the pot-boys.³⁰

For Abū Zayd, then, the distinctively Islamic living-with-contradiction can be joyous. In that sense his debauchery seems healthy minded, to use a term once favored by psychologists of religion. But al-Ḥārith can view the scene only with the cold eye of the law:

I spent that night wrapped in the mourning-cloak of remorse, for having betaken myself to a toping-place and not some house of good repute; and I swore before God a mighty oath, that were I offered even the seat of Baghdad, I should not enter a wine-shop; nor lay eyes on a wine-press, even if I were given again the days of youth.³¹

This is not to say that al-Ḥārith is always a prude. Mostly, he disapproves of wine drinking. In episodes 1 and 41, for example, he refuses to drink with Abū Zayd. But in episode 28, after some reluctance, he joins him for an extended binge. Yet there, and in other, similar cases, his account suggests that he stuck around for the company, not the drinking, which he thinks of as sordid and unworthy. With Abū Zayd, as we’ve seen, mutability, or the shift between opposites, is the only principle to which he can commit. But al-Ḥārith never quite understands that; his inconsistency is simply inconsistency. Or, to put it in terms of Ahmed’s argument, al-Ḥārith doesn’t have a spiritual life capacious enough to embrace contradiction.

Now for the third and last implication of our *bāṭinī* reading. In no. 48, Abū Zayd says he needs money to ransom his daughter but then spends the money on wine. By implication, the wine is his daughter, and she is the wine. This equivalence is hinted at in another *maqāmāh*, no. 35, where Abū Zayd speaks of a marriageable member of his household who turns out to be a sealed wine jug. Of course, Abū Zayd has other daughters as well: his *banāt fikr*,³² or rhetorical performances. This

³⁰ Ḥāriri, *Séances*, 121–22; Ḥāriri, *Impostures*, 104.

³¹ Ḥāriri, *Séances*, 125; Ḥāriri, *Impostures*, 107–8.

³² Ḥāriri, *Séances*, 228.

parentage entails a second equivalence: wine and speech. Both wine and speech are numinous: that is, they partake of the divine—or, put differently, both are magical. As such, they can be perverted and abused. Specifically, both generate sensations that don't count: sensations, that is, that feel good without corresponding to any particular fact about the world. This is why wine is *ḥarām* and why Abū Zayd needs to repent: his sermons, like alcohol, stand in a parasitical relation to the real function of language and emotion, which is to create a correspondence between sensation and reality. But parasitical or not, neither wine nor speech can be banished. If people could be stirred up only by veridical discourses and experience only genuine feelings, there would be no such thing as moral agency. What al-Ḥārith is searching for is genuine feeling and genuine moral sensibility, but he never quite finds them. The problem seems to be that he wants to resolve the generative contradictions embodied by Abū Zayd. In the end, he gets what he wants: Abū Zayd repents. That is, he stops playing at being a holy man, and becomes one, truly—or so he claims. But many readers find *maqāma* no. 50, where the great conversion takes place, to be unconvincing.³³ If we adopt, if only for the sake of literary argument, Ahmed's claim that Islam is constituted by its contradictions, we see that the forcible suppression of one element—in this case, Abū Zayd's bacchic side—must lead not to a better Islam but to a collapse of the whole system.

To conclude, then, I would agree with all the readers who have found something enigmatic and disturbing about the *maqāmāt*. But this enigmatic and disturbing quality does not come about because al-Ḥāriri is parodying, inverting, or excluding the religious. Rather, it comes about for precisely the opposite reason: that he is engaging with it. I would further argue that his complex response to the problem of divine and human language, and to the divine and the human in general, may help us solve one last puzzle: why were the *maqāmāt* so popular?

As a matter of epistemology, there is no particular reason that a culture should understand itself. But if Shahab Ahmed is right about the ways this particular culture was defined by contradiction, then it makes sense that premodern Muslims, when they heard or read the *maqāmāt*, would have recognized themselves, if only "as through a glass, darkly" (δι' ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι, 1 Corinthians 13:12), with a pun intended on the (English) word *glass*. In this sense, the *maqāmāt*, far from parodying or subverting anything, can be read back through Ahmed's work as al-Ḥāriri's contribution to the debate over what it means to be a Muslim—a debate that for

³³ By showing how the *maqāmāh* genre is constituted by the play of opposites, Abdelfattah Kilito makes it difficult to read the conversion as definitive. See Kilito, *Les Séances: Récits et codes culturels chez Hamadbānī et Ḥāriri* (Paris: Sindbad, 1983), at 30, 45-46, and 62-63, *inter alia*. In a similar vein, Philip Kennedy argues that in the *Maqāmāt*, "the truth is incessantly discovered to be a pack of lies." See Kennedy, *Recognition in the Arabic Literary Tradition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 306. An important dissenting voice is that of Katia Zakharia, who reads the entire collection as a record of Abū Zayd's progress along the mystic path (Zakharia, *Abū Zayd*, 59, 207-8, 226-31, *inter alia*). For text-internal reasons to consider the conversion story part of an elaborate trap, see my comments in Ḥāriri, *Impostures*, 481.

many of al-Ḥarīrī's contemporaries and successors was simply another way of asking what it meant to be a human being. Far from being a series of word games, studied in the hope of mastering Arabic morphology and syntax, or a deviant sort of paraliterature, cultivated in secret by secularists *avant la lettre*, the *maqāmāt* are the *dirwān* of the human predicament, the distillation of *la comédie humaine*, and in that sense, the quintessential medieval text.

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Part 1
Development of Literary
Forms and Structures

ʿAdī Ibn Zayd al-ʿIbādī and the Origins of Arabic *Khamriyya*

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The development of Arabic wine poetry into a distinctive poetic genre of the *khamriyya* is closely related to the poetic heritage of the late antique Arab city of al-Ḥira. Some of the earliest attestations of Arabic *khamriyyāt* are attributed to ʿAdī ibn Zayd al-ʿIbādī, an outstanding early Arab poet from al-Ḥira who lived in the second half of the sixth century. This chapter focuses on two texts by ʿAdī Ibn Zayd, poems XI and XIII in his *diwān*,¹ providing examples of his treatment of the wine theme. The discussion of both texts reveals the gradual process of the “emancipation” of Arabic wine song, initially part of the *qaṣīda*, to an independent poetic genre.

Historical and Literary Context

Early Arabic poetry has often been regarded as rooted exclusively in the Bedouin cultural environment of Arab tribal society of the pre-Islamic era.² In acknowledging a dominant impact of the Bedouin culture and recognizing the crucial importance of poetry as the main medium of cultural memory for the Arabs,³ one should also consider the diversity of the late antique context of early Arab cultural history and the complexities of literary developments manifested in early Arabic poetic sources. Already Gustav von Grünebaum pointed to the existence of various schools of early Arabic poetry and attempted to classify them chronologically.⁴ An analysis of stylistic features and metrics led Grünebaum to the conclusion that one of the earliest and most affluent schools of early Arabic poetry, distinguished by the “ideas of non-Bedouin background, and a definite colour of local tradition,” was flourishing in al-Ḥira (Ar. الحيرة),⁵ an Arab city on the western bank of the Euphrates in southern Mesopotamia. Emphasizing al-Ḥira’s outstanding significance as a center

¹ For the full Arabic text of the poems adopted from the edition by Muḥammad Jabbār Muʿayyid, *Diwān ʿAdī ibn Zayd al-ʿIbādī* (Baghdad, 1965) and my translation into English, see the chapter appendix.

² On the influence of this postulate from the perspective of Arab cultural tradition, see Samir Kassir, *Das Arabische Unglück* (Berlin, 2006), 37–42.

³ Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich, 1992), 50.

⁴ Gustav von Grünebaum, “Zur Chronologie der früh-arabischen Dichtung,” *Orientalia* 8 (1939): 328–45; see also Renate Jacobi, “Die Altarabische Dichtung (6.–7. Jahrhundert),” *Grundriss der arabischen Philologie*, vol. 2, *Literaturwissenschaft*, ed. Helmut Gätje (Wiesbaden, 1987), 23.

⁵ Gustav von Grünebaum, “Abū Duʿād al-Iyādī: Collection of Fragments,” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 51 (1948–1952): 83. See also Grünebaum, “Pre-Islamic Poetry,” *Moslem World* 32 (1942): 151–52.

of early Arabic literary culture is also the fact that the Arabic tradition, as Dmitry Frolov has pointed out, attributed probably the earliest pieces of Arabic poetry to the members of the Christianized tribe of Tanūkh, as well as to poets affiliated with the Lakhmid dynasty of al-Ḥira.⁶ Along with having such deep historical roots, the poetic heritage of al-Ḥira presents itself as one of the most innovative of the corpus of early Arabic poetry. It reflects the urban environment of its origin defined by intertribal, intercultural, and interreligious aspects.

In late antiquity, from the beginning of the fourth to the beginning of the seventh century, al-Ḥira was the center of the Lakhmid principality, and one of the largest Arab cities.⁷ The dynamic urban development of al-Ḥira was stimulated by its healthy climate as well as its location at the crossroads of trading routes connecting East and West Arabia.⁸ Close proximity to Sasanian Iran and its capital of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, one of the largest urban centers of the late antique world, facilitated intercultural exchange with Persia. In addition, the population of al-Ḥira was religiously diverse and included a large and influential Christian group known as the 'Ibād—a Nestorian community of Arabs from various tribal backgrounds.⁹ In attracting Arabs from different parts of the Arabian Peninsula, al-Ḥira remained an Arab city closely connected to the tribes of eastern, central, and western Arabia. These factors defined al-Ḥira as a gateway of political, economic, and cultural exchange among Persia, Arabia, and Byzantine Syria and fostered the development of Arab culture during late antiquity. The crucial role of al-Ḥira as “Berührungspunkt aramäisch-hellenistischer Kultur und des vorislamischen Arabertums”¹⁰ is indirectly confirmed by evidence found in medieval Arab historiography that the Arabic script was first introduced in al-Ḥira and from there it spread to other regions of Arabia.¹¹

⁶ Frolov, *Classical Arabic Verse*, 102.

⁷ Greg Fisher, *Between Empires: Arabs, Romans, and Sasanians in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2011); Gustav Rothstein, *Die Dynastie der Lahmiden in al-Ḥira: Ein Versuch zur arabisch-persischen Geschichte zur Zeit der Sasaniden* (Berlin, 1899). Al-Ḥira was located near today's Najaf and the city of al-Kūfa, founded in 16/637. On the history of al-Ḥira, see Isabel Toral-Niehoff, *Al-Ḥira: Eine arabische Kulturmetropole im spätantiken Kontext* (Leiden, 2013); Alois Musil, *The Middle Euphrates: A Topographical Itinerary* (New York, 1927).

⁸ Meir J. Kister, “Al-Ḥira: Some Notes on Its Relation with Arabia,” *Arabica* 11 (1968): 143–69.

⁹ According to Hishām ibn al-Kalbī (d. 204/818), one third of the population of al-Ḥira belonged to the 'Ibād, see at-Ṭabarī, *Kitāb akhbār ar-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. M. J. de Goeje et al. (Leiden, 1879–1898), 1:822. The importance of Christianity in the history of al-Ḥira is reflected in the conversion of the last Lakhmid ruler, an-Nu'mān (580–602). See Isabel Toral-Niehoff, “The 'Ibād of al-Ḥira: An Arab Christian Community in Late Antique Iraq,” in *The Qur'ān in Context: Historical and Critical Investigations into the Qur'ānic Milieu*, ed. Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx (Leiden, 2010), 340.

¹⁰ Gerhard Endress, “Arabische Schrift,” in *Grundriss der arabischen Philologie*, vol. 1, *Sprachwissenschaft*, ed. Wolf Dietrich Fischer (Wiesbaden, 1982), 170.

¹¹ Dmitry Frolov, “Dva rannih teksta o proishozhdenii arabskogo pis'ma” [Two early texts about the origin of the Arabic script], *Vostok* (1996): 10–119; Dmitry Frolov, “K voprosu o rasprostraneni gramotnosti v Mekke i Medine v period propovedi Muhammada” [On the question of literacy in Mecca and Medina during Muhammad's time], *Gumanitarnaya nauka v*

The cultural diversity of al-Ḥira had a significant impact on its literary tradition. Due to its populations from different Arab tribes, in al-Ḥira poets of various tribal affiliations could creatively, directly engage with each other, then promote their literary innovations in other parts of Arabia. The court of the Lakhmids attracted poets from various regions of Arabia to the city, among them such renowned figures of early Arabic poetic tradition as Zuhayr Ibn Abī Sulmā, Ṭarafa Ibn al-‘Abd, and an-Nābigha adh-Dhubyāni. The courtly environment of al-Ḥira strongly stimulated poetic production in Arabic, which significantly increased in the sixth century.¹² It also promoted the professionalization of the poets and the establishment of the panegyric as the major genre of the *qaṣīda*—a polythematic ode representing the nucleus of early and classical Arabic poetry.

Another important factor shaping specific features of Arabic poetry in al-Ḥira was the influence of Persian culture, particularly music and singing. An analysis of poetic works by Abū Du‘ād al-Iyādi (sixth century) allowed Grünebaum to ascertain that the poetic meter of *ramal* was adopted as an Arabic poetic technique from Persia, via the poets of al-Ḥira, who developed a preference for using the short meters *ramal* and *khafif* that were particularly suitable for songs.¹³ An evaluation of the metrical repertoire of early Arabic poetry carried out by Dmitry Frolov on a much larger scale confirms that *ramal* was used mainly by poets closely connected to al-Ḥira. In contrast, poets of the tribes in northwestern Arabia, as well as those of the Dhubyān tribe in central Arabia and the Tamim in eastern Arabia, who “were not influenced by the Christianised culture of al-Ḥira,”¹⁴ largely avoided the *ramal* meter.

Apart from the metric repertoire,¹⁵ other important aspects of the poetry from al-Ḥira—such as the development of specific poetic genres, motifs, and imagery—remain practically unstudied. Nonetheless, Régis Blachère in his monumental survey of Arabic literary history remarks that the poetic tradition of al-Ḥira manifests in three dominant traits: Bacchic, elegiac, and religious.¹⁶ This chapter focuses on the first characteristics, the poetic treatment of the wine theme, to explore the development of early Arabic *khamriyya* through the example of poems XI and XIII in the *diwān* of ‘Adi ibn Zayd al-‘Ibādi.

Rossii: Sorovskie laureaty: *Filologiya, literaturovedenie, kul'turologiya, lingvistika, uskusstvoznanie* (Moscow, 1996), 108–14.

¹² Robert Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs from the Bronze Age to the Coming of Islam* (London, 2001), 242.

¹³ Grünebaum, “Abū Du‘ād al-Iyādi,” 102.

¹⁴ Frolov, *Classical Arabic Verse*, 232nn38–39.

¹⁵ See also Bruno Paoli, *De la théorie à l'usage: Essai de reconstitution du système de la métrique arabe ancienne* (Damascus, 2008).

¹⁶ “En l'état de notre documentation, nous sentons l'existence d'une tradition particulière avec des dominantes bachique, élégiaques et religieuses”: Régis Blachère, *Histoire de la littérature arabe des origines à la fin du XVe siècle de J.-C.* (Paris, 1964), 2:363.

ʿAdi ibn Zayd al-ʿIbādi and the Poetic School of al-Ḥira

Works of at least twenty poets who lived from the end of the fifth to the beginning of the seventh centuries and were closely associated with al-Ḥira have been transmitted in various literary, biographical, and historical sources.¹⁷ Most of these poets are reported to have been Christians.¹⁸ In fact, the outstanding representative of the poetic school of al-Ḥira—ʿAdi ibn Zayd al-ʿIbādi (d. ca. 600) belonged to the Nestorian Christian community.¹⁹ Apart from his poetic oeuvre, ʿAdi ibn Zayd is known as, according to Arabic historiography, the first to introduce the Arabic script into administrative usage.²⁰ This might reflect the professional role of ʿAdi ibn Zayd as a high official at the courts of the Sasanians in Ctesiphon and the Lakhmids in al-Ḥira, as well as his Christian background and familiarity with the written heritage of the Nestorian community of his native city. No archaeological evidence of the usage of the Arabic script in pre-Islamic al-Ḥira has been found yet. Nonetheless, a few preliminary excavations in the area have brought to light some fragments of Syriac texts featuring biblical phraseology,²¹ which clearly testifies to the existence of written culture among the Christians in late antique al-Ḥira. Against this background, it appears plausible that ʿAdi ibn Zayd and other Christian Arab poets of al-Ḥira actively contributed to the development of Arabic literacy.

Christian culture is reflected in the poetic texts by ʿAdi ibn Zayd,²² one of which provides a poetic adaptation of the biblical story of Creation and the Fall. The literary aspects of this poem, as well as the history of its transmission in Arabic sources, support its authenticity.²³ Moreover, the Christian cultural environment is echoed in the popularity of wine theme by the poets from al-Ḥira, particularly in the texts by al-Aʿshā (died c. 7/629)²⁴ and ʿAdi ibn Zayd, who lived one generation earlier.

¹⁷ Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, vol. 2, *Poesie bis ca. 430 H.* (Leiden, 1975), 167–86.

¹⁸ Compare Frolov, *Classical Arabic Verse*, 236.

¹⁹ Important information about the life of ʿAdi ibn Zayd is transmitted by Abū al-Faraj Al-Isbahāni in his *Kitāb al-aghāni* (Beirut, 1961), 2:63–100. For an evaluation of this and other biographical sources on ʿAdi ibn Zayd, refer to Theresia Hainthaler, “ʿAdi ibn Zayd al-ʿIbādi, the Pre-Islamic Christian Poet of al-Ḥira and his Poem Nr. 3 Written in Jail,” *Parole de l’Orient* 30 (2005): 157–72.

²⁰ Josef Horovitz, “ʿAdi ibn Zayd, the Poet of Hira,” *Islamic Culture* 4 (1930): 38.

²¹ Erica C. D. Hunter, “Syriac Inscriptions from al Hira,” *Oriens Christianus* 80 (1996): 66–81.

²² Julius W. Hirschberg, *Jüdische und Christliche Leben im vor- und frühislamischen Arabien* (Krakow, 1939), 53–57.

²³ Kirill Dmitriev, “An Early Christian Arabic Account of the Creation of the World,” in *The Qurʾān in Context: Historical and Critical Investigations into the Qurʾānic Milieu*, ed. Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx (Leiden, 2010), 349–87.

²⁴ Thomas Bauer, “al-Aʿshā,” in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, 2nd ed., ed. Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey (London, 2010), 107.

The Origins of the Arabic Khamriyya Genre

The emergence of Arabic wine poetry and its development into a distinctive poetic genre, *khamriyya*, is closely related to the poetic school of al-Ḥira and its receptiveness to the creative impulses arising from both late antique Christianity in Arabia and the cultural sophistication of Iran, radiating especially from the splendor of the Sasanian court in Ctesiphon. Several Arab poets from al-Ḥira made significant contributions to the development of the *khamriyya*. Some of the earliest pieces of Arabic wine poetry are attributed to ‘Adi ibn Zayd. In the collection of ‘Adi’s works, the Bacchic topic is represented in the framework of his polythematic *qaṣīdas* and in separate poetic fragments. The question of whether such fragments should be regarded as independent examples of *khamriyyāt* or are merely excerpts from lost *qaṣīdas* remains in dispute.²⁵ Nevertheless, remarkable for understanding the impact of ‘Adi’s wine poetry on early Arabic poetic tradition is the statement of the *Kitāb al-Aghānī* that Bacchic poetry by ‘Adi ibn Zayd used to be recited for al-Walid ibn Yazid (d. 6/743),²⁶ whose own poetry in turn inspired Abū Nuwās (140–198/755–813).²⁷ With al-Walid, the *khamriyya* clearly manifests as an independent genre of Arabic poetry, and in Abū Nuwās, it finds its unequaled genius.²⁸ The mention of ‘Adi ibn Zayd together with al-Walid and Abū Nuwās is recognition of his foundational significance for the creation of the new genre of the *khamriyya*. The novel character of ‘Adi’s poetry in this respect reveals itself not so much in separate poetic fragments about wine but in his *qaṣīdas*, in which the theme of wine becomes prevalent, transforming the poems into what we can call *wine qaṣīdas*.

The starting point in the development of the *khamriyya* was the description of wine as a subject of the *qaṣīda*, which steadily transformed into an independent genre. This can be seen clearly on the basis of the material provided by early Arabic poetic texts. Furthermore, such a development is indirectly confirmed by the history of other genres of Arabic poetic tradition, foremost, love poetry (*ghazal*), which also emerged through transformation of the *qaṣīda* form. This process has often been regarded as disintegration of the polythematic *qaṣīda* into separate poems dedicated to one specific theme. However, the development of various genres in Arabic poetry resulted not just from a formal dissolution of different parts of the *qaṣīda* into separate units; it went hand in hand with gradual changes in the *qaṣīda* form itself. Early Arabic lyrical poetry, for instance, has transitional forms of two major types: *ghazal* in the form of a “*nasīb* without *qaṣīdah*,” and *ghazal* structured independently of the

²⁵ Gregor Schoeler, “Die Einteilung der Dichtung bei den Arabern.” *ZDMG* 123 (1973): 37.

²⁶ In the chapter on al-Walid, Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī cites parts of the *qaṣīda* XIII by ‘Adi ibn Zayd, which is discussed below. See *Aghānī* 6: 59–60, 7: 37.

²⁷ Schoeler, “Die Einteilung der Dichtung bei den Arabern,” 37.

²⁸ See Jamel-Eddine Bencheikh, “Khamriyya,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. E. van Donzel, B. Lewis, and Ch. Pellat (Leiden, 1978), 4:1003; and the contribution by Renate Jacobi to this volume, “Poetry as Provocation—The *Khamriyya* of al-Walid ibn Yazid (d. 126/743).”

nasīb patterns.²⁹ Early Arabic wine poetry also demonstrates transitional forms beyond the polarity of a polythematic *qaṣīda* with passages on wine and a *khamriyya* as an isolated poem.

The theme of wine occurs in pre-Islamic Arabic *qaṣīdas* mainly in the section dedicated to the poet's self-praise (*fakhr*) or in the context of description of the beloved, especially her saliva³⁰, in the *nasīb*, the opening part of the *qaṣīda*. Such interpolations are intrinsic to the *qaṣīda* structure. They stimulated the diversity of poetic motifs within the normative framework of the *qaṣīda*, its structure and content alike. Wine was just one of the poetic themes in the repertoire of Arab poets used for artistic similes and descriptions. Considering the normative poetics of early Arabic literature, it is important to note that the characteristics of the *qaṣīda* as genre are defined both by the polythematic form, including one other main part in addition to a *nasīb*, and by correlation of all the parts of the *qaṣīda* in scope, composition, and content. This provides the *qaṣīda* genre with a wide range of possible variations and allows for the development of novel literary forms, leading to the emergence of new independent poetic genres. This process advanced gradually and involved changes and innovations affecting the structure and content of the *qaṣīda*. One can observe this in the examples of poetic texts that are discussed in this chapter, which, though conventional *qaṣīdas*, concurrently expose features reflecting the emergence of new genres. The following discussion of two poems by ʿAdi ibn Zayd, number XI and XIII in his *diwān*, illustrates this in relation to the history of early Arabic *khamriyya*.

²⁹ Andras Hamori, "Love Poetry (Ghazal)," in *Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: ʿAbbāsīd Belles-Lettres*, ed. Julia Ashtiany et al. (Cambridge, 1990), 204; Kirill Dmitriev, *Das Poetische Werk des Abū Ṣaḥr al-Hudhālī: Eine literaturanthropologische Studie* (Wiesbaden, 2008), 54–65. On the typology of the Umayyad *ghazal*, see Renate Jacobi, "Omajjadische Dichtung (7.–8. Jahrhundert)," in *Grundriss der arabischen Philologie*, vol. 2, *Literaturwissenschaft*, ed. Helmut Gätje (Wiesbaden, 1987), 38–39.

³⁰ On the saliva-wine simile in Hudhali poetry, see Ali Hussein, "The Rhetoric of Hudhali Wine Poetry," *Oriens* 43 (2015): 1–53. Several attestations of the motif in early Arabic poetry are discussed in Rudolf Geyer, *Zwei Gedichte von al-ʿAṣṣā* (Vienna, 1905), 1:55–73.

Poems XI and XIII by ‘Adī ibn Zayd

Poems XI and XIII are both twenty-two lines and consist of three main parts.³¹

Poem XI

Poem XI, composed in the in *sarī‘* meter,³² has the following structure:

- I *Nasīb* 1–2
- II Praising of ‘Abd Hind 3–13
- III The dream of liberation 14–22

The opening two lines of the *qaṣīda* resemble a conventional *nasīb*. Explicit mention of particular geographic names emphasizes the distance between the poet and the subject of his longing, implying the pain of their separation—a common motif in early Arabic *nasīb*.³³ In contrast to a traditional *nasīb*, however, the lines address not the beloved woman of the poet, but his patron, ‘Abd Hind. Accordingly, instead of a conventional description of the beloved, the following part of the poem praises the poet’s patron (ll. 3–13). Apart from a brief note on the moral virtues of ‘Abd Hind in line 8, his merits are highlighted through allusion to his privileged status as someone who enjoys delicious food (ll. 3 and 4), entertaining and hunting (ll. 4 and 7), and precious wine (ll. 5 and 7). ‘Adī ibn Zayd appeals to the patron to remember him (ll. 9–10 and 12) and includes two gnomic interpolations (ll. 11 and 13) indicating his current sorrow as a prisoner, which leads to the third main part of the text, an expression of the poet’s dream of liberation. With its nine lines (ll. 14–22), this part forms almost half of the *qaṣīda*. The thematic focus here is on wine and wine drinking. The poet uses Bacchic images to carry himself into the pleasant environment of a carousal (ll. 14–18) and emphasizes that the joy of carousing is beyond comparison (ll. 19–22).

One should not overlook the fact that the wine theme features prominently already in the beginning of the poem. The opening line of the *qaṣīda* mentions al-Khuṣūṣ as the place near where the addressee of the poem is still lingering:

أَبْلِغْ خَلِيلِي عَبْدَ هِنْدٍ فَلَا زِلْتُ قَرِيْباً مِنْ سَوَادِ الْخُصُوصِ 1

Report, my friend, to ‘Abd Hind for
you are still near the outskirts of al-Khuṣūṣ.³⁴

³¹ See the appendix for the full texts of the poems.

³² On the rarity of long *sarī‘* as a *qaṣīd* meter, see Frolov, *Classical Arabic Verse*, 181–88.

³³ Renate Jacobi, *Studien zur Poetik der altarabischen Qaṣīde* (Wiesbaden, 1971), 38.

³⁴ Compare the English translation of the poem quoted in al-Ma‘arrī’s *Risālat al-Ġufrān* edited and translated by Jan van Gelder and Gregor Schoeler in Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Ma‘arrī. *The Epistle of*

This clearly implies Bacchic elements: according to Yāqūt (d. 626/1229), al-Khuṣṣ is a place located by the city of al-Kūfa and particularly known for its production of wine barrels,³⁵ a fact that reveals al-Kūfa and al-Ḥira as part of the wine trade in late antique Arabia. Furthermore, the theme of wine is emphasized in line 5 of the poem, which describes the consumption of red wine originating from Khuṣṣ, a village near al-Qādisiyya, to the southwest of al-Ḥira.³⁶ Also, Imru' al-Qays, a famous Arab poet of the sixth century, refers to al-Khuṣṣ in the context of wine trade:³⁷

كَأَنَّ التَّجَارَ أَصْعَدُوا بِسَيِّئَةٍ مِنْ الْخُصِّ حَتَّى أَنْزَلُوهَا عَلَى يُسُرٍ

Like wine merchants, who go up from al-Khuṣṣ with imported wine,
until they discharge it at Yusr.

Moreover, both place-names, al-Khuṣṣ and (al-)Khuṣṣ, allude to the Bacchic topic on the lexical level. The Arabic word *khuṣṣ* (pl. *khaṣṣ*, *khuṣṣ*) means both “wine of the best quality” and “shop of a vintner.”³⁸

Introducing the wine theme at the beginning of the poem in the context of praise, ʿAdi ibn Zayd employs wine and wine-drinking motifs to underline the nobility of the patron and illustrate his lavish lifestyle. This reflects wine as a symbol of luxury and pleasure. It is obvious that such usage implies that the wine motifs are subordinate within the framework of praise. Nonetheless, the weight of the wine theme in the poem increases in the second part, which revolves around the symbolism of wine. The poet’s wish to be released from his current imprisonment is directly associated with Bacchic motifs of liberation. The joy and the pleasures to which the poet aspires are expressed in images of a carousal:

يَا لَيْتَ شِعْرِي وَأَنَا ذُو غِنًى مَتَى أَرَى شَرَبًا حَوَالِي أَصِيصٍ 14

If only I knew—and I was rich—
when will I (again) see drinkers (gathered together) around a wine jug.

In a pleasant setting of a tavern:

يَبْتَ جُلُوفٍ بَارِدٌ ظِلُّهُ فِيهِ ظَبَاءٌ وَدَوَاخِيلُ خُوصٍ 15

Forgiveness. Volume One: A Vision of Heaven and Hell. New York: NYU Press, 2013: 113–114. I am indebted to the anonymous peer reviewers for the reference to this publication.

³⁵ Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī. *Jacut's geographisches Wörterbuch [Muṣjam al-buldān]*, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (Leipzig, 1867), 2:449.

³⁶ al-Ḥamawī, *Jacut's geographisches Wörterbuch*, 449.

³⁷ Imru' al-Qays. *Diwān*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1958), 111, XIV:8. See Edward Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, bk. 1, pt. 2 (London, 1865), 746; Albert Kazimirski, *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français* (Paris, 1860), 1:580.

³⁸ Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1:580.

In the house of wine barrels: cool is its shade,
in it are wine-skins [lit. gazelles] and palm-leaf bowls (for serving dates).

Where a sophisticated cupbearer serves wine in a fine jar:

وَالرَّبِّ رَبِّ الْمَكْفُوفِ أَرْدَانُهُ يَمْشِي رُوَيْدًا كَتَوَقَّى الرَّهِيصَ 16

يَنْفَحُ مِنْ أَرْدَانِهِ الْمِسْكَ وَال عَنَبَرُ وَالْغَارُ وَلُبْنَى قَفُوصَ 17

وَالْمُشْرِفُ الْمَشْمُولُ يُسْقَى بِهِ أَخْضَرَ مَطْمُوثًا كَمَاءِ الْخَرِيصَ 18

And the herd (of gazelles, i.e. women) with the tips of their sleeves embroidered,
walking slowly as one protecting a damaged foot.

Their sleeves are radiating with musk,
ambergis, bay and storax of Qafūṣ;

And a fine jar, they serve with it
clear wine, fragrant like cold water from the clouds.

The conventional comparison of wine with fresh rainwater is extended in the last four verses of the poem to emphasize that wine drinking at a carousal is better not only than imprisonment (l. 19) but also the liberty of an eagle, the waywardness of a wild camel (ll. 20–21), or kites devouring their prey (ll. 19–22). The reference to such powerful images carrying poetic symbols of important significance for Arab culture highlights that ‘Adi ibn Zayd understands wine not merely as symbolic of prestige and pleasure but also as an expressive symbol of liberation.

The importance of wine within the thematic scope of the poem is also manifest at the structural level. The second part of the *qaṣīda* is dedicated entirely to the theme of wine. The composition consolidates the weight of this topic and merges individual wine motifs together into a core of thematic and structural gravity. This can be considered an initial step in the process of the development of the new genre of the *khamriyya*. The second text, poem XIII in the *diwān* of ‘Adi ibn Zayd, takes it to the next stage and offers an example of a fully fledged *wine qaṣīda*.

Poem XIII³⁹

Poem XIII is composed in *khafīf*, a short poetic meter typical of the metrical repertoire of poets from al-Ḥira. The usage of short meter, as has been mentioned earlier, made poetic texts more suitable for singing. Also, poem XIII by ‘Adi ibn Zayd can

³⁹ A discussion of this poem in the context of Christian Arab culture in late antique Arabia, see Kirill Dmitriev, “Poetičeskaya škola al-Ḥiry i istoki arabskoy vinnoy poesii na primere qāfiyyi ‘Adi ibn Zayda al-‘Ibādi” [The poetry school of al-Ḥira and the origins of the Arabic wine song: The *qāfiyya* of ‘Adi ibn Zayd al-‘Ibādi], in *Symbol 58: Syriaca and Arabica*, ed. Nikolay Seleznyov (Moscow, 2010), 319–39.

be defined as a wine song, which is indirectly confirmed by the transmission of some of its verses in *The Book of Songs*.⁴⁰

The poem comprises three main parts: *nasīb*, the wine theme and description of water as well as the place of its origin:

I *Nasīb*

1–3 reproaching visitors

4–8 description of the beloved

II Wine

Description of wine and the story of its purchase

9 description of wine

10–11 a Jewish wine merchant

12 the virtues of wine buyer

Carousal

13 morning feast, wine serving by a singing girl

14 description of wine

15–16 mixing of wine with water

III Water

17–18 running mountain water

19–22 pure rainwater

The text opens with a *nasīb* spanning just over one third of the poem's length (ll. 1–8). Two conventional motifs presented here—visitors reproaching the poet and a description of his beloved—clearly indicate the poet's intention to introduce the poem with a *nasīb*, common for traditional early Arabic *qaṣīdas*, in which the general mode is set by reflection on the lost pleasures of love of bygone days. The feelings of sadness and grief related to this express emotional aspects of the crisis in which the poet depicts himself in the *nasīb*, and which he is supposed to overcome in the following part(s) of the *qaṣīda*, by manifesting the supremacy of the ethical norms of the collective consciousness over the feebleness of an individual against fate and time dragging his life toward an inevitable, tragic finale.

The motif of reproaching visitors (*ʿādbilūn*) illustrates the conflict between the self-consciousness of the poet and normative ethics imposed by the society to which he must submit himself. It is noteworthy that the time when the poet confronts his visitors asking him whether he has yet recovered is early morning. In pre-Islamic Arabia—and later—wine was preferably consumed in the morning.⁴¹ Analyzing Bacchic motifs in the poetry of al-Akḥṭal (20–92/640–710), a Christian Arab poet of the

⁴⁰ *Aghānī* 6:59–60, 7:37.

⁴¹ Georg Jacob, *Altarabisches Beduinenleben nach den Quellen geschildert* (Berlin, 1897), 100, 249; Peter Heine, *Weinstudien. Untersuchungen zu Anbau, Produktion und Konsum des Weins im arabisch-islamischen Mittelalter* (Wiesbaden, 1982), 70–71.

Umayyad period closely associated with the tradition of al-Ḥira and al-Kūfa, Ignaz Krachkovsky notes that in almost all references to carousals, one finds lexemes derived from *bakara*, *ṣabaḥa*, and *ghadā*—verbs that still preserve meaning related to early morning.⁴² Placing the opening scene at dawn can therefore be interpreted as alluding to the context of wine drinking. Also, in the following section of the poem, the wine consumption is described at a morning carousal:

13 ثُمَّ نَادَوْا عَلَى الصُّبُوحِ فَجَاءَتْ قَيْنَةٌ فِي يَمِينِهَا إِبْرِيْقُ

Then they called to the morning feast, and
a singer came with a jar in her right hand.

Moreover, as Krachkovsky has observed, not only female (‘*ādhila*, pl. ‘*awādhil*) but also male reproachers (‘*ādhilūn*, the word used also by ‘Adi ibn Zayd) are recurring images in early Arabic wine poetry.⁴³ In this respect, it is worth mentioning that in a variant of the poem transmitted in *Kitāb al-Aghāni*,⁴⁴ verses 1–3 describing the reproachers are immediately followed by the above-quoted verse 13, suggesting that the call to the morning carousal was put forth by the poet’s visitors. Last, it seems plausible that the visitor’s question about the poet’s awakening or recovery (*istafāqa*) hints at his groggy state resulting from intoxication, as drowsiness was regarded in early Arabic poetry as an effect of wine drinking.⁴⁵ This leads to the conclusion that, as in poem XI, already the opening line of poem XIII introduces the theme of wine, which is then fully developed in the sections following the *nasīb*.

As a rule, it is the function of these following parts of the *qaṣida* to express and prove a successful overcoming of the conflict expressed in the *nasīb*, which generally takes the form of self-praise (*fakbr*) or praise of the poet’s tribe (*mufaḥkhara*). In this context, the description of the beloved in the *nasīb* enhances the dramatic effect of lost love and/or indirectly exposes the merits of the poet presenting himself as someone who was able to secure the sympathy of attractive ladies. In wine poetry, the description of the beloved acquires an additional function of a transitional motif. One of the popular elements in early Arabic *nasīb* is the saliva-wine simile, introducing the Bacchic theme through comparison of the sweetness of the beloved’s saliva and the pleasant taste of wine.⁴⁶ ‘Adi ibn Zayd uses the same motif in verses 7–9 to proceed from the description of the beloved to the wine theme, and thus follows the established poetic convention:

⁴² Ignaz Kračkovskij, “Der Wein in al-Aḥṭal’s Gedichten,” in *Festschrift Georg Jacob zum siebenzigsten Geburtstag 26. Mai 1932 gewidmet von Freunden und Schülern*, ed. Theodor Menzel (Leipzig, 1936), 153.

⁴³ Kračkovskij, “Der Wein in al-Aḥṭal’s Gedichten,” 161.

⁴⁴ *Aghāni*, 5:127; see also Geyer, *Zwei Gedichte von al-‘Aṣṣā*, 1:211–12.

⁴⁵ Kračkovskij, “Der Wein in al-Aḥṭal’s Gedichten,” 162.

⁴⁶ Hussein, “Rhetoric of Hudhali Wine Poetry,” 4.

9 بَاكَرْتُهُنَّ قَرَقَفْتُ كَدَمَ الْجَوِّ فِ ثُرَيْكَ الْقَدَى كُمَيْتٌ رَجِيئُ

Wine sweetened them [i.e., teeth] in the morning, (red) like heart's blood,
(so clean) that (any) speck (in it) becomes visible, dark red, matured wine.

Notwithstanding the conventional *nasīb*, in the following part of the poem the wine theme is developed to such an extent that it clearly brings it out of the *nasīb* framework. The elaboration of the color and quality of wine, the mentioning of a Jewish wine merchant and the virtues of the wine buyer, and the depiction of wine serving and its mixing with water constitute the central part and main content of the *qaṣīda*.

On the structural level, the Bacchic part extends just like the preceding *nasīb* over eight verses (9–16). But the final part of the *qaṣīda* is closely related to the wine theme, as lines 17–22 are dedicated to the description of water to be mixed with wine. Verses 18 and 19–22 refer to the mountain region where this water comes from. Stylistically forming the end of the *qaṣīda*, the lines remain within the context of its wine topic. The interweaving of the themes of wine and water is characteristic for the further development of the *khamriyya* genre, particularly by authors like al-Akḥṭal. The interplay of wine and water in poetic texts stimulated the development of rich poetic imagery of these two elements.⁴⁷ The focus on the process of mixing wine with water and an extensive reference to the purity of the latter in the poem by ʿAdi ibn Zayd show that already for him both topics were closely linked.

The interpretation of poem XIII by ʿAdi ibn Zayd depends essentially on the understanding of the wine theme, its meaning, and its function within the *qaṣīda*. The reference to the virtues of the wine buyer in line 12 can be seen as expressing one of the popular subjects of *qaṣīda* poetry—the poet's self-praise. However, it is mentioned only cursorily, and along with the introductory comparison with the beloved, it does not define the exposition of the wine theme. ʿAdi ibn Zayd provides the wine topic with a self-sufficing function and presents it as the main content of his *qaṣīda*. The focus is on the symbolism of wine and defining the meaning of poetic images and statements linked to it. This reflects an important change in the poetic narrative: instead of using the wine motifs incidentally as background illustrations of ideas such as prestige, pleasure, and intoxication, wine imagery comes to the fore and is showcased as a symbolic embodiment of these ideas, and thus, it becomes the starting point and main subject of poetic accounts of them. This is a necessary condition and impetus stimulating the development of the *khamriyya* as a distinguished poetic genre.

Another important aspect is the relation between individual and collective consciousness, as has been observed also in the history of early Arabic *ghazal* poetry.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Heine, *Weinstudien*, 80–82.

⁴⁸ Renate Jacobi, "Time and Reality in *Nasīb* and *Ghazal*," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 16 (1985): 1–17; Renate Jacobi, "Die Anfänge der arabischen *Ghazal*poesie: Abū Duʿaib al-Hudālī," *Der Islam* 61 (1984): 218–50.

Considering the outlined features of early Arabic *qaṣida*, it becomes obvious that such a development of the Bacchic theme as in ‘Adi ibn Zayd’s poem XIII expresses ideas central for the whole text and does not merely provide an elaborate description of yet another possible subject for the main theme of the *qaṣida*.⁴⁹ Therefore, the theme of wine fully adopts the main function of the *qaṣida* as it was known in early Arabic poetic tradition, yet with a new meaning. It would be misleading to assume a radical break with the literary tradition in the wine poetry by ‘Adi ibn Zayd. The structural continuity of the *qaṣida* reflects the validity of literary conventions, yet it is precisely this conventional form that, in the perception of ‘Adi ibn Zayd’s audience, often required a *qaṣida* to manifest an overcoming of personal crisis and to suggest a model to follow in compliance with the norms and values constitutive of the tribal society. As a structurally dominant part, the theme of wine absorbs the main function of the *qaṣida*, but it does so with a new emphasis on the legitimacy of an individual experience. One can presume that the depiction of wine is merely a variation of the so-called compensating motifs, such popular topics in early Arabic *qaṣida* as the description of poet’s camel or his fearless journeys through solitary deserts. Structurally the theme of wine occupies their place, but it carries a different meaning, as can be seen in poem XIII. The morning visit of the reproachers is compensated with yet another carousal in the morning involving wine drinking and singing. Intoxication from love turns into intoxication from wine, but it remains an intoxication, and the appeal of the collective norm to the poet “to come to his senses” remains neglected. ‘Adi ibn Zayd replaces the ideal of the tribal hero with an ideal of the Bacchic heroism of an individual.

Conclusion

Both poems represent remarkable examples of the treatment of wine theme in early Arabic poetry. They reflect the emergence of the *khamriyya* as a new poetic genre in the process of its development within the conventional framework of the *qaṣida*. While poem XI, despite being generously spilled over with various wine motifs from the beginning to the end, as a whole still remains grounded in the thematic trajectory of messaging, an appeal from the imprisoned poet to his patron, poem XIII celebrates wine and wine drinking as a carousal of poetic symbols that appear to create a poetic universe on their own—a universe of a new literary genre that would be so enthusiastically explored by later generations of poets uninterruptedly and unceasingly during all stages of the history of classical Arabic poetry.

⁴⁹ Compare, for instance, the thesis by Thomas Bauer on the “zweckfreien Themen” of the *qaṣida*—subjects that may not fulfill any other function but demonstrating the poetic skills of the author. Bauer, *Altarabische Dichtkunst. Eine Untersuchung ihrer Struktur und Entwicklung am Beispiel der Onagerepisode*, Teil 1, *Studie* (Wiesbaden, 1992), 262–73.

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Appendix

Poem XF⁵⁰

سريع

| | | |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|---|
| زُلْتُ قَرِيْباً مِنْ سَوَادِ الْخُصُوصِ | أُبْلِغُ خَلِيلِي عَبْدَ هِنْدٍ فَلَا | 1 |
| غَيْرُ بَعِيدٍ مِنْ عُمَيْرِ اللُّصُوصِ | مُوَازِي الْفُورَةِ أَوْ دُونَهَا | 2 |
| بِالْخَبِّ تَنْدَى فِي أَصُولِ الْقَصِيصِ | تُجْنَى لَكَ الْكَمَاءُ رِبْعِيَّةً | 3 |
| طَيْرٌ وَلَا تُنْكَعُ لَهُوَ الْقَنِيصِ | تَقْنِصُكَ الْخَيْلُ وَيَصْطَاذُكَ الْـ | 4 |
| حَمَرَاءُ مِنْ خُصٍّ كَلَوْنِ الْفُصُوصِ | تَأْكُلُ مَا شِئْتَ وَتَعْتَلُّهَا | 5 |
| رَّوْجُبَتْ ذَوَاتَ الْعَوِيصِ | غُيِّبَتْ عَنِّي عَبْدُ فِي سَاعَةِ الشَّـ | 6 |
| كَأْسٍ وَطَوْفٍ بِالْخَذُوفِ النَّحُوصِ | لَا تَنْسِينَ ذِكْرِي عَلَى لَذَّةِ الْـ | 7 |

⁵⁰ 'Adi ibn Zayd al-'Ibādi. *Dirwān*, edited by Muḥammad Jabbār al-Mu'ayyid. Baghdad 1965: 68–72.

| | | |
|----|----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 8 | إِنَّكَ ذُو عَهْدٍ وَذُو مَصَدَقٍ | مُجَانِتٌ هَذِي الْكَذُوبِ اللَّمُوصِ |
| 9 | يَا عَبْدُ هَلْ تَذْكُرُنِي سَاعَةً | فِي مَوْكِبٍ أَوْ رَائِدًا لِلْقَنَاصِ |
| 10 | يَوْمًا مَعَ الرِّكَبِ إِذَا أُوضِعُوا | نَزَفَعُ فِيهِمْ مِنْ نَجَاءِ الْقُلُوصِ |
| 11 | قَدْ يُدْرِكُ الْمُبْطِئُ مِنْ حَظِّهِ | وَالْخَيْرُ قَدْ يَسْبِقُ جُهْدَ الْحَرِصِ |
| 12 | فَلَا يَزَلْ صَدْرُكَ فِي رِيَّةٍ | تَذْكُرُ مِنِّي تَلْفِي أَوْ خُلُوصِ |
| 13 | يَا نَفْسُ إِنِّمَي وَاتَّقِي شَتْمَ ذِي الـ | أَعْرَاضِ إِنَّ الْجَلَمَ مَا إِنْ يُنُوصِ |
| 14 | يَا لَيْتَ شِعْرِي وَأَنَا ذُو غَنَى | مَتَى أَرَى شَرَبًا حَوَالِي أَصِصِ |
| 15 | بَيْتَ جُلُوفٍ بَارِدٍ ظِلُّهُ | فِيهِ طِبَاءٌ وَدَوَاخِيلُ خُوصِ |
| 16 | وَالرَّبِّ رَبِّ الْمَكْفُوفِ أَرْدَانُهُ | يَمْشِي رُوَيْدًا كَتَوَقِّي الرَّهِيصِ |
| 17 | يَنْفَحُ مِنْ أَرْدَانِهِ الْمِسْكُ وَالـ | عَنْبَرُ وَالْعَارُ وَلُبْنَى قَفُوصِ |
| 18 | وَالْمُشْرِفُ الْمَشْمُولُ يُسْقَى بِهِ | أَخْضَرَ مَطْمُوثًا كَمَاءِ الْخَرِصِ |
| 19 | ذَاكَ خَيْرٌ مِنْ فُيُوجٍ عَلَى الـ | بَابٍ وَقَيْدَيْنِ وَغِلٍّ قَرُوصِ |
| 20 | وَمُرْتَقَى نَبَقٍ عَلَى نَفْنَقٍ | أَدْبَرَ عَوْدٍ فِي إِكَافٍ قُمُوصِ |
| 21 | لَا يُثْمِنُ الْبَيْعَ وَلَا يَحْمِلُ الـ | رَدْفَ وَلَا يُعْطِي بِهِ قَلْبَ خُوصِ |
| 22 | أَوْ مِنْ نُسُورٍ حَوْلَ مَوْتَى مَعَا | يَأْكُلْنَ لَحْمًا مِنْ طَرِيٍّ الْفَرِصِ |

1. Report, my friend, to ‘Abd Hind for
you are still near the outskirts of al-Khuṣūṣ,⁵¹
2. in parallel with al-Fūra or near it,
not far from ‘Umayr al-Luṣūṣ.
3. Truffles are picked for you in the springtime
on a plain between two rugged tracts, which moistens at the roots of cassia trees.
4. Horses chase you,
birds hunt you, but unrestrained you are from the joy of chasing.
5. You eat whatever you desire and take to drink after it
red (wine) from Khuṣṣ resembling the color of precious gems of a ring.
6. You have been taken away from me, ‘Abd, at the time of
distress and have been protected from the calamities.
7. May you not forget to remember me under the pleasant influence of
the goblet and the whirling with a fat, wild she-ass that did not conceive in the
current year (= hunting).

⁵¹ Compare the translation of the poem in Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Ma‘arrī. *The Epistle of Forgiveness. Volume One: A Vision of Heaven and Hell*, edited and translated by Jan van Gelder and Gregor Schoeler. New York: NYU Press, 2013: 113–114.

8. Indeed, you are faithful and sincere,
avoiding the guidance of a liar, a deceiver.
9. Oh, 'Abd! Do you remember me at the time (when I was)
in the squadron of horsemen or riding freely for the hunt?
10. Once with the cavalcade when they were rushing,
we were standing out among them racing with the speed of a young she-ostrich.
11. (Yet) at times the slow one gets its share,
while good fortune precedes the burden of a passionately longing one.
12. May you not cease to worry
remembering me, my ruin or demise.
13. Oh, (my) soul! Endure and avoid the reproach of
a reputable one!—indeed, prudence does not become weak.
14. If only I knew—and I was rich—
when will I (again) see drinkers (gathered together) around a wine jug.
15. In the house of wine barrels: cool is its shade,
in it are wine-skins [lit. gazelles] and palm-leaf bowls (for serving dates).
16. And the herd (of gazelles, i.e. women) with the tips of their sleeves embroidered,
walking slowly as one protecting a damaged foot.
17. Their sleeves are radiating with musk,
ambergis, bay and storax of Qafūs;
18. And a fine jar, they serve with it
clear wine, fragrant like cold water from the clouds.
19. This is better than the guards by
the entrance, both shackles and scratchy fetters,
20. And the one ascending a mountain peak hunting the one
who is trying to escape, (and better) than an adult camel with a saddle (and) a restless
wild (camel).
21. It neither has a price nor does it
carry a second rider, nor does it submit itself to the pulp of palm leaves.
22. And better than kites gathered around the dead
eating meat from the tender sides (of the cadavers).

*Poem XIII*⁵²

خفيف

| | | |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|---|
| سَحَّ يَقُولُونَ لِي أَلَا تَسْتَفِيحُ | بَكَرَ الْعَاذِلُونَ فِي وَضَحِ الصَّبْ | 1 |
| لَهُ وَالْقَلْبُ عِنْدَكُمْ مَوْهُوقُ | وَيَلُومُونَ فِيكَ يَا ابْنَةَ عَبْدٍ الـ | 2 |
| أَعَدُّوْ يُلُومُنِي أَمْ صَدِيقُ | لَسْتُ أَذْرِي وَقَدْ بَدَأْتُمْ بِصُرْمِي | 3 |
| مِسْكُ فَأَرْ وَعَنْبَرٍ مَفْتُوقُ | أَطِيبُ الطَّيِّبِ طِيبُ أَمْ عَلَيَّ | 4 |

⁵² 'Adi ibn Zayd al-'Ibādī. *Dirwān*, edited by Muḥammad Jabbār al-Mu'ayyid. Baghdad 1965: 76–79.

| | |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| فَهَوَّ أَحْوَى عَلَى الْيَدَيْنِ شَرِيقُ | 5 خَاطَتْهُ بِأَخَرٍ وَبَيَانٍ |
| وَأَسِيلٌ عَلَى الْجَبِينِ عَمِيقُ | 6 زَانَهَا وَارِدُ الْغَدَائِرِ جَثْلُ |
| لَا قِصَارٌ كُشِرُوا هُنَّ رُوقُ | 7 وَثَنِيَا كَالْأَفْخُونِ عَذَابُ |
| حَانَ مِنْ غَائِرِ التُّجُومِ خُفُوقُ | 8 مُشْرِقَاتٍ تَخَالُهِنَّ إِذَا مَا |
| فَبِ تُرِيكَ الْقَدَى كُمَيْتٌ رَحِيقُ | 9 بَاكَرْتَهُنَّ فَرَقَفَتْ كَدَمِ الْجَوُ |
| نِ فَادْكَى مِنْ نَشْرِهَا التَّعْنِيقُ | 10 صَانَهَا التَّاجِرُ الْيَهُودِيُّ حَوْلِي |
| نَّ وَحَانَتْ مِنَ الْيَهُودِيِّ سُوقُ | 11 ثُمَّ فُضَّ الْخِتَامُ عَنْ حَاجِبِ الدَّ |
| أَرْيَحِيَّيَ عَمِيدَرُ غَرْيَنُوقُ | 12 فَاسْتَبَاهَا أَشْمُ خَرَقُ كَرِيمُ |
| فَيَنْةً فِي يَمِينِهَا إِبْرِيْقُ | 13 ثُمَّ نَادُوا عَلَى الصُّبُوحِ فَجَاءَتْ |
| يَكِ صَفَى سُلاَفَهَا الرَّأُوقُ | 14 قَدَّمْتُهُ عَلَى سُلاَفِ كَعَيْنِ الدَّ |
| مُزَجَّتْ لَذَّ طَعْمُهَا مَن يَذُوقُ] | 15 [مُزَّةً قَبْلَ مَزْجِهَا فَإِذَا مَا |
| يَا قُوتِ حُمُرٍ يَزِينُهَا التَّصْفِيقُ] | 16 [وَطَفَا فَوْقَهَا فَقَافِيعُ كَالْـ |
| طَيِّبِ زَانٍ مَزْجُهُ التَّصْفِيقُ | 17 فَتَلَّتْهُ بِسَيْبِ أَبْيَضٍ صَافٍ |
| يَلْغَبُ التَّسْرُفُوقَهَا وَالْأَنُوقُ | 18 فَوُوقَ عَلِيَاءَ مَا يُرَامُ ذُرَاهَا |
| لَا صِرَى آجِنٌ وَلَا مَطْرُوقُ | 19 ثُمَّ كَانَ الْمِزَاجُ مَاءً سَحَابٍ |
| رُ إِذَا فِيهِ أَنِيْقُ | 20 كَانَ فِي مِسْجِهَا يُكْنَفُهَا الصَّخْ |
| هُ صَفَا يُلْغَبُ الْوُعُولُ دَلُوقُ | 21 أَسْفَلَ خُفَّ بِالْعِصَاهِ وَأَعْلَا |
| فُ وَتَنْفِي قَذَاهُ رِيحُ خَرِيقُ | 22 مَسْقَطُ الظِّلِّ مَنْ تَكْنَفُهُ الْحَقْ |

1. Censurers came by morning light
saying to me: Haven't you come to your senses?
2. And reproaching me because of you, O daughter of ‘Abdallāh,
while my heart is ensnared by you.
3. I do not know—you have already initiated my separation (from her)—
whether it is an enemy reproaching me or a friend.
4. The best scent is the scent of Umm ‘Ulayy,
ground fragrance of musk and ambergris,
5. which she mixed with another (fragrance) and the Moringa oil,
so that it is shining dark green over (her) hands.
6. Locks falling down on the forehead adorn her,
abundant, sleek, and perfumed.

7. And (her) teeth, white like a chamomile, sweet,
neither short fragments nor tusks,
8. Shining, you imagine them like an early
setting of falling stars.
9. Wine sweetened them in the morning, (red) like heart's blood,
(so clean) that (any) speck (in it) becomes visible, dark red, matured wine.
10. A Jewish merchant kept it for two years,
so that the maturing process has enriched its fragrance.
11. Then the seal was removed from the stopper of the cask
and the time for the Jewish (wine-merchant) to go to market arrived.
12. A generous notable with a discerning nose purchased it,
A magnanimous (man), living easy, an elegant [lit. a crane].
13. Then they called to the morning feast, and
a singer came with a jar in her right hand.
14. I preferred it to the best of (drinks), (it is golden yellow) like (the color of)
a rooster's eye, a strainer has filtered the best of it.
- [15. Pungent wine prior to being mixed, but when
mixed, sweet is its taste for someone drinking it.]
- [16. On its surface are bubbles
red like ruby, when decanting decorates it.]
17. She killed [i.e. mixed] it with fresh water, clean, clear
and excellent, decanting has cleaned its composition
18. over a height, its peaks unreachable,
exhausting for an eagle and a kite.
19. It was mixed with the water of clouds,
neither stagnant and brackish nor filthy.
20. In its flowing, it was hemmed in by
rocks, when ... in it is an elegant one.
21. At its bottom, it is covered with blackthorn, but at its most elevated part
it is pure, and thorny swords exhaust the efforts of the wild goats.
22. It is a place of shade for one (man) surrounded by the winding
sands, the gusty wind drives away its dust.

Hāleti's *Sāqināma* and the Emergence of an Ottoman Genre

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Concerning Hāleti's *sāqināma* (*sāqināme*), "book of the cupbearer," the biographer 'Aṭā'ī (d. 1635) tells us that this Turkish work, produced in the mid-1610s, rivaled similar ones by Persian poets, going so far as to declare that it would "intoxicate Hāfiz and Jāmi."¹ The praise is rather high and further carefully crafted. In invoking Hāfiz (d. 1390) and Jāmi (d. 1492), 'Aṭā'ī calls attention to two bygone figures who not only loomed large among Ottoman literati as standard-bearers but also themselves composed *sāqināmas*. Implied, thus, is that Hāleti's emulated theirs.

But even a cursory glance at Hāleti's *sāqināma* indicates that it was not patterned after those older works, granted it might have drawn inspiration from them. His work, in form and content, better resembles the *sāqināmas* by his Persian contemporaries out east in India, especially that of Zuhūrī (d. 1616), produced twenty-odd years prior in the early 1590s. There is little doubt that Hāleti used Zuhūrī's *sāqināma* as a model. Although Zuhūrī's work is more expansive in topics broached, Hāleti's is nonetheless similar to Zuhūrī's in that it is fundamentally a poem in *matnawī* form structured around addresses to the cupbearer, along with a series of cantos describing the essentials of a drinking gathering. And as a model, Zuhūrī's *sāqināma* seems to have been an obvious choice: by the start of the seventeenth century his work had become popular enough in Ottoman literary circles that Riyāzī (d. 1644), another biographer, quotes verses from it, with no apparent need for attribution, at the very beginning of his *tadbkira*, or memoir, devoted to poets' lives, that was compiled in 1609.²

At the same time, it is clear that Hāleti had another work in mind in creating his *sāqināma*, a local product and in Turkish. A century before, Revānī (d. 1524) produced a *matnawī* entitled the *Isbratnāma* (*İşretnāme*), "Book of Revelry," a eulogy of sorts comprising also a series of cantos relating a drinking gathering. His work almost certainly served as the primary model for Hāleti's *sāqināma*. Both poems contain about fifteen cantos, and a similar set of essentials are described, starting with the wine and cup.³ The main structural difference is the absence of addresses to the cupbearer in the *Isbratnāma*. Despite that, Rıdvan Canım has maintained

¹ 'Aṭā'ī, *Hadā'iq al-ḥaqā'iq fī takmilat al-Shaqā'iq* (Istanbul: Dār al-Ṭabā'at al-ʿĀmira, 1852), 740. Titles and terms in Persian and Arabic are rendered according to the Brill transliteration system, slightly modified, with Turkish equivalents given in parentheses when appropriate.

² Riyāzī, *Riyāzū'ş-Şuara*, ed. Namık Açıkgöz (Ankara: T. C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2017), 20–21. Cf. Zuhūrī, *Sāqināma* (Kanpur: Kishore, 1896), 34–35.

³ By comparison, the initial descriptions in Zuhūrī's *sāqināma* are of springtime and the tavern.

that Revānī's work should be seen as an early example of an Ottoman *sāqīnāma*, because Ḥāletī and a few others took it as a model.⁴ Yet it appears that the literati of the time did not view it as such. In fact, in his appraisal of Ḥāletī's work, 'Aṭā'ī states that a *sāqīnāma* proper must be a *mathnawī* composed "in the meter of the *Shāhnāma*"—that is, in *mutaqārib*.⁵ This Ḥāletī was able to achieve, Revānī not.

'Aṭā'ī's insistence on those formal features as the basic requirements for a *sāqīnāma*, besides the summoning of the cupbearer as a structural device, reflected how the genre came to be defined in Persian through the sixteenth century up to the time Ḥāletī produced his. The content, though varied, also relied on a fixed repertoire of tropes and topoi on wine and its effect, and the accoutrements, manners, and settings appropriate for a drinking gathering. All this has been well documented.⁶ But seldom explored is in what particular way the genre took shape in the Ottoman context with the appearance of Ḥāletī's *sāqīnāma*, which from 'Aṭā'ī's perspective represented a relatively new kind of poem in Turkish, if not expressly original. The remainder of this chapter examines the issue by looking at more closely Ḥāletī's work, as well as considering the *sāqīnāmas* produced afterward and with regard to Persian varieties. Ultimately, I argue that Ḥāletī made it fashionable among Ottoman literati to compose a *sāqīnāma*, but a peer of his shaped the trajectory of the emergent genre.

Ḥāletī's Sāqīnāma

Born in the Ottoman capital of Istanbul in 1570, Ḥāletī was a teacher and judge by profession, and by his twenties he had earned a reputation as a poet. Beyānī, in his *tadbkira* dating from 1597, provides a brief entry for Ḥāletī and mentions that he was skilled in poetry like his father.⁷ Riyāzī, writing a dozen years later, is a bit more effusive in his praise of the now more accomplished Ḥāletī. Revānī likens Ḥāletī's skill to that of a "sweet-spoken governor," a nod to his peripatetic career as a judge at the time that took this governor to Damascus, Cairo, and Bursa, credits him with a collection of poems, and duly quotes couplets of his, mainly from his *qaṣīdas* and *ghazals*.⁸ Yet nowhere in his notice does Revānī give an indication that Ḥāletī had composed a *sāqīnāma* by then.

'Aṭā'ī is among the first of Ḥāletī's biographers to mention his *sāqīnāma*. He does so in his *tadbkira*, devoted more broadly to learned men and compiled three years following Ḥāletī's death in 1634. 'Aṭā'ī's assessment of Ḥāletī's poetic output is by

⁴ Rıdvan Canım, *Türk Edebiyatında Sâkînâmeler ve İşretnâme* (Ankara: Akçağ, 1998), 43.

⁵ 'Aṭā'ī, *Hadā'iq al-ḥaqā'iq*, 740.

⁶ For a historical overview, see Paul Losensky, "Sāqī-nāma," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (New York, 2016): <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/saqi-nama-book>.

⁷ Beyānī, *Tezkiretü'ş-şu'arâ*, ed. Aysun Sungurhan-Eyduvan (Ankara: T. C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2008), 46.

⁸ Riyāzī, *Riyāzü'ş-Şuara*, 113–16.

far the most extensive, though not without hyperbole. This is not surprising, as 'Aṭā'î was a former pupil. 'Aṭā'î calls his teacher the "master of the poets of Rûm" and singles out his ability to create verse in multiple forms, including the *rubā'î*. He notes that in this pursuit Hâletî kept to the "valley of the poets of 'Ajam," but he adds that his quatrains, of which there was a separate collection, would be the "envy of Khayyâm's soul."⁹ 'Aṭā'î does not make a similar statement about other aspects of Hâletî's output, about possible influences. It is nonetheless evident from 'Aṭā'î's entry that Hâletî was quite familiar with Persian poetry, for he also attempted to finish his father's translation of the fourteenth-century romance *Mibr u Mushtarî*, "Sun and Jupiter."

Returning to Hâletî's *sâqînâma*, Bayram Ali Kaya has proposed that it has to date before 1617, the year 'Aṭā'î produced a draft version of his own take that was plainly influenced by his teacher's.¹⁰ And according to the biographical information we have about Hâletî, his *sâqînâma* has to date within a few years before then, when his professional career was at a standstill. Hâletî returned to his hometown of Istanbul in 1614 upon his appointment to a judgeship. But he did not last long in the position, less than two months, and remained jobless for nearly a year, at which point he was assigned to the provincial town of Komotini as a temporary administrator. Although we cannot determine the precise date of composition, for whom, and where, we do know Hâletî was professionally ambitious and regularly employed poetry as a tool to show off his literary talent in order to secure new patronage. With that purpose, he must have composed his *sâqînâma* at a low juncture in his career, when he needed something striking.

Why Hâletî decided to compose a *sâqînâma* we also do not know. No reason is provided in the poem, as we might expect, nor is there biographical detail to be had that could furnish some context, as is the case with some of the Persian examples.¹¹ But we can safely assume that Hâletî sought to put an Ottoman Turkish cast on a genre that was at the peak of its popularity in India and Iran. And he found a ready audience for it among his peers. Soon after its completion, Hâletî's *sâqînâma* began to circulate and was excerpted in a major poetic anthology, *Zubdat al-asb'âr* (*Zübdet el-eş'âr*), "Cream of poems," compiled by Fâ'îzî, a friend of 'Aṭā'î, right before his death in 1622.¹² Personal networks, to be sure, played an important role in the circulation and impact of particular works.

Hâletî's *sâqînâma* comprises more than five hundred couplets and is divided into a prologue, fifteen cantos called *maqâlas*, and an epilogue. The prologue sets forth

⁹ 'Aṭā'î, *Hadâ'iq al-ḥaqā'iq*, 740.

¹⁰ Bayram Ali Kaya, "Azmi-zâde Hâletî'nin Sâkî-nâmesi," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 24 (2000): 63–64.

¹¹ See Paul Losensky, "Vintages of the *Sâqî-nâma*: Fermenting and Blending the Cupbearer's Song in the Sixteenth Century," *Iranian Studies* 47 (2014): 131–57.

¹² See Fâ'îzî, *Zubdat al-asb'âr*, Süleymaniye Library MS Şehit Ali Paşa 1877, fols. 23v–24r. This is the earliest surviving copy, dating from 1623.

the poem's mystical tenor by affirming the oneness of God, a common ploy. Hâletî starts with a vocative call to the divine cupbearer, to intoxicate him with the "wine of unity" so that his heart shall sing of God solely, and toward the end he asks that he become drunk with the "wine of affection" and thus free from reason and intellect.

The main section of *maqālas*, ranging from a dozen to sixty-plus couplets, can be further divided into two parts. The first part begins with the summoning of the cupbearer to initiate the poet's lament over his plight. Next are descriptions of the wine and cup, the singer and musician, and the tavern and its keeper, accompanied by a plea to the cupbearer for goodwill. The second begins with another address to the cupbearer, after which are descriptions of party etiquette and nighttime revelry; dawn, spring, and winter; and the cruelty and transitoriness of life, together with a reproach to the ascetic. Prior to a closing prayer that constitutes the epilogue, the poem culminates in a final call to the cupbearer, to pour the last drop of the red wine that shall mingle the free spirit's "blood with earth" and hence unity with the divine.¹³

The poem, at heart, is a sustained celebration of mystical intoxication, and therefore according to E. J. W. Gibb a "typical representative of its class."¹⁴ And the use of images and conceits are just as conventional, albeit reworked. To get a better sense of that, a representative sample of selections follows.

Hâletî commences his address to the cupbearer in the first *maqāla*, a litany of formulaic appeals, thus:

*Getür sâkî ol âb-ı cân-perveri
K'ola teşne-dil tâb-ı gamdan beri
Reb-i gamdan oldu tenüm tire hâk
Aña kıl mey-i rûşeni cân-ı pâk
Niçe bir göründükçe ceys-i belâ
İraklardan olursun âteş-nümâ
Gamum şu'lesi üzre dökmezsen âb
Derünümde dil hâli olur harâb
Eger olmasan ceste mânend-i berķ
Vücūdum olur seyl-i endüba ğarķ
Görürsem eger zevraķuñ ser-nigün
Dil ü didem olur iki baķr-i hün
Baña bâdeden mümkün olmaz ferâĝ
Şî'âr u dîşâr olmadan dâĝ dâĝ
Gül-i cândan kim olan nâ-ümîd
Olur üstüme tiĝ-keş berg-i bîd
Virürse eger cemre-i cür'a tâb
Bu ben hâkî ķor lerze-i ızırâb*

¹³ The quotations of Hâletî's poem come from Kaya, "Hâletî'nin Sâkî-nâmesi," 81–98.

¹⁴ E. J. W. Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry*, ed. Edward G. Browne, 6 vols. (London: Luzac, 1900–1909), 3:224.

Cupbearer, bring that soul-sustaining water
 So free from thirst the burning heart shall be!
 From grief's path my body is in dust and dirt,
 So cleanse my soul with the gleaming wine!
 However many distressed legions appear,
 Far and wide you are their bright beacon.
 If you do not pour wine onto grief's flame,
 Ruined and desolate my heart's den lies.
 If you do not come forth fast as lightning,
 Under grief's torrent my body drowns.
 If I catch that your vessel is upside down,
 Seas of blood my eyes and heart shed.
 It is impossible for me to abandon wine,
 For my garments not to be worn out.
 The cup's rose I am so hopeless about,
 The willow-leaf blade that spears me.
 If the last dregs of wine give warmth,
 It is hot coal for my shivers of pain.

Next is a partial description of the wine and cup from the second and longest *maqâla*, with references to figures from the *Shāhnāma*, Firdawsī's eleventh-century Persian epic, which was a rich source of poetic lore connected to feasting and wine. The most relevant involves Jam or Jamshīd, a legendary king regarded as the inventor of wine:

Bularsaṇ eger keṣṭi-i ḡamda zīr
Saṇa zūr-ı şahbâ olur nâ-güzīr
Eger olmasa bâde-i ergavân
Qalur mıydı bir kimse beñzinde qan
Olur neşvesinden anuñ lâ-cerem
Külâb-ı nemed reşk-i dîbîm-i Cem
Felek zer-geri la'lin itmiş müzâb
Bozulduqda zer-tâc-ı Efrâsyâb
Qanı sâkî ol gevher-i dîl-fürûz
O ser-mâye-i h'âce-i nîm-[r]üz
Zibi la'l-i sir-âb kim kân deger
Zibi mâb-ı gerdün gerdân deger
Eger olsa rindân siper-dâr-ı cām
Kalur tiğ-i h'ün-riz-i ḡam der-niyâm
Qanı sâkî ol cām-ı râḡşan qanı
Hilâl olmamış bedr-i tâbân qân
Düşürseñ sipibre eger 'aks-i cām
Olur âftâb-ı seher mâb-ı şam
Eger dinse aña tütulmuş güneş
Ne mümkün gele tab'-ı rindâna hoş
Anı mibr ü mâba kim itse kıyâs
Olur soñra maḥcûb-ı encüm-şinâs

If you find the bottom of grief's vessel,
 You have succumbed to red wine's force.
 If it is not the wine of the Judas tree,
 Would anyone's face drain of blood?
 Of course, once intoxicated by it, does
 Jam's crown come to envy the dervish cap.
 A brilliant ruby the heavenly smith forged
 When Afrasiyab's gilt crown had shattered.
 Cupbearer, where is that heart-cheering gem,
 Property of the ruler of the Midday kingdom?
 What a thirst-slaking ruby, worthy of the pits!
 What a celestial moon, worthy of the heavens!
 If free-spirits are the cup's shield-bearers,
 Sheathed grief's bloodthirsty sword remains.
 Cupbearer, where is that sparkling cup?
 Where is the radiant moon, yet unfaded?
 If you drop onto the sky the cup's reflection,
 Into the evening moon the morning sun turns.
 If one says the sun has been moonstruck,
 What a welcome occasion for free-spirits!
 Whoever compares the sun and moon to it,
 Contrite like the astrologer he is in the end.

The following selection on the singer comes from the fourth *maqāla*, and is cited in Fā'izī's anthology.¹⁵ The couplets are notable for a clever pun on the word *perde*, meaning both "veil" and "musical key":

Olur halk' aşık kulağdan saña
Bu hâlet 'aceb dâd-ı Haqq'dur saña
Seniñ gibi bulmaz harifân-ı râz
Der-i hâne-i feyze bir perde-sâz
Eger itmeseñ perdeñi zir ü bem
Bilinmezdi sır-ı vücūd u 'adem
Gebi perdedürsin gebi perde-dâr
Seniñ kabz u başuñdur âhîr medâr
Olur ehl-i zühde sürüduñ hicâb
Bulur rind her perdeden fetḥ-i bâb

By hearing people fall in love with you;
 This fact is a wonder, God's gift to you.
 Gnostics can find none equal to you,
 Key-maker for the door to bounty's house.
 If you do not make your tone high and low,
 None gets the secret of being and non-being.
 You are at times the veil, at others the veiler;
 Your back and forth the ultimate hinge.
 Your song is concealed to ascetic men,
 But free-spirits open the door by any key.

¹⁵ Fā'izī, *Zubdat al-ash'ār*, fol. 24r.

Here is the shortest *maqāla*, the eighth regarding party etiquette, quoted and translated in its entirety:

*Kam sâki ol âb-ı âzer-şitâb
 Ol ateş-keş-i sine-i şeyh ü şâb
 Budur evvelin şart-ı bezm-i şarâb
 Vefâdan harifân ola bebre-yâb
 Olur muntazam encümen-gâb-ı ‘ıyş
 Şu vaktin ki rindân ola hem-çü hış
 Hakikat nemek-dâm olsa tebi
 Olur bezm rezm-i gâma müntehi
 Sadâkat mevin eyleyen pür-nemek
 Kesel-nâk-i endûb kılmağ gerek
 Budur lâzım-ı bezm-i bi'l-ittifâk
 K’ola anda şad pâre câm-ı nîfâk
 Gerek bezm ola puhtelerle tamâm
 Duğûl itmeye bâdeden gayrı hâm
 Reb-i gâmda rindân-ı pâkize-hüş
 Tutar bâr-ı yârâna elbette düş
 Ol olmağ gerek geşt-i gül-şende yâr
 Ki dendân ura pâyünâ batsa hâr
 Serüñde eger zâhir olsaydı tâb
 İde şişe-i bâdesin pür-gül-âb
 Esâs-ı hakikat gerekdür düriüst
 Binâ-yı şafâ tâ ki olmaya süst
 Olur rûz-ı ‘işret kim olursa yâr
 Gerekdür şeb-i derde tedbir-kâr*

Cupbearer, where is that fire-burning water,
 That stokes the hearts of old and young?
 This is the first condition for a wine party,
 That out of faith all companions partake.
 The joyful assembly comes to order
 When free-spirits as a family gather.
 If it is empty of those truly grateful,
 In a miserable fight the party ends.
 For devotion's wine to be tasteful,
 Grief-induced languor must remain.
 This by accord is required of the party,
 That discord's cup is in a hundred pieces.
 Men ripe and mature must fill the party;
 Nothing raw other than wine must enter.
 On grief's path free-spirits, pure of mind,
 Shoulder they must the beloved's burden.
 Should a lover stroll in the rose garden,
 If a thorn pricks the foot, let it be a kiss.
 If the warmth has gotten to your head,
 Fill up the wine bottle with rose water.
 The truth is it is necessary to stand firm,
 So the edifice of purity shall not totter.

Whoever is loved on the day of drinking,
A wise guide is needed for the night of woe.

The last selection concerns the desire for nighttime revelry from the thirteenth *maqāla*, the first half of which goes:

*Şebân-gâh gerek şimdi 'ıys u neşât
Ki mümtedd ola müddet-i inbisât
Bulur anda 'ışk ehli mi'râcını
Atar anda sâlik göge tâcını
İder anda erbâb-ı dîl ka'f-ı râh
Gelür şevke şeb-kâr-ı feryâd u âb
Şeb ü bâde Şeb-diz ü Gül-gün olur
Dü-esbe giden baht vârun olur
Gel ey sâki vir meclise âb u tâb
Dağı itmeden baht âheng-i h'âb
Şeb-i gam kaçan tâb-ı fersûd olur
Çü şâm-ı ecel şubhı bi-sûd olur
Kararsa n'ola sakf-ı kâh-ı cihân
Bu denlî çerâğa az olmaz duhân
Koyup nâfesin gitmiş âbû-yı mihir
Çıkardı anuñ müşk-i nâbın sipilr*

Now is the night needed for revel and drink,
So prolonged the time of delight shall be.
It is when the lovelorn ascend to the heavens,
When the devotee tosses his crown to the sky.
It is when men of heart head off on the path,
When sighs and laments grow ever merry.
The night is Dark-Colored, the wine Rose-Colored;
Luck turns bad to those who ride these two horses.¹⁶
Oh cupbearer, come and give shine to the party,
Before fickle fortune yet prescribes sleep.
When the night of woe loses its gentle glow,
Like the break of death's eve, it is useful no more.
If the roof of earth's palace goes black, what of it?
The smoke from this lamp never disappears.
The sun's deer left his musk-bag behind,
And the sky scattered its strong scent.¹⁷

As the sample amply demonstrates, Hâletî's *sâqinâme* has a decidedly mystical quality, with the metaphor of wine and intoxication signifying the transcendental and unifying power of divine love, and in that respect is quite unremarkable. The metaphor had been a mainstay of poetry in Turkish for some time under the sway of Hâfiz. In addition, in the course of the sixteenth century, works addressing the cupbearer increasingly became common, either as strophic poems or as a distinct sec-

¹⁶ The two horses mentioned belong to the lovers Khusraw and Shirin, whose tale was originally told by Firdawsî in the *Shâhnâme*.

¹⁷ For a translation of additional couplets from this *maqāla*, see Gibb, *Ottoman Poetry*, 3:232.

tion in verse narratives, didactic or romantic, which is the case with Jāmi's *sāqī-nāma*.¹⁸

But to appreciate better what Hāleti was trying to do with his *sāqīnāma* as an independent piece of poetry, we need to revisit Revānī's *ʿIsbratnāma*. Not long after its completion, during the reign of Selim I (1512–1520), his work found favor with literati. The biographer Sehi, writing in 1538, states simply that the work is “unrivaled.”¹⁹ The biographer Laṭīfī, writing less than a decade apart in 1546, is more fulsome in his admiration. While recognizing the influence of Ḥāfız on Revānī's use of images and conceits related to a wine party, regarding his *ʿIsbratnāma* specifically, Laṭīfī calls it a “most joyful book,” adding that his style is an “innovation.”²⁰ Laṭīfī's opinion on the uniqueness of the work would be repeated by successive biographers and persist into Hāleti's lifetime. Beyānī, for instance, speaks of it as a masterpiece, filled with “many delicacies,” and quotes several couplets from the section on soul-comforting food:

*İderse ehl-i meclis n'ola ikrām
Ki yaḥnī puḥtedür gāyet degül ḥām
Kerāmet ehлідür eyle[n] temāşā
Şalar seccādesin şu üzre [sel]mā
Herise luṭfī gālib yāre dönmiş
Tekellüfsüz yenür dıl-dāre dönmiş
Görüb meclisde şād oldı şarābı
Soyunub rakş urur tavuk kebābı
Nedendür meclise çak böyle ikdām
Niçün pālūdeye göz dikdi bādām*²¹

Whatever offerings the gatherers bestow,
A stew is to be had, done well not raw.
The bits are like the sight of holy men,
Floating in water on top of prayer mats.
The mealy pudding won over the friend,
Made plain and palatable to the lovelorn.
The wine appeared and the party rejoiced,
With kebabs of naked fowls dancing around.
Why is such attention lavished on the party?
Why is the almond eyeing up the blancmange?

¹⁸ Jāmi's *sāqīnāma* was originally part of his adaptation of the Alexander romance, *Khīradnāma-i Iskandari*, and in the early seventeenth century anthologized as an independent poem. See Qazwinī, *Tadbkira-i maykhāna*, ed. Aḥmad Gulchin Maʿāni (Tehran: Iqbāl, 1961), 105–11. The *Tadbkira-i maykhāna* was compiled in 1619.

¹⁹ Sehi, *Heşt-Bibişt*, ed. Halûk İpekten et al. (Ankara: T. C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2017), 103.

²⁰ Laṭīfī, *Tezkiretü'ş-şuʿarâ ve Tabsiratü'n-nuzamâ*, ed. Rıdvan Canım (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi Başkanlığı, 2000), 279.

²¹ Beyānī, *Tezkiretü'ş-şuʿarâ*, 75. Cf. Canım, *Sâkınâmeler ve İşretnâme*, 215–16.

Riyāzī, in contrast, declares Revānī's poem a "work special above special," and quotes as well couplets from the poem. However, the couplets picked do not involve any delectable item, and instead come from the section on the wine cup:

*Kimün [kim] cām ile hoş 'ālemi var
Süleymān'dur elinde hātemi var
Kimün hükminde olsa pādşādur
'Aceb āyine-i 'ālem-nümādur
Ne bedr olur ki buldukda kemālī
Getürür bir araya beş bilālī
Ne yire kim ayak başsa qademdür
O bezmün kâse-bāzı Cām-ı Cem'dür²²*

Whoever makes merry with the cup,
He has Solomon's seal in his hand.
Whoever has command of it is a king,
That wondrous world-displaying mirror.
What a moon that when it turns complete,
The five crescent-fingers at once gather.
Wherever it arrives, good luck is afoot;
The juggler at that feast is Jam's cup.²³

The different couplets quoted from Revānī's *Isbratnāma* indicate that not all literati appreciated his innovative work in the same manner. It seems that for some its appeal lay in the festive descriptions of routine subject matter, of dishes, for example, and that for others in the imagistic conventions applied, of Solomon's seal or Alexander's mirror. None, though, ascribe the poem a mystical reading, despite Revānī's admonition at the end that it is was meant as an allegory. In fact, the biographers writing from the mid-1560s onward highlight Revānī's personal habit of frequenting taverns, thus insinuating that the affection for wine shown in his work should be understood literally. Moreover, in his *tadbkira* of 1586, Hasan Çelebi states that Revānī's verses were popular also among the masses because of his "simple" language and "carefree and cheerful" tone.²⁴

Hasan Çelebi's comments about Revānī's verse-making, especially of his language is telling, for it anticipates concerns about linguistic sophistication that preoccupied literati in the early seventeenth century. At the time, works composed in an old, simpler Turkish were recast in an idiom full of lexical and syntactical borrowings from Persian (and Arabic), with the aim to rhetorize it further. It is against this backdrop that Hāleti composed his *sāqināma*. Undoubtedly, he intended his work to be a response to Revānī's *Isbratnāma*, updated with more figurative language and classicizing in direction with less novel content, as can be seen from the selections. In doing so, Hāleti attempted to create a distinctively Ottoman Turkish *sāqināma*,

²² Riyāzī, *Riyāzū'ş-Şuara*, 166. Cf. Canım, *Sâkînâmeler ve İşretnâme*, 204.

²³ Cf. Gibb, *Ottoman Poetry*, 2:339.

²⁴ Hasan Çelebi, *Tezkiretü'ş-Şuarâ*, ed. İbrahim Kutluk, 2 vols. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1978), 1:421.

yet in accord with antecedents in Persian, especially with Zuhûrî's work. And as a *sâqînâma* celebrating mystical intoxication, Hâleti's work might have also been influenced by the strophic variety of Furqatî (d. 1617), Zuhûrî's contemporary based in Iran.²⁵ But from what is known about Hâleti, he was not particularly inclined to spiritual contemplation, nor was he attached to any Sufi order.

The Emergence of an Ottoman Genre

As mentioned earlier, prior to Hâleti's *sâqînâma*, poems in Turkish addressing the cupbearer had increasingly become common. But none that we know of fit the criteria outlined by 'Aṭā'î—that a *sâqînâma* should be, at a minimum, a stand-alone *mathnawî* in the *mutaqârib* meter—thus substantiating his opinion that Hâleti's work represented something new.²⁶ Curiously, 'Aṭā'î presented his own *sâqînâma* as an original enterprise. In stating his reason for composition, he tells how literati had tired of *mathnawî*s recounting the age-old romances tied to Shirîn and Laylâ and were keen on another tale that would measure up to the existing corpus in Persian and also be “approved by the likes of Zuhûrî,” and he notes that it was Fâ'izî who advised him to craft a poem about “love for the singer and the cupbearer.”²⁷ The result was a *sâqînâma* in excess of 1,500 couplets, entitled *'Âlamnumâ* (*'Âlemnümâ*), “World-Mirror.”

Nowhere in his *sâqînâma*, though, does 'Aṭā'î give a nod of recognition to his teacher Hâleti, as a source of inspiration. This can be mainly attributed to 'Aṭā'î's self-proclaimed, albeit indirectly, ambition to expand the scope of topics broached in a *sâqî*-focused *mathnawî*, in the vein of Zuhûrî. Most notably in this respect, the main portion of 'Aṭā'î's poem opens with a lengthy account of the Bosphorus strait and the Rumelian and Anatolian fortresses that overlook it, recalling the topographical descriptions found in Zuhûrî's work.²⁸ But 'Aṭā'î was not the sole figure who modeled his *sâqînâma* after Zuhûrî's. As might be expected, Riyâzî himself produced a draft version of more than one thousand couplets before 'Aṭā'î did. Riyâzî's *sâqînâma* is also expansive in the range of topics, but absent the topographical and with a lighter tone, reminiscent of Revânî's *Isbratnâma*. Nevertheless, according to Tunca Kortantamer, the two later poems were chiefly shaped by Zuhûrî's work, both in form and in content.²⁹

²⁵ See Qazwîni, *Tadhkira-i maykhâna*, 417–28.

²⁶ In contrast, Revânî's *Isbratnâma* was composed in the *bazaj* meter.

²⁷ 'Aṭā'î, *Sâkinâme*, ed. Muhammet Kuzubaş (Istanbul: Etüt Yayınları, 2009), 137–38.

²⁸ 'Aṭā'î, *Sâkinâme*, 144–56. Cf. especially Zuhûrî, *Sâqînâma*, 86–88. For a summary of the contents of 'Aṭā'î's *sâqînâma*, see Tunca Kortantamer, *Nevî'zâde Atayî ve Hamsesi* (Izmir: Ege Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1997), 164–75.

²⁹ Kortantamer, “Sâkinâmelerin Ortaya Çıkışı ve Gelişimine Genel Bir Bakış,” in *Eski Türk Edebiyatı Makaleler* (Ankara: T. C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2004), 195. He also considered Zuhûrî's work the principal model for Hâleti's *sâqînâma*.

‘Aṭā’i and Riyāzī were at the time part of an extensive literary network—of mentors, friends, and rivals—that stretched out of Istanbul.³⁰ To that network belonged Hāleti and Fā’izī, and other prominent members included Nef’i (d. 1635) and Yahyā Efendi (d. 1644). As ‘Aṭā’i tells it, the members shared a strong interest in the *sāqī-nāma*. In fact, all the individuals just mentioned tried their hand at producing a *sāqīnāma*, and only Fā’izī failed to finish one as an independent poem. Significantly, of the stand-alone *sāqīnāmas*, only Hāleti’s is excerpted in Fā’izī’s anthology. This suggests that the others were completed within several years of 1622 and after Hāleti had finished and circulated his poem. And what is evident is that if Hāleti did not serve as the primary model, he certainly made it fashionable among his peers to compose a *sāqīnāma*.

Not all of them, however, viewed Zuhūri’s work as a model to be emulated, or the *mathnawī* as the requisite form. Nef’i, for instance, composed two *sāqīnāmas* as strophic poems, a *tarkīb-band* in Turkish and a *tarjīc-band* in Persian. That he produced one in Persian shows how much Ottoman literati identified the *sāqīnāma* as a genre not only Persian in origin but also still evolving in formal terms. His poems were likely influenced by the *tarjīc-band* of Vaḥshī (d. 1583), an Iran-based poet credited with popularizing the strophic varieties of the *sāqīnāma* and whose example Furqatī adopted.³¹ Yahyā Efendi, by contrast, composed his *sāqīnāma* as a short *mathnawī* of less than a hundred couplets that function as an extended ode to the cupbearer. His poem is similar in design to that of ‘Urfī (d. 1591), Vaḥshī’s India-based peer who was greatly admired in Ottoman circles. It appears, then, that the literati of the time, in composing their *sāqīnāmas*, took as templates the wide range available in Persian, a poetic genre distinguished for “its flexible form,” to quote Paul Losensky.³²

That said, the flexibility found in the initial set of Ottoman productions did not have a lasting impact. The *sāqīnāmas* composed from the mid- to late seventeenth century, at the height of the fashion, are almost all short *mathnawīs*, averaging a hundred couplets, and the majority are mystical in sentiment. From an initial glance, these *sāqīnāmas* bear a remarkable resemblance to the work of Yahyā Efendi, the chief jurisconsult who was an influential poet during his long lifetime and in the ensuing decades.³³ The extent to which the newer poems were shaped by Yahyā Efendi’s demands further investigation. Yet we do have an anonymous miscellany largely of verse, from the following century, which gives us an indication of how the *sāqīnāma* as a genre came to be perceived in the Ottoman context.³⁴ The miscellany

³⁰ See Aslı Niyazioğlu, *Dreams and Lives in Ottoman Istanbul: A Seventeenth-Century Biographer’s Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2017), 25–29.

³¹ Nef’i composed a few *nazīras* or responses to Vaḥshī’s poems. See Nef’i, *Farsça Divan*, ed. Mehmet Atalay (Erzurum: Atatürk Üniversitesi, Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 2004), 27–28.

³² Losensky, “Sāqī-nāma.”

³³ For a partial translation of Yahyā Efendi’s *sāqīnāma*, see Gibb, *Ottoman Poetry*, 3:283–84.

³⁴ See *Mecmū‘a*, Istanbul University Library MS TY 4097, fols. 30v–62r.

has a section specifically dedicated to *sâqînâmas*, and the ordering of selections, though not exactly chronological, presents a trajectory of the genre's development as a *mathnawî*, from its beginnings as a lengthy descriptive poem to its consolidation as a shorter ode to the cupbearer. And of the odes included, the most prominent is by Yahyâ Efendi.³⁵

If we take Hâleti's work as the starting point, the Ottoman genre of the *sâqînâma* emerged and evolved in a manner different from that of its Persian counterpart, in which form and content were inextricably linked. Almost in reverse, in the course of the seventeenth century, the genre became less flexible and gradually fixed and further classicized as a short eulogistic *mathnawî* in the *mutaqârib* meter. This development represented a return to Hâfiz's prototype, with the mystical overtones accentuated—a restoration of the roots of the genre, I argue, advanced effectively by Hâleti's peer, Yahyâ Efendi. Needless to say, as a genre of wine poetry, the Persian *sâqînâma* drew on the older Arabic tradition of *khamriyya* associated with courtly oenophilic culture, and Sunil Sharma has suggested that it is best to think of it as subgenre focusing on one figure of that culture.³⁶ The Ottoman *sâqînâma*, then, should be regarded as a subgenre too, but of clear Persian vintage.

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³⁵ The selections are as follows, in order and by author's name: ‘Aṭā’î, Riyâzî, Hâleti, Fakîrî, Yahyâ Efendi, ‘Allâme Şeyhî (d. 1643), and Şabûhî Dede (d. 1647). None of the other poets who composed a short *sâqînâma* did so before Yahyâ Efendi. Nor did they come close to matching his standing as a poet. Fakîrî was a minor poet who flourished during the reign of İbrâhîm I (1640–1648), but he is often confused with another poet with the same pen name from the sixteenth century. ‘Allâme Şeyhî served under Yahyâ Efendi, composing *qaşîdas* in praise of him, and as a poet was under his influence. Şabûhî Dede, a reputable poet, was better known for his abridgment of Rûmî's *Mathnawî*, and his *sâqînâma* was probably produced after he was appointed the head of the Mevlevî lodge in Istanbul in 1630. Moreover, the miscellany has a separate section of selections in Persian that contain an excerpt from Zuhûrî's *sâqînâma*, Furqatî's *tarjîf-band*, and ‘Urî's contribution, to mention the most relevant. See *Mecmû‘a*, 230v–236v.

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Part 2
Themes, Motifs
and Imagery

The Image of Wine in *Poem 2* by Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhālī

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The *majāz 'aqli* is an important figure in classical Arabic rhetoric. Defined and discussed by pioneering classical Arabic rhetorician 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 471/1078),¹ it is an intellectual trope that affirms or attributes a verb (including any verbal form, such as the infinitive) to a subject that is not its true subject. To clarify, here are two examples from 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī. The first is *fa-mā rabiḥat tijāratuhum* (2:16) (their merchandise did not profit),² in which the subject of the verb 'profit' (*rabiḥa*) is the merchandise. It is not, however, the merchandise which profits but the traffickers, and they are the true subject of the sentence. Literally, it should read something like *fa-mā rabiḥū fī tijāratibim* (they did not profit from their merchandise), but it was changed using this intellectual trope. The second example is *nāma laylī* (my night slept),³ whose literal meaning is "I slept during the night," as it is not the night that sleeps. In both these examples, the true subject ("they" in the first, and "I" in the second) appears in the sentence, but the verb is not attributed to it.

In my view, the semantic level of a phrase that includes an intellectual trope differs from that of the same phrase expressed without this rhetorical device. In the Qur'ānic verse, which reads that the merchandise did not profit, focus is on the minimal value of the merchandise itself, which will always be a reason for failure. Phrased without the intellectual trope, the verse would read the traffickers did not profit from their merchandise – suggesting that failure was due not to the merchandise itself but to those who handled it. That is, others may have profited had they traded the same merchandise. The phrase *nāma laylī* offers an image absent from the

¹ Abū Bakr 'Abd al-Qāhir b. 'Abd ar-Raḥmān al-Jurjānī, *Asrār al-balāgha*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir (Jidda: Dār al-Madani, 1991), 366–80; id., *Dalā'il al-i'jāz*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānī, 2005), 293–303. In the *Dalā'il*, 'Abd al-Qāhir uses a different term for *majāz 'aqli*: *majāz ḥukmī* (judicial trope). Concerning the two types of *majāz*, see Ali Ahmad Hussein, *The Rhetorical Fabric of the Traditional Arabic Qasida in its Formative Stages: A Comparative Study of the Rhetoric in Two Traditional Poems by 'Alqama l-Faḥl and Bashshār b. Burd* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2015), 51–52. Wolfhart Heinrichs translates the term as "mental trope." See Wolfhart Heinrichs, "Contacts between Scriptural Hermeneutics and Literary Theory in Islam: The Case of *Majāz*," *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften* 7 (1991–1992), 278. Avigail Noy prefers "*majāz* on the level of reason" and "logical/conceptual *majāz*." Both are good, but they merely indicate the Arabic term and do not give its literal meaning. See Avigail Noy, "The Emergence of 'Ilm al-Bayān: Classical Arabic Literary Theory in the Arabic East in the 7th/13th Century" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2016), 219.

² 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī, *Dalā'il al-i'jāz*, 293.

³ 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī, *Dalā'il al-i'jāz*, 293.

phrase “I slept during the night.” It describes the night’s calm and stillness as though it is the night rather than the speaker which falls asleep. Expressing it as “I slept during the night” does not carry the same tranquility. In fact, it does not even portray it.

For ‘Abd al-Qāhir, this intellectual trope is not a metaphor, and phrases which use it should not, therefore be defined as “personification”, which is exclusively a type of metaphor. The difference between intellectual trope and metaphor can be simply stated: all three elements that shape the *majāz ‘aqli* – the verb, the false and the true subjects – appear in the text or can be concluded through the context, and tropic attribution can be adjusted by simple rephrasing, making the sentence realistic and non-tropic. A sentence containing a verb metaphor, however, has only one subject, and rephrasing will not demolish the metaphor. In the example “their merchandise did not profit”, there are two subjects – the true subject, “they” (indicated by the pronoun “their”), and the false, “merchandise”. Its attribution can easily be altered to: “they did not profit from their merchandise”. “My night slept” can likewise be made non-tropic by changing the attribution to “I slept during the night”. An example of a verb metaphor given by ‘Abd al-Qāhir is *kallamatnī ‘aynāhu [...]* (his two eyes spoke to me). Here, the true subject of the verb “to speak” is imagined to be “the eyes”, with no other subject in this sentence. No manner of rephrasing – such as, “I spoke to his eyes,” or “I spoke to him by means of his eyes,” or “he spoke to me with his eyes” – can change the sentence into a non-metaphorical expression.⁴

One poem that leans heavily on intellectual trope is *Poem 2* by Abū Dhu’ayb al-Hudhali, a pre-Islamic Hijazi poet who converted to Islam probably in the 9th Islamic calendar year (630 CE), some twenty years before his death in 28/649. This poem narrates a love story with Asmā’ who is apparently married. The lover approaches his beloved but dares not make contact for fear of her relatives (*akbshā ba’labā wa-abābubā*; “I am frightened of her husband and I am in awe of her”).⁵ Three years later, he decides to approach her, despite knowing that this could mean his death (ADhH2:3-6),⁶ either at the hands of her family, or because, even should he succeed in reaching her, they will ultimately be separated, resulting in his metaphorical death.

⁴ ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī, *Asrār al-balāgha*, 51. The difference between the verb metaphor and the intellectual trope can be traced in ‘Abd al-Qāhir’s detailed discussion of the two types of *majāz*: *‘aqli* vs. *lughawī*. He considers the metaphor *majāz lughawī* (linguistic trope). See *ibid.*, 366-380; and *id.*, *Dalā’il al-‘ijāz*, 293-303. Wolfhart Heinrichs translates the term as “a single-word trope”. See Wolfhart Heinrichs, “Contacts between Scriptural Hermeneutics and Literary Theory”, 279; *id.*, “On the Genesis of the *Ḥaḡiqa-Majāz* Dichotomy,” *Studia Islamica* 59 (1984): 116-17.

⁵ The word *ba’l* indicates husband but may also mean father. Edward Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1984), 1:228.

⁶ Poem and verse numbers are as they appear in ‘Abd as-Sattār Aḥmad Farrāj and Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākīr, eds., *Abū Sa’id al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥusayn as-Sukkarī, Kitāb Sharḥ asb’ār al-Hudhaliyyin* (Cairo: Dār al-‘Urūba, 1965).

The poem opens with two verses that suggest the beloved's departure, implying that the dreaded separation has occurred (ADhH2:1–2). After narrating the story with the beloved, there are two similes. In the first shorter one, the scent of the beloved is compared with that of an amphora of perfume (ADhH2:7). The second simile, which compares Asmā's mouth with a cup of wine mixed with honey, is prolonged, starting in verse 8 and continuing to verse 28, three verses from the poem's end. This extended simile is shaped as one very long sentence, which opens with the subject in verse 8 ("Nor is the wine....") and whose predicate is not found until verse 28 (*bi-atyaba min fihā* "sweeter than her mouth"). To help the reader, the poet repeats both subject and negative particle in verse 27 – *fa-mā in humā* ("both [wine and honey] are not") – and completes the sentence with the predicate in the following verse. The poem ends with an account of the lover's unexpected meeting with Asmā when he is intoxicated, Asmā's anger, and the severing of their relationship (ADhH2:29–31).⁷

This article's focus is the simile of the wine (not including the honey-scene), described in verses 8 to 14 and 26–28. The Arabic text is below, followed by a translation often guided by commentary on the poem in as-Sukkari's (d. 275/888)'s *Kitāb Sharḥ asb'ār al-Hudhaliyyin* (The Commentary on Hudhali Poetry).

8 وَلَا الرَّاحُ رَاحَ الشَّامِ جَاءَتْ سَبِيئَةً لَهَا غَايَةٌ تَهْدِي الْكِرَامَ عِقَابَهَا

Nor is the wine – the wine of Syria – that came to be sold, and which has a banner upon a standard leading noblemen [to her]

9 عُقَارُ كَمَاءِ النَّيِّ لَيْسَتْ بِخَمْطَةٍ وَلَا خَلَّةٍ يَكْوِي الشُّرُوبُ شَهَابَهَا

It is an aged wine with a color like the juice of raw meat. It is neither acid nor acrid, whose flame burns the drinkers

10 تَوَصَّلُ بِالرُّكْبَانِ حِينًا وَتُؤَلِّفُ الـ حَوَارِ وَيُغَشِّيهَا الْأَمَانُ رَبَابَهَا

She [the wine] is joined with the camel caravans and links the neighbors. Her owners safeguard her

11 فَمَا بَرَحَتْ فِي النَّاسِ حَتَّى تَبَيَّنَتْ ثَقِيفًا بَرِزَاءَ الْأَشْيَاءِ قِبَابَهَا

She remained among the people until she took notice of the Thaqif tribe. Their tents were in the higher places where the palm trees grew

⁷ These three verses have been discussed as the earliest humorous love verses in classical Arabic poetry. See Renate Jacobi, "Die Sonne auf dem Maultier: 'Umar ibn Abi Rabi'a als Humorist," in *Humor in der arabischen Kultur*, ed. Georges Tamer (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 168–169.

12 فَطَافَ بِهَا أَبْنَاءُ آلِ مُعْتَبٍ وَعَزَّ عَلَيْهِمْ يَمُّهَا وَاعْتَصَابُهَا

The sons of the Mu‘attib family surrounded her. They struggled to buy her and to take her by force [or, to rape her]

13 فَلَمَّا رَأَوْا أَنْ أَحْكَمَتْهُمْ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ يَجِلُّ لَهُمْ إِكْرَاهُهَا وَغِلَابُهَا

When they saw that she would not surrender to them, and they were forbidden to force her or to coerce her

14 أَتَوْهَا بِرَبِيعٍ حَاوَلَتْهُ فَأَصْبَحَتْ تُكْفَّتُ قَدْ حَلَّتْ وَسَاغَ شَرَابُهَا

They paid her the sum of money that she wanted. Then she was poured, she was permitted, and she could be drunk⁸

26 فَأَطْيَبَ بِرَاحِ الشَّامِ صِرْفًا وَهَذِهِ مُعْتَقَةٌ صَهْبَاءٌ وَهِيَ شَيَابُهَا

How sweet is this pure Syrian wine when mixed [with honey]. A matured, reddish wine, tending toward white. The honey is mixed within her

27 فَمَا هُمَا فِي صَحْفَةٍ بَارِيقَةٍ جَدِيدٍ حَدِيثٍ نَحْتُهَا وَافْتِصَابُهَا

The two [are mixed together] in a Bāriqī bowl with wood newly cut and hewn are not

28 بِأَطْيَبٍ مِنْ فِيهَا إِذَا جِئْتُ طَارِقًا مِنْ اللَّيْلِ وَالتَّقْتُ عَلَى ثِيَابُهَا

more delicious than the mouth of [my beloved] when I visited her at night; and her clothes covered me.

Abū Dhu‘ayb focuses on describing the hazardous voyage of this Syrian wine to ‘Ukāz in the lands of the Thaqif tribe near Mecca and its famous market, held during the pilgrimage season in the pre-Islamic era. Despite the perils of the journey, the merchants succeed in bringing their wine safely to the coast – only to meet further danger: the sons of Mu‘attib, wealthy people living around Mecca, surround the wine in the ‘Ukāz market. Eventually, Banū Mu‘attib decide to meet the wine’s high price and purchase it lawfully. This extended simile suggests that the lover kissed his beloved, or at least wished he were kissing her and tasting her. Her mouth is as flowerlike and delectable as wine mixed with honey. More importantly,

⁸ As mentioned earlier, the wine theme is followed by a description of the honey scene, with honey, bees, and honey-gathering. After this, in verse 26, the poet refers to both the honey and the wine, and in verses 27-28 compares a cup of wine mixed with honey to Asmā’s mouth. The symbolism of the honey scene is analyzed in Akiko Motoyoshi Sumi, “Remedy and Resolution: Bees and Honey-Collecting in Two Hudhali Poems,” *Middle Eastern Literatures* 6, no. 2 (2003), 131–57; and id., “Remedy and Resolution: Bees and Honey-Gathering in Two Hudhali Odes,” in *Description in Classical Arabic Poetry: Wasf, Ekphrasis and Interarts Theory* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 61–91.

however, is its effect: the wine-drinker and his mouth become intoxicated and lose reason. This simile has a further semantic allusion as an allegory of the relationship between the lover and Asmā', hinted at mainly through the poet's skillful use of *majāz 'aqli*. The poem features the following examples of this rhetorical figure:

- *rāḥu sh-shāmi jā'at sabī'atan* (the wine of Syria that came in order to be sold) (ADhH2:8): the verb *jā'a* (to come) is attributed to the wine, while the true subject is the vintners who brought the Syrian wine to sell it.
- *tawaṣṣalu bi-r-rukbāni ḥinan* (it joins, for a while, the camel caravans) (ADhH2:10). Ibn Ḥabīb (d. 245/860), a commentator on Hudhali poetry, explains: "The poet means not the wine itself but the wine's owners."⁹ He understands that the true subject is the vintners, but they are ignored as though they have no important role in the poem, with the verb (to join) attributed to the wine. During the wine's journey from Syria to the Arabian Peninsula, she is protected (I intentionally use the feminine *she* and *her* to refer to the wine). She (the wine) does not travel alone. When she sees a caravan, she joins it for a while, and when they separate, finds another. She thus moves from caravan to caravan until she reaches her destination.
- *tu'lifu l-jirwāra* (she creates a link between the neighbors) (ADhH2:10). Ibn Ḥabīb explains this as: "The wine connects neighbors with one another, they start caring for each other." Another explanation is: "The wine connects two neighbours, when her owners fear harm."¹⁰ Here, too, the true subject is the vintners, who are afraid to travel unaccompanied. Their wine is precious, and they fear they will be robbed. When they journey in the company of first one caravan and then another, they connect between the caravans which then travel together. The greater the number of caravans with whom they journey, the safer their wine will be. The vintners, however, go unmentioned.
- *fa-mā bariḥat fi n-nāsi ḥattā tabayyanat / thaqīfan bi-zizā'i l-ashā'i qibābubā* (she remained among the people until she took notice of the Thaqif tribe. Their tents were in the higher places where the palm trees grew) (ADhH2:11). Here, too, the vintners are disregarded, and the wine is the subject. During her long journey, the wine remains in the company of the traveling caravans until she reaches her destination – the 'Ukāz; the famous market in the lands of Thaqif.
- *fa-lammā ra'aw an aḥkamathum ...* [ADhH2:13] *atawbā bi-ribḥin ḥāwalathu* (ADhH2:14) (when they recognized that she refused to surrender to them ... they paid her a sum of money that she attempted to gain). The verses deal with *abnā' āl Mu'attib* (sons of family of Mu'attib of the Thaqif tribe), who are drawn by the wine and want to possess her, but the vintners refuse to sell for less than a large profit. The Banū Mu'attib ultimately give way and pay a substantial sum for the wine. Here, again, the wine is the subject: it is not the vintners who prevent Banū Mu'attib from taking the wine, but the wine herself. She claims she must be

⁹ As-Sukkārī, *Kitāb Sharḥ ash'ār al-Hudhalīyyīn*, 1:46.

¹⁰ As-Sukkārī, *Kitāb Sharḥ ash'ār al-Hudhalīyyīn*, 1:46.

bought for a profit, and Banū Mu‘attib surrender to her. In each instance, the true subject – the vintners – are ignored as though they do not exist. The wine is the subject for all the actions and deeds.

- *wa-‘azza ‘alayhim bay‘uhā wa-ghṭiṣābuhā* (ADhH2:12) (They struggled to buy her and to take her by force [or to rape her]). Used in the same verse, the words *tāfa* (to surround) and *ighṭiṣāb* (forcing, raping) can be considered a *double entendre* (*tawriya*) or even an employment (*istikhḍām*; that is, a word that can be interpreted in two different ways, both interpretations equally acceptable as the reader cannot know which was intended by the poet).¹¹ The verb *tāfa* can mean “to surround something” but can also signify the Ka‘ba, encircled by pilgrims. The wine is brought to the ‘Ukāz market during the pilgrimage, and the verb *tāfa* is carefully chosen by Abū Dhu‘ayb to conjure the image of the wine versus the image of the sacred Ka‘ba. Both are holy and both feature during the holy month: both are encircled and none dare harm them. The Ka‘ba is encircled for the deity’s reward and blessing to be received (the poem is composed in the *jābiliyya*). The wine is encircled to gain possession of it, as if it were equal to the deity’s blessing. The word *ighṭiṣāb* can be understood as “to force” or “to rape.” Ibn Ḥabīb explains *ighṭiṣābuhā* as “to force its owners.” Here, again, the vintners are the actual object – Banū Mu‘attib cannot force them to sell the wine – but, as before, they are not named, and it is the wine that is treated as a person who cannot be forced to submit to Banū Mu‘attib (that is, cannot be raped). Translating *ighṭiṣāb* as “to be raped” enhances the femininity of the wine, as if she is a real woman who attracts nobility who want to ravish her but are prevented.
- *wa-lam yakun yaḥillu labum ikrābuhā wa-ghilābuhā* [ADhH2:13] (they were forbidden to force her and to coerce her). The commentator explains *ikrābuhā* as *ikrābu ahlīhā* (forcing its owners – that is, forcing the vintners).¹² Here, too, the vintners are unheeded, and the wine is the object. The same can be said of the second phrase *wa-ghilābuhā* (they were forbidden to coerce her). Banū Mu‘attib are forbidden to coerce the vintners and seize their wine by force, but, as usual, they go unmentioned, with the wine replacing them as the real object: they were forbidden from coercing the wine. Here, again, the wine is depicted as a noblewoman, and Banū Mu‘attib cannot force her.

The intellectual trope in all these instances portrays the wine allegorically: it becomes a noblewoman, who is protected and given (or even, figuratively, “married”) to the proper person only after an acceptable price is paid. This returns us to the poem’s main story: the love between the poet and Asmā’. Asmā’ is protected by her family. Her lover – like Banū Mu‘attib with the wine – desires her but cannot possess her without paying a steep price: his very life. Both are ready to pay: Banū Mu‘attib

¹¹ See a discussion of the two terms in Geert Jan van Gelder, *Sound and Sense in Classical Arabic Poetry* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012), 318–22.

¹² As-Sukkārī, *Kitāb Sharḥ ash‘ār al-Hudhalīyyīn*, 1:48.

hand over their money, and Abū Dhu'ayb, symbolically, hands over his life. Abū Dhu'ayb is initially fortunate: the family of his beloved is unaware of the relationship. When the family migrates, however, the poet must face his metaphorical death – the agony expressed at the start of the poem caused by separation.

The wine's feminine personality suggests further internal, allegorical connections between the stories of the wine and the beloved: the long and dangerous journey undertaken by the wine merchants echoes the three long years endured by the lover until he dares make contact with Asmā'. In doing so, he puts himself at risk of death, both at the hands of Asmā''s family and from love itself. Despite the length and perils of the merchants' travels, they reach safety, implying, perhaps, that the lover succeeds in making contact with his beloved. The story of Banū Mu'attib is also analogous to that of the lover. They desire the noble wine and gather round (encircle) it (*fā-tāfa bihā abnā'u āli Mu'attibin*; ADhH2:12), similar to the lover who spends three years attempting to gather up (encircle) Asmā'. Abū Dhu'ayb uses the same verb, *tāfa*, to express his pursuit of his beloved: *wa-qad tuftu min aḥwālībā wa-aradtuhā sinīna* (for years, I encircled her and wanted her). At the end of the "circuit" around the wine, Banū Mu'attib decide to pay the wine's high price in order to possess it. The same is true for the poet: after encircling his beloved, he makes contact with her and apparently forms a relationship with her.

Conclusion

In summary, the *majāz 'aqlī* is a rhetorical figure similar to, but different from, the metaphor. Its effectiveness is demonstrated in the story of the wine by Abū Dhu'ayb, where it is used several times to enhance the episode's allegorical level. The wine is personified and becomes an actual being with a storyline parallel to that of the poet's beloved, Asmā'. In his use of this allegory, expressed here in intellectual trope, Abū Dhu'ayb weaves together the poem's different themes – the love affair and the wine episode. Figuratively, the poem becomes a single fabric woven from the multi-coloured threads of its different themes. The loom used that creates this fabric, specifically in the episode of the wine, is the intellectual trope.

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Beautifying Wine Drinking: Some Observations on *Khamriyyāt* Conventional Themes

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The evolution of wine poetry (*khamriyyāt*) in the period from the sixth to the ninth century reflected the development of the whole Arabic poetic system and was caused by changes in the understanding of principles of literary creativity.¹ With the emergence of individual authorship, the first signs of which occurred as early as the pre-Islamic era, the style of works gradually changed. In particular, poets began to pay more attention to figurative speech. Literary creativity was understood as a desire to display originality while maintaining succession and emulating the best examples. On a practical level, the poet's individual approach was reflected in the way he treated conventional themes, namely motifs (*maʿnā*, or the smallest semantic unit of the verse) and wording (*lafẓ*, or the particular realization of the motif). The poet's use of conventional, traditional elements correlated with the context of the genre and charged the work with an "affective content" that helped define the theme. Each word in this stock of motifs came to take on an almost entirely new meaning, a meaning transformed to include much broader associations. The role of the conventional theme was not nominative but connotative one: convention referenced the history of each poetic genre and set a certain mood for the audience. More intensive use of one theme or the absence of a usual one changed the general tone of the verse and thus revealed individual authorship.²

The way medieval scholars treated the poet's initiative to rework the poetic tradition in meaning and wording changed considerably over time. At first, in the eighth to tenth centuries, scholars stressed that the array of motifs was constant and that the goal of the poet's creativity was to improve upon the form of existing material.

¹ Wine poetry enjoyed great popularity among scholars. For an overview of the genre, see J. E. Bencheich, "Khamriyya," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs (Leiden: Brill, 1980–2004); and J. E. Bencheich, "Poesie bachiques d'Abu Nuwas," *Le Bulletin d'études orientales* 18 (1963–1964): 13–75. For nuanced discussion of wine poems from pre-Islamic times until the late ʿAbbāsīd, see Ḥāwī I., *Fann al-shiʿr al-khamri wa taṭawwunuh fi-l-adab al-ʿarabi* (Beirut: Dār al-thaqāfa, 1976). The interaction between wine and other main themes in classical Arabic poetry is thoroughly examined in Ph. Kennedy, *The Wine Song in Classical Arabic Poetry: Abū Nuwās and the Literary Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

² On the concept of individual authorship, see A. Kudelin, *Medieval Arabic Poetics (second half of 8th–11th centuries)* (Moscow: Nauka, 1983) (in Russian), 69–90, 124–65; and A. Kudelin, "Medieval Arabic Panegyric: Tradition and Creative Individuality," in *Arabic Literature: Poetics, Stylistics, Typology, Communication*, ed. A. Kudelin (Moscow: Yaziki slavyanskoy kultury, 2003) (in Russian), 86–103.

Then, in the tenth and eleventh centuries, the dominant opinion was that each generation had the right to create new themes. The development of the range of a motif was understood not as changing “old” content but as creating or “discovering” new things.³ The ways that poets were able to change and adapt conventional themes were fixed in theoretical treatises. The concept of borrowing (*sariqa*) addressed how poets could use and modify the motifs they took from their predecessors.⁴ Paradoxically, we see now that deviating from conventional standards became conventional. At the time, because the canon itself was original, any creative initiative became conventional by default.

The evolution of style in Arabic poetry was affected by the change in poetry’s function, which can be understood through the concept of the beautiful lie. This famous principle, formulated by Qudāma b. Jaʿfar (d. 337/948) in *Naqd al-shiʿr*, stands as follows: “The best poetry is the falsest” (*aḥsanu-l-shiʿr akdhabuhū*).⁵ The next generation of scholars extended this idea. Al-ʿAskarī (d. after 395/1005), in *Kitāb al-ṣināʿatayn*, wrote that poetry is built on lying (*kidhb*) and on the transformation of prohibited qualities (*istiḥāla min al-ṣifāt al-mumtanaʿa*).⁶ Among the eminent features of poetry, Ibn Rashīq (d. 456/1063) singled out the fact that “a lie, which people consider to be ugly, is beautiful in it [poetry]” and stressed that the “poet who makes a lie beautiful, is forgiven for lying.”⁷ Thus, from the seventh century, the creativity of a poet was estimated by a poem’s aesthetic merits and understood as a testimony to his poetical skills. Moreover, authors’ initiative was highly welcomed and recommended.

Even the “beautiful lie” was meant to follow certain aesthetic principles. Ibn Rashīq indicates that the poet must choose unusual similes that are not “annoying” to the listener. That is why the so-called “sedentary generation” (*al-ḥaḍārīyy*) preferred the lines of Abū Nuwās (140–755/198–813), Ibn al-Muʿtazz (247–96/861–908), and Ibn al-Rūmi (221/836–283/896) to the lines of Imruʾ al-Qays (d. 550), although the description of the latter is more precise (*ashadd iṣābah*).⁸ As an example of a bad simile, the scholar mentions Imruʾ al-Qays’ comparison of wine’s froth to ripped snakeskin, fingertips to worms, and windflowers to a blood-soaked cloth. The exact simile (*tashbih muṣīb*) in these cases is spoiled by literal meaning. Ibn Rashīq recommends changing blood to saffron, for example; such simile would lack accuracy but “be pleasant to the listener’s soul” (*awqaʿ fi-n-nafs*). He goes on to criticize the lines in which the process of mixing wine with water is compared to a mad-

³ Kudelin, *Medieval Arabic Poetics*, 38–40.

⁴ Kudelin, *Medieval Arabic Poetics*, 100–123.

⁵ Qudāma b. Jaʿfar, *Naqd al-shiʿr*, ed. Kamāl Muṣṭafā, (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānī, 1963), 65.

⁶ Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī, *Kitāb al-ṣināʿatayn*, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat ʿĪsā al-Ḥalabī wa-shurakāʾih, 1971), 131.

⁷ Ibn Rashīq, *al-ʿUmda fi maḥāsini al-shiʿr wa-ādābihi wa-naqdih*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyi al-Din ʿAbd al-Ḥamid, 2 vols., 4th ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Jil, 1972), 22, 25.

⁸ Ibn Rashīq, *al-ʿUmda*, 1:299.

man's epileptic attacks: "Who would like to drink something equated to a foaming madman seized by the devil?!"⁹ Therefore, aesthetically pleasing and conventional similes, not such vivid ones, would have more positive associations for listeners.

The peculiar principle of representing "the truth in the form of a lie, and the lie in the form of a truth" developed further taking shape in the special tropes "beautifying the ugly" (*taḥsinu l-qabīḥ*) and "disfiguring the beautiful" (*taqbiḥu l-ḥasan*).¹⁰ Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih (246/860–328/940) dedicated an entire chapter to these devices of figurative speech, pointing out that according to some experts in the poetic art, the best poet is the one who "worsens the finest facts and exalts the most disgusting ones."¹¹ In another chapter the scholar enumerates the qualities of intoxicating drink's abilities to trick, as it can cause people to "lose their mind." Among these he points out wine's ability to turn ugly things beautiful (*tuḥassinu l-qabīḥ*), and vice versa (*tuqabbihu l-ḥasan*). The following lines of Abū Nuwās are cited to prove this remark:

اسقني حتى تراني حسن عندي القبيح

Pour me a drink till you see that I'll consider good things to be bad

اسقني صرفاً حميماً تترك الشيخ صبياً

وثريره العلي رشداً وثريره الرشيد غيلاً

Pour me a pure fiery drink that turns an old man young [again],
And which make him see wrong as right and right as a wrong.

That being so, the distinction between ethical and aesthetic aspects of literary creativity was crucial for lyrics about wine: while legal discourse condemned wine, in poetic imagery it was highly esteemed as a drink that could transform bad to good.

The rich corpus of *khamriyyāt* themes started finding its place in poetic anthologies in the second half of the eighth century. If we try to classify the conventional elements of wine poetry, we find they are either presented in single words or signs or extended across one or several poetical lines. Leaving aside lexicological matters, I focus here on thematic components of the Bacchic passage in the poem and on their main motifs (*maʿānī*).

The wine passage is distinguished by the following sequence of themes: value of wine, old age of wine, luminosity of wine, clarity of wine, density of wine, perfume, the way it is made, its mingling with water, description of vessels, uncorking of the bottle, description of wine and goblet as a single unit, description of the process of buying wine, boon companions, description of the cupbearer, singers, and musi-

⁹ Ibn Rashiḡ, *al-ʿUmda*, 1:299.

¹⁰ On this type of figurative speech, see Geert Jan van Gelder, "Beautifying the Ugly and Uglifying the Beautiful," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 48, no. 2 (2003): 321–51.

¹¹ Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *Al-Iqd al-Farid* (Cairo: Lajnat al-Taʿlif wa al-Tarjamah wa-l-Nashr, 1949), 5:335–36.

cians, addressing the censurer's remarks, drinking at dawn, inebriation, being cured of drunkenness, the notion of a fleeting life, and celebration of hedonistic behavior.

Analysis of the examples cited in the treatises (particularly those lines dating from the pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods, when the main corpus of *khamriyyāt* was shaped) shows that the most elaborate example concerned the influence and effects of wine, its uniqueness and value, the process of mingling it with water, and description of vessels.¹² The main rhetorical devices used to develop a theme were similes, antithesis, and various metaphors. Another way to give a fresh dimension to a well-known motif was to incorporate conventional elements from other poetic genres. In the following paragraphs, I look at various realizations of one thematic component by renowned poets and discuss how the smallest semantic unit or motif (*ma'na*) could have been reworked. For this, I have chosen the theme of mingling wine with water.¹³ One of the concrete treatments (*ma'na*) of this theme described high-quality wine being mixed with clear water:

al-A'shā (565–629 CE):¹⁴

صُهَاءٌ صَافِيَةٌ إِذَا مَا اسْتَوْدَفْتُ شَجَّتْ غَوَارِبُهَا بِمَاءِ غَوَادِي

The golden, pure [wine] flowed [into the cups] and its crests were cleft by rainwater.

ʿAdi b. Zayd (d. 600 CE):¹⁵

ثُمَّ كَانَ مَزَاجُ مَاءِ سَمَاءٍ غَيْرِ مَاءِ آجِنٍ وَلَا مَطْرُوقٍ

Then it was mixed with water from the sky, not the one stagnating or kept for a long time.

Imru' al-Qays:¹⁶

كَأَنَّ الْمَدَامَ وَصُوبَ الْغَمَامِ وَرِيحَ الْخَزَامِيِّ وَنَشْرَ الْقَطْرِ

It is like wine mixed with rainwater, aroma of gillyflower and aromatized wood.

Ḥassān b. Thābit (d. 40/661):¹⁷

فَقَمْتُ بِكَأْسِ قَهْوَةٍ فَشَنَنْتُهَا بِذِي رَوْقٍ مِنْ مَاءِ زَمْزَمٍ فَاتَرُ

I raised the cup of wine and poured clear water from Zamzam.

¹² Ch. Ossipova, "Wine Poems (*khamriyyāt*) in Classical Arabic Poetry of 7th–9th Centuries (*Genesis and Evolution*)" (PhD diss., Moscow State University, 1997), 118–56.

¹³ While the themes were not formulated in medieval treatises, I give the titles based on the main idea of the cited lines.

¹⁴ al-A'shā, *Dirwān*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Ḥusayn (Beirut: Dār ṣādir, 1956), 50.

¹⁵ ʿAdi b. Zayd, *Dirwān*, ed. Muḥammad Jabbar al-Mu'ayyid (Baghdad: Sharikat Dār al-jumhūriyya li-l-nashr wa-ṭabʿ, 1965), 79.

¹⁶ Imru' al-Qays, *Dirwān*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrahim (Cairo: Dār al-ma'ārif, 1969), 156–57.

¹⁷ Ḥassān b. Thābit, *Dirwān*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Barqūqi (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1966), 119.

Another famous *maʿnā* described the lightening of a deep-red wine as it was mixed with water:

Abū al-Hindī (d. 180/796):¹⁸

تَصْبِيحُ بَوَاجِهِ الرِّاحِ وَالطَّائِرِ السَّعْدِ كَمَيْتَا وَبَعْدَ الْمَزْجِ فِي صِفَةِ الْوَرْدِ

Drink at dawn with [the first] birds red wine, which [color] after mingling is like that of a rose.

Al-Walid b. Yazid (d. 125/743):¹⁹

فَهِيَ بَغِيرُ الْمَزْجِ مِنْ شَرَرٍ وَهِيَ لَدَى الْمَزْجِ سَائِلُ الذَّهَبِ

Before the mingling [wine] sparks with fire and after is like liquid gold.

The imagery around mingling of wine with water often indicates some compulsory action. The most elaborate motif in this case can be formulated as “mingling is like killing”:

al-Akhṭal (20–92/640–710):²⁰

فَقُلْتُ اقْتُلُوهَا عَنْكُمْ بِمَزَاجِهَا فَأَطِيبُ بِهَا مَقْتُولَةً حِينَ تَقْتُلُ

I said: “Dilute the wine to death by mixing it [with water]! How sweet it is when killed!”

Finally, an impressive variety of similes can be noticed in descriptions of bubbles. Most frequent is their comparison to precious stones or blazing coal:

ʿAmr b. Kulthūm (sixth century CE):²¹

مُشْعِشَةً كَأَنَّ الْخُصَّ فِيهَا إِذَا مَا الْمَاءُ خَالَطَهَا سَخِينَا

The mixed wine... It seems that saffron is inside, when hot water is added.

ʿAdi b. Zayd:²²

وَطَفَا فَوْقَهَا فَقَاقِيعٌ كَالْ— يَاقُوتٌ حَمَرٌ يَزِينُهَا التَّصْفِيقُ

Bubbles red as rubies appeared on the surface of [wine]. Thus, the decanting decorated wine.

Abū Jilda al-Yashkurī (d. 83/702):²³

¹⁸ Ḥāwī I., *Fann al-shiʿr al-khamriyy wa-taṭawwuruh fi-l-adab al-ʿarabiyy* (Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1976), 154.

¹⁹ al-Walid ibn Yazid, *Shiʿr al-Walid ibn Yazid*, ed. al-Ḥusayn ʿAṭwān (Amman: Maktabat al-Aqṣā, 1979), 17.

²⁰ al-Akhṭal, *Dirwān*, ed. Antwān Ṣāliḥānī (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1968), 263.

²¹ al-Khaṭīb al-Tibrizī, *Sharḥ al-qasāʾid al-ʿashr*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyi al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamid, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Maktabat Muḥammad ʿAli Ṣābiḥ wa-awlāduh, 1964), 381.

²² ʿAdi b. Zayd, *Dirwān*, 76.

²³ al-Iṣbahānī Abū l-Faraj ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn, *Kitāb al-aghānī*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī, 33 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Shaʿb, 1969–1982), 49.

تلوح كعين الديك ينزو حبابها إذا مُرِجت بالماء مثل لظى الجمر

Wine is sparkling as a rooster's eye, and when mixed bubbles are like crackling coal.

Another motif emphasizing the bubbles' luminosity describes the sparkling as the froth settles:

al-Aʿshā:²⁴

مشعشة كأنّ على قراها إذا ما صرحت قطعاً سهاما

[When wine's froth settles down] after being mixed, as if on its surface gossamer appear.

Now let us examine how precisely a single *maʿnā* was reshaped. As an example, we'll address several couplets related to "nice sayings about the hastening of pleasures" (*mubādarat al-ladhḥāt*) in al-ʿAskari's poetical anthology *Dirwān al-maʿānī*. Discussing the celebration of the hedonistic way of life, the scholar has gathered the best maxims in verses by "modern poets," that is, from the eighth to the tenth century. He cites them in nonchronological order, which probably indicates that an aesthetic criterion governs his choice. The lines he includes are the following:

1. Aḥmad b. Abi Fanan (d. second/eighth century):²⁵

جدّد اللذات فالיום جديد وامض فيما تشتهي كيف تريد
انى ان أمكن يوم صالح انّ يوم الشرب لا كان عتيد

Repeat the pleasures! For today is a new day. Continue doing what you like the way you want!

Perhaps it will be a good day. [Remember that] the day of wine (i.e. enjoying life) will not last long!

2. Dik al-Jinn al-Himṣī (161–235/778–850):²⁶

تمتع من الدنيا فانك فانى وإنك في ايدى الحوادث عانى²⁷
ولا تنتظرن اليوم في لهو غد ومن لغدٍ من حادث بأمان
فانى رأيت الدهر يسرع بالفتى وينقله حالين يختلفان
فاما الذي يمضي فأحلام نائم واما الذي يبقى له فأمانى

Enjoy life, for you are perishable. You are a captive in the hands of Fate.

Don't wait today for the pleasures of tomorrow. Who knows for sure about tomorrow?

²⁴ al-Aʿshā, *Dirwān*, 191.

²⁵ al-ʿAskari, *Dirwān al-maʿānī*, ed. F. Krenkow (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qudsi, 1933), 1:315

²⁶ al-ʿAskari, *Dirwān al-maʿānī*, 1:315.

²⁷ Ibn al-Rāqīq al-Qayrawānī mentions the same statements about the hastening of pleasures but attributes the first line of this verse to Imruʿ al-Qays. See *Qaṭb al-surūr fī awṣāf al-anbidha wa-l-khumūr*, ed. Sāra al-Barbūshī (Beirut: Manshūrāt al-Jamal, 2010), 689.

I've noticed how Fate quickly takes a young man away, moving him to one of two states:

Either what is past are dreams of a sleeper, or what remains to him are wishes.

3. ʿImrān b. Ḥiṭṭān (d. 84/703):²⁸

يأسف المرء على ما فاتهُ من لبانات إذا لم يقضها
وتراه فرحاً مستبشراً بالتي أمضى كأن لم يمضها
عجبا من فرح النفس بها بعد ما قد خرجت من قبضها

A man will regret desires he did not realize.

And you will see him gladly expecting what he has carried out, as if he had not carried it out.

How strange is the soul's joy about [the pleasures] although it doesn't possess them any longer.

4. Ibn al-Muʿtazz (247-96/861-908):²⁹

وبادر بأيام السرور فانها سراع وأيام الهموم بطاء
وخل عتاب الحادثات لوجهها فإن عتاب الحادثات عناء
تعالوا فسقوا أنفسا قبل موتها ليالي ما يأتي وهن وراء

Hasten days of joys, for they pass quickly, and days of sorrow are long.

Don't regret the past, such regret is nothing but pain.

Come let us pour out these souls [of wine] before they die, for the best nights will never reoccur.

5. ʿUjayr al-Salūlī (d. first/seventh century):³⁰

عللاني إنما الدنيا علل واتركاني من عتاب وعذل

Pour another cup! For terrestrial life is in the second cup of wine! And spare me all censures and regrets!

6. Aḥmād al-Mādarāʾī (d. second/eighth century):³¹

عافر الراح ودع نعت الطلل واعص من لامك فيها وعذل
إنما دنياك فاعلم ساعة أنت فيها وسوى ذاك أمل

Drink wine and stop describing the abandoned camp! Renounce the one who blames and censures you for it!

Remember you have only one hour [of joy] in this life! All the rest is [mere] expectation.

²⁸ al-ʿAskari, *Dirwān al-maʿānī*, 1:315.

²⁹ al-ʿAskari, *Dirwān al-maʿānī*, 1:315.

³⁰ al-ʿAskari, *Dirwān al-maʿānī*, 1:315.

³¹ al-ʿAskari, *Dirwān al-maʿānī*, 1:315.

7. Ibn Bassām (229–302/844–914):³²

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| واصل خليلك إنما الد | نينا مواصلة الخليل |
| وانعم ولا تتعجل الـ | مكروه من قبل النزول |
| بادر بما تهوي فما | تدري متى وقت الرحيل |
| وارفض مقالة لائم | إن الملام من الفضول |

Keep in touch with your friend, for friendship is the sense of life.

Enjoy [life] and don't rush doing things you hate.

Hasten to [enjoy] what you adore: no one knows the time of his departure!

Turn down censurer's speeches: censure is the product of being meddlesome.

The common motif across all these verses is the urging that one enjoys life without delay. This motif is actually a reworking, a logical development from the pre-Islamic theme that might be formulated as "destiny is predetermined, and one should celebrate the pleasures of this life now." Each verse is an individual interpretation of the traditional *ma'nā* and is charged with a new semantic dimension. So, what are the modes through which new meaning is added to this conventional theme? The most frequent one is amplification. Thus, in the first example, the general motif ("repeat the pleasures") in the first hemistich is developed in the second, bearing a kind of an advice ("today is a new day," "do whatever you want"). In the second verse, "for the day of wine (enjoying life) will not last long" can be considered another common mode to enrich the conventional store of themes—the transposition of the motif from another genre, more precisely, the idea of mortality from ascetic poetry (*zuhdiyyāt*).

The first two lines of the second passage, by Dik al-Jinn, are an example of complicated transformation, with two motifs combined in one line: the motif from *khamriyyāt* of "enjoy life today" and the thematic element from *zuhdiyyāt* of "the person suffers in Fate's hands." The next lines contain the development of the mentioned transposed motifs related to asceticism, about the vicissitudes of life and the failure of hopes. At the same time, they preserve the key message of wine poetry: the poet advises one to hasten and enjoy life because Fate hastens to deprive one of such an opportunity.³³

³² al-ʿAskari, *Dirwān al-maʿānī*, 1:316.

³³ According to different ways to treat the concept of fate as singled out by M. Piotrovsky, the optimistic motifs from wine poetry can be regarded as surpassing destiny." One cannot resist the twists of fate, but one can get over them by remaining in the memory of future generations, see Piotrovsky M., "The Theme of Fate in South Arabic Legend about Asʿad al-Kāmil," *Palestinian Studies* 25 (in Russian, published in Leningrad, 1974): 120–28. A. Hamori pointed out that the descriptions of wine in pre-Islamic poetry were a challenge to mortality. See Hamori A., *On the Art of Medieval Arabic Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 10–12; and Ph. Kennedy, mentioning the essential balance between hardship and ease (*ʿusr/shidda* and *yusr/ladhdha*), stated that the need to "fulfill life through wine" was important Arabic wisdom (*hikma*). Kennedy Ph., "Khamr and Khikma in Jahili Poetry," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 20 (1989): 98, 113.

The third line, in which wine is not mentioned at all, is prefaced by the statement “the similar (*nahwahn*) was stated by ‘Imrān b. Ḥiṭṭān.” This possibly means that the couplet is cited because it corresponds with the motif concerned: a person is glad about any goals achieved, even in the past, but he regrets unfulfilled plans. This can be considered an inverse transformation of the motif “enjoy life today”; for example, “if you don’t want to regret something in future, hurry to do it now.”

The fourth couplet from Ibn al-Mu‘azz’s *khamriyya* provides an array of amplifications. In the beginning, the appeal to hasten and enjoy happy moments is explained by the gnomic, antithetical statement “days of joys pass quickly, and days of sorrow are long.” The next lines continue this motif as expressed in a maxim that one shouldn’t think about the past and reprove his own faults; instead, he should drive away those thoughts with a cup of wine. This can be considered a development of a traditional *ma‘nā*: “Life consists of sorrows that are driven away by wine.”

The semantic overtone in the fifth couplet is created by elliptic transformation of the motif “terrestrial life is in the second cup of wine,” or the constant repetition of pleasures. The second hemistich is amplification (“forget all the censures”).

The ellipsis in the sixth couplet—“Drink wine!”—invites the listener to start enjoying life immediately. The last verse, which explains the poet’s attitude toward life, is a *ma‘nā* transposed from *zuhdiyyāt*: “Little time is assigned for happiness.”

In the first two verses of the seventh line, the motif is reworked by means of amplification or refinement. In the third verse, we again have the conjunction of hedonistic and ascetic motifs of “hasten to enjoy life” and “no one knows when the last day is.” The final line amplifies the motif, suggesting that the censorer withdraws his reproaches. Together with the first line, which mentions the importance of friendship, this passage encapsulates the celebration of a certain life credo.

One can conclude that, in addition to various ways of amplifying, the most fruitful mode for adding new semantic tones to the motif of hastening to pleasures (*mubādarat al-ladhdhāt*) was to transpose various thematic elements from *zuhdiyyāt*. In almost all the examples, motifs from ascetic poetry appear to be indispensable to the effective impact of hedonistic statements. The modes mentioned in this chapter are not the only ways to rework the conventional themes found in wine poetry, but even this short contribution and its examples show the diversity of possibilities available to poets.

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The Theme of Wine and Love in Medieval Andalusian Strophic Poetry: From Arabic and Hebrew *Muwashshahāt* to Ibn Quzmān's *Azjāl*

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The *muwashshah* (girdle poem), a specific form of Arabo-Andalusian strophic poetry, is different from the official Arabic ode called *qaṣīdah*, which is not subdivided in strophes and has only one rhyme in the whole poem. The *muwashshah* has been imitated by the Spanish Jewish poets in Hebrew and is usually called *shir ezor* (girdle poem). These poets wrote on subjects including love, wine, praise, and relatives' wedding ceremonies.

Example of an Arabic Muwashshah

The following example shows how the poet deliberately uses the same grammatical and linguistic features. For instance, frequent imperatives occur in a *muwashshah* by Ibn Sahl (Ghāzi, II, p. 249; Ibn Sahl, no. 24; *sarī*; *mukbammās al-quṣf*; *mushaṭṭar*). The strophes of this poem, which is preceded by an introduction, are each devoted to a special subject or motif:

0. Introduction: exhortation to drink wine
1. Carpe diem invitation with spring and garden description
2. Explicit wine description, with a slender and graceful lad who pours the wine, and in the end the rebellion of the lover
3. Night description and invitation to the morning drink
4. Description of the beloved and dialogue with the beloved
5. The poet describes his being tortured by love, his meagerness and sadness because his beloved boy is not liberal with rendezvous, and he reproaches him—the lover has deposed the arms, the sweetest love is the disgraceful one

This *muwashshah* has no *kharja* in the proper sense: the language remains classical Arabic, but there is a quotation from the suffering lover:

0. Introduction

‘Bākir ilā l-ladhdha / wal-iṣṭibāh // bi-shurbi r-rāh ///
Mā ‘alā ahli l-hawā min junāh ///

Haste yourself to lust and drinking wine in the morning ///
People of love have no blame ///

In the same poem, another imperative exhorts mankind to have a love rendezvous because it is spring; the garden is described, with its flowers and birds. Here, enumeration of the flowers plays a role, and there is repetition of the same words, such as *rawd* (garden) in lines 3 and 4:

1. Pluck the time of the rendezvous before it goes away; //
because the garden was already satisfied by the tears of the clouds //
because a wondrous secret appeared in the garden //
roses and wild roses and flowers of marguerites //
which emanate fragrance like musk //
while the birds sing following the mourners //.
2. Rise up early and hasten toward the old wine //
in her cup she shines as the color of carnelian //
in the hand of a gazelle with an elegant stature //
thin of stature, slim of waist //
shining like a full moon //
I disobeyed, because of my passion for him, the reviling women. //
3. When I saw the night showing its grayness //
and the bright stars fell down to disappearance //
and the doves showed all their marvelous melodies //
I cried to my companions when daybreak appeared //
with a cry of help: //
“Come to pleasure and the morning drink.” //
4. Praised the Lord who created this gazelle, //
I said to him while the fire filled my inside: //
“Give me a rendezvous, o beautiful young man who became drunk!” //
and he unsheathed from his eyelids the white swords //
willing to fight //
inflicting wounds on the vexed heart. //
6. I became meagre when my heart was ill //
because of my love for someone who was unwilling of meeting me //
How many times I said: “Stop this long reproach //
Don’t you see that I laid down my arms? //
For good and all!” //
The sweetest love is what results in being put to shame. //

Conclusion

The language of this *muwashshaha* has the following features:

- the use of imperatives, addressed to the public in general;
- descriptions of spring, night, wine, and the beloved, with the same identical grammatical sequences of conjunction, subject, and verb;
- enumerations in the description of, for instance, flowers;
- repetitions of key words of the same sound, such as the repetition of *rawd* (garden);
- direct speech to the beloved;

- the distribution of the themes over the individual strophes, as there are garden description, wine drinking, nightly description, direct speech to the beloved gazelle, and description of the lovesickness of the lover.

It is incumbent upon every literary analyst to seek such recurrent patterns so that if and when they are found, the appropriate prosodic structures may be characterized as products of these grammatical and thematic premises.

Examples of a Strophic Poem in Hebrew

In the eleventh century CE, the Jewish poets who wrote poems in Hebrew created the new Hebrew-Andalusian poetry. I study here the relation between love and wine themes and strophic form, and how motifs can be subdivided in the Hebrew *muwashshah* by Mosheh ibn Ezra (1055–1138). Mosheh ibn Ezra is among the Classical Hebrew poets, very different from later Hebrew *muwashshah* poets such as Abraham ibn Ezra (1090–1165).

Some strophic poems end in verses in different language (Roman, or Romance) languages, often in quotations from the mouth of an apparently Christian woman, or in Arabic vernacular from the mouth of drunken persons or Classical Arabic about a higher subject, such as the praise of a Maecenas or a learned rabbi. Most of the final parts are different from the rest of the poem. I explain some of the love and other poems in Hebrew, translating them into English. As already mentioned, Mosheh was among the classicist poets of the Hebrew school in Muslim Spain, in the sense that he used classical motifs of Arabic poetry in Biblical Hebrew, whose grammar was analyzed by the learned North African and Andalusian Jewish grammarians. In his work *Sefer ha-Anaq* (Book of the necklace), which consists of a series of short poems with homonyms and paronomasia in the rhyme, he bundles examples of different genres or clusters of themes and poetic motifs in different chapters to elucidate themes of love, wine drinking, praise, and some descriptive genres. His main works are the *Kitāb al-Muḥāḍara wa-l-Mudhākaraḥ*, with a chapter on the emergence of Hebrew poetry in Muslim Spain, another on the activities of the Jewish grammarians and the activities of the first Hebrew-Andalusian Hebrew poets and colleague poets, and one on twenty-three Arabic figures of speech used to analyze Arabic and Hebrew poetry and prose. His other main work was the *Kitāb al-Ḥadiqa fi-l-majāz wa-l-ḥaqīqah*, on aspects of metaphorical speech, to which Fenton has devoted a monograph. In his *Kitāb al-Muḥāḍaraḥ*, Mosheh ibn Ezra speaks about his strophic love poems as his youthful sins. One of these relates a well-known pederastic adventure: the conquest of a young lad in the house of his mother.

There is frequent usage of the imperative in a strophic poem by Mosheh ibn Ezra. Poem no. 250 (*Dadde yefat to'ar layil haboq / u-sefat yefat mar'eh yomam neshoq*) is in fact an accumulation of imperatives, which also manifests in the translation. The beautiful woman and beloved in the introductory strophe is described by a contrast

between night and day: embracing her occurs at night, and kissing her takes place during the day. The first strophe speaks about the censor, who reproaches the poet-lover for his love, but then the poet reveals the truth speaking in imperatives: "hear the words of truth," nice girls are brought from paradise to seduce men on the earth. Therefore, love is innate to every man. The imperatives of the second strophe urge us to participate in the feast, with wine and music, and then to knock at the beloved's door. The theme here is clearly Epicurean—the *carpe diem* of the Latin poet Horace is also found everywhere. In the third strophe, the biblical reference is presented in a libertine manner, becoming an evocation of the body of the desired woman. The original sense occurs in Exodus 29:26–28:

And thou shalt take the breast of the ram of Aaron's consecration, and wave it for a wave offering before the Lord; and it shall be thy part. And thou shalt sanctify the breast of the wave offering and the shoulder of the heave offering, which is waved, and which is heaved up, of the ram of the consecration, even of that which is for Aaron, and that which is for his sons; and it shall be Aaron's and his sons' by a statute for ever from the children of Israel of the sacrifice of their peace offerings, even their heave offering unto the Lord.

What follows is the translation of the Hebrew text into English of the poem:

0. Embrace the breasts of a beautiful girl at night //
And kiss the lips of a woman with a superior beauty during the day //
1. And the censor, who gives counsel according to his own nature, cover him with injuries ///
Hear the words of truth from my mouth: //
Life exists only with the nice girls //
Because they are borrowed from paradise in order to vex the lie of the men //
There is no living human being who does not love. //
2. Mix your heart with the joys and pleasures ///
And drink at the river bank the sacks of wine ///
And at the sound of the lute and the doves and the sparrows //
And dance and jubilate and clasp your hands ///
Be drunk and knock on the door of the gracious gazelle. ///
3. It is the pleasure of the world, you have to take your part //
When it is you who has right on the portion of the priests of the sacrificed animal //
Reserve for you the correct portion: //
Do not cease to suck the lips and the saliva //
Until you will have received the portion that is your share: the breast and the thigh. //

This girdle poem turns out to be an adaption of biblical images describing the acts and attributes of love: from sacred biblical law we move to profane worldly love.

The Mujūn Genre by Ibn Quzman: Wine and Love in Andalusī Strophic Poetry

The *mujūn* genre in Arabic literature has two well-known representatives: one is the famous wine poet from the east of the Arabic world—Abū Nuwās al-Ḥasan ibn Hānī' (d. 199/814),¹ who lived in the time of the 'Abbāsīd caliphs, such as al-Amin and al-Rashīd—and the other is Ibn Quzmān (d. 555/1160),² who lived in Muslim Spain, the western Muslim world, in the time of the Almoravid caliphs, such as Yūsuf ibn Tāshufīn. Both poets practised the *mujūn* genre, a kind of obscene poetry, while professing to lead a dissolute life with much wine drinking and other extravagancies. Here, I present an analysis of some strophic poems by Ibn Quzmān.

The *Dirwān* of Abū Nuwās has a special chapter devoted to *mujūniyyāt* that contains the kind of poetry written by the poet as a debauchee, with his sins of unlawful lovemaking and wine drinking. Although he did not edit his *Dirwān* himself, he must have suggested its arrangement into chapters.³ However, the problem of the authenticity of his poetry remains, as the popularity of his poetry and poetic themes made other poets imitate his work. Ewald Wagner recently published a whole volume of poetic fragments ascribed to Abū Nuwās that are probably largely, if not entirely, spurious.⁴ If this poetry is not by Abū Nuwās himself, it is at least Abū Nuwāsian.

As far as Ibn Quzmān is concerned, at first glance he differs from Abū Nuwās, not in lifestyle but in poetic production: his main genre is not Classical Arabic poetry, but strophic poetry in stylized Andalusī Arabic dialect, the *zajal*. He was even called “leader of the *zajal* makers.”⁵ Ibn Quzmān lived under the dynasty of the Almoravids, who were not very interested in poetry. They came to power when, after the fall of Toledo (478/1085) and the Battle of al-Zallāqa (Sagrajas), in 479/1086, Yūsuf ibn Tāshufīn deposed in 489/1096 the last of the “party kings,” with their luxurious courts and entourages of paid poets.⁶ Yūsuf and his entourage are said to have not even spoken Arabic, let alone understood the subtleties of Arabic poetry. Thus, the only audience to which the poets could turn were their own administrative class, which consisted of local authorities such as the chief *qāḍī* Abū Ja'far ibn Ḥamdīn (d. 548/1153). Although Ibn Quzmān was not a wandering poet, he was sometimes obliged to seek the patronage of other dignitaries outside his native town, Córdoba. He often went to Seville and Granada, where he had his famous discussion and poetic exchange with the poetess Nazhūn (fl. 545/1150). His anecdote about Nazhūn already demonstrates his *mujūn* lifestyle. The anecdote is

¹ Wagner (1965), Kennedy (1997, 2005).

² Colin (1971).

³ Schoeler (2010/2011), esp. 25–30.

⁴ Wagner (2008).

⁵ Colin (1971).

⁶ Schippers (2008).

found in the *Al-Ṭālīʿ al-saʿīd* by Ibn Saʿīd, from which the *Iḥāṭa* derives a passage.⁷ It is about Ibn Quzmān's visit to Granada, when he met several other poets in one of the gardens of the Banū Saʿīd in the village of La Zubia (Zāwiya) near Granada:

When the poetess Nazhūn saw him dressed in yellow, in the manner of the *faqīhs*, she exclaimed: "How nicely dressed you are, golden calf of the Israelites! Only you do not make happy the people who look at you!" Ibn Quzmān replied: "Perhaps I do not delight the people who see me, but in any case I will delight the people who hear me; it is your task to please the people that see you, whore!" Then inebriety came over Ibn Quzmān. The long and the short of it was that people, including Ibn Quzmān, began to push one another away in the direction of the pond. Finally they threw Ibn Quzmān into the pond.

He came out in sopping wet clothes, and had swallowed a large quantity of water. He then said: "Listen, o vizier!" and he recited: *ʾIb Abā Bakrīn wa-lā ḥawla li / bi-dafʿi aʿyānin wa-andhālī //*

1. Listen Abu Bakr, I have no force / to push away prominent or insignificant people //

2. By the woman who possesses that wide vagina, which overflows / with fluid, and resembles the tails of my garment! //

3. You plunged me in water, o lord, pay for this by plunging me in your money."

The vizier ordered Ibn Quzmān to be stripped of his clothes and gave him fresh garments and presents, which suited him.

As a poet, Ibn Quzmān "derided courtly love and portrayed himself as a bohemian, a reckless toper, a whoremonger, and a sodomite (*khālīʿ*, *zānī*, *laṣṣawāt*)."⁸ His great enemies were the *faqīhs* (Islamic juridical functionaries), powerful dignitaries during the reign of the Almoravids: his attitude is dubious because he sometimes praises a *faqīh*, the dignitary from whom he receives money, but at other times *faqīh* is the moralist preacher who reproaches the poet for his debaucherous lifestyle. Because of his frequent wine drinking, Ibn Quzmān was condemned to death by flogging but later saved by an Almoravid dignitary.

Ibn Quzmān's *azjāl* do not contain *kharjas* or *marākiz* in Romance, but there are three occasions on which he takes over *kharjas* in vernacular Arabic from the *muwashshahāt* of his contemporary Ibn Bāqī (d. 545/1151). His *azjāl*, though, do contain many Romance words. His only *muwashshah* is Allen Jones no. 579 from al-Ḥillī's *Al-ʿAṭīl wa-l-Ḥālī*, which contains a *kharja* with some Romance words.⁹

Most of his nearly 150 *azjāl* usually have between five and nine strophes, although some have as many as forty or forty-two. The panegyric poems often have a light love or wine introduction, which replaces the old *nasīb* of traditional Classical Arabic poems; following is usually the proper laudatory part (*madīḥ*). Between the two there is a brief transition (*dukbūl*, *khurūj*, *takballuṣ*).¹⁰

⁷ Ibn al-Khatib, 2:504–5; Schippers (1993).

⁸ Colin (1971).

⁹ Jones (1993), 194–95.

¹⁰ Nykl (1946), 266–301.

Some have a more developed structure, such as poem no. 90, which includes the testament of a lazy drinker whose intention is to drink from the early morning and who finally wants to be buried between the grape vines (0–7); it then tells of a sexual liaison between the poet and a Berber girl, a section that also includes some realistic details (8–13). The anecdote about the Berber woman starts in strophe 8, in dialogue: “By God! Why for a change shouldn’t we talk about a chick!” This encounter is described from strophes 9–10. The dialogue format continues: “We sat there, and I saw—by God!—coming with a diadem on top! A Berber woman! What a beautiful basket! Well, let us go there! She is not a basket with thistles”; “Do not attack her harshly because she is not a sweetie,” which is continued in strophe 10 with a dialogue with the woman herself: “Tell me, little girl, are you from fine flour or what are you made of?” “I go home in order to sleep.” “By God you were right in doing so.” Thereupon the poet says, supposedly to his penis, “You stand up first.” It answers, “No, you first,” and the protagonist concludes, “We will put the horns on her husband.” Strophe 11 describes how the beautiful thighs of the woman arouse his sexual feelings. Strophe 12 describes the sexual act, as does strophe 13: “I had already started—by God—with the job,” followed by “I pushed something so sweet, so sweet as honey, and my spirit descended between her two hot legs.”

The following day, when the poet awakes, a quarrel starts between the poet and the girl’s family (14–15). The poet wants to escape and goes to his Maecenas (a *khurrij* in strophes 16–17), followed by a short laudatory passage on his Maecenas (18–22). The beginning of this *zajal* goes as follows:¹¹

90. And he also said—may God pardon him!— [meter: *khafif*; XSLL / XLSL / LSL //]:

0. *nafni ‘umrī / faʔl-khankara / wa-l-mujūn //*

I pass my life in dissoluteness and doing nothing.

Yā bayāḍi / khalīʿ badit / an nakūn //

What a lucky life for me. My endeavor was always to be dissolute.

1. *innamā an / natūba-ʿnā / fa-muḥāl //*

That I would ever show repentance is unthinkable

Wa-baqāʿi / bi-lā shuray/ba ḍalāl //

Staying without a sip of wine would be a grave error for me.

Binu binu / wa-daʿ-ni mim/mā yuqāl //

Wine, wine! Let me in peace of whatever they say!

Ima tark al-/khalāʿa ʿin/di junūn //

Because leaving my picaresque way of life, is foolishness for me.

2. *Khādīmī ḥur/ra māli li-l-/aḥbās //*

May my slave girl be freed, and my money paid to the pious foundations

An-nabāra-l-/ladbi nuʿaṭ/taʿal-kās //

On the day that I leave the cup in peace

Wa-ana-sqayt / bi-ʿullal aw / jullās [khammās] //

¹¹ For this poem see also the chapter by Agnes C.A. Imhof, ““Bury me under the grapevine”: Comparative Perspectives on an Arabic-Latin Motif of Transgression” in this volume.

And when no drinks are offered anymore to me in two- or fivefold fust
An nuṣṣayyit / illā ḥalqī / la-l-jarrūn //
 Because my throat can only be satisfied with the jar.

3. *Ayya-āltam / bi-nā bi-dhā-l/-aqdāḥ //*
 O what I am thirsty for the wine cups
Sukra sukra / ay mā'nā fī-nā ṣiḥāḥ //
 Drunkenness, drunkenness, what meaning has being sober for us?
Wa-matā a/radum u-l/- iṣṭibāḥ //
 And when you want to drink the morning drink,
Anbabū-nī / min aṣṣawālī -l/-falaqūn //
 Please, awake me before the morning watch.

Especially in the description of the liaison with the woman lies the difference from motifs of Abū Nuwās. In Ibn Quzman's poetry we have the poet's preference for women; there is no trace of Abū Nuwās's preference for young men. Ibn Quzmān stresses his sexual relation with a woman: his description is very explicit.

Let me mention some striking points from the other *azjāl* by Ibn Quzmān in the following. Just like Abū Nuwās, the Andalusī poet stresses that he does not want to repent of his *mujūn* behaviour. Ibn Quzmān reacts negatively in his poem no. 148 (meter: *majzū' al-ramal*; LSL / LSL), a wine and love poem, when he is invited to repent by the *faqīh*, the Islamic preacher. Because the poem starts:

0. *Asma' ash qal/-li -l-faqī: "tub" // inna dhā fu/dūli aḥmaq //*
 Hear how the *faqīh* says: "You have to repent." What a stupid intruder!
Kif natūb wa-r-/raḥḍa ḍaḥka // wa-n-nasīm kal/-miski ya'baq //
 Why repent when the garden laughs and the wind is fragrant like musk?

The poem continues with a garden description and the poet's wish to drink wine, which here is called by its Romance word, *bino*. In the sixth and last strophe he drops his own name, Ibn Quzmān, as a kind of self-praise, with an explanation of his name as a form of *qasam*, or oath, asseveration, magic formula, with its variant *qazma*.

The poet does not want his dissolute colleagues to repent, as he reveals in poem no. 143 (meter: *madīd mabtūr*; LSL/LL), which is a *mujūn* poem without known addressee:

0. *Ḥaqqā khullā' / tubtum? Alla kān yak/fī-kum //*
 Is it really true, drunken people, that you have shown repentance? May
 God help you.
Sataraw dhā-n-/naṣṣawār // ay sharāb yas/qī-kum //
 You will see the "flowers"¹² what a wine they will pour you!

There are, however, ascetic poems (*zubdiyyāt*) in Ibn Quzmān's *Dirwān* in which the poet feigns repentance, such as poem no. 147 (meter: *al-basīṭ al-maqtū'*; XLSL / LL / XLSL / L //), which has a kind of "abandoned campsite" introduction,

¹² Servants pouring wine had apparently been nicknamed after flowers.

with a following motif of *ubi sunt* or *où sont les neiges d'antan*:¹³

0. *Dār-al-ḥabīb / mudb bān / mabdūm la-l-/qā' //*
 [LLSL / LL / LLL / L //] The house of the beloved, since he left, is destroyed to the
 bottom
‘alā ḥafī/r-ad-dār / li-waddu narja' //
 [SLSL / LL / SLSL / L //] To the remnants of the house, because of my longing for him,
 I will return
1. *Raḥal ‘an-a-l-/marṣan // man ḥān raḥi/lu-b //*
 The one whose time has arrived went away from the dwelling place
Wa-d-dār qā'an / ṣafṣaf // ka-dhā faṣi/lu-b //
 The house is a deserted plain just as its enclosure
Yarḥi fi-hā-l-/qumri / ‘alā baḍi/lu-b //
 There the dove is lamenting his young
Man fāraq-al-/khillān // fāyy khayra yaṭ/ma' //
 Who is left by his friends for which good he can desire?
Bal yanduba -l-/āthār / marḍi' fi marḍi' //
 He has to complain the remnants, place for place.

He then speaks about his own sufferings because of his lost world in strophe 4 and repents in strophe 5:

3. *Ayn darba Ban / Zaydūn // waqyn-iḥtifā/luḥ //*
 Where is the street of Ibn Zaydūn, that people frequently visited?
Ayn ḥawmata-l-/jāmī' // waqyn jamā/luḥ //
 Where is the quarter of the mosque, where is its beauty?
ḥummil min al-/makrūb // farwq iḥtimā/luḥ //
 It had to support more disgracefulness than it could bear.
Aqrub tara-b / faddān // yuḥrath wa-yur/za' //
 Come nearer and you will see it has become land plowed and cast with seeds
Wa-l-bāqiy-asb/ṭipar / li-l-qāma yuq/ta' //
 and the rest is steppe [*estepar*] high as the stature of a man.
4. *ka-anni lam / naḥḍur / dbikal-majā/lis //*
 It is as if I was never present at these gatherings
Mā' kulla mus/tazraf / maliḥ murwā/nis //
 With all the distinguished, beautiful and amiable people
Yā fi ḥusna -z-/zina / min-al-malā/bis //
 What beautiful adornments of the garments!
Wa-n-naqri ba-l-/idān / yuḥf al wa-yuṣ/na' //
 When the sound of the lutes was made and produced.
Wa-ṣawelata-l-/mizmār / min barra tus/ma' //
 And you could hear the noise of the flutes from outside.

¹³ The traditional elegiac motif of the deserted campsite of the tribe of the beloved is used here to express the motif of *ubi sunt qui ante nos fuerunt?* (where are the people who lived in former times?), which also occurs in a poem by the medieval poet François Villon (where are the snows of former times?).

5. *Qad tāb Aban / Quzmān // tubā-lu, in dām //*

Now Ibn Quzmān has repented himself, blessings for him, I just hope it will last

Qad kānat ay/yāmu-l / a'yād-f-al-ay/yām //

His days were feasts among the days!

Ba'da-ṭ-ṭabal / wa-d-duff // wa-fatl al-ak/mām //

Leaving behind drums and tambourine and the rolling back of the sleeves [to be ready to go to the dance]

Min ṣum'at al-/ādbān // yabbaṭ wa-yat/la' //

From the minaret of the call to prayer he goes down and up

Imām fī mas/jad šār // yaṣjud wa-yar/ka' //

He has become an Imam in a mosque.

The poet feigns having become as pious as an Islamic preacher or imam under the influence of the elegiac *ubi sunt* motif. However, this is not his normal behavior. He normally does not want to repent and prefers a *mujūn* life, also in his taste for women.

The poet's love of women is clear from poem no. 145 (meter: *majzū' al-mutaqārib* SLX / SLX / SL //): the poet praises brown-skinned women:

0. *Nirid an / naqūl lak / khabar // ḥalāwa / fī ḥawla-s-/sumar //*

I want to say you one thing: sweet are those brown-skinned ladies.

The poet says: brown is a noble color; brown has some white and some black, like the breaking through of light at dawn. The poet is seduced by that color of old wine; he is seduced by its shamelessness and its passion, which leads to death:

5. *Futintu / bi-amra-l-/mujūn //*

I was seduced for the sake of shamelessness ...

Wa-'ishqī / bi-ḥāl-al-Manūn /

When my love passion was in the situation of death

Wa-mā qad/dar al-Lāh / yakūn /

But what God decides, will happen.

Nafadh fīy/ya siḥra-l-/juḥūn /

The charm of the eyelids had an effect upon me

Nufūdh al-/qaḍā wa-l-/qadar /

An effect like fate and predestination.

He finally mentions a lady called Umm Sa'd and describes her haughtiness and his torment. There is no further specific panegyric in this poem.

In poem no. 23 (meter: *ṭawīl* SLL / SLLL / SLL / SLSL //), about wine drinking and the dissolute life, the poet wishes to be a wine seller and an Islamic preacher at the same time, after having said that he does not like preachers at all:

4. *Ay ma kān / wazīr bi-qur/bu naqrub //*

I come near to a vizier wherever I find him,

Wa-in rayt / faqīl, naqūm / wa-nahrub //

But from the preacher I stand up and run away

Wa-kulli / jamā'atan / la tashrub //

Because all the people who do not drink,

Las naqrub / anā dhik-al-/jamā'a //

I do not approach this kind of people.

5. *Faḡī an / khammār min rū/ḥī naʿmal //*

I want to make of myself a wine-selling preacher.

Fa-las kit/takūn ʿimā/ma ashkal //

I would not bear the most elegant turban

In lam al/qa qālis al/qa juljal //

When I do not find a cap, I will find in any case bells hung on my neck.

Tara-h am/si dik wa-l-yawm / qubāʿa //

You see it (the red cap) yesterday as a cock and today as (the feathers of a) hedgehog.

So apparently when he does not find the gown and cap of a judge, he at least does not hesitate to look like a clown.

Many anecdotes about Abū Nuwās and Ibn Quzmān point at their lives as debauchees. Both were thrown into jail because of their behavior. The censor plays a significant role in the poetry of both men. Both poets generally manifest no repentance, although they sometimes say they hope for the Lord's forgiveness. In Ibn Quzmān's *Dirwān* we find an ascetic poem with the motif of repentance. Here, the poet abandons his role for a while, but how long does it last?

Ibn Quzmān's *Dirwān* contains so many *muḡūn* motives that it remains comparable with Abū Nuwās's *muḡūniyyāt*. Both have poems, sometimes starting with enumerative aphorisms, mentioning love objects and wine when professing their debauched desires.

What is different, however, is the outspoken affirmation by the poet Abū Nuwās with regard to his predilection for male love with lads described by some outer qualities, such as a nasal voice and effeminate speech. There are descriptions of the poet untying his lad's trouser cord and other descriptions of liaisons with boys, which stand for his *muḡūn* lifestyle but are different from Ibn Quzmān's *muḡūn* behavior. Abū Nuwās also likes descriptions of penises and their hyperbolic dimensions. His penis "reaching to the stars" is far more of an exaggeration than Ibn Quzmān's dialogue with his penis in poem no. 90.

The *waṣīyya* genre occurs in both poetries: Abū Nuwās's ninth subchapter of his *muḡūniyyāt* (poem 191) is dedicated exclusively to *waṣāyā* giving advice about a life of debauchery, mostly in the form of imperatives. The *waṣīyya* par excellence by Ibn Quzmān is, of course, the testament of the poet as a wine drinker in poem no. 90, but occasionally he gives advice in the form of *waṣīyya* in his other poems.

The fact remains that although Ibn Quzmān sometimes mentions Abū Nuwās in passing in his poems, he has other inspirations and predilections in his practices of *muḡūn* in lifestyle and in composing *muḡūn* poems.

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Wine Poetry in the *Dīwān* of Ibrāhīm al-Mi‘mār

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Ibrāhīm al-Mi‘mār: His Life and Work

Ibrāhīm al-Mi‘mār (d. 749/1348) counts among the most famous poets of the Mamluk era. His *dīwān* was so popular in the Mamluk period that Ibn Taghribirdi did not dare quote much of it, as it was known to everybody anyway.¹ Almost all the information we have on him go back to Ṣafadī’s *A‘yān al-‘aṣr* and his *Wāfi bi-l-wafayāt*.² As the name al-Mi‘mār indicates, he was an architect or master builder. Some of his epigrams actually contain construction terminology, which, as part of the then fashionable device of *tawriya* (i.e., double entendre), implies two meanings: the obvious technical one and a nontechnical, often frivolous one. The last word of these epigrams is usually loaded with the *tawriya*, which at the same time constitutes the punch line of the poem. The following epigram, number 66, in al-Mi‘mār’s *dīwān* is a good example of this technique (metre *sarī*):

لِّلّٰهِ حَجَّارٌ بِالْحَاطِظِ قَدْ تَرَكَ الْأَحْيَاءَ أَمْوَاتًا
كَمْ قُلْتُ مِنْ عِشْقِي لَهُ لَيْتَنِي كُنْتُ لِدَا الْحَجَّارِ نَحَّاتًا

God, what a stonemason, who with his glances turns the living into dead.
How often my passion made me say: “I wish I could be his chiseler!”

The ambiguity lies in the expression *nahḥatā* which technically means “chiseler”. The second, frivolous meaning is “someone who chisels (i.e. ‘bangs’) somebody” which in connection with the preceding *li-dhā l-ḥajjārī* results in the *tawriya* “the chiseler/banger of this stonemason”.

Al-Mi‘mār does not belong to the group of highbrow professional poets who made their living from the gifts and allowances they received from potent sovereigns, as was the case during the ‘Abbāsīd period.³ A serious change had come about in the following centuries. Alongside professional poets, two new types of poets appeared on the scene.⁴ On the one hand, starting in the Seljuq era (429–

¹ Cited in Bauer, “Mamluk Literature,” 118.

² For details on his life, see Bauer, “Ibrāhīm al-Mi‘mār.” Bauer wrote another article on al-Mi‘mār that deals with his only *maqāma* that has come down to us: “Die Leiden eines ägyptischen Müllers: Die Mühlen-Maqāma des Ibrāhīm al-Mi‘mār (st. 749/1348).”

³ Monroe and Pettigrew, in “Decline of Courtly Patronage,” taking into account the cases of Ibn Quzmān (470–555/1078–1160) and Ibn Dāniyāl al-Kaḥḥāl (d. 710/1310), illustrated how the patronage in al-Andalus and in the Mamluk sultanate declined.

⁴ Bauer, *al-Mi‘mār*, 63–66; Bauer, *Misunderstandings*, 108–11; Larkin, *Popular*, 220–24.

552/1037–1194), religious scholars gradually entered the field of poetry, which was formerly imbued with the aesthetic values of the *kuttāb*—a process that continued during the Ayyubid era (566–658/1171–1260 in Damascus and Aleppo, until 742/1342 in Ḥamāh) and the Mamluk reign (648–923/1250–1517). For these religious scholars poetry was an important part of their educational curriculum and developed into markers of merit and status. During the Ayyubid period a second type of poet came into view. These belonged to a lower social strata—Margaret Larkin uses the apposite term *petite bourgeoisie*—which included manual professions such as butchers (e.g., al-Jazzār, d. 669/1275), bath-house keepers (al-Ḥammāmī, d. ca. 712/1312), and paper dealers (al-Warrāq, d. 695/1297).⁵ Unlike the religious scholars of the first group, members of the second group did not receive any systematic education that included poetry. Ibrāhīm al-Mi‘mār belonged to this second group. As a master builder he practiced a profession that could hardly qualify as intellectual, yet he most probably had the opportunity to receive the basic schooling provided by the *sabil kuttāb*, a sort of primary school and a widespread institution in Mamluk times, at which people from the lower classes of society could learn to read and write and receive elementary knowledge of grammar, religious law, and so on. According to his own account in one of his epigrams, he also attended seminars of religious scholars.⁶ Al-Mi‘mār wrote from the perspective of that class, often voicing grievances and exposing social inequalities in some of his poems.⁷ He wrote poems about and for millers, merchants, weavers, cotton manufacturers, and cotton carders, to name only a few.

We can assume that al-Mi‘mār’s main source of income was not related to his work as a poet. He made his living as a master builder and was not dependent on rewards from rich or powerful individuals. His *dirwān* gives ample evidence of this, as panegyric poetry is largely absent. Neither do we find any summons to his audience to reward him for his poetry, as in the anonymous ballad monger’s *zajal* (a strophic poem in dialect form) of Voegeli or in al-Ghubārī’s poem, which seems to have been commissioned or sponsored by a number of shopkeepers.⁸ This does not mean that al-Mi‘mār did not promote himself and his work—al-Ṣafadī mentions that he received an epigrammatic poem as a welcome present from al-Mi‘mār. For a poet from the Mamluk period, no matter whether from the lower or elite strata of society, poetry did not return enough for one to sustain a decent living: If one of the most brilliant elite poets of the time, Ibn Nubāta (686–768/1287–1366), often complained about his poverty—which one might not take literally, given the topos of the poverty-stricken poet—then we can only guess as to the plight of other less prominent poets at the time.⁹ A

⁵ Larkin, *Popular*, 193–94.

⁶ Al-Mi‘mār, *Dirwān*, no. 303: *wa-‘ālimin ataytuhū mustami‘an* (“that scholar I visited, listening to his lectures”).

⁷ See, e.g., Bauer, *Nilzajal* and *Mühlen-Maqāme*.

⁸ Voegeli, *Manṣūbat*, 471; Larkin, *Dust*, 22.

⁹ Bauer, “Ibn Nubātah al-Misrī (686–768/1287–1366),” 30; and Bauer, *Misunderstandings*, 126–27.

good illustration of the nonelite poets' dilemma is Yaḥyā al-Jazzār (d. 679/1281), who, despite endeavoring to survive as a poet by writing loads of panegyric poems, was forced to return to his job as a butcher. He is even reported saying that while a poet he had to run after the dogs (by dogs he means patrons who did not pay him); as a butcher again, he was better off having the dogs run after him.¹⁰

Although al-Mi‘mār's poems brim with graphic descriptions of sex, carousal, sexual innuendo, dissoluteness, winebibbing, and hashish use, al-Ṣafadi describes him as an ascetic man who led a modest lifestyle, avoiding the powerful of his time. He lived in Bāb al-Lūq, a quarter in present-day downtown Cairo, where, according to Maqrizī, jugglers, snake charmers, wrestlers, and other members of this lower class lived. The quarter is also known for various sorts of debauchery: When Qudādār (d. 730/1329) became governor of Cairo in 724/1324, he confiscated large amounts of hashish in Bāb al-Lūq and had it burned at Bāb Zuwayla along with large quantities of confiscated wine.¹¹ The latter gate is portrayed by al-Mi‘mār in three poems in which he describes it as notoriously drunk and inciting envy on the part of the passers-by.

Al-Ṣafadi defines al-Mi‘mār as an *‘āmmī ẓarīf*, a refined man from the common folk with no specific *‘ulamā’* training and no proficiency in grammar, writing *fushḥā* poems full of *lahn*, a mixture of substandard and standard Arabic. This latter fact earned him some blame from al-Ṣafadi, who in contrast explicitly praises al-Mi‘mār's dialectal poetry, saying that he shows his real genius in that field. Interestingly al-Ṣafadi refrains from quoting any of these poems, which, according to Bauer, may be the result of the incompatible nature of this originally oral poetry with the standards of professionalism within the group of *udabā’* at that time.¹² Also, colloquial Arabic has always been the preferred means of communication across all levels of society. It is, however, decidedly informal, which may have disqualified it in the eyes of many anthologists and *udabā’* from being reproduced in written form.

His Dīwān

According to the edition—currently in print—al-Mi‘mār's *dīwān* consists of more than five hundred epigrammatic poems, one laudatory *qaṣīda*, thirty-two *marwāʾils*, one *muwāshshah*, twelve *zajals*, and one *maqāma*.

The epigrammatic poems are for the most part two-verse compositions, although some have three verses, some four, and very few five or more. The longest one reaches twelve verses.¹³ The thematic gamut of his poems ranges from poems on love, wine, hashish, and sex (often using terminology of certain trades and crafts) to poems on certain persons (most satirical, very few laudatory), Egypt and Cairo, on the plague, and other subjects of his time and environment.

¹⁰ Bauer, *Misunderstandings*, 120.

¹¹ Bauer, *al-Mi‘mār*, 69.

¹² Bauer, *al-Mi‘mār*, 70–71.

¹³ Cf. Talib, *Epigram*, *passim*.

In his *diwān*, which is ordered alphabetically, we find only one laudatory *qaṣida* of eighteen verses; this he wrote for the secretary ‘Alā’addīn Ibn Faḍlallāh al-‘Umārī (d. 769/1368). The *qaṣida* is followed by a comment by his contemporary, the poet and goldsmith Shams al-dīn b. al-Ṣā’igh (d. 725/ 1325): “He (al-Mi‘mār) made this although he does not have any ‘*arabiyya* (good Arabic).” Upon that al-Mi‘mār replied: “How could a donkey get himself a cart (also ‘*arabiyya*)?” and improvised the following verses (no. 237 in the *diwān*, metre *ṭarwīl*):

يَقُولُونَ هَذَا مَا لَهُ عَرَبِيَّةٌ وَلَسْنَا نَرَاهُ لِلنَّحَاةِ يُجَارِي
فَقُلْتُ لَهُمْ مِنْ أَيْنَ لِي عَرَبِيَّةٌ وَمَا فُزْتُ فِي الدُّنْيَا بِحَقِّ حِمَارٍ

They say: “He has no ‘*arabiyya* / we don’t see him frequent the grammarians.”

I told them: “How should I get a cart / when I haven’t even obtained the money for a donkey in this world.”

With regard to language, the ordering of the different poems is revealing: after the alphabetically ordered epigrammatic poems in formal Arabic are *marwāls* (two-verse poems in dialect), which are in turn followed by a *murwashshah* (strophic poem) in formal Arabic or what can be called al-Mi‘mār’s formal Arabic as it is mixed with colloquialisms. Consequently, there did not seem to have existed a need to divide the *diwān* by the criterion of formal and informal Arabic. Perhaps the reason for placing the *marwāl* after the epigrammatic poems lies in the length of the *marwāl*, as it is close to the shorter poems in the alphabetical section. The juxtaposition of the *murwashshah* to the *zajal* that follow directly may be due to the affinity between the two genres.

In Mamluk times the *murwashshah* was often used for laudatory purposes. Al-Mi‘mār follows this traditional approach in his only *murwashshah*, which begins with a love theme (stanzas 1–2) and continues with a description of nature showing a *takballuṣ* (a transitional verse) in stanza 4. Stanzas 5–8 contain the praise of an unnamed *sayyid*, on the occasion of ‘*id al-fiṭr*, the feast of fastbreaking at the end of the month of Ramadan, which makes this a typical piece of occasional poetry. The *murwashshah* does not end with a *kharja*, though, but with an ego passage in which al-Mi‘mār gives an account of how he wrote the poem. Quite atypical for a *murwashshah* is its length of eight stanzas. Normally even Mamluk *murwashshahs* do not exceed five or six stanzas at most. Just as his laudatory *qaṣida*, al-Mi‘mār’s *murwashshah* is characterized by an elegant but unadorned formal Arabic with some colloquialisms.

Clearly, al-Mi‘mār preferred the dialectal *zajal* over the formal *murwashshah*. Two of the *zajals* were composed on special occasions: the plenitude of the Nile in the Nile *zajal* (No. 533 in the *diwān*) and the feast of Ramadan in the laudatory *zajal* (No. 532). In this respect they are poetry created for a specific occasion. Most of al-Mi‘mār’s *zajals* recount a story or tie together incoherent episodes that make up a loosely connected story. As a general rule the *zajal* starts with a statement such as “A

tiny amount of green hashish is much better than two-thousand red ones (i.e. glasses of wine),” then passes on to the narrative. There are, however, examples of a more coherent organization of the narrative within a *zajal*: The self-deprecatory *zajal* on the deplorable fate of a man who has four young lovers (No. 534, where it is wrongly introduced as *muwashshaḥa*) is such a neatly organized specimen with an opening verse, *maṭlaʿ*, introducing the poem and giving basic information about what the *zajal* is about. In the first stanza he describes his mishap in a more detailed way, mentioning how difficult it is for an old man to have four lovers in one year (the coincidence of four lovers and the four seasons of the year may be either fortuitous or intended by the author). The next stanza recapitulates the life he had as a soldier and homosexually active man. The following four stanzas are dedicated to four amorous adventures, each one dedicated to one of four lovers.

In most of al-Mī'mār's *zajals* the protagonists lament some event in their life. So do the protagonists of the *zajals* (also called *bullayq*) on wine, hashish, and beer, of which there are four (Nos. 535, 536, 537, and 538). The protagonist does not obtain the drugs he craves and spends all his time and energy on the quest of the coveted intoxicants and other objects of desire associated with them. Al-Mī'mār's self-mocking laments (Nos. 534 and 541) with sexual themes belong to the *ayriyyāt* genre, as they express sexual disappointment, the woes of penis soreness, impotence, and exhaustion in coarse and comical language. It must be mentioned here that the poetry of debauchery (*mujūn*) or penis poems (*ayriyyāt*) was not a domain of lower or middle classes. Instead, many a religious scholar or judge took delight in producing such poems.¹⁴ In the *zajals* that contain praise and direct or open criticism (or lampooning), the narrative element is far less present because they describe or enumerate the qualities of the praised or criticized persons.

Wine in the Poetry of al-Mī'mār

Wine poetry was quite a touchy issue for a scholar, much more than obscene *mujūn* poetry. When al-Nawāḥī (859/1455) published the most comprehensive anthology and treatise on wine to that point, *Ḥalbat al-Kumayt*, he endured fierce attacks from some of his fellow scholars.¹⁵ But as with obscene poetry, al-Mī'mār could rejoice in his position as an outsider to the caste of scholars who were scrutinized much more strictly. Most of his wine poems do not praise the qualities of wine or enumerate its characteristics (e.g., consistency, hue, taste); instead, they form part of a larger setting (an adventurous story or quest in the case of the *zajals*; wine appears in various contexts in the epigrams), most of which praise and encourage sex, debauchery, and libertinism, which thus also belong to the genre of *mujūn*.

¹⁴ Bauer, *al-Mī'mār*, 74; and Rowson, s.v. *mujūn*, in EAL 2:546–48.

¹⁵ Sakhāwī, *Daw'*, 7:230.

Perhaps because of its being the intoxicant associated with the lower classes, beer has not been portrayed in a fashion that even comes close to wine or hashish. Hashish, though, was very popular in poetry starting in the eleventh century. Rosenthal says that during the thirteenth to sixteenth century, all poets would have written some poems on hashish, although many must have been suppressed.¹⁶ Is the same true for beer? We cannot know. Very little noncanonical Arabic poetry has survived that does not stem from literate poets with more than a modicum of education.

There is no doubt that al-Mi'mār took a strong liking to the inclusion of wine, hashish, and beer as the subject matter of or motifs in his poems. He not only used them as in his short epigrams but also dedicated four entire *zajals* to their praise. These four *zajals* are grouped together in the section on *zajals*, beginning with the wine *zajal* discussed here, followed by the *zajal* on beer and ending with two on hashish. Because the *zajal* on beer, *mizr*, is the first of its kind known in Arabic literature, it deserves special attention and has already been the subject of a study by Hinrich Biesterfeldt.¹⁷

His Zajal on Wine

His *zajal* on wine *mana'ūnā mā'a l-'inab, Yāsīn!* ("They barred us from the wine, Yāsīn!", no. 535) comprises twenty-one stanzas and begins typically with an opening verse whose two half verses rhyme. This same rhyme is taken up in the last line of the following stanzas, which consist of four verses. The first three verses of every stanza end on a rhyme that is uniform only in the respective stanza.

The last verses of the stanzas frequently strike a different tone from the first three verses, as they recapitulate, conclude, or ironically comment on or reinterpret the meaning of the preceding three lines. A good example is stanza 9, where he wheedles the abbot into giving him a jar of wine. He talks sweetly to him and even praises his religion (*dīn*), saying that God may let him die under his religion—normally a Muslim would want somebody confessing a different religion to convert to Islam—only to say mockingly in an aside to himself "knowing that Christianity is the most despicable *dīn*." He maintains his derogatory attitude in the next stanza, fearing that the abbot turns "swiny" (*yatkbanzar*).

In this *zajal* (the meter is *khafīf*) the last line of the stanzas ends in an exclamation, such as "Abū Martin!" (stanza 8), "Āmin!" ("amen," stanza 11), "Arwin!" ("serve us," stanza 12), "Ishbīn!" ("godfather," stanza 13). This corresponds to the usual practice of the last line being a refrain sung by a chorus, often in a different rhythmic mood from the first three lines (note here the long ending in *-in*). The refrain may have also been declaimed by the public who knew or predicted the four aforementioned exclamations:

¹⁶ Rosenthal, *Herb*, 13.

¹⁷ Biesterfeldt, *Mizr*.

مَنْعُونَا مَاءَ الْعِنَبِ يَا سَيْنُ اللَّهُ يَكْفِي لَا يَمْنَعُونَا السَّيْنُ

- ٢ بِاللَّهِ قُلِّي إِذَا مُنِعْنَا الرِّاحَ
- ٣ وَحُرْمَنَا مِنَ الْوُجُوهِ الْمَلَاخَ
- ٤ بَيْشَ بَقَيْنَا نَسْتَجْلِبِ الْأَفْرَاخَ
- ٥ وَالْخَلِيعَ كَيْفَ تَرَاهُ يَعِيشُ مَسْكِينُ
- ٦ وَعَلَى مَا الْعِنَبُ بَكَ الرَّاوُوقَ
- ٧ وَالشَّمْعَ صَارَ بِعَبْرَتُوا مَخْنُوقَ
- ٨ وَالْوَتَرِ بَاتَ مِنَ الْغُرُوبِ لِلشُّرُوقَ
- ٩ مِنْ أَنْيُتُوا تَسْمَعُ لَوْ فِي اللَّيْلِ حَيْنُ
- ١٠ وَلَقَدْ هَانُوا حَضْرَةَ الْمُحَضَّرَ
- ١١ وَتَلَوْنَ ذَا الزَّهْرِ وَأَتَعَبَرُ
- ١٢ وَبَغِيظُوا رِيحَانَنَا أَتَمَرَّرَ
- ١٣ وَعَلَى وَجْهُهُوا صَلَّبَ الْيَاسِمِينَ
- ١٤ وَالنَّدَامَى عَادَ جَمْعُهُمْ فِي شَتَاتَ
- ١٥ حَزْنُتُوا كَنَّ مَاتَ لَهُمْ أَمْوَاتَ
- ١٦ هَذَا قَاعِدُ يَبْكِي عَلَى مَا فَاتَ
- ١٧ وَذَا يَبْكِي وَهَذَا الْآخَرُ حَزِينُ
- ١٨ وَلِي صَاحِبَ زَمَانٍ مَعُوا كَانَ نَطِيبَ
- ١٩ جَانِي قَلِّي مُشْتَاقُ أَنَا يَا أَدِيبَ
- ٢٠ لِسُرِّيْبِهِ لَوْ أَنَّهَا مِنْ زَبِيبَ
- ٢١ أَرَى قَلْبِي يَرْتَاخُ لِهَذَا الْحِينِ

- ٢٢ فَقَصَدْنَا مُنِيَهٗ إِلَى شُبْرَى
 ٢٣ مَا لَقَيْنَا شَرْحَنَا طَنَانِ الْأُخْرَى
 ٢٤ وَفِي فَلْيُوبُ قَالُوا وَلَا قَطْرَ
 ٢٥ دُرْنَا مِنْ مَرَصَفَهٗ إِلَى شَيْبِينَ
 ٢٦ وَصَعَدْنَا قَبْلِي ذِكِ الْبُلْدَانِ
 ٢٧ وَنَبَشْنَا طَمَّوَهٗ لِدَيْرِ شَعْرَانِ
 ٢٨ مَا أَمَرَ الطَّرِيقَ إِلَى حُلُوانِ
 ٢٩ أَخْرَبَ اللَّهُ طُرًّا عَلَى التَّيْبِينَ
 ٣٠ وَتَعَبْنَا مِمَّا نُجِدُّ السَّيْرِ
 ٣١ وَلَا صِبْنًا فِي ذَا السَّفَرِ مِنْ خَيْرِ
 ٣٢ جِئْنَا عِنْدَ الْمَسَا لَوَحْدِ الدَّيْرِ
 ٣٣ قُمْنَا نَزَعَقَ لِلشَّيْخِ أَبُو مَرْتِينَ
 ٣٤ وَنَقُلُ لُويَابُونَا قَدْ جِينَاكَ
 ٣٥ عَسَى جَرَّهٗ بِحَيَاتِ رَهَائِينَاكَ
 ٣٦ وَيُمِيتُكَ رَبِّي عَلَى دِينَاكَ
 ٣٧ وَنَا نَذْرِي أَنُوحَا أَحْسَ الدِّينِ
 ٣٨ إِلَّا نَضْحَاكَ عَلَيْهِ وَنَتَهَزَّرُ
 ٣٩ حَتَّى لَا يُنْكِرُوا وَيَتَخَنَّرُ
 ٤٠ وَوَهَبْنَا مِنْ بَيْنَنَا مِيزُ
 ٤١ وَبَقَيْنَا نُحَاطِبُوا بِاللِّسِينِ

- ٤٢ فَدَخَلَ غَابَ زَمَانٌ وَنَحْنَا وَفُوفٌ
 ٤٣ وَأَنْتَ تَدْرِي كَيْفَ وَفَقَةُ الْمَلْهُوفِ
 ٤٤ وَأَنَا نَدْعِي ذَاكَ الدُّعَا الْمَوْصُوفِ
 ٤٥ ائْتُوا يَفْتَحْ وَآخِي يَقُولُ آمِينَ
 ٤٦ بَعْدَ سَاعَةٍ إِلَّا وَهُوَ قَدْ رَدَّ
 ٤٧ جَا يَقُولُ مِنْ خَوْفُوا بَصْرَكُمْ حَدَّ
 ٤٨ وَنَصِيبٌ مِنْ وَرَاهُ شُوَيْخٌ يَرْعُدُ
 ٤٩ مَعُو جَرَّهُ وَهُوَ يَصِيحُ يَا أَشْبِينَ
 ٥٠ دُرْتُ وَأَخْبِرْكَ مَا لَقِيتَ عِنْدِي
 ٥١ غَيْرَ هَذَا وَأَطْنُهَا دُرْدِي
 ٥٢ قُمْتُ نَمْدُدُ مِنَ الْفَرْخِ يَدِّي
 ٥٣ وَنَقُولُ لَوْ مِنَ الظُّلَمَا أَرْوِينِ
 ٥٤ خَذْتُ¹⁸ نَسْكَبُ مِنْهَا فِي قَنِينِهِ
 ٥٥ صَبْتُهَا مِثْلِي زَفْتُهُ مِسْكِينِهِ
 ٥٦ سَوْدًا دُرْدِي مَا لَانَهُ لِلطَّيْنِ
 ٥٧ قُلْتُ مِعْمَارُ ذِي نَحْسِهِ هِيَ لِلطَّيْنِ
 ٥٨ وَرَجَعْنَا أَيُّشَ رَجَعَةَ الْمَكْسُورِ
 ٥٩ قُلْتُ كَيْفَ الْعَمَلُ فَقَلِّي نَدُورُ
 ٦٠ فِي الْمَقِيلَاتِ وَنَقْتَنِعُ بِالْمَزُورِ
 ٦١ وَلَا نَرْجِعُ مِنْ ذَا السَّفَرِ خَائِبِينَ

¹⁸ *Khabbtu* is most probably pronounced *khattu*.

- ٦٢ حِينَ قَطَعْنَا الْإِيَّاسَ مِنَ الْخَمَّارِ
 ٦٣ حِينَا نَسْعَى لِيُؤَاشِرَ الْمَزَّارِ
 ٦٤ إِشْقِنِي مَا عَجِينَ فَقُلْتُ فُشَّارِ
 ٦٥ فَمَاذَا الْكَعْكَ أَصْلًا مِنْ ذَا الْعَجِينَ
 ٦٦ وَأَنَا مَا لِي غِيَّهَ سِوَى ابْنِ الْكُرُومِ
 ٦٧ وَالشَّرَابِ الْمُعْتَقِ الْمَعْلُومِ
 ٦٨ نَتَّبِعُوا لَوْ يَصِيرُ فِي أَقْصَى الرُّومِ
 ٦٩ وَلَوْ أَنِّي نَدَخُلُ لِقُسْطُنْطِينَ
 ٧٠ وَلَا نَهْوَى إِلَّا الشَّرَابَ الْقَدِيمِ
 ٧١ وَمُعِيشِقُ جَدِيدِ يَكُنْ لِي نَدِيمِ
 ٧٢ نُنْفِقُ الْمَالَ عَلَيشَ نُسَمَّى عَدِيمِ
 ٧٣ وَأَنَا مُمَكِّنٌ فِي غَايَةِ التَّمَكِينِ
 ٧٤ وَمُرَادِي مِنَ الصَّغَارِ أَطْفَالِ
 ٧٥ أَيْشَ نَقُولُ لَكَ غَزْلَانُ وَإِلَّا جَمَالِ
 ٧٦ وَلَقَدْ رَأَيْتُ فِي ذِي الصَّغَارِ أَحْتِمَالِ
 ٧٧ ابْنَ سَبْعَةٍ يَحْمِلُ ابْنَ سَبْعِينَ
 ٧٨ إِلَّا إِنِّي قَدْ أَثْقَلْتَنِي الذُّنُوبِ
 ٧٩ مَا بَقِيَتْ نَحْتَمِلُ لِكُثْرِ الْعُيُوبِ
 ٨٠ وَمَا عَادَ لِي أَوْفَقُ سِوَى أَنْ نَتُوبِ
 ٨١ يَا إِلَهِي أَكْثُبْنِي مِنَ التَّائِبِينَ

وَرَّخُوا بِاللَّهِ تَوْبَةً الْمَعْمَارِ ٨٢
 وَأَكْتُبُوهَا بِالتَّبْرِ فِي الْأَعْمَارِ ٨٣
 قُولُوا مِنْ هِجْرَةِ النَّبِيِّ الْمُخْتَارِ ٨٤
 سَبْعُمِائَةِ سَنَةٍ خَمْسَ وَأَرْبَعِينَ ٨٥

1 We have been barred from wine, Yāsin! / God forbid they prohibit us the fig [or the anus].

2 By God, tell me, when they ban the wine

3 and deprive us of men, noble and fine,

4 what will be left for us to procure a merry time?

5 How could a wanton man live in misery?

6 The purification filter cries over the grape juice.

7 The wax candle chokes on its tears.

8 From dusk to dawn you hear the string [the instrument],

9 expressing his yearning by his sighs in the night.

10 They abased the venerable of assemblies [wine].

11 The brilliant one [wine] altered its color and became dusty.

12 Out of rage our *rayḥān* [wine] became bitter.

13 On its surface it crucified [dried] the jasmine.¹⁹

14 The boon companions—their union was dispersed.

15 They grieved as if some of them had died.

16 This one here sits crying over what is gone,

17 and that one there cries, another one grieves.

18 I have an old friend with whom we used to enjoy our time.

19 He came to me saying: "I am yearning, o, mannerly friend,

20 for a little drink, even if it was made from raisins.

21 I think my heart would come to rest for a while."

22 So we hit the road to Munya²⁰, passing through Shubrā²¹,

23 where we did not find anything, so we went to the other Ṭanān²².

24 In Qalyūb²³ there is no drop, they said.

25 So we turned around from Marṣafa²⁴ to Shibin²⁵.

¹⁹ I am not sure what exactly is meant here. *Yasmīn* could be another synonym for wine.

²⁰ From what can be understood from the mention of Marṣafa or Marṣafā in the fourth verse of this stanza, the town meant here is Munyat Ghamr, which is in the vicinity of Marṣafa. Yāqūt, *Buldān*, 4:675.

²¹ A neighbourhood of Cairo on the east bank of the Nile. Al-Maqrīzī notes in his *al-Marwāʿiz wa al-ʿtibār bi-dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa al-āthār*, Bulāq n.d. (p. 69), that large amounts of wine were sold in Shubrā on Coptic martyr's day.

²² A village twenty-seven kilometers north of Cairo, halfway between Marṣafā and Cairo; the other Ṭanān is probably a village close to Fustāt—six kilometers south of Cairo. See Yāqūt, *Muḥjam*, 3:549.

²³ A town twenty kilometers north of Cairo. All places mentioned are on the Nile's east bank.

²⁴ A town fifty kilometers north of Cairo, close to Munyat Ghamr. Yāqūt, *Buldān*, 4:498.

- 26 Then we walked up south of these lands
 27 and dug out Tammawh²⁶ at the monastery of Shaʿrān²⁷,
 28 that leads the way to Ḥulwān²⁸.
 29 May God destroy both, Ṭurrā²⁹ and Tabin³⁰.
 30 Then we got tired from the arduous trail.
 31 On this trip we did not find any avail.
 32 Yet in the evening we arrived at a convent
 33 and we started to shout “Abū Martin!”
 34 I told him: “O father, we have come to you,
 35 maybe [you have] a jar [of wine], by the life of your monks!
 36 May God let you die under your religion!”
 37 Knowing that it is the most despicable *din*.
 38 Only to mock him and fool around,
 39 ensuring that he won’t deny it (our pledge) and turn swiny.
 40 Next, we agreed on giving him a loincloth
 41 and talking sweetly to him.
 42 Whereupon he entered and stayed away for some time, while we were standing.
 43 You know what standing and waiting mean for the very thirsty.
 44 I began to intone that very special begging prayer
 45 that he may open, and my brother here says: “*Āmin!*”
 46 After a long while the prayer was answered,
 47 and he turned up saying worriedly: “Look carefully!”
 48 Behind him we caught glimpse of a tottering little shaykh,
 49 carrying a jar and shouting, “O *Isbbin*” [godfather]!
 50 “I searched, I tell you, but I have not found
 51 anything but this and I think it is all dredges.”
 52 I stood up and stretched out my hand full of joy
 53 telling him with a dry mouth: “Quench our thirst!”
 54 I took the jar and poured it into a bottle
 55 only to notice that it was like me, lousy and abominable,
 56 black, full of sediment up to the clay stopper³¹.
 57 I said to myself: “Miʿmār, this damn stuff belongs back to the earth!”

²⁵ A village between Bilbays (sixty kilometers northeast of Cairo) and Cairo. Yāqūt, *Buldān*, 3:346.

²⁶ A village of Jiza. See Taghribirdi, *Nujūm*, 10:218. The name of the village *Ṭammawh* can also be read as a verb (“they filled it, they let it overflow”), and as such an antonym to the *na-bashmā* (“we dug out, excavated”).

²⁷ Al-Maqrizī, *al-Mawāʿiz*, 501: a monastery in the vicinity of Ṭurrā near Fuṣṭāṭ.

²⁸ A town twenty-five kilometers south of Cairo.

²⁹ A village near Fuṣṭāṭ. See al-Maqrizī, *al-Mawāʿiz*, 501; and Yāqūt, *Buldān*, 3:520.

³⁰ A neighbourhood in south Ḥelwān.

³¹ Which was used to seal off the jug.

- 58 So we returned. And what an abject return it was!
 59 I said [to my friend]: "What shall we do?" He said to me "We walk about
 60 the resting places [or graves] and content ourselves by visiting them,
 61 so we shall not return from this trip crushed [defeated]."
- 62 Once the wine seller left us all hopeless
 63 we turned to Wāshin, the brewer.
 64 "Pour me some beer [water of dough]." Then I said: "Nonsense!
 65 What has this cake to do with dough [beer]?"
- 66 I have no other wishes but the son of the vineyard [to mean "wine"]
 67 and the well-known matured wine.
 68 I will follow it [the wine] even if it be in the far end of Rūm
 69 and even if I had to enter Quṣṭanṭīn [Constantinople].
- 70 I don't like anything but the old wine
 71 and a little, new lover to be my boon companion.
 72 I'll spend on him my wealth so that I am called a have-not,
 73 whereas I will be more powerful than anyone else.
- 74 What I want are young children.
 75 How could I talk to you about gazelles or camels!
 76 Now that I have spotted a probable prey among those little ones?
 77 A son of seven [a seven-year old] that carries a son of seventy [a seventy-year-old].
- 78 Yet now here I am, sins have weighed me down.
 79 I cannot bear them anymore, so many are my wrongdoings.
 80 It is best for me now to repent.
 81 "Oh God, please put me down with the repenters!"
- 82 Note, by God, the date of the repentance of Mi'mār.
 83 Write it [the repentance] down with golden letters amid the ages.
 84 Say: from the Hejra of the chosen prophet
 85 seven hundred and forty-five.

In the main, this balladlike *zajal* is about the quest for wine in times of severe prohibition. Most of the ten stanzas at the heart of the *zajal* concern this particular quest. It should be no surprise that wine drinking was tolerated except in times of severe prohibition, and not only the well-to-do had the opportunity to obtain some if they could afford it.³² Wine was more expensive than beer, which virtually anyone in Egypt could produce on his own.³³

A common feature of many *zajals* in al-Mi'mār's *dīwān* is that they tell a story or tie together narrative episodes—this includes the wine *zajal*. Most stanzas amount to episodes of the quest, as in stanzas 5–17, where the story of the quest and the return is told. Note the anticlimax in stanza 14, where the wine served by the abbot turned out to be undrinkable. Stanzas 1–4 belong to the introduction, where the protagonist describes the initial situation of severe prohibition. Stanza 18 marks the transi-

³² Cf. Biesterfeldt, *Mizr*, 384.

³³ Lewicka, "Beer of Egyptians," in *Food and Foodways*.

tion from the account of the quest to the conclusion, starting with the description of the protagonist's sexual preferences, presented in more detail in stanza 19. Stanza 20 represents the end of the road for the protagonist, and the only solution is to express repentance at his age of seventy. The last stanza, stanza 21, contains a chronogram, as indicated earlier.

This summary displays well the narrative coherence of the wine *zajal*, which starts with a dissatisfying state of deprivation, continues with a quest to remove that state, passes through unfulfilled sexual fantasies, and ends in another state as unsatisfactory as the initial one: the state of deprivation, old age, and reluctant repentance. The wine *zajal* is by far the most coherent *zajal* by al-Mi'mār in terms of its narrative structure. The subsequent episodes are linked together in a chronological and conclusive way. If we were to break down the *zajal* into large and detailed sections, its structure would look like this:

Introduction

Part 1: wine is prohibited, sadness prevails, friends are dispersed (stanzas 1–4)

Main section

Part 2a: quest for wine with friend, stop at a monastery (5–14)

Part 2b: return in misery, short visit to a beer seller (15–17)

Conclusion

Part 3: pederastic fantasies (18–19) introduced by the following verse:

وَلَا نَهْوَى إِلَّا الشَّرَابَ الْقَدِيمَ وَمُعِيشَتُكَ جَدِيدَ يَكُنْ لِي نَدِيمَ

“I don't like anything but the old wine /
and a little new lover to be my boon companion.”

Part 4: sluggish repentance (20)

Part 5: chronogram (21)

In the following, I address some stanzas one by one and particular aspects that qualify wine and deliver contextual information on the circumstances under which it was used. Note that every stanza constitutes a semantic, narrative, and/or stylistic unit within the structure of the poem.

In stanza 1, the *zajal* starts with an account of the protagonist's suffering from the severe prohibition in Cairo at that time.³⁴ For him—a wanton man—prohibition

³⁴ Prohibition of wine occurred several times in the Fatimid and Mamluk eras. See Biesterfeldt, *Mizr*, 384.

means also the loss of his dear friends and the joys of life that are intimately linked to the parties they held. Hence, wine for the protagonist is an integral part of his sociableness and conviviality. Gatherings literally depended on the availability of wine.

In stanza 2, the personified paraphernalia of nocturnal drinking feasts—the filter, the candle, the string of a musical instrument—all mourn the absence of wine in an elegiac (*ritbāʿ*) style. The wine filter wails, the candle chokes on his tears, the instrument’s string wails from dusk to dawn.

Stanza 3 operates on the dialectical tension between the highly praised wine and the abasement it encountered: it was belittled, altered its color, became dusty and bitter because of its rage (again a personification). In this stanza al-Mi‘mār uses lesser-known synonyms for wine, such as *ḥaḍrat al-maḥḍar* (the most venerable of the assemblies), *zahr* (the flower), and *rayḥān* (the well scented).

Stanza 4 takes up the desolation and the tragedy that befell the main persona and his boon companions. Their unity was broken and the boon companions scattered. They grieved as if some of them had died. At this point a friend of the narrator with whom he had a good time in the past showed up. This friend shares his wish for a good drink; he would even settle for wine made from raisins. This stanza also marks the transition from the introduction—which describes the state of despondency and shortage resulting from the prohibition—to the main section of the journey.

In stanza 5, as a consequence the narrator goes on a quest for wine, taking with him a friend to accompany him. In stanza 6 the narrator describes their journey, listing a number of towns and villages where they stopped on their journey. First they walk north, a whopping sixty kilometers from the center of Cairo going past Qalyūb (also mentioned as a hot spot for hashish in the hashish *zajal*), where they cannot find even a drop. In the absence of any indication that they traveled on camels or horses, this is most probably an exaggeration, characteristic of many *zajals* by al-Mi‘mār and other poets.

As the two friends did not find anything in the north they make a U-turn and head south another eighty kilometers continuing their quest until they reached the monastery Dayr Shaʿrān (stanzas 7–8). Al-Mi‘mār takes up the fact that wine was sold by Christians. Monasteries and Copts in general are known to supply wine and beer to their coreligionists and to Muslims alike. During the Coptic New Year festivities (*neyrūz*), large amounts of wine and beer were sold.³⁵ At the monastery they cajole the abbot into giving them some wine in return for a loincloth—they do not seem to have enough money to afford wine, which was relatively expensive, especially during periods of prohibition. Here, we are faced with the recurring theme of the financial burden of wine drinking for the everyday man.

What the abbot brings them turns out to be totally undrinkable (stanzas 9–14). The strict prohibition and the possible punishment that he may get make the abbot

³⁵ See note 17.

worry about his safety as he enjoins them to be vigilant (stanza 11). Resigning themselves to their fate, they decide to call the quest off and return home (stanza 15). In stanzas 16–17 on the way back, they try their luck with a beer seller but get only some sort of solid biscuit. Beer is only the second choice after wine. In my contribution on the drug *zajal* I acknowledge that al-Mi‘mār honors beer as nobody did before him—he devoted a complete *zajal* praising it even over wine. He does the same with hashish in his *zajal*, No. 537 in the *diwān*.³⁶ At the same time, however, he set up a moot competition between beer and wine, and hashish and wine, such that praise for the wine surrogates is only seemingly true—wine is by far his most preferred intoxicant.³⁷ The preference given to beer and hashish in the respective *zajals* seems to result from the main theme and underlying intention of the *zajal*: praise. We return to this aspect in the discussion of the epigrams that concern wine, beer, and hashish. In the wine *zajal*, however, he explicitly expresses his preference for wine: he knows that only wine will make him happy (stanza 18).

As to the largest section of the *zajal*, the quest for beer, it resembles the *raḥīl* section in the *qaṣīda* in its description of a journey from a desolate place (remember the loneliness and despondency of the boon companions in the first stanzas) to a different place—in this case the return to despondency and despair, with only fantasies left. At the beginning of his quest he still had hope, as little as it might have been, to find the wine that he so much desired.

Stanza 18 marks the passage to the erotic part, which is common to all drug *zajals*:

وَلَا نَهْوَى إِلَّا الشَّرَابَ الْقَدِيمَ
وَمُعْشِيقٌ جَدِيدٌ يَكُنْ لِي نَدِيمَ

I don't like anything but the old wine
and a little, new lover to be my boon companion.

The connection between wine and sex, beer and sex, or hashish and sex, mostly homoerotic, is an omnipresent feature in al-Mi‘mār's poems and will be taken up again later in this study.

Pedophile fantasies, which are very rare in al-Mi‘mār's *diwān*, ensue in stanza 19, where he says that he yearns for sex with boys not older than seven years (*wa-murādi min al-ṣighār atfāl* / ... *ibn sal'a* ...), only to be followed by the declaration of his repentance which is not striking as a model of great sincerity (stanza 20), not only because it comes after his drooling over boys in the preceding stanza but also because the tone of the stanza does not really inspire sincere repentance because he

³⁶ Stanza 1, verse 1: *sukru l-muḥammas bū mu‘lam / atyab mina l-khamra wa-slam* (“the intoxication of the toasted one is well known / it is better than that of wine and healthier”).

³⁷ Özkan, *Drug*; see also Biesterfeldt, *Mizr*.

repents very late in his life, at the age of seventy, with no more financial and physical means to satisfy his lust. Recall he had just begged for wine in the preceding stanzas. The same sluggish repentance occurs in stanzas 21–22 of the hashish *zajal* (No. 537).³⁸ The wine *zajal* ends in stanza 21 with a chronogram (an early example of this genre in Arab literary history) of his repentance: *warrahbū billābi tawbata l-Mi‘māri* (by God, mark the date of al-Mi‘mār’s repentance).

His Epigrams and Mawāliyyās on Wine

As I have already mentioned, al-Mi‘mār manifested his predilection for wine on numerous occasions in his epigrams and *mawāliyyās*.³⁹ Let us therefore have a look at the statistics first:

Wine: thirty
Hashish: ten, three of which mention wine
Beer: two, one of which mentions wine

The table shows that apart from the four *zajals* on wine, hashish, and beer, al-Mi‘mār’s *dīwān* contains thirty epigrams that center on wine. Ten poems concern hashish—three of these mention wine, as does one of the two poems on beer. Wine clearly takes up the largest share of al-Mi‘mār’s *dīwān*. The poems display a wide range of themes associated with the main theme (in order of frequency):

Homoerotic love, and sex (except one)
Call to drink
Prohibition of wine or hashish or both
Money issues
Comparison with other drugs
Health and well-being
Repentance and the rejection of repentance
Mixing hashish with wine

The most important subtheme is love, especially homoerotic love, and in some cases sex, as in epigram No. 580, where the coming of spring brings to his mind both sex and wine. The epigrams and the one *mawāliyyā* in question are Nos. 128, 129, 130, 141, 142, 145, 252, 270, 457, 509, 518, 569, 580. The *mawāliyyā* is the only poem that links heterosexual love with the main theme (No. 518):

مَا نَشْرَبُ الْخَمْرَ إِلَّا مَعَكَ يَا سَلَمَى حِينَ تَنْجَلِي تَنْجَلِي عَن قَلْبِي الْعَمَا
إِنْ تَمْزُجِيهِ لَنَا مِنْ رِيْقِكَ الْأَلْمَى هَذَا مِزَاجِي وَإِلَّا مَا أَقْرَبُوا فِي الْمَا

³⁸ “It is a standard motif in Arabic poetry that *tawba* (repentance) is a precarious thing.” Kennedy, *Makers*, 73.

³⁹ Dialectal, noncanonical poems of four hemistichs composed in the meter *basīṭ*.

Only with you, Salmā, I drink wine. / When you are unveiled, my sorrows are taken off my heart.

If you mix it for us with the saliva of your crimson lips / it will be my humor or what comes close to it as what regards water.

Alongside the love subtheme, al-Mi'mār highlights the theme of the amorous rendezvous with his beloved one, Salmā. Salmā's presence is the prerequisite for the protagonist to drink wine. Without her he would not touch it. Al-Mi'mār likens the topos of diluting wine with water to the mixing of wine with Salmā's saliva and the mix of his body fluids (*mizāq*). Note also the semantically diverging use of the word *tanjali* in the second hemistich of the first verse.

Apart from this singular example of a heterosexual couple, al-Mi'mār's poetry abounds in homosexual love. A conventional character for this kind of love poetry is the cupbearer (*al-sāqī*), who seldom fails to get the attention of the lyrical I (129, 130, 141, and 142). Let us have a look at the last-mentioned, which is composed in the meter *wāfir*:

أَشْكَرْتَنَا بِالْكَاسِ مَعَ مُقْلَةٍ فَأَنْتَ سَاقِي اللَّحْظِ وَالرَّاحِ
وَلَمْ تَذُقْ مِنْ خَمْرِنَا نُقْطَةً وَجِئْتَ بِالسُّكْرَيْنِ يَا صَاحَ

You made us drunk with the cup and the eye / for you are the bearer of the glance and the wine.

You have not tasted of our wine a tiny little drop / yet you made us drunk in two ways, O my friend.

Here, al-Mi'mār juxtaposes the eye of the cupbearer and the cup he holds in the first hemistich to, correspondingly, the glance and the wine in the second hemistich. The protagonist is unhappy that the cupbearer did not join them at all, but he still seems to be happy with the double drunkenness (*al-sukrayn*) that they get from the glances and the wine of the cupbearer.

Al-Mi'mār uses the motif of the combination of eye and wine cup in two other epigrams: this time he uses the word pair *ahdāq* ("glances," pl. of *hadaq*) and *aqdāḥ* ("cups," pl. of *qadah*) which form a nice piece of paronomasia, in the epigram No. 129 (meter *wāfir*):

يَا لَيْتَ شِعْرِي سَاقِي الْأَقْدَاحِ مَذْ أَمْسَى يُحْيِينَا بِصَرْفِ الرَّاحِ
أَقْدَاحُهُ مُرِجَتْ مِنَ الْأَخْدَاقِ أَمْ أَخْدَاقُهُ خُلِقَتْ مِنَ الْأَقْدَاحِ

Oh, I wish I knew the bearer of the cups, since / he passed and revived us with wine!
Were his cups mixed with the pupils or / his pupils made of wine cups?

Al-Mi'mār employs the motif of wine cups mixed with pupils, which he opposes to the motif of pupils made of cups, meaning that the pupils were as bright and lustrous as the glass the cup is made of. The protagonist does not know which was

more beautiful: the wine that resembles the beautiful pupils of the cupbearer or the shining pupils made of glass. This may also hint at the level of inebriation that the cupbearer reached—his perception of reality seems to be distorted. This distortion of perception and the contrast that results from the opposition of the two motifs is mirrored well by the wordplay of *aqdāḥ* and *ahdāq*, which in turn reminds the reader of the impediment of a drunken person to distinguish things correctly.

The second time al-Mi‘mār makes use of the same word pair is in epigram No. 141. My supposition that the protagonist is inebriated is explicitly stated here (meter *rajaz*):

لَمَّا أَتَى بِكَأْسِهِ وَلَحْظِهِ تَمَّتْ لِقَلْبِ صَبِّهِ أَفْرَاحُهُ
فَيَا تُرَى أَقْدَاخُهُ أَحْدَاقُهُ فِي السُّكْرِ أَمْ أَحْدَاقُهُ أَقْدَاخُهُ

When he came with his cup and his glance / the joys of the heart of his ardent love unfolded.

Oh, behold! When drunk (you would think) his cups were his pupils / or his pupils his cups.

For the sake of brevity, I present one poem for each remaining theme. The call to drink is very prominent among those. Apart from the above-mentioned *zajal* it appears in various epigrams, such as Nos. 64, 216, 261, 437, 487. Epigram No. 64 (meter *khafif*):

صَاحِ بِادِرْ بِنَا إِلَى اللَّذَاتِ وَتَلَقِّي الْكَؤُوسَ بِالرَّاحَاتِ
لَيْسَ فِي الْعُمْرِ مُهْلَةٌ وَتَوَانٍ لَا تَبِعْهُ إِلَّا بِهَآكَ وَهَاتِ

My friend, hurry up to the joys / and get the cups with wine.

Life does not wait! Don't procrastinate! / And don't sell it unless you give and take!

Prohibition posed a serious issue for winebibbers and hashish eaters in Mamluk times. Even beer was sometimes subject to crackdown by the authorities. When this happened depended on the sultans' unpredictable decrees. Apart from the wine *zajal* presented already, al-Mi‘mār refers to this theme in the poems numbered 163, 216, 261, 271, 437, 487, and the following dialectal *mawāliyyā* No. 526. Note that not only wine but also hashish is being rejected:

يَا مَنْ عَلَى الْخَمْرِ أَنْكَرُ غَايَةِ الشُّكْرَانِ
لَا تَمْنَعِ الْقِسَّ يَمَلَا الدَّنَّ وَالْمَطْرَانِ
وَأَمْرُ بَزْرَعِ الْحَشِيشَةِ تَكْتَسِبُ أَجْرَانِ
وَتَغْتَنِمُ دَعْوَةَ الْمَسْطُولِ وَالسُّكْرَانِ

You, who disapprove of wine lock, stock and barrel,
 let the priests and bishops fill the jugs and the flasks.
 Tell us to grow [hemp, turned into] hashish so you may earn some credit in God's eyes,
 and thus obtain the prayers of the boozers and the stoned.

Wine was not the cheapest way to get drunk, but it was definitely the first choice for people who enjoyed drinking alcohol. Al-Mi'mār describes this crucial issue not only in the above *zajal* on wine but also in several epigrams. In epigram No. 31 the higher price of grape wine made drinkers resort to the cheaper date wine (meter *sarī*):

| | |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| أَرَى جِرَارَ الْخَمْرِ تَغْلُو وَقَدْ | عَزَّتْ وَبِالْإِفْلَاسِ حَالِي عَجِيبٌ |
| جِئْنَا لِخَمَارٍ وَقُلْنَا لَهُ | إِحْمِلْ إِلَيْنَا جَرَّةً كَيْ نَطِيبَ |
| قَالَ زَبِيحِيًّا تُرِيدُونَ أَمْ | خَمْرًا فَإِنَّ الْكُلَّ مِنِّي قَرِيبٌ |
| قُلْنَا لَهُ خَمْرًا فَنَادَى زُنُوزًا | فِي جَرَّةٍ عِشْرِينَ قُلْنَا الزَّبِيبُ |

I was flat broke but saw one day how / in the jugs gurgled some costly wine
 To the wine seller we went and said: / "Give us a jug to enjoy in no time!"
 He said: "Is it raisin wine you desire or / grape wine? For both to me are fine."
 "Grape wine!" we said. "Drop then!" he shouted / "20 for a jug." So we replied:
 "Make it raisin wine!"

As I have pointed out, al-Mi'mār was into weighing hashish and beer against wine as he boosted the two against the latter without being too serious about it. Next to the beer and hashish *zajals*, epigram Nos. 271, 443, and 455 bear witness to this endeavor. In one case he denounces mixing date wine with hashish, which causes somebody to be quarrelsome. Note the *tawriya* (a kind of double entendre very fashionable in Mamluk times) of the verb *khalat* at the end of poem No. 291, where al-Mi'mār refers to the mixing of temperaments and drugs:

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| خَلَطَ الْحَشِيشَةَ بِالنَّبِيْ | يَذِ فَمَالٍ سُكْرًا وَأَخْتَلَطَ |
| وَعَدَا يُعَرِّبُ فِي الْمَقَا | مَ فَقُلْتُ مَا هَذَا اللَّعَطُ |
| فَأَجَابَنِي لَمَّا صَحَا | سَامِحٌ أَخَاكَ إِذَا خَلَطَ |

He mixed date wine with hashish / loaded he stooped and got all mixed up.
 He ran riot at a spot where I happened to be / so I said: "What's all this rumpus about?"
 Upon which he replied when he sobered up / "Forgive your brother when he mixes."

Al-Mi'mār also commends the health benefits that result from wine consumption. Wine fends off distress (32), warms in winter (88), helps against choking (273), and "remedies" flea bites, among its lesser-known benefits (381; meter *majzu' kāmīl*):

إِنَّ الْبَرَاعِيَّ اللَّئِيمَ قَسَوْا عَلَيَّ فَقُلْتُ مَا لِي
إِلَّا الْخُمُورُ إِذَا أَخْتَمَرَ تَوْقَرُّصُونِي مَا أَبَالِي

When the damned fleas / pester me I say there's nothing there
like wine. When drunk / the fleas still bite, but I don't care.

Al-Mi‘mār was well aware that wine drinking meant a reproachable act in his environment. Two epigrams begin with the words *qālū truki l-khamra* (163) or *qila truki l-khamra* (416): “they said: ‘give up the wine.’” In his *zajal* on wine we noticed that he repented, but only unwillingly and only because circumstances of old age and poverty made him do so. In his epigrams, however, he does not yield at all to the calls to abandon drinking. To the contrary, he merrily admits that he vowed to abandon drinking as many times as there are pebbles and grains of sand, so many that in the end his feet slipped on these pebbles and grains and made him relapse (292, last verse, meter *sarīf*):

كَمْ حَلَفَ الْمِعْمَارُ عَنْ شُرْبِهَا عَدَّ الْحَصَا وَالرَّمْلَ لَكِنْ زَلَّطُ

How many times al-Mi‘mār vowed to abandon drinking it [wine],
as many times as there are pebbles and sand grains, but then slipped.

In epigram 163 al-Mi‘mār likens wine to the food one needs to survive. Wine is to him an indispensable food for his soul (meter *munsarīb*):

قَالُوا أَتْرُكُ الْخَمْرَ وَاجْتَنِبْهُ لَا تَتَعَدَّ الْحَرَامَ حَدًّا
قُلْتُ أَرَاهُ لِلرُّوحِ قُوَّتًا وَطَالِبُ الْقُوتِ مَا تَعَدَّ

Give up the wine they said and be abstinent / don't go against the explicit laws of the
Qur'an
I said: wine is like food for my soul / and the one who is after food cannot do wrong.

Conclusion

The poetry of al-Mi‘mār abounds in descriptions of *joie de vivre*. Be it wine, hashish, or beer, he depicts these intoxicants as serving his protagonists to help them reach a state of rapture, sexual arousal, and satisfaction. Wine also helps one enjoy the pleasures of companionship, which is intimately linked to its consumption at drinking feasts. Of course, this is an ideal state, one often enough hampered by prohibition, rejection by society, lack of money, and remorse.

Al-Mi‘mār mostly refrains from praising the qualities of wine, its hue, its bouquet, and its taste. Although the description and effects of beer and hashish are important in the beer and hashish poems, al-Mi‘mār does not include such descrip-

tions either in his *zajal* on wine, which revolves around the quest to find it after it has been prohibited, or in his epigrams or *mawāliyyās*. Maybe he assumed that the praiseful description of wine had lost some of its interest or that the theme had been sufficiently exhausted by poets before him.

Although al-Mi‘mār is the first poet to compose poems on beer and praise its qualities, his other poems show clearly that he prefers wine over beer and also over hashish, which has been touched on in poems written by other poets before him. From this point of view his poems on beer and hashish seem to be nothing more than staged competition in the absence of the more expensive wine that was not always within the reach of his protagonists. As it happens, money issues concerning the acquisition of wine frequently come to the fore in his poems—more than in wine poems by other poets.

Al-Mi‘mār repents tongue-in-cheek from drinking only to return to it as soon as the opportunity arises. As a matter of fact, he takes up the standard repertoire of Arabic poetry in which repentance is only fleeting. The same is valid for renouncing hashish and, to a lesser extent, beer.

With a similar attitude of mockery, al-Mi‘mār lists some health benefits of the grape, among which figures that of a “cure” against flea bites that becomes effective only when one drinks until becoming senseless. Others are quite straightforward, such as its release of psychological stress or its warming quality during cold winter days.

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Part 3
Cross-cultural Inspirations,
Appropriations and Transformations

“Bury me under the grapevine”: Comparative Perspectives on an Arabic-Latin Motif of Transgression

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Alcoholism or Satire?

Regarding the motif of the drunkard who wants to enjoy wine even after death, the question of this motif’s function arises. Is the transgression of religious norms an expression of the joy of life or of disguised religious criticism? This chapter analyzes the motif of the drunkard from a comparative perspective and follows it from early Islamic times to ‘Abbāsīd Iraq, Muslim Spain, and the Latin West. Rereading the Latin-writing Archpoet in this context should open new perspectives on the motif’s function and the discourse from which it emerged. This contribution provides a brief comparative investigation of the Arabic and Latin texts and analyzes the function of the motif in each respective context, defining its literary and sociopolitical role. It also sketches out some possible ways of transmission and reception.

The Caliph’s Fool: Abū Nuwās

Abū Nuwās is among the best-known poets of the early ‘Abbāsīd era. We will thus only sketch the major milestones of his biography. Abū Nuwās lived from about 765–688 CE to 813–815. His family were *marwāli* (non-Arabs) from Ahwāz in southeastern Iran, and his name is mentioned several times in the context of arguments between Arab and non-Arab (mainly Persian) Muslims. At his time, religious skepticism was widespread in circles of not only *kuttāb* (scribes) but also poets and musicians.¹

As a youth, Abū Nuwās was educated in Kufa, where he met the poet Wāliba b. al-Ḥubāb (d. 786), with whom he is said to have had a homosexual relationship. From his youth he seems to have known the famous Hārūn al-Rashīd and the Barmakid family. The relationship with the Caliph, however, was ambiguous: sometimes we find them as boon companions, some other time Hārūn imprisoned him

¹ On the often reproached lack of religiosity among scribes, poets, and musicians, see Agnes Imhof, “If Music Be the Food of Love’: The Singing-Girls and the Notion of Ṭarab”, in *Knowledge and Education*, ed.: S. Günther (Leiden: Brill, 2020, 2 vol.s, 870-905). “Skepticism” in this chapter is understood in the sense of religious skepticism, not referring to theological discourse as discussed e.g. in Heck, Paul, *Skepticism in Classical Islam. Moments of Confusion* (Culture and Civilization in the Middle East 41), London: Routledge 2013. However, the so-called “Islamic” World was shaped by many non-Islamic ideas as well which lived on in its thought and literature, as discussed extensively e.g. in Bauer, Thomas, *Die Kultur der Ambiguität. Eine andere Geschichte des Islams*, Berlin: Verlag der Weltreligionen 2011.

on a charge of drinking. In the *Arabian Nights*, the poet appears as a kind of court jester. Abū Nuwās outlived his patron by some years, and the time when Hārūn's son al-Amin reigned and Abū Nuwās became his official *nadīm* (boon companion) seems to have been his best. There were rumors about al-Amin's homosexuality or bisexuality—also Abū Nuwās composed most of his love and *mujūn* (obscenity) poetry about boys. 'Abbāsīd courtiers lived in permanent ambiguity: on the one hand, carousals were part of 'Abbāsīd court ceremonial, and *nadīm* was an official title of honor. On the other hand, numerous religious scholars regarded wine as forbidden. And since al-Amin's rival brother, the later caliph al-Ma'mūn, used the presence of the *khamriyya*- and *mujūn*-poet at his brother's court for his propaganda, Abū Nuwās was imprisoned again. The poet seems to have been in contact with religious scholars of his time like al-Nazzām to whom he refers several times.

The poet owes his fame to his outstanding position among the first *Muḥdathūn* or *badī'* poets (poets of the "new style"), and to his impressing merits in shaping the genres of *khamriyya* (wine poetry) and *mujūn* (obscene poetry). His topics, thence, are mainly wine, sex (mostly with young boys, referred to as *mudhakkarāt*), and religious criticism.²

Transgression of religious norms is nothing uncommon in the poetry of Abū Nuwās, particularly in his wine poetry. The opposition of religion and (forbidden) intoxication can even be regarded as a kind of leitmotif of his work: e.g. when, playing with the pre-Islamic motif of the *aṭlāl* (the traces on the abandoned place where the poet's beloved used to dwell), he says that the places of prayer were deserted because their "inhabitants" had moved to the tavern.³

In his article on *Khamriyya*, Bencheikh outlines a Christian tradition of wine poetry. It is true that wine poetry from pre-Islamic to 'Abbāsīd times often has a Christian setting: the monasteries usually had taverns, because of the Christian duty of hospitality. However, Hamori, noting that Abū Nuwās used to mock religious duties in his wine poetry, interprets this less in the sense of a Christian tradition but rather as a new social ideal that no longer involved (Bedouin-style) heroes.⁴ In a similar way Philip F. Kennedy deals with the topic regarding it as an expression of opposition against religious law and as a competition between the genres of wine song and *zuhdiyya*.⁵

² Ewald Wagner, "Abū Nuwās", in *EP²* and *EP³*, J.E. Bencheikh, "Khamriyya" in: *EP²*, J. E. Bencheikh, *Poétique arabe, Les voies d'une création*, Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne 1975, chapter i), J. E. Bencheikh, *Thèmes bachiques et personnages dans le diwān d'Abū Nuwās*, in *BEO*, 17 (1963-4), 1-84 Andras Hamori on *The Art of medieval Arabic literature*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press 1974.

³ Full text of this poem in Philip F. Kennedy, *The Wine Song in Classical Arabic Poetry: Abū Nuwās and the Literary Tradition*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997, 274f.

⁴ Hamori, *Art*, p. 34, 57, Kennedy, *Wine Song*, 17.

⁵ Kennedy, *Wine Song*, 17; see also below. On the significance of competition in 'Abbāsīd court culture see also Imhof, Agnes, "Traditio vel Aemulatio? The Singing Contest of Sāmarrā', Expression of a Medieval Culture of Competition", in: *Der Islam* 90.1 (2013) 1-20.

The Motif: Bury Me under the Grapevine

Pre-Islamic *khamriyya* mostly appears in the context of *qaṣīda* poetry. The setting is often a Christian monastery, where monks serve wine to the thirsty poet. The red-faced monk or novice with his rope-girdle was already quite a *topos*.

Among the first occasions we meet the motif of the poet who wants to be buried under the grapevine is in the verses of a *mukhaḍram* (contemporary of the prophet): Abū Miḥjan al-Thaqafi, from al-Ṭāʾif, a place in the Arabian Peninsula known for its local wine production.⁶ Among the few things we know about Abū Miḥjan is that he was reluctant to embrace Islam and did not convert until 631. According to sources he never embraced the lifestyle of his new religion, much less its position on alcohol – and he boasted of this indifference. Allegedly this was the reason why caliph ʿUmar banished him to Nāṣi⁷ in 637, where he died about a year later. Among the poet's best-known verses are these:

When I die, bury me under a grapevine, so that its roots (*ʿurūq*) shall satisfy my bones' thirst after death.

Do not bury me in the desert—for I fear that I may never be able to taste it again: Saffron-coloured wine shall water my flesh, and I shall be bound by it after I used to drive it.⁸

The poem displays clearly anti-Islamic references. In fact, the *K. al-Aghānī* names it as the reason for the poet's imprisonment. As is well known, Muslims are usually buried with their head toward Mecca. Instead, the poet wishes to be buried under a grapevine: the plant becomes the counterpart of Mecca. He wants his bones to be "watered" by the grapevine, his dead body to be soaked in wine and rejects being buried in the desert (maybe an allusion to Mecca), because he dreads forgetting the taste of wine when he is dead. And finally, he declares that he is "bound" by wine like cattle (i.e. fond of wine) –but obviously not by religion.

Even this early poem displays some ideas clearly in opposition to Islamic views. It affirms alcohol, even the preference for alcohol to matters of creed. In the context of the poet's reluctance to embrace Islam, this could be interpreted as a personal expression of forced conversion, that never was whole-hearted.

However, Abū Miḥjan is not the only one who claims that he continued drinking after conversion. Various poets of his time explicitly talk about their consumption

⁶ Philip F. Kennedy, *Abu Nuwas: A Genius of Poetry*, Oxford: Oneworld Publications 2005, 57.

⁷ According to Sezgin, GAS vol. 2, 301, this is an error for Bāḍī.

⁸ *K. al-Aghānī* 21, 140; Italian translation in Francesco Gabrieli, *Storia della letteratura araba*, Milano: Nuova Accademia 1967, 90. Alternative translation of the last hemistich: "And I shall be its captive after having driven it". However, the hemistich seems to refer to the practice to tie the camels' forelegs (to make sure they remain close to the campsite): when he dies the poet ceases to be the active part (drinker/owner of camels) and becomes the passive one ("watered" by wine / cattle). *Sāqa* is "to drive (cattle)", "to impel", but, according to Lane, also "to die" (without the direct object). The word may have been chosen intentionally to evoke this association as well.

of wine, in opposition to religious commands. For example, Aswad b. Yaʿfūr claims that he would be willing to fast and avoid alcohol, if his gluttony and alcoholism did not prevent him from doing so:

Tell God, my drinking prevents me (from avoiding alcohol)
and tell God (as well) that my eating (*taʿāmi*) prevents me (from fasting).⁹

Better Than Paradise: Returning the Ticket to Heaven

For Kennedy,¹⁰ following Hamori, wine poetry in the time of Abū Nuwās has three aspects: antiheroism (i.e., mockery of heroism), antinomianism, and a parodic adaption or assimilation of religious language. Hamori even titles one chapter “The poet as ritual clown.”¹¹

Let us observe this in the poem *wa lāḥin lahā-nī* (a censurer censured me), which quotes Abū Miḥjan. I give Kennedy’s translation:¹²

A censurer censured me, trying to produce a *bidʿa*, and, by that, by my life!, is a plan I cannot abide.
He censured me that I might cease to drink wine, for it bequeaths—(so he claimed)—a burden of sin upon all who taste it.
My detractors have only made me more stubborn, for so long as I live I shall be (wine’s) companion.
Should I reject (wine) when God has not eschewed its name, and whilst our caliph is its friend?
It is the sun, though the sun burns, and our wine exceeds it in every beauty.
And even though for a brief moment we cannot live in Paradise, our Paradise (in this world) is wine.
So, my censurer, give me to drink and sing—for I am its sibling until the time of my death:
“When I die bury me by a vine whose roots can slake the thirst of my bones.”

The poem is talking about *bidʿa*, literally (a heretical) innovation. Right from the beginning we realize that our poet obviously has not the same idea of *bidʿa* as a man of religious learning: The poor poet is censured because he doesn’t want to behave like a heretic! And what is meant by this “heretical innovation”? To avoid wine. So, the idea of heresy is ironically reversed. The statement is to be read in the sense of “Not I’m the heretic, but you are, because you deny worldly pleasures and adhere to religious taboos, heretically introduced by those who prefer religious austerity!” Of course, it mocks the censurer by turning his own reproach against him: The poet

⁹ Quoted from Agnes Imhof, *Religiöser Wandel und die Genese des Islam. Das Menschenbild alatarabischer Panegyriker im 7. Jahrhundert*, Würzburg: Ergon 2004, 197 (Arabic version and German paraphrase).

¹⁰ Kennedy, *Genius of Poetry*, 59.

¹¹ Hamori, *Art*.

¹² Kennedy, *Wine-song*, 266 (Arabic text, 275).

regards the prohibition of wine as a (heretical) innovation (obviously referring to the emerging Islamic law).

In the next line he continues the pre-Islamic motif of the censurer. In pre-Islamic poetry the censurer is usually a woman, often the poet's wife, who exhorts him not to drink so much—however, not for religious reasons, but because carousing is expensive, and she fears he might drink away his last shirt. The poet's reaction is that of a man of honor: he does not care about her “effeminate” fears because it is part of a tribal hero's self-display to drink and to invite others to carouse in order to maintain his position and honor.¹³

The wine-reproaching censurer of Abū Nuwās is male but regarded as thinking “womanish” and having no true understanding of nobility (and religion). The poet claims that he not only does not care about his concern; it even makes him more determined, mocking the idea of the righteous Muslim who defies a temptation of heresy.

Next, explaining his reasons he begins his plea on behalf of wine: Even God did not reject wine's name, and the caliph himself is its friend. Both arguments, in fact, are true: The Qur'ān (regarded as God's speech, thus “God” in the text) mentions wine on several occasions and thus does not reject the name as such (obviously, not everyone would have agreed that this meant “wine is permitted”). In Q 16:67 alcohol made from palms is referred to positively; Q 2:219 says that there was advantage in wine but bigger sin; Q 4:43 prescribes that believers should not attend prayer in a state of drunkenness; and Q 5:90 says that wine and oracle darts are the work of Satan and to be rejected. Because there is also a chronological development from the Meccan sūra 16 to the Medinan sūra 5, there were discussions of whether the prohibition was about only wine from grapes (not concerning other alcoholic drinks), or if wine was forbidden in the context of (pre-Islamic) oracles only.¹⁴ Liberal circles until today stress that more recent sūras do not necessarily abrogate older ones and thus question the prohibition as such.

There is no doubt that the caliph was a friend to wine. During the time of Abū Nuwās, carousals were part of court ceremony. The *nadīm* (boon companion) had an official function at the 'Abbāsīd court; the title was given to the caliph's confidants. Even religious caliphs like Hārūn al-Rashīd enjoyed carousals, although he did so less than e.g. his son al-Amin.

The poem compares wine to the sun, which it exceeds in beauty—a typical *aemulatio* (surpassing) motif and a characteristic of the *muḥdathūn*. But then our poet turns from the harmless nature image to religious language—even if a man cannot live in paradise, there is a paradise on earth: wine. When read in context, the verse continues the *aemulatio* motif: if wine exceeds the sun in beauty, why not assume

¹³ For a brief survey from pre-Islamic to 'Abbāsīd times, see Susanne Enderwitz, *Liebe als Beruf: Al-'Abbās b. al-Aḥnaf und das Ġazal* (Beiruter Texte und Studien 55, Stuttgart: Steiner 1995), 195–207.

¹⁴ H. Bobzin, *Der Koran. Eine Einführung*, [1999], 5th edition, München 2004, 76.

that also paradise in wine exceeds that of religion?¹⁵ Obviously he prefers the paradise of wine to that of religion.

The association of wine and paradise is not surprising at all. Paradise as described in the Qurʾān frequently recalls scenery associated with wine (e.g., sūra 55): there are cushions, servants (sometimes explicitly female ones) – and wine (that does not intoxicate: consequently, the question of whether singing girls were the originals of qurʾānic Huris has been asked some years before, since songstresses usually appear in the context of carousals). The unspoken question of Abū Nuwās is obvious: why wait for the paradise of an unsure afterlife if you can get the same thing here on earth? Consequently, he will drink even more forever (“I’m its sibling [*shaqīqubā*]”), and then, with such a worthy end to his life, he will be buried, not toward Mecca but under a grapevine—this way he will continue drinking even after his death. His quotation of Abū Miḥjan’s verse stresses the mockery: now we find that even after death the poet obviously prefers paradise in wine to that in Heaven. What at first glance seems a slightly mocking wine poem is, at a closer look, a clear rejection of religious taboos and even ideas of paradise and hell in the afterlife. Like Dostoyevsky’s Ivan Karamazov, Abū Nuwās rejects his ticket to paradise. But unlike the former, he does so not because of doubts, but because he has found something better – something which he promptly endows with a “theology” that – alas! – forbids him to accept the ban of wine.¹⁶ The poem’s “theology” can be summed up: Religious austerity is heresy. Why obey so many rules of religion for an uncertain hope of Heaven when you can have the same thing right now without following any rules?

In the time of our poet, religious criticism was nothing unusual. It was widespread among secretaries and poets, and in many cases, there were hardly any consequences at all. Cases like that of Ibn al-Muqaffa^ʿ or Ibn al-Rēwandī were exceptions to the norm. However, they left a strong impression. Also, the ʿAbbāsīd imposed a much stricter religious policy than their predecessors, the Umayyads, had done. Religious law emerged during the second and third hijra century, when religious criticism became much more dangerous, particularly from the time of al-Mahdi. However, since consuming wine was part of court ceremony, praising wine was still a safe way to criticize religion.

Transgression as way to paradise: this wine poem is not the only one to connect death and wine. Abū Nuwās plays ironically with the motif of death and wine in an-

¹⁵ This fits with the idea of competition, see above.

¹⁶ This way of mocking religion is still observable, e.g. when Bobby Henderson, prophet of the “Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster” called the Kansas School Board to officially teach the theory of a world created by the Flying Spaghetti Monster alongside with intelligent design and evolution (2005). <https://web.archive.org/web/20070407182624/http://www.venganza.org/about/open-letter/> Henderson’s letter was mainly a cry against the teaching of intelligent design no matter whether pupils were religious or not. And like our poet he endowed his criticism of religious austerity with a “theology” (which, however, found various adherents afterwards).

other poem as well, however, that one has a different conclusion: Nr. 37 (Colville)/74 (Wagner).¹⁷ At the end of the poem the poet says (translation by J. Colville):

I let him drink, 'til he got drunk
(so drunk he looked quite dead)
Then buried my young would-be monk
Beside me, in my bed.¹⁸

Here the idea of death in wine is ironic (particularly when "not in a tomb" is interpreted in a sexual sense: The drinker is so intoxicated that he looks like a dead body; his grave is the bed of the sexually predatory poet). In contrast to the previous text, there are no allusions to religious vocabulary here.

In Abū Nuwās' wine poetry there is hardly any interest in attaining a Muslim paradise.¹⁹ Consequently, remorse is not his concern: he frequently says that reproach only strengthened his stubbornness. He is the one to introduce the motif of the inversion of a religious moral code which is also visible in our poem: "And so I continued and will continue speedily to dissipate my religion and my wealth. / When we get together, I find pleasure in what is prohibited by religion, and I shy away from what is permissible."²⁰

To waste religion and wealth in favor of pleasure recalls pre-Islamic poetry and its code of honor (this topic will be discussed below in more detail). And Abū Nuwās goes even further, claiming that he displays all sins except *shirk* (polytheism— to admit this would surely have been his death warrant).²¹ As for *taʿwba* (remorse), he comments that a life of pleasure was better than one of desert tents, and he suggests that the censurer should quit his reproaching:

¹⁷ J. Colville, *Poems of Wine and Revelry: The Khamriyyat of Abu Nuwas*, London: Routledge 2005, 40; E. Wagner, *Der Diwān des Abū Nuwās*, vol. 3, 98, Wiesbaden: Steiner 1988.

¹⁸ The original (Wagner, *Der Diwān des Abū Nuwās*, vol. 3, 98) does not explicitly mention the novice and the bed, but says: "I gave him to drink till he was intoxicated, but he was, by your life!, not buried in a tomb!" The sexual context may be an interpretation by Colville, but in any case, the ironical play with the idea of death by wine is obvious.

¹⁹ Of course, there have been lots of attempts to interpret Abū Nuwās as someone who never really transgressed religious boundaries (maybe the fact that he also wrote *zuhdiyyāt* conveyed the impression of some inconsistency) However, he was arrested more than once for exactly this reason, and even presupposed that this might have been rather arbitrary or for political reasons, the "Islamic World" at his time was by no means defined only by Islam. Montgomery, even when reading him as someone testing what it meant to be a Muslim (161f) and assuming the unlimited forgiveness of God (163), says that poetry "facilitated the survival of much that would otherwise have been deemed theologically suspect or morally uncomfortable" (Montgomery, J.E., "Abū Nuwās, The Justified Sinner?", in: *Oriens* 39, 1 (2011): 75-164, 162). Abū Nuwās is mainly a great ironist, and, as will be demonstrated, even the belief in God's forgiveness can be a means of irony with the aim to mock religion.

²⁰ Quoted from Kennedy, *Wine Song*, 220, see also Julie Scott Meisami, "Abū Nuwās and the Rhetoric of Parody", in *Festschrift Ewald Wagner zum 65. Geburtstag*, Wolfhart Heinrichs and Gregor Schoeler, eds., vol. 2: *Studien zur arabischen Dichtung (Beirut Texts and Studien 54)*, Stuttgart: Steiner, 1994, 246–257.

²¹ Kennedy, *Wine Song*, 225.

You are beguiled if you insist on this repentance
tear your garment! I will not repent!²²

This is an interesting line, because it refers to the contempt of urban *zurafā*² (refined people) for “rough” and “uncivilized” “Bedouin-like” asceticism. The demand that the censurer should tear the garment refers to a traditional custom in funeral ceremonies forbidden by *ḥadīth*. By the time of Abū Nuwās the gesture of tearing one’s garment had already been transferred to musical culture as a sign of musical thrill (*ṭarab*). The words used by Abū Nuwās (*shuqqī l-yawma jaybaki*) recall the *ḥadīth* that forbids the practice.²³ He thus mocks the censurer twice: by professing that he will never repent even if she tears her garment as a sign of mourning—and at the same time by demanding that she should tear her clothes as a sign of enthusiasm—usually the audience’s reaction upon the recital of a wonderful poem!

Death and wine are closely connected now. But wine is by no means dead in Islamic poetry.

The Troubadour of Wine: Ibn Quzmān (1078–1160)

At the time of Ibn Quzmān, the Hispano-Arabic poet from Córdoba, the Almoravids introduced a new religious austerity to Spain characterized by strict adherence to religious law. By the time of his death the Almohads had established an even more rigorous regime. Even so, Ibn Quzmān is famous for love poetry to both men and women, and for his wine songs. Not surprisingly, his influence—as that of Hispano-Arabic poetry generally—on the troubadours has recently regained some attention.

David Navarro has demonstrated how Almoravid jurists furnished the new orthodox system with a considerable number of tracts focusing on the new moral code to be established in Spain. Religious norms and taboos increasingly affected everyday life. Regarding relations between the work of the jurist M. b. ‘Abdūn of Seville and poems by Ibn Quzmān, Navarro claims that the latter responded to the theoretical works of the religious man and satirized them deliberately.²⁴

Ibn ‘Abdūn wanted to “teach” the Spanish Arabs how to be good Muslims. Among other things that made them “bad” Muslims, he blames their consumption of wine, claiming that grapes should be cultivated only for other purposes. At the

²² Kennedy, *Wine Song*, 223. As said before, the attempts to read our poet as not contradicting orthodox views might be caused by the fact that he indeed also wrote *zuhdiyyāt*. However, no poet is a monolithic entity during his entire life, and still, it is the time when scribes love to display their eloquence by proving and disproving the same idea: one example e.g. in van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft* vol. 4, 302.

²³ See Imhof, “If Music Be the Food,” where this motif is discussed in more detail.

²⁴ David Navarro, “Interacción cultural de al-Ándalus en el Cancionero de Ibn Quzmān y la *Risāla fi-l-qaḍā’ wa-l-ḥisba* de Ibn ‘Abdūn: Dos ideas en conflict”, *eHumanista* 19 (2011): 328–344.

same time, Ibn Quzmān finds his fervid interest in wine songs.²⁵ He talks about buying wine from Christians or Jews, while Ibn ʿAbdūn blamed commercial contact with other religious groups, or parties with unveiled women and wine in *zajal* 28.²⁶ López Pita describes as well how Ibn ʿAbdūn complains about people drinking wine and ignoring the prohibition;²⁷ correspondingly, he quotes poetry on wine from different epochs in Spain.

Apart from the connection of wine poetry and religio-political issues, still another aspect reminds us of Abū Nuwās: like the ʿAbbāsīd poet, Ibn Quzmān is described as a kind of jester.

Monroe, analysing *zajal* 137 (on the imprisonment of wine) points to some crucial aspects of this motif: large parts of the poem are dialogue, with the holy month of Ramaḍān personified as a guest who makes a surprise visit to the poet's house while it is still devastated by his orgies.²⁸ The month Shaʿbān informs the poet of the unwelcome arrival. The poet orders his staff to straighten up and to empty the cups, for there will be a better occasion to drink wine (namely, the following month): his abstinence will surely not "stay" longer than the unwelcome guest. There is no sign of penitence, quite the contrary: abstaining from wine is mocked in a comparison to unwilling, frustrating sexual abstinence: abstinence not because of piety, but because the lady rejected the poet. Throughout the poem there is religious vocabulary. Monroe interprets it as a ring composition: a circular construction that demonstrates the poet's repentance as hypocrite, which will end as soon as Ramaḍān's repression is over and bring him back to where he started: carousing. The poet appears to be a fool with the privilege to break rules while others must obey them.

Monroe gives some interesting interpretations of why Ibn Quzmān, like Abū Nuwās, takes the role of the fool:²⁹ this role was, of course, a mask behind which criticism could hide, protected by audience laughter. As Monroe points out, the "Ibn Hānī" mentioned in the poem is probably a patron of the poet, given that personal names in Andalusian poetry usually refer to such patrons. The patron is in a situation where he either must pardon the poet (and forgive heretical behavior) or

²⁵ Navarro, "Interacción cultural", 331.

²⁶ Navarro, "Interacción cultural", 337, 339.

²⁷ P. López Pita, "El vino en el islam: Rechazo y alabanza", in *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma*, Serie III, H. Medieval t.17 (2004), 305-23, 318.

²⁸ James T. Monroe, "Prolegómenos al estudio de Ibn Quzmān: El poeta como bufón", *NRFH* (*Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica*) 34, 2 (1985-1986), 770-99, new edition and translation in: James T. Monroe *The Mischievous Muse*, 2 vol.s, (Brill Studies in Middle Eastern Literatures 39,1-2) Leiden: Brill 2017, vol. 1, 810-817. Further see by the same author: "The Decline of Courtly Patronage and the Appearance of New Genres in Arabic Literature: The Case of the Zajal, the Maqāma and the Shadow Play", *Journal of Arabic Literature* 34, 1/2 (2003): 138-77.

²⁹ Monroe, "Prolegómenos" 797-9.

condemn him (and jeopardize his social prestige as a Maecenas). He thus interprets the poem as a satire against the “patron.”³⁰

However, we should question this last argument. The decision required by the patron (to forgive or condemn the poet) in fact points to the idea of free will, a fervidly debated motif in Islamic theology for centuries. Individual free will includes the possibility of non-conformist behavior: non-conformism even proves free will, because otherwise, God would be responsible for any “ill” behavior. As Monroe says, Ibn Quzmān forces the hearer of the poem to come to a moral decision: is the fool-poet right or not, to behave as he does? The same decision is required of the patron Ibn Hānī—the poem is not so much satire against him, but an ironic claim to make a moral decision and thus prove his own free will. I’ll show how the Christian Archpoet addresses his patron, Rainald von Dassel, and all princes of the world in a similar way. But let us first turn to the poem that continues the motif of death in wine: *zajal* 90³¹ starts by clearly attesting to debauchery and drunkenness:³²

I spend my life in orgies and obscenities. Oh my light!, I start to be a debauchee!
That I would repent is absurd (*muḥāl*: logically impossible). To live on (lit.: my survival)
without a bevvy (*shurayba*) means to go astray (*ḍalāl*)

Vino! Vino! Leave me alone with what is said. For to cease from debauchery is madness.

My slave-girl should be manumitted, my gold donated as a religious endowment
the day I stop drinking from a cup. And if they serve me [wine] a second or a fifth
time,³³

I’m only satisfied with my gorge at the *jarrón* (jug)!

Hey, let’s touch glasses! Intoxication! Intoxication! Hey, what’s sobriety for?

...

Take my fortune and waste it for wine! Distribute my gage (*thiyāb*: clothes) to the
whores!

And swear that I did well so, in things like that I never go wrong.

³⁰ Monroe, “Prolegómenos”, 793–795.

³¹ For this poem see also the chapter by Arie Schippers, “The Theme of Wine and Love in Medieval Andalusian Strophic Poetry: From Arabic and Hebrew *Muwashshahāt* to Ibn Quzmān’s *Azjāl*” in this volume.

³² *Diwān Ibn Quzmān al-Qurṭubī*, ed. F. Corriente (Cairo: al-Majlis al-‘ālī li-l-thaqāfa, 1995), 330; Spanish translation in M. A. García Peinado and Juan P. Monferrer Sala, “De poesía y pornografía medievales. Dos muestras, dos ejemplos: Guillermo de Aquitania e Ibn Quzmān”, *Thélème: Revista Complutense de estudios franceses* 13 (1998), 71–86, 78–80. New edition with translation by James T. Monroe *The Mischievous Muse*, 2 vols. (Brill Studies in Middle Eastern Literatures 39, 1–2) Leiden: Brill 2017, vol. 1, 573–79 and in Monroe’s “The Decline of Courtly Patronage and the Appearance of New Genres in Arabic Literature: The Case of the Zajal, the Maqāma and the Shadow Play”, *Journal of Arabic Literature* 34, 1/2 (2003): 138–77. In the latter publication, Monroe stresses the self-ironical aspect (155). Although this is appropriate, it is not only the poet, who is an object of mockery.

³³ Monroe translates „and if I’m offered a two-*raṭl* or a five-*raṭl* cup ...”. Since a *raṭl* is about half a litre, the translation with “a second / fifth time” is preferable and refers to the cup changing between carousers.

When I die, my place in the grave shall be as follows: May I rest with a vine growing between my eyes.

Give me grape leaves as a cerecloth, and at my head a turban of a vine's tendril.

...

And whoever eats a grape shall afterwards plant its stalk in my grave.

The following verses describe sexual adventures. Finally, the poet addresses his patron, Abū Ishāq al-Sahli, whom he praises not only as the Lord of viziers and *amirs* and “flower of the world” but also as the one who made poetry rise from its grave, ironically taking up the tomb motif:

Abū Ishāq! Lord of viziers! Flower of the world, and Lord of Lords!

One like thou revitalizes poetry for the poets and makes generosity rise although it was already buried.

Ibn Quzmān is often called the Abū Nuwās of the West. In this poem, he lives up to the name. The poem is clearly antimoral, and it mocks religious language and ideas about sin and going astray. It contrasts one's personal life and wishes to the code of morals fostered by the authorities. The loosely referred to group of censors (“I don't care what is said / leave me alone with what is said”) seems to adhere to the latter—while the poet claims that following this moral code would be absurd, foolish, and simply mad. In these affirmations he clearly uses religious vocabulary but inverts its value: not to stray from the path of religion would be absurd (recalling theological debates by using *muḥāl*, “logically impossible”) — but repenting. Not committing a sin (like debauchery) is madness — but leaving it undone. Going astray (*ḍalāl*, recalling qur'ānic vocabulary) means not drinking alcohol — but abstaining. The code of morals is inverted to its contrary. As demonstrated above, this technique is also used in the poetry of Abū Nuwās.

To confirm that he will never cease drinking, the poet says that he would rather manumit his slave girl (i.e., concubine) and give away his wealth as a pious donation than stop drinking. In other words, he would rather become a penitent than stop drinking. Getting the cup that circulates among the carousers a second or even a fifth time is not enough—he needs to drink directly (and nonstop) from the jug (for *wine* and *jug* he uses the Spanish *vino* and *jarrón*) to get satisfied. Because sobriety is useless, he wants his comrades to waste his fortune on whores and wine, and he claims that in such things he has never been mistaken.

Wasting one's fortune on wine is a pre-Islamic motif related to generosity, which we also came across in discussing Abū Nuwās. Pre-Islamic tribal poets frequently boast that they wasted their last cloak on wine to display this virtue — the stereotypical reproachful woman only shows her ignorance in the field of honor. In early Islamic poetry this motif was inverted by, for example, Ka'b b. Mālik, who said that he would give away his clan (*abli*) and his wealth (*māli*) for the Prophet.³⁴ Ibn Quzmān again puts wine and whores in the place of honor (pre-Islamic poetry) and

³⁴ Imhof, *Religiöser Wandel*, 251.

even the Prophet (Kaʿb b. Mālik)! Even more, he claims never to be mistaken in these issues—a very unusual understanding of being rightly guided (of course, this claim alludes to the Islamic idea of right guidance).

That he does not expect to become a penitent, neither in this life nor in any possible afterlife, becomes clear in the verse, where he takes up the motif of death in wine: he wants to be buried in a vineyard, and his turban shall be made of the vine's tendril, and his cerecloth from grape leaves: Ibn Quzmān thus mocks Muslim funeral ritual. Anyone who eats grapes shall plant their stalks in the earth of his grave. The drunkard hopes that a new grapevine might sprout for him even from the waste of the grape.

He then describes his love adventures before praising his patron as the one who resurrected poetry from its grave and initiated its rebirth—a thematic turn back to the motif of the dead drunkard. On the one hand, this can be interpreted as an allusion to the Christian idea of the risen Christ. Poetry thus corresponds to Jesus: it attains sacred status, and all that “killed” it by prohibiting its themes of wine and libertinage, would be the henchmen of Pontius Pilate. The verse is, of course, directed against the austere moral code of the ruling dynasty that had “killed” poetry. This moral code is encountered by a scornful affirmation of all it rejects. Poetry was dead but now it is resurrected, with all its offensive topics! By praising the savior of poetry, Ibn Quzmān blames all that tried to “kill” it—and ironically confronts them with all they disdain. The poem is by no means merely the confession of an incorrigible alcoholic. It is a brilliant and extremely stinging religio-political satire.

The Archbishop-Elect's Jester: The Archpoet

We do not know much about the man, who was probably one of the notaries in the entourage of Rainald von Dassel, archbishop-elect of Cologne and arch-chancellor of Italy (1159–1167). Obviously, he styled himself Archpoet in imitation of his master's titles.³⁵ Peter Godman regards him as a kind of court jester to Rainald von Dassel: the one who could say things that were otherwise forbidden.³⁶

Like many church dignitaries of noble birth, Rainald was at least as much a courtier as he was a cleric.³⁷ He had lived in France—Paris was a center of medieval religious scholarship—and Godman suggests that the Archpoet had so as well.³⁸

The Archpoet's probably most famous poem often referred to as the “vagrant's confession” (which later became part of the *Carmina Burana*) dates to 1163.³⁹ As a

³⁵ Peter Godman, *The Archpoet and Medieval Culture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, 2.

³⁶ Godman, *Archpoet*, 2–3, claiming that no one before him had mocked the Bible in the presence of an archbishop-elect.

³⁷ On clerical courtliness, see C. S. Jaeger, *Scholars and Courtiers: Intellectuals and Society in the Medieval West*, Aldershot, UK: Ashgate 2002, especially 291–325 on the Courtier Bishop.

³⁸ *Archpoet* 17–18.

³⁹ Godman, *Archpoet*, 1.

result of political differences, Rainald, a high imperial official, had been excommunicated in May 1163. The pope, to whom he owed obedience as a cleric, expected him to return as a penitent. Instead of doing so, during a stay in Pavia his "jester" recited a poem on false regret, debauchery, and wine—the so-called vagrant's confession.⁴⁰

The poem starts off reminiscent of a confession; however, it goes on to mock by praising a large range of things forbidden to clerics in Roman Catholicism. The text alludes extensively to biblical and theological language. Godman points out that the style of confession refers to Job 10:1 (*aestuans intrisecus ira vehementi*) and to the strict moral code of theologians like Peter Damian and the conformist attitude of the Roman church. The Archpoet, by contrast, regards chastity as a contradiction to nature and thus impossible for a cleric.⁴¹ Godman convincingly makes a connection to the Troubadours, who, by stressing their sensuality as a youthful characteristic created a common identity as a marginalized group.⁴² This, of course, reminds the orientalist of the ideal of *futuwwa*—or young manliness, chivalry—a code of conduct of the ideal (young) man (often of courtiers, but there were numerous different brotherhoods) that flourished from early Abbasid times.⁴³ It will be the task of future researchers to discover whether this striking similarity is attributable to direct influence.

Let the Angels Drink!

Much of the poem celebrates the merits of wine, such as making one a better poet. And the poet's praise of wine reaches its climax in his plan to die in a tavern:

Tertio capitulo memoro tabernam.
Illam nullo tempore spreui neque spernam,
donec sanctos angelos venientes cernam
cantantes pro mortuis: "Requiem aeternam."

Meum es propositum in taberna mori
Ut sint vina proxima morientis ori
Tunc cantabunt letius angelorum chori
Sit deus propitius huic potatori.

⁴⁰ Godman, *Archpoet*, 162–67.

⁴¹ Godman, *Archpoet*, 163, 165–66, 169–70.

⁴² Godman, *Archpoet*, referring to E. Kohler, "Sens et fonction du terme 'jeunesse' dans la poésie des Troubadours," in *Mélanges offerts à R. Crozet*, P. Gallais and Y.-J. Riou, eds., Poitiers: Société d'Études médiévales, 1966, 569–83.

⁴³ On the notion, see D. G. Tor, *Violent Order: Religious Warfare, Chivalry and the 'Ayyār Phenomenon in the Medieval Islamic World*, Würzburg: Ergon 2007, particularly 243–251. Further see C. Pollok, *Fatā, Fityān, Futūwa. Studien zur Vorgeschichte der Männerbünde in vor- und frühislamischer Zeit*, Bonn: Dissertation, University of Bonn 1996.

In the third chapter I mention the tavern.
 I have never despised it, nor will I ever do so
 Until I shall see the the Holy angels come
 To sing "Requiem aeternam" for the deceased.

It is my plan to die in the tavern,
 Where wines are close to the mouth of the dying.
 Then the angels' choirs will sing in a happier way:
 May God be graceful toward this drinker.

In comparing the poem with Abū Nuwās, Abū Miḥjan and Ibn Quzmān, we find the strikingly similar motif of death in wine. Like the Arabic-speaking poets, the Archpoet claims that he never despised wine and never will until the day he dies. Like his predecessors, he wants to taste wine even in the moment of his death. As in the Arabic poems, he talks about afterlife: however, instead of continuing drinking even as a dead body, he claims that the angels will ask God for grace—"may God be graceful toward this drinker"—quoting a biblical verse (Luke 18:13) by changing *peccatori* (penitent) to *potatori* (drinker).⁴⁴ As in the Arabic poems, drinking is connected with the topics of repentance and the afterlife. And as in the Arabic poems, the Archpoet uses religious vocabulary, alluding to Luke's gospel and Gregory the Great's *De angelis*.⁴⁵

The most striking difference between this poem and the Arabic ones is that wine is, at first glance, not preferred to paradise by the poet. In fact, the drinker seems to hope to access paradise despite his drinking. This is no surprise, as the Christian idea of paradise differs from the Islamic one. Is religious criticism missing from this poem? Obviously not. As Godman has shown, the poem is a jest on the rite of confession and on clerical prudery as such. Godman points to how the poet reduces the highest (the angels' choirs, alluding perhaps to the *de angelis* ceremony commemorating the dead) to the lowest: the pub. Angels exalt an "alcoholic ascent to heaven"—and considering that Luke's prayer ("Sit deus propitius ...") had a ritual function, this may have been even regarded as blasphemy.⁴⁶

Let me add to Godman's valuable interpretation some interesting aspects in the context of Abū Nuwās. The comparative in *letius* is usually not translated, but remarkable. Happier than what—than usually? The angels' choirs obviously rejoice more over the dead drinker than over any other person. They even change the verse "may God be graceful toward this penitent" to "may God be graceful toward this drinker." The question arises, whether the dying drinker might have had some influence on the angels. Do the angels rejoice more—*letius*—because they didn't reject a glass as well? This could also explain why they change the verse. So, does the dead

⁴⁴ Godman, *Archpoet*, 1, clearly points out the mockery of confession by the religious vocabulary.

⁴⁵ Godman, *Archpoet*, 171–173.

⁴⁶ Godman, *Archpoet*, 172–73.

drinker's soul waft away to paradise with an entourage of blithe angels, cherished by alcohol?

Consequently, the Archpoet has a clearly ironic attitude toward Christian paradise as well. While Abū Nuwās plans to replace paradise with wine, the Archpoet plans to "infect" it with wine (the difference is, of course, related to the different concepts of paradise in Islam and Christianity). He not only drags heavenly issues down to the pub but pulls very mundane issues (like drinking) up to heaven as well. So, the immaterial idea of a Christian paradise as a community of spiritual beings rejoicing in God suddenly takes on a very material attitude. In the next strophe he continues:

Poculis accenditur animi lucerna
Cor inbutum nectare volat ad superna.
Mihi sapit dulcius vinum de taberna
Quam quod aqua miscuit presulis pincerna.

By cups the lantern of the mind is lit
A heart wetted with nectar ascends to heaven.
To me, wine from the tavern tastes sweeter
Than what the bishop's cupbearer mixes with water.

And here it is: paradise in wine. A heart wetted with nectar (wine) ascends to heaven. Godman reads the following verses in the sense of a butler fraudulently mixing water into wine.⁴⁷ *Pincerna* means in fact a cupbearer at court. But why should the Archpoet construct an opposition between his patron and the tavern and then prefer the latter? An audience socialized into Catholic ritual would have an additional association: the cupbearer could ironically allude to the acolyte or altar boy in Christian ritual who, during the offertory, brings water and wine for the priest (or Archbishop-elect): a symbol of the dual nature of Christ (according to the *Missale Romanum*), the blood and water of Christ's wounds (in the old Catholic liturgy), or the connection between Christ and the Catholic Church (for this reason, according to Cyprian, wine and water must be offered and mixed together).⁴⁸

This fits in well with Godman's argument of the poem being a mockery of confession and his embedding of the text into theological debates of the time.⁴⁹ Even more, regarding another text on the Archpoet's contempt to mix water and wine:

... dico, quod non copulari
Debent, immo separari
Que sunt adversaria.

Cum in scypho reponuntur
Vinum aqua coniuguntur
Sed talis coniunctio

⁴⁷ Quoted in Godman, *Archpoet*, 174.

⁴⁸ Cyprian, *Epistola* 63, ad *Caecilium* 13, quoted in A.-G. Martimort, ed., *Handbuch der Liturgiewissenschaft*, Freiburg: Herder Verlag, 1963, 1:388.

⁴⁹ Godman, *Archpoet*, 157–84.

Non est bona nec laudari
 Debet, immo nuncupari
 Melius confusio.⁵⁰

So, water and wine should not be mixed, because they are not to copulate; they are adversaries—this kind of confusing “marriage” is to be rejected. Godman convincingly reads the verse in the context of theologians who wanted to prevent clerics from drinking. However, the wine imagery and the tavern milieu refer additionally—and hardly in a disguised way—to Christian ritual.

We should read the poem in that context. The question whether bread and wine turned into Christ’s real body during the Holy Mass or not was an issue that raised theological debates. The term *transubstantiation* was first verified in 1155–1156 by Rolandus Bandinelli—a sworn enemy of Rainald von Dassel, who some years later (1159) became Pope Alexander III—and was fixed in the Fourth Lateranum in 1215. Taking this debate into account, the Archpoet’s mockery aims at the heart of theological controversies about Christian ritual.

In a Christian context this satire is as stinging as Abū Nuwās’ rejection of paradise. It gets at the roots of Christian exaltation of the soul over the body, of the immaterial over the material. This fits quite well with the rest of the poem: some verses earlier, the Archpoet describes himself as “voluptatis avidus magis quam salutis / mortuus in anima curam gero cutis” (I strive after lust more than after my salvation / dead in my soul I just care for my skin [i.e., my body]).

Godman’s interpretation logically ends up emphasizing the ironic aspect as a means of concealing any real intention: by combining controversial tones (*meum est propositum—in taberna mori*) he seems to “change shape” whenever he runs the risk of being accused of blasphemy. He alludes rather than speaks openly “on an open battlefield”. Polysemy is intentional.⁵¹

This attitude is also true for Abū Nuwās—and to a lesser extent, Ibn Quzmān. We might call it the trickster attitude: in comparative religion, a trickster is a shapeshifter (a god or a hero), who tricks and mocks the other gods.

At first glance, the poet seems to repent at the end of the text. Strophe 24 reads: “Electe Coloniae parce penitenti” (Archbishop-elect of Cologne, spare the penitent!). However, Godman has demonstrated how even this apparent penitence is nothing but mockery.⁵² If we regard the last line, we read again about *amaritudo* (bitterness)—as in the first line. Keeping in mind what Godman says about the theo-

⁵⁰ Quoted from Godman, *Archpoet*, 175; see also 177. Godman translates (175): “With unvarnished truth/ and succinct brevity/ for diverse reasons/ I say the opposites / should not be combined, / but kept apart. // When they are poured into a goblet/ wine and water are coupled, / but such a union is not good/ nor praiseworthy; rather it should/ be termed a mess.”

⁵¹ Godman, *Archpoet*, 238–39. See also Gerd Althoff and Christel Meier, *Ironie im Mittelalter: Hermeneutik–Dichtung–Politik*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2011, 84–89 and 153–69.

⁵² Godman, *Archpoet*, 180–84.

logical meaning of bitterness, we find that the Archpoet's remorse seems not to be too earnest. His pleading for pardon ends as follows:

Et vos idem facite, principes terrarum:
Quod caret dulcedine, nimis est amarum.

And you, act likewise, princes of the world:
What lacks sweetness is too bitter.

In the beginning of the poem there was bitterness in confessing one's sins. After having described these sins in all detail, they obviously seem sweeter than penitence, and sweetness is better than bitterness.

The final address is thus not only to his patron but also to all princes in the world: to forgive the poet's transgressive behavior. This recalls the challenge of Ibn Quzmān: if the patron pardons him, he pardons all the mockery and transgression of religious commands. If he does not, then he does not deserve to be called a patron. The princes of the world are challenged to make a similar moral decision. Abū Nuwās' hope for God's forgiveness can be interpreted in this sense as well: If God forgives transgression of his commands anyway, they are meaningless. If he does not, he is not forgiving.

Wine and Society—The Sociopolitical Context

Let us set the poems into their respective sociopolitical context. Under the early 'Abbāsids, Islamic theology developed.⁵³ The schools of Islamic law were emerging – particularly the Ḥanbali school shows an austere approach. On the other hand, the 'Abbāsids adopted many aspects of Sassanid court ceremony and pre-Islamic customs in the field of culture, they caroused as part of court ceremony. However, they also stressed their role as *Amir al-Mu'minin* (sovereign of the Believing) and *Khalifat Allāh* (deputy of God), fought "heresies," and—depending on the situation—reduced or practiced more carousing. Their new capital Baghdad had the mosque and palace at its center, and four main roads leading from there into the direction of the four most important provinces: it was regarded the center of the world. At least from the time of Caliph al-Mahdi (Hārūn al-Rashīd's father), mocking religion became dangerous, particularly when connected with an open preference for another belief system (e.g., Manicheism). Increasingly, the 'Abbāsīd tended toward an official religion—about 20 years after Abū Nuwās' death, al-Ma'mūn was the first to introduce Mu'tazili theology as the official religion and to persecute rivalling schools such as the Ḥanbaliyya. It was mainly an attempt to end the various riots in religious disguise all over the huge empire by unifying religious doctrine (preferring so-called "rational" Mu'tazili theology to the more rigorous Ḥanbaliyya in order to

⁵³ I assume that readers will be familiar with the historical cornerstones and will not bore them with citations of basics in this short sketch.

prevent the spread of radical ideas that could challenge the power of the dynasty). However, the impact of religious austerity had become apparent before. Gradually the influence of religion on everyday life became more intense. During the ninth century, women were increasingly separated from men, forced to stay at home and go out only veiled. The rather skeptic courtly milieu of poets, musicians, philosophers, and secretaries struggled for influence, while religious circles of the approved theological and law schools became increasingly important: they guaranteed caliphal legitimation when faced with radical religious groups. The religious party displays its power through an enhanced interest in the observance of religious commands. The party of the courtiers finds expression in the ideas of *futuwwa*, *adab*, and *zarf* and, in the eighth and ninth centuries, had a clearly nonreligious attitude.⁵⁴ The easiest way to mock without fear of death penalty was to focus on things forbidden by religion but still practiced by the Caliph himself. Wine, women, and music, then, were perfect for disguising religious criticism behind the cloak of laughter and conviviality.⁵⁵

The question of free will points to fervently discussed topics of Islamic theology. Abū Nuwās was in contact with al-Nazzām and frequently responded to his opinions or theological debates. The situation of Ibn Quzmān was similar in many respects. The coming of the Almoravids and Almohads brought a new and austere religious fervor. This was supported by jurists, who provided the theological fundament. Like Abū Nuwās, Ibn Quzmān reacted to theological issues and debates of his time, arguing with his personal “counter-theology”. And like Abū Nuwās, he remained in collective memory as a fool: taking the role which allows him to say things that would otherwise be persecuted.

Comparably, during the time of the Archpoet, the Catholic Church was gradually gaining more influence in the Latin West. The Premonstratensians and Cistercians helped to accelerate this process. A Cistercian (Eugen III.) was even pope from 1145 to 1153. They supported an ascetic, monastic ideal of Christianity, devaluating the bodily pleasures that were so dear even to clerics. As a result of the counterpopes and other religious conflicts, imperial functionaries were regarded as brutish “Teutonic” barbarians in Rome.⁵⁶ The Archpoet belongs to the entourage of such an imperial cleric, Rainald von Dassel, a confidant of Friedrich Barbarossa—thus in the controversy between pope and emperor, he took the latter’s side. In his support of a

⁵⁴ Imhof, “If music be the food of love”, on *adab* and *zarf*. For the role of *zandaqa* and the critical tradition in the “high society,” see Josef van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra*, 6 vol.s, Berlin: De Gruyter, 1991-1995, vol. 1, 443–56, vol. 2, 4–41, vol. 3, 21.

⁵⁵ For a glance into the debate on alcohol within Islamic law see Haider, Najam, “Contesting Intoxication: Early Juristic Debates over the Lawfulness of Alcoholic Beverages”, in: *Islamic Law and Society* 20, 1/2 (2013): 48–89.

⁵⁶ See H. Zug Tucci, “Dalla polemica antiimperiale alla polemica antitedesca,” in *Le forme della propaganda politica nel due e nel trecento*, Paolo Cammarosano, ed., Rome, 1994, 45–64.

counterpoet, Rainald was even a kind of antichrist in the eyes of the Roman Church: *ruina mundi*, the ruin of the world.⁵⁷

All three poets, whether writing in Arabic or in Latin, talk about wine to mock religion. This is the more interesting because of the important role of wine in Christian ritual. Why use it for mockery?

In all three cases, the poet claims he will be addicted to alcohol until his death and will die drinking. In the case of Islam, the antithesis between wine and religion is obvious (although there was never absolute consensus)—in the case of the Christian Archpoet it is only understandable in the context of the new, monastic ideal opposed to the pleasures of the body, and if we read the text as a satire against the debates on the offertory.

In all texts there is a clear contrast between religious moralists and the life-affirming (or wine-affirming) attitude of the poet. It is not merely about alcoholism but about the position of religion and its moral code in society. Abū Nuwās plays with the debates on heresy, Ibn Quzmān does so quite similarly. And the Christian? The Muslim world by the time of the Archpoet had the image of libertinage—it thus would not be at all surprising that the Archpoet referred to an Arabic-speaking poet to mock the partisans of Christian asceticism. Alluding to the ritual of the offertory gave him an opportunity to transfer religious criticism of Arabic wine poetry to a Christian context. All three poets share the rejection of morals as an instrument of marginalization with the aim of strict conformism.

Could the Archpoet have known the Arabic poems? I must leave the final proof to further investigation. But the influence of Ibn Quzmān on the Troubadours has become again a focus of research, and it seems to have been remarkable. There are indications that the Archpoet knew the Troubadour poetry and milieu at least superficially. Monroe, among others, stresses the impact of Ibn Quzmān on Troubadour poets like Guillaume of Poitiers (1071-1126) particularly in the field of irony.⁵⁸ Besides Guillaume, Monroe quotes the well-known “Archpriest” of Hita (Juan Ruiz, 1283-1350), author of the *Libro de buen amor*, who also plays with religious vocabulary when saying about a baker-girl named Cruz: “Mis ojos non verán luz/ perdido he la Cruz” (“My eyes won’t see light again, I lost the Cruz”: a pun with the double meaning of *cruz* as a girl’s name and as the Christian cross!) If the Archpoet was inspired by an Arabic text, it was probably Ibn Quzmān’s—the missing link between Abū Nuwās and Christian Europe.

Finally, in all three cases there is a courtly context of gentlemen—gentlemen confronted with religious specialists’ increasing claims on control. As the embodiment of licentiousness, disorder, and loss of control, wine is the perfect counterpart. Our trickster poets disguise their critiques of regulation behind this attitude of disorder.

⁵⁷ Godman, *Archpoet*, 2–4.

⁵⁸ Monroe, „Decline of Courtly Patronage“, 150-2.

All three poets use the motif of wine in the context of paradise as religious satire. Abū Nuwās rejects paradise in favor of his personal paradise in wine. Ibn Quzmān wants to drink away religion and squander his wealth on wine and whores. The Archpoet wants to introduce wine to heaven and claims that wine makes one ascend to heaven (preferring alcohol in the tavern to that of the Mass and thus, to Christian ritual): in opposition to introducing monastic ascetism to the world, he plans to “infect” even paradise with bodily pleasures.

Death in wine is the peak of their rejection. Confronted with the demand to be remorseful, all repudiate it and, quite the contrary, swear to continue drinking even in death. By rejecting penitence, the three of them challenge their public (and even the idea of a forgiving God) with the moral decision: I will not repent, so what are *you* going to do?

The motif seems to have had some influence. Abū Nuwās became a jester in the *Arabian Nights*, and popular culture dealt similarly with his colleagues. The motif of death in wine found its way to several modern poems in German referring to the Archpoet,⁵⁹ and even into one of France’s most popular drinking songs, “Chevaliers de la table ronde”:

Si je meurs, je veux, qu’on m’enterre / Dans une cave, ou il y a du bon vin
Le deux pieds contre la muraille / Et la tête sous le robinet.
Et mes os, de cette maniere / Resteront imbibés de vin.

...

Sur ma tombe, je veux qu’on inscribe: / “ici gît le roi des buveurs!”
La morale de cette histoire / est, qu’il faut boire avant de mourir.

When I die, bury me in a cellar, where good wine is stored.
My feet to the wall, but my head towards the tap.
And so, my bones shall remain watered by wine.

...

and on my grave write the words: “Here lies the king of drinkers.”
And the moral of this story is, that one must drink before one dies.

Conclusion

In all poems, whether by Abū Nuwās, Ibn Quzmān or the Archpoet, we find a culture of courtiers who are opposed to the increasing influence of a religious moral code—court ideal versus religious ideal. All talk about false remorse and mock penitence using religious language. All carry their rejection to the extreme in saying that they want to drink wine even in death. All compare religious morals to wine—and prefer the latter. In all cases the poet reacts on an increasing claim of religion to rule everyday life and hides his critiques behind a jester’s attitude. The similarities are striking, and what we know until now makes it seem most likely that there was a

⁵⁹ H. E. Stiene, *Von Horaz und Ovid bis zum Archipoeta: Sechs Rezeptionsgeschichten aus der deutschen Literatur*, Cologne: Kölner Wissenschaftsverlag, 2015.

direct influence. The missing link in the transmission of the motif from Abū Nuwās to the Archpoet was presumably Ibn Quzmān, who shares the motif of challenging his audience with the Archpoet.

Let me thus do the same and point to the challenge for further research to prove or disprove this impact.

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Appendix: Original Texts (unless quoted in the article)

Abū Miḥjan al-Thaqafi (quoted from K. al-Aghānī as cited above):

إذا مت فادفني إلى أصل كرمة تروى عظامي بعد موتي عروقتها
ولا تدفني بالفلاة فانني أخاف إذا مامت إلا اذوقها
أسير لها من بعد ما قد أسوقها ليروى بخمر الحص لحمي فاني

Abū Nuwās: Wa-lāḥin laḥānī (Quoted from Kennedy's edition, 275)⁶⁰

ولاح لحاني كي يجيء ببدعة وتلك لعمري خطة لا أطيقها
لحاني كي لا اشرب الراح إنها تورث وزرا من يذوقها
فما زادني إلا لاجاة عليها لأنى ما حيت رفيقها
الرفضها والله لم يرفض اسمها وهذا امير المؤمنين صديقها
هى الشمس إلا أنّ للشمس وقدة وقهوتنا فى كل حسن تفوقها
فنحن وإن لم نسكن الخلد عاجلا فما خلدنا فى الدهر إلا رحيقها
فيا ايها الاحى اسقنى ثم غننى فإنى إلى وقت المات شقيقها
إذا مت فادفني إلى جنب كرمة تروى عظامي بعد موتي عروقتها

⁶⁰ There are some differences between this edition and Wagner's (vol. 3, 222-3): Kennedy omits *fādiḥan* after *waizran* in v. 2. In v. 5 he has *ḥusn* instead of *ḥimn* and in v. 6 *kbidumā* instead of *kbuldunā*.

Ibn Quzmān

(*Zajal* 90, as quoted from Monroe’s edition in *The Mischievous Muse* vol. 1, 573-579, transliteration adapted):

Nafni ‘umri fi l-khankara wa-l-mujūn
yā bayāḍi khali‘ badayt an nukūn

Innamā an nutūb anā fa-muḥāl
wa-baqā’i bi-lā shuraybah ḍalāl
BĪNŪ BĪNŪ wa-da‘ni mimmā yuqāl
inna tark al-khalā’a ‘indi junūn

Khādimi ḥurra māli la-l-aḥbās
al-nahār allaḍi na‘aṭṭal kās
wa-in usqit bi-‘allāl aw khammās
ish raḍayt illā ḥalqī la-l-JARRŪN

AYYA alṭam bi-nā bi-ḍā l-aqdāḥ
Sakra sakra ay ma‘nā fi-nā ṣiḥāḥ
wa-matā mā aradtum al-iṣṭibāḥ
anbahūni min awwal al-FALAQŪN

Khudhū māli wa-baddadūh fi l-sharāb
wa-thiyābi fa-ḥaṣṣalū la-l-qihāb
wa-ḥlafū li bi-anna rāyi ṣawāb
lam nukūn qaṭ fi dhā l-‘amal maḡbūn

wa-idhā muttu madhhabī fā l-dafan
anni narqud fi karma bayn al-jifān
wa-tuḍummmū l-waraq ‘alayya kafan
wa-fi rāsi ‘imāma min zarjūn

wa-yuqīm ṣāḥi saw tham kulli wadūd
wa-dhkurūni ‘alayh qiyām wa-qu‘ūd
wa-l-‘inab kulli man akal ‘unquḍ
fa-yaḡarras fi qabri al-‘arjūn

...

yā bū Ishāq yā sayyid al-wuzarā
zahrāt al-dunyā sayyid al-umarā
mithlak aḥyā l-shi‘ri la-l-shu‘arā
wa-nashart al-nadā wa-kān madfūn

Dumta masrūr muballaḡ al-āmāl
wa-tarā jāh wa-‘izzi fi ‘iqbāl
mā staḥāl al-ḡalām wa-lāḥa l-hilāl
wa-mā akhḍar nabāt wa-qāmat ḡuṣūn!

The Impact of Abū Nuwās on Arabic and Hebrew Andalusian Poetry

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The golden age of Andalusian (Arabic and Hebrew) pederastic poetry was in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The history of the genre, however, goes back to the eighth century in Arabic literature. One of the first poets known to have been active in the genre is Abū Nuwās (768–815). His pederastic poetry, which is closely linked to the themes of wine, garden, and love poetry, was an important source of inspiration for Andalusian poets four centuries later. Any account of Arabic and Hebrew pederastic poetry in Andalusia—or al-Andalus, as Muslim Spain is referred to—must therefore begin with an overview of the themes of the genres in which pederastic poetry in the Arabic tradition generally operates. This discussion of the poetry of Abū Nuwās gives me an opportunity to provide some background information on the themes of this Arabic wine, garden, and love poetry. I then consider the Andalusian poets who continued Abū Nuwās’s themes, albeit in a much more mannered style, in Arabic or Hebrew.

In contrast to what we sometimes find in other literatures, Arabic pederastic poetry is not about latent or concealed homosexuality, nor is it part of a special homoerotic subculture. The pederasty here is expressed frankly in poetry that is the product of a courtly elite unconcerned about the rulings of Islamic legal scholars—indeed, they express their indifference to the rules of a religion that forbids both wine drinking and pederasty with a certain degree of derision. Pederasty and homosexuality are generally referred to in Islam as “the sin of Lot” (*liwāʾ*). This Islamic term has a negative ring and is best translated by the equivalent Latin term *sodomia*. Poets such as Abū Nuwās often pride themselves, with some coquetry, as “followers of Lot.” Love in this type of poetry is not confined solely to homoerotic love, for that matter: love of slave girls is often found in wine poetry, as is love of boys. The love objects are frequently slave boys and girls who are wine pourers, musicians, singers, or dancers in the wine-drinking company. The decadence of the courtly circles in which the wine poetry originates is evidenced by all sorts of salacious anecdotes and by a special genre of satirical poetry that is generally obscene in nature and mocks religious values.

Abū Nuwās was of Persian extraction¹, which may explain his penchant for pederastic and wine poetry: although wine motifs are not absent from pre-Islamic and Umayyad poetry, the courtly milieu around 800 in the ‘Abbāsid Caliphate (750–1258) provided a greater stimulus for these poetic genres, not least because courtly

¹ See Wagner, *Abū Nuwās*.

life there copied many features from the earlier court of the Sasanian Empire. The freedom to drink wine and engage in pederasty in the Islamic region at that time is in sharp contrast to the strictness found in the region today (e.g., the executions of gay men in Iran). In those days, the elite were able to turn away from the religion as determined by the legal scholars and follow their inclinations, whereas nowadays, governments in Islamic countries face an Islam of the masses, a populist and fundamentalist religion that sometimes displays great severity and intolerance.

Now to the work of Abū Nuwās. The early tenth-century commentator on the poet's work, Ḥamza, classified the poems by genre: thus, we find a chapter of wine poems, one of poems in praise of caliphs, one of mourning poems, and so on. We also find separate chapters of love poetry about slave girls, love poetry about boys, and love poetry dominated by obscenity (about boys). It is often difficult to draw dividing lines between the genres: wine poems often include the theme of pederasty, and pederastic poems often include wine motifs. In the obscene poems the poet usually boasts of his conquests, whereas the chapters of love poems about slave girls and boys are usually more serious in tone. Each chapter has an introduction to the genre by Ḥamza. In the introduction to the pederastic poetry section, for instance, he tries to explain how pederasty came about and how it found its way into Arabic literature. Ḥamza bases this discussion on the Book of Schoolmasters of the prolific author al-Jāhīz (776–868), which has been lost but evidently deals with the subject of the love of schoolmasters for their pupils. The passage that Ḥamza quotes on the genesis of pederasty reads as follows:

During the Abbasid period women and children did not accompany the army, as had previously been the case in the Umayyad period. The soldiers were badly in need of women. They apparently realised then that boys often had the same attributes as women: cheeks, legs and so on. Hence, they took refuge in boys.²

The twentieth-century scholar Goitein in fact comes up with a similar explanation.³ The armies that dominated Khorasan and related areas supposedly found a population there that was accustomed to centuries of domination. The people there had become “human dust” and readily bent to the wishes of the conquerors, who occasionally wanted something different. Whatever the case, Goitein's explanation perhaps overlooks the fact that homosexuality had evidently been a fairly common feature of Iraqi society, as is clear from the stories of the civil servant and judge Tanūkhī (938–994) that claim to include elements of the reality of the time as well as fictional ones. This shows that al-Jāhīz's and Goitein's explanations may be simplistic.

² See *Dirwān Abī Nuwās* (1958–2006), 4:141–142.

³ S. D. Goitein, “The Sexual Mores of the Common People” in *Society and the Sexes in Medieval Islam*, edited by Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, *Sixth Giorgio Levi Della Vida Biennial Conference* (Malibu, California: Undena Publications, 1979), 23–42.

In Tanūkhī's stories we find some homoerotic passages that have a fatal outcome, with drink often playing a part. In one story, for example, a merchant arriving in Basra gladly accepts an invitation to a party from an unknown man, whom the merchant—who is very drunk—thinks he recognizes as a friend. Later, the merchant is the unwilling witness to a murder:⁴

I went into his house, where there was indeed a party going on, with people drinking wine.... Among the party-goers was someone accompanied by a beardless young boy [his sweetheart]. When [after the party] the guests had all gone to their beds to sleep, I alone remained awake amongst them. After a while I saw someone in the company arise and move over to the beardless young boy. He committed indecency with him and then returned to his bed. He lay near the man to whom the beardless boy belonged. The boy's owner suddenly awoke and approached the boy to commit indecency with him. The boy asked him, What do you want? Were you not with me just now? And did you not do it with me in such and such a way? The man answered in the negative. Thereupon the boy said, Someone was with me just now who did it with me, I thought it was you, so I did not move, for I never thought anyone would dare to do such a thing in your presence. The owner flew into a rage, took his dagger from its sheath around his waist and arose. I trembled with fear, and if he had come at me and found me thus trembling he would surely have killed me, thinking that I had committed the misdeed. But God had decided to allow me to live a little longer, hence the man began with his neighbour, placing his hand on that man's heart, which he found was beating furiously [because of his recent indecent exertions]. Although the neighbour pretended to be asleep in the hope of remaining unhurt, the boy's owner drove his dagger into his heart, holding his mouth closed; the man put up a brief struggle and then died. Thereupon the owner took his boy by the hand, opened the door and left the house. This faced me with a problem: I was a stranger, and if the host were to awake [from his drunken stupor] he would not recognise me and would not doubt that I had committed the misdeed. I would then be killed. So I left my bag, took my coat and shoes, found the door, [went out] and walked and walked in the pitch-black night, without knowing where to go, fearing the night watchmen.

This same person experienced another equally murderous occurrence in Baghdad: to perform a good deed he helps carry a bier that has no followers to the cemetery. No doubt it is the bier of a poor person or a stranger, he thinks. The other bearer runs away, however, and he sees that the corpse is a headless man. The police initially arrests the man, but following some detective work a shrewd official discovers that the body is that of a young, beardless boy from a house where a group of unmarried men live. The boy has been killed because he was the object of jealousy of various men in the group. The police storm the house of the unmarried men, and the occupants are interrogated, found guilty, and executed. Tanūkhī has more of these "beardless young boy" stories, often involving drink, and culminating in a boy's corpse being cut into pieces.⁵

⁴ Abū 'Alī al-Muḥassin al-Tanūkhī, *Al-Faraj ba'da al-shidda*, ed. by 'Abboud. Shālji, Beirut 1978: no. 269.

⁵ See Tanūkhī, *ibid.*

This, then, gives some idea of pederasty in the medieval narrative literature of civil servants, which to some extent reflects what went on in the civil service milieu at that time. We should not conclude from the fact of pederasty's appearance with drinking and death in these stories that the love of beardless boys was generally considered something negative. On the contrary, pederasty was regarded as natural, even if religion regarded it as indecent.

The milieu in which pederasty is found in the literature is not that of schoolmasters, barracks, or merchants, and civil servants, but—where poetry is concerned—particularly that of the caliph and his dignitaries, who took pride in assembling a host of poets around them. As well as ceremonial genres, such as poems in praise of the caliph or one of his officials in which the poet keeps his distance from the sovereign, we also find informal genres, among them wine poetry. It was not uncommon for wine poets to be drinking companions of the caliph. The wine-drinking sessions sometimes degenerated into scenes of drunkenness and sexual frolics with boys and slave girls. The motifs of wine drinking and pederasty have been comprehensively revealed for German readers by Ewald Wagner, who published a book on Abū Nuwās in 1965. Here I merely consider a few of the main motifs, with some translations by way of illustration.

What are the main wine and pederasty motifs in the poetry of Abū Nuwās? First, a description of a boy going around with the wine, as we find in fragment no. 1:⁶

A roe deer goes around with the wine, still a young boy, crowned with a crown of
fragrant myrrh, a king in his Persian tunics.
He is not as a he sways like a heavy branch, if we look at his heavy behind when he
steps forth in his well-cut tunics.

There can be differences in the place and time of the drinking session, but often spring is the occasion for drinking. A drinking companion advises the poet to take part in the drinking, with a burgeoning garden as the backdrop. The flirtatious boy acts as wine pourer here. We find this in fragment 2, for example:⁷

The Season has become pleasant, for the leaves on the trees have budded, the winter has
gone and the month of Adhar (March) has come.
Spring has covered the earth with its flowers as an embroidery that dazzles the eyes with
its beauty.
Leave your seriousness and indulge in frivolity while drinking red wine, whose colour is
mixed with clear water ...
Receiving wine from the hands of a flirtatious boy, whose forehead is as the moon and
the rest of his face as a gold coin.

Both boys and slave girls are found in wine-drinking scenes, and the poet can fall in love with both of them. Abū Nuwās often declares a preference for boys over slave girls, although he refers to no fewer than twenty women in his love poems about

⁶ *Diwān Abi Nuwās*, edited by A.A. Ghazzali, Beirut 1953: 171, ll. 6–10.

⁷ *Diwān Abi Nuwās*, edited by A.A. Ghazzali, Beirut 1953: 688, ll. 1–3, 5.

slave girls. He has four times as much poetry on the subject of pederasty, however. In the cultural milieu of the caliphate there is in fact a tendency for boys to appear as effeminate as possible and for slave girls to be as like boys as possible. Slave girls who looked like boys were referred to as *ghulāmiyyāt*. They dressed in the same kind of tunic that the boys wore and had their hair cut short.

One of the *mujūn* poems about a *ghulāmiyya* has already been partly translated by Ewald Wagner into German,⁸ and by myself into Dutch.⁹ In her article on Arabic *mujūn* poetry Julie Scott Meisami partly quoted the poem in Arabic transcription and English translation.¹⁰ I have picked some points from Meisami's translation into English, in giving here the translation of the whole poem into English. This poem is to be found in Ghazzālī's edition of Abū Nuwās's *Dīwān*.¹¹ In Wagner's more recent edition of volume 5 of the *Dīwān*, the poem appears as *mujūniyyāt* no. 118.¹² This version has two extra lines: lines 14 and 16. Line 3 in the new version has *karwākib* (stars) instead of *karwā'ib* (those with breasts).

Some readers may prefer the older reading *karwā'ib*, because the poet says that women ("those with breasts") are not his affair. This expression fits wonderfully in this context, because the poem belongs to the third section of Abū Nuwās's *mujūniyyāt* devoted to the "abominable attitudes of women and the praiseworthy behaviour of the beardless lads." But it may be too easy to prefer the *lectio faciliior*. However, the reading *karwākib* may, in fact, be read as a metaphor that indicates breasts (*karwā'ib*). I quote here from fragment 3 of the poem from Wagner's edition (meter: *ṭawīl*):

1. *Wa-nāhidati ṭb-thadyayni min khadami l-qaṣri / muzarfanati -l-aṣḍāghī maṭmūmati sh-sha'ri*
2. *Ghulāmiyyatun fi ziyi-bā Barmakiyyatun / manāṭiqu-hā qad ghilma fi luṭṭfi-l-khaṣri*
A maiden with thrusting breasts, a servant in the palace, / adorned with curled hair locks covering the temples and short-cropped hair.
A boy-like person, Barmakid¹³ in her dress, / her belts were invisible because of the thinness of her waist.
3. *Kaliftu bi-mā aḥṣartu min ḥusni wajbi-bi / zamānan wa-mā ḥubbu-l-karwākibi min amri*

⁸ Wagner (1965), 175–76 and 177; Abū Nuwās (1958–2006).

⁹ Schippers (1990).

¹⁰ Meisami, Julie Scott. Arabic *Mujūn* Poetry: The Literary Dimension. *Verse and the Fair Sex: Studies in Arabic Poetry and in the Representation of Women in Arabic Literature*, ed. Frederick de Jong. Utrecht: M. Th. Houtsma Stichting, 1993: 8–30.

¹¹ Abū Nuwās (1953), 264; Kennedy (2005), 47.

¹² Abū Nuwās (1958–2006), 5:101–2.

¹³ Barmakids or Barmecides, Persian-descended vizier family from Khorasan, so the meaning here is fatuous and pompous.

4. *Fa-mā ziltu bi-l-ash'ārī fi kulli masbhadin / ulayyinu-bā wa-l-shi'ru min 'uqad -l-siḥri*
 I was infatuated with her because of the beauty of her face that I saw. / Already
 sometime [I was in love with her], although love for the ones who have breasts
 is not my affair.
 I made poem after poem on every occasion / speaking kindly to her, because
 poetry is one of the magic arts.
5. *Ilā an ajābat li-l-wiṣāli wa-aqbalat/ 'alā ghayri mi'ādin ilayya ma'a-l-ʿaṣri*
6. *Fa-qultu la-bā 'ablan wa-dārat ku'ūsu-nā / bi-mashmūlatin ka-l-warsi aw shu'ila-l-jamru*
 Finally, she answered my urgings to meet her and came / unannounced to me on
 a late afternoon.
 I said to her: "Welcome" when the cups with wine cooled by the northern wind
 went around yellow-red as *wars* plants or burning coals that are lighted.
7. *Fa-qālat 'asā-bā-l-khamru? Innī bari'atun / ilā -l-Lābi min waṣli-l-rijāl ma'a-l-khamri*
8. *Fa-qultu shrabī in kāna hādbā muḥarraman/ fa-fi 'unuqī, yā rimu, wizrū-ki ma'a wizrī*
 She said: "Is that perhaps wine? I am for God free from meeting men with wine."
 I said: "Drink. When it is forbidden, O little gazelle, may your fault as well as my
 fault come upon my neck."
9. *Fa-ṭālabtu-bā shay'an fa-qālat bi-ʿabratin / amūtu idban min-hu wa-dam'atu-bā- tajrī*
10. *Mā ziltu fi riḡqin wa-naḡsī taqūlu li / jurwayriyatun bikrun! Wa-dbā jazā'u-l-bikri*
 Then I demanded something of her, and she said tearfully / "I shall die of it
 then!" as her tears flowed.
 I continued to be kind, because I said to myself: "She is still a young girl, a virgin,
 this is the grief of a virgin."
11. *Fa-lammā tazwāṣalnā tazwassattū lujjatan / ghariqtu bi-bā, yā qazemu, min lujaji-l-baḥri*
12. *Fa-ṣiḥtu a'in-nī, ya gbulāmu fa-jā'a-nī / wa-qad zaliqat rijli wa-lajjajtu fi-l-ghamri*
 But when we had intercourse, I found myself in the midst of a bottomless sea, in
 which I drowned, o men, a sea of the deep seas.
 So I cried "Help me, o boy", and there he came to me when my foot already
 slipped away, and I entered the full sea in its very depth.
13. *Fa-law-lā ṣiyāḥi bi-l-ghulāmi wa-anna-hu / tadāraka-ni bi-l-ḥabli širtu ilā l-qa'ri*
14. *Wa-ʿūjiltu fi-bi bi-l-mamāti wa-kbiltu-ni / sa-albatu fi-bi ṭūla dabri ilā-l-ḥabri*
 And were it not for my cry to the boy, and his reaching me with the rope, / I
 would surely have ended up in the depths.
 I would therein be given the death without respite and I imagined myself already
 / that I had to stay there all my time left until the Resurrection on the Last Day.
15. *Fa-ālaytu al-lā arkaba l-baḥra ghāziyan / ḥayāti wa-lā sāfartu illā 'alā z-zabri*

16. *‘Ajibtu li-man yaznī wa-ḥi-l-nāsi amradun / wa-qad dbāqa ṭa‘mu-l-bardi shiddata-ḥarri*

Therefore, I swore never again in my life to ride the seas when being on expedition, / and to travel only on the back.

I wonder about persons who commit fornication with women, as long as there exist beardless young men among mankind, especially when the sensation of coolness [of the kissing of these young men] tasted the heavy warmth.

This poem is characteristic of Abū Nuwās on the following points. The drinking scene normally features several persons, among whom we find the pourer of wine—a young male or female servant for whom the poet professes love. The emphasis is on love for young people. Male and female are sometimes interchangeable, as symbolized by the *ghulāmiyyah*. In some poetry, the masculine grammatical forms are even used when referring to girls. We see here the typical Abū Nuwāsian motif that he prefers men over women, sometimes expressed as preferring the back to the belly, or the images “traveling over the sea” and “traveling over the land” to indicate sexual intercourse with women and with men, respectively.¹⁴ This latter vow by the poet (“I swore never again in my life to ride the seas”) can only be a joke, not unusual in the milieu of the *mujūn* or satirical poets. Abū Nuwās’s preference for men over women is beyond dispute, but he does not entirely spurn the love of slave girls. Moreover, this enables him to induce jealousy and rage in the boys he loves with some coquetry. In fragment 4, we find a vow expressing the opposite idea, i.e. the preference for women over men:¹⁵

Hamdān, why are you angry with me when there is no reason to be angry?
I have sworn a solemn vow that is not to be sneezed at.
Be in no doubt that I shall observe my vow, oh pleasant conveyance.
Now the sea has become my affair. For the sea is much more desirable and pleasant.
I have sworn never again to travel over land as long as I live.

In the courtly circles frequented by poets such as Abū Nuwās, the drinking bouts often degenerated into lechery. Sometimes three men are on top of one another in a sexual frolic, as in the case of the poet Muṭī‘ Ibn Iyās, who witnesses “double pleasure.” Abū Nuwās depicts a similar situation in a short poem, except that this also involves a slave girl, Durra (pearl), to whose name he alludes. The poet is in love with the slave Mufaḍḍal, who is in turn in love with the slave girl Durra.¹⁶

The boy who is loved by the poet should, of course, preferably meet the poet’s certain ideals of love, such as beauty and a literary education. The guarantee formula (“may I stand bail”)—a common formula in this poetry, later copied in Hebrew Andalusian poetry—occurs twice in the following excerpt. Here we have not only a boy with whom the poet is in love but also a flirtatious wine pourer who wishes to

¹⁴ Further on fragment 3 and the preference for men over women, see Ghazz., p. 264, ll. 1–3; 11–14; Wagner, *Abū Nuwās*, 175.

¹⁵ Jurj, Was., pp. 59–60, ll. 1–5; Wagner, *Abū Nuwās*, p. 175.

¹⁶ Abū Nuwās (1953), 91, ll. 1–2; Wagner, *Abū Nuwās*, 174.

keep the poet away from his beloved. A typical feature of the description of the wine pourer here is that he is not a Muslim Arab. This is common: innkeepers and male and female wine pourers are often not Muslims but Christians or Jews. In later Hebrew poetry the wine pourer is not a Jew but an Arab or Christian. A passage where the poet parades his sin is included in poem 27, fragment 5:¹⁷

May I stand bail for someone whose elegance and literary education is perfect. Who is proud when joy touches him...
 May my soul stand bail for you, oh beloved, whose secret I cannot reveal. I am bound to you by an indissoluble tie.
 How many hours that I have spent with you have the angels not noted as a sin!
 But I boast to other people of the sin that they have written down.
 No flirtatious wine pourer with a fat backside and slim belly shall hold me from you.
 A wine pourer who in his Persian robes steps forth as the full moon and is a descendant of red-haired Europeans [Byzantine Christians].

A familiar feature of love poetry throughout the world is secret love and the lover's care in concealing his love from tattlers and envious rivals. In the following excerpt from poem 63, fragment 6,¹⁸ the poet describes a secret amorous adventure of this kind that evidently does not go to the boy's liking:

When he finally came, I took him to a place away from the eyes of tattlers and envious rivals.
 I gave him wine to sip. Once he had had his fill of drinking, he lay down to rest on his side.
 I arose to unfasten his clothes and caress his thighs with my hand.
 Then we embraced: I kept kissing him on his mouth as white as hail.
 When his dazzlement was over he arose, deeply sad and with intense pain in his heart.

The boys are not always so unfortunate, however: in another poem, in contrast, a boy is insolent and forward. His effeminate speech is emphasized: instead of pronouncing the rolled Arabic *r*, he uses the burred *r*, *ghayn*, which is a different phoneme in Arabic. There are references in other poems to lispings: an interdental *th* is pronounced instead of an *s*.¹⁹ We find a similar kind of burring in boys in the work of the Hebrew Andalusian poet Samuel ha-Nagid. Abū Nuwās's boy pronounces his name ʿAmr as ʿAmgh; he says *mughgha* instead of *murra*, *saqagh* instead of *saqar* (go to hell), and so on. The encounter has a bad outcome for Abū Nuwās: the poet bows before the boy as if he were a divinity, whereupon the boy accuses him of *kufgh* (*kuf*, "unbelief") and then hits him on the head, causing him to bleed.

So far we have looked at a few motifs found in Abū Nuwās' wine and pederastic poetry. These motifs continue to be found in these poetic genres in later centuries, albeit the vividness of Abū Nuwās declines, and there is increasing use of stylistic devices such as paronomasia and antithesis. Poets are also very eager to interweave

¹⁷ Abū Nuwās (1958–2006), 4:164–65, ll. 1–9; Wagner, *Abū Nuwās*, 328.

¹⁸ Abū Nuwās (1958–2006), 4:191–92, ll. 8–12.

¹⁹ Wagner, *Abū Nuwās*, 183.

metaphors from different thematic registers. In the Andalusian poetry of the eleventh century—Andalusia's golden age—we find many of Abū Nuwās's motifs recurring, with wine and love poems often including descriptions of gardens.

The Hebrew Andalusian Poets

Let me now consider secular Hebrew Andalusian poetry, a faithful copy of the Arabic model. I discuss Hebrew Andalusian poetry first because the Hebrew poets whom I have selected as examples lived before the Arabic Andalusian poets whom I intend to discuss. Generally, however, Arabic Andalusian poetry predates Hebrew Andalusian poetry.

The flourishing of both Arabic and Hebrew literature in Andalusia was probably due to the political fragmentation of Moorish Spain. In the period from circa 1010 to 1090, between the Umayyad Caliphate of Córdoba and the rule of the Almoravids, many independent city-states were ruled by sovereigns of Arab, Berber, or 'Slav' origin. There was great rivalry among these kingdoms, particularly cultural rivalry. The sovereigns often were patrons of poets, with the expectation that the latter enhance their prestige with laudatory poems in return for a state pension.

The courtly life of such local monarchs was a faithful copy of life at the caliphate court in the East. The sovereign gathered round him poets chosen to be his drinking companions at drinking sessions that produced poetry (as well as drunkenness).

Jews played an important role in Andalusian courtly life. They occupied a special position in Spain, dating back to the Visigoths. Elsewhere in the diaspora it is rare to find Jews owning land, bearing arms, or having their own cities that non-Jews were not permitted to enter. In eleventh- and twelfth-century Andalusia, Jews could be found in all strata of society—unlike elsewhere, where they were permitted to practice only particular occupations. For example, the Berber kingdoms employed Jewish viziers. Berber sovereigns did not generally trust their own families when it came to collecting taxes or leading armies. An illiterate Berber sovereign could not rely on Arabs to teach Arabic language and culture or conduct state correspondence in Arabic, as they could be accomplices of rival Arab sovereigns. For these various reasons, Berber sovereigns appointed Jewish viziers, and a large proportion of their subjects were Jews. This was the case in Granada, for instance, governed by the Berber Zirids. The Jew Samuel ha-Nagid acted as vizier and general there. The Jewish viziers copied their masters' courtly life. They, too, organized drinking bouts in which poets wrote wine poems in Hebrew.

The Hebrew poets wished to show that poems and rhyming prose could be written just as well in the Hebrew of the Tenakh (Biblical Hebrew) as in classical Arabic. Thus, they imitated the Arabic poets' themes and copied their meters. They used the Tenakh (Old Testament) as a dictionary, which often resulted in certain groups of words from Bible passages occurring in the same order in an Andalusian poem,

but in a completely different context. They also published theoretical works in Arabic on how to write Hebrew poetry on Arabic themes and in Arabic meters.

Samuel ha-Nagid (993–1056)

The first Hebrew Andalusian poet I discuss here is Samuel ha-Nagid, the general and vizier of the Granadan sovereign Badis. He wrote wine poetry and pederastic poetry as well as poetry in other genres. We also find examples of translation in his poetic works. A wine-drinking group has a silver or gold dish inscribed with a line of Arabic poetry, for instance. This is handed around the group, and everyone tries to come up with the best translation of the line into Biblical Hebrew while retaining the Arabic metre.

Before giving some examples of ha-Nagid's wine poetry and pederastic poetry, I should point out that there is controversy over pederasty among Jewish scholars: did homosexuality actually exist in Jewish milieus? The Israeli scholar Nehemia Allony considers Hebrew pederastic poetry as a purely literary exercise that had nothing to do with reality. Other scholars, including Shelomo Dov Goitein, Jefim Schirmann, and recently Norman Roth, reject this notion: they believe that the Jewish elite behaved in the same way as the Arab elite. I am inclined to the same opinion as Schirmann, who until his death in 1981 was the greatest authority on medieval Hebrew literature.

One difference between the Jewish and Arabic poetic milieu is that there was no polarity in the Jewish milieu. Samuel ha-Nagid was a poet and a general, but also a legal scholar and leader of the Jewish community in Granada. We find nothing here of the antithesis between dissolute sovereign and Islamic legal scholar, the *faqih*, who—unsuccessfully—tries to call his overlord to order with strict sermons.

In the next excerpt, from a wine poem by ha-Nagid, the wine pourer is introduced as a gazelle that the poet is in love with. The second half of the poem urges a drinking companion to take the wine cup from the gazelle's hands:

Fragment 7 (Wine poem, Dov Yarden; no. 140, ll. 1–4)²⁰

- The eyes of the gazelle serving me have robbed me of my heart. It has hunted its lord's heart without a net.
- If water would extinguish the lovers' fires you would still be in my heart as a burning fire.
- Arise, my friend, and take the transparent red carbuncle cup of pomegranate juice, now that morning is about to break.
- From the hands of a gazelle. These hands are as gold rings set with beryl [Song of Solomon 5:14] and marble.

²⁰ Yarden, Dov (ed). *Divan Shmuel HaNagid*.

In Fragment 8 we again find the theme of the boy's effeminacy, but this time in Hebrew. The change of the phoneme *r* into the phoneme *g*[*h*] (the sound in Hebrew that is closest to the burred *r*) is functional here: the words take on a different meaning from what was intended. Remember, though, that by the tenth century, Hebrew was already a dead language, hence this situation cannot have occurred in reality, and the blurring is therefore purely an imitation of the situation in Arabic, where the effeminate speech did occur:

Fragment 8 (Love poem with effeminate language, D. Yarden; no. 160, ll. 1–5):²¹

- Where a gazelle lisps, whence a fawn has gone, dripping with myrrh and incense.
- The moon has covered the light of the stars: beloved of mine, come, cover the light of the moon.
- Coo with a soft voice. Have faith in God who gave such a sound to dove and swallow too, when they came into the world.
- He meant to say “Rogue” [*ra*], but he said “Come closer” [*ga*]. So I came closer as his tongue had spoken.
- He meant to say “Go away, Rogue” [*surah*], but he said “Encircle me” [*sugah*]. Then I rushed to enclose him, a lily.

The next excerpt is a Hebrew example of the guarantee formula in a wine and love poem, similar to what we found earlier in an Arabic excerpt:

Fragment 9 (Wine poem, D. Yard, no. 183, ll. 1–3):²²

- May I stand bail for the young roe deer arising at night to the sound of the harp and the well-sounding zithers—
- In my hand saw a cup and said, “Drink the blood of the bunch of grapes from between my lips” [i.e., kiss me].
- Meanwhile the moon was as a letter *j* written in gold ink on the robe of the morning.

Solomon Ibn Gabirol (1022–1070)

The next poem is by the poet-philosopher-vizier Solomon Ibn Gabirol, who was referred to in Arabic as Abū Ayyūb Sulaymān ibn Yaḥyā Ibn Gabirūt. He is known as a medieval philosopher under the name of Avicbron or Avicebrol. He lived from 1022 to probably 1070, albeit according to some sources, he died earlier.

He was raised in Saragossa, at the time still in Muslim hands. The poet abhorred the city as a backward place, as it was later lambasted by the Muslim poet Ibn ʿAmmār and the Jewish poet Moses ibn Ezra. He frequented the court of the Jewish

²¹ Yarden, Dov (ed). *Divan Shmuel HaNagid*.

²² Yarden, Dov (ed). *Divan Shmuel HaNagid*.

vizier Yequṭi'el, to whom he dedicated many poems. He was sickly, suffered a lonely and withdrawn life, and was married to philosophy.

In many poems he boasts of his poetic skills, which he considered far superior to those of his contemporaries. Love and wine poems make up only a small part of his work. I have selected the short poem here for its conciseness and for its concealment motif. In line 2 the poet says he is not permitted to reveal the name of his beloved; line 3 contains a veiled reference to the act that has to be concealed because his fellow believers would not approve of the sinful relationship.

Fragment 10 (Wine poem, D. Yard, no. 190, ll. 1–3):²³

- In the burgeoning garden I often visit my boy. He is still green as a cypress.
- Discretion towards my friend compels me not to reveal his name.
- Does not the head [i.e., the first syllable] of Mordechai come forth from the city of Ahasverus? [In other words, does not myrrh come forth from the lily?]

Mosheh Ibn 'Ezra (1055–1140)

Abū Hārūn Mosheh ben Ya'qov Ibn 'Ezra was born in Granada but emigrated to Christian Castile a few years after the conquest of Granada by the Almoravids in 1091. In later life he wrote a kind of *Poetics* in Arabic, which discusses, among other things, how to write Hebrew poetry in Biblical Hebrew according to the rules of classical Arabic poetry. Although in his voluntary exile in a Christian area, Mosheh Ibn 'Ezra became an elegiac poet, bewailing his isolation and the loss of his friends, the tone of the strophic pederastic poems that he wrote in his youth is much more frivolous, and in his *Poetics* Mosheh accordingly brands the poems as sins of his youth. In the next excerpt we find one of the most realistic and vivid descriptions of a lovers' rendezvous in Hebrew Andalusian literature:

Fragment 11 (Strophic poem, ed. Brody (1935), 261, no. 249, ll. 1–17). Ta'wat levavi u-mahmad 'eni, p. 261:

0. The wish of my heart and the lust of my eyes
Is a gazelle at my side and a cup in my right hand.
1. Many are my censors, but I do not listen to them.
Come, oh gazelle, I will humiliate them.
Fortune will consume them; Death will make us peaceful.
Come, oh gazelle, give me anew my being.
With the nectar of your lips, satisfy me.

²³ Yarden, Dov (ed). *Divan Shmuel HaNagid*. On the poetry by Solomon ibn Gabirol see also: *Vulture in a Cage. Poems by Solomon Ibn Gabirol*. Translated from Hebrew by Raymond P. Scheindlin. Brooklyn, NY: Archipelago Books, 2016.

2. Why are they making deaf my heart, why?
When it is because of my sins and faults,
Then my transgression was caused by your beauty, may God be my testimony.
Do not take of the words of my censor seriously.
Obstinate person! Come and try me.
3. The lad let himself to be seduced, and we were at the house of his mother.
He inclined his shoulder to the yoke of my load.
Night and day I was only with him.
I undid him from his clothes, and he denuded me.
I sucked his lips, and he sucked my lips.
4. When my heart was violently taken by his eyes,
He found the yoke of my sins too heavy.
He imagined reproaches and his anger enflamed.
He cried furiously: That is enough, leave me alone!
Do not draw me, do not deviate me from the way!
5. Do not consume me with your anger, Oh gazelle.
Put me in the shadow of your love, my friend, put me in the shadow.
Kiss your beloved and fulfill your endeavor.
When you want to give life, give me life.
When you want to kill, give me death.

It is clear that the introductory lines of this poem contain a general feature also found in Western European Christian literature. Curtius has called this device an “enumerative aphorism.” In the Italian literature from the time of Dante Alighieri (1266–1321), the poet Cecco Angiolieri said more or less the same thing: “Tre cose soltanto mi son in grado / ... cioè la donna, la taverna e il dado.”

The first strophe evokes the censors or reproachers, who do not favor his love. The narrator says to the gazelle not to pay attention to them, because time will destroy them. The second strophe goes on to exhort the lover not to pay attention to the censors. The third strophe describes the acts of love. Every strophe has its own purpose and themes—true also for the other strophes of the poem. In the fourth strophe, the lad resists the love of the poet-lover and cries that he wants to go away. In the fifth strophe, the poet-lover tries to use all his stratagems to bring back the lad to him. He says that his beloved can decide over his life and death. The verbal forms he uses are nearly all in the imperative.

The Arabic Andalusian Poets

Ibn Khafāja (1058–1139)

Ibn Khafāja was born in 1058 in Alcira (Jazīrat ash-Shuqr) on the river Júcar, between Játiva and Valencia, where he died. As a poet he was welcome at the courts of the many city-states that dotted Muslim Andalusia in the eleventh century until

Yūsuf ibn Tāshufin brought the whole of Andalusia under Almoravid domain in 1090.

Here, I discuss part of a poem by Ibn Khafāja that gives a detailed description of an encounter with a boy. The poem begins like a *ḥamāsa*, a war poem that glorifies going into battle. Boldness, decisiveness, judgment, and violence are lauded by the poet as virtues of the warriors. “In songs of this kind,”²⁴ the poet goes on, “I seek fulfilment of my desires: the fearlessness of their lances comes from the strength of their hands” (l. 3). “They are youthful warriors on Arab horses: if there is battle, speak of the strength of the beardless young men on the short-maned horses” (l. 4).

The poet then depicts the war situation in descriptions of wine and gardens. He likens the red blood to red flowers and red wine. The warriors pour red wine for one another. The trees in the garden are the lances. The rivers that crisscross the garden are the shining swords. The poet wishes, like the warriors, to bathe in the lance tips that have turned from gleaming white to dark red from the blood; he meets red Death in gray robes, in the dust clouds of the battle. The poet would also like to give his foes hell, were it not that his heart had been possessed by love (l. 19). Lines 29–49 describe the youth, then a nocturnal rendezvous between the poet and the boy. The encounter is cut short by the dawning of a calamitous morning:

Fragment 12 (War poem, followed by description of rendezvous):²⁵

I would appear before my foes, wherever they are, as the forehead of the sun appears to the grey eyes [of the earth].

Were it not that love has taken possession of my heart. To love belongs what the heart conceals. To desire [belongs] what the heart reveals.

A slender youth, on whose cheeks down [incipient beard growth] had appeared, as if a line of dark ambergris was written on camphor.

I had chosen him from the young men of the clan to be chief. He had taken his place between the sun and the benevolent moon.

When they recite the *sūra* of the morning from his face, they continue their recitation and read the *sūra* of praise on account of his generosity.

In the evening I go to him and I do not usually return until the morning. I turn away from fame to turn to the place of love:

Instead of a lance I clasp a straight body, while I unleash the horses of kisses on the race-course of the cheek.

There I pluck the marguerite from a desirable mouth and bend the bamboo stem of a waist. There he went, bending as a green branch. I asked him whether I could pluck the fruits of togetherness or the flowers of troth.

He went away and did not turn toward me. I now called to him from afar as I had first called to him from nearby.

He steps forth regally and proudly and bends as the laurel tree bends over its branches. May the earth that brought us together be watered! So that it is the paradise of eternity, albeit I have already left it.

²⁴ *Dirwān*, no. 278.

²⁵ *Dirwān*, no. 278, ll. 19–28, 32–41, 43–44.

Many a night we handed each other wine and there was a gentle conversation between us,
 as a breeze blowing upon a rose.
 Again and again we took wine, while the cup exhaled musk. But even more fragrant than
 that was what we again and again resumed and continued.
 I drank wine from his hand. It was as if wine sprang in lustre and purity from his purity and
 my love.
 My dessert was the marguerite of his mouth or the lily of his neck, the narcissus of his eye-
 lids or the rose of his cheek.
 Until wine and sleep went around in his body and bent his slender limbs, so that he nestled
 in my arms.
 I made myself ready to ask for the gift of the freshness between his teeth for the warmth of
 the love that was within me.
 I embraced him who had already been taken out of the sheath of his embroidered cloak. I
 embraced his "sword" too that had likewise been taken out of its sheath.
 It was soft to my fondling, upright in position, trembling as a lance and gleaming as a
 sword of shining steel.
 I played with that branch of his, planted on a sand hill. I kissed the face of the sun in the
 ascendant of the fortunate constellation.
 I roamed his body with both the palms of my hands, fondling now his waist, now his
 breast.
 One hand descended to the Tihāma [Arabian coastal plain] of his sides, the other climbed
 the Najd [Arabian plateau] of his breast.
 I had already turned from kissing a cheek to kissing a mouth: that I say to assert the superi-
 ority of the marguerite over the rose.
 I changed by pulling his downy hairs from the camphor of his cheek; truly I am chaste in
 dress, pure in cloak.
 Had not limpness overcome me while there was freshness about him, the full moon would
 only have been jealous of me.
 When I bade him farewell, I kissed the places of his neck as of a laurel tree.
 Oh, calamitous morning, may your unworthy behaviour be revealed! Oh, blissful night,
 will you ever return?

Ibn az-Zaqqāq (1075–1135)

Ibn az-Zaqqāq was a nephew of Ibn Khafāja. Like his uncle, he lived near Valencia. In his work we find the style of the poems gradually becoming more mannered and the depictions of the encounters with the beloved becoming less and less realistic. Ibn az-Zaqqāq is renowned for making metaphors mobile, for what the Spanish Arabist García Gómez referred to as "raising the metaphor to the power of two":

Fragment 13 (Descriptive wine, garden and love poem):²⁶

A slender youth went around in the morning with the cups of wine and he urged them
 to be quick, for the morning was already bright.
 The garden meanwhile showed us its anemones, and its amber-coloured myrtle was al-
 ready exhaling its fragrances.

²⁶ *Dirwān*, no. 19, p. 124.

We said to the garden, "Where are the marguerites?"
 It answered us, "I gave them in safe keeping to the one who pours wine."
 The pourer of wine, however, continued to deny what the garden had said, but when he
 smiled he was obliged to confess his secret.

In this excerpt the comparison between the wine pourer's teeth and marguerites—initially implicit—becomes a reality that functions at different levels. Spanish scholars have frequently compared this kind of mannerism with the Gongorism of later centuries.²⁷ Although the parallel between mannerism in Andalusian poetry and Gongora is indisputable, in all probability this is more a case of similar developments in both literatures rather than influence of one on the other: developments caused by increasing accumulation of conventions.

Last, a critique by Henri Pérès of the above poem by Ibn az-Zaqqāq. Henri Pérès published a book on eleventh-century Arabic Andalusian poetry in 1934, in which he devotes a passage several pages long to what he calls "the degeneration of Andalusian culture." Pérès regards the poem quoted here as one of the most stereotypical pederastic poems there is, and one that appeals to the imagination only by virtue of its poetic qualities.

Ibn Sahl al-Isrā'ili (1212–1251)

In the last poet I discuss we find the secular use and mockery of religious terms and symbols that we are already familiar with from the poetry of Abū Nuwās, but his Jewish background makes this perhaps even more pointed. This is the poet Ibn Sahl al-Isrā'ili, who lived in Seville from 1212 to 1251. He was a Jewish convert to Islam. It is evident from his poetry that he regarded his conversion as highly amusing, for throughout his life he worshipped boys with the name of Moses and sometimes Muḥammad. This often gives rise to short poems containing quotations from the Qur'ān or other scriptural allusions. For instance:

Fragment 14 (Love poem):²⁸

I have turned away from Moses because I love Muḥammad; thus have I yet been led on
 the true path. Without God I would not have found the true path.
 I say this not out of contempt: it is simply the case that the Law of Moses was abolished
 by that of Muḥammad.

Another two-line poem quotes the initial lines of Sūra 46 of the Qur'ān, which reads: "We have gained a clear victory." In the poem, he prides himself on his conquest of a boy:

²⁷ Dámaso Alonso. *Poesía arabigo-andaluza y poesía gongorina*.

²⁸ *Dirwān*, no. 32, 116.

Fragment 15 (Love poem):²⁹

- Beauty has written it on his cheek: Truly we have gained a resounding victory over you.
- Oh heart, if you turn to another you will find yourself clearly going astray [cf. *Sūra* 3:164].

In another poem he describes how a kiss causes a blush on a boy's face. In the second line he wishes that his rebuker's hand be chopped off, using a verse from the *Qurʾān*:

Fragment 16 (Love poem):³⁰

If his saliva were not the blood of the vine, his scarlet cheek would not be covered with a blush of fire / or with Abū Lahab [a proper name meaning "person with a glow of fire"].

May the hands of him who rebukes me for my relationship with him be chopped off, for his cheek is a bearer of roses, not a bearer of firewood.

The *sūra* in the *Qurʾān* to which this poem alludes is *Sūra* 111, the Palm Fiber (*Sūra al-masad*). This contains a curse on Abū Lahab, one of Muḥammad's most virulent opponents, for causing Muḥammad to emigrate to Medina, the event that marks the beginning of the Islamic era in 622. The *Sūra* reads as follows:

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.
May the hands of Abū Lahab be chopped off and may he perish.
Neither his wealth nor that which he has gained shall avail him.
He shall burn in a fire of flame.
His wife as well, the bringer of firewood.
Around her neck a rope of fibre.

In the poem we find allusions to the line urging the perishing of Abū Lahab's hands and of his wife, referred to as "bringer of firewood." (In fact, Abū Nuwās too repeatedly alluded to *Sūra* 111, referring to a descendant or descendants of the bringer of firewood, for instance.) The subject of the poem is the blush on the boy's cheeks after a kiss. It is described in terms of a fantastic etiology: the redness of the blood of the vine; that is, the wine of which the boy's saliva is made up is the cause of the redness of the cheeks. The redness of the cheeks, the "blush of fire," brings us to the name Abū Lahab, whereupon the poet continues in the second line: may the hands of him who rebukes him for his relationship with the boy be chopped off, for the boy's cheeks are not bearers of firewood but of roses.

This love poem is typical of many Andalusian poems in that we find an accumulation of implicit comparisons of red phenomena. This is already a leitmotif in Ibn Khafājah. Red is particularly favored in these poems, but also is commonly combined with white, and of course the black-white antithesis: incipient beard growth

²⁹ *Diwān*, no. 93, 225.

³⁰ *Diwān*, no. 10, 81.

on the cheek, for instance, is regarded as a contrast between black and white in many poems. In the Andalusian poems we find a continuation of the wine and love themes that started in eastern Arabic poetry, of which Abū Nuwās was the foremost representative. Pederasty occurs in wine-drinking scenes of Andalusian poems, too, with slave girls as well as boys as love objects.

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The Dispute between Cup and Jug in the Court of Wine: A Poem by Joseph ben Tanḥum Yerushalmi from Mamluk Egypt

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This chapter focuses on the literary intersections of medieval Judaism and Islam and examines how Jewish minority authors attempted to accommodate the hegemonic Arabic-Islamic culture in the medieval Middle East with their own religious and literary traditions.¹ As might be expected, the result of this endeavor was complex and multiform. On one end of the spectrum, Jewish traditionalists opposed secular, Arabic-style Hebrew poetry; on the other, some authors embraced the majority culture to such an extent that they converted to Islam. Between the poles were Jewish poets such as Joseph ben Tanḥum Yerushalmi (b. 1262) who remained faithful to their ancestral faith while unapologetically enjoying the literary merits of Arabic-Islamic culture.² Yerushalmi was one of numerous Jewish scholars active in the Islamic Middle East during the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, particularly in major cities like Cairo, Damascus, and Baghdad. These bilingual authors wrote in both Judeo-Arabic (i.e., Arabic written in Hebrew script) and Hebrew. Although they wrote most of their prose in Judeo-Arabic, they tended to favor poetry in Hebrew.³

Yerushalmi, who lived in Egypt during the early Mamluk era (second half of the thirteenth century to first half of the fourteenth century), is considered the paradigmatic Egyptian Jewish poet of the Mamluk period. His father, Tanḥum ben Joseph Yerushalmi (ca. 1220–1291) was a famous biblical exegete, grammarian, and lexicographer who wrote in Judeo-Arabic.⁴ Already as a young poet, Joseph ben Tanḥum

¹ This chapter is a revised version of a lecture held at the conference “*Khamriyya* as a World Poetic Genre: Comparative Perspectives on Wine Poetry in Near and Middle Eastern Literatures” (University of Cambridge, June 22, 2016) and at the Eighth Medieval Hebrew Poetry Colloquium (University of Helsinki, July 13, 2016). It presents the results of the postdoctoral project “A Reappraisal of Jewish Poetry from Mamluk Egypt: Communal Identity and Elite Culture in the Arabic and Hebrew Oeuvre of Joseph ben Tanḥum Yerushalmi,” which was based at the University of Ghent between January and October 2016, when it ended prematurely after a professional move to KU Leuven.

² On “the Judeo-Arabic duality” of balancing these two cultures, see Raymond Scheindlin, *The Gazelle: Medieval Hebrew Poems on God, Israel and the Soul* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 3–6.

³ See Esperanza Alfonso, *Islamic Culture through Jewish Eyes: Al-Andalus from the Tenth to Twelfth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 9–33; Rina Drory, *Models and Contacts: Arabic Literature and Its Impact on Medieval Jewish Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 170–77.

⁴ A biography of Tanḥum ben Joseph Yerushalmi (by Michael Wechsler) can be found in *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 4:460–61.

Yerushalmi enjoyed the patronage of the highest-ranking leader of Egypt's Jewish community, *Ra'is al-Yahūd* (lit. "the head of the Jews"), David ben Abraham Maimonides (1222–1300), a grandson of the famous philosopher and physician Moses Maimonides (1138–1204).⁵ In his role as house poet of Maimonides's family, several of Yerushalmi's poems were composed to mark a wedding or death in the extended family. Although it is hard to identify every figure mentioned in Yerushalmi's panegyric and elegiac poetry, it is clear that, as a professional poet, he promoted prominent members of the Egyptian Jewish community, many of whom were professionals in the fields of medicine, finance, or commerce.

Yerushalmi's oeuvre is preserved in two books: *Sēfer 'arūgōt ha-besāmim* (The book of fragrant flower beds), a volume of Hebrew homonymic epigrams published by Judith Dishon,⁶ which is followed in manuscript Russian National Library Evr. II A 100/1 by an unpublished Arabic commentary to these poems, and a seven-part *diwān*, or poetry collection, including liturgical poems, rhymed prose (*maqāmat*), epistles, panegyrics, love and wine poems, laments, as well as riddles and Hebrew translations of Arabic poems. While certain portions of this collection have been published, it is far from fully available for research.⁷ In this chapter, I shed further light on two of Yerushalmi's poems from the fifth section of this collection.⁸

As its Judeo-Arabic heading (British Library Or. 2588, fol. 29a) attests, *al-bāb al-khāmis*, or the fifth section of the *diwān* is devoted to *al-ghazal*, *wa-l-nasīb wa-l-khamriyyāt*. Whereas the first two terms refer to the theme of love and to the amatory prelude to the *qaṣida* respectively, the last term indicates that, apart from love poetry, this section also includes wine poetry. The section includes a total of twenty-

⁵ On Moses Maimonides, see Joel Kraemer, *Maimonides: The Life and World of One of Civilization's Greatest Minds* (New York: Doubleday, 2008). A biography of David ben Abraham Maimonides (by Paul Fenton) can be found in *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 3:312.

⁶ Judith Dishon, *The Book of the Perfumed Flower Beds by Joseph ben Tanchum Hayerushalmi* [in Hebrew] (Beer-Sheva: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press, 2005).

⁷ Hayim Sheynin's 1988 University of Pennsylvania PhD dissertation, "An Introduction to the Poetry of Joseph Ben Tanhum Ha-Yerushalmi," was the first successful attempt to introduce the poet and his extensive poetical oeuvre to the scholarly community. Yehuda Ratzaby published the fourth part of the *diwān* (panegyric poems) in *Pirkei Shira: From the Hidden Treasures of Jewish Poetry* 1 (1990): 77–110; and *Pirkei Shira* 2 (1999): 53–81. Hadassa Shy and Joseph Yahalom published fragments from Yerushalmi's rhymed prose; see Shy, in *Pirkei Shira* 1 (1990): 111–16; and Yahalom, in *Pirkei Shira* 3 (2003): 87–98. Recently, Kedem Golden published new fragments from Yerushalmi's *diwān* found in the Second Firkovich Collection in "Addenda to the Poetry of Yosef Ben Tanhum Hayerushalmi" [in Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 86, no. 1 (2018): 107–46.

⁸ Both poems were edited by Hayim Sheynin in his article "Der Literarische Nachlass des Josef ben Tanchum Ha-Jeruschalmi: Forschungen und Texte," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 22 (1969): 245–71, esp. 264–65, 270. The first poem, the dispute between jug and cup in the court of wine, was also edited, translated, and analyzed by Hayim Sheynin in his dissertation. See Sheynin, "Introduction," 165–66, 196–98, 293–305. His translation of the poem can also be consulted online at the website Medieval Hebrew Poetry, <https://www.medievalhebrewpoetry.org/joseph-ben-tanchum-ha-yerushalmi/>.

two poems, some of which number only a few monorhyme lines, whereas others are considerably longer and written in strophic forms. As the main part of this chapter, I analyze poem 5:14 (Russian National Library Evr. II A 100/1, fol. 11b–12a), a strophic poem that the manuscript heading defines as a “*muwashshah khamri*” or “*muwashshah* about wine” but in reality is a fine example of a debate poem, with jug and cup as principal disputants and wine serves as judge. I also discuss poem 5:21 (Russian National Library Evr. II A 100/1, fol. 13a), a monorhyme poem of two lines modeled on an Arabic poem quoted by al-Ḥarīrī (1054–1122) in his *Maqāmāt*.

Poem 5:14

In accordance with the *muwashshah* form from which it takes its heading, poem 5:14 consists of an introductory prelude, called *maṭlaʿ* in Arabic and *madrikh* in Hebrew, which is equal in form and rhyme to the *simṭ* or *ēzōr*, whose rhyme is *-iv*. After this prelude are five strophes that follow the pattern of the *muwashshah*, apart from the fact that a foreign *kharja* at the end of the poem is missing. The prelude is chorally repeated as a *pizmōn*, or refrain, following the conclusion of each stanza. The meter is identical in the strophes and girdles, whereas the rhyme differs. Yerushalmi also managed to sign his acrostic, *Yōsēf*, in the beginning of the first four strophes, after introductory remarks. The poem is further enriched with enjambments and internal rhymes, occasionally rhyming in the middle of the words. As an Arabic speaker, the poet seems to adhere to the Babylonian tradition of Hebrew vocalization, rhyming words ending with *sēgōl* and *patāḥ*.

The Judeo-Arabic heading and Hebrew prelude confer the theme of the poem, which is presented here in the original and in an English translation:⁹

ולה איצ'א מושח כ'מרי

מי הגבר לקנות משוש / לבות חפץ יקשיב לגיב
משפט יין בין כד וכוס / עת עמדם מול כסאו בריב

And more by him a *muwashshah* about wine

Who is the man who desires to acquire joy of hearts? The one who listens to the record of the lawsuit between a jug and a cup when they stood arguing in the court of wine.

After this foreword, which addresses the (male) reader or listener in a direct manner, each of the strophes begins with an opening remark introducing the speaker and contains direct speech of one speaker at a time. Every personified disputant gives two speeches, in this order: first, cup, then jug, and once again cup, then jug; finally, in the fifth strophe, the wine itself, acting as judge, concludes the lawsuit with its verdict. The cup's first speech goes as follows:

⁹ This translation is based on Sheynin, “Introduction,” 196–98, with minor adaptations.

אָמַרְהָ הַכּוֹס יוֹפִי וְהוֹד / וְיָקָר וְחֵן לִי נִצְמְדוּ
כִּסְאִי עַל יַד רֵעַ וְדוֹד / וְלִמְשַׁמְעֵתִי כָּל נוֹעֵדוּ
אָמְרוּ לְבָנֵי רֶכֶב מָאֵד / הַסִּכְלָתָם כִּי בִי בָגְדוּ
פָּרְסוֹת סוֹסֵי חֲזָקוֹ כָּצָר / חִילִּי יִגוֹן בָּם אֲאָדִיב
הַכֵּד בְּשִׁמְשׁ נֶעְצָר / וְאֲנִי מִגֵּן עַל יַד חֲבִיב

The cup said, "Beauty, splendor, glory, and charm are attached to me;
My throne is near the friend and beloved, and all are subjects of my discipline.
Tell the sons of Rechab (Jer 35), 'You were very foolish for betraying me!'
My horse's hooves (Isa 5:28) are hard as a rock; with them I can sadden hosts of distress.
The jug is detained by the sun,¹⁰ while I am a shield (Gen 15:1; Ps 3:4) for the darling."

This strophe makes a reference to the story told in Jeremiah 35, where the sons of Rechab heed the call of their forefather Jehonadab to abstain from drinking wine (or living in cities). While in the biblical narrative the Rechabites' loyalty to a long-established nomadic lifestyle is considered exemplary, the poet rejected this feature of their custom as foolish. In the next line, the words "my horse's hooves" allude to verse 28 in the fifth chapter of Isaiah, which starts with the Song of the Vineyard. More generally, this line creates a picture of a metaphorical war against distress, with the cup emerging as winner. To emphasize its dominance, the cup says that it is close to the wine, and even guards it as God protects his people, while the place of the jug is beyond the horizon. In the next strophe it is up to the jug to refute the arguments put forward by the cup:

אָמַר הַכֵּד וְהֵלֵא בְּחֶבְ-רָתִי בְּלִבְדִּי תִהְיֶה לְרֹאשׁ
וְלֵאסֶם הוֹדֵךְ נִחְשָׁב / בְּלִתִּי גַם יִשְׁבִּיעוּךָ בְּרוֹשׁ
כָּל יָמֵי אֶהְיֶה לְךָ לָאֵב / וְלִבְבְּךָ רֵעַ יִחְרוֹשׁ
יֵינִי מִכָּל זֶר אֲחֻשׁוֹךְ / וּבְחֻרְבֵי תוֹגוֹת אֲחָרִיב
רַק עֵינֶיךָ רְכִיל יִהְיוּ / בְּעַדִּי וּמִקּוּרֵי יִחְרִיב

The jug asked, "Is it not so, that only in my company can you be superior?
While your splendor is considered ample, without me you might as well be filled with
poison.
All my days I will be your father, but your heart will plot evil against me.
I will withhold my wine from every stranger and destroy sorrows with my sword.
Only your eye will slander me (Jer 9:3), and my source will run dry."

Throughout this strophe but especially in the girdle (the last two lines), we hear the Hebrew letters *hēt* and *khāf* resounding in the jug's plea, which is also characterized by images of war and hostility that strengthen the animosity between jug and cup. The cup's reaction was not long in coming:

¹⁰ This seems to refer to exposure to the sun as a common winemaking technique in Egypt, see Shelomo Dov Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 4 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 260; Paulina Lewicka, *Food and Foodways of Medieval Cairenes* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 495. I am indebted to Michael Rand for the references and for mentioning a parallel in *Studies in the Medieval Hebrew Tradition of the Ḥarirīan and Ḥarizian Maqama*. Maḥberot Eitan ha-Ezraḥi (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 236.

אָמַרְהָ הַכּוֹס סָכַל פֶּקַח / עֵינֶיךָ טָרַם שְׁתַּעֲנֶה
 וְרָאָה אִם גּוֹפֶךְ יָד וְצַח / אִו לָךְ עַל יַד דּוֹר מַחֲנֶה
 כָּל יָמֶיךָ שְׁפֵל וְשַׁח / וּבָיוִם שְׁמָחָה אֶת נַעֲנָה
 כִּילִי תִקְבּוֹץ עַל יַד עֲדִי / יִסִּיר מִצְנַפְתְּךָ כָּל נָדִיב
 לִכְבּ וַיֵּצֵא אוֹתִי רְדָה / עָלְיוּ וּמַעֲוֹן אוֹן הַחֲרִיב

The cup said, "Foolish one, open your eye (Isa 37:17) before you answer
 And see, whether your body is clear and bright. Or, do you have a camp near the be
 loved?
 All your days you are humble and bowed (Isa 2:11), but on a joyful day you [dare to]
 answer.
 O miser, you gather little by little (Prov 13:11) until some kind-hearted man removes
 your headdress (Ezek 21:31) and commands me, 'Subdue him and destroy the dwelling
 of grief.'"

This attack offers some insight into the appearance of the cup's adversary. The jug was made simple and without any of the ornamental detail with which the cup might have been adorned. Moreover, as a rule it was kept in a wine storehouse, and even when it made its appearance "on a joyful day," in other words, during a banquet, it was put out of the way and did not play as central a role as the cup. The "kind-hearted man" would be a participant in the banquet, who would open the jug by removing its cover or metaphorical "headdress" and, in so doing, depriving it of its strength—just as happened to the corrupt prince of Israel in Ezekiel 21:30. In the fourth strophe, the jug defends itself against some of these claims and puts forward some of its own harsh accusations against the cup:

אָמַר הַכֵּד פִּיךָ סִגְרִי / פֶּן מִמּוֹמֶךְ תִּתְבוֹשְׁשִׁי
 וּבִמְהַלְלֵי הַתְּפָאֲרִי / וְלַעֲבָדוֹתֵי הַתְּקַדְּשִׁי
 כִּי בְשָׁלוֹם מַלְכִי בַחֲרִי / וּבִרְעֻתוֹ תִתְלַחֲשִׁי
 אֶסְתִּירוּ מִצָּר תוֹךְ דְּבִיר / עַד יִגָּה מְאוּרוֹ שְׂבִיב
 אֲנִירִיחַ כּוֹכְבָיו וּבֶן-כֶּתֶד / יִדְּךָ אוֹתָם תַּעֲרִיב

The jug replied, "Shut your mouth, in order not be ashamed of your blemish.
 You may boast with my praises, but prepare yourself to be my slave.
 You delight in the peace of my king (= wine) but conspire to harm him.
 I will hide it in the sanctuary, until the flame of its light shines forth (Job 18:5).
 I will make its stars shine, but with the help of your blessing they will grow dim.

In other words, the jug hides the wine in a top-secret place, namely, the *devir*, referring to the most sacrosanct area of the ancient Temple of Jerusalem, which was accessible only to the Israelite high priest. Storing the wine in these ideal conditions ensured that its brilliance—compared first to that of a flame and then to the glare of the stars—would reach its zenith, after which it would be ready to drink. According to Sheynin,¹¹ the poet might have even had in mind a sparkling wine, which goes well with the image in this strophe's final line, which states that with the "help" of

¹¹ See Sheynin, "Introduction," 303–4.

the cup, the wine's stars will grow dim—in other words, when poured in the cup, the sparkling wine will lose its bubblyness. However this may be, medieval Arabic and Hebrew poetry more generally abound with descriptions of the splendor of wine and its old age or maturity.¹²

After patiently hearing out these two rounds of pleading by the two disputants,¹³ the wine itself steps in to deliver its fairly enigmatic final judgment in the fifth and final strophe of the poem:¹⁴

שח יין נשבע הנני / בכבודי ובטוב טעמי
לא תריבו תוך מחני / כי אתם אוכלי לחמי
ובמספרכם נראה אני / למאהבי ולחושבי שמי
עת יסירו ראש כד וראש / כוס יורם איך יעמוד יריב
כי יגלה לבני אנוש / סוד מעב גיל יזיל רביב

Said the wine, "I swear by my honor and good taste
Do not argue in my camp, for you are those who eat my bread;
And in your numerical values I appear to those who love me and esteem my name (Mal 3:16):

When the jug will be beheaded and the cup's head held high, how will any adversary stand?

For when the secret is disclosed to people, rain will pour from the cloud of joy.

The enigma is reinforced by the use of gematria and riddle in the final girdle, where the poet plays with the numerical values of the Hebrew words *yayin* (wine), *kad* (jug), *kōs* (cup), and *sōd* (secret), in the belief that words with identical numerical values

¹² See Arie Schippers, *Spanish Hebrew Poetry and the Arabic Literary Tradition: Arabic Themes in Hebrew Andalusian Poetry* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 129–43. There are also numerous references of wine being hidden, stored, and even imprisoned.

¹³ I am indebted to Ariel Zinder for his highly inspiring feedback after my lecture at the Eighth Medieval Hebrew Poetry Colloquium. Zinder noted a clear difference of tone between the two disputants to each other's discourse; while both sides are attacking and attacked, the jug is clearly more aggressive and scornful than the cup. He also suggested that there might be a slight gender bias in the jug's discourse in the second and fourth strophes, which resonates with certain stereotypes of women that were prevalent in medieval culture: the woman whose heart is evil, who gossips constantly (strophe 2), who needs to be hushed, and who talks too loud (strophe 4). This being said, because distinctive masculine or phallic imagery is missing, it is hard to read the poem from an explicit gender paradigm in which cup and jug represent, respectively, female and male—even though the grammatical figures of the feminine *kōs* (cup) and masculine *kad* (jug) seem to corroborate such a reading. In Hebrew, wine is often—as in this case—masculine because of the grammatically masculine word *yayin* (or other masculine words like *hemer*, which correspond to Aramaic *khamar* or Arabic *khamr*; the latter is, however, usually grammatically feminine and as a result often conceptualized as a woman, particularly a beautiful virgin). Nonetheless, the female personification of wine also occurs in Hebrew poetry (even though there are practically no descriptions of wine as a virgin). See Schippers, *Spanish Hebrew Poetry*, 137–38.

¹⁴ There are some rabbinic sayings associating wine with judgment. See, for example, the tractate Bava Batra 12b in the Babylonian Talmud, where, according to Rabbi Huna, wine helps open the heart to reasoning. Moreover, in the Kabbalistic tradition, wine is linked to the attribute *binā*, or "understanding."

bear a deep conceptual bond with one another. For example, the Talmud points out that if we add up the letters in the Hebrew word *yayin* (wine), we get the number 70; moreover, if we add up the letters in the word *sōd* (secret), we get the same number. The Talmud teaches that this similarity alludes to the following idea: **וְכֵן כִּי יֵצֵא סוֹד**, “When wine enters, the secret comes out!” (*Erubin* 65a) The poet adds to this famous Talmudic saying a more challenging arithmetical riddle in the penultimate line: “When the jug will be beheaded and the cup’s head held high, how will any adversary stand?” In other words, when subtracting the numerical value of the first letter of these words—both *kad* (jug) and *kōs* (cup) start with the letter *kāf* (which equals 20)—their subsequent addition equals 70, the numerical value of “wine,” which by way of gematria confirms wine’s advantage over cup and jug.

The final line in the poem goes as follows: “When the secret is disclosed to people, rain will pour from the cloud of joy.” In other words, when the reader or listener understands the solution of the riddle, this will cause him much pleasure.¹⁵ This stress on enjoyment reminds us of the prelude of the poem, which one could freely translate as follows: “Do you, listener, like to have fun? In that case, let me tell you a story about the dispute between cup and jug.” In other words, this kind of debate poem was quite possibly written to be recited publicly during a banquet, as an oral performance for the sake of the entertainment of a public of literature lovers and patrons who likewise desired panegyrics in their honor, to enhance their reputation. The performance of such a strophic poem might also imply that one person would assume the role of the cup, another the role of the jug,¹⁶ and yet another the role of the wine, whereas the refrain was repeated or even sung by a singer or the public. Surely the participants in a banquet would be happy to hear the wine have the last word!

However this may be, the genre of debate poetry has a long and variegated history spanning different literary traditions, including Hebrew, Syriac, Arabic, and Persian literature (where it was known as *mufākharā* or *munāzara*), and is characterized by such an element of entertainment and performance, where different disputants use direct speech and rich layers of metaphors to express their superiority to each other.¹⁷ The disputes are typically between two concrete individuals, abstract

¹⁵ The question remains whether the public present at a banquet would indeed understand the riddle’s solution; it is interesting to note that the penultimate line can also be read without taking into account the riddle—in this case, we get an image of a cup that is raised and a jug that is lowered for wine filling.

¹⁶ If we accept the gender paradigm discussed in note 13, we can further hypothesize that a woman would assume the role of cup and a man the role of jug.

¹⁷ On this genre of debate or dispute poetry (or in German, *Rangstreitdichtung*), see Moritz Stein-schneider, *Rangstreit-Literatur: Ein Beitrag zur vergleichenden Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte* (Vienna: Holder, 1908); Ewald Wagner, *Die arabische Rangstreitdichtung und ihre Einordnung in die allgemeine Literaturgeschichte* (Mainz: Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, 1963); and various contributions to Gerrit Reinink and Herman Vanstiphout, eds., *Dispute Poems and Dialogues in the Ancient and Mediaeval Near East* (Leuven: Peeters, 1991), esp. Wout van Bekkum, “Observations on the Hebrew Debate in Medieval Europe” (77–90); see also Asghar Seyed-

concepts, or inanimate objects, and the list of personified disputants is extensive: there are debates between body and soul, good and evil, pen and sword (or scissors), love and reason, fire and dust, ear and eye, heaven and earth, sea and land, summer and winter, day and night, men and animals, hunter and gazelle, dates and grapes (or watermelons), poetry and prose, rose and narcissus, candlestick and candle, and so on. Wine is also a favorite topic in debate poetry, also among Muslim poets who wished to give a voice to this alcoholic drink and let it defend its position in Islamic society. And so we find debates between wine and some other object, such as a rose or thorn, nightingale, grape juice, milk, water, bread, or hashish.

Yet so far, I have nowhere come across this particular combination of disputants in Yerushalmi's poem, namely jug, cup, and wine.¹⁸ I have encountered only one dispute between cup and wine, a Syriac poem attributed to a Christian contemporary of Yerushalmi, the thirteenth-century scholar Khāmis bar Qardāhē, who lived in Erbil in northern Iraq and authored Syriac liturgical poems and wine songs.¹⁹ Jews and Christians were unhindered by restrictions on drinking wine or composing poetry about it, so it is perhaps no coincidence to find Hebrew or Syriac poems about the theme. Yet the assumption that Yerushalmi might have been acquainted with Syriac poetry can be ruled out, so the question remains whether he created an original theme or based his poem on a still-unknown Arabic or Hebrew model.²⁰

Gohrab, "The Rose and the Wine: Dispute as a Literary Device in Classical Persian Literature," *Iranian Studies* 47, no. 1 (2013): 69–85.

¹⁸ During the Eighth Medieval Hebrew Poetry Colloquium, Masha Itzhaki and Haviva Ishay confirmed that Abraham Ibn Ezra has no equivalent poem and added that the combination of riddle and debate in the same poem is rather exceptional. See Masha Itzhaki, "Abraham ibn Ezra as a Harbinger of Changes in Secular Hebrew Poetry," in *Hebrew Scholarship and the Medieval World*, ed. Nicholas de Lange (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 149–55; Haviva Ishay, "The Biblical Exegesis of Abraham Ibn Ezra as a Hermeneutical Device: A Literary Riddle as a Case Study," in *Exegesis and Poetry in Medieval Karaite and Rabbanite Texts*, ed. Joachim Yeshaya and Elisabeth Hollender (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 122–46. Likewise, none of the scholars specialized in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish poetry present at the conference "Khamriyya as a World Poetic Genre" could come up with a comparable poem, nor other scholars of Mamluk Arabic poetry (e.g., Thomas Bauer) whom I consulted on the topic.

¹⁹ See Sebastian Brock, "Syriac Dispute Poems: The Various Types," in *Dispute Poems and Dialogues in the Ancient and Mediaeval Near East*, ed. Gerrit Reinink and Herman Vanstiphout (Leuven: Peeters, 1991), 112, 119; David Taylor, "Your Sweet Saliva Is the Living Wine: Drink, Desire and Devotion in the Syriac Wine Songs of Khāmis bar Qardāhē," in *The Syriac Renaissance*, ed. Herman Teule et al. (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 31–52.

²⁰ A possible Hebrew model – brought to my attention in the proof stage of this article – can be found in *Mahberot Eitan ha-Ezrahi*, an anonymous, fragmentary *maqāma* collection produced in Egypt in the second half of the thirteenth century. One of the *maqāma*-compositions included in this collection (*maqāma* Z) is organized around a debate between a wine-cup and a wine-jug, see Michael Rand, *Studies in the Medieval Hebrew Tradition of the Haririan and Harizian Maqama*. Maḥberot Eitan ha-Ezrahi (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 9–10; 33–8; 232–40. Interestingly, in this debate, as pointed out by Rand in footnote 57, the cup is presented in the masculine gender, while the jug is feminine, whereas in Yerushalmi's poem the situation is reversed, the cup is feminine and the jug masculine.

Poem 5:21

That Yerushalmi based his poems on Arabic models is well established in other instances,²¹ so as an afterthought I present poem 21 in this fifth section of his *diwān*, a monorhyme poem of two lines modeled on an Arabic poem by the tenth-century poet Ibn Sukkara al-Hāshimī (d. 995), quoted by al-Ḥarīrī (1054–1122) in his twenty-fifth *maqāma* and presented here in the original followed by Geert Jan van Gelder's English translation (which succeeds in reproducing the alliteration of the seven words all starting with the Arabic letter ك [k] in the original poem):²²

جاء الشتاء وعندي من حوائجه سبع إذا القطر عن حاجتنا حيسا
كن وكيس وكانون وكاس طلا بعد الكباب وكس ناعم وكسا

Winter has come, but I have seven things I need, when due to dripping rain our business we must close: A cosy cover, cash, a kindled stove, a cup of wine, and then kebab, a lovely cunt, and clothes.

This poem belongs to a genre of poems known as “enumerative aphorisms,”²³ which in both Arabic and Hebrew wine poetry are often used by several famous poets, including Abū Nuwās and Moses Ibn Ezra. This is how the aforementioned “seven Ks of winter” sound in Yerushalmi's Hebrew poem, which is preceded by the following Judeo-Arabic heading that wrongly ascribes the Arabic poem to al-Ḥarīrī: *wa-qāla aydan yanḥū naḥwa bayti l-sabʿ kafāt li-l-Ḥariri*, “and he also said, following the example of al-Ḥarīrī's poem on the seven Ks”:

וקאל איצ'א ינחו נחו בית אלסבע כפאת לאלחרירי

שבעה צרכים שים בביתך לסתיו / עת מגשמיך בא ויוצא איך
כלה וכיס כסף וכוס וכסות וכר / שמן וכירת אש וכדת ייך

Put seven must-haves in your home for winter, when due to rainfall you cannot go out: a bride, cash in a carryall, a cup, clothes, a chump of lamb, a kindled stove, and a wine jug.

²¹ One example of such a Hebrew poem by Joseph ben Tanḥum Yerushalmi based on an Arabic poem by ʿAbd al-Malik al-Isnāʿī—one of his contemporaries in early Mamluk Egypt—was identified by Susan Einbinder in “The *Muwashshah*-like Zajal: A New Source for a Hebrew Poem,” *Medieval Encounters* 1, no. 2 (1995): 252–70.

²² For the Arabic poem, see Silvestre De Sacy, ed., *Les séances de Hariri: Publiées en arabe, avec un commentaire choisi* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1822), 262. For the English translation, see Geert Jan van Gelder, *Sound and Sense in Classical Arabic Poetry* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2013), 291.

²³ See Arie Schippers—quoting from Ernst Robert Curtius's magnum opus *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter*—in *Spanish Hebrew Poetry*, 108; a good example of an enumerative aphorism by Samuel ha-Nagid is included in Raymond Scheindlin, *Wine, Women and Death: Medieval Hebrew Poems on the Good Life* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1986), 51: “Five things there are that fill the hearts of men with joy, and put my grief to flight: a pretty girl, a garden, wine, the water's rush in a canal, and song.”

As can be noted, in my own English translation I have also tried as much as possible to keep the alliteration of the seven words all starting with the Hebrew letter כ (k) in Yerushalmi's poem, which clearly imitates the Arabic alliterative epigram. Although the list of winter essentials in both poems is quite similar, there are also some differences: sometimes a certain attribute is present in the Arabic but absent in the Hebrew poem (e.g., "a lovely cunt" vs. "a bride"; note also the use of this vulgar word in the original poem, not present in the more decent imitation). At other times the opposite happens (e.g., "cash" vs. "cash in a carryall"). The kebab of the Arabic original is replaced by "a chump of lamb" in the Hebrew imitation, whereas the "cosy cover" seems to be missing given that the home is already mentioned in the first line in the Hebrew poem (however, note that the Hebrew word כְּסוּת—translated here as "clothes"—can also mean "cover"). Instead, we find besides "a cup (of wine)" also "a wine jug" at the end of the Hebrew alliterative epigram, which leads into my conclusions concerning the debate poem between cup and jug discussed in the main part of this chapter.

Conclusion

Regardless of whether it was original, the dispute between cup and jug in the court of wine certainly gave Joseph ben Tanḥum Yerushalmi an opportunity to show off his erudition and poetic virtuosity. His audience was probably acquainted with the conventional themes and motifs of Arabic and Hebrew wine poetry and with similar debates and riddles in earlier Hebrew literature, particularly Abraham Ibn Ezra's groundbreaking literary debates and riddles, as well as the examples found in the popular Arabic and Hebrew *maqāma* literature. It is interesting to note that Abraham Ibn Ezra also used acrostics and strophic forms for several of his Hebrew dispute poems,²⁴ and Yerushalmi himself wrote Hebrew *maqāmāt*. The fact that Yerushalmi might have used earlier Arabic or Hebrew poems as prototypes for composing his own poems does not mean that his work should be considered exclusively derivative or epigonic. Rather, in line with my earlier research on other Eastern Jewish poets, notably Moses Dar'ī, Yerushalmi "may be said to possess an independent, original talent in that he was capable of reworking traditional themes and of inventing some new and unexploited ones."²⁵ Moreover, Yerushalmi's oeuvre counters the long-standing assumption of an irreversible Jewish (cultural) decline in the Mamluk period.

²⁴ See Itzhaki, "Abraham ibn Ezra as a Harbinger," 154–55.

²⁵ See Joachim Yeshaya, *Medieval Hebrew Poetry in Muslim Egypt: The Secular Poetry of the Karaite Poet Moses ben Abraham Dar'ī* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 141.

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Part 4
Dialogic Relationship between
Literary Texts and Social Practices

Wine for the King, Wine for the Hero: The Literary Role of Wine as a Body- and Mind-Altering Catalyst in Firdawsi's *Shahnama masnavi*

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Firdawsi's *Shahnama* (or *Book of Kings*) is a long narrative poem written in Persian in the *masnavi* form at the end of the third/tenth century,¹ in Tus, a city in the eastern part of the Persian-speaking world (within present-day Iranian territory). In approximately sixty-thousand *bayts*, this *Book of Kings* tells of the reigns of fifty Iranian kings, an (artificially) uninterrupted hereditary line active from mythical-heroic-legendary times to historical ones. The chapters develop between the beginnings with the mythical Gayumarth, the first Iranian king, and the Arab invasion in the first/seventh century, which ends the rule of Iranian kings over the Iranian heartland. References to wine in the *masnavi* also evolve between these two moments. The first mention of wine happens with the establishment of the Iranian New Year (*Nawruz*) by the fourth king, the mythical Jamshid: on Nawruz, "the noble chieftains held a festival, / Called for the goblet, wine and minstrelsy."² The passage is meaningful and, besides linking wine with music and social occasions, it announces three crucial themes: the relation between wine and influential religious practices in pre-Islamic Iran, the link of wine with nobility, and the use of wine during feasts and banquets. Fast-forwarding to the very end of the *masnavi*, we find the following lines which offer useful background on the relation between kings, world order and wine. In his catalog of Iran's grim future under the yoke of the Arab invaders, the astronomer-hero Rustam son of Hurmuzd refers back to the link between Nawruz and wine. Here is one of the *Shahnama*'s last wine mentions, as Rustam moodily predicts: "No difference / Will be 'twixt Spring and Winter; there will be / No wine at feasts: they will not recognize / Degree and place but live on barley-bread. / And dress in wool. When much time hath passed thus / None will regard the noble Persian stock. / They will be shedding blood for lucre's sake, / An evil age will be inaugurate."³ In this passage, Firdawsi's point is that the disappearance of the royal

¹ The poetical form of the *masnavi* consists of rhyming couplets; a couplet is designated in Arabic and Persian as a *bayt*.

² *The Shahnama of Firdausi*, trans. A. G. Warner and E. W. Warner (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Truebner & Co, 1905), 1:134–35. Hereafter all citations to this work are by translator name, volume, and page.

³ Warner and Warner, 9:77. This Rustam is a member of the Sistani family, descendant of the great hero Rustam. M. T. Bahar, ed., *Tarikh-e Sistan* (Tehran, 2010), 9, mentioned in S. Gaz-

Iranian rulers, signifies the disappearance of a world-order guided by their positive aura of just and God-protected rule; it will be overruled by new rulers who will disregard these traditions.⁴ This change and its multifarious impact on the stratified Iranian society has been examined and discussed in detail by scholars of the early Islamic period in Iran, but, as far as I am aware, they have not considered the point I am making in this chapter which is: Firdawsi's numerous mentions of wine and inebriation mostly function as an intrinsically royal Iranian political, social and cultural identifier.⁵

I present a selection of vignettes chosen from a large corpus of references to wine in my primary source. Their analysis reveals several strands of drinking and drunkenness in the *Shahnama*. The chapter, which paves the way for a more in-depth treatment of the topic, also shines a light on Firdawsi's refinement as a literary author and experienced narrator, demonstrating the extent to which he polishes his imagery. I show his familiarity with wine-related references in other literary traditions, emphasizing the care with which he has crafted the story line's structure, and how meaningful the often innocuous sounding details really are in order to capture the relevance and excitement of the episodes and the careful psychological portraits. I also propose stepping beyond the skillful descriptions of wine's impact on the characters' actions. In my view, wine in itself is an important dynamic force and actor in the *Shahnama*: it functions as a literary catalyst that propels the action.

I do not examine whether the references to wine in Firdawsi's text reflect in any reliable way the reality of pre-Islamic royal and noble wine traditions. Nevertheless, in order to underpin my analysis, I nod to sources to that effect, taken pell-mell from pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods, as I suggest a continuity of the wine tradition across the dynasties who ruled over Iran. In some cases, Firdawsi might indeed have engaged with these or with related traditions. Nor do I venture here to address the reality of Firdawsi's own relation to wine, or presume to guess how his target audience in third/tenth-century Islamic Iran related to inebriation.⁶ However, it seems that the references I examine were not experienced as threatening to the readers' Islamic convictions. This can be deduced from the simple fact that the text

erani, *The Sistani Cycle of Epics and Iran's National History* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 8, 13 (on the indication that the toponym *Sistan* is a survival of Sakastan, or "land of Saka").

⁴ The passage mentions a specific type of wine consumption. As we shall see, the use of wine at banquets is a skill, a political tool in the hands of Iranian rulers. It should not be adduced from this mention that Firdawsi adopts the overly-simplified view that early Muslim rulers were not consuming alcohol.

⁵ See for example L. Marlow, *Hierarchy and Egalitarianism in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 148-51.

⁶ It is not relevant to my literary analysis to hypothesize the author's social habits and religious beliefs, from either authorial asides or remarks on the characters he created. For the opposite attitude, see M. Omidšalar, *Poetics and Politics of Iran's National Epic, the Shāhnāmeh* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 88-90. For a study which brings together literary references to wine and historical sources, see W. Floor, "The Culture of Wine Drinking in Pre-Mongol Iran" (Wien: Austrian Academy of Science, 2014), 165-210.

and its numerous mentions of wine have survived through centuries of successive Muslim rulers with variable levels of religious fervor.

I start by highlighting the differentiation of kings, heroes, and the *hoi polloi* in their relations to wine.⁷ The characters' varied reactions to wine express social differences, which mark the aptitude of some to rule over Iran. My examples deal with moments when wine effects physical and mental alterations, that is, when wine-induced inebriation triggers the story line to move forward, propelling the characters more often than not toward inevitable tragedy. These passages refer to wine as a pharmacological substance with impacts on the human body and mind. I explore how wine consumption in male circles may alter physical courage and mental virtues in a positive way. I also look at passages showing how rightful rulers resist excessive inebriation and its negative physical and mental effects. These examples offer a general illustration of the complicity between wine and the paradigms of royalty and heroism, bonding men while also acting as a social divider. I then move to an analysis of wine's central role in the famous episode of Suhrab and Rustam. Next, exploring another level of wine's impact on physical and mental male faculties, I briefly examine the link between drunkenness and sex, an important motif in *Shahnama* love episodes. Together, wine and women exacerbate male sexual desire sometimes for better, but mostly for worse. Drunkenness overwhelms male characters and reverses domination patterns between men and women. This is related to an archetypal taboo pertaining to a psychosexual alcohol-induced delusion, which I briefly highlight, comparing Firdawsi's text with other literary examples. Finally, I highlight the links between lyrical poetry and the *Shahnama*, bringing together the wine-production myth, with its connotations to femininity, and its Christian or Dionysian symbolism, with another puzzling *Shahnama* passage. We discover how the Sassanian ruler Khusraw Parviz subverts the relation between wine and divinity for the sake of his ill-advised love affair.

Wine as a Mental and Physical Catalyst

Shahnama studies have mostly seized on the less remarkable part of the Nawruz passage mentioned in the previous section to illustrate what is considered the flimsy relevance of wine in the text. Wine's significance is confined in a general way as part of male characters' rowdy *bazm o razm* (feasting and fighting) occupations.⁸ Rather

⁷ Within one and the same passage, Firdawsi may use several terms (such as *bāda*, *may*, *nabid*), to refer to wine.

⁸ These mentions are viewed as mere creators of atmosphere. J. W. Clinton, s.v. *bāda*, *Encyclopaedia Iranica* vol. 3, fasc. 4, 353–54, online edition (2011), shows the perils of treating this huge *masnavi* in a global manner. In this instance, the entry downplays the impact of wine and misunderstands references to it:

"Literary texts reflect very different views of wine and drunkenness than one might expect from the fierce temperance of Islamic injunctions against intoxicating beverages. In the *Šāh-*

than viewing them as unobtrusive and trivial remarks or additions, I argue that these references to wine banquets are significant. The feasting and drinking interludes happen mostly during public parties in a royal or noble social context. They often occur at key moments in the action, and, as I discuss later, the impact of wine on the characters is not limited to meaningless inebriation during merry social occasions.

The rules of wine drinking are a recognized part of Iranian princely education. This is evident in the description of the education of several princes in the *Shah-nama*. For example:

[Rustam] instructed / The youth [Siyavash] in riding, archery, the use / Of lasso, stirrups, reins, and other gear / To hold his court, his feasts, and drinking-bouts, / To follow game with falcon, hawk and cheetah, / To judge in causes and to rule the kingdom, / Make speeches, combat, and lead forth a host: / All these accomplishments did Rustam teach him, /⁹

This passage mentions the art or science of wine as the third in a list of indispensable skills that form a future ruler's education, before justice, rhetoric, and war strategy. It immediately follows two essential nomadic and martial accomplishments related to hunting and battle: mastering horsemanship and using bow and lariat in the saddle. Presiding at wine banquets is coupled with hunting with hawks and cheetahs, as equally essential competences.¹⁰ If Firdawsi's association of skills is meaningful, then the passage is an indication that wine is viewed as a quasi-hunting device. Hawk and cheetah are trained to catch the prey and bring it back to their master; so is wine for those who are competent in using it. The banquet is a diplomatic arena and a political tool: wine brings down the guests' psychological defenses and reveals their thoughts. Indeed, the skill of using wine is important as

nāma, a work that is self-consciously pre-Islamic in its context and ideology, wine is an antidote to grief and misfortune and the necessary accompaniment of hospitality.... Drinking wine in company is the benign opposite of meeting in war or single combat. There are many scenes in which heroes either invite their foes to put aside their arms and hoist the cup of friendship instead, or in which warriors prepare for battle by a night of carousal.... Nor is there any suggestion that drunken conviviality has unfortunate side effects.... Finally, while Zoroastrian beliefs and practices are only vaguely and imperfectly adumbrated in the *Šāh-nāma*, there is no suggestion that wine-drinking is offensive to the new faith. Esfandiār does not hesitate to hoist a cup with Rostam although he is an exemplar of Zoroastrian piety (*Šāh-nāma*, Moscow, VI, p. 249 l. 528).” As I demonstrate below, most of Clinton's remarks need fine-tuning. For a similar attitude, see also the recent, Hämeen-Anttila, J., *Khwadāy-nāmag The Middle Persian Book of Kings* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 214.

⁹ Warner and Warner, 2:196. See also Gazerani, *Sistani Cycle of Epics*, 89, on the historical background of Rustam's family's special prerogative to educate Iran's royal heirs. Rustam educates Siyavash and later Bahman, son of Isfandiyar.

¹⁰ This link between hunting and drinking wine is repeated in the description of the education of Isfandiyar's son Bahman: Warner and Warner, 5:256: “Bahman stayed in Zabulistan, enjoying / The hunting-field and wine among the roses, // While Rustam taught that enemy of his to ride, to quaff, and play the monarch's part.” The link between monarchy and hunting might well be related to the tradition of the king hunter (See P. Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander. A History of the Persian Empire* (Winona: Eisenbrauns, 2002) 230-32)

warrior techniques and as political savoir faire. The challenges of wine are twofold: to learn to gauge one's own physical threshold for drunkenness (which will affect physical and mental abilities; excellence in these combine to forge the successful hero) and to learn how to use the effects of wine on others, be it courtiers, enemies, or even friends, to serve one's diplomatic and political goals (an essential skill for a ruler). Of all the *Shahnama* characters, it is Isfandiyar who most explicitly uses wine to bring down an adversary. He openly uses wine as a truth serum. During his Seven Stages trip, he forces his prisoner Gurgsar to drink several cups of wine before every interrogation on the dangers of the road ahead: "presently Gurgsar, / In miserable plight, was brought before him, / And furnished with a golden goblet filled / Four times successively."¹¹ It is probable that this is also the relevance of the drinking challenge between Rustam and Isfandiyar, which I mention later.

Amongst the remarkable reforms introduced by the first Sassanian ruler Ardashir, Firdawsi includes a section on the reception of ambassadors which shows a similar use of wine to loosen the envoys' tongue, both about details on his home country and about his views on the Iranian state and ruler. True to the link mentioned above, Ardashir stipulates that the king would also show off to his guest, his own and his court's excellence in hunting.¹²

Mirrors for princes containing advice for current or future rulers sometimes have a section relating to the etiquette of wine drinking.¹³ One such text, by the vizier Nizam al-Mulk (d. 485/1092), addresses his master the Saljuq sultan Malikshah (r. 465/1073–485/1092), giving ad hoc advice related to arranging drinking parties, confirming the ruler's duty to hold public drinking banquets. The *Siyasat Nama* is tailored to a ruler whose role and life are in the public sphere, when each one of his actions has a political dimension. Interestingly, the text distinguishes public drinking parties from intimate parties with boon companions, in whose company "the king's spirit is free," as he is able to enjoy himself "without detriment to his majesty and sovereignty."¹⁴ By contrast, the public drinking parties are political theaters. In this passage, the vizier's advice is of a practical character, setting the etiquette in response to some obnoxious practices.¹⁵ In this case, the banquet is viewed as an

¹¹ Warner and Warner, 5:120.

¹² See mention of this in N. Askari, *The Medieval Reception of the Shāhmāneh as a Mirror for Princes* (Leiden: Brill, 2016) 140. Askari is not discussing these wine occurrences in her sources. See B. Kaim, "Women, Dance and the Hunt" (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2016) for the importance of banquets as a crucial element of court rituals (91) and for the presence of Dionysian themes in the decoration of the Arsacid palaces (*passim*). See also P. Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, for references to a similar use of wine during Achaemenid banquets.

¹³ See N. Askari, *The Medieval Reception* for mentions of sections on wine in *Mirror for Princes* (e.g. p. 39, the *Pand-Nāmah-ye Rashidi*), though she does not discuss them.

¹⁴ Nizam al-Mulk, *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings: The Siyār al-Muluk or Siyasat-nama of Nizam al-Mulk*, trans. Hubert Darke, Persian Heritage Series, 2nd ed. (Boston, 1960; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 119.

¹⁵ Nizam al-Mulk, *Book of Government*, 119. The remarks cover the importance of keeping the official public parties separated from the general public and of stopping guests from providing

opportunity to demonstrate the ruler's wealth. It does not refer to the royal skill of using wine.

Prominently situated at the very opening of the chapter on Bahram Gur's reign,¹⁶ the double *Shahnama* episode "How Bahram Slew Lions and Forbade Wine Drinking, and The Story of the Young Shoemaker and How Bahram Allowed Wine Again"¹⁷ documents how the effects of wine on non-royal persons create a flux in the attitudes and practices surrounding its use. The episode deals with wine consumption by two secondary characters, who are displaying opposite reactions to inebriation. The episode's particular relevance for his readership through the centuries to this day is likely to be its unspoken link with the reality of Islam. Firdawsi might have meant for the passage to hold an implicit comment, as suggested by the way in which he presents the sweeping condemnation and the subsequent reintroduction of public wine consumption on anecdotal grounds rather than inspired by weighty theological or philosophical reasons. Besides this possible guarded reference to the author's own time, the double episode's relevance within the core message of the *Shahnama* is not easy to pinpoint. My hypothesis is that it might well be an instance where the new Sassanian dynasty is humiliating the Pahlavans, the old defeated Parthian ruling family¹⁸, in its relation to wine.

The episode starts with a *bazm* being organized at the court of Bahram Gur when what appears to be a country farmer bearing an offering of fruit flamboyantly crashes the party. Claiming to be a *Pahlavan* called Kibruy, the man demands to participate in the drinking, toasting the Shah and boasting that he will remain sober even after emptying seven huge measures of wine. The king and nobles are entertained. However, on his way back, the huge quantity of wine he has drunk overwhelms Kibruy. As he sinks into drunken stupor, a raven pecks out his eyes and he bleeds to death. The king bans wine: "Wine is a thing forbidden in the world / Alike to paladin and artisan."¹⁹ The episode is puzzling and opens up several possible avenues of interpretation. It gains in meaning when we consider that Kibruy introduces himself as a *pahlavan*, which probably identifies him as the scion of the defeated and impoverished princely Parthian (*pahlavan*) family, presented by Firdawsi as surviving in rustic circumstances under Sassanian rule. Kibruy's offering of

their own wine for the parties. This is a slur on the ruler's reputation: his wine steward should provide the highest-quality wines, which should prevent guests from preferring their own.

¹⁶ The historical character the fifteenth Sassanian king, Bahram V, nicknamed Bahram Gur, reigned from AD 420 to 438. See O. Klima, s.v. "Bahram V," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, vol. 3, fasc. 5, 514–22, online edition.

¹⁷ Warner and Warner, 7:21–25.

¹⁸ There is convincing evidence that the term *pahlavāni* (also translated "paladin" by Warner and Warner) in the context of the *Shāhnāma* refers to Parthians. See P. Pourshariati, "The Parthians and the Production of the Canonical *Shāhnāmas*" in *Commutatio Et Contentio: Studies in the late Roman, Sāsāniān, and early Islamic Near East in memory of Zeev Rubin*, eds H. Börm and J. Wieshöfer (Düsseldorf: Wellem Verlag, 2010), 347–99.

¹⁹ Warner and Warner, 7:23.

fruit and flowers seem to relate him to Mehregan, the autumnal festival, which is also related to grape-picking and wine. Mehregan is also known as the only festival when it was permissible for the king to get drunk.²⁰ By crashing Bahram's party, Kibruy is demanding to participate in the drinking festival. His arrogant conviction that he can withstand heavy drinking seems to relate to his awareness of his own high birth. He is challenging to ruler to drink huge quantities, as befits the occasion of Mehregan. His inability to take his drink might be explained by his lack of practice induced by his rustic lifestyle, but it might also indicate that as is the case with the royal *farr*,²¹ the ability to withstand drink abandons those who have lost the crown. Bahram's decision after the catastrophe, reduces "*pahlavans*" to the rank of "artisans", uniting them in their common ban from wine. It might thus be a hitherto unnoticed, but meaningful mention in the *Shahnama* of the social humiliation inflicted on the vanquished Parthian ruling families by the victorious Sassanian king. Noticeably, this decision does not target royal and noble wine consumption, thus confirming that this episode specifically addresses the nefarious effects of wine on persons who are not protected by the noble training and education. We might tentatively explain the king's horror at the news of Kibruy's death as a reaction to the harsh signal that he too will lose his special relationship with wine, should he lose the crown. The Iranian attitude to the raven seems to have been less negative than what is found in Arabic literature. For Zoroastrians, the raven is neither a noxious animal, nor ill-omened, but useful as it feeds on carrion. This might be what Firdawsi intended to highlight: excessive wine consumption has transformed the Parthian Kibruy into carrion.²² The pecking out of the eyes might also be a metaphor for the effects of inebriation as generally disabling a man's senses and as incapacitating his physical abilities.

This drama can be compared to a later moment in the reign of Bahram Gur, when we see that King Bahram and Kibruy are not equal in relation to wine: the former's physical might is enhanced, where Kibruy's is overwhelmed. Bahram masquerades as his own envoy at the court of the Indian king Shangal. After a royal banquet, the inebriated guests watch a wrestling match. "Now Bahram took up a cup / Of crystal and the wine confused his brain. / He spoke thus to Shangul: "O

²⁰ S. Cristoforetti, s.v. "Mehragān," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition (2013). On the *Mithrakana* festival, see P. Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 253.

²¹ The exact meaning of *farr* is open to debate, although it is usually understood as the glory or royal splendor that accompanies the righteous Iranian rulers. However, G. Gnoli ("Farr(ah)," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition [1999]), also notes associations of the term with a "magic force or power of luminous or fiery nature," and with a "vital creative force ... situated in the waters." Remarkably, these two latter descriptions evoke wine imagery in Medieval Persian poetry. Although I have no competence to address this possibility, I nevertheless hypothesize that the *Shahnama's* relation between wine and Iranian rulers might represent a late and diffuse memory of an ancient inebriating drink lending a physically dominant ruler superhuman powers without incapacitating him. This is suggested by the earlier Achaemenid and later Saffavid traditions.

²² See H. A'lam, s.v. "crow," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition.

king bid me / To gird me for a bout for when I wrestle / Against the strong I am away from harm / And drunkenness.”²³ And indeed, Bahram can demonstrate that his physical strength is not affected by inebriation. But wine did “confuse his brain” as he rashly shows off that he possesses this special physical relation to wine, while alone in enemy territory! Firdawsi’s portrayal of the reign of Bahram Gur contains several specific commentaries on the king’s relationship with wine and its body- and mind-altering qualities.

The *Shahnama* king’s ability to gauge his level of response to wine might be rooted in mythical tradition as expressed in an ancient custom of Iranian kings who earned esteem in relation to their ability to resist inebriation.”²⁴ The ability of some rulers, such as Bahram Gur, to remain unscathed by wine consumption might be a natural talent of their royal heredity, but it might also be a skill acquired through comprehensive education and training, as mentioned earlier in relation to the education of young Prince Siyavash.

This is in contrast to the second part of the same *Shahnama* episode, which illustrates positive wine-induced alterations to body and mind. After Kibrui’s death, the Shah orders the ban on drink. Meanwhile, a shoemaker’s boy is unable to fulfill his duties to his bride on their wedding night. His mother advises the boy to drink seven cups of a hidden bottle of wine, kept despite the king’s prohibition law. Inspired by the aphrodisiac properties of the beverage, the groom now triumphs in bed. Hot upon this, he comes face-to-face with a lion escaped from the royal zoo. Still under the influence, the young man feels no fear, sits on the roaring animal, and grasps him by the ears. When informed of this, Bahram is convinced that this shoemaker’s son is in fact of *Pahlavan* stock: such act of bravery can only be done by a *pahlavan*. The mother is interrogated, she swears that her boy is of artisan back-

²³ Warner and Warner, 7:117.

²⁴ This might give meaning to the famous mention in Plutarch that Cyrus the Younger boasted to holding his wine better than his brother Artaxerxes. (Plutarch, Art. 6.1, mentioned in P. Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 292. See also Athenaeus (book X) who reports an inscription on the tomb of Darius: “I was able to drink a great deal of wine, and to bear it well.” Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists or Banquet of the Learned of Athenaeus*, trans. C. D. Yonge, book Y (London, 1854), 2:686, cited in T. Daryaee, “Herodotus on Drinking Wine in the Achaemenid World,” in *Iranian Languages and Cultures: Essays in Honor of Gernot Ludwig Windfuhr*, ed. B. Aghaei and M. R. Ghanoonparvar (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2012), 28–43, at 40. For a similar attitude in historical chronicles, compare A. Malecka, “The Muslim Bon Vivant: Drinking Customs of Babur, the Emperor of Hindustan,” *Der Islam* 78, no. 2 (2001): 135: at the Timurid courts, “the one who was able to drink more liquor than others was bestowed with the title Bahādur, which literally means ‘a hero.’” Also R. Matthee, *The Pursuit of Pleasure: Drugs and Stimulants in Iranian History, 1500-1900* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005) 67: “Iranians’ pre-Islamic *razm u bazm* tradition of hard fighting and hard drinking as the expected pursuits of warriors. Consuming alcohol in large quantities had a worldly as well as a spiritual dimension. The [Safavid] king was not just allowed to drink; he was supposed to drink, both as a sign of his status and stature as a ‘big man,’ and as a demonstration that, as the descendant of the sinless Imam, he was beyond the strictures of Islam, occupied his own autonomous moral space and thus personified the body politic.”

ground. She might be lying on this point, as Firdawsi specifically shows her to lie about the quantity of wine she gave her son to drink. The king seems unaware of the lie, laughs heartily and allows wine once more, but in limited quantity.

Beyond the superficial understanding of the episode as contrasting the effects of different quantities of wine on respectively Kibruy and the shoemaker,²⁵ Firdawsi's point might be a political reference to the threatening presence of defeated Parthians within the Sassanian kingdom. Kibruy's tragic misadventure is the opportunity for Bahram to humiliate the vanquished *Pahlavans*. His decision to reinstate wine drinking after a shoemaker has shown wine-induced *pahlavan*-like courage might well be meant as an added insult to the true *pahlavans*.

The story of the groom also contains references to women's relation to wine. The mother appears as the temptress who pours out the potent body- and mind-altering beverage and the wife as the recipient of the boy's inebriated sexual drive. Other examples of female-induced drunkenness follow, where the two roles are conflated into one female character. Firdawsi also subtly refers to his contemporary audience's Islamic faith: the anecdote explicitly highlights how wine's aphrodisiac effects boost the groom's physical prowess in bed. Susan Pinckney Stetkevych has discussed the links between wine and procreation in an Arabic Islamic context. She argues that wine's action as a sexual booster might encourage illicit relations, which end in non-reproductive sex or in procreation outside marriage that wreaks havoc on the social fabric.²⁶ In the adventures of the shoemaker-groom, Firdawsi offers practical comment on the other side of the coin: illicit wine gives the groom the necessary boost to achieve licit (hopefully reproductive) sex with his bride.

As to the probable etymological roots of this episode, they offer a clear rapprochement to the Dionysian tradition. Two famous themes of the wine god's lore are translated in this story: wine's power to enhance sexual vitality was acknowledged in Dionysus's phallic attributes. Firdawsi evidently relishes his graphic descriptions of the young man's feltlike attribute, which is unable to bore through a

²⁵ Kibruy drinks seven huge cups: Firdawsi specifies that each is able to contain five *mann* (also *maund*) (Firdawsi, *Shahnama*, ed. J. Mohl (Tehran, 1369/1990) b. 300, 1609) A *mann* is a weight which is not fixed and varies between 40 to 84 lbs (Steingass, F.J., *A Comprehensive English Persian Dictionary* (London, 1892)1136). See W. Floor, "The Culture of Wine-Drinking" 174 and 187-88, for the mention of a passage in the *Bibliographical Dictionary* of Ibn Khallikan, describing a wine party with a similar huge golden cup, weighing more than 4,5kg. This "friendship bowl" was then passed around and each guest would drink from it. The shoemaker's boy also drinks seven cups, but, as the content they hold is not specified, we are allowed to consider them "normal" cups (Firdawsi, *Shahnama*, ed. J. Mohl (Tehran, 1369/1990) b. 322, 1610).

²⁶ Stetkevych, S.P. "Intoxication and Immorality: Wine and Associated Imagery in al-Ma'arri's Garden," in *Critical Pilgrimages: Studies in the Arabic Literary Tradition, Literature East and West*, ed. F. Malti-Douglas (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989), 29-48, at 43: In contrast, in the hereafter, wine-induced illicit non-productive sex is permitted as immortality renders the propagation of the species redundant: "paternity and immortality are incompatible." Hence the river of wine promised in paradise.

stone, an image he uses twice in the course of this brief episode! And the shoemaker's adventure with the lion, apposite as it is to Bahram Gur's own courage in killing the two lions at the start of his reign, seems a whimsical literary translation of representations of Dionysus astride a leopard or tiger, which have reached us through Greek mosaics.²⁷ Kibruy's story ends in tears, but that of the shoemaker, in smiles: wine has blurred the groom's brain to such an extent that he indiscriminately deals with his bride and the roaring lion.

Wine and Royal Decision Making: Telling Bad Kings from Righteous Ones

My next set of *Shahnama* references to wine relate to wine's effect on the decision making of Iranian rulers. I start with another episode related to Bahram Gur, which at first glance seems to correspond to the following passage found in the *Siyasat-Nama*: "Messages [from the king] reach the divan and the treasury concerning matters of state, fiefs or gifts. It may be that some of these commands are [given] in a state of merriment. Now this is a delicate matter and it needs utmost caution.... And it must be the rule that, in spite of the fact that an order has been delivered, it must not be executed or acted upon until its substance has been refereed by the divan back to The Sublime Intellect [for confirmation]."²⁸ This is similar to a tradition already documented in Achaemenid wine culture. Thus Herodotus: "If an important decision is to be made, [the Persians] discuss the question when they are drunk, and the following day the master of the house where the discussion was held submits their decision for reconsideration when they are sober. If they still approve it, it is adopted; if not, it is abandoned. Conversely, any decision they make when they are sober, is reconsidered afterwards when they are drunk."²⁹

The *Shahnama* episode of Bahram Gur and the jeweler's daughter might well contain an ad hoc commentary on a similar tradition, which Firdawsi now links to the Sassanian ruler.³⁰ Incognito, King Bahram enjoys the hospitality of a jeweler who

²⁷ See the discussion of how Greco-Roman Dionysian motives were reinvented in the Parthian idiom, as found in the surviving decoration of the Parthian Qaleh-yi Yazdigird in B. Kaim, "Women, Dance and the Hunt", 57-59. See also the mosaic representations in the House of Dionysus and the House of the Masks in Delos, or the pebble mosaic in Pella, Greece. All these representations show Dionysus astride a leopard or tiger. Katherine Dunbabin, *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 32-35.

²⁸ Nizam al-Mulk, *Book of Government*, 88.

²⁹ Herodotus, *The Histories* I.133, ed. J. Marincola, trans. A. de Selincourt, revised with introduction and notes by J. Marincola (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 62. This passage is cited in Daryaei, "Herodotus on Drinking Wine," 39, who, on the basis of passages from the Zoroastrian Middle Persian *Dādestān i Mēnōg i Xrad*, proposes that Herodotus might have exaggerated the Persian's drunkenness and briefly comments on the likelihood that Herodotus misunderstood or voluntarily amplified the Persians' trust in inebriated decision making. See also for other references to this custom at the Achaemenid court, P. Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, p. 292.

³⁰ Warner and Warner 7:55-66.

entertains him and orders his lovely daughter to serve the wine and to play the harp and sing. The inebriated Bahram asks the father, who is equally drunk, for his daughter's hand in marriage. The jeweler suggests:

Be not precipitate, take rest to-night, / And, if needs must, another cup of wine, / For great men make no compacts in their cups / Especially about lady-loves.... Ill-omened 'tis to marry in one's cups / Or handsel any business.³¹

Firdawsi's jeweler contradicts Herodotus's intriguing comment, whereas Bahram insists on reaching a decision immediately, despite his awareness of being inebriated. Once more, the king shows that heavy drinking will not handicap his strength, this time his ability to make wise decisions. Incidentally, his nonchalant reaction might also indicate that this marriage holds limited impact as far as he is concerned. This passage also proposes a second hint at the link between drunkenness and sex, the focus of the next case study.

The episode of Bahram and the jeweler yet again indicates Firdawsi's relation to the same tradition or to sources similar to those used by Herodotus.³² Firdawsi refers in several instances to the same royal tradition. Khusraw Parviz makes a foolish and cruel decision during a drinking party, not being blessed, as was his ancestor Bahram, with the royal ability to hold his drink:³³ "As he was drinking wine amongst his sages, / His magnates and experienced officers, / There was a cup in use amongst the guests, / Graved with the name Bahram. The Shah bade throw / The cup away whereat they all began / To curse Bahram, the cup, and him that wrought it." Flying into a drunken rage, the king decides to destroy the city of Ray, Bahram Chubin's former capital, by appointing the lowliest, most incompetent, and most evil of men as Ray's governor.³⁴

³¹ Warner and Warner, 7:62.

³² Several details in the course of Firdawsi's work are similar to those found in literary works of classical antiquity. As our knowledge of the *Shahnama* progresses, it seems unlikely that these links are fortuitous. They indicate not necessarily direct textual heredity but certainly awareness of a common tradition. Thus, Rustam and Tahmina's love night is similar to the story of Heracles and the sea nymph in Herodotus. J. Khaleghi-Motlagh, *The Women in the Shahnameh, Their History and Social Status within the Framework of Ancient and Medieval Sources*, ed. Nahid Pirnazar, trans. Brigitte Neuenschwander (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2012), 39–41. Shirin's trial in front of the Iranian *buzurgan* is similar to that of the *hetaira* Phryne in front of the Athenians, told in Athenaeus's *Deipnosophist*, trans. Ch. Burton Gulick (1927), book 13:59, as discussed in C. van Ruymbeke, "Persian Medieval Rewriters between Auctoritas and Authorship: The Story of Khusrau and Shirin as a Case-Study," in *Shahnameh Studies III*, ed. G. van den Berg and C. Melville (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 269–92, at 278 and 278n28). The relevance of such comparisons across genres (here, literature and history) remains conjectural at this stage of familiarity with Firdawsi's working references, which are diffuse and difficult to pin down. In the foregoing instance, Herodotus was referring to Achaemenid, or even earlier traditions; Firdawsi stages the episode in the Sassanian era. Should we premise the immutability of this tradition over a millennium? Rather, ought we to consider that Firdawsi was not pernickety in his use of historical details, or that his sources were unreliably generalizing?

³³ Khusraw Parviz, the twenty-fourth Sassanian king, reigned from AD 590 to 628.

³⁴ Warner and Warner, 8:365.

The future king Shapur, too, is unable to keep his physical strength and mental power during drinking parties. He travels incognito to the court of the Roman emperor. Trusting in his disguise, he drinks immoderately at the Roman court and is caught unaware and too drunk to defend himself.³⁵ Similarly, when the ill-fated ruler Kay Ka'us decides to invade Mazanderan, the frightening land of the powerful *divs* (demons), he is conversing in his cups. This makes him reckless, and the nobles comment that "if the Shah / Remembereth the words said in his cups / 'Twill be the ruin of us and of Iran."³⁶ Kay Ka'us will remember and attempt his invasion, he and his heroes will be captured, and they will need the help of Rustam to fight the *divs* and finally to kill their ruler, the White Div. This wine-induced decision, the first of his rule, sets the tone for most of Kay Ka'us's years on the throne. His quick temper and rash decisions time and again bring the kingdom of Iran to danger; time and again, it is the Sistani hero Rustam who is able to save Iran and his king. This is the background to the episode of Rustam and Suhrab, to which I now turn.

Suhrab, the Fruit of Inebriation?

This section leaves the sphere of the Iranian kings' special relation to the effects of wine on mind and body and turns to an episode that appears to revolve around the nefarious effects of wine. Inebriation seems to pervade the story of Rustam and Suhrab. In what follows, I examine the episode on the basis of the chain formed by references to wine, and the results of this reading are enlightening. They propose a different dimension and meaning to this story, which is usually viewed for the significance of its filicide, which stains Rustam's superhuman career.

In the heroic part of the *Shahnama*, the stories about the Iranian rulers are intertwined with those of the Sistani dynasty.³⁷ Sistan, identified as it is with the Scythian territory or Saka, holds a special relation to wine, and especially to inebriation. According to several Greek authors, the Saka (Scythians) were renowned for their use of strong, pure wine. Herodotus confirms for us that Scythians were known as heavy drinkers: when Spartans "wish to drink beyond what is reasonable, they order "In the Scythian way!"³⁸ Similar remarks are found in Horace's poetry.³⁹

³⁵ Warner and Warner, 6:337.

³⁶ Warner and Warner, 2:30–33.

³⁷ M. Boyce, "Zariadres and Zarer," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 17 (1955): 463–77, at 475, claims that Rustam "was truly a Saka hero." E. Yarshater, "Iranian National History," *Cambridge History of Iran*, 7 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 3:359–477, at 455–56. O. M. Davidson, *Poet and Hero in the Persian Book of Kings*, 2nd ed. (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2006), 101, refers to T. Noeldeke, *The Iranian National Epic, 1894–1904*, trans. L. Bogdanov, Publication No. 7 (Bombay: Cama Oriental Institute, 1930), 19n2; and W. W. Tarn, *The Greeks in Bactria and India*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), 494–502.

³⁸ Herodotus, *Histoires*, trans. Ph. E. Legrand, book 4 (Paris: Collection des Universités de France, Les Belles Lettres, 1945), 6, 84.

Anacreon mentions the Scythians as the epitome of brawly, noisy, obnoxious inebriation.⁴⁰

However, as remarked earlier, the comparison with historical sources and earlier traditions is not indispensable for assessing the special role of wine in a literary episode. At all events, the Sistani family in the *Shahnama* is attuned to wine, but we also see them aware of the dangers of inebriation. Rustam teaches the young prince Siyavash the right techniques to handle wine, as we have seen, but he is not immune to its effects in his younger years. Firdawsi seems to make a point of describing how Rustam, still in his infancy, is already part of wild adult drinking parties.⁴¹

In the specific episode of Rustam and Suhrab, wine acts as a catalyst for the two heroes, inspiring Rustam's more controlled and hot-tempered anger toward the king, but spinning out of proportion with Suhrab's hubristic defiance of kingship. The young boy is fated to die because of his challenge to royal legitimacy. As though acting in retribution for their hubris, wine urges father and son to a tragic clash that ends in filicide. Wine triggers the whole drama, acting hand in hand with Rustam's self-confidence as the episode begins.

In the prologue, Rustam loses his horse in enemy territory. He is welcomed by the king of Samangan, who, though an enemy, seems faithful when he promises to return the horse. Rustam a little rashly lets his defenses down and shares a banquet. Then, "At length bemused and drowsy Rustam went / to ... a place of rest." Soon after he falls asleep, Tahmina, the king's daughter, enters Rustam's room. She barter the return of his horse for his sexual prowess. Drunken slumber has overtaken the hero, blurring his decision-making ability and enhancing his sexual enthusiasm.⁴²

Among the effects of wine on the *Shahnama* characters, Firdawsi repeatedly illustrates wine's strong relationship to women, physical seduction, and love or infatuation. Wine blurs men's mental, while enhancing their sexual abilities. To create or use the heroes' inebriation to achieve their infatuation is a common female trick.⁴³

³⁹ H. Chisholm, "Anacreon," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), 906–7.

⁴⁰ The poetry by the Greek poet Anacreon (fl. second half of 6th century–early 5th century BC) has survived in fragments and in citation in later works. His poetry is different from what is termed the *Anacreonta*, a compendium of poems in the style of Anacreon that appear to have been composed over a long period, from the time of Alexander the Great until the time that paganism gave way in the Roman Empire. The Greek rhetorician and grammarian Athenaeus of Naucratis (fl. end of the second–early third century AD) in his *Deipnosophistae* (*Scholars at Dinner*) cites Anacreon's verses: "Come boy, bring me a bowl, so that I may drink without stopping for breath.... Come again, let us no longer practice Scythian drinking with clatter and shouting over our wine, but drink moderately amid beautiful songs of praise." *Greek Lyric II: Anacreon, Anacreonta, Choral Lyric from Olympus to Alcman*, trans. D. A. Campbell, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 54–55 (fragment 356). On Anacreon's reference to Scythian drinking practice, see also H. Chisholm, "Anacreon."

⁴¹ Warner and Warner, 1:326–27.

⁴² Warner and Warner, 2:123.

⁴³ The episode between Rustam and Tahmina is replicated in one of the mirror episodes that abound in the *Shahnama*. When the servant Gulnar approaches Ardashir, the bored young

Although Firdawsi's text as it reached us does not specifically comment on this, the boy Suhrab is thus conceived, as already remarked by Davis, in an inebriated embrace.⁴⁴ It seems that this provokes in him blindness to his duties as a noble hero and a constant recklessness, similar to that induced by wine, which we identified in Kibruy and other characters.⁴⁵ With him, the rashness seems to course spontaneously through his blood. This character trait makes the whole episode meaningful within the *Shahnama* discourse: even when sober, he lacks his father's overriding respect for the sacredness of the royal persona. With characteristic out-of-bonds self-assurance, young Suhrab shows immoderate hubris: he has no respect for his mother and treats her brutally. Also, his ambition is to conquer the crowns of Iran and Turan for himself and his father. He ignores the specific duties of a *Shahnama* hero, as helper of the righteous kings of Iran. He plots a double regicide, and thus, in the *Shahnama* world order, is doomed. In contrast, despite the Iranian king's shortcomings and his own quick temper, Rustam abides by his heroic identity and saves the current holder of the Iranian crown. That this act should come at the cost of filicide and save an unworthy Iranian monarch makes the story particularly poignant.

Suhrab, when still an infant, already drinks wine, though his lips still taste of milk.⁴⁶ This very young hero enters Iranian territory with an army. The envoy of King Ka'us reaches Rustam with a desperate call to rush to the help of the Iranian army. But Rustam does not take the summons seriously and proposes several days of carousing first: "They took the wine in hand and grew bemused / With drinking

man has been spending his days and nights "eating and drinking; wine and entertainers were his companions." Gulnar seizes the moment when he is deep in inebriated slumber to appear and seduce him. This is an easy conquest with mighty effects, as Gulnar will urge Ardashir to rebellion, the duo of wine and woman proving essential to establishing the Sassanian dynasty.

⁴⁴ D. Davis, *Epic and Sedition: The Case of Ferdowsi's Shāhnāmah* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1992), 106–7: "Sohrāb is conceived in drunkenness during a raid of dubious legality into enemy territory." Davis does not identify, as I suggest here, that Suhrab shows constant traits of inebriation. It is worth noting that Suhrab's conception in a drunken embrace is different from Rustam's birth. There is no mention of drinking as Zal and Rudaba meet, fall in love, and spend the night together—or in the description of the wedding of Rustam's parents, although Ferdowsi describes weeklong revelries. Interestingly, wine as a perfume is mentioned in the preparations of the future bride's chambers, to welcome her future father-in-law: "All was prepared for welcoming the guests, / And all the slaves were summoned to strew musk / And spicery, to put down furs and silks, / To fling down gold and musk, / and sprinkle round wine and rose-water on the dusty ground." This might refer to the perfumed or to the inebriating qualities of wine fumes. Similarly, when Rudaba is preparing to meet Zal in her rooms, the servants prepare golden trays as ornaments and "mingled wine with musk and ambergris / And scattered emeralds and carnelians" (Warner and Warner, 1:270). Nevertheless, wine plays a role in Rustam's difficult caesarian birth, as the Simurgh orders: "Bemuse the lady first with wine to ease / Her pain and fear" (Warner and Warner, 1:321).

⁴⁵ Onlookers, impressed by his reckless bravery, think he is inebriated: "Thou wouldst have said: 'He cometh fresh from wine / To venture all alone on such a struggle'" (Warner and Warner, 2:165).

⁴⁶ Warner and Warner, 2:140.

to the monarch and to Zal. / The next morning Rustam though crop-sick made ready / To start, but tarrying through drunkenness / Gave orders to the cooks to spread a feast. / The banquet done they held a drinking-bout / And called for wine and harp and minstrelsy. / Next day he held another sunny-bright / And on the third day brought out wine at dawn."⁴⁷

There follows a clash of two headstrong personalities when Rustam finally reaches the court and the irate ruler. He indeed seems under the influence of alcohol as he rashly defies the king, stressing how he has saved the crown several times and arrogantly calling himself the kingmaker. Humiliated, the king has no option but to order Rustam's execution. The grandees of Iran manage to calm both the angry ruler and the hero: things are eventually settled in a feast: "They drank till hearts and eyes were dazed with wine, / And all became bemused, returning home / While tedious night was traversing the dome."⁴⁸

It is not without significance that the first time Rustam spies on Suhrab (still ignoring that the enemy hero is in fact his son), on the eve of their first duel, the latter is in the middle of a wild party. Rustam, too, returning to the Iranian camp, will "call for harp and wine," but he keeps the troops ready in case of danger.⁴⁹ In the night before his second duel with the Turanian hero, Rustam wisely keeps away from drink, contrary to young Suhrab, whose courage in part results from the night of carousing.⁵⁰ Accordingly, in the morning, although his courage is intact, his wits are blurred: he is "mirthful though resolved" as he prepares for the battle and smilingly greets Rustam as if "they had passed the night in company: — / How went the night? How is't with thee to-day? / ... Let us dismount and, sitting, clear our faces / With wine.... Until some other cometh / To battle feast with me because I love thee, / And weep for shamefastness."⁵¹ Firdawsi's representation of someone in his cups: Suhrab is merry and shows warm friendship, followed by maudlin affection and tears. As the two heroes fight, Suhrab overpowers Rustam but is tricked into releasing him.⁵² Wine gives young Suhrab the physical power to defeat Rustam, but sobriety gives the mature man the upper hand in the intellectual duel. Eventually, on the third encounter, both are sober and Rustam wins, unwittingly killing his son.

It is interesting to set this episode against the other, perhaps more significant duel in Rustam's life: the fight against Prince Isfandiyar, which puts the now old Rustam in the role of regicide. The prince has been ordered by his father, King Gushtasp, to bring Rustam in chains to the Iranian court. Rustam is innocent and refuses to submit. There will be a duel. The fact that the hero is unwilling to fight the Iranian prince, that he passionately pleads that he has spent his life in the service of the

⁴⁷ Warner and Warner, 2:141.

⁴⁸ Warner and Warner, 2:147.

⁴⁹ Warner and Warner, 2:149–50 and 152.

⁵⁰ Warner and Warner, 2:166 and 168.

⁵¹ Warner and Warner, 2:169.

⁵² Warner and Warner, 2:170–71.

monarchs, transforms the episode into an unresolvable paroxysm of Rustam's heroic personality, representing in essence the opposite of Suhrab's hubristic desire to commit regicide. On the eve of the duel, a curious episode occurs: Rustam, now a mature, even elderly, man, is invited to young Isfandiyar's tent and makes of public show of drinking enormous quantities of undiluted wine. "Then the prince commanded:— / "Bring cups and ruddy wine for him, and we / Will note how he will hold forth his cups, / and prate of Kai Ka'us." The drawer brought / A goblet filled with wine of ancient vintage, / and Rustam drank it to the King of kings; / He drained that golden fountain dusty-dry. / The young cup-bearer brought the cup again— / The same royal wine replenished— / And matchless Rustam whispered to the boy:— / "We want no water on the table here. / Why dost thou mingle water in the cup, / And weaken this old wine?" Said Bishutan / Thus to the server: "Bring a bowfull neat." He had the wine brought, summoned minstrels up / And gazed astounded on Rustam."⁵³ Firdawsi does not comment on this, but he does remark how this meeting with the immense hero has impressed, even terrified, Isfandiyar. Isfandiyar is adept at using wine's inebriating effect to defeat his adversaries, as already mentioned. However, strong wine has no effect on Rustam: as he reached maturity, he also mastered the art of wine drinking. He knows how to monitor his reaction to wine on the eve of a duel because together with the art of wine come all the other royal skills of combat. Mastering one suggests mastery of all the others, which is the message that the elderly Rustam impresses on the young Isfandiyar.

Drunkenness and Sex, Wine and Women

Wine has a female identity in lyric poetry, as I examine in some detail here. In the *Shahnama*, it is also a weapon for women. Drunkenness puts male characters at the mercy of others, male or female. Fearless Gurdiya and five companions smother her husband, the hero Gustaham, as he falls asleep after heavy drinking.⁵⁴ On another, less sinister note, several *Shahnama* episodes introduce women's use of wine to blur men's ability to resist erotic passion. Wine stimulated Bahram Gur's overriding physical attraction for the harpist daughter of the wealthy jeweler. Music is traditionally paired with wine, as both have powerful disinhibiting influence. When Manizha invites Bizhan into her tent, she has organized a perfect welcome, with wine and musicians: "Old wine in crystal cups gave to Bizhan / New strength, but when three days and nights had passed / In pleasure, sleep and drink prevailed at

⁵³ Warner and Warner, 5:210–11.

⁵⁴ Warner and Warner, 8:361: "She struggled greatly with the drunken man, / And silenced him at last." Incidentally, when Gurdiya meets Khusraw and dazzles him with her manly prowess, wine is also part of the demonstration, showing that, despite her female identity, Gurdiya is fit to rule. Khusraw challenges her: "Let me see if you are quelled / By wine or unaffected." Then she took / —that paladin lady— a goblet filled / With royal wine, which Ahriman himself / would've declined, and in the sight of all / Quaffed to the shah and drained it at a draught."

last.” Later, Manizha feels that she could not bear to be separated from Bizhan; seeing his sad face, Manizha “called her handmaids / And bade them mingle with a grateful draught / A drug that maketh senseless. This they gave him, / And he, bemused already, swallowed it.”⁵⁵

Manizha uses wine to seduce Bizhan, transforming his inclination to eroticism and blurring his awareness of danger. He will wake up inside Afrasyab’s palace and suffer as his prisoner. This is a case of a woman’s calculated creation of inebriation. Others simply seize the opportunity of the aftermath of a drinking party.

Coming back to Rustam, there is an interesting farcical moment during his Haft Khvan, or Seven Deeds or Courses, when Firdawsi seems to playfully bring together the typical ingredients that link women, wine, and music.⁵⁶ The mirror episode that features Isfandiyar is grim, but wine also plays a decisive role.⁵⁷ The Rustam episode pictures the astonishment of the hero who thought he was clasping a lovely maiden. As she transforms back to her repulsive shape, Rustam captures her: “In the lasso’s coils, / There was a fetid hag all guile and wrinkle, / Calamitous. He clave her with his blade / And made the hearts of sorcerers afraid.”⁵⁸

These twin episodes are part of a whole cluster of similar moments in several other *masnavis*. In all of these, the inebriated lover discovers that he is not sharing his passion with a young beauty as he thought he was. The tone of these episodes varies from farcical to nightmarish. Another example of this theme—linking love, wine, and a witch who transforms from beautiful to repulsive—occurs in Nizami’s *Haft Paykar*, in the story of the Turquoise Dome. Young Mahan finds himself in an enchanted garden, under the spell of a fantastically beautiful woman: She offers him wine and when bewildered, drunk and excited, he clasps her, she transforms into an ugly, repulsive monster who tortures him in her embrace until he mercifully passes away in exhausted terror. He wakes up, it is morning, and he finds himself in a desert wasteland.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Warner and Warner, 3:299.

⁵⁶ In this episode, Rustam discovers a waiting picnic. He avails himself of the food and wine, sings a little, and spots a witch disguised as a lovely girl. In his innocent joy, he thanks God, and it is this prayer that robs the witch of her wiles (Warner and Warner, 2:50–52). On the *Haft Khwans* of Rustam and those of Isfandiyar, see, e.g., O. Davidson, “Haft Khuan,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, vol. 9, fasc. 5, 516–19, available online (2012).

⁵⁷ Isfandiyar knows he will encounter a redoubtable witch; he comes prepared with a lute and a golden goblet filled with wine. He chooses a romantic spot, then drinks and sings and lures the foul witch to appear “as beauteous as a Turkman maid.” He plies her “with musk-scented wine and made her face a tulip-red.” When the witch is distracted, he firmly bounds her in chains. As she returns to her proper repulsive shape, he kills her. See Warner and Warner, 5:128–31.

⁵⁸ Warner and Warner, 2:52.

⁵⁹ Nizami, *Haft Paykar: A Medieval Persian Romance*, trans. J. S. Meisami, World’s Classics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 192–94, ll. 356–58. “The feast done (all had eaten well), / The ruby winecup fed the soul. / When they had drunk some cups of wine, / Then from their path they banished shame. / When drink had rent shame’s veil, Mahan / Felt longing for that moon grow warm.”

Gurgani's *Vis-u Ramin* stages an unlikely adventure when Vis, married against her will to the much older King Mawbad, orders her nurse to take her place in bed next to the inebriated, sleeping king. Meanwhile, Vis slips out to join her lover Ramin. The anecdote reaches farcical dimensions when the king, despite his drunken state and utter darkness in the room, recognizes that the woman lying next to him is not his young bride. Vis rushes back at his angry cries and takes back her place in bed, calming her husband.⁶⁰ The topos, reaching its most extreme stage in necrophilia, occurs in a Turkish Manichaean and in several Arabic versions. In each example, the man has drunk more than is advisable and cannot resist wine's powerful aphrodisiac effect. This is a widely traveled and oft-encountered story: the theme of necrophilia is already present in the Acts of John with the attempted rape of Drusiana's corpse.⁶¹

Khusraw Parviz and His Wine Metaphor

A group of early *qasidas* and *musammats*, written at the Samanid and Ghaznavid courts by Rudaki (d. ca. AD 940) and Manuchihri (d. ca. AD 1040–1041) relate to my final *Shahnama* example. These early lyrical pieces (or rather the introductory *nasib* to them) propose the literary topos of the female persona of wine. They narrate the legal sacrifice of the “mother of the wine,” guilty of being pregnant from the sun, and the miraculous transformation undergone by the grapes, the daughters born of the sin of the vine, which are “punished,” “imprisoned,” before their impure blood metamorphoses into the purest wine. The poets establish connections between legal sacrifice and punishment for extramarital sex, wine-making imagery, and religious concepts. Scholars have identified the roots of these poems in non-Islamic traditions, such as ancient Iranian myths related to the festival of Mihri-gan.⁶² This autumnal feast was the occasion for Manuchihri's cluster of seven *nasibs*

⁶⁰ Fakhraddin Gurgani, *Vis and Ramin*, trans. D. Davis (Washington, DC: Mage Publishers, 2008), 184–93. This is taken over by Nizami again, this time in his *Khusraw and Shirin masnavi*, when Khusraw, too drunk to notice, is not making love to the courtesan Shakkar but to one of her maidens. And he is caught a second time, when he drinks too much on his wedding night, and Shirin sends her old nurse to take her place next to the drunken groom.

⁶¹ A. Van Tongerloo, “A Nobleman in Trouble or the consequences of drunkenness,” in *Literarische Stoffe und ihre Gestaltung in mittelliranischer Zeit*, ed. D. Durkin-Meisterernst, C. Reck, and D. Weber (Wiesbaden: L. Reichert, 2009), 287–306. Van Tongerloo mentions the possible link with the Acts of John, section 62, at the House of Andronicus in Ephesus. He also found the same story in Ibn-Babuya and in the *Risala* of the Ikhwan al-Safa (no references). Stetkevych notes that the inverted, miraculous, and beneficial transformation is expressed in the Qur'an: according to al-Tabari's commentary, the Qur'anic passage (68:36–38) refers to God's transforming old, pussy-eyed, bleary-eyed mortal women into nubile, clear-eyed heavenly consorts for saved mortal men. The point being not so much that they remain virgins in the garden, but that having born children and grown old on earth, their youth and virginity will be restored to them (Stetkevych, “Intoxication” 43n52, citing al-Tabari, *Jami 'al-Bayan*, 27:184–89).

⁶² D. P. Brookshaw, “Lascivious Vines, Corrupted Virgins and Crimes of Honor: Variations on the Wine Production Myth as Narrated in Early Persian Poetry,” *Iranian Studies* 47, no. 1

on the topic. The Christian flavor, or roots, of some passages are evident. This is also the case with Arabic poets, such as some famous Abū Nuwās lines.⁶³ I suggest here that some of these also recall the even older Dionysian tradition, which I have already mentioned in relation to the lion and the shoemaker's son.⁶⁴ In the Greek tradition, however, the grape's gender is masculine. This opens up interesting contrasts in the Arabic and Persian poetical tradition as the latter refers to the female persona of the vine.⁶⁵ In the case of Khusraw Parviz (r. 590–628) and his wine metaphor, Christian references might be more apposite than Dionysian ones: the literary Khusraw's first wife is the Christian daughter of the Byzantine emperor.⁶⁶

The affair between Shirin and the prince, and future king, Khusraw is a key moment in the Sassanian part of the *Shahnama*.⁶⁷ This ruler's readiness to follow the dictates of ill-advised love against the royal, quasi-sacred marriage traditions and against the council's plea shows that something is very wrong in the empire of Iran. The episode announces the ultimate demise of the dynasty in the short interval of a few decades. The poet has taken particular care in his caustic portrayal of the central scene in the episode: the dramatic clash between the Buzurgan-i Iran and the king about Shirin's entry into the royal family. During this clash, Firdawsi's use of wine imagery is anything but anodyne.

The grandees are in deep shock at the news of the marriage between the Persian king and a harem woman of unknown and unseemly origin. They boycott the king's council and appear only at his express demand. The Mawbad voices their anger and anxiety: "When sire is pure and mother virtueless / Know that no holy son will

(2014): 87–129; W. L. Hanaway, "Blood and Wine: Sacrifice and Celebration in Manuchihri's Wine Poetry," *Iran* 26 (1988): 69–80; W. Clinton, *The Divan of Manuchihri Damghani: A Critical Study* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1972); J. S. Meisami, *Structure and Meaning in Medieval Arabic and Persian Poetry* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2003), 36–37 and 332–33; J. S. Meisami, "Poetic Microcosms: The Persian Qasida to the End of the Twelfth Century," in *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa*, ed. S. Sperl and C. Shackle (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 1:140–41; E. Dennison Ross, "A Qasida by Rudaki," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 58, no. 2 (1926): 213–37.

⁶³ J. Montgomery, "For the Love of a Christian Boy: A Song by Abū Nuwās," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 27, no. 2 (1996): 115–24, at 119 and 123. Montgomery translates: "No, I wish that I were a Eucharist which he is given or the chalice from which he drinks the wine! No, I wish I were the very bubbles [of the wine]!"

⁶⁴ There are recognized similarities between the Christian tradition and the Dionysian cult. By its freedom and allusiveness poetry does not always allow for a clear conclusion on the etymology of a specific image, nor does such research fall within the remit of this chapter.

⁶⁵ *Greek Lyric II*, 234–35, Anacreonta poem 56: "Bringing wine to mortals ... the child of the vine. He keeps it shackled in the fruit of the vine branches so that when men cut the grape-bunches..."

⁶⁶ I note, with due circumspection on the poet's use of reliable historical chronicles as a basis for his *masnavi*'s stories and motifs, the strong influence of Iranian Christians documented during the reign of Khusraw II.

⁶⁷ Warner and Warner, 8:382–422. The two central characters survive for most of the reign of Shirwi, Khusraw's son (Warner and Warner, 9:8–42).

come to birth.”⁶⁸ The king takes a full day to prepare his response. It comes in the form of an allegory directly related to the wine production myth. But even “as he defends the match, he shows little respect for Shirin.... His choice of metaphor is strikingly uncomplimentary and blunt.”⁶⁹ He first has a golden bowl filled with polluted blood passed around the bemused assembly of counselors who turn away in disgust. Next, the bowl is thoroughly cleansed and filled with wine, mixed with musk and rosewater, glowing like the sun. The priest praises the king for transforming what was hellish into something heavenly. Khusraw indicates that the bowl is an allegory for Shirin: soiled and polluted as she might be, through his decision, she is transubstantiated into a pure, heavenly, perfumed substance.

Khusraw might genuinely believe that he has the power to transform a doubtful courtesan into a pure royal wife, in the same way that divine power transforms grape juice into wine. The episode seems to more than nod toward the Dionysian cult in which the blood of the god becomes wine. Firdawsi might also have referred to the Christian miracle in which it is wine that transubstantiates into Christ’s blood. Whatever might have been his direct reference, the author plays with a web of wine-related imagery and symbolism. Recalling the wine-making myth and sexual sin of the vine, he stresses his depiction of beautiful Shirin’s impure nature (a beautiful golden goblet but filled with blood). This image is coarser than the traditional vegetal impurity of the vine and the grapes, her daughters, which produce clean but bland juice, later to be miraculously transformed into wine. But King Khusraw oversteps the mark: his chosen example reaches beyond the social dimension of the affair into religious symbolism and the miraculous. He not only tramples the sacred rules of royal Iranian marriage alliances of which his *grande*es remind him; in his hubris he presents himself as possessing the divine power that enables transubstantiation. This is another form of the eternal temptation plaguing the *Shahnama* kings throughout the centuries. And finally, the king’s comparison of Shirin to perfumed wine is not without literary warning signals: the suggestion is that this woman will hold him in bonds as would intoxicating fumes or a female potion to inebriate and enslave.

Contrary to all the previous examples in this chapter, in this case, wine is not effecting a physical or mental transformation in the characters. Nobody drinks from the golden bowl, but wine’s threatening, even sinister, connotations are evident as the effects of the king’s decision bring the dynasty a step closer to its ultimate crashing end at the hands of a people whose rulers Firdawsi brandmarks as unaware of the proper royal relation to wine.

⁶⁸ Warner and Warner, 8:386–89, 387. For my close reading of the whole episode, see C. van Ruymbeke, “Firdausi’s *Dastan-i Khusrau va Shirin*: Not Much of a Love Story!” in *Shahnama Studies I*, ed. Ch. Melville (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 2006), 125–47. It is worth reiterating that the poem is not concerned with historical reliability. Firdawsi has tampered with events and identities, which he manipulates for the needs of his story line.

⁶⁹ van Ruymbeke, “Firdausi’s *Dastan*,” 137–39.

Conclusion

Several directions present themselves for the study of the pervasive phenomenon of wine-related imagery in medieval and premodern Persian literary production. One should not automatically approach descriptions of wine's consumption and of its effects as poetical challenges addressed to a putative social and religious atmosphere characterized by the condemnation of alcohol; the long shadow of Islam is perhaps too readily described as dogging poetical creations in the large area under Islamic influence. In such a context, wine imagery also highlights the patrons' provocative decisions to encourage such poetical pieces. This point of view emphasizes the intellectual and social impact of poetry in a game of influence against what is imagined as the periods' ubiquitous religious and political censure under the overarching influence of Islam.

We might also consider the phenomenon through a different lens: that of its similarities and ties to a cluster of literary topoi in other traditions across time and cultural divides. This emphasizes the unquenchable continuation and cross-pollination of literary, historical and religious themes and images. Scholars of Persian literature have examined the relationship between this wine imagery and ritualistic or royal pre-Islamic references that have reached us. They have approached the imagery through the prism of ancient Iranian myths and religion.⁷⁰ Similarities with rich neighboring literary traditions, in particular Greco-Roman classical antiquity, but also the Hebrew and pre-Islamic Arabic worlds, also provide clues to the origins of topoi related to wine.⁷¹ The wine imagery's ties to therapeutic, theological, mystical, legal, ritual, and cultural realities in ever-fluctuating artistic spheres also provide enlightening data.

This chapter builds on research in all these directions and examines several hitherto-unstudied clusters of wine references linked to royalty and sex in Firdawsi's *Shahnama*, a monumental *masnavi* crafted with enormous care and poetical mastery. It relates stories from the distant royal Iranian past for audiences exposed to a medieval Islamic reality. It is my hypothesis that Firdawsi's wine references woven into the long and complicated *Shahnama* narrative are too numerous not to be meaningful; I understand many of them as representing one facet of imperial Iran, perhaps specifically including the notion of *farr*, which was lost with the establishment of foreign rulers and their Islamic faith. Firdawsi's references are rarely pointed, never ex-

⁷⁰ T. Daryaei, "Food Purity and Pollution: Zoroastrian Views on the Eating Habits of Others," *Iranian Studies* 45, no. 2 (2012): 229–42; E. Yarshater, "The Theme of Wine-Drinking and the Concept of the Beloved in Early Persian Poetry," *Studia Iranica*, no. 13 (1960): 43–53, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1595239>; A. S. Melikian Chirwani, "From the Royal Boat to the Beggar's Bowl," *Islamic Art* (New York: Genes-New York, 1991), 4:3–111; A. S. Melikian-Chirwani, "The Wine-Bull and the Magian Master," in "Recurrent Patterns in Iranian Religion from Mazdism to Sufism," ed. R. Gyselen, special issue, *Studia Iranica*, cahier 11 (1992): 101–34.

⁷¹ Stetkevych, "Intoxication and Immorality."

plained, and not commented on, but they are present in filigree, as it were: often ambiguous, they relate to a wealth of different sources and carry a web of meanings and symbolism.

The present chapter's usefulness partly lies in its expansion of our knowledge of the lyrical poetry's use of wine imagery. Firdawsi's references to wine do not develop wine imagery as do the lyrical poets, but they illustrate how this early Persian *masnavi* uses the pharmacological attributes of wine as indispensable to the narrative progression. My examination of the *masnavi*'s references to wine is not concerned with documenting the pre-Islamic reality of wine consumption.⁷² I do not conjecture whether these literary references provide information on the messy and defiant "lived practice" in medieval and premodern courts that are documented in historical sources, or whether these literary *bazm* depictions function as an example for the target audience, encouraging their consumption of the psychoactive beverage. Nor do I wish to posit a direct chain of influences for one culture into another. The similarities documented here at most suggest the likelihood of a common and unidentified source or tradition culled by different literary cultures, linking the legendary past of Iranian dynasties to the knowledge and use of wine's physical and mental effects.

The chapter remains in the field of literary studies, yielding data on the poet's awareness of an extensive—literary or otherwise—tradition related to wine imagery. It loads our literary table with evidence of the reality of numerous points of contact with the literature of classical antiquity. It documents how the semantics of medieval Persian poetical wine imagery refer to ancient Iranian roots, which are synthesized with Classical Greek and Roman motifs and interlaced with Islamic references. The focus of the research is concerned with the way in which the *masnavi* uses and illustrates the success of the close-knit triangle of wine, royalty, and sex in the narrative, as a leitmotiv and a literary signal for the story line.

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⁷² For an example of this approach, see M. A. Newid, "Wenn die Liebe trunken macht—Bemerkungen zum Wein in der persischen Literatur," in *Wine Culture in Iran and Beyond*, ed. B. G. Fragner, R. Kauz, and F. Schwartz (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie Der Wissenschaften, 2014), 217, 277–309, esp. 277–97.

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Wine and the Pleasures of Delhi in Urdu Court Poetry*

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The classical Persian poet Farrukhī Sistānī (d. 1037 or 1038) declares in a *qasida*, “Although wine is forbidden, I believe that it becomes licit for lovers when spring arrives.”¹ Courtly poems on the Persian spring festival of Nauroz in the *bahāriyya* genre often contain references to wine and drinking. After all, the first grapevine shoots bloom with the advent of spring, and celebrations of the new season would not be complete without drinking wine, even if in a symbolic act. According to J. T. P. de Bruijn, who explains in the context of the *ghazal*, the occasion for wine drinking “is a convivial gathering where the poet indulges in wine-drinking with his friends. Usually, when he calls out to the cup-bearer for a drink, a motivation is added. This may be no more than the celebration of the coming of spring, which one cannot enjoy without wine.”² Many of the classical Persian poetic conventions were carried over into early Urdu poetry, and as one would expect, the imagery of wine drinking in the spring season was a familiar trope. The Persianate features of classical Urdu poetry mainly comprised Persian poetic forms, genres, and themes, but as with other Persianate literatures, such as Ottoman Turkish, Urdu poetry also had a distinctive identity that was connected to a particular place and time. There was no separate genre of wine poetry, i.e., *khamriyya*, as such in this tradition, but a variety of poems, chiefly the *qasida*, *ghazal*, and *masnavi* forms, contain oenophilic references, especially in the early Urdu poetry of North India and the Deccan.³ As with Persian poetic culture, the occasion of the convivial gathering, *bazm*, *mahfil*, or *majlis*, provides the ideal setting for the enactment of serving and drinking wine, whether it be mystical or courtly, metaphorical or real. This concept takes on a special valence in eighteenth-century Urdu poetry, as the idea of pleasure was defined by the oft-used terms *‘aish* and *‘ishrat*, but also connoted an excess of enjoyment to the point of degeneracy. I discuss this topic in the context of the poetry of Shaikh Zuhūruddīn Shāh Hātim (1699/1700–1783), a central figure in early eighteenth-century Urdu literary culture.

* I am grateful to C. M. Naim and Hajnalka Kovacs for their comments and suggestions on an earlier draft of this paper.

¹ *Agarchib bādab harām ast zann baram kib magar / balāl gardad bar ‘āshiqān bi-vaqt-i bahār*. The entire poem is available at <https://ganjoor.net/farrokh/divanf/ghasidef/sh26/>.

² J. T. P. de Bruijn, *Persian Sufi Poetry: An Introduction to the Mystical Use of Classical Persian Poems* (Richmond, UK: Curzon, 1997), 65.

³ Wine imagery was used by both Sufi and courtly Urdu poets; an example of the former is Mir Dard (d. 1785) and of the latter Mir Taqi Mir (d. 1810), both younger contemporaries of Hātim.

Hātīm was a poet in the capital Delhi of the fast-shrinking Mughal Empire, ruled by Muhammad Shāh (r. 1719–1748), known as Rangilā (colorful rake).⁴ He is best remembered for his participation in a historical move to purge the Rekhta language—a name for early Urdu—of Indic elements in favor of a more Persianized register. But so great was the attachment to the older language, which was the everyday speech of the people of Delhi and northern India, that even in his new collection of poems that he called *Divān-zāda* (*Divān's* offspring) put together in 1755–1756, he retained some poems in their original version.⁵ Many of Hātīm's *ghazals* are replete with *khamriyya* imagery, and in their straightforward style they eschew the complex imagery of the “fresh style” (*tāzahgū'i*) that was the rage in Indo-Persian poetry.⁶ In his study of eighteenth-century Urdu literary culture in North India, Ishrat Haque writes that “revivalist and puritanical teachings notwithstanding, [it] was an age of eclecticism and cultural synthesis.” He goes on to make connections between social realities and the production of literary texts: “Although Urdu poetry largely mirrors contemporary Muslim beliefs, social prejudices and predilections, it also incorporates varied aspects of cultural life commonly shared by Hindus and Muslims. The Urdu poetry of the period, perhaps more than any other single source, reflects the socio-cultural assimilation of the last two centuries. It emerged both as an instrument as well as symbol of the fruition of Indo-Islamic culture in the eighteenth century.”⁷ Therefore, although spring was associated with wine in Persian culture, spring in the Indian context meant the monsoon season, “when after weeks of parching heat, rain falls torrentially and every green thing grows luxuriantly, and an atmosphere of relief and joy infects everyone. This season, and the nights of the full moon, are regularly associated in Urdu poetry with wine drink-

⁴ See Walter Hakala's article for a discussion of eighteenth-century Urdu literary culture of this period in the context of Hātīm's poetry, “A Sultan in the Realm of Passion: Coffee in Eighteenth-Century Delhi,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 47, no. 4 (2014): 371–88. Muhammad Sadiq writes that “he participated in the reckless gaiety that marked Muhammad Shah's court,” in *A History of Urdu Literature*, 2nd ed. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984), 102. See also Nabi Hadi who mentions Hātīm's transformation from a rake to a more sober and mystically minded person, in *Dictionary of Indo-Persian Literature* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi Centre for the Arts, 1995), 231. The fact that Hātīm's name was actually pronounced “Hātām” by himself and his contemporaries is mentioned by C. M. Naim, *Zikr-i Mir: The Autobiography of the Eighteenth Century Mughal Poet Mir Muhammad Taqi 'Mir' (1723–1810)* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 178.

⁵ The story of this strange *divān* is analyzed by Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, *Early Urdu Literary Culture and History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 152–54; Purnima Dhavan and Heidi Pauwels, “Mirza Hatim, Vali Dakhani, and the Crafting of Literary Urdu” (forthcoming). Hātīm's poems have been published as *Divān-zāda*, ed. ‘Abd al-Haq (New Delhi: National Mission for Manuscripts, 2011). Citations of poems are from this edition. An earlier edition was edited by Ghulām Husain Zulfikār (Lahore: Maktabah Khayābān-i Adab, 1975).

⁶ Although Hātīm's language is seemingly simple and accessible today, in classical Urdu literary culture he was connected with the highly metaphoric *ihām* poetry, for which see Naim, *Zikr-i Mir*, 179, 183; and Sadiq, *History of Urdu Literature*, 96–98, 100–1.

⁷ Ishrat Haque, *Glimpses of Mughal Society and Culture: A Study Based on Urdu Literature in the 2nd Half of the 18th Century* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing, 1992), 126.

ing.”⁸ The blending of Persian and Indian poetic tropes and aesthetics gave rise to innovations in the poetry of early Urdu poets. Two poems from Hātim’s old *divān*, introduced and analyzed in this chapter, are of direct relevance to the broader genre of wine poetry. One of the poems is the short *Sāqīnāma* (Book of the *sāqī*) in the *masnavī* form; the second is the longer *Bahariyyah: Bazm-i ‘isbrat* (Spring poem: Assembly of pleasure), also a *masnavī*.

The *sāqīnāma* genre enjoyed great popularity in the early modern period, continuing a literary phenomenon of the seventeenth century across Persianate societies. In the context of classical Persian literature, in the words of de Bruijn, the genre often has a “melancholy note when the poet seeks comfort in intoxication for the pain caused by his love, for the wrongs afflicted by the World or the inexorable passing of time. Even in secular poems, wine therefore may adopt the figurative meaning of a means of escape from a cruel reality into the realm of hope and illusions about the fulfillment of love.”⁹ This use of the address to the *sāqī* was a common organizing device to signal the conclusion of different sections of a longer narrative work that was used by the classical poets Nizāmi Ganjavi (d. 1209) and Amir Khusrau Dihlavi (d. 1325). Paul Losensky argues that it “is protean, a genre capable of taking on a wide range of forms—a structural marker in an extended narrative, an independent poem of self-transformation in rhymed couplets, a celebration of mystical drunkenness in stanzas—and of assimilating other thematic genres.”¹⁰ It became an especially malleable genre in the hands of poets of the Mughal, Safavid, and Ottoman courts. Early Urdu poets continued to use the genres that were prominent in Mughal Persian poetry even as they transformed them in new ways. Thus, in his *sāqīnāma* Hātim employs all the conventional tropes of the genre in his poem, but in essence it is a more religious than mystical work. The Urdu *sāqīnāma* is a neglected subject that requires detailed study, but it is a genre that remained popular until the twentieth century, as exemplified by the poems of Muhammad Iqbāl (d. 1938) and Hafiz Jālandhārī (d. 1982).

Hātim’s *sāqīnāma* is a sixty-line poem in the *mutaqārib* meter, which is common to many narrative *masnavīs*. In the first eight lines the poet calls upon God as the *sāqī*, invoking him as the qibla and Ka‘ba of wine drinkers; both the prophet Muhammad and his son-in-law, the revered caliph and imam ‘Alī, have drunk this wine. Hātim craves to be among such imbibers and asks the *sāqī* to serve him draughts of the wine of love:

⁸ Ralph Russell and Khurshidul Islam, *Three Mughal Poets: Mir, Sauda, Mir Hasan* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1968), 198. Also see Sunil Sharma, “The Spring of Hindustan’: Love and War in the Monsoon in Indo-Persian Poetry,” ed. Imke Rajamani, Margrit Pernau, and Katherine Butler Schofield *Monsoon Feelings: A History of Emotions in the Rain* (New Delhi: Niyogi Books, 2018).

⁹ de Bruijn, *Persian Sufi Poetry*, 65.

¹⁰ Paul Losensky, “Sāqī-nāma,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, 2016; also see Sunil Sharma, “Hāfiz’s Sāqīnāmāh: The Genesis and Transformation of a Classical Poetic Genre,” *Persica* (2003): 75–83.

*mujhe maikashoñ bich nāmī karo
 merī bazm ko bazm-i jāmi karo
 tere āb-i kausar kā pyāsā hūñ mainī
 terī mai ke rakhne kā kāsā hūñ mainī
 pilā mujhko apnī muhabbat ki mai
 karam se do-se jāam de pai-ba-pai
 kih phir mujhko pine ki hājat na ho
 kisū ghair se phir samājat na ho¹¹*

Make me renowned among drunkards,
 make my assembly a drinking party.
 I am thirsty for your water of Kausar [the river of paradise],
 I am the cup to hold your wine.
 Give me the wine of love to drink;
 kindly give me two or three drinks in succession,
 so that I no longer have need to drink,
 and I don't get tainted by strangers.

In the first line, the poet puns on the word *jāmi*, which connotes both the cup and the classical Persian poet-mystic ‘Abd al-Rahmān Jāmi (d. 1492). The most frequent word he uses for wine is *mai*, but Hātim also uses *mul* once, and *dārū*, which to this day is the colloquial word for alcohol. He ruminates on the special qualities of the assembly and the wine that can burn the drinker.¹² The assembly (*bazm*) is the world itself, where there is a constant battle with the intellect (‘*aql*). In this strife the poet rejects the authority of both the morality police (*muhtasib*) and the ascetic (*zāhid*), two stock figures in classical Persian poetry who are in opposition to the poet-lover, instead affirming his reverence for the tavern elder, *pīr-i mughān*.¹³ He spurns the mosque and hypocritical prayers (*riyā ki namāz*), asserting that his entire religious life revolves around wine drinking and the tavern. But there is also an assembly inside his body (*tan ki mahfil*), where a *pari* is hidden within the glass of his heart (*pari hai chhipi shishab-yi dil ke bich*), an old favorite in mystical poetry.¹⁴ Rather than finding an escape from the world, Hātim wants everyone to celebrate life by being drunk and rowdy (*machāo har ek bazm meñ hā o hū*) from the wine of oneness (*mai-yi vabdat*) with him.¹⁵ The drunkard with his antinomian ways was a figure most frequently encountered in the persona of the poet-lover in the Persian and Persianate *ghazal*, but instead of directing his devotion to an ambiguous beloved as in the love lyric, in this wine poem Hātim’s object of devotion is solely divine.

¹¹ Hātim, *Dīvānzādab*, 406.

¹² *Hai is bazm ki is qadar tund mai / pi’e so kabe, jal ga’e, jal ga’e*: Hātim, *Dīvānzādab*, 407.

¹³ Among classical Persian poets, Hāfiz Shīrāzi (d. 1390) uses the trope of the poet-lover in conflict with a range of people who represent political and moral authority and orthodox Islam most frequently. See Ehsan Yarshater, “Hāfez. i. An overview”, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition.

¹⁴ Annemarie Schimmel, *A Two-Colored Brocade: The Imagery of Persian Poetry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 278.

¹⁵ Hātim, *Dīvānzādab*, 408.

Hātim's other work, *Bazm-i 'isbrat*, composed in AH 1147/1734, is a long topical poem in the *masnavi* form about the celebration of spring and the festival of Holi in Mughal Delhi. It provides a somewhat novel use of the wine topos and could be considered a variation on the more formulaic *sāqīnāma*. Along with the address to the *sāqī*, the poem also has some features of the spring poem in a panegyric, as well as the city poem with topographical descriptions. An obvious influence on Hātim would have been the *Sāqīnāma* of the poet Zuhūrī Turshizī (d. 1615), whose much longer poem continued to be a best seller in eighteenth-century Persianate literary cultures.¹⁶ *Bazm-i 'isbrat* is a poem comprising 357 lines in the *hazaj* meter that was used for romantic narratives. It is divided into the following sections, with Persian title headings:

1. Praise of god and oneness (*hamd o taubīd*)
2. Preface (*tambīd*)
3. Beginning (*āghāz-i sukhan*)
4. Description of Shahjahanabad Delhi (*vasf-i Shāhjahānābād Dehlī*)
5. Description of the king (*vasf-i bādsbāh*)
6. Imperative to gather friends (*qasamiyya dar jam' namūdan-i dūstān*)
7. Description of the preparation for the garden (*vasf-i tayyārī-yi bāgh*)
8. Going to the garden and words with the morality police (*raftan ba-bāgh o sukhan ba-muhtasib*)
9. Reaching the garden and an exchange between the rose and rosiness (*rasidan ba-bāgh o munāzirah-yi gul o gulrang*)
10. Description of the assembly of song and music (*vasf-i bazm o naghma o āhang*)
11. Description of Holi (*vasf-i holī*)
12. Description of light (*vasf-i rausbnī*)
13. [Description of dance (*vasf-i raqs*)]
14. [Conclusion (*khātima*)]¹⁷

In the opening section in praise of God, as the poet asks his heart to be filled with divine light and his language with force, he defines the ambit of the assembly that he is setting up as the world, *bazm-i jahān*, rather than a more restricted private space. Further, he beseeches God, who in this poem, too, takes on the role of *sāqī*, to give the poet a wineglass of love (*jām-i muhabbat*) and make him experience the intoxication caused by that love (*nasbe meñ is qadar kar mast o sarshār*).¹⁸ The *sāqī* is explicitly

¹⁶ On the influence of Zuhūrī's work, see Losensky, "Sāqī-nāma"; and Sunil Sharma, "The City of Beauties in the Indo-Persian Poetic Landscape," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24, no. 2 (2004): 74–75; for Urdu poetry on the cityscape, see Sunil Sharma, "Fā'iz Dihlavi's Female-Centered Poems and the Representation of Public Life in Late Mughal Society," in *Affect, Emotion, and Subjectivity in Early Modern Muslim Empires: New Studies in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Art and Culture*, ed. Kishwar Rizvi (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 168–84.

¹⁷ The last two sections are not extant.

¹⁸ Hātim, *Divān-zādah*, 416–17.

addressed at the end of each section of the poem. In the third section, the poet describes the discerning reader of poetry and indulges in the usual self-praise. At the end of this section, he begs the *sāqī*, who is both a wine server and muse, for both a drink and a showing of the spectacle of India (*tamāshā hind kā mujh ko dikhā jā*).¹⁹ The two spaces, assembly of the world and spectacle of India, are linked in a metonymic relationship in which society collectively represents a *bazm*, or even a performance as the word *tamāshā* implies, which can be experienced through wine drinking.

In the next section Hātim describes the joyful cityscape of Shahjahanabad, or the new Delhi of that time that was built under the emperor Shāh Jahān (r. 1628–1658). The praise of this rose garden (*gulistān*) that is a land of beauty (*dīyār-i husn*) is described in the conventional language of the celebratory *shabrāshob* poem.²⁰ Only a cosmopolitan and discerning individual, such as his reader, can enjoy the pleasures of this land:

*savād-i hind kā jis ko mazā hai
vo lizzat se jahān ki āshmā hai
guloñ ke kām meñ kabhi hai bulbul
yahi kashmīr hai aur yeh hī kābul
voh beshak vaqt kā shāb-i jahān hai
jo ko'ī mutavattin-i hindūstān hai*²¹

Those who have a taste for the blackness/inhabitation of India,
he is acquainted with the enjoyment of the world
The nightingale whispers to the roses,
“This is Kashmir and this is Kabul!”
He who is a resident of India
is the king of the world of the age.

Kashmir and Kabul in the Mughal imagination were celebrated for their paradise-like qualities and eternal spring. The reference to “king of the world” (*shāb-i jahān*) is also a reference to the founder of the new city, the emperor Shāh Jahān. In the concluding lines of this section, Hātim exhorts the *sāqī* not to put on so many airs but to accept him in the assembly of kings (*shahān ki bazm*), where he can get drunk. The following brief section is a bombastic panegyric to the then-current ruler Muhammad Shāh who is both brave and generous. This is a requisite part in a courtly poem, and the poet tells himself not to be greedy for the sultan’s favor, but rather turn to god for everything. He then asks the *sāqī*, in a somewhat impatient tone, to pour a drink and prepare for the assembly of friends. Hātim seems eager to be set free to view the outside world, access to which is controlled by following the proper protocol in the inner courtly space.

Leaving behind the emperor’s private presence, in the next section the poet takes us outdoors. He takes in the pleasures of nature and the season: it is spring (*babār*),

¹⁹ Hātim, *Divānzādah*, 418.

²⁰ This poetic genre is discussed in Sharma, “City of Beauties,” 74–77.

²¹ Hātim, *Divānzādah*, 419.

and the nightingale is singing in full form before the rose, while the *tesū* and *sarson* are in bloom in the month of *phāgun*. This description of the spring season is a Persianate literary construction, combining the stock imagery of spring from both Persian and Indic poetry. The poet sends letters to his friends inviting them to his assembly, this time he used the variant *bazm-i ʿaish*. The guests do not need much encouragement and set off towards the garden like “beggars in the street of the tavern” (*gadāʿe kūchal-i maikhāna*), while the poet asks the *sāqī*, now called “the door-man of the world’s garden” (*jahān ke bāgh ke darbān*), for permission to join the party in the sylvan setting. In this long section, the preparation of the garden for the festivities involves the arraying of all sorts of flowers, and again Hātim has a chance to combine floral varieties of the Persian and Indian worlds. When everything is ready, he urges the *sāqī* not to be negligent about serving wine.

In the next section of the poem, the poet’s friends collect the accoutrements for a festive gathering, such as alluring courtesans (*tavāʾif*), Portuguese wine (*sharāb-i portugālī*), *pān*, rosewater, and saffron. The poet declares that it is time for pleasure, not for piety:

*tū kar abrak gulāl aurang kī sair
bbulā dil se kbiyāl-i kaʿba o dair
kih yeh vaqt-i musalmānī nahīn hai
phir aisi āj bāth ānī nahīn hai*

Enjoy the talc, red powder, canopy,
forget about the Kaʿba and monastery.
This is not the time to be religious,
for today will not come again.²²

But as they are making their way to the garden, the morality police in the form of the *muhtasib* suddenly appears to put an end to any plans that people have about enjoying themselves outdoors. While everyone becomes intimidated by these threats, the poet is the only one who challenges the figure of authority, telling him:

*agar tujh ko shariʿat par nazar hai
haqiqat se valekin be-khabar hai
qulūb al-muʿminīn ʿarsh-i khudā hai
tujhe kab ʿarsh kā dhānā ravā hai
merā dil todnā tujh ko ba-jā nahīn
yeh minā lāʾiq-i sang-i jafā nahīn*²³

You may be concerned about the sharia,
but you are clueless about the truth/reality.
The hearts of believers are the throne of god;
since when can you topple the throne?
It is not proper for you to break my heart,
this wine cup is not worthy of this cruelty.

²² Hātim, *Divānzādah*, 424.

²³ Hātim, *Divānzādah*, 425.

Exposing his hypocrisy and illegitimate stance, the poet urges the *muhtasib* to have a drink with them for the sake of conviviality, and the official does so in a sheepish manner!

The party then begins with the lovers and wine bibbers now in the right mood, enhanced by musicians playing different instruments. This is followed by the actual *tamāshā*, playing Holi by all kinds of lovers and beloveds in a frenzy of revelry, where the intellect (*‘aql*) and sobriety (*hosli*) are the enemies of fun and frivolity.²⁴ Watching the female revelers who are intoxicated and intoxicating, day turns to night. This is the most detailed section of the poem and includes lyrical ethnographic descriptions of the way the festival was celebrated in Delhi. Night brings about another kind of joy: through the lighting of lamps, *chirāghān*, a popular practice in Mughal and Safavid societies on festive occasions. As the poet calls upon the *sāqī* for another drink, the poem comes to an abrupt end. Apparently, the next two sections, on the dancing at the festival and the conclusion were already lost in the eighteenth century.²⁵ The curtain comes down as the revelry is at the height of merriment and drunkenness, making the reader feel like a guest who leaves a party early.

In the *Bazm-i ‘isbrat*, “wine, music, and love helps the poet-mystic achieve an ecstatic state and he is “not only a lover but also a *rind*—a word in which the senses of drunkard, happy-go-lucky, profligate, and rake are all present.”²⁶ The poet shares this persona with the protagonist of the *ghazal*, where, as was mentioned earlier, he is more of a lover. For the sake of comparison to the long wine poems, let us turn to a short *ghazal* by Hātim that has the rhyming word *sharāb* (wine):

sāqī mujhe khumār satā’e hai lā sharāb
martā hūn tishmagī se ay zālim pilā sharāb
muddat se ārzū hai kbudā voh ghadi kare
ham tum pī’eñ jo mīlke kabīñ ek jā sharāb
masrab meñ to durust kharābatīyon ke hai
mazhab meñ zābidoñ ke nabiñ gar ravā sharāb
sāqī ke ta’īñ bulā’o utā do tabīb ko
mastoñ ke hai maraz kī jahāñ meñ davā sharāb
be-rū-ye yār o mutrib o abr o bahār o bāgh
*Hātim ke ta’īñ kabhī nah pilā’e khudā sharāb*²⁷

Sāqī, bring wine, I am bothered by a hangover.
 I am dying of thirst, o tyrant, let me drink wine.
 For a long while I hoped that god would bring that time
 when you and I would drink wine together somewhere.

²⁴ For a Holi poem by Hātim’s contemporary, see Sharma, “Fā’iz Dihlavi’s Female-Centered Poems,” 173. Haque, *Glimpses*, on festivals, 127–29.

²⁵ Apparently, the Rampur manuscript has a note in the poet’s hand dated 1188/1774 stating that the last pages of the poem were lost in the tumult following the sack of Delhi by the Afghan Ahmad Shāh Durrāni between 1748 and 1752 and asks anyone with a complete copy of his poem to send it to him. Hātim, *Divānẓādah*, 432.

²⁶ Russell and Islam, *Three Mughal Poets*, 195.

²⁷ Hātim, *Divānẓādah*, 146.

Although wine is not permissible in the creed of ascetics,
 it is correct practice for those who haunt taverns.
 Summon the *sāqī* and send the physician away:
 wine is the medicine for drunkards in the world.
 Without the beloved's face, minstrel, cloud, spring and garden,
 may god never have Hātim drink wine.

In this poem, it is not entirely clear whether the *sāqī* and the beloved are different people or the same. Love, wine, music, the rainy spring season, and garden are all brought into the picture. The garden was a particularly important space for Hātim, and his *divān* includes two poems, also with five lines each, with the rhyming word *bāgh* but without any mention of wine; the first lines are *chalo ab sair ko ay gulrukhān* *bāgh* / *kib phir ham tum kabān aur phir kabān bāgh* (come for a stroll in the garden, O beauties, for when will you and I be together again, and when the garden), and *phūlā hai terā busn kā ay gul-azār bāgh* / *kartā hai tujh ūpar zar-i gul ko nisār bāgh* (the garden of your beauty has bloomed, o rosy cheeked one; the garden sacrifices the golden stamina of flowers over you).²⁸ It seems that for Hātim the garden was more than a metaphor and a stock setting; rather, it was an actual locus of pleasure and enjoyment.

Two years later Hātim wrote a short poem on drinking coffee—and also one on tobacco and the hooka—a beverage he calls “the ingredient of every assembly” (*hai bazm-i aish kā sāmān qabva*), using much of the same imagery as in wine poetry. While this beverage was served in various coffeehouses in Delhi, as attested by historical sources, there is little evidence of wine being sold publicly, at least as a socially acceptable practice. Walter Hakala writes, “In reading Urdu poetry historically, any determinations regarding a material basis underlying the poet must contend with what some have argued to be an independent rhetorical universe that resists the logic of the everyday.” For instance, Shāh Hātim's poem on coffee culture in Delhi “cannot in and of itself be read as a transparent and comprehensive document of the modes of elite consumption of eighteenth-century Delhi.”²⁹ In weighing the tension between representation and reality, Losensky explains that “ample historical evidence shows that the depiction of transcendental intoxication was based not just on poetic symbolism, but on real social and body experiences.”³⁰ Therefore, the poetic trope of wine drinking was a formulaic device, but it also served as a way to comment on social practices and challenge figures of authority, as evidenced in this *ghazal* by Hātim:

shaikh tū to murid-i hasti hai
ma'i-ye ghaflat kī tujh ko masti hai
tauf-i dil chhod jā'e ka'ba ko
baskih fitrat meñ teri pasti hai

²⁸ Hātim, *Divānzādah*, 196.

²⁹ Hakala, “Sultan in the Realm of Passion,” 378.

³⁰ Paul Losensky, “Vintages of the *Sāqī-nāma*: Fermenting and Blending the Cupbearer's Song in the Sixteenth Century,” *Iranian Studies* 47 (2014): 157.

*kyoñ chadbe bai gadbe gadbe ūpar
 terī dadbi ko khalq bansti bai
 terī to jān mere mazhab meñ
 dil-parasti khudā-parasti bai
 be-khud is daur meñ haiñ sab Hātim
 in dinon kyā sharāb sasti hai?*³¹

Shaikh, you are the disciple of life,
 you are intoxicated on the wine of unawareness.
 Leaving the circumambulation of the heart, you go off to the Ka‘ba,
 so base are you in your nature.
 You ass, why do you ride a donkey?
 People laugh at your beard.
 You are focused on my religion,
 heart worship is God worship.
 Everyone is out of their senses in this age,
 Hātim, is wine cheap these days?

There is no beloved, actual or implied, in this *ghazal*, nor a *sāqī*, but the reference to intoxication is ironic because Hātim thinks that despicable people like the shaikh are drunk in the wrong sense of the word, without imbibing wine.

In the age of Muhammad Shāh, a visitor to Delhi in 1741 from the Deccan, Dargāh Quli Khān, was struck by the almost hedonistic quality of life in the city, just two years after the devastating raid by the Iranian ruler, Nādir Shāh. Dargāh Quli Khān’s work, *Muraqqa‘-i Dihlī* (Album of Delhi) describes celebrations at Sufi shrines, graves of poets, and in private assemblies where nobles, musicians, singers, and courtesans came together. With respect to the pleasure parties of the nobleman Latif Khān, himself a singer, the author says that the musical soirees were exclusive and much talked about. The intoxication is not merely from the heady company, but it would seem that “he is continuously in a deep intoxication, and like the cup in the service of the enamel he is engaged with his companions; and in company he recites colorful poetry.”³² The presence of the genteel host, who was a member of the *asbrāf* class, is necessary for the assembly to maintain a respectable air. The British traveler John Henry Grose visiting India in the 1750s noted that Muslims preferred cordials and drams, taking brandy to refresh themselves: “They manage, however, with so much discretion and reserve in this article, that even those who have the character of the greatest drinkers among them, are never seen, in public, in the indecent order caused by this vice, which is not only fatal to their reputation, but sometimes precipitates their governors and great men into a dangerous abuse of

³¹ Hātim, *Divānzādah*, 300.

³² *Muraqqa‘-yi Dihlī*, ed. Nūr al-Hasan Ansāri (Delhi: Shu‘bah-yi Urdū, Dihlī Yünivarsiti, 1982), 52. For a survey on the topic of alcohol consumption in India from ancient times to the medieval period, see James McHugh, “Alcohol in Pre-Modern South Asia,” *Intoxicating Affairs: A History of Alcohol and Drugs in South Asia*, ed. Harald Fischer-Tiné and Jana Tschurennev (London: Routledge, 2014), 29–44.

their power.”³³ Therefore, while drinking wine and other alcohol in the company of respectable people seems to have been a genteel practice, there was apparently a great deal of anxiety about drinking in public at this time.

Hātim’s younger contemporary, the Urdu poet Fā’iz, in a poem on a fair held at the shrine of the Sufi saint Qutbuddin Bakhtiyār Kākī curses the rowdy *bhāng* imbibers who become intoxicated and destroy the serenity of the public gathering. His tone is contemptuous of the behavior of the rabble (*razal*):

*Pa-yi qada sab pade haiñ is jā par
la’nat allāh uke ghaughā par
aur jānib meñ hai sharāb-farosh
mast is jā haiñ karte josh o kharosh
lāt mukki bhī hotī hai aksar
ho rabeñ vāñ fasād bhī dar par*³⁴

On one side are the [*bhāng*] drinkers ready for a sip,
God’s curse on their rowdiness.
On the other side is the wine seller,
and drunkards making a racket.
Often they all come to blows,
creating many a sedition there.

Drinking in public was the pastime of individuals from the dregs of Mughal society and thus an antisocial activity. In a poem offering advice on a variety of subjects from the right clothes to flirting to young men in Delhi, an older contemporary poet Shāh Mubārak Ābrū (d. 1733) warns about the danger of this activity and the thin line between pleasure and excess:

*ghair subbat milke tu mat pī sharāb
ādmī is tarah hotā hai kharāb
sādab-rū jab mast aur sarshār ho
be-takalluf har kisi se yād ho
tab to nahīñ rahī hai ma’shūq kī shān
is se sārā shabar ho hai bad-gumān
sab se kabte haiñ khvār o muhtazal
ho hai bad-nāmi meñ nām uskā masāl*³⁵

Don’t drink wine in the company of strangers.
A man is ruined in this way.
When a beardless boy becomes drunk
he is talked about freely by everyone.
Then the beloved is left with no dignity,

³³ Quoted in Muhammad Umar, *Urban Culture in Northern India During the Eighteenth Century* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2001), 243. The author also discusses the culture of wine drinking in the seventeenth century.

³⁴ Fā’iz *Dihlavi aur Divān-i Fā’iz*, ed. Sayyid Mas’ūd Hasan Rizvi (Aligarh: Anjuman-i Taraqqi-yi Urdū, Hind, 1965), 216.

³⁵ *Divān-i Ābrū*, ed. Muhammad Hasan (New Delhi: Taraqqi-yi Urdū Byūro, 1990), 306.

the whole city thinks ill of him.
 He is called lowly and degenerate by all;
 his name becomes an example of infamy.

Wine was actually meant to be enjoyed with friends in a private setting since one had to be mindful of the bounds of propriety and comportment (*adab*). In a *qasīda* the poet Muhammad Rafi^c Saudā (d. 1781) describes an Id celebration at the Awadh court where “the muhtasib is seen embracing wine-bibbers / While the zahid does not mind if a few drops fall on his clothes.”³⁶ Is this purely a literary trope? Haque explains this in the historical context, “Sauda’s uninhibited account of the merry making and wine drinking on festive occasions reflects the lifestyle of the upper classes wholly in defiance of religious prohibition against wine drinking. Those responsible for guarding the public morals turn their backs when it comes to censoring the morals of the rich.”³⁷ In the end, one cannot divorce the questions of the wine as poetic imagery and the social act of wine drinking for they are connected at some level because literary texts and social practices are frequently in a dialogic relationship.

In Hātim’s poem, *Bazm-e ‘ishrat*, composed when he was a young man, the experience of courtly pleasure is connected to established norms of comportment that were in need of reaffirmation at a historical moment when various forms of urban entertainment and pleasure pastimes opened up to new groups of people. The wine-drinking assembly was in danger of becoming cheapened, along with the danger of immorality and disorder taking over that went against all Persianate ideas of courtly behavior. Even as Hātim leads people out of the private assembly of the emperor to an outdoor space for the celebration of a spring, thus opening up the realm of pleasure and enjoyment of both Nauroz and Holi, to people outside the inner circle, he wants the participants not to forget that the same rules apply in the outside spaces as inside. The world may be a big party, but the celebration is not a carnival by any means.³⁸ In his larger poetic oeuvre, Hātim used the imagery of wine extensively due to its multivalent associations. Under the influence of early Mughal Persian poets, he composed a *sāqīnāma*, and then further exploited the possibilities that this genre offered to write a poem that was not purely metaphorical or mystical but more enmeshed in the social life of eighteenth-century Delhi.

³⁶ Quoted in Haque, *Glimpses*, 126.

³⁷ Haque, *Glimpses*, 123.

³⁸ The Indian festival of Holi is described as a carnival in a Persian satire composed by Ashraf Māzandarāni in the seventeenth century, for which see Sunil Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia: Persian Poetry in an Indian Court* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), 174–76.

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Part 5
Pleasure, Transgression
and Religion

Poetry as Provocation: The *Khamriyyāt* of al-Walid ibn Yazid (d. 6/743)

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There is general agreement among scholars that the wine poetry of the short-lived caliph al-Walid ibn Yazid was a major development in the *khamriyya* genre, and that al-Walid is the most important forerunner of Abū Nuwās (d. 813).¹ It appears that these views are primarily based on the information provided by Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī in the chapter on the poet in his *Kitāb al-Aghānī*.² Indeed, it would be hazardous to draw far-reaching conclusions from the limited number of *khamriyyāt* transmitted in the corpus of al-Walid's poetry. As Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī tells us, al-Walid composed a great number of verses on wine, but other poets plundered them and included them in their own poetry. Abū al-Faraj mentions Abū Nuwās in particular, whom he accuses of adopting all of al-Walid's motifs (*maʿānīhi*) and using them repeatedly in his *khamriyyāt*.³ We are hardly in a position to substantiate Abū al-Faraj's statement on account of the few surviving texts of al-Walid's verses on wine. As far as we know, there has been no *diwān* of al-Walid in Arabic literary tradition. His poetry seems to have been scattered across different sources, and the poems collected and edited by Francesco Gabrieli and later published with an essay in an Arabic edition constitute only a small part of his oeuvre.⁴

This chapter discusses two aspects of al-Walid's poetry on wine: his contribution to the development of the *khamriyya* genre, and the question of how his verses reflect his individual taste, creativity, and tempestuous character. For what makes his poetry unusual and highly interesting is its intimate connection with his life and personality. Because he was a caliph—though for most of his life only designate—he did not have to seek anybody's favor but was free to follow his own poetics and inclinations, which he certainly did. This is a reason for the originality of his verses. As to his biography, we know more about him than about most other early poets. What is more, his scandalous behaviour stimulated authors to transmit and, in all probability, also invent stories about him, to entertain their readers. Even if some of

¹ Jamel-Eddine Bencheikh, "Khamriyya," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. E. van Donzel, B. Lewis, and Ch. Pellat (Leiden, 1978), 4:1003; Dieter Derenk, *Leben und Dichtung des Omayyadenkalifen al-Walid ibn Yazid. Ein quellenkritischer Beitrag* (Freiburg, 1974), 59–62.

² Aghānī, 7:1–84.

³ Aghānī, 7:20.

⁴ Francesco Gabrieli, "Al-Walid ibn Yazid. Il califfo e il poeta," *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 15 (1934): 1–64; see also the second revised edition of *Diwān al-Walid ibn Yazid* (Beirut, 1967). I quote from the latter edition. For a detailed bibliography, see Robert Hamilton, *Walid and His Friends: An Umayyad Tragedy* (Oxford, 1988). Hamilton includes a great number of verses with translation.

the anecdotes in *adab* literature are not authentic, they seem to be in keeping with his image conveyed by other sources.

His tendency to shock people through his defiance of religion and society in general, or to discredit those he disliked, is apparent in other genres of al-Walid's poetry, too, but it seems dominant in his poetry on wine. There are also non-polemical *kham-riyyāt* expressing his joy of living, although they certainly imply a defiance of Islamic values. In these texts the musical quality of his verses seems to be most striking. Al-Walid is unique in drawing on effects of sound in his verses. No earlier poet, and perhaps no later poet, displayed the same sensitivity to sound or used techniques of musical composition in his poetry. I previously put forth this theory in an article devoted to al-Walid's *ghazal*, published in 2005,⁵ and this study may be regarded as a sequel to that, confirming some of the results reached there.

Al-Walid was born at the beginning of the eighth century and grew up in a climate of luxury and dissipation, which must have influenced the shaping of his character. Music was important at the court of his father, Yazid (r. 101–105/719–724). Accordingly, al-Walid showed a remarkable talent for music and received a careful musical education and training. He became an accomplished musician and was able to play several instruments. It is further reported that he sometimes set his poems to music himself. Besides his love for music and poetry, he had a pronounced interest in architecture, and also liked hunting. He was inordinately proud of his physical prowess, which he was inclined to demonstrate. Boasting seems to have been a need. He is described as a big blond man, able to consume an amazing quantity of wine. When his father, Yazid, died, he was about fifteen years old and already married, a young man who had never learned to curb his passions or to endure frustration. However, he would have to do precisely this twice during the decisive period of his youth after his father's death.

The first instance touched his emotional life. He fell in love with his wife's sister Salmā, forced her divorce and asked for Salmā's hand in marriage, but her father refused him, allegedly influenced by his uncle, the caliph Hishām (r. 105–125/724–743). To his thwarted passion we owe some of the most beautiful and delicate love poems in Arabic literature. The second instance was political and concerns the line of succession. Yazid had designated his son for the caliphate, but only after his own brother Hishām, whose twenty-year reign proved a long waiting period for the ambitious al-Walid. What is more, Hishām and al-Walid were opposites in every respect, and there was a mutual dislike and even hatred between them, which is documented in al-Walid's verses and in other sources. Hishām even tried, in vain, to exclude him from succession on account of his licentious behaviour. When al-Walid finally became caliph, after having spent years waiting in a life of dissipation, con-

⁵ Renate Jacobi, "Al-Walid ibn Yazid, the last Ghazal Poet of the Umayyad Period," in *Ghazal as World Literature*, vol. 1, *Transformations of a Literary Genre*, ed. Thomas Bauer and Angelika Neuwirth (Beirut, 2005), 131–55.

tinuously shocking people with his abominable actions and blasphemous verses, he had made many enemies. Disregarding the advice of well-meaning relatives, he refused to change his lifestyle and was assassinated after only fourteen months of his caliphate in 126/744.

The poetry of al-Walid, collected by Francesco Gabrieli, consists of 102 poems—some of which are doubtless fragments—428 verses in all. Love and wine are his main subjects. Almost half of the corpus, forty-three poems, can be classified as *ghazal*, and fourteen as *khamriyya*. The remaining texts address various subjects, mainly *fakhr* and *hijāʾ*. In addition to his *khamriyyāt*—no more than sixty-three verses—the subject of wine is sometimes treated in other genres, in combination with the theme of love or, its opposite, hatred. There are a few general features of his poetry I should like to point out. With the exception of two texts,⁶ his poems are always short, not exceeding ten verses. On wine, the longest poem consists of nine lines. Some of the poems may be fragments, but even extremely short poems of three or four lines often appear to be complete, as they are closely structured and have a certain flourish or climax in the final verse.

In addition to the shortness of his poems, another unusual feature of his *diwān* is to be observed: his choice of meter. In his book *Poétique arabe*, Jamel-Eddine Bencheikh offered statistical evidence regarding the distribution of meters in Arabic poetry from the sixth to the ninth century.⁷ He provided charts showing the preferences of the most important poets at each period but omitted al-Walid. In my article on al-Walid's *ghazal*, I studied the metrics of his *diwān* and presented a chart of his metrical choices, so as to compare them with Bencheikh's evidence.⁸ The result is rather surprising. Al-Walid equals no poet with regard to the variability of his metrics and his choice of meter. Despite his small oeuvre available to us, he employs thirteen meters, plus five in their shortened (*majzūʾ*) version, eighteen meters all together. Furthermore, he is unique in his preferences. According to Bencheikh's statistics, *ṭawīl* remains the meter most frequently used, even among 'Abbāsid poets, although its percentage is reduced. In al-Walid's *diwān*, in contrast, *ramal majzūʾ* holds the first place, followed by *wāfir*, *khafif* and *ṭawīl*. Moreover, he employs a number of short, lively meters rarely used by other poets.

In his wine poetry, the same tendency is apparent on the whole, but there are a few particularities. Of the fourteen *khamriyyāt*, five texts are composed in the meter *khafif*, and four texts in *ramal majzūʾ*, his favorite meters for wine poetry, it seems. With the remaining five poems he used different meters: *bazaj*, *munsariḥ*, *mutaqārib*, *mutaqārib majzūʾ*, *sarīʿ*. In fact, he employed none of the traditional long meters in his *khamriyyāt*, perhaps because his verses on wine were usually set to music and performed at his drinking sessions. As a result, the evidence appears to show that he was more inclined

⁶ *Diwān*, poems 33 and 68.

⁷ Jamel-Eddine Bencheikh, *Poétique arabe: Essai sur les voies d'une création* (Paris, 1975), 205–27.

⁸ Jacobi, "Al-Walid ibn Yazīd, the last Ghazal Poet," 139.

to experiment with meter than any poet of the periods studied by Bencheikh. Only Abū Nuwās displays the same variability, but with decidedly more conventional preferences. Abū Nuwās's favorite meters are *ṭawīl*, *basīṭ*, *kāmil*, and *sarī*. It seems to me relevant in view of the widely accepted theory that al-Walid was a forerunner of Abū Nuwās. This may be true with regard to themes and motifs, or on the conceptual level, "a philosophy of existence," as Bencheikh asserts,⁹ but on the formal level, in his metrics and in the musical quality of his verses, Abū Nuwās did not imitate him. There he seems to have been unique.

Al-Walid follows in his *khamriyya* his own creative genius, but he also continues traditions dating back to the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda*. The verses he allegedly said when asked by his relatives to change his behavior as caliph reveal two conventional aspects:

22:1–3:

| | | |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|---|
| رَرَارَ الْعَابِدِينَ أَهْلَ الصَّلَاحِ | أُشْهِدُ اللَّهَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةَ الْأَبْرَارَ | ١ |
| الكَأْسِ وَالْعَصَى لِلْخُدُودِ الْمَلِاحِ | أَنْبِيَّ أَشْتَهِي السَّمَاعَ وَشُرْبَ | ٢ |
| رِهِ يَسْعَى عَلَيَّ بِالْأَقْدَاحِ | وَالنَّدِيمَ الْكَرِيمَ وَالْخَادِمَ الْفَاحِ | ٣ |

1. I call to witness God and the holy angels and the righteous people who worship
2. that I desire listening to music, drinking a cup and biting a lovely cheek,
3. a noble companion to drink with and an eager servant to pass the cup around.

It is reported that his relatives left him in consternation after that. The first aspect regards the elements he mentions in lines 2 and 3. They are part of drinking sessions from pre-Islamic times onward. Already in the *fakhr* of the *qaṣīda* poets describe the assembly of noble drinkers (*fityān*) and mention the combination of three pleasures: wine, women, and music. Wine was imported by merchants, who visited the Bedouin tribes and usually brought female singers with them to entertain the drinkers. From allusions in the texts, it can be assumed that the women also fulfilled the erotic desires of the assembly.¹⁰ Drinking was a social occasion; the enjoyment of wine demanded companions. We do not find the figure of the lonely drinker in Arabic poetry. He may have existed in real life, but he did not become a conventional motif of the *khamriyya*. Al-Walid described an established tradition of drinking wine in company and enjoying the pleasures of women and music, although

⁹ Bencheikh, "Khamriyya," 1003.

¹⁰ See the *Mu'allafa* of Ṭarafa, vv. 48–50:

| | | |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|----|
| نَدَامَايَ بِيضُ كَالنَّجُومِ وَفَيْئَةً | نَرُوحُ عَلَيْنَا بَيْنَ بُرْدٍ وَمَجْسَدٍ | ٤٨ |
| رَجِيْبُ قَطَابِ الْجَيْبِ مِنْهَا رَفِيقَةٌ | بِجَسِّ النَّدَامَى بَطْنَةُ الْمُتَجَرِّدِ | ٤٩ |

Wilhelm Ahlwardt, *The Divans of the Six Ancient Arabic Poets: Emmābiga, 'Antara, Tharafa, Zuhair, 'Alqama und Imru'ulqais* (London, 1870), 57.

these pleasures may have been accentuated in a different way. Music played an important part in al-Walid's sessions, and his standards were high.

The second aspect regards the subversive character of wine poetry, which is already evident in the *fakhr* of the early *qaṣida*. Al-Walid seems to have been aware of it, for in one of his *khamriyyāt* he includes an intertextual link to a verse of Ṭarafa's *Muʿallaqa* (see below). With the emergence of Islam and its prohibition on drinking wine, the revolt against social and religious norms gained a new relevance. As Andras Hamori remarks in an article on Abū Nuwās, "The wine song ... is never quite free of the shadow of Islam."¹¹ Religious formulas, references, and allusions pervade al-Walid's verses on wine and are invariably used to provoke and shock. This suggests that religion was never absent from his mind, for blasphemy in itself is an expression of religion and presupposes its acceptance.

Al-Walid developed several poetic techniques for expressing his defiance of Islam and for hurting the feelings of the religious. Among these is his contrasting of pious references to scandalous statements, as evidenced in the earlier-quoted verses. There are also some explicit statements—for example, his proud assurance, even boasting—that he makes no atonement for his sins (poem 45:2). In one of his *khamriyyāt* he quotes from the Qurʾān with slight variation and in some of his expressions alludes to it, thereby converting the meaning (poem 36):

36:1–4:

| | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| لَيْتَ حَظِّي الْيَوْمَ | مِنْ كُلِّ مَعَاشٍ لِي وَزَادَ | ١ |
| فَهْوَةٌ أَبْذُلُ فِيهَا | طَارِيفَ ثَمٍّ تَلَادِي | ٢ |
| فَيُظِلُّ الْقَلْبُ مِنْهَا | هَائِمًا فِي كُلِّ وَادٍ | ٣ |
| إِنَّ فِي ذَاكَ صَلاَحِي | وَفَلَاحِي وَرَشَادِي | ٤ |

1. I wish that my lot today from all my goods and provisions
2. were a wine, on which I squander my acquired and inherited property.
3. Then my heart will be in a state of roaming about in every *wādī*.
4. In this will be my peace, my paradise, and my right way.

The text is interesting from several points of view. In line 2 there is the intertextual link to a verse of Ṭarafa's *Muʿallaqa*; Ṭarafa proclaims in his *fakhr* that he had spent "his acquired and inherited possessions" (*tarīfī wa-muṭladī*) on wine.¹² In verse 3 he quotes from sura *The Poets* (Q 26:225) with slight modification. In the Qurʾān the

¹¹ Andras Hamori, "Ghazal and Khamriya: The Poet as Ritual Clown," in *On the Art of Medieval Arabic Literature* (Princeton, 1974), 67.

¹² The *Muʿallaqa* of Ṭarafa, v. 51, in Ahlwardt, *Divans of the Six Ancient Arabic Poets*, 57.

وَمَا زَالَ تَشْرَابِي الْخُمُورَ وَلَدَّتْنِي وَبَيْعِي وَأَنْفَاقِي طَرِيفِي وَمُتْلَدِي

poets who “roam about in every wādi” (*fi kulli wādin yabimūn*) are severely blamed. Al-Walid changes the blame into approval. His heart feels joy and bliss after consuming the best of wines. Of the terms he used in verse 4 only *rashād* occurs in the Qurʾān, in the expression “right way” (*sabīl ar-rashād*; Q 40:29 and 38), but the roots *ṣ-l-h* and *f-l-h* occur in several morphological variations. According to Lane, the terms *ṣalāh* and *falāh* have profane connotations and could therefore be rendered with profane meaning.¹³ In the context of al-Walid’s *dirwān* the religious meaning indicated by Lane seems the most appropriate.

A third procedure consists in al-Walid simply recounting his own abominable behaviour. It may have been the most effective means of provocation. The following text (poem 92) consists of a short narrative, the only example of this kind among his *khamriyyāt*. As in one of his *ghazal* poems (poem 36), a short narrative as well,¹⁴ the verses are primarily intended to hurt the feelings of Christians, but they also imply offense against Islam:

92:1–6:

| | |
|-------------------------------------------|---|
| حَبَّذَا لَيْلَتِي بِدَيْرِ بَوَّانَا | ١ |
| حَيْثُ نُسْقَى شَرَابَنَا وَنُغْنَى | |
| كَيْفَ مَا دَارَتْ الرُّجَاجَةُ دُرُنَا | ٢ |
| يَحْسِبُ الْجَاهِلُونَ أَنَّا جُنُنَا | |
| وَمَرَرْنَا بِنِسْوَةِ عَطِرَاتٍ | ٣ |
| وَعِنَاءٍ وَفَهْوَةٍ فَتَرَلْنَا | |
| وَجَعَلْنَا خَلِيفَةَ اللَّهِ فُطْرُو | ٤ |
| سَ مَجُونًا وَالْمُسْتَشَارَ يُحْنَا | |
| فَأَخَذْنَا قُرْبَانَهُمْ ثُمَّ كَفَّرْ | ٥ |
| نَا لِصُلْبَانِ دَيْرِهِمْ فَكَفَّرْنَا | |
| وَأَشْتَهَرْنَا لِلنَّاسِ حَيْثُ يَقُولُو | ٦ |
| نَ إِذَا خُبِرُوا بِمَا قَدْ فَعَلْنَا | |

1. How wonderful was my night at the monastery of Bawanna,
where we were served wine and listened to songs!
2. In the rhythm the glasses rotated, we also kept rotating,
so that the ignorant thought us possessed by jinn.
3. We had passed perfumed women, and singing
and drinking. So we just decided to stay.
4. In jest we made God’s Caliph Peter,
and the counsellor likewise we made John.
5. We took their communion and bowed to the cross
of their monastery, which made us unbelievers.
6. All this spread among people and they started
to gossip about us, when they heard what we had done.

¹³ Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (London, 1872), 4:1715; (London, 1877): 6:2439.

¹⁴ Jacobi, “Al-Walid ibn Yazīd, the last Ghazal Poet,” 146.

The poem must have been a late one, stemming from the time when al-Walid was already caliph, which makes it all the more scandalous.

As mentioned earlier, al-Walid sometimes used the subject of wine in poems that cannot be classified as *khamriyya*. His intention to shock by disregarding decency is obvious in most of these texts as well. I quote only one example, the verses he allegedly said after receiving the news of Hishām's death:

60:1–3:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------|---|
| طَابَ يَوْمِي وَلَدْتُ شُرْبُ السُّلَافَةِ | ١ |
| إِذْ أَتَانَا نَعِيٌّ مِّنْ بِالرُّصَافَةِ | |
| وَأَتَانَا الْبَرِيدُ يَنْعَى هِشَامًا | ٢ |
| وَأَتَانَا بِخَاتَمِ الْخِلَافَةِ | |
| فَأَصْطَبَحْنَا بِخَمْرِ عَانَةٍ صِرْفًا | ٣ |
| وَلَهَوْنَا بِقَيْنَةٍ عَزَافَةٍ | |

1. My day had been fine, and the precious wine tasted sweet,
when a message of death came to us from the man at Ruṣāfa.
2. The post came to us and brought the news of Hishām's death,
and brought the signet-ring of the caliphate.
3. So we took the morning drink with a pure wine from ʿĀna,
enjoying the company of a girl singing and playing her instrument.

It was not exactly the behavior expected from a future caliph, but al-Walid's hatred knew no bounds, and he was not a man to suppress his emotions.

The defiance of religion and its values are a dominant trait of his *khamriyyāt*, but there are a few nonpolemical poems, in which his genius as a poet is most perceptible, as well as the musical quality of his verses. Even these texts are not always free from boasting, from asserting his ego, an impulse he evidently could not restrain. As already mentioned, I have theorized that al-Walid not only shows a remarkable sensitivity for sound but also was influenced in his verses by techniques he used as a composer.¹⁵ His texts often give the impression of swift movement, partly due to the short, lively meter he prefers. In addition, the phonological structure sometimes shows a predilection for long vowels, in particular the vowel *ā*; it is significant that in the rhyme of eight *khamriyyāt*—more than half of them—the vowel –a– precedes the *rawiyy*. We also observe a preference for labial consonants, enhancing the flow of the verses. Furthermore, a striking feature of al-Walid's poetry in general is the frequent repetition of words or parts of words, sometimes with slight variations, without adding substantially to the meaning. Repetition with variations is a dominant trait of musical composition. Some of his poems seem to me like songs, a sequence of sounds and their variations. Among his *khamriyyāt* poem 95 is perhaps the most musical text in that understanding. It also contains some of the motifs adopted and elaborated on by ʿAbbāsīd poets. It is a poem of eight lines in the meter *ramal majzūʿ*:

¹⁵ Jacobi, "Al-Walid ibn Yazīd, the last Ghazal Poet," 137–43.

95:1–8:¹⁶

| | | |
|--------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| عَلَّلَانِي وَاسْقِيَانِي | ١ | مِنْ شَرَابٍ إِصْبَهَانِي |
| مِنْ شَرَابِ الشَّيْخِ كَسْرَى | ٢ | أَوْ شَرَابِ الْقَيْرَوَانِي |
| إِنَّ فِي الْكَأْسِ لِمُسْكًا | ٣ | أَوْ بِكَفِّي مَنْ سَقَانِي |
| أَوْ لَقَدْ غُوِدرَ فِيهَا | ٤ | حِينَ صُبَّتْ فِي الدَّنَانِ |
| كَلَّلَانِي تَوَجَّعَانِي | ٥ | وَبِشْعَرِي غَيَّيَانِي |
| أَطْلَقَانِي بِوَثَاقِي | ٦ | وَأَشْدُدَانِي بِعَنَانِي |
| إِنَّمَا الْكَأْسُ رَيْعٌ | ٧ | يُتَعَاطَى بِالْبَنَانِ |
| وَحُمَيَا الْكَأْسِ دَبَّتْ | ٨ | بَيْنَ رِجْلِي وَلِسَانِي |

1. Another cup! Another drop! Of the wine of Iṣfahān!
2. Of the wine of the Old Man Kisrā¹⁷, or the wine of Qayrawān!
3. There's a fragrance in the cup, or on the hands of him who pours;
4. Or is it just a lingering trace of musk from filling of the jars?
5. A wreath, a garland for my head! And take my poem for your song!
6. Here's my rope to let me loose and here to bind me take my thong!
7. Spring time's only in the cup that's handed with the fingertips.
8. And now the ardor of the cup has crept between my feet and lips.

In lines 1–2 the principle of repetition is most striking, especially on the phonological level. The rhyme *āni* is repeated in the verses several times. It adds to the swiftness of the movement already ensured by the meter; the wines mentioned do not add to the meaning, except indicating al-Walid's indifference to the wine he consumes, provided it is excellent. This gives the impression of mainly functioning as sounds. Within lines 5 and 6 the rhyme *āni* is repeated as well, and by the morphological repetition of the verbs the movement and the effects of sound are enhanced. The poem seems primarily structured by rhythm and sound, but some aspects of its content are of special interest. Besides al-Walid's urge for self-assertion (line 6), the wine's properties, its smell, and its effects on the drinker are well-known topoi of *khamriyya* in later periods. More important is the wine's beautiful sight, which produced rich imagery in 'Abbāsīd poetry. In the last text I quote from, al-Walid's most brilliant *khamriyya* (though, in my view, slightly marred by his inevitable boasting),

¹⁶ The translation is quoted from Hamilton, *Walid and His Friends*, 119.

¹⁷ [The epithet "the drink / wine of the Old Man Kisrā" for the wine of Persia is used by al-Akḥṭal (20–92/640–710) and may have been a common reference at the time (*Dirwān al-Akḥṭal*, 2nd ed., ed. Anṭūn Ṣāḥḥānī (Beirut, 1969), 155, l. 3; see also Ignaz Kračkovskij, "Der Wein in al-Aḥṭal's Gedichten," in *Festschrift Georg Jacob zum siebenzigsten Geburtstag 26. Mai 1932 gewidmet von Freunden und Schülern*, ed. Theodor Menzel (Leipzig, 1936), 156).]

al-Walid dwells on the wonderful sight of wine to the drinkers. The poem is an unequivocal revelation of his “philosophy of existence,” to use Bencheikh’s words once again:

8:1-9:

| | | |
|---|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| ١ | إِصْدَعْ نَجِيَّ الْهُمُومِ بِالطَّرَبِ | وَأَنعَمْ عَلَى الدَّهْرِ بِأَبْنَةِ الْعَنَبِ |
| ٢ | وَأَسْتَقْبِلِ الْعَيْشَ فِي غَضَارَتِهِ | لَا تَقْفُ مِنْهُ آثَارَ مُعْتَقِبِ |
| ٣ | مِنْ قَهْوَةِ زَانَهَا تَقَادُمُهَا | فَهِيَ عَجُوزٌ تَعْلُو عَلَى الْحَقَبِ |
| ٤ | أَشْهَى إِلَى الشُّرْبِ يَوْمَ جَلَوْتَهَا | مَنْ الْفَتَاةَ الْكَرِيمَةَ النَّسَبِ |
| ٥ | فَقَدْ تَخَلَّتْ وَرَقَّ جَوْهَرُهَا | حَتَّى تَبَدَّتْ فِي مَنْظَرٍ عَجَبِ |
| ٦ | فَهِيَ بَغِيرِ الْمَزَاجِ مِنْ شَرِّ | وَهِيَ لَدَى الْمَزْجِ سَائِلُ الذَّهَبِ |
| ٧ | كَأَنَّهَا فِي زُجَاجِهَا قَبَسٌ | تَزْهُو ضِيَاءٌ فِي عَيْنِ مُرْتَقِبِ |
| ٨ | فِي فِتْيَةٍ مِنْ بَنِي أُمَيَّةَ أَهْلِ | الْمَجْدِ وَالْمَأْثَرَاتِ وَالْحَسَبِ |
| ٩ | مَا فِي الْوَرَى مِثْلُهُمْ وَلَا يَبْهَمُ | مِثْلِي وَلَا مُنْتَمٍ بِمِثْلِ أَبِي |

1. Split the secret whispers of sorrow by delight,
and challenge time with the daughter of the grapes.
2. Accept life in its joyful abundance,
and do not follow the footsteps of one who repents,
3. with wine adorned by the passing of time,
an aged woman, far advanced in years.
4. She is more enjoyable for drinkers on the day of her unveiling,
than the virgin daughter of a noble family.
5. And now the wine is unveiled, its substance delicate,
manifest to the eyes, a marvelous sight.
6. Unmixed it seems to consist of sparks,
but being mixed it is a stream of gold,
7. as if it were a firebrand in the glass,
shining like pure light before the gazing eyes.
8. And take as company young men of Umayyad descent,
famed for their glory, honor, and heroic deeds.
9. None equals them in mankind and among them none equals me,
and none equals my father of our ancestry.

The poem, from beginning to end, is an advice presumably addressed to the men of al-Walid’s entourage. It is carefully structured on the syntactical and semantic level. Lines 1–2 serve as an introduction; the poet voices the basic principle of his life. To seek enjoyment, preferably by drinking wine, is the only means to overcome the impact of time, the transient nature of life. This should be done without repen-

tance, an allusion to the Islamic interdiction of wine, but certainly understood comprehensively. The maxim al-Walid proclaims is a rejection of Islamic values. In the first line he already alludes to the female gender of wine, and that image is continued in line 3. The main part of the poem, lines 3–7, is devoted to praising the wine's taste and beautiful sight. Its excellence is ensured, on account of its having rested in the jar for many years. The metaphor of precious wine as an old woman would become a conventional image of the 'Abbāsīd *khamriyya*, as would that of a virginal girl for wine as yet unopened or unmixed.¹⁸ In the *khamriyya* of Abū Nuwās, he elaborates on both metaphors when he calls the wine in one of his poems both "virginal and old" (*shamtā'u 'adrā'u*; poem 2:1). There is no evidence of the image of a virgin girl for wine in al-Walid's *khamriyyāt*, but the contrast between an old and a young woman is expressed in lines 3–4, though in a different understanding. In line 4, he claims that the "unveiling" of the old woman was preferred to enjoying a young girl on her bridal day.

In lines 5–7, the wine's beauty is praised with rich imagery. It is one of the favourite motifs of the 'Abbāsīd *khamriyya* and may have been influenced by the poetry of al-Walid. The essence of al-Walid's praise, however varied the metaphors he employs, is light, the luminous quality of the wine, and in this he alludes to religion. Light as a spiritual entity is transformed into a quality of the forbidden wine. Here is occasion, once more, to quote from Hamori's perceptive article on Abū Nuwās; Hamori suggests that the imagery with transcendental associations in his *khamriyya* creates "a sense of something like a rival religion," and that the poet's rebellion "takes the form of a rival religion."¹⁹ Both of these observations apply to al-Walid's *khamriyya*. In a satirical couplet intended to annoy the caliph Hishām, he avows explicitly that drinking wine was his religion (poem 43):

43:1

يا أَيُّهَا السَّائِلُ عَنْ دِينِنَا نَحْنُ عَلَى دِينِ أَبِي شَاكِرٍ

1. Whoever asks about our religion,
our religion is that of Abū Shākir.

¹⁸ Both images are used by al-Akhṭal, who explains the metaphor of the virginal girl as unopened wine:

عَذْرَاءٌ لَمْ يَحْتَلِ الْخَطَّابُ بَهْجَتَهَا حَتَّى اجْتَلَمَاعًا عِبَادِيٌّ بِدِينَارٍ

And as unmixed wine:

حَتَّى إِذَا افْتَضَّ مَاءُ الْمُزْنِ عَذْرَتَهَا رَاحَ الرُّجَاجُ وَفِي الْوَاوِيهِ صَهْبٌ

Dirwān al-Akhṭal (Šālḥānī), 117, l. 7, and 378, l. 10. See also Kračkovskij, "Der Wein in al-Akhṭal's Gedichten," 158.

¹⁹ Hamori, "Ghazal and Khamriyya," 67.

Abū Shākir was a son of the caliph Hishām, who became a follower and boon companion of al-Walid.

In the poem's conclusion, lines 8–9, al-Walid takes up the conventional motif of the noble companions (*fityān*) with whom one should drink. As has been observed more than once, his urge to boast knew no bounds. Here he extols the glory of the Umayyad clan, raising his family above mankind and raising himself above all its contemporary members. The lines reflect his character, but they do not reflect his poetic genius. These two aspects of his personality seem to have been in conflict in his poetry more than once.

At the beginning of this chapter I proposed discussing two aspects of al-Walid's *khamriyya*. The first concerns his contribution to the development of the genre. Although the textual basis of his *dirwān* is too small for a reliable assessment, we can hazard a few assumptions. The following points are significant:

- Al-Walid may have been among the first poets to use wine poetry as an independent genre, but he may not have been *the* first. According to the *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, he appreciated the wine poetry of ‘Adi ibn Zayd (d. ca. 600) and may have been influenced by him. We have only fragments of his *dirwān*, but it is not impossible that he already composed poems devoted exclusively to wine. There is also a poem on wine by Abū Miḥjan ath-Thaqafi (d. 16/637), but it could be part of a greater unit.
- Some of al-Walid's motifs and images were to become topoi of the ‘Abbāsīd *khamriyya*, elaborated on in particular by Abū Nuwās. This is the description of the wine's properties, above all its luminous quality. The metaphorical identity of wine and woman, however, had been already employed by al-Akḥṭal.²⁰
- The defiance of religion and social norms in al-Walid's verses remains a characteristic trait of the *khamriyya*, though rarely pronounced with the same vehemence. His conceiving of the enjoyment of wine as a rival religion is a line leading directly to Abū Nuwās.
- What has been called al-Walid's "philosophy of existence" also makes him a forerunner of Abū Nuwās. As al-Walid never tires of avowing, the transient nature of life is to be overcome by one means only: seeking pleasure and enjoyment. Living in the moment and enjoying it with the utmost intensity is the only weapon we have to fight against invincible time. It is, of course, a pagan philosophy, one that denounces the values of Islam.

The second aspect regards al-Walid's poetry as an expression of his individuality and creative genius, above all, the formal character of his poetry, his choice of meter, and the musical quality of his verses. His genius and training as a poet and musician enabled him to combine both arts in a way unknown in Arabic poetry before him and possibly also after him. His poems often appear like songs, mainly structured

²⁰ Kračkovskij, "Der Wein in al-Aḥṭal's Gedichten," 158.

by sound and rhythm. Words and parts of words are repeated in a sequence of sounds with slight variation. This is true of his *khamriyya*, but also of other genres of his *dirwān*. His verses reflect his artistic taste, but they also reveal his character, his passions, his love and hate—he is used to speaking without reservation. Few poets could permit themselves to disregard public opinion and the poetics of their time, as al-Walid could, if they wanted to be successful. His privileged position is one of the prerequisites for his originality, though certainly not the essential one.

In conclusion, I briefly consider al-Walid's individuality and the problems resulting from it. These issues have been referred to frequently throughout the article, but they are vital for understanding and appreciating his poetry. The following remarks are based on the preceding analysis and on my study of his *ghazaliyyāt*: al-Walid's image in historical sources and in *adab* literature is not exactly endearing, nor do his verses contradict that image. Nevertheless, he seems a rather pathetic figure—tragic, to be exact—not only because of his violent death at the prime of his life. At the base of his tragedy were two opposite sides of his personality that he was unable to harmonize. He was a gifted, creative poet with a touch of genius rarely to be observed, and a talented musician and composer, capable of combining both arts in an original way. But he was also sensual, passionate, immoderate in his desires, and proud of his body and the feats it allowed him to perform. There seems to have been an internal rage in him, moreover, urging him to offend religious feelings and social norms. His upbringing at the court of his father provided him with an excellent education and musical training, but it did nothing to curb his unfortunate disposition or assist him in attaining maturity. As I suggested in my study of his *ghazal*, he appears to have remained an adolescent all his life. His urge to assert his ego is another proof. His constant need to boast, rather surprising for a man of his social position, gives the impression that he had to suppress secret self-doubts about his worth. He had to convince himself more than other people. The conflict within him thus described was never resolved. It thwarted his life, impaired some of his poetry, and eventually led to his premature death.

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Toward an Integral Abū Nuwās: Evidence of Transgressive Religiosity in His *Khamriyyāt* and *Zuhdiyyāt*

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This chapter describes and contextualizes the Islamic religiosity of al-Ḥasan b. Ḥānī' al-Ḥakamī, better known as Abū Nuwās (d. AH 198/813 CE or 200/815), popularizer of the Arabic wine song (*khamriyya*).¹ Two issues confront this ambition. First, scholars of remote times, such as the early 'Abbāsīd period (i.e., between the reigns of as-Saffāḥ and al-Amin; 136 CE/AH 750–217/814) are at the distinct disadvantage of being unable to probe their subjects' beliefs and motivations beyond the documentary or archaeological record. Fortunately, the historical figure of Abū Nuwās has inspired extensive anthologization: his *diwān* is published in a critical edition, and the biographical record is extensive.² A second issue, then, merits further con-

¹ There are many studies of Abū Nuwās's contributions to the *khamriyya* and other genres. The standard references are Jamel el-Din Bencheikh, "Poésies bachiques d'Abū Nuwās, thèmes et personnages," *Bulletin des études orientales* 18 (1963–1964): 7–84; and Bencheikh, "Khamriyya," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. Peri Bearman et al. (Brill Online) (hereafter *EP*); Ewald Wagner, *Abū Nuwās: Eine Studie zur arabischen Literatur der frühen 'Abbāsidenzeit* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1965); Jūrj Ghurayyib, *Shi'r al-labw wa-l-khamr: ta'rikhubu wa-a'lāmuhu* (Beirut: Dār ath-Thaqāfa, 1966); 'Abbās Muḥammad al-'Aqqād, *Abū Nuwās al-Ḥasan b. Ḥānī'* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1388/1968); Philip F. Kennedy, *The Wine Song in Classical Arabic Poetry: Abū Nuwās and the Literary Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997); and Kennedy, *Abū Nuwās: A Genius for Poetry* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005). For minor studies before 2010, see the bibliographies of those works just cited and Ewald Wagner, "Abū Nuwās," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed., ed. Kate Fleet et al. (Brill Online) (hereafter *EP*). More recent studies that treat Abū Nuwās and his *khamriyyāt*, albeit at times obliquely, include Fuad Matthew Caswell, *The Slave Girls of Baghdad: The Qiyān of the Early Abbasid Era* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011); and Katia Zakharia, "Figures d'al-Ḥasan ibn Ḥānī', dit Abū Nuwās, dans le *Kitāb akhbār Abi Nuwās* d'Ibn Manzūr," *Bulletin d'études orientales* 58 (2008–2009): 131–60.

² Abū Nuwās, *Diwān Abi Nuwās*, recension Ḥamza al-Isfahānī, 5 vols. + *Fabāris*, ed. Ewald Wagner (vols. 1–3, 5, *Fabāris 'amma*) and Gregor Schoeler (vol. 4) (Beirut: Klaus Schwartz, 2001–2006) = recension Abū Bakr aṣ-Ṣūlī, ed. Aḥmad 'Abd al-Majīd al-Ghazzālī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1953). Citations refer to the Wagner-Schoeler edition, unless there is a substantive discrepancy in the placement of the verse quoted or the verse appears in only one edition; subsequent citations appear as *D* followed by the volume number. For the development of Abū Nuwās's persona in biographical and popular literature, see Ewald Wagner, *Abū Nuwās in der Nebenüberlieferung. Dem Dichter zugeschriebene Gedichte und Verse* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008); Wagner, *Abū Nuwās in Übersetzung. Eine Stellensammlung zu Abū Nuwās-Übersetzungen vornehmlich in europäische Sprachen* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012). Much of the biographical material related to Abū Nuwās is notoriously late. However, the recent publication of a papyrus fragment featuring Abū Nuwās and other poets may date from as early as the mid-third/ninth century, as argued in Mark Muehlhaeusler, "An Invitation to Dinner for Abū Nuwās and His Friends: An Early Textual Witness on Papyrus (Yale P. CTYBR Inv. 2597 (A))," *Studia Orientalia Electronica* 4 (2016): 24–35.

sideration: There appears from these materials, with gestalt-like immediacy, two Qurʾanically condemned features of Abū Nuwās's religiosity: wine bibbing and the poet's insouciance.³ The image of Abū Nuwās as the "connoisseur of vice" who rejected the "rhetoric of sobriety" favored by his Muslim contemporaries has long served as an entrée for scholarship on Abū Nuwās's religiosity.⁴ This chapter demonstrates that this account is the flawed product of the tendency to find evidence of Abū Nuwās's religiosity only in bacchic material, and that a superior historical portrait can be drawn with reference to a largely ignored or otherwise marginalized portion of his *diwān*, the *zuhdiyyāt*.

Before attending to Abū Nuwās specifically, an explication of the utility and constituent variables of the concept of religiosity is in order. Recourse to "religiosity" as a historical category betrays a fundamental analytical issue: although there may exist at any given time an intellectual or moral abstraction to which a person could conform or respond (here, *al-Islām*), historical descriptions attest to a multitude of practiced and enacted forms.⁵ To coherently delimit the often scattered evidence of this variety, the evolutionary anthropologist Harvey Whitehouse offers the following definition of religiosity: "*tendencies* towards particular patterns of codification, transmission, cognitive processing, and political association."⁶ Of the many possible patterns to be observed, several categories recur in scholarship of religiosity: rituals, associative "moral communities," and the telos of a primordial or eternal existence. With respect to Abū Nuwās, I use these categories to engage an array of possible early ʿAbbāsīd Muslim identities while also maintaining a coherent framework for rigorous analysis and comparison.

³ See the condemnation of poetry at Q 36:69–79 and 26:221–27, and of wine at Q 5:90–91. For prohibitions in scripture generally, see Wael Hallaq, "Forbidden," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Brill Online) (hereafter *EQ*).

⁴ The formulation "connoisseur of vice" belongs to Elizabeth S. Goodstein, *Experience without Qualities: Boredom and Identity* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 223. "Rhetoric of sobriety" is from Katherine Kueny, *The Rhetoric of Sobriety: Wine in Early Islam* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2001). On this subject, add the account of *ḥadīth* and legal literature (and the extensive bibliography) in Stefanie Brinkmann, "Wine in Ḥadīth: From Intoxication to Sobriety," in *Wine Culture in Iran and Beyond*, ed. Bert G. Fragner et al, Veröffentlichungen zur Iranistik Bd. 75 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaft, 2014), 71–135; I am indebted to the editors of this volume for referring me to this work. On the issue of wine in the legal communities of Kufa, with special emphasis on the Shiʿa, see Najam I. Haider, *The Origins of the Shiʿa: Identity, Ritual and Sacred Space in Eighth-Century Kufab* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 138–88.

⁵ See the discussion in Shahab Ahmad, *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 397ff. Compare with the invocation of "religiosity" to characterize even the earliest period of Islamic activity in Josef van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft in 2. und 3. Jahrhunderts Hidschra*, 6 vols. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1991–1997), 1:4–5.

⁶ For the quote, see Harvey Whitehouse, *Arguments and Icons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1 (emphasis original). For the development of this argument, see also Whitehouse, *Inside the Cult: Religious Innovation and Transmission in Papua New Guinea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 197–98; Whitehouse, *Modes of Religiosity: A Cognitive Theory of Religious Transmission* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004).

It is with due consideration for these issues that James E. Montgomery begins his landmark study, “Abū Nuwās, Justified Sinner?” (hereafter JS).⁷ In light of the “astonishing” credal variety to be found in the ‘Abbāsīd polity of the second/eighth and third/ninth centuries, Montgomery identifies his principal task with the portrayal of Abū Nuwās in historical terms; that is, as an “early ‘Abbasid Muslim ... rather than as simply [a] frivolous and heretical roué.”⁸ The description of Abū Nuwās’s religiosity in JS is diffuse; Montgomery artfully describes his approach to Abū Nuwās’s verse as “hypostatic.”⁹ Therefore, it will be useful to summarize the parallel strands of argumentation.

The arguments in JS proceed in three principal parts: the first two resituate Abū Nuwās’s poetry as historical material and the third delineates Montgomery’s historical claims vis-à-vis Abū Nuwās in detail. In the first major section of JS, Montgomery maintains that premodern Arabic poetry, in the course of its anthologization, has been effectively and unduly “deracinated” and dismissed as historical evidence of religiosity (JS 77–104), mostly in favor of biographical material. To recover the “occasionalism” of this poetry, Montgomery champions a theory of reading he calls “eavesdropping” in which the reader emphasizes the following operations (JS 105–16): “factitious” readings of Abū Nuwās’s *dirwān*, philological rigor, and multigeneric intertextual engagement with the verse.¹⁰ When applied to Abū Nuwās’s *khamriyyāt* (JS 116–47), these operations reveal the “persistent declaration of his Muslim identity,” which Montgomery suspects to be some species of Shi‘ism.¹¹ Otherwise, the poet’s religiosity is apparent for its “transgression” of established communal norms, and for its internal contradictions: “Libertinage and asceticism ... are the defining paradoxes of Abū Nuwās’s *dirwān*, the apparent polarities of *mujūn* and *tawba*.”¹² Finally, as relates to the formal characteristics of the religiosity Abū Nuwās exhibits, Montgomery states his principal conclusions as follows:

Abū Nuwās may have been promoting, and al-Amin [re. 193/809–198/814] may have been the sponsor of, a charismatic brand of Islam that valorised a *doctrine of God’s unlimited forgiveness*, which permitted the consumption of wine, celebrated spiritual priapism, and which may have been *built upon the theory of spiritual election*, and, as an *alternative to the incipient Hadith movement* and in contradistinction to the credal rigours of, for example, the *Istithnā’* controversy.¹³

⁷ James E. Montgomery, “Abū Nuwās: Justified Sinner?” *Oriens* 39 (2011): 75–164.

⁸ “Astonishing,” JS 95; “early,” JS 147.

⁹ JS 117, 144.

¹⁰ On “facticity,” see Montgomery’s comment (JS 109): “The apolaustic Abū Nuwās is now so much a synecdoche for a secularised ‘Abbasid society that we can do little else but read his wine songs as figurative.”

¹¹ For the quote, JS 139n188. On the issue of Abū Nuwās’s Shi‘ism, Montgomery writes (JS 96): “I think Abū Nuwās was a Shi‘i, though I cannot prove it.”

¹² For “transgression,” see JS 92, 116n120, 119, 121, 123, 132n171, 147, 149, 150, 152, 155, 157, 158. The quote on defining paradoxes is at JS 151.

¹³ JS 163 (emphasis mine).

Throughout his meticulous reading of Abū Nuwās's *khamriyyāt*, Montgomery advances several brilliant and actionable insights. I adopt here his characterization of aspects of Abū Nuwās's religiosity as transgressive, the efficacy of entertaining factitious readings of 'Abbāsīd *dirwāns*, and his insistence throughout JS on exploiting poetry as a valid source of historical evidence.¹⁴ However, and in agreement with his strong historicist bent, I take the question mark in the title of his piece as an invitation to disagree with certain aspects of his characterization of Abū Nuwās's religiosity.

The most immediate opportunity to engage Montgomery's conclusions relates to the discussion of renunciation or self-abnegation (*zuhd*), an operative dialectical component in his characterization of Abū Nuwās. For a mode of expression of such ostensible importance to the conception of Abū Nuwās's religiosity, mention of *zuhd* in JS occurs only rarely. For instance, and despite Montgomery's declaration that the *zuhdiyya* forms an integral part of Abū Nuwās's *dirwān* and serves as an important vessel for his expression of religiosity, he cites no *zuhdiyya* in JS. In fact, every verse considered there comes from the third volume of Ewald Wagner and Gregor Schoeler's edition of Abū Nuwās's *Dirwān*, which consists entirely of *khamriyyāt*.¹⁵ Instead, the totality of the primary-source evidence Montgomery offers for Abū Nuwās's renunciatory inclination he culls from biographical sources—the very practice he had previously criticized as counter to the historical recontextualization of 'Abbāsīd poetry.¹⁶ Additionally, the only attempt in JS to locate *zuhd* as a datable component of early 'Abbāsīd religiosity comes in the discussion of "clemency" (*ḥilm*): "*Conventional piety generally took the form of the grave ḥilm, self-restraint, of ... al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī [d. ca. 110/728] ... [and others]. Zuhd was effectively coterminous with ḥilm.*"¹⁷ This accounting is deficient in several respects. First, it neglects to profit from the work of Suleiman A. Mourad, who already showed that the historicity of the ascetic portrayal of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and his contemporaries is, in many cases, suspect.¹⁸ A closer examination of the evidence related to second/eighth century figures also shows, contrary to Montgomery's supposition, that many different currents of *zuhd* flowed in the early 'Abbāsīd period.¹⁹ Thus, in considering the *khamriyyāt* as the specific, sole locus of evidence of Abū Nuwās's religiosity, Montgomery's

¹⁴ Montgomery contends (JS 116n120): "My materialism impels me to ponder the social loci of [Abū Nuwās's religiosity]." A similar historicist approach is also taken in numerous essays in Ramzi Baalbaki et al eds., *Poetry and History: The Value of Poetry in Reconstructing Arab History* (Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 2011).

¹⁵ For the *zuhdiyyāt* see DII 157–175 (*al-bāb as-sābiʿ*) = ed. al-Ghazzālī, 609ff.; compare with JS 89.

¹⁶ JS 157–58.

¹⁷ JS 94 (emphasis mine). See also Andras Hamori, "Ascetic Poetry (*Zuhdiyyāt*)," in *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Abbāsīd Belles Lettres*, ed. Julia Bray Ashtiany et al (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 265–74, at 273.

¹⁸ Suleiman A. Mourad, *Early Islam between Myth and History: Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. ca. 110/728) and the Formation of His Legacy in Classical Islamic Scholarship* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 50–120.

¹⁹ The issue of early Islamic asceticism is serially under-addressed and deserves more attention. See for now: Benedikt Reinert, *Die Lehre vom tawakkul in der klassischen Sufik*, Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des islamischen Orients Bd. 3 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1968); Richard Gramlich, *Weltverzicht. Grundlagen und Weisen islamischer Askese*, Veröffentlichungen der Orientalischen Kommission Bd. 43 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1997); Christopher Melchert, "Asceticism," *EP*; and Yunus Yaldız, "The Afterlife in Mind: Piety and Renunciatory Practice in the 2nd/8th and Early 3rd/9th Centuries Books of Renunciation (*kutub al-zuhd*)" (PhD diss., Utrecht University, 2016).

“eavesdropping” strategy has instead turned a deaf ear to a resource of pivotal importance for describing Abū Nuwās’s religiosity.

The remainder of this chapter seeks to reimagine Abū Nuwās’s religiosity in its fullness, which necessarily requires integrating both his *khamriyyāt* and his *zuhdiyyāt* into the analysis. Before taking that step, though, it will be valuable to consider more fully how long-standing conceptual idiosyncrasies have valorized Abū Nuwās’s *khamriyyāt* and *zuhdiyyāt* as “anomalous or ambiguous” historical evidence, respectively, for describing his religiosity.²⁰

Religiosity in the Khamriyya: Esotericism and the “History of Religions” Paradigm

Despite the pride of place of previous investigations of religiosity in scholarship on Abū Nuwās, these studies devote almost no theoretical treatment to the concept. For instance, Montgomery in JS refers to the concept only twice, without defining it, and discussion in other works is even more limited.²¹ It is of interest, then, to trace the extent to which the conception of Abū Nuwās’s (non-)Islamic religiosity converges with or adjusts the categories and assumptions of other scholarship.

A full comparative treatment of religiosity across several fields would be illuminating, but the argument in this section is limited. Namely, it concerns demonstrating that the conception of Abū Nuwās’s religiosity as it appears in his *khamriyyāt* shows significant parallels to an influential modern intellectual tradition, known as the “History of Religions” approach. In the field of religious studies, this historiographical approach gained currency throughout the twentieth century, especially through the influence of prominent members of the Eranos school: Mircea Eliade, Gershom Scholem, and Henri Corbin.²²

In a study of these aforementioned figures’ works, Steven Wasserstrom posits three salient conceptual components of the History of Religions notion of esoteric religiosity.²³ The first is a “mythocentric and mystocentric approach to generic fea-

²⁰ Kueny (*Rhetoric*, xi, 54) uses these concepts to describe *ḥadīth* specialists’ approach to wine. She also finds that poetry, as a mode of Islamic expression, is anomalous and ambiguous as to the status of wine (91–92).

²¹ JS 118n124, where he sees the problem as one of “construct[ing] Abū Nuwās’s religiosity or the rejection thereof.” Kennedy (*Abū Nuwās*, 44) uses it once, also without a definition.

²² Steven M. Wasserstrom, *Religion after Religion: Mercea Eliade, Gershom Scholem and Henry Corbin at Eranos* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999). My reading of Wasserstrom’s work has been substantively nuanced by the criticisms in Bryan Rennie, “Religion after Religion, History after History: Postmodern Historiography and the Study of Religions,” *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 15 (2003): 68–99.

²³ For an excellent review of the employment of esotericism in the field of Islamic studies, see Feras Hamza, “Locating the ‘Esoteric’ in Islamic Studies,” in *Islamic Studies Today: Essays in Honor of Andrew Rippin*, ed. Majid Daneshgar and Walid A. Saleh (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 354–66.

tures of religion,” wherein Eliade, Scholem, and Corbin each opted to “leave behind the many inadequate modes of rationality [to explain religious epiphenomena], in favor of symbols and myths, those truly privileged expressions of the spirit.”²⁴ Concomitantly, these scholars, for Wasserstrom, adumbrated a second principle of religiosity by “underplay[ing] the importance of law, ritual, and social history.”²⁵ The final shared feature of the three figures’ notion of religiosity is the tendency to locate in their subjects’ worldviews an abiding apocalypticism, or what Wasserstrom terms “the end of history inside history.”²⁶ In other words, the notion of religiosity in the History of Religions approach seldom appears as a historically contingent phenomenon, as would be the case with documented legal conventions or social norms. Instead, it is imagined in terms of cyclic processes of birth and rebirth: a “metahistorical reality.”²⁷ Insofar as Eliade, Scholem, and Corbin treated conventional categories of religiosity as inimical to the vicissitudes of transient law or custom, Wasserstrom argues that their approach constitutes a vehicle for a conception of a universal, transhistorical religiosity.

The scholarship that treats Abū Nuwās’s religiosity evinces significant congruence with the History of Religions approach. Specifically, one sees the persistent linking of imagery from Abū Nuwās’s *khamriyyāt*, especially descriptions of drinking alcohol or revelry, of an essentially esoteric character to his religiosity. Such accounts tend to situate the poet as archetypal and associate him with figures from periods of great historical remove.²⁸ We turn now to examine the characterization Abū Nuwās’s relation to ritual, moral community, and ultimate existence as these appear in this literature.

The subject of ritual has attracted the most attention in the scholarship on Abū Nuwās’s religiosity. In perhaps the most celebrated discussion of this issue, Andras Hamori portrays the poet as a “ritual clown,” an analytical category first proposed for First Peoples of North America. This figure, Hamori claims, “bring[s] a sense of release because behavior is permitted him that is not permitted others.”²⁹ Hamori

²⁴ Wasserstrom, *Religion after Religion*, 5, 237.

²⁵ Wasserstrom, *Religion after Religion*, 5.

²⁶ Wasserstrom, *Religion after Religion*, 165–66, esp. 170.

²⁷ Wasserstrom, *Religion after Religion*, 161–64.

²⁸ See the discussion of the archetype in Arabic literature in Angelika Neuwirth, “Introduction,” in *Myths, Historical Archetypes and Symbolic Figures in Arabic Literature: Towards a New Hermeneutic Approach*, ed. Angelika Neuwirth et al, Beiruter Texte und Studien Bd. 64 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1999), ix–xxii, at xviii.

²⁹ Andras Hamori, *On the Art of Medieval Arabic Literature*, 2nd ed. (1974; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 62–63. Regarding the ritual clown, Laura Makarius, in “Ritual Clowns and Symbolic Behaviour,” *Diogenes* 69 (1970): 44–73, stresses that this figure “has little to do with the jocularly assumed to be his unique purpose to arouse ... [thereby] relieving tension” but “satisf[ies] the needs and aspirations of his group ... [in performing an] act of transgression” (46). See also Laura Makarius, *Clowns rituels et comportements symboliques* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970); Makarius, *Le sacré et la violation des interdits* (Paris: Payot, 1974); Makarius, “The Magic of Transgression,” *Anthropos* 69 (1974): 537–52.

attributes the perseverance of this behavior to the clown's role in convening a subversive Bakhtinian carnivalesque, and elaborates on this postulation with reference to Christianity: "As a rule [ritual clowns] act contrary to the norm ... but during Lent [they] serve as guardians to the image of Christ and as his special servitors."³⁰ Ewald Wagner likewise highlights the dialectic of carnival and Lent, the former being the season in which Abū Nuwās allegedly participated in the ceremony of *māshūsh* or *gulbirān*, which involved deflowering virginal nuns. However, as François de Blois notes, this discussion constitutes a "most unfortunate attempt to construct a historical basis" for this occurrence, marred as it is by a calendrical miscalculation.³¹ Elsewhere, Montgomery, in his formulation of Abū Nuwās's ethos of "sinning as virtue," almost exactly restates Scholem's fascination with the idea of ritualized "redemption through sin."³² As Montgomery elaborates: "Arrogations of the credal, intellectual and spiritual possibilities of *zandaqa* [belief in Manichaean dualism], their courting of the outrage of condemnation ... as ... a programme for destabilising competing versions of Islam, and ... contestatory recalibrations of *ʿibāda* [i.e., ritual acts of worship]."³³ This transgressive ethos seems to Montgomery so pervasive that he cautions that reference to Islamic ritual anywhere in Abū Nuwās's *diwān* is suspect: "Thus [Abū Nuwās] boasts of ... neglecting his prayers or performing his own dyspraxic version of them or of the *ḥajj*."³⁴ In each of these cases, ritual functions as a repressive structural foil against which Abū Nuwās—as clown or rogue—presses an un-Islamic agenda.

As for the issue of Abū Nuwās's moral community, Montgomery notes that the poet is most closely associated with the Kufan libertines, "a shady company, notorious in the sources for their oenomania and their pederasty, and for what the sources deem to be their transgression of Muslim cultic practice and unacceptable religious beliefs."³⁵ Owing to lack of further evidence of close associations, arguments for

³⁰ This schema was adopted in Kennedy, *Wine Song*, 16–17, and JS 90. Hamori's notion of the ritual clown exhibits significant congruence with the structuralist analysis of ritual pre-Lenten carnival in Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984). For criticisms of Bakhtin's image of the medieval carnival, see Thomas J. Farrell, ed., *Bakhtin and Medieval Voices* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995), pt. 3.

³¹ Wagner, *Abū Nuwās*, 203. Compare with François de Blois, "Laylat al-Māshūsh: Marginalia to al-Bayrūnī, Abū Nuwās and Other Authors," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 29, no. 1 (1984): 81–96, at 90–91. Whereas Wagner supposes that this ritual takes place several days before the beginning of Lent, the relevant source (ʿAlī b. Muḥammad Shābushtī, d. 388/998) notes that the ritual is supposed to have begun one week afterward.

³² "Sinning as virtue," JS 67 (only in the article's abstract). For Scholem's concept, see Wasserstrom, *Religion after Religion*, 215–24. See also Wasserstrom, "Defeating Evil from Within: Comparative Perspectives on 'Redemption through Sin,'" *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 6, no. 1 (1997): 37–57.

³³ JS 147.

³⁴ JS 154–55.

³⁵ JS 149.

Abū Nuwās's positive inclusion in any given sect are rare.³⁶ In the absence of a strong positive identification of communal belonging, Montgomery defines Abū Nuwās as an "early 'Abbāsīd Muslim" partly as a function of which groups would not have accepted his sexual license and penchant for alcohol.³⁷ Otherwise, on account of his commitment to heresiographical forensics, Montgomery resorts to describing Abū Nuwās's community of "soul brothers."³⁸ This collectivity he cobbles together from two temporally distant groups: the second- and third-century CE Christian Gnostics, and the Khurasanian pietistic movement known as the "Blame-worthy" (*al-Malāmatiyya*), which convened only in the late third/ninth century.³⁹ Thus, Abū Nuwās's exemplars in religiosity need not have been from the 'Abbāsīd period, or even Muslim. Rather, they constitute a transregional and transhistorical ideal type of mystic.

With regard to a further element of religiosity, the conception of an ultimate state of existence, several descriptions of Abū Nuwās's stance again mirror the categories of History of Religions scholarship almost exactly in their infusion with apocalypticism. A forceful assertion of this type occurs in the work of the poet Adūnis who, like Hamori, maintains that Abū Nuwās wore "the mask of a clown." This persona recognizes no law but liberation and promotes the destruction of "the existing [Islamic] cultural and ethical systems ... [and] the advent of a culture in which there will be no repression and no restrictions."⁴⁰ Yaseen Noorani associates the Nuwasian *khamriyya* with a desire to bask in the glow of a personal apocalypse: "Abū Nuwās's version of the wine poem ... makes the most of the euphoric escape

³⁶ In addition to Montgomery's tacit conjecture of the poet's Shi'ism, al-'Aqqād (*Abū Nuwās*, 187–90) asserts that the poet belonged to the amorphous ranks of the Murji'a.

³⁷ Doubts about inclusion in a given group occur at JS 94 (Kharwārij), 139–40 (Shi'a), 151–52nn236 and 248 (proto-Sunnis, Hanābila).

³⁸ JS 134, 137.

³⁹ For Gnosticism, JS 133 and 149–50. Following Julian Baldick, in *Mystical Islam: An Introduction to Sufism* (1989; London: I. B. Tauris, 2000), Montgomery refers to the Christianity of Isaac of Nineveh (d. ca. 700) as a possible model of 'Abbāsīd ascetic religiosity (JS 161n267). For a criticism of the lack of evidence in support of this alleged connection, see Bernd Radtke, "Review: *Mystical Islam*," *Religious Studies* 29, no. 2 (1990): 266–68. On the possible links of Christian Gnosticism to early Shi'i *ghulāt* (a reference point for Abū Nuwās's religiosity, according to Montgomery), see now Mushegh Asatryan and Dylan Burns, "Is Ghulat Religion Islamic Gnosticism? Religious Transmissions in Late Antiquity," in *L'ésoterisme shi'ite, ses racines et ses prolongements/Shi'i Esotericism: Its Roots and Sources*, ed. Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi et al (Brepols: Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Hautes Études Sciences Religieuses and The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2016), 55–86. For Montgomery's discussion of the *Malāmatiyya*, see JS150, 161–62. Direct influence between this group and Abū Nuwās is unlikely, as the early leaders of the *Malāmatiyya*, in addition to being active only after Abū Nuwās's death, did not speak Arabic. See Jacqueline Chabbi, "Remarques sur le développement historique des mouvements asétiques et mystiques au Khurasan: III^e/IV^e siècle-IV^e/X^e siècle," *Studia Islamica* 46 (1977): 5–72, at 30–33; and Christopher Melchert, "Sufis and Competing Movements in Nisapur," *Iran* 39, no. 2 (2002): 237–47, at 239.

⁴⁰ Adonis, *An Introduction to Arab Poetics*, trans. Catherine Cobham (London: Saqi, 1993), 60. Note the congruence between this image and that of the "free believer" in JS 94.

from selfhood that ensues.”⁴¹ Montgomery develops this impression of a quasi-mystical “inward turn” through the incorporation of vivid imagery of an apocalyptic “annihilation: a temporal moment when the barrier between the terrestrial and celestial world is removed.”⁴² Peering out from his *khamriyyāt*, this postapocalyptic Abū Nuwās flaunts his otherworldly isolation, cup in hand.

With great sensitivity born of close readings of Abū Nuwās’s *khamriyyāt*, previous scholarship has constructed a remarkably coherent portrait of the poet’s antiritualistic, transhistorical, apocalyptic religiosity. The resulting depiction demonstrates remarkably close parallels to the esoterism espoused by the History of Religions approach. This is not to argue, it should be stressed, that scholars of Abū Nuwās were influenced by direct engagement with Eliade’s, Schoeleman’s, or Corbin’s works. Rather, because such a wide variety of scholarship converges on the principle of Abū Nuwās’s esotericism, it is more accurate to propose that this convergence is a function, as Whitehouse suggests, of the “tendency” to discern “patterns” that recur in *khamriyyāt*: ritual transgression, noncommunitarianism, and apocalyptic consciousness. The recognition by the aforementioned scholars of the subtlety of Abū Nuwās’s Islamic imagery in his *khamriyyāt* should therefore be considered an achievement on par with the perceptive contributions of their history of religions-affiliated counterparts.

That being said, the historiographical upshot of this centering of the *khamriyyāt* in the discussion of Abū Nuwās’s religiosity is the complete dislocation of the poet from his historical surroundings. In effect, Abū Nuwās’s religiosity is made out like that of any number of Christians and/or autochthonous peoples; it existed (or will come to exist) in antique Egypt and/or Sāmānid Nishāpūr and/or a sacred “nowhere.” What begins in JS and other studies as an attempt to find an early ‘Abbāsīd Muslim ultimately produces what Wasserstrom criticizes as the “metahistorical” figure. In the following section, I extend the discussion of the effect of this *khamriyyāt*-centered reading of Abū Nuwās’s religiosity to the rhetorical strategies used in scholarship of Abū Nuwās’s *zuhdiyyāt*.

Religiosity in the Zuhdiyya: Abū Nuwās as Paradox and the Fallacy of Religious Congruence

The close identification of Abū Nuwās’s religiosity with wine poetry and debauchery is not merely the product of scholarly caprice. Rather, the relation of these attributes rests on a formidable empirical foundation; Abū Nuwās’s *khamriyyāt*, so called, make up an entire volume of Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī’s (d. 350/961) recension of

⁴¹ Yaseen Noorani, “Heterotopia and the Wine Poem in Early Islamic Culture,” *IJMES* 36, no. 6 (2004): 345–66, at 346–47; see further comments in this vein at 353, 358.

⁴² JS 114. On the “inward turn,” see Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 3.

the Nuwasian *dirwān*, in comparison to only a handful of *zuhdiyyāt*.⁴³ The temptation to underplay aspects of Abū Nuwās's preference for continence, convention, and abidance of sacred prescript is therefore understandable.

The great disparity in generic output notwithstanding, there is widespread evidence of Abū Nuwās's orientation toward conservatism and abidance by sacred prescripts. For instance, his facility with the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth* is evidenced in verse from various poetic genres, and biographers stress his early study of this sacred corpus.⁴⁴ A strict sense of scriptural propriety is illustrated in one specimen of his *hijāʾ* (so Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī),⁴⁵ in which Abū Nuwās refuses to countenance the heretical prophetological and theological formulations of the Persian poet Abān al-Lāhiqī (d. ca. 200/815?).⁴⁶ He allegedly composed poetry while performing the ritual obligation of *ḥajj*.⁴⁷ Nor was Abū Nuwās's lyrical brilliance restricted to the realm of sensuous verse. For example, one of the poet's younger associates and biographers, Abū Hiffān al-Mihzamī (d. 255/869), twice records the positive impression that one of his teacher's *zuhdiyyāt* left on the famed *ḥadīth* scholar Sufyān b. ʿUyayna (d. 198/814).⁴⁸ Abū al-ʿAtāhiya (d. 210/825 or 211/826), a contemporary of Abū Nuwās and famed composer of *zuhdiyyāt*, thought highly of his counterpart's sensibilities in the genre and is alleged to have offered a trade: one thousand of his own lines for three by Abū Nuwās.⁴⁹ Such accounts stand against the description of the poet as an arch-esotericist. This jarring divergence in the tone and content of this material from the Nuwasian *khamriyyāt* has led to the charge that Abū Nuwās was

⁴³ *DIII* = ed. al-Ghazzālī. 731–38 (Index); for *zuhdiyyāt*, see above, note 15.

⁴⁴ Wagner, *Abū Nuwās*, 33–37; Kennedy, *Abū Nuwās*, 5–7. For the extensive quotation of the Qurʾān in a single *khamriyya*, see James E. Montgomery, “A Poem of Revelry and Remorse,” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 25, no. 2 (1994): 116–34. See also Claude Audebert, “*Abū Nuwās wa-l-fitya*/Abū Nuwās et les fitya,” *Bulletin d'études orientales* 60 (2011): 54–65.

⁴⁵ The content of generic sections varies by the recension of Abū Nuwās's *Dirwān*; see Gregor Schoeler, “Die Einteilung der Dichtung bei den Arabern,” *ZDMG* 123 (1973): 9–55, at 35–36. See also Ewald Wagner, “Warum haben Ḥamza al-Iṣbahānī und Abū Bakr aṣ-Ṣūlī ihre Weingedichte aus ihren Rezensionen des Abū Nuwās-Diwān ausgeschieden,” *Asiatische Studien/Études asiatiques* 64, no. 2 (2008): 1085–96.

⁴⁶ *DII* 158, apud *JS* 140–41. The prophets in question are Jesus and Moses, and the theological issue is God's eternity and the impossibility of a preexisting entity.

⁴⁷ *DV* 530. The *hijāʾ* in aṣ-Ṣūlī's recension of the *dirwān* are found in ed. Ghazzālī, 507ff.

⁴⁸ Abū Hiffān al-Mihzamī, *Akbbār Abi Nuwās* (Cairo: 1373/1953), 22–23, 116.

⁴⁹ For reports in which the relationship between the two is developed, see Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aghānī*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās, with assistance from Ibrāhīm as-Saʿāfin and Bakr ʿAbbās, 3rd ed., 24 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1429/2008), 4:14–15, 37, 69, 70, 81, 83. However, Abū al-ʿAtāhiya is supposed to have reprimanded Abū Nuwās for listening to music (100), and demanded that the latter forswear composing *zuhdiyyāt*: *DII* 161; Ibn al-Muʿtazz, *Ṭabaqāt ash-Shuʿarāʾ*, ed. ʿAbd as-Sattār Aḥmad Farrāj, 3rd ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif 1976), 207; Ibn Manẓūr, *Akbbār Abi Nuwās* (1924; Cairo: Dār al-Bustānī, 1420/2000), 70. For the quote of Abū al-ʿAtāhiya's praise of Abū Nuwās's *zuhdiyyāt*, see Wagner, *Abū Nuwās*, 456; Hamori, “Ascetic Poetry,” 268. On the alleged offer to verse swap, see *DII* 158, *DV* 336; Abū Hiffān, *Akbbār Abi Nuwās*, 75ff., no. 25, n. 3 for further references in later literature. See also Kennedy, *Abū Nuwās*, 125, although he gives no references; and *JS* 158–59.

“two faced” in matters related to Islam; in some accounts, like that of Montgomery, this situation is presented as a paradox.⁵⁰

The logic that subtends the portrayal of Abū Nuwās’s religiosity as a paradox proceeds in a peculiar pattern, common to some ancient and many modern observers. Namely, these works manipulate—or reject outright—the evidence that exists in the *zuhdiyyāt* to maintain the integrity of Abū Nuwās’s purported esoteric religiosity. As a result, Abū Nuwās’s *zuhdiyyāt* are understood in one of the following ways: an anachronistically late development, a comic mask to hide his open hostility to exoteric expressions Islam, or an involuntary manifestation of “religious” sentiment.

The first approach to Abū Nuwās’s *zuhdiyyāt* holds that, perhaps even as late as his deathbed, the poet exchanged as his muse Thalia for Melpomene. That is, after having shown sincere repentance (*tarwba*) for his reckless and dissolute life, Abū Nuwās forsook composing *khamriyyāt* in favor of *zuhdiyyāt*.⁵¹ The originator of this interpretation may have been Abū Bakr aṣ-Ṣūlī (d. 335/946–47), the first collector of Abū Nuwās’s *diwān*, given the implication of his placement of Abū Nuwās’s *zuhdiyyāt* in the tenth and final section of his recension.⁵² Wagner remarks that this narrative of Abū Nuwās’s belated turn toward Islam “has its origin in the desire of the Muslims not to let their heroes—even the sinners among them—go to hell.”⁵³ Setting aside for the moment the likelihood of this claim,⁵⁴ such a portrayal is possible only

⁵⁰ I borrow “two-faced” from a study of the seemingly contradictory aspects of the Jewish philosopher, exegete, and mystic Maimonides (d. 1204), in David Blumenthal, *Philosophic Mysticism: Studies in Rational Religion* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2006), 128–51. On “paradox,” see Malcolm C. Lyons, *Identification and Identity in Classical Arabic Poetry*, Gibb Literary Studies 2 (Warminster, UK: Aris and Philips 1999), chap. 7; Kennedy, *Abu Nuwas*, 33, 57, 75; Noorani, “Heterotopia,” 345–46, 351, 359–60; Montgomery, “Revelry and Remorse,” 129–30; JS 114–47; and Zakharia, “Figures,” 134–36, who describes several anecdotes of Abū Nuwās’s amorous relationships as “contradictory.” Hamori (*On the Art*, 36) does not subscribe to the paradox hypothesis, which he sees as more of a “problem” in early Christianity.

⁵¹ Baron Viktor R. Rozen, “Ob Abū Nuwāse i ego poessi,” in *Pamjati V.R. Rozena: Stat’i i materialy k sorokaletiju so dnja ego smerti: 1909–1948*, ed. Ignatij J. Kračkovskij and Viktor R. Rozen (Moscow: Institut Vostokovedenija Akademija Nauk USSR, 1947), 57–71, at 69–70; *apud* Francesco Gabrieli, “Abū Nuwās, Poeta ‘Abbāsīde,” *Oriente Moderno* 33, no. 6 (1953): 279–96, 294n3; Ṭaha Hussein, *Ḥadith al-arba‘a*, 2 vols. (1926; Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1976), 1:138–39; al-‘Aqqād, *Abū Nuwās*, 177–78; Mohammed al-Nowaihi (Muḥammad an-Nuwayhi), *Nafsiyyat Abi Nuwas*, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānji; Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1970), 90–91; Muḥammad ‘Abd ar-Rāziq, “Zuhdiyyāt Abi Nuwās: Qirā’a fi l-asbāb wa-d-dawāfi’,” *Majallat al-‘Arab* 51, nos. 5–6 *Dhū l-qāda wa-dhū l-hijja* (1436/2015): 301–24, at 319ff.

⁵² Kennedy (“*Zuhdiyya*,” *EP*) notes that aṣ-Ṣūlī also places the *zuhdiyyāt* of Ibn al-Mu‘tazz (d. 296/908) in the tenth and final section of the former’s *diwān*. The practice of composing *zuhdiyyāt* toward the end of one’s life is also ascribed to Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih (d. 328/940) in Muḥammad Shāfi‘i, “A Description of the Two Sanctuaries of Islām by Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih,” in *A Volume of Oriental Studies Presented to Professor Edward G. Browne*, ed. Thomas Arnold and R. A. Nicholson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), 416–38, at 418.

⁵³ Wagner, *Abū Nuwās*, 130.

⁵⁴ For example, the account of the concurrent funeral processions of Abū Nuwās and Ma‘rūf al-Karkhi (d. ca. 197/805), which the author acknowledges to be an anachronism, in Ibn al-Jawzi,

if the utter separability of the raucous and penitent phases of Abū Nuwās's life is enforced.

A second framing of Abū Nuwās's religiosity maintains that his occasional composition of *zuhdiyyāt* should not distract from the enduring transgressive ethos that informs his composition of *khamriyyāt*. This approach may be most clearly recognized in the manner in which the poet's use of pre-Islamic (*jābili*) topoi in each genre is treated. According to Hamori, in non-Nuwasian *zuhdiyyāt* the contemplation of pre-Islamic ethical qualities should be understood unproblematically as a pious exercise, which echoes the usage of the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*. However, when Abū Nuwās employs these same themes, Hamori assumes no righteous motive: "There is no textual evidence for deciding whether [these tropes] ... are flourishes of poetic versatility, or expressions of religious anguish from a man better known for his devotion to the senses."⁵⁵ For other commentators, any departure from the usual itinerary of Abū Nuwās's *diwān* into the contemplation of weighty themes—that is, a stray *zuhdiyya* in the multitude of *khamriyyāt*—is best understood as an instance of parody or irony.⁵⁶ However, these same observers find that no such indeterminacy attends the motives of Abū Nuwās in composing his *khamriyyāt*, wherein his genuine beliefs are thought to cohere once phrased in the *jābili* idiom. For instance, Philip F. Kennedy states "the bacchic spirit of ... Abū Nuwās's [allusion to *jābili* tropes] ... holds some of his *khamriyyāt* together, and sets them *cumulatively against* religious conservatism."⁵⁷ Here, evidence of Abū Nuwās's Islamic orientation can be recognized only according to the "seriousness" of the overture. It is instructive that the genre in which the evidence appears seems to be the primary, if not sole, criterion for this judgment.

Manāqib Ma'rūf al-Karkhī wa-akbbārūhu, ed. 'Abd Allāh Jubūri (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabi, 1405/1985), 181–82.

⁵⁵ Hamori, "Ascetic Poetry," 269–70, where he also covers the concepts of trust in God (*tawakkul*) and fear of the Day of Judgment. See also Kennedy, *Wine Song*, 113ff. Neither discussion refers to the work of Reinert, *Die Lehre vom tawakkul in der klassischen Sufik*, *op. cit.*

⁵⁶ For parody, see J. S. Meisami, "Abū Nuwās and the Rhetoric of Parody," in *Festschrift Erwald Wagner zum 65. Geburtstag. Band 2: Studien zur arabischen Dichtung*, ed. W. Heinrichs and G. Schoeler (Beirut and Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1994), 246–57. Kennedy (*Wine Song*, 111–12) is most explicit on the issue of irony, when, in a comparison of the *zuhdiyyāt* of Abū Nuwās and Abū al-'Atāhiyah, he sees in the former's contribution "an ironic literary game steeped in parody and genuine socio-religious anxieties. Emphasis should probably be placed on the former." Claude Audebert ("Abū Nuwas et les *fitya*," 51–52) devotes considerable space to describing the poet's satire (*sukbriyya*) of the Qur'ān and specialists in its sciences and the *ḥadīth* corpus. Hamori (*On the Art*, 46) suggests "the incompatibility of obsession and religion" but deals with the concepts of irony and parody only in relation to the poetry of Jamil Buthayna (d. second/eighth century). However, he claims to detect an "impious intent" in one Nuwasian *khamriyya* (53).

⁵⁷ Kennedy, *Wine Song*, 147 (emphasis mine), where the tropes in question are *mubādara* and *aqūlu bi-d-dabr*. Elsewhere Kennedy states: "The *khamriyya* beginning *dā'i l-aṭlāla tasfī-bā l-janūbu* channels its themes away from Islam and excludes religion from its natural domain" (223).

The third approach to Abu Nuwās's *zuhdiyyāt* holds that the religiosity expressed therein is not conditioned by stylized (dis)taste for Islam; instead, it represents the outcome of pre- or unconscious machinations. For instance, Jamel Bencheikh concludes that any suggestion of sacrality in Abū Nuwās's *khamriyyāt* merely amounts to "symbols, the origins of which lie in the very distant pre-religious consciousness." Bencheikh goes further, comparing the Nuwasian wine rite to "the religious ceremonial of the great civilizations of the Far East and South America, and likewise the magical ritual of primitive societies of Africa and Australia."⁵⁸ Montgomery separately describes Abū Nuwās's oscillation between bouts of drunkenness and piety as a function of the poet's alleged alcoholism. In this account, the persona that Abū Nuwās displays in the *khamriyyāt* is notable for his "glibness and poetic ebullience,"⁵⁹ whereas that of the *zuhdiyyāt* is typified by sullenness and withdrawals. Drawing on the description of behaviors observed in the clinical study of addiction, Montgomery construes one recorded instance of Abū Nuwās uttering a blasphemy during ritual prayer (*ṣalāt*) as a sign of "depression (alcohol-induced dysphoria)." This initial diagnosis he extends suggestively to the entirety of Abū Nuwās's production of *zuhdiyyāt*:

Whatever the occasions, and whatever the poetic and generic purposes of these poems, it is tempting to understand the *Zuhdiyyāt* as psychologically motivated by Abū Nuwās's alcoholism, in the grip of what ... has been called the metaphysical hang-over, a, to the non-alcoholic, contradictory blend of religiosity and debauchery.⁶⁰

In addition to exhibiting many of the same trans-historical portrayals of religiosity discussed with reference to the Nuwasian *khamriyyāt*, these readings of his *zuhdiyyāt* merit more specific criticisms for their defense of the historicity of Abū Nuwās's esotericism. As for the first approach, which considers that Abū Nuwās embraced his faith only late in life, it has long been pointed out that the biographical record unanimously remembers him as having composed *zuhdiyyāt* many years before he lay on his deathbed.⁶¹ The second approach, which maintains that Abū Nuwās's appropriation of *jāhili* themes represents the scattering of ingenious rhetorical bread crumbs that indicate his latent hostility to exoteric forms of Islam, implicates

⁵⁸ J. Bencheikh, "Poésies bachiques," 41. Compare with the application of Arthur O. Lovejoy's "great chain of being" thesis in JS 86n29.

⁵⁹ James E. Montgomery, "Abū Nuwās the Alcoholic," in *Philosophy and Arts in the Islamic World: Proceedings of the Eighteenth Congress of the Union européenne des arabisants et islamisants held at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (September 3–9, 1996)*, ed. Urbain Vermeulen and Daniel de Smet (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 15–26, at 23. Montgomery implores the reader to enact a "willing suspension of disbelief" (17) in order to argue this case.

⁶⁰ Montgomery, "Abū Nuwās the Alcoholic," 24–25. Montgomery elsewhere contends: "His [Abū Nuwās's] asceticism does not bring purity but delay and frustration; his gnosis does not consist in enlightenment but in drunken unconsciousness" (JS 149). This same argument is tangentially extended in Montgomery, "Of Sex and Alcohol: The Marginal Voice of Abū Nuwās?" in *Marginal Voices in Literature and Society: Individual and Society in the Mediterranean Muslim World*, ed. Robin Ostle (Strasbourg: European Science Foundation, 2000), 25–38.

⁶¹ Wagner, *Abū Nuwās*, 37–38; Abd ar-Rāziq, "Zuhdiyyāt," 308–9.

Montgomery's objection: if 'Abbāsīd poetry is read in a parodic or ironical voice, then one should also entertain a nonironic reading, "which ... is often overlooked or discarded by the reader."⁶² Aspects of the third approach are likewise analytically problematic. Bencheikh's characterization of Abū Nuwās as an exponent of "primitive" religion echoes an anthropological disposition of the 1930s and 1940s, which projects the anxieties of interwar Europe more clearly than it explains the complexity of the culture being analyzed.⁶³ In the same vein, Montgomery's detection of Abū Nuwās's ascetic pathology aligns most specifically with the Nietzschean notion of ascetic formation of the self, which is of dubious utility for assessing premodern ascetic subjectivities.⁶⁴ In all these readings of Abū Nuwās's *zuhdiyyāt*, then, existing scholarship reflects the application of historiographical and rhetorical stratagems that restrict or distort, rather than clarify, the position of Abū Nuwās's religiosity vis-à-vis that of his early 'Abbāsīd counterparts.

A final objection can be raised against these readings of Abū Nuwās's *zuhdiyyāt*, which speaks to their shared conception of religiosity. In short, previous studies of Abū Nuwās's *diwān* conceive of the possible forms of his religious expression in terms of durable and neatly separable phases: youth and old age, *jāhili* and Muslim, savage and urbanite, manic and depressive. This type of reasoning about the literary and historical value of Abū Nuwās's *zuhdiyyāt* thus corresponds to what Mark Chaves identifies as the "fallacy of religious congruence." The proposition that undergirds this fallacy, especially evident in discussions of Abū Nuwās's ironic or parodic disposition, is that "values and beliefs that individuals express [in one mode or situation] ... are consistently held and chronically accessible [at all other times]."⁶⁵ While Chaves allows for the possibility that a single mode of religiosity

⁶² JS 77.

⁶³ See the critiques in Ernest H. Gombrich, *The Preference for the Primitive: Episodes in the History of Western Taste and Art* (London: Phaidon, 2002), 159–60; Klaus Köpping and Hans-Peter Köpping, "Ritual Transgression between Primitivism and Surrealism: *Tauromachia* and the Ethnographic Imagination," *World of Music* 40, no. 1 (1998): 17–35.

⁶⁴ "Ah, give me madness, you heavenly powers! Madness, that I may at last believe in myself! Give me deliriums and convulsions, sudden lights and darkness, terrify me with frost and fire such that no mortal has ever felt, with deafening din and prowling figures, make me howl and whine and crawl like a beast: so that I may only come to believe in myself!" Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1882), 15; *apud* Tyler T. Roberts, "This Art of Transfiguration Is Philosophy: Nietzsche's Asceticism," *Journal of Religion* 76, no. 3 (1996): 402–27. Noorani ("Heterotopia," 365n64) is explicit about his debt to Nietzsche's work on Dionysian rite. For alternatives to the Nietzschean paradigm of asceticism in premodern societies, see, with caution, Gavin Flood, *The Ascetic Self: Subjectivity, Memory, and Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁶⁵ Mark Chaves, "SSSR Presidential Address: Rain Dances in the Dry Season: Overcoming the Religious Congruence Fallacy," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 49, no. 1 (2010): 1–14. Chaves describes religious congruence in three senses: "(1) Individuals' religious ideas constitute a tight, logically connected, integrated network of internally consistent beliefs and values; (2) religious and other practices and actions follow directly from those beliefs and values; and (3) the religious beliefs and values that individuals express in certain, mainly religious, con-

predominates for long periods of a person's life, previous studies have failed to successfully demonstrate such constraints. Thus, even in those schema that do consider the inconsistency of Abū Nuwās's poetic expression of his religiosity, such aesthetic modularity depends entirely on the imaginative emplotment of life-altering scenarios (e.g., immanent death, crippling addiction) that reflect a speculative, rather than evidentiary, basis.

My goal to this point has been to illustrate the logical operations used to construct an argument of an esoteric religiosity from Abū Nuwās's *khamriyyāt*, at the expense of a rigorous examination of the contents of his *zuhdiyyāt*. To be clear, it is not my intention to argue that one should give equal weight to the respective evidence of these genres, or that there exist no discernible esoteric aspects of Abū Nuwās's religiosity. Rather, it should be possible to recognize the importance of transgressive acts as expressed in Abū Nuwās's *khamriyyāt* without also discounting the more interdictory categories of the *zuhdiyyāt*. The need for a viable category of religiosity that can better comprehend these divergent modes of Abū Nuwās's religiosity is therefore clear. The description of this category constitutes the task of the next section.

Transgressive Sacrality: A Typology of Early 'Abbāsīd Religiosity

A possible schema of the religiosity Abū Nuwās exhibits has been termed *transgressive sacrality*, a designation that comprehends both transgressive and conventional modes of expression. Its usage as an analytical category in this chapter is informed by two other studies. The term seems to have been coined by Sunthar Visuvalingam in a study of the *dikṣita*, a type of Bhakti Hindu actor known from relative antiquity who engages alternately in shocking contraventions of conservative norms, such as engaging in ritual cannibalism, and public acts of penance, such as covering himself in ashes and lying in open graves. According to Visuvalingam, the *dikṣita* combines "truly penitential and ascetic practices ... and radically transgressive elements ... [in order to form] *integral* spiritual disciplines."⁶⁶ Outwardly, the *dikṣita*'s actions do not conform to the evidence found in Abū Nuwās's *khamriyyāt* and *zuhdiyyāt*, yet the combination of ascetic and transgressive elements into a recognized mode of Hindu religiosity allows for the possibility that an Islamic analogue existed in proximity to Abū Nuwās.

Although the *dikṣita* whom Visuvalingam describes are remote from Abū Nuwās, there is strong evidence that transgressive sacrality was a known, if not widespread, mode of piety in early 'Abbāsīd Iraq. This exact term is used by the late Patricia

texts are consistently held and chronically accessible across contexts, situations, and life domains" (2).

⁶⁶ Sunthar Visuvalingam, "The Transgressive Sacrality of the Dikṣita: Sacrifice, Criminality and the Bakhti in the Hindu Tradition," in *Criminal Gods and Demon Devotees: Essays on the Guardians of Popular Hinduism*, ed. Alf Hiltebeitel (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1989), 427–62 (emphasis original).

Crone to describe a certain tendencies within a “nativist movement,” known as the Khurramiyya, which was active in Basra by the middle of the second/eighth century.⁶⁷ Crone describes some of their practices as “a ritual meal followed by sexual union of the type in which the participants see themselves as enacting divine roles, as known for example from Tantric schools of Buddhism and Hinduism.”⁶⁸ A reference to a subgroup or rival group (*ṣinf*) of the Khurramis called al-Rūḥāniyya in *At-Tanbih wa-r-radd ‘alā abl al-abrwa’ wa-l-bida’*, by Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Malaṭi (d. 377/987–988), notes that these figures claimed to be able to visit the other-worldly realm of the *malakūt* (e.g., Q 7:185, 36:83) and were considered heretical *zanādiqa*.⁶⁹ According to Crone, “These ‘Spirituals’ held that they might achieve ... love of God [such] that they could steal, drink wine, and engage in forbidden sexual relations.”⁷⁰

Although there is no evidence that Abū Nuwās, a native of Basra, was affiliated with this group, the similarity between the Rūḥāniyya’s practices and the poet’s more transgressive feats are striking and suggestive of further parallels. An even more apt comparison to Abū Nuwās’s religiosity may be located in the alleged creed and practices of a subgroup or rival group of the Rūḥāniyya, whom al-Malaṭi refers to as al-Fikriyya, following his informant Khushaysh b. Aṣram (d. 253/867).⁷¹ Crone comments only briefly on the Fikriyya, but Louis Massignon, Christopher Melchert, and Bernd Radtke have each given the group some attention, with the latter having translated some of al-Malaṭi’s text.⁷² Because Radtke does not indicate several Qur’anic

⁶⁷ Patricia Crone, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 264–71, at 264–65. See similar usage in Patricia Crone, “Korramis,” *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2011, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/korramis>.

⁶⁸ Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Malaṭi, *At-Tanbih wa-r-radd ‘alā abl al-abrwa’ wa-l-bida’*, ed. Muḥammad Zaynahum Muḥammad ‘Izb (Cairo: Maktabat Madbūli, 1413/1992), 71–72.

⁶⁹ These two *āyāt* are particularly notable for their eschatological content. The other Qur’anic *āyāt* that describe the *malakūt* are Q6:75 and 23:88. All translated passages of the Qur’ān, unless otherwise noted, are from *The Holy Qur’ān: Text, Translation, and Commentary*, trans. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, 2nd ed. (London: Islamic Foundation, 1975).

⁷⁰ Crone, *Nativist Prophets*, 266.

⁷¹ Al-Malaṭi, *Tanbih*, 72.

⁷² Louis Massignon, *Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane*, 2nd ed. (Paris: J. Vrin, 1954), 94–95 (s.v. “Khashish”), in English as *Essay on the Origin of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, trans. Benjamin C. Clark (South Bend, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1997), 80–81 (hereafter *Essay*, with French and English editions). See also Massignon, *La Passion d’Husayn ibn Mansūr Hallāj, Martyr et mystique de l’Islam*, 4 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), 3:219–20, in English as *The Passion of al-Hallāj: Mystic and Martyr of Islam*, trans. Herbert Mason, Bollingen Series 98, 4 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 3:207; Christopher Melchert, “Baṣran Origins of Classical Sufism,” *Der Islam* 82 (2005): 221–40, at 225n22; Bernd Radtke, “How Can Man Reach Mystical Union?” in *The World of Ibn Tufayl: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*, ed. Lawrence I. Conrad (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 165–94, at 189–90. Van Ess (*Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 2:117–18) appears to identify the Fikriyya with another sect named “al-Bakriyya” by referring to a work by Abū Muṭi’ Makhḥūl al-Nasafi (d. 308/920 or 318/930), the *Kitāb ar-Radd ‘alā bida’*; this on the strength that the latter group professed that contemplation is the best of all acts of worship (*at-tafakkuru khayru l-‘ibādati kullihā*).

references that appear in al-Malaṭī's account, fails to consider the entirety of the passage, and misconstrues several key phrases, I offer my own translation:

And they are also named al-Fikriyyah because they contemplate. They make claims about this [contemplation], going so far [as to say that] they conduct themselves toward God, and thus have made the contemplation of this [possibility] the goal of their ritual worship (*ʿibāda*) and the ultimate end of their desire.⁷³ In that contemplation, they direct their attention to this goal by means of their souls, so as to take pleasure in [the following]: God's address to them, God's taking them by the hand, and casting their gaze toward God.⁷⁴ They claim [to do this] while [also] having intercourse with the houris and bantering [or copulating?] (*mujāmaʿa*) with the virgins who recline on settees [Q 18:31, 76:13]. The eternal youths [*mukhalladūn*; Q 56:17, 76:19] seek them out with platters of food, and all manner of drinks [*ashrāb*], and varieties of fruit.⁷⁵ So long as [a member's] consideration of [his or her] sin constitutes regret for it, turning away from it, and seeking pardon (*an-nadama ʿalayhā wa-t-tawbata minhā wa-l-istighfār*), then [he or she] is on the right path. As regards this "meditation," Satan has authored it, because none derives pleasure from the delights of paradise except for the one who arrives there on the day of resurrection. Thus has God promised his believing male and female servants.

Al-Malaṭī's account of the Fikriyya is exceptional not only for its vividness but also because he pointedly addresses the various aspects of religiosity that have animated the preceding discussion. He specifically identifies the programmatic contemplation of God's (anthropomorphic) attributes with ritual worship. Adherence to this ritual program cultivates solidarity with one's fellow adherents and with extraterrestrial beings.⁷⁶ Apparently conceding the controversial nature of their worship, the Fikriy-

⁷³ Radtke ("How," 189) renders this as "They are also called *fikriyya* because they meditate and believe that in their meditation they can reach God in reality. Thus they make their meditation the object of their devotions and their striving towards God." Massignon (*Essay* 256/210n171) maintains that *fikr* constitutes mere "reflection," whereas "contemplation" (*mu-rāqaba*) is a "deeper" mystical method.

⁷⁴ Radtke renders this as "In their meditation they see this goal by means of their spirit, through God speaking to them directly, passing his hand gently over them, and—as they believe—looking upon them directly." Van Ess (*Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 1:144) comments on the prevalence of the belief in *ruʿya bi-l-absār* among Syrian "ascetics and mystics" of the third/ninth century. Contemplation of this possibility carried on well into the fourth/tenth century in Iraq and elsewhere. For examples, see Ibn an-Naḥḥās, "*Kitāb Ruʿyat Allāh*," in *Materialien zur alten islamischen Frömmigkeit*, ed. Bernd Radtke, Basic Texts in Islamic Mysticism 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 194–214; and Abū Bakr al-Kalābādhi, *Kitāb at-taʿarruf li-madhbhab ahl at-taṣawwuf*, ed. A. J. Arberry (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānji, 1936), 20–22 = *The Doctrine of the Sufis*, ed. and trans. A. J. Arberry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), 24–26.

⁷⁵ Radtke's consideration of the passage ends here.

⁷⁶ On the aesthetics of the Qurʾānic portrayal of heaven as filled with wine, see Jane Dammen McAuliffe, "Wines of Earth and Paradise: Qurʾānic Proscriptions and Promises," in *Logos Islamikos: Studia islamica in honorem Georgii Michaelis Wickens*, ed. Roger M. Savory and Dionisius A. Agius (Toronto: Pontifical Institute for Medieval Studies, 1984), 159–74; Leah Kinberg, "Paradise," *EQ*; Nerina Rustomji, *The Garden and the Fire: Heaven and Hell in Islamic Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 91ff.; Ailin Qian, "Delights in Paradise: A Comparative Survey of Heavenly Food and Drink in the Quran," in *Roads to Paradise: Eschatology and Concepts of the Hereafter in Islam*, ed. Sebastian Günther and Todd Lawton, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 1:251–70, at 254–58. On heaven and sexual intercourse, see Aziz Al-

ya appear to promote their practices in a fully Islamic idiom. For example, if successful, the contemplator achieves phenomenological access to an environment that recapitulates almost precisely the Qur'ānic the portrayal of the gastronomic and sensual delights of heaven in the markedly eschatological *sūrat al-Wāqī'a* (56:15–25).⁷⁷ In the event that this experience motivates “sinful” behavior, al-Malaṭī contends that the Fikriyya had developed a specific vocabulary (and perhaps procedure) to indicate contrition: *nadam*, *taṭba*, and *istighfār*. Interestingly, al-Malaṭī does not immediately object to the ethical content of this form of worship, but criticizes it on the grounds that it is only appropriate after the rendering of the Final Judgment.

As with the Rūhāniyya, it is probably impossible to conclude that Abū Nuwās was a member of the Fikriyya or that he modeled his religiosity on their example. Nevertheless, it may be useful to probe Abū Nuwās's *ḍirwān* more extensively to develop the case for his exhibition of a similar ethic of transgressive sacrality, and to test this against Montgomery's description of the poet's esotericism. Recall that Montgomery has put forward the following theses: First, Abū Nuwās, under the assumption of his own “election” and God's “unlimited forgiveness,” flagrantly transgressed Islamic ritual norms. Second, the *ahl al-ḥadīth* were the local community that Abū Nuwās most opposed on account of their scorn for debauchery. Third, his esotericism manifested in apocalyptic visions of an ultimate reality. Using material from both *khamriyyāt* and *zuhdiyyāt*, the following sections appraise these postulations in the following terms: the limits of Abū Nuwās's willingness to transgress Islamic ritual; a shared ethos with the *ahl al-ḥadīth* and other pietists of southern Iraq in the early 'Abbāsid period; and the contemplation of an eschatological, rather than purely apocalyptic, horizon.

Abū Nuwās and Ritual Conformity

Although ritual remains an undertheorized area of inquiry in Islamic studies,⁷⁸ what work has been done asserts that ritual conforms closely to conservative legal princi-

Azmeh, “Rhetoric for the Senses: A Consideration of Muslim Paradise Narratives,” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 26 (1995): 215–31.

⁷⁷ On the eschatological dimensions of these verses, see Angelika Neuwirth, *Studien zur Komposition der mekkanischen Suren: Die literarische Form des Koran – ein Zeugnis seiner Historizität?* (1976; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 210–11; Todd Lawson, “Paradise in the Quran and the Music of the Apocalypse,” in *Roads to Paradise*, 2:99–135, at 100 (table 6, described as “eschatological upheaval,” “the end”).

⁷⁸ Works with premodern emphasis are largely comparative in scope. See, e.g., A. J. Wensinck, *Some Semitic Rites of Mourning and Religion. Studies on Their Origin and Mutual Relations* (Amsterdam: Müller, 1917); Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Some Religious Aspects of Islam: A Collection of Articles* (Leiden: Brill, 1981). See the tentative exploration of the concept with respect to Islam in Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion, Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 55ff.

ples: conventional ritual reaffirms the integrity of an existing regime.⁷⁹ Montgomery appears to accept this function of ritual, as in his characterization of Abū Nuwās's "destabilizing" transgression of existing forms of *ʿibāda*. Recent theoretical approaches to ritual challenge the assumption of this "stabilizing" function, and instead posit ritual as intrinsically transgressive. Ursula Rao and John Hutnyk affirm that rituals are "risky activities ... uncontrollable ... and may also trigger a—more or less—radical reorganisation of perception and social contexts."⁸⁰ Accordingly, ritual does not necessarily serve established codes or norms: "In ritual ... boundaries are crossed, violated, blurred."⁸¹ Such ritual transgression bears costs, as Peter Stallybrass and Allon White have argued: transgression is "a powerful ritual or symbolic practice whereby [an individual or group] squanders ... symbolic capital so as to get in touch with ... [external] fields of desire."⁸² Understood as inherently transgressive, ritual serves as the mechanism for trafficking spiritual currency in a potentially volatile market of exchange.

Abū Nuwās's *dirwān* provides evidence of exactly this type of transgressive notion of ritual. Take, for example, a *khamriyya* considered at length by both Montgomery and Claude Audebert. Montgomery describes the poem as having "manifestly religious content, describing how, in his old age, the libertine repents of his sins and calls on God's forgiveness," and he divides it into five parts:⁸³

1. A prologue, in which the poet and a group of companions make ready for a night out, preparing to "assault Fate" while already beginning to partake of wine; time appears to have stopped ("Time brought round its felicitous spheres and halted").⁸⁴

⁷⁹ William A. Graham, "Islam in the Mirror of Ritual," in *Islam's Understanding of Itself: Eighth Biennial Giorgio Levi della Vida Medal Conference Volume*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian and Speros Vryonis (Malibu, CA: Undena, 1983), 53–71, reprinted in William A. Graham, *Islamic and Comparative Religious Studies: Selected Writings* (Farnham, UK: Variorum Reprints, 2010), 87–106, at 94. Note Graham's criticism of Eranos-affiliated scholars' inattention to Islamic cases, as well as their overly symbolic view of ritual (90n22). Ritual symbolism primarily serves Moroccan *sharifi* dynasties and patriarchies in M. E. Combs-Schilling, *Sacred Performances: Islam, Sexuality and Sacrifice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 373, s.v. "ritual." The mythic dimension of ritual as a stabilizing agent that serves the logics of states and governments appears in Brennan Wheeler, *Mecca and Eden: Ritual, Relics and Territory in Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006). Compare with Haider, *Origins of the Shi'a*, on how ritual may catalyze communal cohesion.

⁸⁰ Ursula Rao and John Hutnyk, introduction to *Celebrating Transgression: Method and Politics in Anthropological Studies of Culture. A Book in Honour of Klaus and Peter Köpping*, ed. Ursula Rao and Jon Hutnyk (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 7.

⁸¹ Adam B. Seligman, Robert P. Weller, Michael J. Puett, and Bennett Simon, *Ritual and Its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 103.

⁸² Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *Poetics of Transgression* (London: Methuen, 1986), 201; *apud* Noorani, "Heterotopia," 360n65. The authors insert the qualifier "dominant" to describe the group that is transgressing, but this is not a necessary condition, especially because those performing ritual may occupy a submissive or inferior role.

⁸³ Montgomery, "Revelry and Remorse," 117–18; Audebert, "*Abū Nuwās wa-l-fitya*/Abū Nuwās et les fitya," 57–58.

⁸⁴ The Arabic reads *ṣālū ʿalā d-dabri*; Montgomery (amphigorically perhaps) inserts *dallance* on line 2.

2. A negotiation with the aged proprietress of a tavern, who is an old woman ("infidel crone"); the narrator and companions express their willingness to spend large sums of money ("every one open-handed, noted for his prodigality," "name your price"), which the proprietress initially refuses but eventually accommodates.
3. A description of the wine, wherein the usual aesthetic qualities are extolled: formal comparisons to luminous bodies; its ancient vintage ("It was made in the time of Saul"), its purity; its odor.⁸⁵
4. A description of the ensuing Symposium; the effects of the wine leave them as indolent as those who rest on the Sabbath (*ka-l-masābīt*).⁸⁶
5. The appearance of gray hair on the head of the narrator, which repulses "beautiful women" and inspires regret on the part of the narrator for having missed prayer, with a final appeal to forgiveness in the manner of the prophet Jonah.

All the characteristics of the previously described transgressive notion of ritual—instability, transactionality, transformation, and unpredictability—appear in this *khamriyya*. The opening is marked by an awareness of the contingency of the approaching "assault on Fate," as if this company were going into battle. There is a palpable sense that the success or failure of this mission hangs in the balance.⁸⁷ The second stage is marked by naked transactionality, a back-and-forth with the proprietress in which the protagonists even offer to be prodigal in order to obtain their objective. A clear arc of transformation transverses the final three sections of the poem: the wine becomes the basis for all types of fleeting comparison (*tashbīb*), and the company, previously having girded their loins for revelry, sustains the leisurely attitude of a day of rest. The poem's coda is marked by a final, radical, transformation: the crone-proprietress disappears, replaced by beautiful women; the narrator is no longer a redolent youth but gray haired; where the conventions of the *khamriyya* once guided the reading, the imagery has morphed into realm of the *zuhdiyya*.⁸⁸ In a final turn, the *majlis* dons the trappings of conventional Islamic religiosity, as the narration shifts dramatically from an indolent Sabbath and its divinely ordained freedom from obligations to the immediacy of performing ritual *ṣalāt*.

⁸⁵ For these tropes see Bencheikh, "Poésies," 13-17, 26-33; and Bencheikh, "Khamriyyāt," *EP*.

⁸⁶ Montgomery translates the Arabic infelicitously as "in a trance" ("Revelry and Remorse," 118n27); Montgomery otherwise indicates (JS 124n140) that his reading may be derived from the Qur'anic *subūt* (Q 25:47, 78:9); presumably, in this reading, the plural used in this verse is derived from *musbit/masbūt* ("lethargic," "motionless"). But in this context the reference is to the quality of refraining from work as though it were Saturday (*as-sibt*; *as-subūt*), the Jewish Sabbath; this impression is strengthened by the proprietress's apparent Jewish identity, as argued in Philip F. Kennedy, "Abū Nuwās, Samuel and Levi," *Medieval and Modern Perspectives on Muslim-Jewish Relations* 2 (1995): 109-25.

⁸⁷ Hamori, *On the Art*, 12, 72, especially his utilization of the concepts of *plerosis* ("filling") and *kenosis* ("emptying").

⁸⁸ Compare with Hamori's reading (*On the Art*, 51) of a *zuhdiyya* that transforms into a *khamriyya*.

Abū Nuwās's haste to answer the fleeting call to prayer shows little in common with Montgomery's contention that the poet lived with scant regard to the repercussions of his transgressions. Rather, as in other *zuhdiyyāt*, Abū Nuwās shows a well-developed sense of exhibiting contrition for instances of transgression; his vocabulary in expressing this contrition—regret, repentance, asking forgiveness—mirrors quite precisely the formulations of the Fikriyya. For instance, in one *zuhdiyya*, Abū Nuwās expresses regret but does not tie it to absolution: "Throughout his life, man never leaves off regretting it [i.e., sin], and thus is ever described by it among the people."⁸⁹ In another case, efforts at atonement might elicit God's forgiveness, on the condition that the poet turn away from sin altogether: "I turn toward God (*atūbu li-llāh*), as He is Ever-Forgiving to man's sin."⁹⁰ Finally, the sinner implores God for forgiveness: "O Pardoner of the Greatest Sin/Most Awesome Pardoner of Sin (*yā ghāfir al-dh-dhanbi l-ʿaẓīm[a/i]*): in light of his goodness (*bi-jūdihī*), pardon in abundance Your servant for his sin."⁹¹ Returning to the poem originally under consideration in this section, the narrator's fate, like that of Jonah, is ultimately uncertain unless and until God affirms the sincerity of his repentance.⁹² As the inverse of the ceremonial environment of the Symposium, the apparent urgency of Abū Nuwās's rush to prayer and pleas for forgiveness also exhibit the dislocating, transactional, and uncertain properties of ritual undertaking.

Abū Nuwās and His Moral Community

The importance of Islamic ritual in Abū Nuwās's *dirwān* signals his adherence to a type a religiosity that was not so aberrant from "the piety of *ḥadīth* folk" in his immediate surroundings.⁹³ Although previous scholarship on the influences that drove Abū Nuwās to drink has focused on the Kufan libertines, as noted above, local prominent exponents of the *abl al-ḥadīth* constitute one of a number of possible candidates in this role. In fact, the permissibility of drinking wine—or that which resembles it—is especially well attested in Kufan circles in the late second/eighth century, the site of Abū Nuwās's formative association with the libertines.

Evidence of relaxed attitudes toward drinking is evidenced in a report featuring the famed traditionist and jurist Sharik b. ʿAbd Allāh (d. 177/793 or 178/795), as

⁸⁹ *DII* 168. Compare with Abū Hiffān, *Akbbār*, 99.

⁹⁰ *DII* 169. Compare with Abū Hiffān, *Akbbār*, 116; Kennedy, *Wine Song*, 204.

⁹¹ *DII* 174.

⁹² Jonah's transgression (Q 37:139–44) was "casting lots" (*sābama*), an act the Qurʾān describes as "worthy of blame" (*mulūmun*): "Had it not been that he repented and glorified Allah (*mina l-musabbihīna*), he would certainly have remained inside the Fish until the day of Resurrection."

⁹³ For one view of this type of piety, see Christopher Melchert, "The Piety of the Hadith Folk," *IJMES* 34, no. 2 (2002): 425–39.

recorded by Shams ad-Din adh-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348).⁹⁴ During a public disputation over the licitness of wine Sharik, quoting a *ḥadīth*, registered his approval. Then, in adh-Dhahabī's account, one attendee chimes in with the fact that the great Sufyān ath-Thawrī (d. 161/778) also drank (another anonymous figure offers that he quit before he died), and still another notes that the famous traditionist and pietist Mālik b. Mighwal (d. 159/775), known in Kufa as "the best of all people," hosted drinkers in his house. Moreover, Sufyān's student al-Mu'āfā b. 'Imrān (d. 185/800), traditionist and author of a book on *zuhd*, offered a carefree comment on the licitness of *nabīdh*, a beverage often suspected to be of alcoholic content: "Drink from it as you would from water (*mā*)."⁹⁵ In their capacity as fellow tipplers—or at least people relatively unconcerned with the ritual purity of alcohol—perhaps the Kufan *abl al-ḥadīth* and Abū Nuwās could have found room for agreement.

Reinforcement of Abū Nuwās's appreciation of the *abl al-ḥadīth*'s positions arrives in a *khamriyya* that Montgomery rightfully describes as an *ʿaqida*, or creed. His translation:

I pray the five prayers at their ordained time and I obediently bear witness to the unicity of God;
I perform my ablutions properly if I become impure, and if the pauper comes to me, I do not turn him away;
Every year I keep to the months' fast, and I case not to disown God's rival and associates;
And I see to it that if there comes a summons to pledge allegiance to the saqi, I answer with haste,
And I drink her pure, along with haunch of goat and sucking kid, full of fat,
With eggs, *khāmiz*,⁹⁶ vinegar and vegetables; this has always been good for a drunk man;
And if some game should hove into view, I leap and sink my teeth into his rear, secretly, hungry like the wolf,
And I leave all the motley Rāfiḍites bowing in prayer in the Fire, at Bukhtishū's anus.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Aḥmad adh-Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām an-nubalā'*, ed. Shu'ayb Arna'ūt and Bashshār 'Awwād Ma'rūf, 24 vols. (Beirut: Mu'assasat ar-Risāla, 1423/2002), 7:203.

⁹⁵ Al-Mu'āfā b. 'Imrān, *Kitāb az-Zuhd wa-yalibi Musnad al-Mu'āfā b. 'Imrān al-Mawṣili*, ed. 'Amir Ḥasan Ṣabirī (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā'ir al-Islāmiyya, 1419/1999), 56. On Mu'āfā's *ḥadīth* and pietist credentials, see Chase Robinson, "Mu'āfā b. 'Imrān and the Beginnings of the *Ṭabaqāt* Literature," *JAOS* 116, no. 1 (1996): 114–20. Yaldız (*Afterlife*, 261n1044) notes that "Mu'āfā's *Zuhd* seems to consist mainly of traditions with eschatological content."

⁹⁶ Montgomery appears to mirror Ibn Manẓūr's bafflement at this word, in *Lisān al-ʿarab* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' at-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1412/1992), s.v. "kh-m-z," 1262. The latter records that its origin is Persian (*a'jami*), otherwise Arabized as *āmiš* or *āmiṣ*, referring to a type of dish (*arābu ḍarbl^{an} min aṭ-ṭa'ām*). 'Alī Akbar Dihkhodā, in *Lughatnāmeḥ* (Tehran: Mu'assasat Intishārāt wa Chap-i Dānishgāh-i Tih-rān, 1325–1352/1947–1973), s.v. "khamiz," describes it as "a type of stew" (*naṣṣ-i-yi khōrsh*) containing lamb or veal (*gōsfand yā gōsāleh*); he quotes az-Zamakhshari (d. 538/1144), a native Persian speaker, who describes it as "raw meat thrown into vinegar" (*gōsh-i khām ke dar sirkeh afkonand*), thus making Abū Nuwās's further mention of vinegar either tautologous or indicative of his enthusiasm for it when drinking.

⁹⁷ JS 159.

This *khamriyya* alternates thematically between the affirmation of postures that are identical to the stated beliefs of the *abl al-ḥadīth* and the denigration of those same norms. In the former instance, the transactional and transformative aspects of ritual are on display as the narrator in this poem displays a heightened consciousness of and respect for the boundary between his world and the sacred: he contemplates and recognizes God's transcendence, and acts in compliance with exoteric commands such as observing the fast of Ramaḍān.⁹⁸ In the last line, Abū Nuwās prefigures a Dantean image of eternal damnation, wherein the extremist Shi'is—noted foils of the *abl al-ḥadīth*—roast away in hell.⁹⁹ This affirmation of the transcendence of God also implicates common, theologically conservative positions, such as the refusal to associate God with others and affirming God's oneness (*tawḥīd*).

Yet transgression persists; in the latter half of the poem, the transformative and transactional aspects of ritual are again on display. Perhaps the most suggestive of these images is the narrator's transformation from a person into an animal, a metamorphosis that marks the ease with which overindulgence can transport the individual outside the bounds of her community.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, throughout the second half of the poem, it appears that the narrator recasts the scrupulosity to pious minutiae as a license to indulge in good wine, food, and sexual favors. This transactional quality of ritual observance that enables otherwise transgressive behavior is evidenced in other of Abū Nuwās's *zuhdiyyāt*, as well. For example: "None regards the dark-eyed beauty in her quarters / except the man whose balance is surpassing (*mī-zānuhu rājiḥun*)."¹⁰¹ Other ascetic verse, by way of comparison, seems nearly Stoic in its conception of future reward. For example: "Provision yourself (*tazawwad*) before there comes to you / a day so terrible (*yawmun faẓī'un*) that no provision will benefit [you]."¹⁰² The employment of this imagery is, in some ways, unsurprising; as Philip Kennedy has rightly pointed out, the invocation of a "provision" of good works (*zād*, *dhakhar*) for the afterlife is a pillar of the *zuhdiyyāt* genre.¹⁰³

The recognition of this potential transactionality of good works returns us to the question of the moral community, specifically whether the concept of a moral bank account in Abū Nuwās's verse offended the sensibilities of the *abl al-ḥadīth* and

⁹⁸ See Abū Ḥifḥān, *Akbbār*, 103–4. However, in aṣ-Ṣūlī's recension (ed. Ghazzālī, 441), Abū Nuwās expresses his impatience with these ascetic strictures: *Wa-inni bi-shabiri ṣ-ṣawmi idb bāna shāmitun / wa-innaka yā Shāwvālu li la-ṣadiqū*. This verse does not appear in al-Iṣfahānī's recension. It is found in DV 221. Compare with van Ess's incredulity over Abū Nuwās's commitment to fasting in *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 1:420n14.

⁹⁹ See Montgomery's discussion of the tenets of early Rāfiḍism in JS 139–40.

¹⁰⁰ For an exploration of the unsettling effect this human-to-animal transformation was perceived to convey in premodern Arabic literature, see Abdelfattah Kilito, "Conclusion," in *The Author & His Doubles: Essays on Classical Arabic Literature*, trans. Michael Cooperson (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 100–112.

¹⁰¹ DII 165. Compare with Hamori, "Ascetic Poetry," 273–74.

¹⁰² Kennedy, *Wine Song*, 17.

¹⁰³ Kennedy, *Wine Song*, 16–17, 132–33. See also Kennedy, "Zuhdiyyāt," *EF*³, where *zād* is discussed only in a *zuhdiyya* that appears in *Alf layla wa-layla*.

other contemporaries. Although the overt *qadari* sympathies of this formulation surely attracted criticism from some quarters, it would be wrong to assume that this particular theological proposition anathematized Abū Nuwās by the standards of his day. The belief in the accrual or debit of otherworldly benefits through mundane acts is common across religious traditions, a concept referred to as “instrumental asceticism” by Eliezer Diamond.¹⁰⁴ It was likewise known even in the earliest periods of Islam. For instance, Abū Nuwās’s justification of the transactionality of good works seems virtually indistinguishable from a saying ascribed to the Companion Ḥudhayfa b. Ḥusayl al-Yamān (d. 36/657), as related by the famous traditionist, Ibn Qutayba (d. 274/889): “I purchase my observance (*dīnī*) piece-by-piece, in fear that I should lose it all in one go.”¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, as Rkia L. Cornell has shown, by the late second/eighth century Diamond’s exact notion of instrumental asceticism had garnered widespread approval in the “ascetic ritualist” (*nussāk*) communities of Basra and elsewhere. Women, whose company Abū Nuwās often kept, mounted some of the staunchest defenses of this position.¹⁰⁶

Abū Nuwās and the End of Time

Abū Nuwās’s concern with his spiritual bank account not only indicates an abstract theological speculation but also implicates the immediacy with which he thought his spiritual balance sheet might come under review. This latter issue refers to the eschatological, rather than merely apocalyptic, expectations that preceded the arrival of the third Islamic century, exactly the time of Abū Nuwās’s creative florescence.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Eliezer Diamond, *Holy Men and Hunger Artists: Fasting and Asceticism in Rabbinic Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), esp. 11–33.

¹⁰⁵ Ibn Qutayba, *Taʾwīl Mukhtalaf al-Hadīth*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyi ad-Dīn al-Aṣḥar (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmi 1419/1999), 72; *apud* Massignon, *Essay*, 159–60/109. Massignon also highlights Ḥudhayfa’s practice of “daily *istighfār*.” Ibn Qutayba quotes the opposition to Ḥudhayfa’s position on the part of the Muʿtazili Ibrāhīm al-Nazzām (d. ca. 220/835), about whom see below.

¹⁰⁶ Rkia Elaroui Cornell, *Rabīʿa from Myth to Narrative. The Many Faces of Islam’s most Famous Woman Saint, Rabīʿa al-ʿAdawīyya* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2019), 125–46. A similarly instrumental view of sin and good works was expressed later in the third/ninth century by the Muʿtazila in the concept of the mutual cancellation (*taḥābul*) of good and bad works; see Sabine Schmidtko, *A Muʿtazilite Creed of az-Zamahṣārī (d. 538/1144)*, *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* Bd. 51.4 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft: Franz Steiner, 1997), 227–28. Compare with van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 4:64; and Schmidtko, “The Muʿtazilite Movement (III): The Scholastic Phase,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtko (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 165.

¹⁰⁷ On eschatological belief in this period, see David Cook, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Hayrettin Yücesoy, *Messianic Belief and Imperial Politics in Medieval Islam: The ʿAbbāsid Caliphate in the Early Ninth Century* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2009). On eschatology generally, see Klaus Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic: A Polemic Work on a Neglected Area of Biblical Studies and Its Damaging Effects on Theology and Philosophy*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1972). See also John J. Collins, introduction to *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*, ed. John J. Collins (Missoula,

Although such sentiments in Abū Nuwās's *dirwān* are not generally appreciated, they form some of the most intriguing evidence of nontransgressive elements of his religiosity.

For some, the idea that *zuhdiyyāt*, much less those by Abū Nuwās, would treat such a weighty subject as the End of Time is suspect. For instance, Thomas Bauer asserts concerning the themes of *zuhdiyyāt*: "Above all, it is the religious sentiment that is addressed, more than religion itself, for most of the ascetic poems are not explicitly related to theological propositions or religious norms."¹⁰⁸ This follows on Hamori's contention that specific theological, and especially eschatological, themes appear only rarely in the genre.¹⁰⁹ However, the evidence of Abū Nuwās's *dirwān* suggests the opposite. In fact, Abū Nuwās's quotations of the Qur'ān tend noticeably toward the most eschatological portions of revelation, the so-called Meccan *sūras* of the Qur'ān: two-thirds (twenty-six out of thirty-nine) of the total Qur'ānic quotations attributed to Abū Nuwās by Wagner deal with this material.¹¹⁰ Among the strongest eschatological symbols that David Cook identifies in the Qur'ān is that of the *munādi* (Q 40:22, 73:5), the voice that will announce the End of Time—this sign of impending terror accordingly appears in a Nuwasian *zuhdiyya*.¹¹¹ Another Qur'ānic image relating to the *eschaton*, the "seat of Judgment" (*maqām*; e.g., Q 14:14, 55:46) also appears: "You heedless man, who persists in inattentiveness (*ghafla*): But there is no excuse for the inattentive at the *maqām*!"¹¹²

A final, less visceral rendering of Abū Nuwās's possible eschatological preoccupation relates to his knowledge of speculative theology, or *kalām*. An especially live topic in early third/ninth-century Mu'tazili circles was the status of the atom (*shay'*, *jawhar*, *juz'*), particularly the suggestion that the realization of peak entropy would

MT: Scholars Press, 1979), 9–10. The distinction between apocalypse and eschaton is not observed in Aziz Al-Azmeh, "God's Chronography and Dissipative Time: *Vaticinium ex Eventu* in Classical and Medieval Muslim Apocalyptic Traditions," *Medieval History Journal* 7, no. 2 (2004): 199–225. As a consequence, his conception of the end of time bespeaks a "quietist determinism" (201).

¹⁰⁸ Thomas Bauer, "Die Dichter Hārūn ar-Rashids," in *Ex Oriente: Isaak und der weisse Elefant. Baghdad-Jerusalem-Aachen. Eine Reise durch drei Kulturen um 800 und heute*, Vol. 1: *Die Reise des Isaak*, ed. Wolfgang Dreßen (Aachen: Domkapitel, 2003), 168–82, at 181; *apud* Nora Schmid, "Abū l-ʿAtāhiya and the Versification of Disenchantment," in *The Place to Go: Contexts of Learning in Baghdad, 750–1000 CE*, ed. Jens J. Scheiner and Damien Janos (Princeton: Darwin Press, 2014), 147–82, at 176.

¹⁰⁹ Hamori, "Ascetic Poetry," 273. See Schmid, "Abū l-ʿAtāhiya," for a treatment of the theological themes of the sermons of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī.

¹¹⁰ DV 29–30; Wagner, *Abū Nuwās in der Nebenüberlieferung*, 237. Several *āyāt* that Montgomery (JS 139–40) suggests support Abū Nuwās's claims to an elect status among the righteous (e.g. Q 40:15, 42:52) are found nowhere in the poet's *dirwān* or later biographical commentary. For example, "Even if we were to take [a reference to *dīn* in a *khamriyya*] out of context ... [it could be understood] as 'religion' in the sense of Qur'ān 109 (al-Kāfirūn): 6, of which it is most decidedly an echo, consistent with the poet's prophetic mission."

¹¹¹ Cook, *Studies*, 142–43, 307ff. See also DV 239.

¹¹² DII 168.

coincide with the end of cosmic time.¹¹³ Ibrāhīm an-Nazzām (d. ca. 220/835), a noted Muʿtazilite and frequent intellectual sparring partner to Abū Nuwās, showed special concern with the issue of the atom, and there is evidence that the two disagreed on exactly this point.¹¹⁴ This concern with atomic motion is extended in several *zuhdiyyāt*. Abū Nuwās, like Aristotle, observes the propensity of the human body to deteriorate and contrasts it to the eternal essence of God: “So then, seek (*irghab*) God, not a mortal / who is transported (*bishrin muntaqalin*) between tribulation and the vicissitudes of fate. // And seek God, not a body / that is transported from youth to old age (*kibari*).”¹¹⁵ Further evidence of Abū Nuwās’s contemplation of God’s incorruptibility and the abeyance of atomic motion in the universe come from another *zuhdiyya*:

Glory be to The One who created creation (*man khalaqa l-khalqa*) / from a contemptuous weakness (*ḍaʿifi mahini*) //
 The One Who drives them from their inclination / to a firm resolve (*qarāri makini*) //
 In the innermost sanctums, bit by bit / He recedes from [people’s] eyes //
 Until actions appeared / [as if] created from utter stillness (*sukūni*).¹¹⁶

Conclusion

The question of Abū Nuwās’s religiosity will likely never be fully settled; this chapter is but an incomplete and suggestive correlation of the evidence found in two sections of his *dirwān* with the elements of a contemporary current of transgressive sacrality. Whatever the merits of the preceding account, its motivation is the integration of the many facets of the legacy of Abū Nuwās into an imperfect whole. I have tried to pursue this aim on a number of levels. Most notable, in this regard, is the incorporation of the mode of the *zuhdiyyāt* into the consideration of Abū Nuwās’s religiosity, and the contextualization of Abū Nuwās’s *khamriyyāt* with the example of adjacent ʿAbbāsīd Muslim actors, with whose rituals, communal affiliations, and understandings of the universe Abū Nuwās seems to differ largely in degree. In this effort, there is an explicit critique of the reading of early ʿAbbāsīd

¹¹³ Alnoor Dhanani, “Atomism,” *EP*³. On entropy, see Richard M. Frank, “The Divine Attributes according to the Teaching of Abū l-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf,” *Le Muséon* 82 (1969): 451–506, at 471–72. Al-Ashʿari (d. 324/935), in *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyin wa-ikhtilāf al-muṣallin*, ed. Helmut Ritter (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1980), 136, cites Abū Hudhayl, elaborating on this position: “God’s objects of knowledge have a totality and an entirety, and that over which God has power has a totality and an entirety. The motions of the people in paradise cease such that they are permanently at rest.” I am indebted to David Bennett for this reference, and to his expertise on these and other *kalām*-related issues.

¹¹⁴ Leonardo Capezzone, “Amorous or Scientific Metaphors? Abū Nuwās, the Beginning of the End of the Aristotelian Cosmos and an Incoherence by al-Nazzām,” *Studia Islamica* 111 (2016): 1–19.

¹¹⁵ *DII* 167.

¹¹⁶ *DII* 172. Compare with van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft* 1:303, where he highlights a series of poets’ opposition to the Muʿtazila.

khamriyyāt in a way that necessitates the creation of metahistorical dimension in which the like of Abū Nuwās floats, isolated and besotten.

Despite this criticism, previous scholarship has successfully identified in Abū Nuwās's *zuhdiyyāt* and *khamriyyāt* a persistent a sense paradox. In light of Abū Nuwās's own example, it should be possible to explore further the parallels of the inclination toward the height of sensuousness and artistry, and the sense of ultimate, or immanent, accountability for pursuing this program. It is such a conception of possibility and responsibility that Abū Nuwās himself so elegantly integrates into the following short lines:

What provision (*zād*) do you have except what's already stored? / Were it spent on
frivolities (*lahwāt*), it might even be increased. //
None enjoys the benefits (*mā aḥadun ... aḥzā*) of your provision more than you / just as
none is more culpable (*ashqā*) for your sin.¹¹⁷

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¹¹⁷ *DII* 171.

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The Wine-Drinking Party in Medieval Hebrew Poetry

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Jews wrote poetry and drank wine from the earliest times, but the history of Jewish wine poetry begins only in the mid-tenth century.¹ This development was part of a larger shift in Jewish literary systems, as Jews in al-Andalus began to write Hebrew poetry that served similar functions to those of Arabic poetry and made use of many of the formal techniques and literary themes typical of the Arabic poetry of the age. The very first Hebrew poet in the new manner, Dunash ben Labrat (mid-tenth century), has two lengthy descriptions of wine-drinking parties; and from then on, all the poets who wrote secular poetry wrote wine poetry that greatly resembled Arabic wine poetry.

Wine poetry and love poetry—secular poetry, in general—came to exist in Hebrew solely because of the inspiration provided by Arabic poetry. Much Hebrew wine poetry is very similar to the Arabic wine poetry that inspired it. Its existence is a measure of the impact of Arabo-Islamic civilization on medieval Jewry in the Islamicate world. But the social structure and literary history of the Jewish minority were different in many ways from those of the dominant Islamic society within which it was embedded. As a result, slight but significant differences between Hebrew wine poetry and its Arabic models are observed.

Interwoven Themes

As in Arabic, there are monothematic Hebrew poems about wine and wine drinking and polythematic poems that combine wine and wine drinking with other themes. The monothematic poems are mostly short descriptive or meditative poems (i.e., *qīṭāʿ*); some of these are merely epigrams—two- or three-line poems with a witty *pointe*. Moses Ibn Ezra included many such poems in the second chapter of his book of *tajnis* poems called *Sefer haʿanaq* in Hebrew, *Zabir al-riyāḍ* in Arabic. The polythematic poems are *qaṣīdas*. In *qaṣīdas*, wine and wine parties largely figure in the opening part, the *nasīb*, sometimes as the main theme of the *nasīb*, and at other times as part of a more elaborate descriptive opening. In the Andalusi period, *muwashshahs* are sometimes devoted entirely to motifs of pleasure, but as the Hebrew *muwashshah* came to be used for *madiḥ*, themes of pleasure, including wine,

¹ A few earlier poems on wine were collected by Dan Pagis, in “Wine Songs from before the Spanish Period” (Hebrew), in his collected papers *Poetry Aptly Explained: Studies and Essays on Medieval Hebrew Poetry* (Hebrew), ed. Ezra Fleischer (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1993).

often were concentrated in the first couple of strophes as the equivalent of the *nasīb* in the *qaṣida*. The most prolific author of Hebrew *qīṭāʿ* on wine was Ismāʿīl Ibn Naḡhralla (known in Hebrew as Shemuʿel hanagid); the meatiest *qaṣidas* are by Moses Ibn Ezra; the most prolific writer of *muwashshahs* in Hebrew was Todros Abulafia, many of whose *muwashshahs* include some reference to wine drinking. Hebrew wine poems draw on nearly the whole repertoire of Arabic motifs, so that many of them, especially the descriptive poems, might as well have been written in Arabic. Arie Schippers has cataloged many of the common motifs in his book *Spanish Hebrew Poetry and the Arabic Literary Tradition*.²

But even short “monothematic” poems—*qīṭāʿ*—dealing with wine often touch on themes other than wine; in fact, in both Hebrew and Arabic, wine poetry only rarely is entirely about wine. Sometimes even a short poem can be classified as belonging to the genres of wine, Eros, or nature description. It is generally accepted that the three themes tended to attract one another because of the social situation in which wine was customarily drunk: at wine parties held outdoors, in the beautifully landscaped patios of palaces and great homes at night, with the participation of male wine waiters and female dancers and singers, who—in addition to practicing their functions of pouring wine, dancing, and singing—entertained the drinking guests with literary conversation and erotic flirtation. Much wine poetry is not so much about wine and wine drinking as about the wine party.

A fourth theme often joins wine, Eros, and nature in the polythematic wine poem, a theme that has gotten more attention in studies of Arabic than of Hebrew poetry, namely, *ḥikma*, that is, aphorisms or meditations on life and death and how one should conduct oneself in relation to them. In wine poetry, the poet, while participating in the pleasures of the wine party, also often stands apart from the events that he is describing and addresses the drinkers or the reader or himself with reflections about life or about drinking or both. The poet may position himself as a solitary thinker or even as a solitary drinker amid the revels. This pose is facilitated by the tradition of organizing the poem as a summons to drink (inherited from Arabic); this common opening puts the speaker-poet in a superior position, as the master of the event, who is therefore entitled to expound its meaning. But the pose is not at all limited to poems with this stereotypical opening.

The poet may stand apart from the drinkers in other ways. In a complex *qīṭʿa*, Moses Ibn Ezra breaks off from description of the garden in spring to call for wine to dispel his sorrows; he ends by advising his fellow drinkers to beware of Time’s deceit and changeability and to drink wine to escape the grinding round of day and night and Time. The drinker’s voice is that not of a preacher but of an elder uttering

² Arie Schippers, *Spanish Hebrew Poetry and the Arabic Literary Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1994). There is a thorough catalog of the motifs of wine poetry, with many parallels from Arabic, in Israel Levin, *The Embroidered Coat* (Hebrew), 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 1994), 2:147–86.

weary worldly wisdom and employing a maxim-like *ḥikma* style.³ In some poems, the poet presents himself as a solitary figure amid the revelry, the last to remain awake when the others have submitted to the soporific effect of the wine; in these circumstances, his powers of observation and of thought are heightened. Ibn Naghralla says: "Wake, friend, for the cups have bound the censors in the prison of sleep, and I am alone with some hearty drinkers."⁴ Such a situation is presupposed by Ibn Naghralla's little erotic gem:

| | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| לקול כנור ועוגבים מטיבים, | אהי כופר לעופר קם בליל |
| "שתה מבין שפתי דם ענבים", | אשר ראה בידי כוס ואמר |
| כסות שחר במימי הזהבים. | וירח כמו יוד נכתבה על |

I'd give my life for that youth who rose at night
At the sound of the lute and lyre playing,
Who saw the cup in my hand and said,
"Drink wine from between my lips."
The moon was like the letter *yod* inscribed
On night's covering in golden ink.⁵

Wine Drinking as a Religious Problem

Although Hebrew wine poetry is very similar to Arabic wine poetry, a number of motifs that are common in Arabic wine poetry are not present in Hebrew: the narrative element in Abū al-Hindī and Abū Nuwās, the treatment of inns and innkeepers (beyond merely referring to them), and Abū Nuwās's mocking of Bedouin literary traditions are among them. The most interesting difference for our purposes is in the ways in which Hebrew poetry positions wine drinking and the wine party in relation to the religious values of Jewish culture as compared with the way wine drinking and the wine party are positioned in Arabic poetry with relation to the religious values of Islam. Here, we find subtle but notable differences.

Before exploring this difference further, we have to deal with the difference in the official attitudes of the two religions towards wine and wine drinking. In Islam, wine and other intoxicants are more problematic than in Judaism because of statements in the Qur'ān that were widely interpreted as prohibiting them. In Judaism, wine is not only not prohibited, but its use is an essential element of some religious rites, even including one religious festival for which drunkenness is advocated. Numerous

³ E.g., Moses Ibn Ezra, "December's Frost," in *Wine, Women, and Death: Medieval Hebrew Poems on the Good Life*, by Raymond P. Scheindlin (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1986), 142–47. This book contains a selection of Hebrew wine poems in the original and in verse translation, as well as a discussion of each poem. Page references to it in these notes include the pages of the relevant discussion. All quotations from medieval Hebrew poets in this chapter are cited from books in which there is a translation, where one exists; where no translation exists, citations are to the standard Hebrew critical editions.

⁴ Samuel the Nagid, "Wake, Friend," in *Wine, Women, and Death*, 60–63.

⁵ This is a more literal translation of the poem that appears in verse translation in *ibid.*, 68–71.

passages in the Bible and some in classic rabbinic lore speak of the benefits of wine. Religious authorities commend sobriety and are scornful of habitual drunkenness, but as Ibn Gabirol puts it in a lengthy wine poem, God must have been favorably inclined toward wine, since He ordered that libations of it be offered with his sacrifices.⁶ One might therefore expect that the transgressive mood so much cultivated by Arabic wine poets would not be available to Hebrew wine poets.

But the absence of authoritative texts condemning wine and intoxication in the Jewish tradition does not mean that the transgressive aspect of Arabic wine poetry is absent from Hebrew wine poetry. For wine poetry deals not only with wine; it deals with sensual pleasures in general; it is not only the ingestion of wine that offends the religious sensibility, Jewish or Muslim, but the party atmosphere in which wine was drunk and the entertainments that accompany its drinking, especially the erotic aspect of those entertainments. The wine party offends the Jewish moralist—because of its sensuousness, because inebriation might lead to forbidden behavior, and because of the wasting of time that could be devoted to the study of Torah—quite enough to permit the Hebrew poet to strike a transgressive note if he is so inclined. In particular, the erotic aspects of the wine party, particularly the homoerotic play of the male *sāqīs*, would have had for Jewish partygoers the aura of taboo that wine had for many Muslims. An excellent example of this attitude is found in a famous poem by Judah Halevi:

פי כוס בפי עופר צפה--
 ייני ומגדו פה אל פה.
 אין לי במוסרך מרפא.
 נא קט מעט מני הרפה!

Observe the cup's lip in the youth's mouth:
 My wine and his sweetness, mouth to mouth.
 No admonition of yours can cure me,
 So let me alone for a while, if you please.⁷

Thus, for Jewish poets, the wine party could be just as much an opportunity for transgression, and wine poetry just as much an opportunity for transgressive expression, as they sometimes were in Muslim society.

The tension between the pleasures of the sensual life and the demands of the religious life is a central theme of a good deal of Hebrew wine poetry. This tension, in two of its aspects, was most forcibly expressed in the two poems by Dunash ben Labrat mentioned earlier.

⁶ Hayim Brody and Hayim Schirmann, *Shelomo ibn Gabirol: shirei bahol* (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1974), pp. 89-90, poem 145, line 37.

⁷ Judah Halevi, *Diwan des abu-l-Hasan Jehuda ha-Levi*, ed. Hayim Brody (Berlin: 4 vols. Berlin: M'kize Nirdamim, 1894-1930) 1:135-37, lines 7-10.

Dunash's poem "There Came a Voice" purports to be a description of a wine party in the home of Ḥasdai Ibn Shaprut, the Jewish courtier of Abd al-Rahman III.⁸ It begins with the speaker recalling an invitation to attend a drinking party. He describes the garden in which the party is to be held, the beautiful women and youths who will be present, and the food and drink that will be provided; but the speaker rejects the invitation with a rebuke: How can we take pleasure in such worldly things when we Jews are in exile from our land as divine punishment for our earlier sins? We should be living in sorrow as mourners and in abasement as penitents. This poem treats wine poetry as transgressive not because of any prohibition of drinking wine but because all worldly pleasures are inappropriate and religiously improper, given the exilic status of the Jewish people. Not the wine itself but the ambiance associated with wine drinking—the way of life that it stands for—is considered repugnant.

Dunash's other poem depicting wine drinking, "Know Wisdom, O My Heart,"⁹ provides the first example in Hebrew of the far more common reason that wine drinking is transgressive even in the absence of a prohibition. The poem is a *qaṣida* in honor of Ḥasdai. It begins with the speaker adjuring the auditor to pursue wisdom and righteousness and to reject lust and pleasures—above all, the pleasures of wine drinking and wine parties. Such entertainments are vanity, corruption, and ruin; their joys are sorrow, their sweetness bitter; they begin with pleasure and end with lamentation. One should not pursue the ways of mortal men but the ways of God. But before the speaker gets around to this condemnation, he devotes eight juicy verses to describing the pleasures:

| | | | |
|----------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| כשוקט בשמרים, | וריחו לא נמר | זמן ארוך נשמר | ואל תתאו חמר |
| בכוסות ספירים, | ולראות לו להב | בכוסות הזהב | שתותו לרהב |
| מסבים בנהרים, | בצל נטעי גנים | ומיני מעדנים | ומאכל משמנים |
| וזיתים ותמרים. | כרמון ושקדים | כפרים ומגדים, | למראה נחמדים |
| וקנה עם מורים, | מקוטרות קידות | ושדה עם שדות | ולו בתי מדות |
| כאילות היערים, | עליהן אילות | ומקה ותעלות | וגולות ננעלות |
| במים מוגרים, | לרוות הערוגות | ואין להם פוגות, | בכל עונות עורגות, |
| בראשי האמירים. | וציצים כשנים | שחורים ולבנים | להציץ נצנים |
| | | | הלא זה ההבל... |

Do not desire wine
stored up a long time,
its fragrance unspoiled
as it lay quietly on its lees;

⁸ In Scheindlin, *Wine, Women, and Death*, 40–45. The Hebrew text and a more literal Spanish translation are found also in Carlos del Valle Rodríguez, *El Diván poético de Dunash Ben Labrat* (Madrid: Consejo superior de investigaciones científicas, 1988), 496–97 (Hebrew), 195–99 (Spanish).

⁹ In del Valle Rodríguez, *El Diván poético*, 500–502 (Hebrew), 209–17 (Spanish).

or drinking it in pride
out of golden goblets,
observing its flame
in the crystal cups;

or feeding on rich foods
and varied dainties,
in the shade of garden plantings
surrounded by canals,

delightful to behold:
camphor, fruit,
such as pomegranate, almond,
olive, and date trees.

He has a huge palace
and slave girls aplenty,
all fragrant with incense,
cinnamon, and myrrh;

secluded pools,
basins, and canals,
with does by their side
like the does in the woods,¹⁰

that are always yearning
without ceasing
to saturate the planting beds
with water that they pour

producing buds
black and white
and scarlet blossoms
the tops of the boughs—

All this is vanity ...

Both of Dunash's poems on wine drinking denounce the wine party. But it is hard to consider them moralistic poems because they are structured on a contradiction: in denouncing the wine party, they describe it in terms so elaborate and inviting as to overshadow the disapproval. The poet carries the reader or auditor off into a delightful fantasy of worldly pleasures in order to hurl him down to earth; but the reader does not forget the fantasy just because it has been exploded. On concluding our reading, we may well be bewildered as to just what the poet's commitments are. Dunash, the first Hebrew wine poet, has not merely described wine drinking; he has made a problem out of it.

Later Hebrew poets continued to deal with the duality of life of pleasure versus life of religion. I do not know of another poem about wine drinking that denounces wine drinking in Dunash's manner—although such denunciations occur occasion-

¹⁰ The does described here are, of course, not real does but fountains in the shape of does.

ally, in gnomic poetry or as a rhetorical exercise¹¹—but Hebrew wine poetry frequently adopts a preaching manner in which the speaker advocates wine drinking as a way of life. Two such poems by Ibn Naghralla have been much discussed. “Our Lives Are Merely Sleep, and All That Befalls Us Merely Dreams” begins like a sermon,¹² but instead of going on in the expected religious vein to say, “So repent your preoccupation with meaningless things and prepare for the next life,” the speaker goes on to advise his listeners to devote themselves to drinking. Right-minded people, he avers, are those who know how to drink heartily and wisely; they follow the counsel of Ecclesiastes, presumably to eat and drink heartily in this life—knowing that, in any case, they will undergo punishment in the next world.¹³

In another poem, Ibn Naghralla, again speaking in the voice of a preacher, begins by instructing his auditors that they have an obligation to God to live righteously but that obligation should not cause them to “wear out their days” in God’s service. One should divide one’s time between worship, work, and drink. Alluding to a different passage in Ecclesiastes, he points out that there is no wine, song, or fellowship in the grave, so the pleasures we make for ourselves in life are our only reward for our labors.¹⁴

The Fellowship of Drinkers

The linking of wine with fellowship in the passage just referred to is typical of Hebrew wine poetry, in which drinking is mostly depicted as a social activity. Several poets compare the gathering of friends at drinking parties to the flocking of birds. Ibn Naghralla recommends eating and drinking together with friends “who wide-mouthed chirp their song like doves and swallows when the darkness departs.”¹⁵ Ibn Gabirol implies a similar parallel:

| | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| הנה בנות עגור אשר נועדו | שרות עלי פארות ולא לומדו. |
| איך תשמעו קולם בגנת אגוז | הולך ולא תשתו ולא תחדו? |
| מה טוב ענפים חדשמו זמן | חדש ונצנים בגן יולדו! |
| עת תעבר עליהם, אזי | שיחים כשחים זה לזה יקדו. |

¹¹ An example of the latter is found in Judah al-Ḥarizi’s Hebrew *maqāma* collection known as the *Ṭaḥkemoni*, ed. Joseph Yahalom and Naoya Katsumata (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 2010), 479–84, in English as *The Book of Ṭaḥkemoni*, trans. David S. Segal (London: Littman Library, 2001), 233–37.

¹² In Scheindlin, *Wine, Women, and Death*, 54–59.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 60–63. The reference is to Ecclesiastes 11:9; the Nagid’s use of it has been explained differently, but plausibly, by Dan Pagis, “And Drink Thy Wine with Joy: Hedonistic Speculations in Three Wine Songs by Samuel Hanagid” (Hebrew), in *Poetry Aptly Explained*, 29–49.

¹⁴ Scheindlin, *Wine, Women, and Death*, 46–49, with reference to Ecclesiastes 2:10.

¹⁵ *Divān Shemuel hanagid*, ed. Dov Jarden (Jerusalem: Hebrew Union College Press, 1966), 287, no. 139.

Look! The cranes are gathered
 Singing on the boughs, though never taught.
 Can you hear their song among the nut-trees
 And not rejoice and drink?
 How lovely: boughs renewed in season new,
 And buds in gardens born,
 Breezes blowing—bushes bowing,
 Like gentlemen in earnest conversation.¹⁶

For Ibn Naghralla, the flocking of birds suggests the opportunity for a wine party, but it also puts him in an elegiac mood: “The young doves have appeared on our land; they call to one another from the tops of the boughs. So come to my garden and drink wine, abundant as my tears for absent friends.”¹⁷ *Qaṣīdas* by Moses Ibn Ezra and Judah Halevi that include wine-drinking scenes also stress the delight of fellowship along with the delight of the wine itself.¹⁸ As Ibn Naghralla says, “There is no good except a good reputation, good wine, a good singer, and a good friend, to drink as the cup goes round.”¹⁹

The drinkers whom Hebrew wine poetry has in view are not rebels and outlaws, in the manner of Abū Nuwās’s self-portrayal, but members of the social elite. Ibn Naghralla invites to a wine party “sages, elders, and pious, handsome youths.”²⁰ Like Abū Nuwās and other Arabic wine poets, he includes a lengthy boasting section in a wine poem, but his boast is not about profligate behavior; rather, he boasts of his distinguished lineage, his wealth, honors, power, learning, and his skill as a poet.²¹ In another poem, his invitation to a drinking party is directed at a “man of modesty and culture, one of the wealthy and generous.”²² In yet another, he invites a “man of wealth, friend of the great men, kinsman of the pious and the good.”²³ Describing in the most elegant terms a party to which he was invited by his own son Yehosef, Ibn Naghralla concludes with the trenchant lines: “It was a marvel, and a great thing to behold. / Whoever has not seen such a thing has never seen majesty. / There is no activity like drinking with brethren in a garden / by a water canal.”²⁴ Ibn Naghralla was a highly placed courtier in the Zirid court of Granada as well as the central figure

¹⁶ Hebrew text and verse translation in Raymond P. Scheindlin, *Vulture in a Cage* (New York: Archipelago, 2016), 216–17.

¹⁷ Scheindlin, *Wine, Women, and Death*, 72–73.

¹⁸ E.g., Moses Ibn Ezra, in Hayim Brody, ed., *Moshe Ibn Ezra: Shirei baḥol* (Berlin: Schocken, 1934–1935), 185–88, v. 5; Judah Halevi, “The Earth, Like a Girl-Child,” trans. Raymond P. Scheindlin, in *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa*, ed. Stefan Sperl and Christopher Schackle (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 148–53, vv. 9ff.

¹⁹ *Dirwān*, ed. Jarden, 291, no. 147.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 280, no. 131.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 282–83, no. 131, vv. 35–51. Ibn Naghralla’s boasts are supported by Jewish as well as Islamic sources.

²² *Ibid.*, 293, no. 151.

²³ *Ibid.*, 295, no. 158.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 283–84, no. 132. “Whoever has not seen *x* has never seen *y*” is a topos in rabbinic literature; see, e.g., Mishna, Suka 5:1.

of the Jewish community of al-Andalus, and he raised his son Yehosef to be his successor in status and power. Themes of grandeur, elegance, and power are frequent in his personal poetry. This poem is Ibn Naghralla's acknowledgment that, by making the party and by making it so well, Yehosef had demonstrated his mastery of the elegance (*zarf*) expected of a great public man and was proving himself worthy of his father.

The notion that the fellowship of drinkers forms an elite class is especially prominent in the poems of Moses Ibn Ezra, which sometimes read as manifestos for a life of serious-minded carousing. Celebrating the blooming of the roses in spring, he depicts the rose as a king, incarcerated in its leaves through the winter, and now freed; the poet summons the onlookers to acclaim the restored monarch of the garden by drinking in his honor and ends with a threat: "He who does not drink in his honor will bear his own guilt."²⁵ This expression "will bear his own guilt" is one that any medieval Jew with enough Hebrew to understand poetry would have recognized as deriving from the biblical laws of Passover, which warn that the person who fails to observe the Passover will bear his guilt (Num. 9:13). The biblical allusion lends the toasting of spring in a garden some of the weight of the observance of Passover, which is incumbent on all Jews of good standing. In the poem's logic, whoever fails to observe the rites of the garden has no place among the aristocratic attendants of spring, youth, and beauty.

In a *muwashshah* that is formulated as a harangue in favor of both Bacchus and Eros, Moses Ibn Ezra advises his reader or auditor to disregard any reproachers but to devote himself to love and wine. "Caress a lovely woman's breast by night, / and kiss some beauty's lips by morning light," he begins. After stanzas commending love and drink, he concludes:

זה הוא נעים תבל. קח חלקך
מנו, כאיל מלואים. חקך
שימה מנת ראשי עם צדקך.
אל תחשה למצץ שפה ורוק
עד תאחז חקך--חזה ושוק!

This is the joy of life, so take your due.
You too deserve a portion of the Ram
Of Consecration, like your people's chiefs.
To suck the juice of lips do not be shy,
But take what's rightly yours--the breast and thigh!²⁶

This Ram of Consecration was a one-time sacrifice that was part of the ritual by which Aaron, according to Leviticus, was inducted into his role as high priest and as founder of the priestly line. When the ram was slaughtered, Aaron and Moses were to wave the breast and thigh in the Sanctuary, and then Aaron was to consume

²⁵ Text and translation in Scheindlin, *Wine, Women, and Death*, 34–39.

²⁶ Ibid., 90–95.

them there. This part of the ritual provides Moses Ibn Ezra with the material for his *kharja*. The phrase “breast and thigh” is diverted from the sacrifice to the objects of male lust, which is indeed witty, but the biblical allusion is more than a joke. It casts a certain spell over the whole poem, implying that the priests of mankind are its voluptuaries. As a member of the Jewish social elite, the reader or auditor should submit to the act of consecration and take his rightful place among this metaphorical priesthood.

These allusions to religious texts and a multitude of others elevate the wine party to a kind of ritual communion among an elite class within the Jewish community. The wine party is made to represent a way of life that is complementary to religion. Such allusions are not meant as attacks on religion; rather, religious texts are exploited to cast a quasi-religious atmosphere over this complementary way of life. Ibn Naghralla nearly says this explicitly when he advises his reader or auditor, in a passage mentioned at the end of the previous section of this paper, to devote only half the day to God, the other half to work, but the entire night to drinking.²⁷ In another poem, he praises the person who bows to God by day and to the cup at night, who drinks, and forgets his troubles.²⁸ There is a right balance between religion and worldly pleasures, the prerogative of an elite circle of aristocratic men. As the leaders, patrons, and protectors of the Jewish community, they are entitled—indeed, enjoined—to enjoy these pleasures among themselves.

Never Irreverent, Never Indecorous: Sometimes Solemn

Because this is the prevailing mood, the biblical quotations and allusions that pervade Hebrew wine poetry, as they pervade all medieval Hebrew poetry, do not come across as blasphemous. The parodic use of biblical quotations does not so much blaspheme religion as it elevates drinking, especially social drinking, to parity with religion. To a straitlaced traditionalist, there might not be much difference, but the tone of nearly all medieval Hebrew poetry on the pleasures of the senses is not defiant. Drinking and its associated pleasures are mostly presented as a respectable way of life for the elite of the Jewish community, with the poet as that elite community's priest and prophet. It must have seemed perfectly reasonable to Moses Ibn Ezra to begin an imposing panegyric to a community leader praised as a supreme Torah scholar with a *nasib* containing an elaborate depiction of a wine party with a seductive *sāqī*. More important, Moses Ibn Ezra must have expected that his learned and pious recipient would be happy to receive such a poem.²⁹

²⁷ The reference is in note 14 *supra*. For the talmudic allusion in this line, see my discussion in *Wine, Women, and Death*, referring to Pesahim 68b and Beṣa 15b.

²⁸ See v. 6 of the poem cited in note 20.

²⁹ The poem by Moses Ibn Ezra referred to in note 19.

Even when the parodies of religious language seem mildly irreverent, they can suggest a serious meaning as well. Judah Halevi bids the wine, "Come to me and dispel all my sorrows: this is the sign of the covenant between me and it,"³⁰ echoing God's description of the rainbow to Noah (Gen. 9:12). God had promised that when mankind sees the rainbow, it will be assured that He would not again destroy the world; likewise, when we see the wine sparkling in a goblet, we are assured that our troubles will be put to flight. The alleviation that wine offers is the fulfillment of a divine promise to mankind.

Or take the summons to the morning drink. Arabic poets in a provocative mood speak of the muezzin's call as a summons to the tavern, as if deliberately flouting the demands of religion. Ibn Naghralla, in one of his wine poems, bids his reader or auditor: "Go out and see whether the light of dawn appears as a scarlet thread in the east,"³¹ an unmistakable exploitation of the language in the Mishna with which the priests are instructed to see whether the sky has become light enough to begin the day's sacrificial ritual.³² But although a pietist might take offense at any misuse of sacred texts, the phrase is tossed off so naturally that it does not seem as if the poet is mocking religion and propriety. He seems, rather, to be using the allusion as a rhetorical technique for suggesting a certain legitimacy for the sensuous life.

Sometimes, the play with religion is harmless rhetorical fun. One of the *maqāmas* of Judah al-Ḥarizi is devoted to praise of the months of the year in prose and verse. Whatever other aspects of the twelve months are mentioned, the treatment of each month ends with the statement that it is a perfect time for drinking wine. This joke works well for ten of the months, but the summer months of Tamuz and Av present a problem, because they are supposed to be devoted to mourning for the Temple of Jerusalem and other disastrous events of Jewish history. Al-Ḥarizi ends his treatment of Tamuz and Av by saying that they may be months of mourning, but wine is just the thing to alleviate our misery. The solution is flip, but the wording is not serious enough to be a challenge to religion. Consistency compels al-Ḥarizi to include these two months, and wit enables him to deal with the religious problem that they pose to the pattern. But no one would take this passage seriously as a flouting of, much less as an attack on, religion.

As Hebrew wine poetry is not blasphemous, neither is it indecorous. Hebrew poets delight in inebriation, but they never speak of scandalous or shameful drunken behavior. Ibn Naghralla, in a lengthy depiction of a wine party, amusingly describes the drinkers' muddled senses:

³⁰ *Diwān yehuda halevi*, ed. Hayim Brody, 4 vols. (Berlin: M'kize Nirdamim, 1894–1930), 2:248, no. 23.

³¹ *Diwān*, ed. Jarden, 286, no. 137.

³² "The priest in charge said to them, 'Go out and see if the time for the sacrifice has arrived.... Has the east become light as far as Hebron?' " Tamid 3:2; cf. Yoma 3:1.

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ועלה הוא לראש שרים ורמים; | שלחוהו עלי פיהם במורד, |
| במקבת ביד יעל הלומים. | והשכיבם לעת ערב, כאלו |
| אשר יקום, וראשם לא מרימים, | הקימותים לעת בקר, ואין בם |
| ואין להם בצוארם גרמים. | כאלו אין לרגליהם בהונות, |
| וננערו כנעור מחלומים. | ואמרו לי: "אמור מי את ומה לך?" |

They sent it [wine] down their throats
and it went up to the heads of those exalted lords.
We laid them down at evening as if
they had been smitten with Jael's mallet [Jud. 4:21];
We woke them in the morning, and not one
could rise, they could not lift their heads,
As if their feet had no toes,
their necks no bones.
They said to me, "Who are you, what do you want?"
waking as if from a dream.³³

Elsewhere, he says, "Friends poured golden liquid into golden goblets until you hadn't the sense to tell the light of day from the dark of night."³⁴ Moses Ibn Ezra, in one of his most elaborate depictions of drinking, speaks at length of the deadening effect of wine on the senses.³⁵ In a typically opaque passage, Ibn Gabirol, while praising wine for relieving a person's sorrows, actually seems to insist that it does not affect one's wisdom and judgment.³⁶ Hebrew poets do not speak of drunkenness as provoking sprees of socially offensive conduct or wild and illicit sexual activity.

One of the greatest of Hebrew wine poems subverts all the bacchanalian traditions of the genre by using those very traditions to express profound personal disappointment and sorrow. This poem is the *qaṣida* beginning, "Fire blazing though unstoked," one of Moses Ibn Ezra's major performances, which is built on a thorough treatment of wine in the context of a wine party. The poem opens with a description of the wine itself as it burns and rages in its crystal goblets; it goes on to describe the wine's paradoxical effects on the drinkers, who are first laid low by it, and then call for more, and whom it fills with an unrealistic, but welcome, feeling of well-being. The speaker prays for the welfare of the vine because it gives joy to those who have little joy. He evokes the *sāqī* and the circle of drinkers eagerly seizing the goblets, and then tells us how his heart leaps up at the sight of the jug bowing down to fill the cup.

But by this time, the long series of antitheses and paradoxes that he has employed in the descriptions has shaded the whole event with tristesse. Even when the speaker summons his friends to join him in drinking on the meadow by the brook

³³ *Dīwān*, ed. Jarden, 280–83, no. 131, vv. 30–34.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 288, no. 141, vv. 3–4.

³⁵ *Moshe Ibn Ezra*, ed. Brody, 72–75, no. 72, vv. 6–8. See also *ibid.*, 117, no. 116, v. 1.

³⁶ *Shelomo Ibn Gabirol*, ed. Brody and Schirrmann, 89–90, no. 145, v. 31.

to celebrate the appearance of spring, we feel that he feels essentially alone, especially when he turns to the lute player to quell his sorrow. In the music, there is at last some hope for the desolate soul, for it blocks our view of mundane reality and opens the eyes to the supernal reality, at least for those, like the poet, who have the wisdom and sensitivity to see this. Such listeners might well feel that they have been touched by an angelic spirit, and they experience relief from their sorrows. But—and here is the *takballuṣ* marking the transition from the descriptive opening to the body of the poem—the poet's sorrows find no relief even in this experience. The rest of the poem deals with these sorrows; their cause is not a concern for this lecture. What is relevant is the scene evoked by the poem's *nasīb*: the poet at a wine party, alone amid the revelers. His drinking companions are mentioned and alluded to repeatedly in the course of the poem, but we readers see them as if through a scrim, while at the center of this poem is the solitary poet for whose sorrows even the wine and the music cannot bring relief.

Conclusion

There may have been exceptions to this prevailing moderation. Judah al-Ḥarizi's *maqāma* collection, the *Taḥkemoni*, includes, in its anthological fiftieth chapter, a set of eleven epigrams lampooning a Hebrew poet of Baghdad who had written obscene poetry about drinking and explicit homosexuality.³⁷ But this scabrous work has not been preserved, nor has anything of its kind survived from the great Hebrew poets of al-Andalus.

The moderation of Hebrew wine poetry stands out most clearly when Hebrew wine poetry is compared with Arabic wine poetry, particularly the transgressive kind associated with Abū Nuwās and Ibn Quzmān. The Hebrew poet does not present himself as a ritual clown, to use Hamori's now-classic characterization,³⁸ or as an antihero rebeling against social constraints,³⁹ but rather as the spokesman of an elite social class.

The conflict between pleasure and religion is present, and is often right in the center of the poet's attention, but it is not the same conflict as the one prevalent in Arabic. The wine party and religion are presented as legitimate and complementary ways of life. To slight religion is to court punishment in the next world; to slight pleasure is to forfeit the worldly reward for our troubles and comfort for our sorrows. Sensual pleasure is not, in Hebrew poetry, an "inchoate rival religion" as Hamori describes it in Abū Nuwās's poetry (p. 73), but a complementary ritual of comradeship that sets

³⁷ *Taḥkemoni*, ed. Yahalom and Katsumata, 574–75, lines 948–55; trans. Segal, *The Book of Taḥkemoni*, 402; but the clever rhyming translation omits the reference to wine.

³⁸ Andras Hamori, *On the Art of Medieval Arabic Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), 31–77.

³⁹ G. Schoeler, "Bashshār b. Burd, Abū l-ʿAtāhiya and Abū Nuwās," in *ʿAbbāsīd Belles-Lettres*, ed. Julia Ashtiany, T. M. Johnstone, J. D. Latham, R. B. Serjeant, and G. Rex Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 294.

off the elite against the masses. This elite seems to feel that it owes allegiance to religion, but not all its allegiance.

Why did Hebrew poetry calibrate its worldliness in this way? I do not think it can have been simply because wine was permitted by Jewish law, for the reasons stated earlier. And it seems simplistic say that it was to reduce the scope for criticism, because the Arabic poets of the ribald type could have wished to avoid criticism, but instead welcomed it; thus the question is simply pushed back to why did the Hebrew poets not wish to open themselves to criticism, when the Arab poets who were their models welcomed it? I wish to propose three—not solutions to this question, but rather three ways of thinking about it.

First, the difference between the two literatures may be thought of as reflecting a difference in the social position of the wine and love poet in the two societies. While there were professional poets in the Jewish community, most of the poets whose work has come down to us and whose achievement has caused their period to be called the golden age of Hebrew literature were not professional poets but communal leaders, public officials, and rabbis; some of them were members of the Andalusī Umayyad and Taifa courts. They were the elite of their own community—not a powerful, self-confident community and culture like that of the Muslim elite on whom they modeled themselves, but the elite of a fragile minority community for which the Jewish religion, its texts, traditions, and institutions were the main cohesive force. Steeped in Arabic language and culture and at home with the manners and customs of the Muslim elite as they were, they might, among themselves, enjoy the pleasures of the Muslim elite from time to time and push against the boundaries of religion; but they had every reason to eschew saying anything that might subvert the religion that defined their communal identity or dilute their authority as leaders of that community. A Walid Ibn Yazid may have felt sufficiently powerful and protected as an Umayyad prince that he could risk some of his reputation by writing daring wine poetry; the caliph al-Amin may have been secure enough that he could allow himself to sponsor an Abū Nuwās. A Jewish leader like Ibn Naghralla had to watch his step, both to maintain his own authority in the Jewish community and so as not to undermine that community's cohesiveness.

Second, there was also a legitimating precedent for the sensuous life within the authoritative corpus of Jewish religious texts. Obsessed with the futility of most human activity, Ecclesiastes preaches a moderate hedonism that attempts to balance reverence with worldly pleasure. Just as Hebrew love poets found precedent for Arabic poetry's literary motifs in the Song of Songs and a few other biblical passages, so the wine poets found in Ecclesiastes a precedent for celebrating, in the Arabic manner, the material and sensual pleasures that were available to the Jewish elite, to which they mostly belonged. Ecclesiastes 9:7–10 gave them leave: "Go, eat your bread in joy and drink your wine heartily, for God is pleased with your deeds. At all times, wear white, and never stint oil on your head.... Whatever your hand

seeks to do, do it with all your power, for there is neither action, reckoning, knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, to which you are going."

Third, of the myriad things that medieval Jews absorbed from the dominant Arabo-Islamic society in which they lived, one of the most fruitful was how to balance the duality of *din* and *dunyā*, of religion and worldliness. Lacking any homeland but the metaphorical one of religion and religious texts, Jewish communities before the age of Islam had officially concerned themselves solely with the elements that made for a cohesive community: holy books and rites, as well as communal organization. Everything else had been the realm of the individual and therefore left hardly a trace in the literary sources. By writing about such private pleasures as wine parties and erotic life in *Hebrew*, the Jewish leadership gave a sort of official status to the idea of balancing the things of this world and the things of the next world that is normal in most cultures. To people who had absorbed this idea, a little measured carousing among sophisticated and discriminating friends did not amount to heresy, blasphemy, apostasy, infidelity, or even hypocrisy; it was merely play, such play as perhaps even the Holy One, Blessed Be He, could look down upon with a smile.

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Part 6
Symbolic and
Mystical Dimensions

Mystical Wine: The *Khamriyya* of Ibn al-Fāriḍ (576–632/1181–1235)

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In this chapter I present and interpret one of the most famous and most fascinating poems on wine in classical Arabic literature, Ibn al-Fāriḍ's mystical *Khamriyya*. There are numerous medieval commentaries on it, as well as several modern interpretations, beginning with Nicholson's *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* of 1921. My own interpretation is based on an analysis of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's mysticism, as he expounded in his great *Poem of the Way* (*Nazm al-sulūk*), a text of 761 verses in which he described his own progress to the highest stage of mystical union. It must have been composed later than the *Khamriyya*, but there are certain parallels and intertextual links indicating that the wine ode anticipates basic concepts of the *Poem of the Way*. As to the allegorical interpretations of medieval Arabic commentators, I have decided to disregard them, for in my view Ibn al-Fāriḍ rarely employs allegory as a means of expression, and when he does, he usually points it out himself. The English translation of the *Khamriyya* is indebted to previous translations by Nicholson, Arberry, and Homerin, but I have not adopted the exact wording of any of them.¹

Before I come to the text, I provide some information about the religious and literary tradition to which Ibn al-Fāriḍ belongs, Sufism and classical Arabic poetry, as he takes most of his concepts and imagery from there. One aspect I should have liked to discuss more fully, but that demands a chapter in itself, is the symbolic meaning of wine in religion. There seems to be hardly any religion—primitive or advanced, local or universal—that does not use the symbolism of wine, either in its cult or in its teaching. As we should not totally neglect this aspect, I refer to it briefly, as far as it seems relevant to our understanding of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poem. For although he is rooted in Islamic mysticism, the symbolism developed there extends far beyond Islam, and in his *Khamriyya* he combines different lines of tradition in an original way. The final issue to be discussed after analyzing the text is the question, what is the mystical wine of which Ibn al-Fāriḍ speaks? An answer can be found only within the conceptual framework of his mysticism.

When looking at the symbolism of wine in religion, the first impression is the diversity of aspects. We may be inclined to take wine's intoxicating effect as a common denominator, but even if we limit our regard to Christianity, different aspects come into view, and intoxication is probably not the first we would associate with

¹ Reynold Alleyne Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (Cambridge, 1921), 184–88; *The Mystical Poems of Ibn al-Fāriḍ*, trans. and annotated by A. J. Arberry (Dublin, 1956), 81–84; *The Wine of Love and Life: Ibn al-Fāriḍ's al-Khamriyyah and al-Qaysari's Quest for Meaning*, ed., trans., and introduced by Thomas Emil Homerin (Chicago, 2005), 13–44.

wine. Wine is administered at Holy Communion, where the transubstantiation of bread and wine into Christ's flesh and blood takes place. The identification of wine with blood is an ancient notion, to be found in various religions, as wine has been conceived as a symbol of the life-giving force. Another symbolic dichotomy has been employed and further developed in postclassical Sufism: the vine and its tendrils or branches, or the vine and its grapes, to mean the wine itself. We immediately associate Christ's words in the gospel of John (15:5): "I am the vine and you are the branches," or his saying in the same Gospel (15:1): "I am the true vine." There is significant variation also of this image in medieval Christian texts. The Virgin Mary is sometimes called "the vine," and thereby the symbol acquires a different meaning, for if Christ's mother is the vine, then Christ himself is the wine. It is that second analogy that has become most fertile in Islamic theosophy and has given rise to a number of dichotomies—mother and father, body and soul, matter and spirit. There is no lack of paradox resulting from this line of thought. Last but not least, the wine is to be viewed in terms of its effect, intoxication—in ancient cults, participants (drinkers) would lose consciousness as individuals and become part of a greater unity. From here it is only a short step to the concept of mystical union, in which the mystic loses awareness of his individual self and his rational faculties and becomes united with the Divine. In Sufi terminology *intoxication* (*sukr*) is a synonym of *annihilation* (*al-fanāʾ*), and its opposite *soberness* (*ṣaḥw*) denotes the Sufi's regaining of his rational faculties and return to life in the material world.

These few remarks must suffice to open up this perspective on religious symbolism from which Ibn al-Fāriḍ derived some of his imagery. There is another tradition to be considered, too, however, that is prior to Sufism, Arabic wine poetry. Its main characteristics can be traced back to the pre-Islamic period, although not as a genre but as a unit of the polythematic ode, the *qaṣīda*. The *khamriyya* as a separate form seems to have emerged during the course of the seventh century and was fully developed in 'Abbāsid poetry, primarily in the wine ode of Abū Nuwās. The development of the genre, though, does not concern us here. I mention only those elements of the profane *khamriyya* that we encounter in the verses of Ibn al-Fāriḍ; these concern the places and surroundings of wine drinking, the community of drinkers, the tavern attendants, the way wine was served, and a description of its attributes.

In the Arabic wine ode intoxication is not a solitary experience; we do not encounter the lonely drinker. Already in the pre-Islamic ode, wine is consumed in the company of noble friends, the enjoyment being enhanced by music. Much later, in the urban 'Abbāsid environment, drinking wine takes place in a tavern (*ḥān* or *ḥānūt*) or in a monastery, as Christian monks used to sell wine and offer hospitality to the drinkers. Again, we find the element of music, performed by a male or female singer, and there is also an erotic element, represented by the female singer or the cupbearer, a beautiful boy who passes the wine around. All this is taken up and elaborated on in mystical texts. When Ibn al-Fāriḍ refers to the tavern and the as-

sembly of boon companions, he means the community of Sufis practicing *dhikr* or listening to music (*samāʿ*), and that is the place where the mystical wine is to be consumed.

The wine was kept in a jar together with fragrant herbs. When it was taken from there and poured into a pitcher, a strainer with a straining cloth had to be used. It was then served in a cup and usually mixed with water. Over the centuries poets have depicted with a wealth of images the effect produced on the surface of the wine in the moment the water was poured into it. The same applies to the luminous quality of the wine and its fragrance. Ibn al-Fāriḍ mentions both attributes at the beginning of his *Khamriyya*, as we shall see. Another aspect of the wine's symbolism, the relation of wine to the vine, can also be traced back to 'Abbāsid poetry. Abū Nuwās, in one of his most famous poems, says about the wine,

أَلَلَيْلُ وَالذُّهَاءُ وَالْأُمُّ خَضِرَاءُ²

His father is the night, his mother green and tender,

meaning the dark grapes and green tendrils of the vine.

Ibn al-Fāriḍ was thoroughly educated in both Arabic literature and Sufism, and both are essential to his poetry. According to sources, he was first renowned as a poet and only much later achieved recognition as a Sufi sheikh. As to his biography, a few remarks will be sufficient. He was born in Cairo in the year 576/1181, the son of a religious scholar who introduced him to Sufism at an early age. After his father's death he went on the pilgrimage to Mecca and stayed there for about fifteen years. It is to be assumed that he composed his main work, the *Poem of the Way*, while staying in the Ḥijāz. His last years in Cairo, where he died in 632/1235, were filled with longing for the landscape of Arabia and the friends he left in the Holy Cities, as he tells us in several poems. His *Khamriyya*, to which we turn now, is an early text, in my view. It gives us a taste of the *Poem of the Way* and will be interpreted in light of his fully developed mysticism. There are some earlier poems on wine in postclassical Sufism, but there seems to be no established tradition from which the structure of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Khamriyya* could have been derived.

The text of the *Khamriyya* is based on Giuseppe Scattolin's edition and consists of forty-one verses.³ There is a passage of eight verses (vv. 23–30) generally considered a later addition and therefore sometimes omitted completely, as in Homerin's translation. This passage interrupts the syntactical and semantic flow of the verses and presents a contrast to the rest of the poem on account of its abstract, theoretical diction. In Scattolin's edition it is put into brackets. In my German translation pub-

² Ewald Wagner, ed., *Der Diwān des Abū Nuwās* (Stuttgart, 1988), 3:5.

³ *Diwān Ibn al-Fāriḍ*, ed. Giuseppe Scattolin (Cairo, 2004), 158–61. The full text of the poem and its translation into English is provided in appendixes 1 and 2 at the end of the chapter.

lished in 2012, I placed it at the end of the text, marked as an interpolation.⁴ How the verses came to be added to the *Khamriyya* is a matter of speculation. It has been suggested that they were inserted later either by the poet himself or by a Sufi of the school of Ibn 'Arabi. To me, neither of the two assumptions is convincing. The verses are not up to Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetic standard, and a follower of Ibn 'Arabi would have projected some of his master's concepts into the text. As it is, the passage fully conforms to the poet's mystical teaching. The author could have been a Sufi who was thoroughly familiar with Ibn al-Fāriḍ's the *Poem of the Way* and may have thought his *Khamriyya* in need of further elucidation. The verses can be disregarded from a literary point of view, but they are by no means unimportant from a conceptual perspective. To my mind, the passage virtually constitutes a commentary on the poem and can assist us in determining what Ibn al-Fāriḍ had in mind when talking about the mystical wine.

Let us now turn to the text and first consider its structure and sequence of themes. Ibn al-Fāriḍ begins by introducing the place, the tavern, where the mystical wine can be found and consumed by the community of drinkers, although time has left only a last breath of it in the material world (vv. 1–4). In the main section or sections of the poem, Ibn al-Fāriḍ goes on to explain in what way the wine still exists and affects mankind at the present time. He first points out how the mere mention of the wine or thought of it causes happiness in the human heart (vv. 5–7), then adds an elaborate depiction of the wine's miraculous powers, could it still be active in its full force in the world of phenomena (vv. 8–20). In the following passage (vv. 21–35, omitting vv. 23–30) the wine is further praised and discussed. This is the most personal part of the text, where the poet speaks of his own experience. In the concluding passage (vv. 36–41) he gives instructions on how to seek the wine, and, in a passionate appeal, he implores us not to miss what is essential in this life. With these final verses we find ourselves again among the boon companions in the tavern, who drink wine while listening to music. The conclusion thus corresponds to the introduction and forms with it a sort of frame enclosing Ibn al-Fāriḍ's main subject, the narrative of the wine's loss, its destruction through time. But as he tells us at the beginning and again at the end of the *Khamriyya*, what has been lost can be regained.

After this short survey of the text, I discuss individual verses or passages that seem of particular significance. An exhaustive analysis is not possible within the limited scope of this chapter, nor can I point out all the intertextual links between the *Khamriyya* and the *Poem of the Way*. Nonetheless, one striking parallel should be mentioned: Ibn al-Fāriḍ begins both poems with the same situation, a group of boon companions drinking wine in a tavern—that is, an assembly of Sufis in a session of *dhikr*—in this way emphasizing the importance of *dhikr* and *samāʿ* for the

⁴ Renate Jacobi, *Ibn al-Fāriḍ. Der Diwan. Mystische Poesie aus dem 13. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 2012), 67–70.

mystical path. There is also a difference, or to be more exact, a certain development, if we look at the two texts more closely. I take up this point again at the end of the chapter.

Ibn al-Fāriḍ does not always allude to the mystical dimension of his poems from the very beginning, but in the *Khamriyya* he makes it plain in the first verse, where it cannot be missed:

١ شَرَبْنَا عَلَى ذِكْرِ الْحَبِيبِ مُدَامَةً سَكِرْنَا بِهَا مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يُخْلَقَ الْكَرَمُ

1. In memory of the Beloved we drank a wine
That made us drunk before the vine was created.

The term for memory is *dhikr*, used here in its twofold meaning, as a general term and as an allusion to the Sufi practice. The wine they drank, Ibn al-Fāriḍ says, had been consumed before creation, and here, at the very beginning, he introduces the paradox of the wine and the vine. The wine, belonging to the sphere of timelessness, precedes its material origin, from which it grows. The spiritual and the material aspects of the universe are contrasted and set in relation to each other.

The second line is perhaps the most beautiful verse of the poem:

٢ لَهَا الْبَدْرُ كَأْسٌ وَهِيَ شَمْسٌ يُدِيرُهَا هَلَالٌ وَكَمْ يَبْدُو إِذَا مَزَجْتَ نَجْمُ

2. Its cup is the full moon, itself a sun passed around
By a crescent. When it is mixed, how many stars appear!

There are two levels of meaning to be considered here, both of them relevant for interpretation of the text. Ibn al-Fāriḍ uses the imagery of the celestial bodies known from the profane *khamriyya*. "The wine is a sun" was already pronounced by an 'Abbāsīd poet in alluding to its luminous quality. Ibn al-Fāriḍ conveys the same notion but adds to its meaning. The sun's splendor is only reflected by the full moon and the crescent, as well as by the stars in the process of mixing the wine. In later commentaries, the full moon is interpreted as the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*), "the gnostic or saint," as Nicholson puts it, "in whom God reveals himself completely," whereas the crescent is the gnostic still veiled in part by his individuality but who makes God's names and attributes known to the world. When the wine is mixed with water, or, again in the words of Nicholson, "when pure contemplation is blended with the element of religion, the traveller is guided by the stars in his night-journey."⁵ As already mentioned, I have my doubts about allegorical interpretations of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verses as in the method of medieval commentators, who split an image into parts and explain them separately. As a consequence, the beauty of the whole image is diminished or completely destroyed. Ibn al-Fāriḍ is first and foremost a poet. In this verse he succeeds, by his genius, in combining the poetic

⁵ Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, 184n3.

tradition and the spiritual dimension to express a central concept of his mysticism. The sun is the perfect image of the wine because it is a cosmic force, the only origin of light in the world. Neither the moon in its different stages nor the stars shine of their own essence; they borrow their light from the sun's radiance. The presence of wine in the tavern is sufficient to transform it into a place filled with pure light, and no Muslim would fail to associate the "Light verse" of the Qur'ān (24:35), which begins "God is the light of heaven and earth."

In verse 3, Ibn al-Fāriḍ mentions the two attributes of the wine most often referred to in the wine ode, its perfume and its luminosity:

٣ وَلَوْ لَا شَذَّاهَا مَا اهْتَدَيْتُ لِحَافِئِهَا وَلَوْ لَا سَنَاهَا مَا تَصَوَّرَهَا الْوَهْمُ

3. But for its fragrance, I would not have been guided to its tavern,
But for its radiance, my imagination would not have pictured it.

Both attributes, the poet says, can still be perceived by the senses in the material world, at least by sensitive people like himself, and without them he would not have found the tavern, where the wine is to be consumed, i.e. the community of Sufis, nor would he have been able to imagine its existence. For the wine is lost, he goes on to say in verse 4, destroyed by time, save for a last trace within the heart of those having mystical knowledge:

٤ وَلَمْ يُبْقِ مِنْهَا الدَّهْرُ غَيْرَ حُشَاشَةٍ كَأَنَّ خَفَاَهَا فِي صُدُورِ النَّهْيِ كَثْمُ

4. Time left nothing of it save a last breath,
As if it had been concealed in the breast of the wise.

At this point the poet begins with the main part of the *Khamriyya*, the narrative of the eternal wine's loss and the search for the few traces still remaining in the world of phenomena. I do not discuss the following verses in detail, except for the most significant lines, and give only a summary of their content. The wine's power is such, Ibn al-Fāriḍ says, that even mention of its name intoxicates the "members of the tribe," the Sufis, and the mere thought of it causes joy and dispels sorrow. In a long passage (vv. 8–20) he then describes the miraculous effects of the wine, were it still fully active in the universe, thereby echoing some of Christ's miracles. It would revive the dead and heal those who were sick and at the point of death. The lame would walk, the blind would see, and the deaf and dumb would be liberated from their afflictions. The poet lets his imagination roam to convey the cosmic power of the wine. It would affect human beings, even if they did not come in direct contact with its substance. The earth where its vine grows, the cup containing it, the strainer that filters it, even the letters of its name—wherever they are written—would have a healing or intoxicating influence. The whole passage, with the exception of a few verses, is composed with a striking sequence of syntactical parallelism, always intro-

duced by the same particle (*law*), which indicates the hypothetical meaning of the statement. While praising the cosmic power of the wine, the poet leaves no doubt that it lost its influence on earth. But there is a way to win back what time destroyed. The *Khamriyya* in its entirety is about loss and regain.

After treating the wine in its manifestations, either real or imaginary, Ibn al-Fāriḍ speaks about its attributes directly. In verse 21, he is asked to describe it, as he is considered an expert on the wine, to which he fully agrees. His concise description is the focal point of the poem:

صَفَاءٌ وَلَا مَاءٌ وَلَطْفٌ وَلَا هَوًى وَنُورٌ وَلَا نَارٌ وَرُوحٌ وَلَا جِسْمٌ ٢٢

22. Purity, but not water, subtlety, but not air,
Light, but not fire, spirit, but without a body.

In this verse the mystical wine is set in relation to the four elements of the universe, in the sequence water, air, fire, earth. The wine corresponds to all these elements, the poet says, but in their spiritual quality. It is suggestive that the last element, earth, is represented by the human body. This gives us a clue to the interpretation of the verse, for the relation of matter and spirit in the human species can be assumed in the case of the other elements as well. The mere existence of water, air, and fire depends on the Divine Essence within them.

It is after this line of the *Khamriyya* that the additional eight verses were inserted. They continue the poet's description on a highly abstract level and are discussed later. In the text as originally conceived, Ibn al-Fāriḍ continues his praise alluding to literature, poetry, and prose, where the wine is immortalized by language, his own domain. We are not far from the truth, I believe, if we assume that he is also speaking of himself. There is a passage at the end of the *Poem of the Way* glorifying the beauties of the world. It is interesting, if perhaps somewhat surprising, that he mentions his own poetry among them (v. 730). His frequent reference to language in both forms of expression, speaking and writing, is a leitmotif of the *Khamriyya*, and, at the same time, its justification.

In the following verses different aspects of the wine are discussed, but the poet always plays with the opposition of the material and the spiritual wine. It is sin to consume wine in Islam, but the spiritual wine must be sought and consumed. All else would be sin; what is more, it would deprive human beings of their essential gain in this world. From Muslims and their attitude, the poet turns to Christian monks, here again contrasting the two aspects of the wine, for it was in Christian monasteries that wine was mainly produced and offered to drinkers in medieval Islamic society. Ibn al-Fāriḍ admits that Christians were, indeed, often drunk from the mystical wine, although they never consumed it. Mere longing for it was sufficient to cause intoxication. His own case is different, however, as he emphasizes in the following verse that leads us back to the beginning of the poem:

وَعِنْدِي مِنْهَا نَشْوَةٌ قَبْلَ نَشْأَتِي مَعِيَ أَبَدًا تَبْقَى وَإِنْ بَلَى الْعَظْمُ ٣٥

35. As for me, I was drunk with it before I was created,
And so it will remain forever, though my bones decay.

This is the final verse before the concluding passage and sums up the essence of the *Khamriyya*. The mystical wine has been consumed in eternity, before the universe was created, and the mystic who reaches the state of union will remain drunk with it throughout his life and after death. He returns to the state prior to God's covenant with mankind before their creation, mentioned in the Qur'an (7:172), a central concept of Islam and of Sufism. Already in the ninth century the state of annihilation (*al-fanā*) was interpreted as a return to man's existence before the covenant.⁶ The verse constitutes an important intertextual link with the *Poem of the Way* (v. 158). When Ibn al-Fāriḍ refers to his longing for the Divine Beloved, the central figure of his great poem, he uses the same words as in the verse just quoted: "I was drunk (with it) before I was created" (*wa-kānat nashwatī qabla nash'atī*). This suggests that the wine in the *Khamriyya* symbolically corresponds to the Divine Beloved in the *Poem of the Way*.

In the last passage of the text the poet gives practical advice on how to seek the mystical wine. With these verses we are back in the tavern, the session of *dhikr* and *samāʿ*, recitation and listening to music, and this is the place, he once more declares, where the wine must be sought. He begins his speech explaining how it should be consumed:

عَلَيْكَ بِهَا صِرْفًا وَإِنْ شِئْتَ مَرَّجَهَا فَعَذْلُكَ عَنْ ظَلَمِ الْحَبِيبِ هُوَ الظُّلْمُ ٣٦

36. Drink it pure! But if you wish, you may mix it,
For it would be wrong to turn away from the Beloved's mouth.

The verse has been interpreted by medieval commentators as the advice, in the words of Nicholson, "to contemplate the Divine essence alone," and if that is not possible, to seek "the highest manifestation of that Essence, namely, the Spirit or Light of Muḥammad, which is figuratively called 'the water of the Beloved's teeth.'"⁷ Whether we accept this interpretation or not, the basic meaning of the verse seems clear enough. The wine in its pure state might be too strong for some mystics. In that case it is advisable to dilute it, in other words, not to go to extremes, although it should by no means be avoided altogether. There is a similar advice in the *Poem of the Way*. A novice is warned not to continue the path to its highest stage, because it might be dangerous for his mental balance. As Ibn al-Fāriḍ

⁶ Ali Hassan Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writing of al-Jumayl* (London, 1962), 57.

⁷ Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, 188n1.

puts it in verse 309: "But this is thy limit: stop here, for wert thou to advance a step beyond it, thou wouldst be consumed by a brand of fire."⁸

In the following verse Ibn al-Fāriḍ continues his spiritual guidance, again blending the poetical and the mystical dimension of his poetry in an ingenious way:

۳۷ وَدُونَكْهَا فِي الْحَانِ وَاسْتَجْلِيَهَا بِهِ عَلَى نَعَمِ الْأَلْحَانِ {فَهِيَ} بِهَا عَنَّمُ

37. Seek it in the tavern and there unveil it!
Accompanied by melodies you can win the prize.

With the key term *unveil* he alludes to the metaphorical identity of wine and woman, a conventional image of the profane *khamriyya* since the Umayyad period. The verse provides a further intertextual link with the *Poem of the Way*, where Ibn al-Fāriḍ speaks of the "bridal chamber," in which the "unveiling," the final attainment of unity with the Beloved, takes place (vv. 6 and 209). The poet's reference to music in the second hemistich underlines the identity of the tavern with a session of *dhikr* and *samāʿ*.

The wine, Ibn al-Fāriḍ goes on to explain, dispels sorrow and destroys the effect of time; the drinker is restored to the primordial state of timelessness. The two concluding verses are a passionate appeal not to miss the only way to win happiness and fulfilment in this life:

۴۰ فَلَا عَيْشَ فِي الدُّنْيَا لِمَنْ عَاشَ صَاحِيًّا وَمَنْ لَمْ يَمُتْ سُكْرًا بِهَا فَاتَهُ الْحَزْمُ
۴۱ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ فَلْيَبْكْ مَنْ ضَاعَ عُمُرُهُ وَلَيْسَ لَهُ فِيهَا نَصِيبٌ وَلَا سَهْمُ

40. No joy is in the world for one who lives sober,
And who does not die drunk with it – wisdom has passed him by.
41. Let him weep for himself, whose life is wasted
Without a share or portion of this wine.

Before attempting a final interpretation of the text, I outline some aspects of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's mystical theory based on his *Poem of the Way* and discuss the passage subsequently added to the *Khamriyya*. According to Sufism in its monistic orientation, God manifests himself in the universe. Creator and creation, God and the material world, are essentially one, a view condemned as heresy in Islamic theology. The unity of God's essence, unknown and unchangeable, is emphasized in monistic Sufism as well, however. It is through his names and attributes that the world of phenomena comes into being. Unity and plurality are both aspects of the Divine, and the mystic on his path is called on to recognize that. Ibn al-Fāriḍ's mysticism is based on the monistic view just outlined. In many verses of the *Poem of the Way* he exhorts a novice to realize the unity of God's essence in the plurality of phenomena

⁸ Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, 228.

and to visualize the Divine substance hidden within each material object. This hidden substance is the Divine Beloved, whom Ibn al-Fāriḍ recognizes in all that he perceives. And because he loved beauty, he considered the perception and contemplation of beauty, in nature and in art, an integral part of the mystical path.

In his theory of sense perception he explains, how the soul (*nafs*), the mediator between the material and the spiritual sphere, reports the message of the senses to the spirit (*rūḥ*), for the spirit alone is able to recognize the Divine Essence, from which the object receives its beauty. Thus, soul and spirit have a definite function in Ibn al-Fāriḍ's mystical theory, and we shall meet them again in the passage inserted after verse 22, where he refers to the four elements of the universe. It is not possible to interpret the passage in all its aspects here. Instead, I point out only what seems most significant for the present purpose. The text is structured in such a way that two verses always form a semantic unit:

٢٣ تَقَدَّمَ كُلُّ الْكَائِنَاتِ وَجُودُهَا قَدِيمًا وَلَا شَكْلٌ هُنَاكَ وَلَا رَسْمٌ
٢٤ وَقَامَتْ بِهَا الْأَشْيَاءُ ثُمَّ لِحِكْمَةٍ بِهَا اخْتَجَبَتْ عَنْ كُلِّ مَنْ لَا لَهُ فَهْمٌ

23. It existed prior to all created things
In eternity, when there was no form nor sign.
24. All phenomena came into being through it according to a wise decision,
Whereby it was veiled from those lacking understanding.

The wine is preexistent, the author says; it belongs to the sphere of timelessness. What is more, it is the origin of the material world, the immaterial substance in all phenomena, and in this way, it has been "veiled," that is, wisely hidden from the ignorant. In the following two verses he discusses the relationship of spirit and soul, and of spirit and matter:

٢٥ بِهَا اتَّصَلَتْ رُوحِي بِحَيْثُ تَمَازَجَا تَحَادًا وَلَا جِزْمٌ تَخَلَّلَهُ جِزْمٌ
٢٦ فَنَفْسٌ وَلَا خَمْرٌ وَأَدَمُ لِي أَبٌ وَخَمْرٌ وَلَا نَفْسٌ وَلِي كَرْمُهَا أُمُّ

25. My spirit longed for it, so that they were mingled together
As one, but not as a body pervades another body.
26. There is a soul and no wine, for Adam is my father,
And wine and no soul, for its vine is my mother.

The human spirit, because it belongs to the immaterial sphere, can reach the wine through love and be united with it. The soul, in contrast, since it belongs to the world of Adam, the created world, cannot touch it. Also, the wine is free from contact with matter, here called the vine, its mother and at the same time the mother of humanity, a paradox we must leave unexplained in the present context. The notion is followed up on in the next two verses, where the relation of unity and plurality is explained:

٢٧ وَلُطْفُ الْأَوَانِي فِي الْحَقِيقَةِ تَابِعٌ لِلْطُّفِ الْمَعَانِي وَالْمَعَانِي بِهَا تَسْمُو
 ٢٨ وَقَدْ وَقَعَ التَّفْرِيقُ فَالْكُلُّ وَاحِدٌ فَأَرْوَاحُنَا خَمْرٌ وَأَشْبَاكُنَا كَرْمٌ

27. The subtlety of the vessels depends in reality on the subtlety
 Of its essence, and the essence multiplies by means of the vessels,
 28. For division has taken place, while the whole is one,
 And so our spirits are a wine, and our bodies a vine.

The vessels are the material phenomena that are refined by their spiritual content, and it is through them that plurality becomes possible, meaning that the Divine essence can manifest itself. The division between spirit and matter, the wine and the vine, has taken place in the cosmos, as it has taken place within ourselves, the author emphasizes once more, but we must realize that they are one. The two final verses of the passage refer to time and timelessness:

٢٩ فَلَا قَبْلَهَا قَبْلٌ وَلَا بَعْدَ بَعْدِهَا وَقَبْلِيَّةُ الْأَبْعَادِ فَهِيَ لَهَا خْتَمٌ
 ٣٠ وَحَصْرُ الْمَدَى مِنْ قَبْلِهِ كَانَ عَصْرَهَا وَعَهْدُ آبَيْنَا بَعْدَهَا وَلَهَا الْيَتَمُ

29. Before it is no “before” and after it is no “after.”
 The priority of all posterity is essential to its nature.
 30. Its grapes were pressed ere time began,
 And our father’s age came after it, itself being an orphan.

The wine does not belong to the sphere of time, we are told once more in the mystical diction of paradox, and therefore it is an orphan, that is, without a cause or origin. In eternity nothing comes into being, because everything exists.

To sum up the subjects of the passage, they are the wine’s preexistence, its creative force, its two aspects, unity and plurality, and the human condition between the spiritual and the material sphere. What the author said in an abstract, theoretical diction corresponds to the symbolic meaning of the wine Ibn al-Fāriḍ conveyed in his poetic, imaginative language. That brings us to the final question to be discussed: what is this wine he speaks about, and how does he want us to understand the *Khamriyya*? The most frequent answer given by previous scholars is to take the wine as a symbol of Divine Love pervading the universe. This is an interpretation that can certainly be accepted in a general way; as Nicholson puts it in a footnote of his commentary: “Absolute Being or God or Divine Love—all these terms are the same in essence.”⁹ So we could leave it at that, but perhaps it is possible to be more precise. In my view, the *Khamriyya* anticipates main concepts of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s mystical theory, which are further developed and clarified in his *Poem of the Way*. Let us take a last look at the text.

⁹ Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, 187n2.

We are first introduced to a company of drinkers in a tavern, an assembly of Sufis during a session of *dhikr*. This is the place, where the eternal wine, the wine they drank before creation, can be consumed again. It is lost in the universe, destroyed by time, but its fragrance and luminosity can still be felt by men sensitive to the spiritual dimension of the world and will lead them to the Sufi path. In verse 22 the poet sums up the gist of the text. The wine is the spirit giving life to the body, purity to the water, subtlety to the air, and light to the fire. It symbolizes God's manifestation through his names and attributes in the world, the Divine Essence concealed in each material phenomenon. In the *Poem of the Way* we find another symbol, the Beloved, but the meaning is the same, as a comparison of the two texts suggests. At the end of the *Khamriyya* Ibn al-Fāriḍ once more emphasizes, where the wine can be found and consumed, imploring us to seek it, for it is the only source of joy in this world. It is at this point that the *Khamriyya* differs from the *Poem of the Way* in a fundamental aspect. In the *Khamriyya* the tavern—the assembly of Sufis practicing *dhikr*—constitutes an end, the poet's final destination, as it were. In the *Poem of the Way* the same situation is conceived as a beginning, Ibn al-Fāriḍ's point of departure on his path to the highest stage, the union with the cosmic power of the universe. But that is beyond our present concern.

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Appendix 1

The *Khamriyya* of Ibn al-Fāriḍ. Arabic text adopted from the edition by Giuseppe Scattolin.¹⁰

طویل/Tawil

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|----|
| سَكِرْنَا بِهَا مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يُخْلَقَ الْكَرُمُ | شَرِبْنَا عَلَى ذِكْرِ الْحَبِيبِ مُدَامَةً | ١ |
| هَلَالٌ وَكَمْ يَبْدُو إِذَا مُرِجَتْ نَجْمُ | لَهَا الْبَدْرُ كَأْسٌ وَهِيَ شَمْسٌ يُدِيرُهَا | ٢ |
| وَلَوْلَا سَنَاهَا مَا تَصَوَّرَهَا الْوَهْمُ | وَلَوْلَا شَذَاهَا مَا اهْتَدَيْتُ لِحَانِهَا | ٣ |
| كَأَنَّ خَفَاهَا فِي صُدُورِ النَّهْيِ كُنْتُ | وَلَمْ يَبْقَ مِنْهَا الدَّهْرُ غَيْرَ حُشَاشَةٍ | ٤ |
| نَشَاوَى وَلَا عَارَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا إِثْمُ | فَإِنْ ذُكِرَتْ فِي الْحَيِّ أَصْبَحَ أَهْلُهُ | ٥ |
| وَلَمْ يَبْقَ مِنْهَا فِي الْحَقِيقَةِ إِلَّا اسْمُ | وَمِنْ بَيْنِ أَحْشَاءِ الدُّنْيَا تَصَاعَدَتْ | ٦ |
| أَقَامَتْ بِهِ الْأَفْرَاحُ وَارْتَحَلَ الْهَمُّ | وَإِنْ خَطَرَتْ يَوْمًا عَلَى خَاطِرِ امْرِئٍ | ٧ |
| لَأَسْكُرَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهَا ذَلِكَ الْخَنَمُ | وَلَوْ نَظَرَ النَّدَامَانُ خَنَمَ إِنَائِهَا | ٨ |
| لَعَادَتْ إِلَيْهِ الرُّوحُ وَأَنْتَعَشَ الْجِسْمُ | وَلَوْ نَضَحُوا مِنْهَا ثَرَى قَبْرِ مَيِّتٍ | ٩ |
| عَلِيلًا وَقَدْ أَشْفَى لِفَارَقِهِ السُّقْمُ | وَلَوْ طَرَحُوا فِي فِي حَائِطِ كَرَمِهَا | ١٠ |
| وَيَنْطِقُ مِنْ ذِكْرِي {مَذَاقَتِهَا} الْبُكْمُ | وَلَوْ قَرَّبُوا مِنْ حَانِهَا مُقْعَدًا مَشَى | ١١ |
| وَفِي الْعَرَبِ مَرْكُومٌ لَعَادَ لَهُ الشَّمُّ | وَلَوْ عَبَقَتْ فِي الشَّرْقِ أَنْفَاسٌ طَيِّبِهَا | ١٢ |
| لَمَّا ضَلَّ فِي لَيْلٍ وَفِي يَدِهِ النَّجْمُ | وَلَوْ خَضِبَتْ مِنْ كَأْسِهَا كَفُّ لَا مَسِ | ١٣ |
| بَصِيرًا وَمِنْ رَأُوفِهَا تَسْمَعُ الصُّمُّ | وَلَوْ جَلِيتْ سِرًّا عَلَى أَكْمِهِ غَدَا | ١٤ |
| وَفِي الرُّكْبِ مَلْسُوعٌ لَمَّا ضَرَّهُ السُّمُّ | وَلَوْ أَنَّ رُكْبًا يَمَّمُوا تُرْبَ أَرْضِهَا | ١٥ |
| جَبِينِ مُصَابٍ جُنَّ أَبْرَأَهُ الرَّسْمُ | وَلَوْ رَسَمَ الرَّاقِي حُرُوفَ اسْمِهَا عَلَى | ١٦ |
| لَأَسْكَرَ مَنْ تَحْتَ اللَّوَا ذَلِكَ الرَّقْمُ | وَفَوْقَ لَوَاءِ الْجَيْشِ لَوُزْمَ اسْمِهَا | ١٧ |
| بِهَا لَطَرِيقِ الْعَزْمِ مَنْ لَا لَهُ عَزْمُ | تُهَذِّبُ أَخْلَاقَ النَّدَامَى فَيَهْتَدِي | ١٨ |
| وَيَحْلُمُ عِنْدَ الْغَيْظِ مَنْ لَا لَهُ حِلْمُ | وَيَكْرُمُ مَنْ لَا تَعْرِفُ الْجُودَ كَفُّهُ | ١٩ |

¹⁰ *Diwān Ibn al-Fāriḍ* (Scattolin), 158–61.

- ٢٠ وَلَوْ نَالَ قَدُمُ الْقَوْمِ لَنُتِمَ فِدَامِهَا
 ٢١ يَقُولُونَ لِي صِفْهَا فَأَنْتَ بِوَصْفِهَا
 ٢٢ صَفَاءٌ وَلَا مَاءٌ وَلُطْفٌ وَلَا هَوًى
 ٢٣ (تَقَدَّمَ كُلَّ الْكَائِنَاتِ وَجُودُهَا
 ٢٤ (وَقَامَتْ بِهَا الْأَشْيَاءُ ثُمَّ لِحِكْمَةٍ
 ٢٥ (بِهَا اتَّصَلَتْ رُوحِي بِحَيْثُ تَمَازَجَا
 ٢٦ (فَنَفْسٌ وَلَا خَمَرٌ وَأَدَمُ لِي أَبٌ
 ٢٧ (وَلُطْفٌ الْأَوَانِي فِي الْحَقِيقَةِ تَابِعٌ
 ٢٨ (وَقَدْ وَقَعَ التَّفْرِيقُ فَالْكُلُّ وَاحِدٌ
 ٢٩ (فَلَا قَبْلَهَا قَبْلٌ وَلَا بَعْدَ بَعْدِهَا
 ٣٠ (وَحَصْرُ الْمَدَى مِنْ قَبْلِهِ كَانَ عَصْرَهَا
 ٣١ مَحَاسِنُ {تَهْدِي} الْمَادِجِينَ لِيُوصَفِهَا
 ٣٢ وَيَطْرُبُ مَنْ لَمْ يَدْرِهَا عِنْدَ ذِكْرِهَا
 ٣٣ وَقَالُوا شَرِبْتَ الْإِثْمَ كَلَّا وَإِنَّمَا
 ٣٤ هَنِيئًا لِأَهْلِ الدَّيْرِ كَمْ سَكِرُوا بِهَا
 ٣٥ وَعِنْدِي مِنْهَا نَشْوَةٌ قَبْلَ نَشَاتِي
 ٣٦ عَلَيْكَ بِهَا صِرْفًا وَإِنْ شِئْتَ مَرْجُهَا
 ٣٧ وَدُونَكِهَا فِي الْحَانِ وَاسْتَجْلِهَا بِهِ
 ٣٨ فَمَا سَكَتَتْ وَالْهَمُّ يَوْمًا بِمَوْضِعٍ
 ٣٩ وَفِي سَكْرَةٍ مِنْهَا وَلَوْ عُمُرُ سَاعَةٍ
 ٤٠ فَلَا عَيْشَ فِي الدُّنْيَا لِمَنْ عَاشَ صَاحِبًا
 ٤١ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ فَلْيُنِكَ مَنْ ضَاعَ عُمُرُهُ
 لَأَكْسَبَهُ مَعْنَى شَمَائِلِهَا اللَّئِيمُ
 خَيْرٌ أَجَلٌ عِنْدِي بِأَوْصَافِهَا عِلْمُ
 وَنُورٌ وَلَا نَارٌ وَرُوحٌ وَلَا جِسْمُ
 قَدِيمًا وَلَا شَكْلٌ هُنَاكَ وَلَا رَسْمُ)
 بِهَا اخْتَجَبَتْ عَنْ كُلِّ مَنْ لَا لَهُ فَهْمُ)
 تَحَادًا وَلَا جِرْمٌ تَخَلَّلَهُ جِرْمُ)
 وَخَمَرٌ وَلَا نَفْسٌ وَلِي كَرْمُهَا أُمُّ)
 لِلطُّفْلِ الْمَعَانِي وَالْمَعَانِي بِهَا تَسْمُو)
 فَأَرْوَاحَنَا خَمَرٌ وَأَشْبَاخُنَا كَرْمُ)
 وَقَبْلِيَّةُ الْأَبْعَادِ فَهِيَ لَهَا خَتْمُ)
 وَعَهْدُ آبِنَا بَعْدَهَا وَلَهَا الْيَتَمُ)
 فَيَحْسُنُ فِيهَا مِنْهُمْ النَّشْرُ وَالنَّظْمُ
 كَمُشْتَقٍ نَعْمَ كَلَّمَا ذُكِرْتَ نَعْمُ
 شَرِبْتُ اللَّيِّ فِي تَرْكِهَا عِنْدِي الْإِثْمُ
 وَمَا شَرِبُوا مِنْهَا وَلَكِنَّهُمْ هُمُو
 مَعِيَ أَبَدًا تَبَقَى وَإِنْ بَلَى الْعَظْمُ
 فَعَدْلُكَ عَنْ ظَلَمِ الْحَبِيبِ هُوَ الظُّلْمُ
 عَلَى نَعَمِ الْأَلْحَانِ {فَهِيَ} بِهَا غَنَمُ
 كَذَلِكَ لَمْ يَسْكُنْ مَعَ النِّعَمِ الْغَمُ
 تَرَى الدَّهْرَ عَبْدًا طَائِعًا وَلَكَ الْحُكْمُ
 وَمَنْ لَمْ يُمُتْ سُكْرًا بِهَا فَاتَهُ الْحَزْمُ
 وَلَيْسَ لَهُ فِيهَا نَصِيبٌ وَلَا سَهْمُ

Appendix 2

The *Khamriyya* of Ibn al-Fāriḍ. English translation by Renate Jacobi.

1. In memory of the Beloved we drank a wine
That made us drunk before the vine was created.
2. Its cup is the full moon, itself a sun passed around
By a crescent. When it is mixed, how many stars appear!
3. But for its fragrance, I would not have been guided to its tavern,
But for its radiance, my imagination would not have pictured it.
4. Time left nothing of it save a last breath,
As if it had been concealed in the breast of the wise.
5. But whenever it is mentioned among the tribe,
The tribesmen become intoxicated without disgrace or sin.
6. It arose from the innermost depth of the jars,
And in reality nothing remained of it except a name.
7. Yet when it comes one day into a man's mind,
Joy will dwell in him and sorrow depart.
8. Could the boon companions only see the seal of its jar,
That seal alone would make them drunk without the wine.
9. And could they sprinkle it on the earth of a dead man's grave,
His spirit would return to him and his body rise.
10. And could they spread in the shadow of the trellis with its vine
A sick man about to die, his disease would leave him.
11. Could they bring a lame man to its tavern, he would walk,
And at the mention of its fragrance the dumb would speak.
12. Had the breath of its perfume spread in the East,
A man in the West, who had lost the sense of smell, would regain it.
13. Had the palm of one touching its cup been tinged with red,
He would not go astray at night with a star in his hand.
14. Could it be secretly unveiled before the blind, he would see,
And from the sound of its strainer the deaf would hear.
15. Had a group of riders sought the soil of its land,
And one of them stung by a scorpion, the poison would not harm him.
16. Could a magician write the letters of its name on the forehead
Of one afflicted by madness, the writing would cure him.
17. And could its name been inscribed upon the banner of an army,
The letters would intoxicate those walking beneath that banner.
18. It refines the natures of the boon companions,
And guides the irresolute on the path of resolution.
19. He whose hand knew no munificence is now generous,
And he who was without forbearance now forbears in times of wrath.
20. Could the fool of the tribe kiss its strainer,
That kiss would make him realize the essence of its qualities.
21. They say to me: "Describe it, for you know its description well."
Yes, that is true, I am acquainted with its attributes:
22. Purity, but not water, subtlety, but not air,
Light, but not fire, spirit but without a body,

[Verses 23–30 are a later addition and appear here at the end.]

31. Beautiful attributes guiding men to the highest praise,
And beautiful are their words about it in poetry and prose.
32. He who never knew it rejoices when it is mentioned,
As the lover of Nu'm is moved at the mention of her name.
33. They said: "You were drinking sin." No, surely not,
I drank what is sin to abstain from, in my belief.
34. Health to the Christian monks! How often were they drunk with it,
Although they never drank it, but they longed for it.
35. As for me, I was drunk with it before I was created,
And so it will remain forever, though my bones decay.
36. Drink it pure! But if you wish, you may mix it,
For it would be wrong to turn away from the Beloved's mouth.
37. Seek it in the tavern and there unveil it!
Accompanied by melodies you can win the prize.
38. It never dwells with sorrow in the same place,
As grief never dwelt together with songs.
39. And if you were drunk with it for only an hour,
Time will be your faithful slave and you his master.
40. No joy is in this world for one who lives sober,
And who does not die drunk with it—wisdom has passed him by.
41. Let him weep for himself, whose life is wasted,
Without a share or portion of this wine.

[Later addition:]

23. It existed prior to all created things
In eternity, when there was no form nor sign.
24. All phenomena came into being through it according to a wise decision,
Whereby it was veiled from those lacking understanding.
25. My spirit longed for it, so they were mingled together
As one, but not as a body pervades another body.
26. There is a soul and no wine, for Adam is my father,
And wine without a soul, for its vine is my mother.
27. The subtlety of the vessels depends in reality on the subtlety
Of its essence, and the essence multiplies by means of the vessels.
28. For division has taken place, while the whole is one,
And so our spirits are a wine and our bodies a vine.
29. Before it is no "before" and after it is no "after."
The priority of all posterity is essential to its nature.
30. Its grapes were pressed ere time began,
And our father's age came after it, itself being an orphan.

Mystifying Wine: An Analysis of Sayyid ‘Alī Hamadānī’s Commentary on Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s Wine Ode

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In its most basic form, the function of a commentary in relation to a literary work is not only one of description and explanation, but also of interpretation. We might imagine the act of commenting as the selection and privileging of a text’s many potential intrinsic meanings over others, when for an instant an end is put to the proliferation of the text’s meanings. Or we might prefer to think of a commentary as the locus where meaning is produced and attached to a text extrinsically. Regardless, any commentary (not only on literary works) is arguably always more than just a vessel for the continuing transportation of a text. An example known to most students of the intellectual heritage of the Middle East are the Arabic commentaries on Greek philosophy that are no longer considered as a mere “‘vehicle of Hellenism,’ as a transporter of Greek thought,”¹ but have instead come to be treated as philosophical works in their own right. In this chapter I seek to contribute to our understanding of the roles and functions of commentaries by analyzing the way the Persian mystic Sayyid ‘Alī Hamadānī (b. 1314) treats and defines the bacchic images of the Egyptian mystic Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s *Khamriyya*.

For centuries the poetry of the renowned Cairene mystic ‘Umar ibn ‘Alī ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 1235) was the subject of a tradition of lively reception, and the number of commentaries (*shurūḥ*) that have been produced on Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s poetry indicate the importance attributed to his work.² Whereas some of these commentaries focus on the poems’ linguistic aspects, others provide a mystical exegesis of the verses’ religious content by relating them to other religious sources. Among the commentators of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s poetry we find the Sufi Sa‘īd al-Dīn al-Farghānī (d. 1300), ‘Izz al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Kāshānī (d. 1334), al-Kāshānī’s student Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī (d. ca. 1346), and ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d. 1731).³ In the case of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s famous *Khamriyya*, scholars have noted that some commentators read the poem through the mystical views of Ibn ‘Arabī. For instance, Shigeru Kamada argues that al-Nābulusī’s “interpretation almost exclusively follows a specific worldview, namely, Ibn al-‘Arabī’s.”⁴ Reynold A. Nicholson goes one step further, attributing a certain artificiality to al-Nābulusī’s interpretation when he states that al-Nābulusī

¹ Wisnovsky (2004), 150.

² Th. Emil Homerin (2001a, 27–28) suggests that up to twenty-five works of commentary were written on Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s poetry.

³ Homerin (2001a), 27–28.

⁴ Kamada (1982), 37.

“brings in philosophical theories that belong to Ibnu ‘l-‘Arabí rather than to Ibnu ‘l-Farid.”⁵ Kamada, too, eventually comes to a similar conclusion, claiming that al-Nābulusi’s commentary is “farfetched to such a degree that his interpretation sometimes does not seem to be an interpretation of the Khamriyah.”⁶ What these comments betray is a specific understanding or expectation as to what constitutes the role and scope of commentaries. In fact, it seems that, according to Kamada and Nicholson, a commentary has to exclusively serve the purpose of communicating the primary text’s “meaning,” and it ought not to exceed the limits that supposedly define the primary text as an autonomous, hermetically sealed piece of writing.

Yet a less prescriptive approach to the commentary tradition would allow commentaries a greater variety of functions and interactions with primary texts. In fact, one might read, as Homerin suggests, mystical authors’ commentaries on Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s poetry as expositions of and argumentations for their own theosophical system. As a result, Homerin argues, these commentaries sometimes “became respected mystical works in their own right,” as it is the case with al-Farghānī’s, Qayṣarī’s, and al-Nābulusi’s works on Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s poetry.⁷ In this chapter I seek to further develop this understanding of an alternative function of mystical commentaries through an analysis of a commentary on Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s *Khamriyya* (Wine Ode) that was written by the Persian Sufi author and preacher Sayyid ‘Alī Hamadānī.⁸ Born in 1314 in Hamadan, in present-day northwestern Iran, Hamadānī is mostly known for converting the people of Kashmir to Islam.⁹ Although his shrine in Khatlan, in present-day Tajikistan, and the Sufi hospice built in his honor in Srinagar, India, are still popular destinations for pilgrims, he is probably most venerated in the Kashmir, where he is considered a saint.¹⁰ Regarding his commentary on Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s *Khamriyya*, little has been written so far, except for Homerin’s claim that it is “directly indebted to that of al-Qayṣarī.”¹¹ Because Homerin gives no evidence to support his assessment, this chapter also provides several preliminary observations on the relationship between the two texts.¹²

⁵ Nicholson (1967), 184.

⁶ Kamada (1982), 28.

⁷ Homerin (2001b), 52. Homerin (2001b, 54) reinforces his understanding of the role of commentaries by stating that they “cannot be fully understood and appreciated without a careful study of their own particular mystical concerns and positions.”

⁸ Various scholars have acknowledged the value of such commentaries as independent works by making them the main subject of their research. For discussions of commentaries on Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s poems other than the *Khamriyya*, see Scattolin (1993); and Homerin (2007). For biographical information on Hamadānī, see Stern, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*², s.v. “‘Alī b. Shihāb al-Dīn b. Muḥammad al-Hamadānī.”

⁹ Azka’i, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Hamadani, Sayyid ‘Alī.”

¹⁰ Azka’i in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Hamadani, Sayyid ‘Alī.”

¹¹ Homerin (2001b), 342n6.

¹² I would like to thank Dr. Vahid Behmardi for providing me with parts of the new edition of al-Qayṣarī’s commentary that he is currently preparing.

Hamadānī's work, which carries the title *Mashārib al-Adhwāq*, begins with an extended introduction in which he discusses basic ideas and concepts of Islamic mysticism, which can be traced back to such eminent scholars as Ibn 'Arabi or al-Ghazālī. In practice Hamadānī combines a treatise on the nature of God with a discussion of the love relationship between God and mankind. God's nature is, according to Hamadānī, based on the principle of *tawḥīd*, expressed in the formula "There is no god but God," which mystics interpreted as pointing to the fact that nothing really exists apart from God.¹³ On the one hand, the basic principle of existence (*wujūd*) implies that God alone is real and has *wujūd*, which makes God identical with *wujūd*. On the other hand, it also implies that everything that exists in the cosmos—and in fact the cosmos itself—while not being identical with *wujūd* is "infused with His reality, because He has given them existence and attributes."¹⁴ As a result, God's nature can be said to be characterized both by incomparability (*tan-zīh*), because God "is not qualified by anything by which the *wujūd* of the cosmos is qualified,"¹⁵ and by comparability or similarity (*tashbīh*), because through God's self-disclosure in the things of the cosmos, God can be compared to them.¹⁶ This has significant implications for the love for God, because it means that God can be loved through his self-disclosures, and the love of God for anything can be said to be God's love for himself. In the course of these explanations Hamadānī also discusses the different states (*ahwāl*) and stations of the mystical path (*maqāmāt*).

From this introduction Hamadānī proceeds to offer an interpretation of each individual line. In doing so, Hamadānī generally follows a distinct structure: a verse of the *Khamriyya* is quoted in Arabic, followed by a short analysis (in Persian) of the line's grammar (especially syntax) and a discussion of the figurative meanings of some of the line's expressions. After that comes the actual explanation or interpretation of the verse, again in Persian. Finally, Hamadānī concludes most of his explanations on the individual lines of the *Khamriyya* with verses of poetry written by himself or other poets, including 'Aṭṭār, 'Irāqī, and Rūmī. Hamadānī's explanation of the verse's syntax and his interpretation of its meaning or underlying authorial intention (*murād*) take the form of a metatext, in which Hamadānī refers explicitly to Ibn al-Fāriḍ and his text. This metatext is an explicit link between Ibn al-Fāriḍ's and Hamadānī's texts, emphasizing their respective roles as primary text and commentary, but also as statement or theory (Hamadānī) and evidence (Ibn al-Fāriḍ).

In his *Khamriyya* Ibn al-Fāriḍ describes a mystical wine that is characterized by the various magical effects it has on human beings. Although this wine seems to have disappeared from the physical world, it might still be found in mystical circles. Ibn al-Fāriḍ concludes his *qaṣīda* by urging readers to seek out the wine because those who die without having tasted it have wasted their lives. In the rest of this

¹³ Chittick (2005), 40.

¹⁴ Chittick (1998), 12.

¹⁵ Chittick (1998), 12.

¹⁶ Chittick (1994), 24.

chapter, I analyze Hamadānī's commentary on two of the *Khamriyya*'s verses, compare it to al-Qayṣarī's commentary, and offer an interpretation of the workings of Hamadānī's text.

Verse 1

We drank to the memory of the Beloved a wine شَرَبْنَا عَلَى ذِكْرِ الْحَبِيبِ مَدَامَةً
that made us drunk before the vine was created. سَكَّرَنَا بِهَا مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَخْلُقَ الْكَرْمَ

In the opening verse of his *Khamriyya* Ibn al-Fāriḍ combines the poem's main theme, wine, with the theme of love. Ibn al-Fāriḍ introduces several personae, including the lyrical I, drinking companions, and the (physically) absent Beloved (*al-ḥabīb*). In terms of the poem's setting, indications of its temporal frame feature prominently in the first line. Ibn al-Fāriḍ places the bout in a time "before the vine was created," which refers to the moment when God created Adam and blew the spirit into him.¹⁷ The companions' drunkenness that Ibn al-Fāriḍ describes can thus be interpreted as their ecstatic state in union with God, shortly before mankind was separated from God through our entry into the terrestrial world at the moment of creation. Eternally intoxicated from this experience of union, the mystic always seeks to return to this state.¹⁸ Ibn al-Fāriḍ alludes to this notion of eternity by using the term *mudāma* for wine, as its root *d-w-m* has a strong temporal connotation and can be translated as "it existed endlessly."¹⁹ Given that the wine is not only eternal but cannot in fact belong to the realm of physical existence because it precedes the vine (*karm*), the term *mudāma* suggests the metaphysical dimension of the poem. Ibn al-Fāriḍ's use of the religiously charged term *dhikr*, which refers to the remembrance or repeated oral mention of God, further discourages an exclusively profane reading of the *Khamriyya*. Finally, the first verse is the only place where the wine is directly mentioned; all other verses refer to it through personal pronouns. This fact arguably contributes to the ambiguity surrounding the wine's nature and its possible symbolic function.

As a result, it does not come as a surprise that many commentators engaged in a mystical reading of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Khamriyya*. Homerin, who in interpreting this verse relies entirely on the commentary of al-Qayṣarī, reads the poem's opening line as an allusion to the primordial covenant between mankind and God, who is described as

¹⁷ See Pedersen, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*², s.v. "Ādam."

¹⁸ See Schimmel (1975), 58.

¹⁹ Lane (1863), 935–36. According to Lane (1863, 938) both the forms *mudām* and *mudāma* can be used to refer to wine. Ashgar Seyed-Gohrab (2014, 72) notes that the usage of *mudām* in reference to wine "reminds us that long life is an inseparable connotation of wine, both in the sense that old wine is better and that it is health-giving."

the Beloved.²⁰ Thus, the poet and his drinking companions represent “the pre-eternal spirits of human beings,” who, before the creation of the “world of manifestations” (i.e., vine), or the “physical universe,”²¹ as Arberry puts it, purified themselves “of all traces of human volition, selfhood, and duality” with the wine of paradise.²² Moreover, Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s usage of the term *dhikr* prompts al-Qaysārī to engage in a discussion of the different levels of the remembrance of God.²³ Al-Nābulusi offers an almost identical reading as he describes the mystics’ annihilation and union with God that results from the performance of *dhikr* and the experience of the wine of divine Love.²⁴ Finally, Arberry also points at the popularity of the theme of the preeternal wine among mystical poets by quoting verses by Abū Nuwās (d. 813/815).²⁵

Hamadānī’s commentary on the *Khamriyya*’s opening verse offers a very similar reading of the poem’s imagery. His remarks, which lack any direct reference to Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s verse, focus—mainly following al-Qaysārī’s interpretation—on the act of creation, the role of saints and sheikhs, as well as the function of wine and remembrance in the attainment of Divine Perfection.²⁶ As does al-Qaysārī, Hamadānī begins his interpretation with a description of the act of creation, which alludes to humans’ preeternal existence that is transferred “from the darkness of the abode of nonexistence to the desert of existence” (48), reflecting Ibn ‘Arabi’s understanding of creation according to which “God did not create the world from not being, but only brought it from being in His knowledge into actual being.”²⁷ Hamadānī’s description of creation also refers to the particular role that God assigned to the saints. They are described as having attained a “robe of honor” (*khiṭāṭ*), which designates them as guides in faith, as well as the power to perform miraculous works (*karāmat*) (49), one of the main preconditions of sainthood in Islam.²⁸ Moreover, Hamadānī mentions that God granted them with the higher, spiritual means of perception and comprehension, such as “immediate experience” (*dhawq*), true “vision” (*ayn*), and “witness-

²⁰ Homerin (2011), 172.

²¹ Arberry (1956), 85.

²² Homerin (2011), 172–73.

²³ Al-Qaysārī (2005), 15–16; Homerin (2001b), 56.

²⁴ Kamada (1982), 23.

²⁵ Arberry (1956, 86) refers to the following verses (see Wagner 1988, 281), for which I have attempted to give a literal translation:

سَبَقَتْ خَلْقَ آدَمَ اسْتَقْبَلَهَا سَلَافُهُ
مَا خَلَا الْأَرْضَ وَالسَّمَاءَ فَهِيَ كَانَتْ ، وَلَمْ يَكُنْ

Make me drink the good wine that has preceded the creation of Adam,
when the wine existed and nothing else, except heaven and earth.

For a biography of Abū Nuwās, see Wagner, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*³, s.v. “Abū Nuwās.”

²⁶ Homerin (2001b), 54–57.

²⁷ Nicholson (1967), 103. See also Burckhardt (1953), 64–65.

²⁸ Nicholson (1967), 68. *Karāmat* are the miraculous works of prophets and saints (Sajjadi 1991, 653). See Al-Qaysārī (2005), 14.

ing” (*shubūd*) (49), delivering them from the lower means of perception, traditionally represented by knowledge (*‘ilm*), intellect (*‘aql*), and imagination (*waḥm*).²⁹

Afterward, Hamadānī turns to the human striving for the (re)attainment of the preexistential state. First of all, Hamadānī explains that only drunkenness can erase humans’ “additional attributes” (*ṣifāt-i izāfī*), which they gained on the day of the primordial covenant, when they became individualized (*ta‘ayyun*) (49).³⁰ He describes the drunkenness as stemming from a kind of wine that is the product of “remembering the real Beloved,” or God (49), thus interpreting Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s wine as a heavenly drink that derives from the recollection (*dhikr*) of God and helps humans free themselves from the earthly existence that they received at creation. Subsequently, Hamadānī presents four steps for the purification of mankind from these additional attributes. Regarding the first two steps, Hamadānī declares:

The first step should be the experience of the drink from the fountain of Salsabil, mixed with ginger, so that the intensive heat of the desire’s fire burns away the wayfarer’s attributes. Then they should relieve the burning heat of the thirst of the craving ones from the desert of desire with the wine of Kafuri, so that they might witness “the annihilation of a person who has never existed and the subsistence of Him who is eternal” (*fanā’ man lam yakun, wa-baqā’ man lam yazul*) through the attainment of the coldness of certainty.³¹ (49)

And he continues:

Then, by pouring out the fragrant wine of the unseen visitations and the secret moonlight-conversation, the spirit of those who have witnessed the vision of the Beauty and those who have desired the desires of hope becomes perfumed. (50)

So far, in his interpretation Hamadānī follows closely al-Qayṣarī’s reading of the *Khamriyya* in that he further develops the poem’s bacchic imagery by first mention-

²⁹ See Chittick (2000), 33. The term *waḥm* is not to be confused with *khayal*, which can also be translated as “imagination” and denotes the modality of understanding God’s *tashbih*; *waḥm* belongs to the realm of the intellect (*‘aql*) that discerns God’s *tanzih* (Chittick 2005, 17–19). Hence, *waḥm* might also be translated as “imaginal perception” (Chittick 1989, 209) or “allegorical conception” (de Boer and Gardet, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*², s.v. “Ālam,” para. 11).

³⁰ See Schimmel (1975), 143. Chittick (2000, 26) notes that in mystical theory, drunkenness (*sukr*) is considered the result of being overcome by God. In this state of intoxication and ecstasy the mystic is finally annihilated and as such loses all his attributes, which are considered “additional” because in reality they belong to God (Chittick 2000, 35).

³¹ This idea of annihilation of the contingent and, in reality, nonexistent individual and the subsistence of the eternal Divine, which is not mentioned by al-Qayṣarī, stems from Ibn ‘Arabi’s *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (The Meccan illuminations) and relates to the twofold perspective on *wuḥūd*. For Ibn ‘Arabi, perfect knowledge of God means to recognize both the singularity of *wuḥūd* in God and the multiplicity of its existence. Hamadānī points to the very same insight when he states that the mystic witnesses both the “annihilation of a person who has never existed,” which is the recognition that nothing (including the wayfarer himself) but God exists or has *wuḥūd*, and “the subsistence of Him who is eternal,” which implies that everything exists through God. Moreover, Ibn ‘Arabi explicitly draws a connection between the principles of *wuḥūd* and God’s simultaneous incomparability (*tanzih*) and similarity (*tashbih*) when he links the “annihilation of a person who has never existed” to the state of *tanzih*, in which God is “stripped of descriptions.” See Chittick (1998), 84–85.

ing the fountain of Salsabil, which is mentioned as a fountain of paradise in the Qurʾān (76:17–18),³² and the non-intoxicating wine of Kafuri, which is reserved for the righteous (*al-abrār*) (76:5), and then referring to the “fragrant wine,” which is later also identified as “sealed” (*makbtūm*).³³ However, Hamadānī goes on to add a fourth stage, to which there is no equivalent in al-Qayṣarī’s commentary:

Then, in the fourth stage, the trees of the existence of the perfecting perfect ones (*kāmilān-i mukammil*) who are the intimate friends of the court of attention and the honourable of the arena of sainthood, bear, as a result of the pollination through the Spirit’s breath ... , the fruits for the perfection of the natural defects of the incomplete ones and for the purification of the bestial impurities of the polluted ones. (50)

Hamadānī thus speaks of the “perfecting perfect ones” (*kāmilān-i mukammil*), meaning those who have reached perfection themselves and can help others to do the same, which is a reference to the *awliyāʾ*, the saints or friends of God. Hamadānī reverts to a botanical allegory in likening the saints to trees, which, after having been pollinated via the wind and divine manifestations, hold the means of perfection for the aspiring mystic.³⁴

In addition to the numerous small variations that we find in Hamadānī’s commentary, in contrast to al-Qayṣarī’s work, is Hamadānī’s subsumption of the above-described steps of purification under the concept of the “drinkers’ immediate experience of the fountains of knowledge (*mashārib ʿirfān*)” (49).³⁵ In his comments on the *Khamriyya*’s second verse, Hamadānī uses a similar image, the “fountains of

³² See Rippin, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*², s.v. “Salsabil.”

³³ The “unseen visitations” (*wāridāt-i ghaybi*) and “secret moonlight conversations” (*musāmārāt-i sirri*) (50), whose effect on people’s spirit Hamadānī compares to the wine’s fragrance—or rather, its ability to infuse others with its own fragrance—both refer to experiences of the Divine. The “unseen visitations” are a temporary visit of the Divine, for instance in the form of speech that enters directly the servant’s heart, without being first perceived by one of his senses, whereas the “secret moonlight-conversations” indicate secret and private conversations between God and God’s servant in the world of the unseen. For an explanation of the mystical role and function of “moonlight conversations,” see Sajjadi (1991), 720. For “visitations,” see Sajjadi (1991), 778. Chittick (1989, 266) also emphasizes the heart as the place where divine visitations occur when he gives Ibn ʿArabi’s definition of the *wāridāt* as “every praiseworthy incoming thought (*khāṭir*) which arrives at the heart ... or every affair which enters in upon the heart from any divine name.”

³⁴ For a discussion of the role of sheikhs and their description as the “perfecting perfect ones,” see Gramlich (1965), 194–95. Al-Qayṣarī merely notes that the effects of *dhikr* are produced by the love arising from the “perfection in the entities of perfect people (*ʿayān al-kāmilin*)” (translated by Homerin, in al-Qayṣarī [2005], 15).

³⁵ Apart from qualifying Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s wine as a heavenly beverage, Hamadānī’s choice to place this particular reference at the beginning of the mystic’s attempt to rid himself of the additional attributes might have a second layer of meaning to it. If we take into consideration the view of the theologian Ibn Qutayba (828–889), who reads the fountain’s name as a composed term to mean “ask for a way,” we might interpret Hamadānī’s mention of the fountain of Salsabil as a reminder of the seeker’s need for guidance. See also Rippin, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*², s.v. “Salsabil,” para. 3.

immediate experiences" (*mashārib-i adbrwāq*), to denote the *awliyā'*, the saints or friends of God:

Through the mixing of the decrees of the Prophet's laws and the announcement of the truths of Ali, the stars of the fountains of immediate experiences of the noble saints, peace be upon them, became manifested.³⁶ (52)

Hence, I would argue that the "fountains of knowledge," too, refer to the *awliyā'*. The various connotations of the term *mashārib* mean that in describing them this way, as immediate experiences or tastings and knowledge, Hamadāni presents the saints as the source of immediate experiences and knowledge of the Divine, or in fact as the point of access to this knowledge or a place of learning.

Hamadāni concludes his remarks on the first verse by reformulating, just as al-Qayṣarī does in his commentary,³⁷ Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verse to reflect his understanding of its imagery, before he concludes his commentary on the opening line with the following two Persian verses:

ای ساقی از آن می که دل و دین من است بی خویشم کن که مستی آئین من است
نفرین تو خوشتر از دعای دگری زیرا که دعای غیر نفرین من است

Hey cupbearer! Make me mad with that wine that is my heart and religion,
because drunkenness is my custom.

Your reproach is sweeter than anyone's prayer,
for the others' prayers are my reproach. (51)

The first verse reflects Hamadāni's previous treatment of the consumption of wine, turning it into a religious and spiritual practice. In the second verse, Hamadāni picks up on a typical theme of Persian love poetry, the cruel beloved.³⁸ Typically, the image of lover and beloved comes with a set repertoire of connotations, such as the impossibility of love's fulfillment, and the beloved is traditionally characterized as aggressive and whimsical. These characteristics are expressed even in the beloved's physical attributes, such as the captivating tresses that Hamadāni mentions in regard to the pitfalls of profane love. When Hamadāni mentions the beloved's sweet reproach, he alludes to the beloved's whimsical alternating between revealing and

³⁶ I have given a very literal translation of this lengthy *idāfa* construction (*nijūm-i mashārib-i adbrwāq-i a'yān-i awliyā'*). However, what this construction (*idāfa-yi isti'āri*; metaphorical *idāfa*) actually offers is a string of metaphors, in which the stars (*nijūm*) mentioned in the verse symbolize the fountains of immediate experiences (*mashārib-i adbrwāq*), which in turn are a metaphor for the noble saints (*a'yān-i awliyā'*).

³⁷ Homerin (2001b), 57.

³⁸ According to J. T. P. de Bruijn (*Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. "Beloved," para. 4), with the expansion of the meanings of the theme of love in Persian literature, the image of the troublesome relationship between lover and beloved is also used to illustrate various kinds of relationships, such as a mystic's yearning for God or a poet's devotion to his patron.

concealing himself, which makes the lover praise even the meanest treatment at the beloved's hands, because it implies the lover receiving the beloved's attention instead of complete disregard. In light of Hamadānī's emphasis on *dhikr*, we might interpret this verse as another reminder to avoid heedlessness of God and to pay attention to God through recollection. In terms of the commentary as a whole, by rounding off his prose comments with his own lyrical approach to the bacchic theme (or a quotation of another author's approach), Hamadānī gives his work an additional spin. In a sense, one might say that after having contained the poem's (i.e., the *Khamriyya*'s) proliferation of meaning by suggesting a certain interpretation, he ultimately undermines the alleged (and, as a result of his artful prose, merely relative) unambiguity of his explanations by opening up the text's potential for a multiplicity of meanings.

Verse 6

The wine has risen from the heart of the wine jars, ومن بين أحشاء الدنان تصاعدت
and in truth, only its name has remained. ولم يبقَ منها في الحقيقة إلا اسمُ

After continuing to describe the wine and its place in the gathering in the second verse, in the verses 3–5 Ibn al-Fāriḍ laments that the heavenly wine has mostly vanished.³⁹ However, he notes that it can still be found in “the breasts of wise men” (*ṣudūr al-nuḥa*) and among the “tribesmen” (*al-ḥayy*), both of whom are commonly identified as mystics.⁴⁰ In verse 6, in continuing the preceding lines, Ibn al-Fāriḍ illustrates the difficulty of finding the wine that has almost completely vanished. There is a sense of opposition in the two hemistiches, with the first half verse locating the wine in the wine jars and the second declaring its essential absence “in truth (*ḥaqīqa*),” that is, the reality around us. The wine jars themselves might represent human beings, as the term *al-dinān* (wine jars) qualifies or “is added to” (*al-mudāf ilayhi*) the *aḥshāʾ*, which can also denote (human) intestines.⁴¹ Thus, the wine jars as bearers of wine might be identical with the wise men and tribesmen of the preceding verses. Yet the wine jars are also a place of transformation, where grapes become wine. Figuratively speaking, this transformation can also describe the restoration of a person's honor, as it is argued by William L. Hanaway, who compares the production of wine through the sacrifice of the illicitly pregnant vines and the locking away of their children (i.e., the grapes) into the wine jar in Manūchihri Dāmghānī's (d. after 432/1040) poems on *Dukhtār-i Rāz* (The daughter of the vine) to the exposure of illicit children who, through divine intervention, are saved and reintroduced

³⁹ In his commentary Hamadānī omits verse 4.

⁴⁰ See Nicholson (1967), 185n2; Arberry (1956), 85; and Homerin (2011), 173.

⁴¹ Lane (1863), 579.

into society.⁴² If we consider this imagery in a mystical context, we might read the transformation for the better, which occurs in a state of isolation after expulsion from society, as an allegory for the transformation a mystic undergoes through the practice of asceticism, at the end of which he might taste the wine of (union with) God.

Arberry reads verse 6 as a climax to the previous verses, stating that the wine “has wholly vanished but for its name.”⁴³ Nicholson expands on this, declaring that the verse “describes the gradual fading of ecstasy from the heart of the mystic.”⁴⁴ However, Arberry also adds that some of the divine inspiration has remained in the wine jars, which he interprets as referring to the mystic’s heart.⁴⁵ Homerin emphasizes a different aspect of the verse, linking it to the issue of the rightfulness of wine consumption mentioned in verse 5. Homerin argues that by declaring the wine’s absence in verse 6, Ibn al-Fāriḍ gives a reason that its consumption is not a sin.⁴⁶ Al-Nābulusi, on the contrary, offers a very different interpretation, linking Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s verse to a discussion of the significance of God’s names. He argues that after the wine’s disappearance, mystics ought to focus on the Divine names by which they can call and seek God.⁴⁷ Al-Qayṣārī explains in his relatively short interpretation of this verse that at a time when the prophets and saints, from whom the divine gnosis emanates (like wine rising from jars), have concealed themselves, only a trace (“name”) of it has remained: the imperfect people pretending to be the perfect ones.⁴⁸

Hamadānī reads this verse as pointing to different manifestations of divine signs, their effect on and internalization by mankind, and, most important, the role of saints in this process. Beginning with his usual grammatical explanations, Hamadānī notes (just as al-Qayṣārī) that the wine’s rising (*taṣāʿadat*) is a metaphor for its appearance (57). Also, Hamadānī identifies “the heart of the wine jars” with the inner parts of men, who are brought into “bubbling” or “agitation” (*jūsh*) by the wine, which he equates to the “realities” (*ḥaqāʾiq*) (57). Hamadānī further describes these realities as the signs of God that “become manifested on the pages of the prophets’ faces and the spontaneous utterances of the saints’ tongues, for the education of the seekers and the admonition of the negligent ones” (57). The reference to the “pages” (*ṣafahāt*) (57) reflects the Qur’ānic view that God reveals himself through “books,” such as the Qur’ān or the cosmos, just as the notion of the involuntary or “spontaneous utterances” (*faltāt*; *falta* [sing. of *faltāt*] denotes “a precipitate, arbitrary act, excusable only because God had bestowed success on it”) (57) might indicate a sort

⁴² Hanaway (1988), 70–75.

⁴³ Arberry (1956), 85.

⁴⁴ Nicholson (1967), 185n3.

⁴⁵ Arberry (1956), 87.

⁴⁶ Homerin (2011), 169.

⁴⁷ Kamada (1982), 26.

⁴⁸ Al-Qayṣārī (2005), 24.

of divine manifestation or act by saints.⁴⁹ When Hamadānī mentions the “negligent ones” (*ghāfilān*) (57), he intends those who are guilty of heedlessness or negligence (*ghafla*) toward God, the “fundamental human shortcoming” and the reason for the need to practice *dhikr*.⁵⁰ Hamadānī describes God’s bestowal of this wine as an act of divine “favor” (*laṭāfat*) (57), a term that refers to God’s motivation of human beings to perform good acts and is therefore considered a type of divine guidance. In the case of Hamadānī’s text divine guidance is given to mankind through the saints.⁵¹

In the final stage of this divine favor, “the wine permeates the pores of the inborn talents” and is thus received by humans according to their aptitudes (*istiḍād*) (57). Finally nothing of the wine’s qualities remains but its name. At this point Hamadānī diverges from al-Qayṣarī’s interpretation as he engages in a discussion of the correct interpretation of the wine’s disappearance. Hamadānī emphasizes that the disappearance of the wine, which in this context might be generally defined as gnosis, by no means indicates the extinction or “negation of sainthood” (*nafy-i walāyat*) (57).⁵² Hamadānī argues:

It has been proved through intuitive and traditional reasoning that in every age and time, there shall be a group of particular people of divine attention and receiver of infinite kindnesses (*alāf*). In their midst stand the poles (*aqlāb*), surrounded by the strings (*afrād*), and sustained by the pegs (*awṭād*), stakes (*abdāl*) and others. Their pious bodies sustained the order of the transient world and their pure breaths were fending off the heavenly afflictions. (58)

By playing on the double meaning of the terms denoting different degrees in the Sufi hierarchical order of saints, Homerīn draws the image of a tent that is sustained by its different components, like the order of the universe that is preserved by the saints.⁵³ On account of this role, Hamadānī insists on their uninterrupted presence, supporting this view with a prophetic hadith stating that “a group of people (*tā’ifa*) from amongst my nation that is on the path of truth continues to prevail and they will not be harmed by those opposing them until God commands to do so” (58). Hamadānī understands the *tā’ifa* that will prevail until the end of time as referring to saints. The fact that someone could deny their existence is for Hamadānī a sign of people’s “weak perception” (*ḍa’f-i taṣawwur*), and he adds that in Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s lifetime, too, saints were both “present and known” (*mawjūd wa-ma’rūf*) (58). He thus goes on to name four saints, including Sheikh Sa’d al-Dīn Ḥamawī (d. 1252); Sheikh Sayf al-Dīn Bākhari (d. 1260); Sheikh Najm al-Dīn Rāzī (d. 1256), known as Dāya; and Sheikh Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (58). Hamadānī’s

⁴⁹ On *falta*, see *Encyclopaedia of Islam*², Glossary and Index of Terms; and Chittick (2005), 57.

⁵⁰ Chittick (1994), 49.

⁵¹ Shihadeh, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*³, s.v. “Favour (divine),” para. 1.

⁵² See Homerīn (2011), 174.

⁵³ For an example of a hierarchical arrangement of saints, see Goldziher, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*², s.v. “Abdāl.”

choice of potential saints is by no means accidental: the first three of these contemporaries of Ibn al-Fāriḍ are all known to have been disciples of Najm al-Dīn in al-Kubrā (1145–1220), the founder of the Kubrawiyya order to which Hamadānī belonged. Suhrawardi alone was not part of this Sufi order, but Hamadānī might mention him because of his close relation with al-Rāzī.⁵⁴

The entire paragraph on the uninterrupted presence of the saints on earth and their role in sustaining the order of the world, as well the identification by name of a number of the saints, is completely absent in al-Qayṣarī's commentary. Taking into consideration also Hamadānī's allusion to the saints in the first verse, we might argue that the description of the saints as an invaluable source of gnosis or point of access to it represents a key message of the *Mashārib al-Adhḥwāq*. Further evidence for this reading might be found in the fact that Hamadānī introduces this passage with a reference to a misinterpretation of the disappearance of the wine (i.e., the belief that sainthood has ended), thus placing his intervention in the context of an alleged debate on the matter, which suggests that Hamadānī holds this point to be of utmost importance. Naturally, all of this is not to deny the striking closeness between al-Qayṣarī's and Hamadānī's commentaries on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's wine ode or the fact that al-Qayṣarī also dedicates significant parts of his work to the role of saints in helping the Sufi disciple along the road. Yet the small changes and deviations that can be observed throughout Hamadānī's text, such as the discussion on the continuing presence of saints on earth, make *Mashārib al-Adhḥwāq* a valuable case for the study of mystical commentaries.

Conclusion

The analysis of Hamadānī's take on two of the *Khamriyya*'s verses has revealed two of the main dynamics of his work of commentary. First, we have seen that in his prose comments on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verses, Hamadānī, too, relies heavily on bacchic images. In fact, from a single verse of the *Khamriyya* Hamadānī develops an entire prose passage that is mainly dressed in images of wine, goblets, and drunkenness. The same goes for most of the verses of poetry with which he routinely concludes his comments on one of the *Khamriyya*'s verses. The effect of this, apart from the aforementioned (re)opening of the text's potential for multiple meanings, is a blurring of the boundaries between Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poem and Hamadānī's commentary. Primary text and commentary converge into a single literary unit with nothing but the short metatextual passages to establish any sort of hierarchy between the two. However, if there is a difference of function in *Mashārib al-Adhḥwāq* between al-Fāriḍ's verses and Hamadānī's comments, it is arguably not the one that might be traditionally expected from a commentary work in which the comments explain and

⁵⁴ For a biography of Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā and a list of his most famous disciples, including those mentioned by Hamadānī, see Algar, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*², s.v. "Kubrā."

serve the communication of the primary text. Instead, and this leads us to the second key dynamic in Hamadānī's work, we might speak about a dialectic relationship between the two components of *Mashārib al-Adhwāq*.

Wolfhart Heinrichs, in his contribution to a cross-cultural study on prosimetry (i.e., the combination of prose and poetry), argues for a potential dialectic between these two modes of writing. On the basis of the concept of the *shawāhid*, or testimony verses, according to which authors use lines of poetry to prove or support what they state in a prose text, Heinrichs argues for a dialectic relationship between prose and verse that implies that the prose is not trustworthy unless it is proved by poetry, which in turn can be understood only through the preceding prose passage.⁵⁵ If applied to *Mashārib al-Adhwāq*, with Hamadānī's prose providing the explanation to Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verses, which in turn prove the veracity of his statements, we might suddenly be looking at a text that is less like a commentary on another work and more like a mystical treatise in its own right—one that takes Ibn al-Fāriḍ's famous *Khamriyya*, as both a popular pretext that captures readers' attention and supporting evidence for its claims. Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verses tell us about an eternal and miraculous wine that all should aspire to taste, while nothing but its qualities is discernible; Hamadānī interprets this as an allegory for the simultaneous transcendence and immanence of *wujūd*. But Hamadānī also emphasizes that mankind can experience the nature of *wujūd*, and thereby the nature of God, only through the guidance of sheikhs and saints, who are the sources of immediate experiences and the fountains of tastings (*Mashārib al-Adhwāq*). Ultimately, in composing this commentary on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Khamriyya*, Hamadānī intends to convey to readers his profound knowledge about the nature of the world and the way mankind can reach absolute happiness. And yet, in the end, Hamadānī's commentaries and explanations do not constrain the *Khamriyya*'s immense potential for multiple meanings. Instead, he interweaves Ibn al-Fāriḍ's vision of a mystical wine with his own bacchic images into a single, multilayered work that is partly a treatise on saints' role for the wayfarer's path to God and partly a literary reflection of his mystical worldview.

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⁵⁵ Heinrichs (1997), 260–61.

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The Circulation of the Astonishing Cup: The Many Facets of Wine Symbolism in Bedil's *Sāqināmah*, *Muḥīt-i a'zam*

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Know that this [work] is a tavern for the manifestation of realities, and not the *Sāqināmah* of Ṣuhūrī's verses. It is a polisher of the mirror of the inebriation of subtleties, and not a displayer of the rust of the hangover of ignorance. The aim with it is to admonish those who are negligent of the degree of meanings, so that they do not consider the unlimited secrets of Reality confined to a few words, and do not read the endless scroll of meanings as merely a phrase on the last page.¹

In his prose preface to the *Muḥīt-i a'zam*, the Indo-Persian poet Mirzā 'Abd al-Qādir Bedil (1644–1720) introduces his *sāqināmah* (poem to the cupbearer) with the epigraph to this chapter, claiming for his poem a distinctly mystical quality that he finds missing in other specimens of the genre.² It was probably the popularity of the *sāqināmah* genre among poets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that prompted the young Bedil,³ then in his twenties, to compose his first long poem in the form of a *sāqināmah*.⁴ The flexible form of the *sāqināmah*, punctuated by a series

¹ *Bi-dān kib in maykhānab-i zuhūr-i ḥaqā'iq ast nab sāqināmah-i asb'ār-i Ṣuhūrī va ā'inab-pardāz-i kayfiyat-i daqā'iq ast nab zangār-furūsh-i khumār-i bi-shu'ūrī. mudda'ā azin tanbib-i ghāfilān-i rutbab-i ma'āni ast tā bi-nihāyat-i asrār-i ḥaqīqat rā ba-lafzi chand munḥaṣar nadānand va bi-pāyāni-i tūmār-i ma'āni rā az ṣafḥab-i ikhtitām 'ibārat-i maḥẓ naklvānand.* 'Abd al-Qādir Bidil, Kulliyāt-i Abū al-Ma'āni Mirzā 'Abd al-Qādir Bidil, ed. Khāl Muḥammad Khastah and Khalil Allāh Khalili (Kabul: da Pohane Wizārat, da Dār al-Ta'lif Riyāsat, 1962/1963–1965/1966), 3:3. Subsequent page references with parentheses in the body of the text refer to volume 3 of this edition.

² I prefer to spell the name *Bedil*, according to the Indian and Central Asian pronunciation; the current Iranian pronunciation is “Bidel”. On Bedil's life and works, see Moazzam Siddiqi, “Bidel (Bedil) Mirzā 'Abd-al-Qāder,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/bidel-bedil-mirza-abd-al-qader-b>; Abdul Ghani, *Life and Works of Abdul Qadir Bedil* (Lahore: Publishers United, 1960).

³ For an overview of the history and the characteristics of the *sāqināmah*, see Paul Losensky, “Sāqī-nāma,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/saqi-nama-book>; Paul Losensky, “Vintages of the Sāqī-nāma: Fermenting and Blending the Cupbearer's Song in the Sixteenth Century,” *Iranian Studies* 47, no. 1 (2014): 131–57; Sunil Sharma, “Hāfiz's *Sāqī-nāmah*: The Genesis and Transformation of a Classical Poetic Genre,” *Persica* 18 (2002): 75–83. For anthologies of *sāqināmahs*, see 'Abd al-Nabī Qazvinī, *Tazkirah-i Maykhānab* (Tehran: Iqbāl, 1983–1984); Aḥmad Gulchin Ma'āni, *Tazkirah-i Paymānab: Dar zikr-i sāqināmah-bā va abvāl va āsār-i sāqināmah-sarāyān* (*Zayl-i Tazkirah-i Maykhānab*) (Mashhad: Dānishgāh-i Mashhad, 1980).

⁴ The poem is dated 1078/1667; there is, however, a possibility that the poem Bedil originally composed was much shorter and later in his life he reworked it. Khvushgū in his *tazkirah* gives the size of the *Muḥīt-i a'zam* as about two thousand lines. The modern editions (Kabul and

of addresses to the *sāqī*, the cupbearer, or the *mughannī*, the minstrel, provided the poet-protagonist with the opportunity to reflect on matters such as “the transitory nature of the world, the unreliability of any position and rank, the wickedness of fate, the vicissitudes of life, the adversity of fortune, the infidelity of the beloved, the cruelty of the rivals, the hypocrisy of contemporaries, the purity of the Sufis, the hypocrisy of ascetics, and so on, while mixing in words of wise counsel and subtle points of warning,”⁵ and at the same to seek deliverance from his plight. In this context, wine is invoked as a friend who dispels sorrow and provides solace, an elixir that rejuvenates, a catalyst that tears the veil of hypocrisy, robs one of mundane consciousness, and liberates one from the self.

Although the focus in the *sāqīnāmāh* on the quest for transcending the limitations of the self makes it a genre particularly suitable for mystical content, in most *sāqīnāmāhs* mystical themes remain peripheral to a variety of descriptive, narrative, and panegyric content. Bedil saw more scope in the genre and aimed to compose a novel *sāqīnāmāh* in which he used the symbolism of wine and wine drinking not only for the illustration of mystical themes but also for the structural organization of the poem. Highly original as it is, such a treatment of the subject matter was possible only through an ingenious manipulation of the conventions of the *sāqīnāmāh* genre.

This chapter discusses Bedil’s dynamic and creative use of wine imagery in the *Muḥit-i a‘zam*, showing that while the symbolism of wine, through which the thematic and formal unity of the poem is achieved, remains in the background throughout the *Muḥit-i a‘zam*, wine imagery is also deployed independent of its symbolic aspects to convey or illustrate a range of themes that are subordinate to the overall scheme of the poem. Much like in the “Indian-style” *ghazal* in general and in Bedil’s *ghazals* in particular, wine-related images, often as parts of complex metaphors, are used to create multiple levels of meaning in the individual descriptive, discursive, or narrative contexts.

Mirzā ‘Abd al-Qādir, with the pen name Bedil (“heartless,” meaning “one who has lost his heart to someone”) is considered one of the greatest poets of Indian Persian. Born in Patna in Shāh Jahān’s time (r. 1628–1658), he lived most of his creative life during Awrangzeb’s rule (r. 1658–1707) and died in Delhi the beginning of Muhammad Shah’s reign (r. 1719–1748). An extremely prolific writer, Bedil composed more than a hundred thousand lines of poetry and prose in a highly cerebral and convoluted style, among them four long mystico-philosophical *masnavīs*, a

Tehran editions) run to about six thousand lines. See Bindrāban Dās Khvushgū, *Safīnab-i Khvushgū*, ed. Sayyid Shāh Muḥammad ‘Atā’urrahmān ‘Aṭā Kākvi (Patna: Institute of Post Graduate Studies and Research in Arabic and Persian, 1959), 124. The early manuscripts I have been able to consult so far (e.g., Bidil, “Muḥit-i a‘zam,” Salar Jung Ms. 890, Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad; “Kulliyāt-i Bidil,” Khuda Bakhsh Ms. HL 667, Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna) all contain the longer text; the modern Kabul edition is based on the latter manuscript.

⁵ Gulchīn Ma‘āni, *Tazkirah-i Paymānah*, 1.

large *divān* of lyric poetry, a prose work of autobiographical nature titled *Chabār 'unşur*, and a collection of letters. Bedil was held in high esteem already in his life; after his death, his works spread to Afghanistan and Central Asia and exercised a lasting influence on literary trends for nearly two centuries.

It can be argued that the so-called baroque or “Indian” style (*sabk-i hindī*)—or, according to the preference in recent scholarly discourse, the “fresh” style (*tarz-i tāzah* or *tāzah-gū'i*)—an innovative and experimental trend in Persian poetry that dominated the larger Persianate world from the sixteenth through at least the eighteenth centuries,⁶ reached its peak in Bedil's poetry. Within the overarching literary idiom that defines the period, however, Bedil was recognized, already in his lifetime, as the master of a peculiar style, characterized by linguistic innovations, complex metaphors, and multiple levels of meaning.

It was not only Bedil's artistic ingenuity but also his deep engagement with mystical and metaphysical thought that made his poetry and prose appeal to people of different religious, linguistic, and geographical backgrounds. While references to various forms, practitioners, and notions of mysticism abound in Bedil's autobiographical account, they do not provide much help in determining whether he followed any particular mystical path during any stage of his life. More important are, however, the indications that for Bedil, the search for meaning in poetry was inextricably linked with the search for meaning, or reality, in the metaphysical sense. This never-ending quest for the ever elusive meaning seems to be at the root of much of the linguistic and semantic complexity of his works.

Notwithstanding the peculiarly cerebral quality of Bedil's poetry and prose, he emphatically considered himself part of the Persian mystical tradition and aimed to distance himself from poets who, in his view, were concerned only with displaying techné, or poetic artistry. In his prose preface to the *Muḥīṭ-i a'zam*, too, he claims a distinctly mystical quality for his poem, in contradistinction to poems on the theme of wine and wine drinking by his predecessors. While he pays homage several such poets, most of them of the Safavid-Mughal era,⁷ he also aims to establish his supe-

⁶ On the origin of the term *sabk-i hindī* and the related polemics, see Rajeev Kinra, “Fresh Words for a Fresh World: *Tāzah-gū'i* and the Poetics of Newness in Early Modern Indo-Persian Poetry,” *Sikh Formations* 3, no. 2 (December 2007): 125–49.

⁷ These are Zuhūri (d. 1616), Hilālī (1470–1529), Zulālī (d. 1621 or 22), Sālik Qazvīni (d. ca. 1674), Ṭalīb Āmulī (d. 1626 or 27), Šamīṭ Isfahānī (d. 1688 or 89), Shaydā Fathpūri (d. 1669 or 70), Naw'ī Khabūshānī (d. 1609 or 10), Salīm Tihrānī (d. 1647 or 8), and Šā'ib Tabrizī (d. 1676). Some of these poets, like Šā'ib and Salīm, composed wine-related poetry in genres other than *sāqīnāmah*. Šā'ib's large literary output includes several poems on wine and wine drinking, of which an anthology was made, probably in his lifetime, with the title *Maykhānah*, “Tavern.” Salīm is known for his topographical narrative poem on Kashmir (titled *Dar ta'rīf-i bahār*, “Description of the spring”), which is in *bazaj* meter and contains no invocations of *sāqī*. Another *masnavī*, *Dar shikāyat-i rūzgār*, is thematically related to the *sāqīnāmahs*. On Salīm and Šā'ib, see Aḥmad Gulchīn Ma'ānī, *Kārvān-i Hind: Dar aḥwāl va āsār-i shā'irān-i 'aṣr-i Šafavī kih bab Hindūstān raftab-and* (Mashhad: Āstān-i Quds-i Rīzavī, 1990/1991), 566–82 and 700–712, respectively.

riority over them. Among these poets was the Iranian emigrant poet Zuhūri (d. 1616), whose ever-popular, highly influential *Sāqināmah* Bedil especially sought to emulate and, at the same time, surpass.⁸

The two *sāqināmahs* are indeed very different in subject matter, scope, and objective. Zuhūri's poem, the main part of which is an account of the royal drinking party and a lengthy tour of Ahmadnagar and the new city Nawshahr on its outskirts, was intended as a panegyric to the sultan of Ahmadnagar, Burhān al-dīn Nizāmshāh II (r. 1591–1594).⁹ In Bedil's poem, however, the idea of the drinking party is transformed into an elaborate cosmic allegory in which the manifestation of the universe is envisioned as a stage-by-stage "outpouring" of divine wine—wine serving as a symbol for the One Being behind the multiplicity of appearances.

Wine Imagery as a Structuring Device

Although there was a centuries-old tradition in Persian poetry of making use of the rich imagery of wine to convey mystical ideas, Bedil's reference to the ignorant who "consider the unlimited secrets of Reality confined to a few words" may be indicative of his dissatisfaction with the way such symbols have become conventionalized and divested of much of their potential. Aiming to follow in the footsteps of the great Persian mystical poets Rūmī (1207–1273) and 'Aṭṭār (1145 or 1146–1221)—both of whom he mentions in the same preface¹⁰—Bedil had a grandiose vision for his poem in which wine symbolism would govern all elements. In particular, Bedil may have had in mind 'Aṭṭār's *masnavi*s, in which he employs a frame tale to construct the plot.¹¹ Instead of a frame tale, however, Bedil organized the *Muḥiṭ-i a'zam* around the cosmogonical narrative of the gradual 'overflowing' (*ḡayz*), or emanation, of the One Reality into the various levels of existence, and the perfected human soul's eventual return to the origin. The title, *Muḥiṭ-i a'zam*, "the Greatest Ocean" or "the All-Encompassing Ocean"—in the present context, "the Great Ocean of Wine"—refers to the One Reality, or Being (*ḡujūd*), that encompasses all.¹² Accord-

⁸ Bedil is said to have emulated Zuhūri's style in both poetry and prose. See e.g. Shir Khān Lodi, *Mir'āt al-khayāl*, ed. Ḥamid Ḥasanī, Bih-rūz Ṣafarzādah (Tehran: Rawzanah, 1998), 252.

⁹ On Zuhūri's *Sāqināmah*, see Losensky, "Sāqī-nāma"; Sharma, "Hāfiz's *Sāqināmah*," 83; Sunil Sharma, "The Nizamshahi Persianate Garden in Zuhūri's *Sāqināma*," in *Garden and Landscape Practices in Pre-Colonial India: Histories from the Deccan*, ed. Daud Ali and Emma J. Flatt (New Delhi: Routledge, 2012), 159–71.

¹⁰ In a short poem in the preface Bedil states that one needs to be a spiritual inheritor of Rūmī (1207–1273) to be able to perceive that the *Muḥiṭ-i a'zam* possesses a quality similar to that of the mystical poems of the great Persian poet 'Aṭṭār (1145/1146–1221): *zi jā-m-i Mawlavī gar jur'ab-at bakhsband daryābi / k-azīn maykhānah bū-yi ṭablab-i 'Aṭṭār mi āyad* ("If you are granted a sip from Rūmī's cup / you will perceive that the scent of 'Aṭṭār's tray is coming from this tavern"). Bidil, *Kulliyāt*, 3:4.

¹¹ I thank Frank Lewis for this suggestion.

¹² *Muḥiṭ* literally means "that which surrounds," and from here, "ocean." It is also one of God's attributes.

ingly, the idea of the Oneness of Being (*vahdat al-vujūd*) behind all appearances, as famously developed by the school of Ibn al-ʿArabi (1165–1240),¹³ is captured in the unifying symbol of wine, while the idea that all contingent beings partake of *vujūd* in accordance with their individual capacities is conveyed in the poem through the images of wine vessels.¹⁴

In his preface to the *Muḥiṭ-i aʿzam*, however, Bedil refers to his poem with another metaphor as well: “a tavern for the manifestation of realities,” envisioning his poem as a tavern in which realities of the divine effusion become manifest to the drinkers through the meanings that he aims to capture with his words.¹⁵ In keeping with both metaphors—the ocean of wine and the tavern where wine is distributed—the *Muḥiṭ-i aʿzam* is divided into eight *dawrs*, or “rounds,” where *dawr* refers to the wine cup’s circulation among drinkers.¹⁶ However, as the primary meaning of *dawr* is “turning, revolving,” it also refers to the revolving of the planets or spheres and, in a more abstract sense, to an era or cycle.

Unlike in most *sāqināmahs*, in which the main structural divisions are seldom marked,¹⁷ in the *Muḥiṭ-i aʿzam* the *dawrs* even have titles, which are also given in the form of a short poem at the end of the prose preface:

dawr-i arvāl jūsh-i izbār-i kḥumistān-i vujūd
dawr-i sāni jān-i taqsim-i ḥarīfān-i shubūd
dawr-i sālis mawj-i arvār-i gubārḥā-yi zubūr

¹³ Although commonly attributed to Ibn al-ʿArabi, the term *vahdat al-vujūd* originates in the works of his commentators. See, e.g., William C. Chittick, introduction to *Divine Flashes*, by Fakhruddin Iraqi, trans. William C. Chittick and Peter Lamborn Wilson (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 4. Ibn al-ʿArabi’s metaphysics exercised influence in the Subcontinent mainly through his commentators and interpreters; there are, however, indications that Bedil read Ibn al-ʿArabi’s works directly.

¹⁴ Capacity or preparedness (*istiʿdād*), an important concept in Ibn al-ʿArabi’s metaphysics, refers to the predisposition of an entity in accordance with which it receives theophany; see E. Geoffroy, “Tadjalli,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs (Brill Online, 2013). Although Bedil also uses the word *istiʿdād*, in conformity with the wine imagery he likes to capture the idea of capacity with the word *zarf*, which primarily means “receptacle, vessel,” but in Persian—especially in compounds—also means “capacity.”

¹⁵ In addition, in a short poem in the preface Bedil also calls the poem, with an allusion to Zamakhshari’s Qurʾān commentary, “a commentary that reveals reality” (*majāz-ash sharḥ-i Kashshāf-i Haqiqat*). Bidil, *Kulliyāt*, 3:5.

¹⁶ The practice in certain types of Arabic poetry, such as the *muwawshshah* and the *zajal*, of calling the stanzas or strophes *dawrs* may have also contributed to Bedil’s choice for the word *dawr* for the sections of the *Muḥiṭ-i aʿzam*. I thank my anonymous reviewer for this suggestion.

¹⁷ In the longer *sāqināmahs* thematic subunits are often marked by titles such as *dar taʿrif-i bahār* (description of the spring), *dar taʿrif-i chaman* (description of the garden), *dar taʿrif-i maykhānah* (description of the tavern), *khiṭāb bah sāqī* (address to the *sāqī*), and *khiṭāb bah mughammi* (address to the minstrel). Such titles are found in the *Muḥiṭ-i aʿzam*, too, but distributed under the main units: the *dawrs*. Of the poets whom Bedil mentions in the preface, only Zulālī’s *Maykhānah*, “Tavern,” is divided, somewhat arbitrarily, into forty *qadahs*, or cups. This work, though, is not a *sāqināmah* but a *masnavi* on the discovery of wine, and is part of his collection of seven *masnavis*, titled *Salḥ al-Sayyārāh*.

dawr-i rābi^c shūr-i sarjūsh-i may-i fayz-i huzūr
dawr-i kbāmis rang-i asrār-i gulistān-i kamāl
dawr-i sādīs bazm-i nayrang-i aṣarhā-yi khayāl
dawr-i sābi^c ḥall-i ishkāl-i kham o pich-i bayān
dawr-i sāmīn khatm-i tūmār-i tag o pū-yi zabān

The first round is [about] fermenting the manifestation in the wine cellar of existence

The second round is [about] distributing the cup among the drinking companions in the sensory realm

The third round is [about] the waves of the lights of the gems of manifestation

The fourth round is [about] the agitation of the froth of the overflowing wine of presence

The fifth round is [about] the color of the secrets of the rose-garden of perfection

The sixth round is [about] the banquet of the magical show of the results of imagination

The seventh round is [about] solving the difficulties of the intricacies of expression

The eighth round is [about] sealing the scroll of the wandering of language.

The symbolism of the structure of the poem is based in part on Islamic cosmology and in part on the system of metaphysics of the school of Ibn al-ʿArabi. The two-fold symbolism points to a cosmic drinking party, with God distributing wine from the ocean that is not other than him (with an allusion to Qurʾān 76:21, *saqā rabbukum sharāban ṭabūrā*: “their Lord will give to them to drink a drink pure and holy”).¹⁸ Each of the eight *dawrs* of the *Muḥīṭ-i aʿzam* is devoted to an aspect of how the One Reality appears in the world of contingency, which in turn is presented from two opposing, yet complementary points of view: first, how the One manifests itself as Many—as symbolized in the poem by the receptacles being filled with wine—and second, how the Many can voluntarily return to the One by transcending the limited self—as symbolized by wine turning to intoxication. Most of the *dawrs* end with an invocation of the *sāqī*, the cupbearer,¹⁹ in which the poet, in addition to asking for inspiration to compose his poem and divine help to transcend the self, comments on the stories, draws conclusions, and provides the moral.

¹⁸ Yusuf Ali’s translation. Bedil partially quotes this Qurʾān verse in a hemistich in the fourth *dawr*; Bidil, *Kulliyāt*, 3:51.

¹⁹ The identity of the *sāqī* in the *Muḥīṭ-i aʿzam* often poses a problem. Out of Bedil’s numerous addresses to the *sāqī*, there are some in which Bedil clearly invokes God; in other places, the *sāqī* appears to be a mediator through whom God’s grace becomes manifest. Because the word *sāqī*, “the one who gives to drink,” in Persian poetry is used in the sense of “cupbearer,” it usually signifies not the source of the wine but the one who gets it to the customers. In lyric poetry, moreover, the *sāqī* often stands for the beloved—who may in turn be interpreted as God. See A. Arazī, W. L. Hanaway, and P. Soucek, “Sāki,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs (Brill Online, 2013).

Setting the Stage: The Overflowing of Wine

Within the allegorical-symbolic framework communicated by the title of the poem and the chapter titles, the stage for the cosmic wine party is set in the 115 lines of the first *darver*. Following Avicenna's scheme of the generation of the universe through emanation (*fayḏ*) or intellection but as interpreted and developed by Ibn al-ʿArabī, in this short *darver*, titled *Jūsh-i izbār-i khumistān-i vujūd* (Fermenting the manifestation in the wine cellar of existence), Bedil, using the analogy of wine that comes into fermentation and "overflows," describes the stages of manifestation from the undifferentiated divine essence to the lowest levels of existence.²⁰ In the course of this account Bedil also introduces the most important "characters" of his poem, such as the wine and the wine vessels, the garden with its colors and fragrances, and various musical instruments. Such characters, who make regular appearance in most *sāqināmahs* in the descriptions of drinking parties, are portrayed here as mere potentialities hidden in the divine knowledge before they become manifest in the realm of contingency.

The poem opens with a description of the wine that is beyond all qualities and effects normally associated with wine:

khvush ān dam kih dar bazmgāh-i qidam
mayi būd bi nashshah-i kayf o kam
munazzah zi andishah-i ḥādīsāt
mubarrā zi dūd o ghubār-i šifāt
nah šabbā-sh nām o nah rang-ash nishān
laṭīf o laṭīf o nihān o nihān
nah khum khalvat-ārā-yi asrār-i ū
nah šadr-i qadah bazm-i izbār-i ū
nah az jūsh-i ū masti ātash-ʿimān
nah az mawj-i ū nashshah rangin bayān
nah abrū-yi mawjash ishārat-furūsh
nah chashm-i ḥabābash taḥayyur bah dūsh
nah az rang-i ū sar-khvush-i āshkār
nah makhmūri az bū-yi ū biqarār
nah paymānah āʿinah-pardāz-i nāz
nah sāghar gul-i rū-yi dast-i niyāz
nah minā-yi ū mast-i shavq-i sujūd
nah jāmasb murabbaʿ-tarāz-i quʿūd
nah pā-yi khumash maṣdar-i khayr o shar
nah dast-i sabūyash nigabbān-i sar
nah mastān-i ū qābil-i iḥtišāb
nah rang-i zurūfash shikast-iktisāb
nah tāki zi šūrat rag o rishab dāsht

²⁰ On the different approaches to the doctrine of emanation in Islamic philosophy see Cristina D'Ancona, "Emanation," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed., ed. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson (Brill Online). Ibn al-ʿArabī's approach is summarized in Chittick, introduction to *Divine Flashes*, 3–32.

nab angūr 'aqdī dar andishab dāsh
nab durdī sar afgandab dar pā-yi šāf
nab šāfi zabardast-i durd az gizāf
nab ibriqi az kbandab qulqul-payām
nab khamyāzab chāk-i giribān-i jām
nab ā'inab-i shishab masti-namā
nab ḥarf-i lab-i jām hasti-šadā
nab āgābi az šāf-i ū tar-dimāgh
nab ghaflat ba-tah-jur'ab-i vahm dāgh (p. 6)

Happy is the moment when in the banquet place of eternity
 There was a wine without the intoxication of quality and quantity,
 Transcending the thought of the temporal,
 Free of the smoke and dust of attributes.
 It was not named "clear wine," and there was no sign of its color—
 It was subtlest of the subtle and most hidden of the hidden.
 There was no jar to adorn the solitude of its secrets
 Or cup-heart to hold the banquet of its manifestation.
 There was no fermentation to spur drunkenness into a fiery gallop
 Or waves to move intoxication to colorful expressions.
 It had no wave-eyebrows to display coquettish winks
 Or bubble-eyes on their shoulders, wide open in amazement.
 It had no color to bring about inebriety
 Or fragrance to stir up drunkenness.
 There was no goblet to hold up a mirror to the coquettish beauty
 Or cup to be placed, like a rose, on the palms of entreating hands.
 There was no flask to be drunk with passion for prostration,
 Or cup to assume the posture of kneeling in prayer.
 There was no foot of a jar to be the source of good and evil
 Or hand of a pitcher to prop its own head.
 There were no drinkers of this wine to be accountable
 Or color of its containers to be capable of fading.
 There were no roots and veins to form the grapevine,
 Or grape-berries to envision the clusters.
 There were no dregs to lay their head at the feet of clear wine,
 Or clear wine to easily gain the upper hand over the dregs.
 There was no ewer to give the message of gurgle with its laughter
 Or cup to rend its garment in insatiable thirst.
 There was no mirror of a flask to display drunkenness
 Or lips of a cup to reverberate with the sound of existence.
 There was no awareness to become dead drunk with the clear wine
 Or heedlessness to be branded by the dregs of delusion.

Because the qualities associated with wine and the paraphernalia of the tavern do not exist yet as separate entities in this state beyond differentiation, the method Bedil chooses to convey this paradox is that he describes them with his characteristically graphic and convoluted metaphors but prefaces these with the negative particle *nab*.²¹

²¹ Approximately half of all lines in Bedil's description of the state before manifestation begin with the negative particle *nab*.

In a similar manner, he proceeds to negate the existence of binary opposites, time, and spatial directions. In the state beyond time and place, the setting for drinking parties—such as the garden or music²²—is lacking, while the main participants—the *sāqī*, the wine, and the wine worshipper, on the one hand, and the reed flute, the melody, and the musician, on the other—are not yet distinct from one another.

Then, as the wine in the “jar of Unicity” (*vāḥidiyyat*) begins to ferment, these triads appear as distinct entities:²³

kih āmad khum-i vāḥidiyyat ba-jūsh
ba-mastān ṣalā zad ba-gulbāng-i nūsh
taqāzā-yi asrār-i shūkbī-kamin
shud az bī-zabānī khurūsh-āfarin
jahānī bah afsūn-i āhang-i kun
bijūshid az shawq-i jān-i ladun (p. 8)

Then the jar of Unicity came into fermentation
 And gave a loud call to the drunk ones: come to drink!
 The demands of the secrets hiding playfully in coquetry
 Made a clamor without a tongue—
 With the magic spell of the melody of “Be!” a whole world
 Spurred from the desire of the divine cup.

The manifestation of the divine names and attributes in the outer realm is conveyed in the poem through wine, ocean, and garden imagery, in which visual, audio, and olfactory sensations are often mixed in a synesthesia. The subsequent stages of emanation are compared to the descending and settling of the dregs in the jug. The first created entities—Intellects and Souls (*‘uqūl va nufūs*)—are still pure in nature, like clear wine; then gradually each level becomes grosser and darker, until, from the dregs that settle in the bottom of the jar, the “nine jugs of possible existence,” that is, the nine spheres, are formed:

²² For drinking, music, and merrymaking at royal banquets in Iran, see Ehsan Yarshater, “The Theme of Wine-Drinking and the Concept of the Beloved in Early Persian Poetry,” *Studia Islamica* 13 (1960): 43–47; Rudolph Matthee, *The Pursuit of Pleasure: Drugs and Stimulants in Iranian History, 1500–1900* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 48–49.

²³ A part of Bedil’s account of the gradual differentiation is omitted here; for a detailed analysis of the first *dawr*, see Hajnalka Kovacs, “‘The Tavern of the Manifestation of Realities’: The *Maṣnāvī Muḥit-i A’zam* by Mirzā ‘Abd al-Qādir Bedil (1644–1720)” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2013), 89–99. Bedil relies on the account of “differentiation” or “entification” (*ta’ayyun*) as laid out by Ibn al-‘Arabi’s commentators and deploys its terminology, but his allusive, metaphorical account only loosely follows it. While the accounts by the various commentators differ in some detail, usually two stages of *ta’ayyun* are distinguished: the first *ta’ayyun* refers to God’s manifesting his knowledge to himself within himself, while in the second *ta’ayyun* the ontological possibilities that are in God’s knowledge enter existence. The first *ta’ayyun*—God’s knowledge of all potentialities within himself—is called *vahdat*, “Oneness,” for in this state each potentiality is identical with the other and with the Being. From one point of view, this Oneness excludes multiplicity; in this respect it is called *ahadiyat*, “Exclusive-Unity.” From another point of view, however, it embraces all ontological possibilities of manifestation; in this respect it is called *vāḥidiyat*, “Inclusive-Unity” or “Unicity.” Chittick, introduction to *Divine Flashes*, 9–11.

zi shūkhi shud ān nashshab šāf-āfarin
šafā par zad o rikht durd az kamīn
murattab shud az lā-yi khum-i vujūd
ba-bazm-i tajallī zurūfi shubūd
namūdār shud nuh khum-i mumkināt
šifat gasht ā'inah-i rang-i zāt
qīdam tā nishān dād maḥdūd shud
aḥad tā shumurdand ma'dūd shud
shubūdi 'ajab sar zad az rāz-i ghayb
jabān gasht ā'inah-pardāz-i ghayb
falak-bā zi shūr-i may-i bi-misāl
ba-parvāz-i masti gushūdand bāl (p. 9)

Out of playful coquetry, that intoxication gave rise to clear wine;
 Clarity flew high and the dregs poured to the bottom.
 In the banquet of self-disclosure, from the sediment of the jar of existence
 The vessels of the sensory realm were prepared.
 The nine jugs of contingent existence appeared;
 The Attribute became a mirror for the color of the Essence.
 As soon as the Eternal showed itself, it became limited;
 As soon as the One was counted, it became numerous.
 A wondrous sensory world emerged from the mystery of the Unseen:
 The world held up a mirror to the Unseen.
 From the agitation in that unparalleled wine, the spheres
 Opened their wings, to fly in drunkenness.

As the spheres begin to turn in intoxication, the celestial bodies come into existence, then the four elements (*anāšir*). As the four elements get their share of intoxication, from their combination the three kingdoms (*mavālid*) of mineral, plant, and animal emerge. Last comes man, who with his soul of divine origin fills the universe with light. Drawing on Ibn al-ʿArabi's metaphor, Bedil describes the appearance of man as the polishing of the mirror that had hitherto been clouded. Once the mirror is polished, it reveals that all contingent beings are in fact moving towards the source through their desire for perfection (*kamāl*), which is nothing else than their wish for union (*viṣāl*).

At the end of the first *dawr*, Bedil reiterates the idea that the same *ḡayz*, "outpouring" or "bounty," of the *pīr-i mughbān* (master of the tavern) that has brought the hidden realities into the realm of existence is the means of their return to the origin:²⁴

ba-yak gardish-i jān-i ḡayrat-aṣar
zi kbūd raft bar yak ba-rang-i digar
ba-yak jakvab-i ḡayz-i pīr-i mughbān
shud in jumlab asrār-i masti 'iyān
dar-i 'aysh-i maykbānah maftūḥ shud
qadaḥ dīl sabū jism o may rūb shud (p. 10)

²⁴ In Persian poetry, the *pīr-i mughbān* (the Elder of the Magi), refers to the master of the tavern and is usually distinguished from the *sāqī*. It may also signify God, fate, or the spiritual master.

With one round of the astounding cup
 Each one, like the other, passed beyond itself.
 With one unveiling of the bounty of the Elder of the Tavern
 All these secrets of intoxication became apparent.
 The door to the pleasures of the tavern flew open:
 The cup became heart, the decanter—body, and wine—soul.

With this unique account of the manifestation,²⁵ Bedil sets the stage for the drama of spiritual transformation and voluntary return to the origin. In the following seven *dawrs* of the *Muḥit-i aʿzam*, he takes up a few aspects of how the same wine becomes manifest in the individual “wine vessels” of the phenomena and how it can transcend these boundaries and return to the boundless ocean from which it has never been separated in reality.

To summarize the main themes of each *dawr*, in the second *dawr*, titled “Distributing the cup among the drinking companions in the sensory realm,” the reader is introduced to the foremost drinkers and distributors of the spiritual wine—who are thirteen prophets known from the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition, starting with Adam, the first man and first prophet, and ending with Muhammad and his first four caliphs. The *dawr* is divided into sections called *jāms* (cups)—the cup metaphor indicating that each of the drinkers is given the same wine but in a different cup.²⁶ In the third *dawr*, titled “The waves of the lights of the gems of manifestation,” Bedil continues the discussion with the less-than-perfect drinkers.²⁷ He describes how the same wine that enters the individual receptacles of manifest existence results in a variety of beliefs and dispositions, in accordance with the capacity of the container. The fourth *dawr*, “The agitation of the froth of the overflowing wine of presence,” in contrast, illustrates the transforming qualities of this wine: it melts the cup, bewilders the intellect, revives the dead, and transforms man into a Perfect Man.

The fifth and the sixth *dawrs* appear to be Bedil’s response to conventional descriptions of banquets and could in themselves constitute a separate *sāqināmah*. The fifth *dawr*, “The color of the secrets of the rose-garden of perfection,” is a *bahāriyyah* (spring ode),²⁸ containing an elaborate description of the garden in the spring, the

²⁵ Although metaphors such as God as the wine server, the seven planets or the human heart as wine cups, and heaven as created from the clear wine while earth from the dregs do feature in other *sāqināmahs*, the elaborate symbolic and structural framework that characterizes the *Muḥit-i aʿzam* is entirely absent from them.

²⁶ Bedil may have had the structure of Ibn al-ʿArabi’s *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* in mind when devising this chapter; his account of the individual prophets, however, owes much more to the popular *Qīṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* literature than to the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*.

²⁷ In describing perfection and imperfection as balance and the lack of balance, Bedil draws on the *akhlāq* literature; see, e.g., Naṣir al-din Tūsī, *The Nasirean Ethics*, trans. G. M. Wickens (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1964), 48–49, 74–149.

²⁸ The *bahāriyyah* was a popular genre of spring poetry in Persian literature; Sunil Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia: Persian Literature in an Indian Court* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 98. Bedil also composed, allegedly on the request of his friends, a prose piece on

season when everything swims in the intoxication of love. In accordance with the conventions of the *sāqināmah* genre, the poet contrasts his own dejected state with the overall intoxication and implores the *sāqī*, the cupbearer, to bring him wine that releases him from the bondage of his self. The sixth *darw*, “The banquet of the magical show of the results of Imagination,” consists of three parts: a description of the tavern and its paraphernalia; a description of the characteristics of the heart, followed by an adaptation of the Indic tale of King Lavaṇa on the magical workings of imagination and its connection with the heart;²⁹ and a description of various musical instruments. In this long *darw*, Bedil skillfully connects conventional elements of the *sāqināmah* with an extended discourse on the role of imagination on the macrocosmic and microcosmic levels.

The last two *darwers* revolve around the ontological and epistemological reality of speech. In the seventh *darw*, “Solving the difficulties of the intricacies of expression,” Bedil explores the intrinsic connection between speech, imagination, and the world of multiplicity, juxtaposing it with the ineffability of the One Reality. In the last *darw*, titled “Sealing the scroll of the wandering of language,” the poet’s mediation on the nature of speech, in conformity with the tradition of the *sāqināmah*, takes on a laudatory tone. The poem ends with the poet offering his guests, as it is customary in South Asia at the end of feasts, betel roll (*pān*) in the form of a contest (*munāzarah*) between the ingredients of the betel roll.³⁰ The contest, which ends in a “universal peace” (*ṣulḥ-i kull*), serves not only as a compelling ending to the poem but also as a graphic illustration to the doctrine of the Unity of Being (*vahdat al-vujūd*).

The *Muḥīṭ-i aʿzam*, however, is neither a versified treatise on the doctrine of the *vahdat al-vujūd* nor is it an allegory in which there is a clear and sustained correspondence between the modes in which the divine “wine” becomes manifest and the stages of ontological descent and mystical ascent. Within the metaphysical-symbolic narrative that governs the structuring of the poem and is reflected in the chapter titles, Bedil also deploys wine imagery in the various descriptive, discursive, and narrative units independently from the overarching framework. On the one hand, he is responding to other *sāqināmahs* by incorporating conventional elements but presenting them with a peculiar twist that renders them harmonious with the

the same topic, which he titled *Babāristān-i junūn* (“The springtime of Madness”). This composition is included in the third part of his *Chabār ʿunṣur*; Bidil, *Kulliyāt*, 4:215–33. See also Abdul Ghani, *Life and Works of Abdul Qadir Bedil*, 255–56.

²⁹ For a detailed analysis see Hajnalka Kovacs, ““No Journey is Possible Outside of the Heart”: The Story of King Lavaṇa in Bedil’s *Muḥīṭ-i aʿzam*,” *Journal of South Asian Intellectual History* 2 (2019): 73–115.

³⁰ For the *munāzarah*, see E. Wagner, “Munāzara,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs (Brill Online, 2013); F. Abdullaeva, “The Origins of the *Munāzara* Genre in New Persian Literature,” in *Metaphor and Imagery in Persian Poetry*, ed. Ali Asghar Seyed-Gohrab (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 249–73.

overall tone and theme of his poem, and on the other, he often lets his metaphors and images be governed by the distinctive logic of the lyrical poetry of the *Sabk-i Hindi* kind,³¹ which results in a baroque-like profusion of vignettes that are barely held together even by the unifying theme, the Unity of Being behind all appearances. The fourth and the sixth *dawrs*—parts of the poem that are devoted to elaborate descriptions of the effects of wine and the characteristics of the tavern and its inhabitants, respectively—are particularly illustrative of this approach.

The Transforming Effects of Wine

The fourth *dawr*, titled *Shūr-i sarjūsh-i may-i fayz-i ḥuzūr*, “The agitation of the froth of the overflowing wine of presence,” deals with the transforming effects of wine; as such, it can be considered Bedil’s response to conventional descriptions of wine in *sāqināmahs*.³² At the same time, even when he exploits conventional ideas, such as wine’s capacity to increase love, to burn hatred to ashes, to remove enmity and hypocrisy, to bring about harmony, or to turn stinginess into generosity and destitution into self-sufficiency, he intends to leave no doubt that the wine that he is referring to is something other than the well-known alcoholic beverage. In the words of a wise man, who in an anecdote in the fourth *dawr* reprimands a person who, following his vain desires (*havas-mashrab*), thinks that drinking wine will make him brave like a lion:

kbirad-nashshab-i guftash ay mast-i jabl
manāz inqadarhā ba-ummīd-i sabl
ba-vaṣf-i sharābi kih būsh ast khūn
makum khatm-i fiṭrat zi ḥarf-i junūn
bah ān nashshab jamʿi kih maḥram shudand
zi ghūli guzashtand o ādam shudand
zi ādam malak az malak nūr-i pāk
chunin rishab-hā dārad asrār-i tāk
az-ū tā tavān maghz-i insān shudan
zi jabl ast ham-vaṣf-i shayṭān shudan
murād-i dīl injā zi kbūd raftan ast
nah dar ṭabʿ-i kbūd shir parvardan ast
kamāl-i kharābātīyān-i kamāl
ba-ṣad āftābi-st ʿarz-i bilāl
darin bazm kābidan afzūdan ast
ghurūr-i namū bich nanmūdan ast
dar ān kūsh tā bishiyat kam shavad

³¹ For the characteristics of *Sabk-i Hindi*, see Muḥammad Rizā Shafīʿi Kadkani, “Persian Literature (Belles Lettres) from the Time of Jāmi to the Present Day,” in *History of Persian Literature from the Beginning of the Islamic Period to the Present Day*, edited by George Morrison (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 132–206.

³² The description of wine in *sāqināmahs* often constitutes a separate unit and bears titles such as *taʿrif-i sharāb* or *kayfiyat-i may* (“description of wine” or “the characteristics of wine”).

zi khvud raftanat bar dū ʿālam shavad
tu az aṣl-i in may nadāri khabar
v-agarnab nanāzi bah farʿ inqadar
zi tāk-i buland ast sarmāyah-aṣḥ
kib gardūn tavān rikht az sāyah-aṣḥ (p. 56)

[A person intoxicated with wisdom told him,] “You are drunk with ignorance!
 Don’t boast so much with such a cheap hope!
 Don’t stamp the word of insanity on your nature
 By describing a wine that turns intellect to blood!
 Those who have become intimate with that intoxication
 Have passed beyond being ghouls, and have become Men.
 From Men—angels; from angels—pure light;
 The roots of the secrets of the grapevine run this far.
 When through this wine you can become a real human being,
 It is stupidity to stay on the level of Satan.
 Here, the heart’s desire is to leave the self behind,
 And not to nurture a lion in one’s nature.
 The perfection of those who frequent the tavern of Perfection
 Is to appear as a crescent, even if they are like hundreds of suns.
 In this banquet, to diminish means to increase;
 the glory of growth is not to display anything.
 Strive to have your ‘too much’ become less;
 If you leave yourself behind, you gain both worlds.
 You are unaware of the root of this wine,
 Or else you would not boast this much of the branch.
 Its origin is from an elevated grapevine,
 From whose shade heaven can be cast.”

Using wine as a symbol for a catalyst that enables man to step beyond mundane consciousness and to become aware of the essential unity behind multiplicity, however, does not prevent Bedil from subjecting wine, on the micro level, to numerous metaphorical comparisons on the basis of its physical qualities, such as purity and transparency, color, and fragrance; features associated with its liquidness, such as waves, ripples, drops, bubbles, and its capacity to fill the receptacle; and its effects. He especially likes to juxtapose wine’s watery qualities with its fiery effect. Although for Bedil the color of wine is red—the color red in fact runs through poem as a leit-motif—there are instances when he compares wine to sunlight, moonlight, lightning, and so on. In his addresses to the *sāqi*, on the other hand, in keeping with the convention, he also invokes wine for its capacity of granting inspiration, in particular poetic inspiration.

Description of the Tavern and Wine Vessels

Bedil’s effort to keep the poem’s symbolic framework in view even when indulging in the *l’art pour l’art* act of creating new metaphors is perhaps the most conspicuous in the sixth *dawr*, titled *bazm-i nayrang-i aṣarhā-yi khayāl*, “The banquet of the magi-

cal show of the results of imagination.” As mentioned earlier, this *dawr* consists of a lengthy description of the tavern and its paraphernalia, a strange story of Indic origin on the nature of the heart and imagination, and a description of musical instruments. With regard to length and subject matter, the first and the third part could stand in their own as a separate *sāqināmah* and *mughannināmah* (poem to the minstrel), and may have been initially composed as replies to other *sāqināmahs*. Bedil, however, invested these conventional elements with new significance not only by inserting a wholly unconventional tale and a complex metaphysical discourse on the nature of the heart between them, but also by personifying and spiritualizing the paraphernalia of drinking parties in his own peculiar way. Consider his description of the tavern in the exordium of the sixth *dawr*:

chib maykbānah daryā-yi vaḥdat-kinār
chib maykbānah ṣaḥrā-yi kaṣrat-ghubār
 ...
chib maykbānah ḥusn-i bahār-i karam
chib maykbānah āʿīnah-dār-i karam
ba-ṣūrat binā-yi jumūn-āstān
ba-māʿnī ʿibādat-gab-i rāstān
jahānī barīn āstān-i shubūd
chu masti jabīn-sāy-i zawq-i sujūd
zi āṣār-i taslīm-i mastān-i rāz
falak-bā zamīn-i ṭarīq-i niyāz
zi vajd-i ḥarīfān-i ṣāghar ba-chang
dū ʿālam shikastī ba-dāmān-i rang
zibī qiblab-i ʿālam-i ihtirām
kib khākash zi naqsh-i jabīn khvurdab jān (p. 114)

What tavern? It is an ocean, the shore of which is Unity.
 What tavern? It is a desert, the sand of which is multiplicity.

...
 What tavern? It is the beauty of the spring of Mercy.
 What tavern? It is the holder of a mirror to Mercy.
 In form, it is an edifice whose threshold is frenzy,
 In meaning, it is the place of worship for the righteous.
 On this threshold of witnessing [Reality], a whole world,
 Like intoxication, is rubbing its forehead in the delight of prostration.
 The marks of submission left by those who are drunk with the Secret
 Cause the heavens to throw themselves on the ground in humble supplication.
 The ecstasy of the cup-holding drinkers
 Makes the color of the robe of the two worlds fade.
 Hail, *qibla* for the world of veneration!
 Its floor “drinks” cuplike marks left by foreheads.

Here Bedil envisions the tavern as encompassing the universe and being the place of worship for the entire creation. In the exordium he gives a short description of each inhabitant of the tavern—starting with the largest, the jar, and ending with the smallest, the cup—as they are immersed in the same worship but in accordance with their

individual capacities. The metaphors he deploys are based on the formal and functional features of the wine vessels, their color in relation to the red color of wine, the sound they omit, or, on the contrary, the lack of sound. The jar sits humbly, but its chest is the full of the precious pearls of its secrets. Since it is from where wine is distributed, the entire world prays facing the prayer niche (*miḥrāb*) of its knees. The pitcher (*sabū*) lifts its hand to its ear to give the call for prayer; the flask (*minā*) prostrates, reciting *qul huw-Allāb*—the latter image involves a wordplay, as the word *qul*, when doubled, becomes *qulqul*, “gurgle,” onomatopoeically representing the sound that the flask gives out when wine is poured. The cup with its open mouth thanks God (says *al-ḥamd*) while telling the beads of its rosary of wine drops. The duck-shaped wine cup (*bat*) lays down the prayer mat on water; the goblet recites the supplication known as *du‘ā-yi qadaḥ*—which literally means “the prayer of the goblet,” but as a technical term, it refers to a special prayer for rain.

Bedil goes on describing in considerable detail, utilizing religious and mystical terminology, the devotion performed by various wine vessels, before turning to the drinkers (*abl-i maykhānah*)—whose identity he does not specify, except for noting that “they are outside of the bounds of conventional worship.”³³ These are the true lovers, attracted to the tavern because of the affinity of their natures with it and its paraphernalia. They display the same characteristics as the wine vessels: they are humble, filled with love and pain, and silent even when they speak.

In the first part of the *dawr*, however, the focus is not on the drinkers but on the wine vessels introduced in the exordium. In separate sections devoted to the main characters, Bedil elaborates on the peculiarities of their “worship,” in most cases even illustrating it with an anecdote. The anecdote (*ḥikāyat*) at the end of the first part of the *dawr*, for example, consists of a dialogue between the flask and the cup, and is meant to convey the moral that each worshipper's way of worship is commensurate with his own capacity. It begins with the cup reproaching the flask:

qadaḥ kard rūzi zi minā su‘āl
kib ay az tu rawshan dil-i vajd o ḥāl
khayāl-i qadat sarv-i gulzār-i nāz
ṣafā-yi dilat ṣubḥ-i anwār-i rāz
jigar tishnah-i ḥasrat-i qulqulat
nāzar-hā kamīn-gāb-i rang-i mulat
labat az chib rū dar sujūd-i niyāz
chu gul mikunad shūkh-i khandāz bāz
agar in namāz ast qabqab chirā-st
v-agar sabv bāshad sujūdat kirā-st
zi miṣl-i tu Khizr-i ḥaqīqat-namā
ba-rāb-i ṭariqat nazibad khaṭā

³³ The Kabul edition has *zi qayd-i ‘ibārāt-i rasmi birūn / ba-dars-i ishārāt-i dil zū funūn* (p. 118) (“They are outside of the bounds of conventional expression / they are skilled in reading the signs of the heart”). Some manuscripts have *‘ibādāt*, “worship,” instead of *‘ibārāt*, “expression”; both meanings make sense in this context.

zi ravshan-dil in shirah sabl ast sabl
kih az rāstān kaj-kharāmi-st jabl
ba-in rang tā'at nadid-ast kas
ba-qabqab namāz ikhtirā' ast o bas (p. 139)

[One day the cup asked the flask,
 "O you who illuminate the heart of ecstasy and spiritual transports!
 Thinking of your stature brings to mind the cypress of the garden of elegance;
 The clear wine of your heart is morning glow of mystery.
 My heart is thirsty with longing for your gurgle!
 My eyes can only see the color of your wine!
 Why is it that in the prostration of prayer, your mouth
 Opens with a coquettish laughter, like the rose?
 If this is a ritual prayer, why is this laughter?
 Or else, if it is out of heedlessness, then for whom is your prostration?
 On the spiritual path, mistakes are not befitting
 Someone like you—a Khizr-like guide to Reality.
 For illuminated hearts to act in such a manner is utter heedlessness—
 For the those who are on the right path, to walk crookedly is a senseless act.
 No one has heard of such worship—
 To laugh while praying is an innovation, nothing else!"

His sense of honor hurt, the flask replies:

surāhi zi ghayrat junūn-sāz shud
ba-khūn-i jigar shu'lab-pardāz shud
kih ay chashmat az nūr-i 'ibrat tabi
nadāri az avzā'-i dabr āgahi
hamah chashm-i o nisti didab-var
hamah ghūsh-i o az jahān bikhābar
namāzi chūn garchib 'ayn-i khatā-st
agar chūn manū miguzārad ravā-st
kih az tā'at-i Haq darīn anjuman
shudab 'ālamī tishnah-i khūn-i man
chu khvāham rukū'i ba-jā āvaram
bar ārand az panbah maghz-i saram
fishārand dar saydah ḥalqam chūnān
kih khūn-i jigar rīzad-am az dabān
ba-vahm in gurūb-i nadāmat-mā'al
shumārand bar khvish khūnam ḥalāl
kih dād-ast bar qatl-i 'ābid šalāḥ
kih guft-ast khūn-i muṣalli mubāḥ
azin gham ba-dil khūn nabandam chirā
bar avzā'-i dunyā nakbandam chirā (pp. 139–40)

[His sense of honor hurt, the flask became enraged,
 With the blood of his heart fanning flames,
 "O you whose eye is devoid of light to take heed!
 You are unaware of the conditions of the time!
 You are an eye all over but have no eyesight,
 You are an ear all over but deaf to the world.

Although such a prayer is essentially wrong,
 If someone like me performs it, it is valid.
 For, because of my worship of God, in this assembly
 An entire world has become thirsty of my blood.
 When I want to perform the ritual bowing,
 They pull out my cotton-brain.
 When I prostrate, they squeeze my throat in such a manner
 That my heart's blood pours through my mouth.
 In their delusion, these people—who will meet nothing but remorse—
 Consider my blood to be lawful for them.
 Who gave them the advice of killing a worshipper?
 Who said that it is allowed to shed the blood of someone who is in prayer?
 How would my heart not bleed in this grief?
 How can I not laugh at the condition of the world?"

In this anecdote, the various positions that the flask assumes when wine is being poured from it are compared to the various positions in Islamic ritual prayer. What the cup is taking issue with is that the flask is "laughing" while in prayer—the sound of its gurgle (*qulqul*) is taken to be a laughter, and laughter is disapproved in prayer. The flask, however, justifies the act with a kind of reasoning that may be regarded an extended *husn-i ta'lil*, "beautiful explanation of a cause," or, as Hellmut Ritter calls it, "fantastic aetiology"³⁴—that is, the poet seeking a poetic explanation for a natural phenomenon. The steps of this reasoning, most of which remain unexpressed, are the following:

The flask is a heart (or has a heart)—here the metaphor is based on formal analogy. The flask is full of wine—that is, the heart is full of blood. The drinkers are thirsty of wine, so they are thirsty of blood. They are ready to kill—which they do by pulling out the cotton plug and squeezing the throat. Pulling out of the cotton plug is like pulling out the brain (or, by extension, the head) of the flask; holding the bottle by its neck is like strangling it. The grip on the bottle's neck is so powerful that it causes its heart's blood (*khūn-i jigar*) to pour—therefore, in effect it is like slitting the throat. In Islamic law, killing someone who is in the act of prayer is a grave sin. The flask is in deep affliction (its heart has turned into blood), which at the same time makes him laugh at the despicable conditions of the world. So, the sound it omits is at the same time a death rattle and a laughter.

It should be noted here that the way Bedil likes to build his complex metaphors is that he takes a metaphor literally and then builds other metaphors on it. A form of this technique is to build a metaphor on the literal meaning of an idiomatic expression but at the same time to exploit both the literal and the idiomatic meanings—as it can be seen in his use of the expression *khūn-i jigar*, which literally means "blood of

³⁴ Quoted in Annemarie Schimmel, *A Two-Colored Brocade: The Imagery of Persian Poetry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 48. On *husn-i ta'lil*, see Natalia Chalisova, "Hosn-e ta'lil," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hosn-e-talil-lit-beauty-of-rationale>.

the heart,” but as an idiom it means “affliction, grief.” Such techniques were very common in the “Indian style” in general, and in Bedil’s poetry in particular.

Dialogues like the dialogue between the flask and the cup in all probability derive from the *munāẓarah*,³⁵ but the vying for superiority that characterizes the *munāẓarah* is no longer in them.³⁶ They may have also been inspired by the *changnāmah*, a thematic genre in which musical instruments lament, at times in conversation with each other, the separation from their origin.³⁷ Although Bedil in this dialogue juxtaposes the flask with the cup, in the section *Kayfiyat-i jān o minā*, in which it is actually located, he focuses on the affinity of the two, as a series of image binaries to which he compares them testify.³⁸

While in descriptive units like this Bedil indulges in art for art’s sake and tends to be lost in the details, he never loses the grandiose symbolic frame narrative of his poem from sight. If in the first *dawr* he describes how the inhabitants of the tavern were hidden in the undifferentiated ocean of wine before manifestation, in the sixth *dawr* he shows them as they appear in the manifest realm.³⁹ Whereas in the first *dawr* he uses the analogy of the fermentation of wine and its differentiation into clear wine and dregs and further substances to describe the gradual manifestation of the universe, here he personifies the wine vessels and dresses them with spiritual qualities.

Although it may not be obvious at first reading, in the larger context of the *Muḥit-i aʿzam* the description of the wine vessels serves yet another purpose. Since in the poem the wine cup (at some times another wine vessel) is metaphorically identified with the heart, the description of the wine vessels serves as a prelude for an extended metaphysical discourse on the nature of the heart—the topic that occupies the central place in the symbolic framework of the *Muḥit-i aʿzam*. A similar link exists between the description of the heart and the third section, the description of the musical instruments.⁴⁰ Through such links on the thematic, the visual and the metaphorical levels, Bedil skillfully weaves conventional elements of the *sāqināmah* into the overall fabric of his metaphysical narrative.

³⁵ See Joachim Yeshaya’s chapter titled “The Dispute between Cup and Jug in the Court of Wine: A Poem by Joseph ben Tanḥum Yerushalmi from Mamluk Egypt” in the present volume.

³⁶ Compare the unique *munāẓarah* in the eighth *dawr* of the *Muḥit-i aʿzam* in which each of the four ingredients of the betel roll (*pān*) tries to demonstrate its superiority in bringing about the slight intoxication that the *pān* produces.

³⁷ In the third section of the same *dawr*, Bedil in fact describes various musical instruments in a manner reminiscent of the *changnāmah*.

³⁸ These include traditional binaries familiar from Persian poetry, such as bulbul and rose, bud and dewdrop, and pen and inkwell, and less familiar ones, such as heart and eye, wave and bubble, and flame and coal, as well as the numbers 1 and 0, which together result in tenfold pleasure, and so on. In most cases, the comparisons are based on shape.

³⁹ Compare, for example, the description of the flask and the cup in the first *dawr* with that in the anecdote of the sixth *dawr*.

⁴⁰ For an analysis of the relationship between the main sections of this *dawr*, see Kovacs, “Tavern of the Manifestation of Realities,” 112–72.

To conclude, although reflections on mystical and metaphysical notions are not rare in the Safavid-Mughal *sāqināmahs*, the grandiose vision behind the *Muḥīṭ-i aʿẓam* and its well-defined formal and thematic structure is unprecedented in the tradition. Within the poem, wine imagery operates on two levels: the transcendental-symbolic and the immanent-comparative, to borrow Riccardo Zipoli's terms.⁴¹ The transcendental-symbolic aspect is behind the organization and the overall structure of the poem, as indicated by Bedil in the chapter titles. In this framework wine primarily symbolizes the One Reality, in which everything is contained in eternity and which is the primary force behind not only "descent," or manifestation, but also "ascent," or return to the origin. The immanent-comparative aspect can be seen in the large array of comparisons and narratives in which Bedil uses the same imagery, at times in ways unrelated to the transcendental-symbolic aspect. The rich profusion of images related to wine, water, gardens, and music creates a baroque-like effect in the poem, reminiscent of his *ghazals*. While Bedil is careful not to lose the overarching thematic framework from sight, for the reader the connection between the micro-elements and the macro-level may not be immediately visible. But once the eyes are trained to see the One Wine behind all appearances, Bedil's "tavern for the manifestation of realities" begins to reveal its unlimited secrets.

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⁴¹ Riccardo Zipoli, "Semiotics and the Tradition of the Image," *Persica* 20 (2005): 155–72.

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