Metaphor and Imagery in Persian Poetry

Iran Studies

VOLUME 6

Metaphor and Imagery in Persian Poetry

Edited by

Ali Asghar Seyed-Gohrab

BRILL

LEIDEN · BOSTON
2012

Cover illustration: *Combat between Rostam and Sohrab*. Courtesy of the Leiden University Library, Cod.Or. 494, f. 90

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Seyed-Gohrab, A. A. (Ali Asghar), 1968-
Metaphor and imagery in Persian poetry / edited by Ali-Asghar Seyed-Gohrab.
p. cm. — (Iran studies, ISSN 1569-7401 ; v. 6)
Includes index.
ISBN 978-90-04-21125-4 (hardback : acid-free paper)
1. Persian poetry—History and criticism. 2. Imagery (Psychology) in literature. 3. Metaphor in literature. 4. Poetics—History. I. Title.

PK6420.I43S49 2011
891'.51—dc23

2011034528

This publication has been typeset in the multilingual "Brill" typeface. With over 5,100 characters covering Latin, IPA, Greek, and Cyrillic, this typeface is especially suitable for use in the humanities. For more information, please see www.brill.nl/brill-typeface.

ISSN 1569-7401
ISBN 978 90 04 21125 4

To Johan ter Haar

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) for their generous VENI award (2002–2006), which resulted in various articles and the book *Courtly Riddles: Enigmatic Embellishments in Early Persian Poetry*. I would also like to acknowledge my gratitude to the Leiden University Fund (LUF), the former Centre for Non-Western Studies (CNWS) and the Netherlands-Iran Society, for their financial support for academic meetings on metaphors in the Persian and Islamic literary traditions.

I would like to express my thankfulness to my friend Sen McGlinn, who meticulously read many chapters of the manuscript and offered me many invaluable editorial suggestions. I am most grateful to my student-assistant Amin Ghodratzadeh, who read the manuscript and made the indispensable index. I am also indebted to the editors of the editorial board of Iran Studies for their invaluable comments and suggestions, saving me from many inconsistencies. Finally, I would like to thank Nicolette van der Hoek, Renee Otto, and Kathy van Vliet-Leigh at Brill for their ceaseless efforts and encouragements.

Ali-Asghar Seyed-Gohrab

INTRODUCTION: PERSIAN RHETORICAL FIGURES

A.A. Seyed-Gohrab

Persian literature is essentially symbolic. This is reflected in the abundant use of rhetorical figures in both prose and poetry, and also in the prominent place of poetry in Persian culture. As Ehsan Yarshater observes "Poetry is the most significant artistic achievement of Persia, and, as an art with wide scope, sustained energy and universal appeal, provides the broadest stage for artistic and intellectual expression."[1]

This volume is a collection of essays on classical Persian literature, focusing mainly on Persian rhetorical devices, especially imagery and metaphors, and theories about them. From the outset of Persian literature in the tenth century, authors have used various literary devices to embellish their writings, and to make them more persuasive, while Persian rhetoricians wrote rules for making such devices, in both Arabic and Persian. The importance of the use of these devices is emphasized in various poetic manuals. A poem without literary embellishments would be considered inelegant.[2]

Rules for rhetoric figures, imagery and metaphors are stipulated in rhetorical manuals. There are many works on the science of rhetoric but the most original is without doubt the *Asrār al-balāgha* ('Secrets of Eloquence') by 'Abd al-Qāhir Jurjānī (d. 471/1078), which, as De Bruijn indicates, "changed the course of literary theory…" Jurjānī treats the use of imagery, simile (*tashbīh*), metaphor (*isti'āra*), analogy (*tamthīl*), and several other tropes.[3] His analyses were taken over by later literary critics such as Sakkākī (d. 626/1229) who wrote *Miftāḥ al-'ulūm* and in

---

[1] E. Yarshater, "Some common characteristics of Persian Poetry and Art" in *Iranian Islamic*, nr. 16, 1962, p. 61.

[2] 'Unṣur al-Ma'ālī Kay Kāvūs b. Iskandar, *Qābūs-nāma*, ed. S. Nafīsī, Tehran: Furūghī, 1342/1963, p. 137.

[3] See *Die Geheimnisse der Wortkunst*, trans. H. Ritter, Wiesbaden, 1959; K. Abu Deeb, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. 'Abd-al-Qāher al-Jurjānī; for an exposition of rhetorical figures in Persian see N. Chalisova, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Rhetorical Figures; for a comprehensive examination of rhetorical figures see N. Chalisova, "Persian Rhetoric: Elm-e Badi' and Elm-e Bayân" (chapter 6), in *A History of Persian Literature: General Introduction to Persian Literature*, vol. I, ed. J.T.P. de Bruijn, London: I.B. Tauris, 2009, pp. 139–71.

various commentaries on it, such as *Īḍāḥ fi'l-maʿānī wa'l-bayān* by Khaṭīb Dimashq Qazvīnī (d. 739/1338).

Arabic literary theories were made applicable to Persian poetry from the eleventh century, during the Ghaznavid period, through several treatises, none of which are extant. The earliest extant work is Kay Kāvūs b. Iskandar who devoted a chapter to poetry in his *Qābūs-nāma* (completed 475/1082–83), presenting several rhetoric figures used by Persian poets and explaining the superiority of poetry over prose. The first author to write a treatise on Persian rhetoric was Muḥammad b. ʿUmar Rādūyānī, whose work *Tarjumān al-balāgha* is to some extent modeled on *Kitāb al-maḥāsin fi'l-naẓm va'l-nathr* by Abu'l-Ḥasan Naṣr Marghīnānī, a native of Transoxania.[4] In his book, Rādūyānī cites many examples from Persian poetry to illustrate his more comprehensive definitions of rhetorical figures. Another work on the subject of rhetoric was by Amīr Rashīd al-Dīn Muḥammad ʿUmarī, known as Vaṭvāṭ (d.c. 578/1182–83) the *Ḥadāʿiq al-siḥr fī daqāʾiq al-shiʿr*.[5] Surely the favourite work on Persian literary theory is *al-Muʿjam fī maʿāyīr ashʿār al-ʿajam* (1232–33) by Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Qays Rāzī, which in many respects surpassed earlier Persian works on literary theory. Shams-i Qays placed literary figures in the second section of the book, treating them as tools to embellish poetry.[6]

---

[4] For the background of Rādūyānī's work see G.J. van Gelder, "The Apposite Request: A Small Chapter in Persian and Arabic Rhetoric," in *Edebiyāt: The Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 2001, pp. 1–13.

[5] Amīr Rashīd al-Dīn Muḥammad ʿUmarī (Vaṭvāṭ), *Ḥadāʿiq al-siḥr fī daqāʾiq al-shiʿr*, ed. ʿA. Iqbāl, Tehran, 1308/1930. See also N. Chalisova, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Ḥadāʾiq al-siḥr.

[6] Western scholars have dealt with Persian and Arabic rhetoric from the beginning of the eighteenth century. In *Die Rhetorik der Araber*, A.F. Mehren (Copenhagen/Vienna: 1853) examined classical Arabic rhetorical figures. In addition, several of Persian rhetorical manuals have been the basis of Western literary scholarship. Niẓām al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ's *Majmaʿ al-ṣanāʿi*, which was completed in 1650, was the source of Francis Gladwin's *Dissertations of the Rhetoric, Prosody and Rhyme of the Persians* (Calcutta: 1801). Qabūl Muḥammad's *Haft qulzum* was translated by Fr. Rückert and W. Pertsch, and was published under the title of *Grammatik, Poetik und Rhetorik der Perser* (Gotha: 1874). Shams al-Dīn Faqīr Dihlavī's *Ḥadāʾiq al-balāgha* was the source of Joseph Garcin de Tassy's *Rhétorique et prosodie des langues de l'orient musulman* (Paris: 1873). There are several other studies and translations of Arabic and Persian poetics such as V. Cantarino, *Arabic Poetics in the Golden Age: Selection of Texts Accompanied by a Preliminary Study*, Leiden: 1975; K. Abu Deeb and Wolfhart Heinrichs published several articles and books on this topic among which *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, Approaches to Arabic Literature, Warminster: 1979; Wolfhart Heinrichs, *The Hand of the Northwind: Opinions on Metaphor and the Early Meaning of istiʿāra in Arabic Poetics*, Wiesbaden: 1977; idem, *Arabische Dichtung und griechische Poetik: Ḥāzim al-Qartağannīs Grundlegung der Poetik*

In the classical literary theory that was developed by these literary rhetoricians, the science of rhetoric (*ʿilm al-balāgha*), comprised three branches: semantics (*ʿilm al-maʿānī*); the theory of figurative speech (*ʿilm al-bayān*); and the science of rhetorical embellishment (*ʿilm al-badīʿ*).[7] These branches were regarded by writers and poets primarily as tools used by all the learned classes including religious doctors, poets, historiographers and government officials to enhance their writing and its power to persuade. What mattered was literary taste: knowing how far, and how, a text should be embellished through rhetorical figures to achieve the highest effect.

The theory of figurative speech (*ʿilm al-bayān*) receives much attention, as this also includes the use of metaphors and other figures. *Bayān* means literally 'statement,' 'exposition,' or 'explanation,' but from an early date it was used in a technical sense, referring to the science of rhetoric in Arabic, Persian and Turkish.[8] In this sense, *bayān* was a quality, involving eloquence and clarity of expression. The more eloquent and figurative an expression, the more connoisseurs appreciated the poet. Because of the emphasis on eloquence, the term was often synonymous to *balāgha* and *fasāha*, both meaning eloquence, but *bayān* retains the connotation of the modes through which a concept is expressed. As *bayān* became an essential part of literary theory, rhetoricians subdivided it into two types: *taḍammun* or "signification by implication" and "signification on the basis of an association (*iltizām*), i.e., by means of a notion which is not inherent in the concept itself but is somehow related to it."[9] Various rhetorical concepts such as simile (*tashbīh*), trope or 'figurative speech,' (*majāz*), and metonymy (*kināya*) fall under this type of *bayān*. Each of these concepts is further theorized to indicate what the clearest and most innovative way of expressing a concept. Tropes (*majāz*), which were distinguished from *ḥaqīqat*, or 'the truth' or 'direct speech,' are divided into two different classes: the metaphor (*istiʿāra*) and the 'free trope' (*majāz-i mursal*). While 'free tropes' are made through abstract relationships, between the "part

mit Hilfe Aristotelischer Begriffe, Wiesbaden: 1969; J. Scott Meisami, *Structure and Meaning in Medieval Arabic and Persian Poetry*, London: 2003.

[7] For an exposition of these individual sciences see J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.vv. Balāghat, Bayān, and Badīʿ. Also see M.J.D. Kazzāzī, *Badīʿ: Zībā-shināsī-i sukhan-i Pārsī*, vol. 3, Tehran, Kitāb-i Mād, 1373/1994.

[8] J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Bayān.

[9] Ibid.

and the whole, the cause and its effect, or the position (*maḥall*) and the thing which occupies it (*ḥall*)," metaphors always involve a comparison.[10]

Metaphors are at the heart of Persian poetry. They are used for a wide range of purposes in different genres. They are indispensible for descriptive poetry (*vaṣf*), in which poets strive to make original metaphors for a courtly object such as a pen or sword or for an abstract concept such as good name or magnanimity. In a fierce competitive context, the poet's professional survival rests on his ability to contrive original metaphors within the established literary conventions. As I have indicated elsewhere, this drive for originality in metaphors produced many that had to be puzzled out by the reader, to the point that in some cases the description genre merges with that of the literary riddle.[11] The 'puzzle' descriptions became a courtly entertainment, the readers enjoying the suspended comprehension and then the pleasure of unraveling a metaphor. For the poet, this was a way to outshine other poets. Poets such as Niẓāmī of Ganja (1141–1209) and Khāqānī of Shirvān contrived such complicated metaphors that, even during medieval times, many of their metaphors became unsolvable. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (d. 1492), unable to decipher some five hundred to one thousand couplets by Niẓāmī, said that we should ask their meanings of Niẓāmī, on the Day of Judgment.[12]

But metaphors that were widely circulated lost the riddling aspect and became mere metaphors and even clichés.[13] A good example is a riddle first recounted by Firdawsī in his *Shāh-nāma* (about 1010 AD). The episode of Zāl and Rūdāba includes several riddles as narrative devices, one of which is "The two running horses, black and white / that cannot catch each other in the race."[14] The white and black horses stand for day and night, but when the poet Ḥakīm Sanā'ī (d. about 529/1131) reuses this metaphor in his *Sayr al-ʿibād*, there is no riddle involved. He refers to a city whose pack animals are black and white. The reader is expected to know that this is day and night, and therefore that the city is the world.

---

[10] Ibid.

[11] *Courtly Riddles: Enigmatic Embellishments in Early Persian Poetry*, Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2010, pp. 45–7.

[12] *Makhzan al-asrār*, ed. V. Dastgirdī, p. 181.

[13] Almost the same relationship can be applied to the proverbs. As Annikki Kaivola-Bregenhoj has shown riddles in one community can serve as proverbs in another, and *vice versa*. See Annikki Kaivola-Bregenhoj, *Riddles: Perspectives on the Use, Function and Change in a Folklore Genre*, Helsinki, 2001, p. 26.

[14] *The Shahnameh* (*Book of Kings*), ed. D. Khaleghi-Motlagh, New York, 1988, vol. i, p. 247.

One century later, Niẓāmī changes the metaphor, the horses have become birds, and their colors are also left out:

> For a long time these two shameless birds
> Have been making a hole in your bag.
> If your life is a heap of millet,
> Fear the eating of these two birds.

The passage in the *Shāh-nāma* is an example of the didactic use of riddling metaphors. They test a young man's wit and wisdom, or are used to select the most suitable husband. In addition to these didactic and entertaining aspects of the metaphor, they are also used in narratives to depict a character's feelings, posture, talents, the astrological circumstances, time and place, etc. To give one example, in the following couplets from Niẓāmī's *Laylī and Majnūn*, when Majnūn realizes that he cannot attain his beloved, he leaves his father to wander the desert. In this passage, a person finds him in the corner of a ruined spot. The narrator describes Majnūn as follows:

> He saw him at the banks of a mirage
> Fallen down ruined in a ruined place
> Like the rope of his tent, he was loose
> With broad meanings but narrow rhyme
> Like his horoscope, he was an expert bowman
> In prostration he was a bow, in fidelity he was an arrow.

In this description, the narrator uses various metaphors to describe Majnūn's whereabouts, his condition, the star under which he is born, his poetic genius, his steadfastness in love, his unrequited love and his loneliness. The description starts with the setting. Majnūn has abandoned his home and is far out in the desert, indicated by 'the banks of a mirage.' The Persian term is *sarāb, sar* meaning head, beginning or end, while *āb* is water. So he is located on a shore between the nothingness of the desert and that of an illusory sea. The setting in which Majnūn finds himself is the objective correlative of his own condition, for he is lost in longing for Laylī, whom he can never attain: the idea of Laylī is another mirage. *Sarāb* has an internal rhyme with the words *kharāb* and *kharābī* (a ruined condition, and a ruined spot) in the second hemistich of the first couplet. As a rejected lover, Majnūn is ruined, physically and psychologically. This dramatic condition is further emphasized by the verb *uftāda* or fallen: his strength is exhausted, and he is weak from thirst. The word 'fallen' also connotes his failure to attain to the object of love.

A new set of metaphors are used in the second couplet, emphasizing Majnūn's poor condition. The words *langar* and *lang* are both ambiguous. *Langar* means an anchor, a stay or rope for supporting a tent, a mystic lodge, but also a mendicant. *Lang* means lame, maimed, the halting of a caravan, flaccidity of a penis, or stopping someone (for example to rob them).[15] The word *bayt* means both a couplet, and by extension poetry, but it also means a tent or a house. By combining *langar* with *bayt*, the narrator finds a way to bring to mind at least two metaphors: Majnūn has involuntarily stopped and is injured, the *lang* or lameness refers to his physical condition. But taking the other meaning of *bayt*, and bearing in mind that Majnūn is a poet, we read "Like the anchor of his poetry, he was lamed," meaning that he has stopped composing poetry or that his poetry had no rhythm, as the rope (or metre and rhyme) is the frame of poetry. The second hemistich builds on this, by referring to the constriction of his rhyme (*qāfiya*). This has an association with *qāfī*, meaning 'attendant' or 'follower,' so the connotation is that Majnūn is alone, his poetry has no audience, and no rhyme or rhythm either. Yet he is still full of meanings (*maʿnī*): the word has connotations beyond the lexical, pointing to transcendence, and the world of ideas. So Majnūn is impotent to achieve, or retell, the transcendence he feels, and he in his condition is an object lesson, full of meanings for the reader.

The third couplet extends this with a cosmological metaphor. Majnūn is like a bowman, referring to his astrological sign (Sagittarius), and he is both the bow and arrow. Like the bow he is bent, by unrequited love, but he is resolute in his intentions and faithfulness, like an arrow. This is only one of the many passages in which the setting Niẓāmī describes is welded with Majnūn's character and the topic the author is treating at that point. Majnūn becomes part of the setting and the setting is an indispensible part of Majnūn, while the narrative is also carried forward.

H. Ritter has compared the characteristics of Persian metaphors to those in Arabic poetry. In Ritter's view, in Persian poetry, poets prefer to use metaphoric expressions, while in Arabic poetry, poets make explicit poetic comparisons.[16] As De Bruijn has rightly formulated, this preference for an "immediate and flexible use of imagery" has led Persian poetry to develop a manneristic idiom in both poetry and prose. Chalisova refers

[15] F. Steingass, *Persian-English Dictionary*, London: Routledge, 1963 (fifth print), under *lang* and *langar*.

[16] H. Ritter, *Über die Bildersprache Nizāmīs*, Berlin and Leipzig: 1927.

to the "aesthetic tenets (*ʿilm-i badīʿ*)" which in her view "formed the very core of Persian literary theory, while in neighboring traditions, e.g. Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, and to a certain extent even Arabic, rhetorical figures served only as a complement to other parts of the literary canon."[17] In his study of the influence of Persian on Arabic literature, Benedikt Reinert shows the relationship between Arabic and Persian poetry, emphasizing that these literary traditions influenced each other for a long time. While Jāhiliyya poetry was the ancestor of Persian poetry, the Jāhilliya itself was influenced by Middle Persian poetry. Reinart names several Middle Persian literary predilections adopted in Arabic poetry such as the use of hyperbole, metaphors, the genre of literary description, and the *radīf*-rhyme.[18] This also explains to some extent why the very first specimens of Persian poetry are rich with figures of speech, although in the subsequent centuries the use of these figures increased.

Several scholars such as De Bruijn, Ritter and Reinert has shown, in Persian poetry, metaphor grew in importance as compared to the "predominance of explicit similes in ancient Arabic poetry."[19] Persian poetry became permeated with metaphors and novel imagery. The growing rhetorical virtuosity related to a stylistic development in Persian poetry. The 'Khurāsānī style' usually marks the first period (from the ninth century to the second half of the twelfth century) of New Persian poetry in which poetry aimed at *sahl-i mumtaniʿ* or "inimitable simplicity,"[20] and poets limited their use of Arabic vocabulary, compared to the next period of Persian poetry called *sabk-i ʿIrāqī* ('the style of 'Irāq'), which begins in the middle of the twelfth century and ends in the sixteenth century. In this period, poets employed complicated imagery and extended metaphors. Poets such as Anvarī, Niẓāmī and Khāqānī are famous as *poeta docti* because of

[17] N. Chalisova, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Rhetorical Figures. See also B. Reinert article "Probleme der vormongolischen arabisch-persischen Poesiegemeinschaft und ihr Reflex in der Poetik," in *Arabic Poetry: Theory and Development*, ed. G.E. von Grunebaum, Wiesbaden: 1973, pp. 71–105.

[18] B. Reinert, Probleme, pp. 71–105; see also J.T.P. de Bruijn, "Arabic Influences on Persian Literature" (Chapter 13), in *A History of Persian Literature*, pp. 369–84; N. Chalisova, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.vv. Hyperbole, and Ḥosn-e taʿlil for the impact of Arabic on Persian literature see L.P. Elwell-Sutton, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Arabic Language, iii. Arabic Influence in Persian Literature.

[19] J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Badīʿ; H. Ritter, *Über die Bildersprache Nizāmīs*; Benedikt Reinert, *Ḫāqānī als Dichter*; idem, "Probleme der vormongolischen . . ."

[20] On various attempt to attain inimitable simplicity in later centuries see M.E. Subtelny, "A Taste for Intricate: The Persian Poetry of the Late Timurid Period," in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, vol. 136, 1986, pp. 56–79.

their use of learned and scientific allusions. The twelfth century is seen as the epoch of "a continuous refinement of the language of metaphor."[21] The use of metaphors and rhetorical devices increased further from the sixteenth century, during the period called *sabk-i Hindī* ('the Indian style'). During this period Persian poets moved to India or the Ottoman Empire, as the Shiite Safavid rulers focused less on poetry as a courtly activity. The style of this poetry is described by Alessandro Bausani as follows: "deviations from the rule of harmonious use of imagery, leading to a 'baroque' extension of the stock images and metaphors allowed in poetry, the predominance of mystical-philosophical themes, and an extreme tendency towards allegory."[22] The number of rhetoric figures increased and their use become extremely convoluted, to such an extent that a through knowledge of rhetoric figures and of Persian poetry and culture was needed to understand it.[23]

Persian rhetorical manuals concentrate on various categories of metaphors. Metaphors usually underlie other rhetorical figures, and the other figures are commonly used to enhance a metaphor. One of the most common terms for metaphor is *istiʿāra*, meaning literally 'to borrow.'[24] The term is often regarded in rhetorical manuals as a subcategory of *majāz* and stands in contrast to literal (*ḥaqīqī*) meaning. Metaphor is also discussed in philosophical and religious manuals, with somewhat different definitions in the various disciplines. Authors define the term in relation to other adjacent terms such as simile (*tashbīh*), exemplification (*tamthīl*) or rhetorical ornament (*badīʿ*).

In *Tarjumān al-balāgha*, Rādūyānī discusses *istiʿāra* under *balāgha* or 'eloquence,' stating that this is a "borrowing" of a name (*nām*) or word (*lafẓ*). In his *Ḥadāʾiq al-siḥr*, Rashīd al-Dīn Vaṭvāṭ bases himself on Rādūyānī's definition, adding that a word is 'transferred' (*naql*) from its literal meaning to a different context. In his *al-Muʿjam*, Shams-i Qays Rāzī elaborates on the definition of the term *istiʿāra*, emphasizing the use of a word with a meaning other than its literal meaning, and giving as examples the hand, lion and donkey which are used respectively for power,

---

[21] See J.W. Clinton, "Esthetics by Implication: What Metaphors of Craft Tell us about the Unity of the Persian Qasida" in *Edebiyāt*, vol. iv, no. 1, 1979, p. 76.

[22] As summarized by J.T.P. de Bruijn in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), s.v. Iran, p. 60; see also W. Heinz, *Der indische Stil in der persischen Literatur*, Wiesbaden, 1973, p. 4.

[23] See E. Yarshater, "The Indian or Safavid Style: Progress or Decline" in *Persian Literature*, New York, 1988, pp. 249–288.

[24] J. Scott Meisami, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Esteʿāra; idem, *Structure and Meaning*, 319–403.

courage and ignorance.[25] These definitions are further elaborated by later Persian literary theorists. The present volume includes two articles which analyze the term metaphor in Persian literature. The first article treating theories of metaphor is by Justine Landau, whose *Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī and Poetic Imagination in the Arabic and Persian Philosophical Tradition*. Here Landau examines the power of Persian metaphor, focusing on Rūdakī's famous lines which motivated the Persian sulṭān to move from Herat to Bukhārā after a long absence:

> The scent of the river Mūliyān comes to us,
> The memory of the friend dear comes to us.
> The sands of the Āmū, toilsome though they be,
> Beneath my feet are soft as silk to me.
> On seeing the friendly face, the waters of the Jeyḥūn
> Shall leap up to our horses' girth.
> O Bukhara, rejoice and hasten!
> Joyful towards thee hasteth our Amīr!
> The Amīr is the moon and Bukhara the heaven;
> The moon shall brighten up the heaven!
> The Amīr is a cypress and Bukhara the garden;
> The cypress shall rise in the garden!

Landau has related literary metaphors to Perso-Arabic philosophy and literary theory, in which Persian writers had detailed the process of digesting a metaphor. Landau cogently examines the views of philosophers such as Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, Fārābī, and Ibn Sīnā not only to show why Rūdakī's poetic use of metaphors and rhetorical devices were so successful and how poetry can urge a person into action, but also dwelling on poetry as a rational discourse, showing how poetry could be explained through syllogism. Landau also relates the Iranian rhetorical tradition to its Western counterpart. In the Middle Ages, rhetoric was one of the *artes liberales* and was taught in Hellenistic schools long before the flowering of Islamic civilization. Muslim rhetoricians knew the Hellenistic tradition, although it is hard to find evidence of a direct influence on the Islamic rhetoric tradition.[26] Aristotle's works, the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics*, were known, but were not widely spread, in Islamic literary circles. Landau also examines philosophical aspects of metaphors, in relation to the Greek tradition. The second article *Kāshifī's Powerful Metaphor: the Energising Trope* by

[25] Ibid.

[26] The example of Qarṭājannī (d. 684/1285), which W. Heinrich studies in *Arabische Dichtung und griechische Poetik.* is an isolated case.

Christine van Ruymbeke is devoted to Ḥusayn Vāʿiẓ Kāshifī (d. around 910/1504), an erudite writer who is known mainly for his Shiite martyr stories. A prolific author in a baroque style, Kāshifī also wrote a poetic manual *Badāyiʿ al-afkār fi ṣanāyiʿ al-ashʿār*, treating some 200 devices, inventing many subtypes of previous rhetoric figures.[27] Van Ruymbeke concentrates on Kāshifī's strong metaphoric style, elaborating on Kāshifī's view of metaphors and his difference of opinion with Shams-i Qays about what hand and lion mean as metaphors.

While classical Persian poetry works within well-defined literary standards and conventions, poets tried to contrive new but acceptable metaphors. In my contribution, *Waxing Eloquent: the Masterful Variations on Candle Metaphors in the Poetry of Ḥāfiẓ and his Predecessors*, I have tried to trace the development of the metaphor of the candle, a favourite object, from early Persian poetry to the time of Ḥāfiẓ, in the fourteenth century. I have been fascinated by the way Persian poets constantly contrive new metaphors, surprising their readers. Metaphors were also at the basis of Persian mystic love poetry, in which mundane earthly metaphors received a transcendent attribute, making the language ambiguous. In *Love and the Metaphors of Wine and Drunkenness in Persian Sufi Poetry*, Nasrollah Pourjavady analyzes wine metaphors in an amatory context, examining one of Rūmī's famous ghazals, illustrating how wine metaphors are interwoven in mystic love poetry. By referring to theories of love outlined by influential figures such as Aḥmad Ghazālī, the author shows how such metaphors are at the heart of love mysticism and how they have evolved in various mystic works.

Not only Persian metaphors, but also Persian themes, motifs and tales were transmitted to other literary traditions. In recent years, there have been a limited number of studies of literary borrowings between Persian and Western literary cultures.[28] One of the most significant works is by Dick Davis, who examined Persian motifs in Greek contexts, and who more recently has propounded a theory of the Persian origin of Tristan and Isolde.[29] In the present volume, we have three articles which deal with

---

[27] For an analysis of Kāshifī's *Badāyiʿ al-afkār* see M. Simidchieva, "Imitation and Innovation in Timurid Poetics: Kāshifī's *Badāyiʿ al-afkār* and Its Predecessors, *al-Muʿjam* and *Ḥadāʾiq al-Siḥr*," in *Iranian Studies* vol. 36, nr. 4, 2003, pp. 509–30.

[28] See the excellent works is the following: Thomas Hägg & Bo Utas, *The Virgin and her Lover: Fragments of an Ancient Greek Novel and a Persian Epic Poem*, Leiden: Brill, 2003.

[29] See D. Davis, *Panthea's Children: Hellenistic Novels and Medieval Persian Romances*, New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 2002; and Davis' introduction to *Vis and Ramin by Fakhraddin Gorgani*, Mage Publishers, 2008.

transcultural aspects of literature. Franklin Lewis, in *One Chaste Muslim Maiden and a Persian in a Pear Tree: Analogues of Boccaccio and Chaucer in Four Earlier Arabic and Persian Tales*, gives an example of how stories from the Islamic world were transmitted to Europe in the medieval period. Lewis offers a perceptive and learned discussion of the tale of a chaste girl and a Persian in a pear tree, in Boccaccio and Chaucer, showing that it occurs in at least four earlier Arabic and Persian texts. Another article, *Translating Persian Metaphors into English* by Ahmad Sedighi, analyses how Persian metaphors have been translated into English. The author first gives a theoretical appraisal of metaphors, and then discusses the famous quatrains of ʻUmar Khayyām and the various ways they have been rendered into English.

Tales, motifs and metaphors were also transmitted within the literary tradition, for example in Persian epics. In Firdawsī's monumental poem, the *Shāh-nāma*, there is a famous episode within the story of Rustam and Suhrāb in which the hero Rustam is spending the night with Afrāsiyāb's daughter, a princess of the house of Iran's arch-enemy. He offers her a ring and tells her that if their child is a son, she should place the ring on his arm. This ring is also a metaphor, representing the lineage of Suhrāb (son of Rustam). The metaphor has been transmitted through several other epics, as Gabrielle van den Berg shows in *The Ring as a Token in the Barzūnāma: on the importance of Lineage and Origin*.

Although the main genres of Persian poetry are defined, there is a problem of definition in relation to genres where a Qaṣīda includes other forms, such as the catalogue of poets' names, riddles, debate poetry, etc. Sunil Sharma's article, *The Function of the Catalogue of Poets in Persian Poetry*, presents a new view of Persian literary memoirs. The names of poets are often catalogued in a section of a poem, within a "memoir" poem, in almost the way that Elizabethan English poets used the "method of the roll-call," a catalogue of poets on whom they comment. Sharma persuasively shows that these catalogues have "rhetorical application in the structure and meaning" of poems, as well as giving us a window into the literary canon at various times. Sharma shows how the names of poets function as metonyms for the genre in which they excelled. Their names are used in later poetry to indicate to the reader how the new text should be interpreted. The modes of presenting a poem also received much attention. Poets used various poetic forms and moulded their poems to achieve the utmost effect. The modes included the *suʾāl-u javāb* or 'question and answer,' *lughaz*, the riddle, *muʿammā*, the conundrum, and *munāẓara*, the debate poem. In her contribution *The origins of the genre of munāẓara in*

New Persian Literature, Firuza Abdullaeva delves into various early Persian texts, showing how this ancient poetic form was introduced and developed in classical Persian literature. To my knowledge, the Persian *munāẓara* or debate genre has not been examined in the European secondary literature since the nineteenth century, when the honourable H. Ethé published a chapter entitled "Über persische Tenzonen" (in *Verhandlungen des fünften internationalen Orientalisten-Congresses*, Berlin, 1882).

I am sure that this volume of essays on various essential aspects of Persian literature will generate new interest in the vast field of Persian literature, especially on specific subjects such as the theories of metaphor and tropes, the stylistic characteristics of Persian poetry and the transcultural aspects of this poetry.

Bibliography

Abu Deeb, K., *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery, Approaches to Arabic Literature*, Warminster: 1979.

——, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Abd-al-Qāher al-Jurjānī.

Bruijn, J.T.P. de, "Arabic Influences on Persian Literature," in *A History of Persian Literature: General Introduction to Persian Literature*, vol. I, ed. J.T.P. de Bruijn, London: I.B. Tauris, 2009, pp. 369–84.

——, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Badīʿ.

——, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Balāghat.

——, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Bayān.

——, in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), s.v. Iran.

Cantarino, V., *Arabic Poetics in the Golden Age: Selection of Texts Accompanied by a Preliminary Study*, Leiden: 1975.

Chalisova, N., "Persian Rhetoric: Elm-e Badiʿ and Elm-e Bayân," in *A History of Persian Literature: General Introduction to Persian Literature*, vol. I, ed. J.T.P. de Bruijn, London: I.B. Tauris, 2009, pp. 139–71.

——, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Ḥadā'iq al-siḥr.

——, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Ḥosn-e taʿlil.

——, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Hyperbole.

——, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Rhetorical Figures.

Clinton, J.W., "Esthetics by Implication: What Metaphors of Craft Tell us about the Unity of the Persian Qasida" in *Edebiyāt*, vol. iv, no. 1, 1979, pp. 73–96.

Davis, D., *Panthea's Children: Hellenistic Novels and Medieval Persian Romances*, New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 2002.

——, *Vis and Ramin by Fakhraddin Gorgani*, Washington: Mage Publishers, 2008.

Elwell-Sutton, L.P., in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Arabic Language, iii. Arabic Influence in Persian Literature.

Garcin de Tassy, J., *Rhétorique et prosodie des langues de l'orient musulman* (Paris: 1873).

Gelder, G.J. van, "The Apposite Request: A Small Chapter in Persian and Arabic Rhetoric," in *Edebiyāt: The Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2001, pp. 1–13.

Gladwin, F., *Dissertations of the Rhetoric, Prosody and Rhyme of the Persians* Calcutta: 1801.

Hägg T., & Bo Utas, *The Virgin and her Lover: Fragments of an Ancient Greek Novel and a Persian Epic Poem*, Leiden: Brill, 2003.

Heinrichs, W., *Arabische Dichtung und griechische Poetik: Ḥāzim al-Qartaǧannīs Grundlegung der Poetik mit Hilfe Aristotelischer Begriffe*, Wiesbaden: 1969.
——, *The Hand of the Northwind: Opinions on Metaphor and the Early Meaning of istiʿāra in Arabic Poetics*, Wiesbaden: 1977.
Heinz, W., *Der indische Stil in der persischen Literatur*, Wiesbaden: 1973.
Jurjānī, ʿAbd al-Qāhir, *Die Geheimnisse der Wortkunst*, trans. H. Ritter, Wiesbaden, 1959.
Kay Kāvūs b. Iskandar, ʿUnṣur al-Maʿālī, *Qābūs-nāma*, ed. S. Nafīsī, Tehran: Furūghī, 1342/1963.
Kazzāzī, M.J.D., *Badīʿ: Zībā-shināsī-i sukhan-i Pārsī*, vol. 3, Tehran, Kitāb-i Mād, 1373/1994.
Mehren A.F., *Die Rhetorik der Araber*, Copenhagen/Vienna: 1853.
Reinert, B., "Probleme der vormongolischen arabisch-persischen Poesiegemeinschaft und ihr Reflex in der Poetik," in *Arabic Poetry: Theory and Development*, ed. G.E. von Grunebaum, Wiesbaden: 1973, pp. 71–105.
——, *Ḫāqānī als Dichter. Poetische Logik und Phantasie*, Berlin and New York: 1972.
Ritter, H., *Über die Bildersprache Nizāmīs*, Berlin and Leipzig: 1927.
Rückert F. & W. Pertsch, *Grammatik, Poetik und Rhetorik der Perser*, Gotha: 1874.
Scott Meisami, J., *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Esteʿāra.
——, *Structure and Meaning in Medieval Arabic and Persian Poetry*, London: 2003.
Seyed-Gohrab, A.A., *Courtly Riddles: Enigmatic Embellishments in Early Persian Poetry*, Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2010.
Simidchieva, M., "Imitation and Innovation in Timurid Poetics: Kāshifī's *Badāyiʿ al-afkār* and Its Predecessors, *al-Muʿjam* and *Ḥadāʾiq al-Siḥr*," in *Iranian Studies*, vol. 36, no. 4, 2003, pp. 509–30.
Steingass F., *Persian-English Dictionary*, London: Routledge, 1963 (fifth print),
Subtelny, M.E., "A Taste for Intricate: The Persian Poetry of the Late Timurid Period," in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, vol. 136, 1986, pp. 56–79.
Vaṭvāṭ, Amīr Rashīd al-Dīn Muḥammad ʿUmarī, *Ḥadāʿiq al-siḥr fī daqāʾiq al-shiʿr*, ed. ʿA. Iqbāl, Tehran, 1308/1930.
Yarshater, E., "Some common characteristics of Persian Poetry and Art" in *Iranian Islamic*, no. 16, 1962, p. 43–53.
——, "The Indian or Safavid Style: Progress or Decline" in *Persian Literature*, New York: 1988, pp. 249–288.

NAṢĪR AL-DĪN ṬŪSĪ AND POETIC IMAGINATION IN THE ARABIC AND PERSIAN PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITION[1]

J. Landau

Introduction

Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī is famous for his many writings on mathematics and astronomy, as well as for his treatises on ethics. He is less known for his writings on poetry, which, though relatively modest in size, are a full part of his philosophical works. Naṣīr al-Dīn was probably the first author to appropriate the concepts developed by Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā in their commentaries on Aristotle's *Organon* and to express them in Persian. A logician and a psychologist, he sought to account for the nature of poetic discourse and its action on the human soul in terms drawn from his teachers.

The present paper aims to shed some light on Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī's contribution to "that art whereby the poet arranges imaginary propositions." Defined as a part of logic, poetry is distinguished from all other possible schemes of rational discourse—be they demonstrative, dialectical, rhetorical or sophistical—by the fact that it cannot claim to affect the audience by winning its assent (تصديق). Poetry works, rather, by stirring the audience's imagination (تخييل). Following Avicenna, Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī considers imagination to be irreducible to illusion or deliberative reason. To imagine, therefore, is not merely to be deceived by improbable representations, nor to argue about their truth or falsehood with respect to reality; according to the philosophers, imagination is akin to what could be termed a non-assertive type of thought. We shall therefore question

[1] An earlier French version of this paper was published under the title "Nasir al-din Tusi et l'imagination poétique dans la tradition philosophique arabo-persane" (*Farhang. Quarterly Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies. Issue Topic: Commemoration of Tusi* (2), vol. 20, n° 61–62, Spring-Summer 1386/ 2007, pp. 151–205). I would like to express my gratitude to Professors Charles-Henri de Fouchécour and Riccardo Zipoli, whose reflections on the French version of this paper were a great help. I am also indebted to Agathe Sultan and Stefano Pellò for their friendly support, as well as to Professors Yann Richard and Georges Bohas for their valuable comments. My greatest debt is to Daniel Heller-Roazen; without him, these pages would hardly exist at all.

the special features that characterize imagination and its *modus operandi* in poetry according to Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī. If poetry is indifferent to truth, how does it relate to reality? And in what way can it affect the human soul? Evocative rather than persuasive, imaginative discourse appears as the only discourse capable of prompting the listener to action by stirring passions in his soul. Because of the wonder and pleasure (تعجب والتذاذ) it provokes, Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī even attributes to poetry a power of conviction superior to that of the naked truth. However, insofar as it meets the standards of rational speech, poetry lends itself to a systematic analysis in terms of means and effects, as is evident from Naṣīr al-Dīn's discussion of the "poetic syllogism." His philosophic account of poetry further implies a formal interpretation of tropes and figures of speech which we shall aim to elucidate.

As if breaking through a wall of rationalist thought, philosophical poetics allows for the specific powers of fiction to be conceptualized. Indeed, it is a well-established fact in literary history that, as long as poetry was acknowledged to be efficacious, the poet's discourse could be credited with an undeniable political role. We shall first recall one special instance of this power of poetry, recorded in Niẓāmī ʿArūḍī's *Four Discourses*.

The Scent of the Mūliyān, or the Effectiveness of Poetry

The scene takes place at the court of Amīr Naṣr II ibn Aḥmad (regn. 914–943).[2] In the 4th century of the Muslim calendar, or the 10th century A.D., Transoxiana was subject to the prosperous Samanid dynasty. Though the seat of power was in Bukhara, the prince used to spend the warm months of summer with his attendants in a city in Khurāsān before returning to his capital at the start of winter. One day, he took up residence in Herat. Spring was coming to a close, and this was a suitable place for the army to rest. The weather was splendid, the landscape entrancing, and nature prodigal; the autumn feasts had passed and the court had not struck camp. The prince was enthralled by his new resort. Citrus fruits ripened after grapes. That winter, the court did not return to Bukhara. Spring blossomed anew. "And when summer came and the fruits again ripened, Amīr

[2] See Niẓāmī ʿArūḍī Samarqandī, *Chahār maqāla*, critical ed. by Md. Muʿīn after Md. Qazvīnī, Tehran: Ṣidā-yi Muʿāṣir, 11th print, 1379/2001. English translation by Edward G. Browne, *Revised Translation of the Chahár Maqála ("Four Discourses") of Niẓāmī-i ʿArūḍī of Samarqand*, London: Cambridge University Press, "E.J.W. Gibb Memorial" Series vol. xi, 2, 1921 (hereafter *Four Discourses*).

Naṣr ibn Aḥmad said, 'Where shall we go for the summer? For there is no pleasanter place of residence than this. Let us wait till Mihrgān.' And when Mihrgān came, he said, 'Let us enjoy Mihrgān at Herat and then go;' and so from season to season he continued to procrastinate, until four years had passed in this way."[3] Yet the Amīr's attendants grew weary, and they longed to return home. On hearing that the sovereign planed to remain in Herat for yet another summer, the noblemen and the captains of the army decided to act. They appealed to Master Abū 'Abd-Allāh Rūdakī, promising a generous reward to the poet if he could persuade the Amīr to depart from Herat and return to Bukhara. As we are told, "there was none more honoured of the king's intimates, and none whose words found so ready an acceptance."[4] Familiar with the prince's temperament, Rūdakī "perceived that prose would not affect him, and so had recourse to verse. He therefore composed a *qaṣīda*."[5] At dawn, after the Amīr had drunk his morning cup, Rūdakī took up his harp and sang the following poem, on the "Lover's air:"[6]

بوی جوی مولیان آید همی یاد یارمهربان آید همی
ریگ آمو و درشتی راه او زیر پایم پرنیان آید همی
آب جیحون ازنشاط روی دوست خنگ ما را تا میان آید همی
ای بخارا شاد باش و دیر زی میر زی تو شادمان آید همی
میر ماه است و بخارا آسمان ماه سوی آسمان آید همی
میرسرو است و بخارا بوستان سرو سوی بوستان آید همی

The scent of the river Mūliyān[7] comes to us,
The memory[8] of the friend dear comes to us.
The sands of the Āmū, toilsome though they be,
Beneath my feet are soft as silk to me.

---

[3] *Four Discourses*, p. 34. Diacritics modified.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 34.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 35.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 35. The "Lover's air" refers to the musical mode in which the poem was sung, the *parda-yi ʿushshāq*.
[7] The names Mūliyān, Jayḥūn and Āmū all designate the river Oxus that flows nearby Bukhara.
[8] Or, according to other versions, "the scent of the friend dear . . .," see Niẓāmī 'Arūḍī, *Chahār maqāla*, Persian edition, p. 54.

On seeing the friendly face, the waters of the Jayḥūn
Shall leap up to our horses' girth.
O Bukhara, rejoice and hasten!
Joyful towards thee hasteth our Amīr!
The Amīr is the moon and Bukhara the heaven;
The moon shall brighten up the heaven!
The Amīr is a cypress and Bukhara the garden;
The cypress shall rise in the garden![9]

The effects of this *qaṣīda* on the ruler exceeded all expectation: "When Rūdakī reached this verse, the Amīr was so much affected that he descended from his throne, all unbooted bestrode the horse which was on sentry-duty, and set off for Bukhara so precipitately that they carried his leggings and riding-boots after him for two parasangs, as far as Burūna."[10] After four years of procrastination, the Amīr had yielded to a simple poem. Though he had remained unmoved by every other discourse, some six verses sufficed to overcome his infatuation. A few lines down, the narrator goes on to conclude with this tribute to the poet: "And indeed [...] no one had yet [...] found means to surmount triumphantly the difficulties [which the subject presents]."[11]

Tradition has bestowed an exceptional importance on this poem by Rūdakī. It was to be imitated by Mawlānā and later by Ḥāfiẓ, and even parodied by 'Ubayd. But would the *Bū-yi jū-yi mūliyān* merely be known to us had the poem not been included in the anecdote reported by Niẓāmī 'Arūḍī? The transmission of Persian poetry is inseparable from those tales and legends that describe the circumstances in which the poems were composed. And the famous *qaṣīda* by Rūdakī, considered the first Persian lyric poet,[12] has come down to us linked to a narrative that, whether real or mythical, has played a crucial part in the history of the poem's reception.

Though modest in size, Niẓāmī 'Arūḍī Samarqandī's *Four Discourses*[13] brilliantly combine elements of theoretical knowledge with didactic and

---

[9] *Four Discourses*, p. 35. Translation modified. Among the various editions of the Persian text, one may refer to Rūdakī, Abū 'Abd Allāh Ja'far ibn Muḥammad, *Dīvān-i rūdakī-i samarqandī*, ed. Sa'īd Nafisī and I. Braginski, Tehran: Mu'assisa-yi Intishārāt-i Nigāh, Adabiyāt-i Kilāsīk-i Īrān n° 20, 1373/ 1995, p. 113.

[10] *Four Discourses*, pp. 35–36.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

[12] Shams-i Qays-i Rāzī, the famous poetician, even attributes the invention of the *rubā'ī* to Rūdakī. See Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Qays al-Rāzī, *Al-mu'jam, fī ma'āyīr ash'ār al-'ajam*, ed. S. Shamīsā, Tehran: Intishārāt-i Firdaws, 1373/1995, pp. 119–121.

[13] The *Chahār maqāla*, also referred to as *Majmā' al-navādir*, was composed around the year 552/1157, close to the death of the last Great Seljuk, Sultan Sanjār. Niẓāmī 'Arūḍī dedicated the book to his patron, the Ghurid prince Abū 'l-Ḥasan Ḥusām al-Dīn 'Alī. His

entertaining anecdotes concerning the major public offices connected to the king, "with [which] he can in no wise dispense."[14] For "the wise King cannot do without these four persons, the Secretary, the Poet, the Astrologer, and the Physician."[15] Together with Key Kāvūs' *Qābūs-nāma*,[16] composed one century earlier, the *Four Discourses* are one of the earliest extant sources on the scholarly and literary offices that flourished in medieval Persian princely courts. The "Second Discourse" displays a small poetry textbook of its own. It brings together anecdotes, critical considerations and technical prescriptions for younger poets. Tellingly, Niẓāmī ʿArūḍī's remarks on poetry bear witness to the influence of Greek philosophy, whereas his predecessor remained free from any such reference. In fact, the *Four Discourses* are one of the first Persian documents to testify to the extension of Avicennian concepts beyond scholarly circles. More generally, Niẓāmī ʿArūḍī is a major witness to the influence of such philosophers as Al-Fārābī (870–950) and Ibn Sīnā (980–1037) on Iranian thought.

How can we explain that Rūdakī's poem had such a great influence over the Amīr? The story related by Niẓāmī ʿArūḍī may sound improbable to the modern reader. Today, we might grant poetry an emotive power at best. But to concede that an ode or a sonnet may urge anyone into action is a step few of us would be ready to take.

One can easily imagine that the noblemen in the anecdote only appealed to the poet as a last resort, after all other attempts to convince the sovereign—overtly or secretly—had failed. There is no doubt that, during their four-year stay in Herat, the attendants expressed longing for their homeland and resorted to all the charms and persuasions of rhetoric to prompt the prince to return. This is perhaps how one should understand the remark that "[Rūdakī] perceived that prose would not affect [the Amīr]."[17] But what the narrator suggests has less to do with Naṣr's temper—his alleged indifference to prose—than with the powers of poetry as such.

---

commentary on Rūdakī's *qaṣīda* constitutes the second anecdote in the Second Discourse, "On the essence of the Poetic Art and the aptitude of the Poet," pp. 27–61 in the English translation.

[14] *Four Discourses*, p. 12.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

[16] ʿUnṣur al-Maʿālī Kaykāvūs ibn Iskandar ibn Qābūs ibn Vashmgīr ibn Zīyār, *Qābūs-nāma*, ed. Ghulām-Ḥusayn Yūsufī, Tehran: Shirkat-i Intishārāt-i ʿIlmī va Farhangī, 1967. Chapters 35 and 36 are dedicated to the art of the poet and to that of the minstrel respectively. On the aims and structure of the text, see Charles-Henri de Fouchécour's classic *Moralia, les notions morales dans la littérature persane du 3e/9e au 7e/13e siècle*, Paris: Institut Français de Recherche en Iran, Bibliothèque Iranienne n° 32, 1986, esp. pp. 179–223.

[17] *Four Discourses*, p. 35.

How could it be that poetry alone prevailed? How could a simple ode to Bukhara so promptly bend the Amīr's will, such that he would flee the more actual delights of Herat, whose charms he exalted "above those of a Chinese spring,"[18] and which he preferred even "to the Garden of Eden?"

In accounting for Rūdakī's prowess, Niẓāmī ʿArūḍī aims not only to illustrate the poet's ability to extemporize, "his improvisations and readiness in verse."[19] He also seeks to show the powers of poetry, the particular action that it alone can exert on its audience. In this respect, the definition which opens the Second Discourse, "On the essence of the Poetic Art and the aptitude of the Poet," is significant:

> Poetry is that art whereby the poet arranges imaginary propositions and blends fruitful analogies, in such wise that he can make a little thing appear great and a great thing small, or cause good to appear in the garb of evil and evil in the form of good. By acting on the imagination, he excites the faculties of anger and concupiscence in such a way that by his suggestion men's temperaments become affected with depression or exaltation; whereby he conduces to the accomplishment of great things in the order of the world.[20]

Summoned by the noblemen to provide relief for their homesickness, Rūdakī overturned the Prince's will with a single poem. Skillfully woven with metaphors and vivid similes, the chant revived the sweetness of Bukhara before the eyes of His Majesty. Had the Amīr stayed in Herat, the world would have no doubt taken a different turn: the anecdote is, in every respect, exemplary. One could not convey more clearly to a large audience the issues at stake in the philosophical account of poetry and its action on the human soul.

The Art of Imagination: Between Logic and Natural Science

It is no accident that in the exordium to his treatise, Niẓāmī ʿArūḍī ranks poetry, alongside the secretarial art, among the "branches of the Science

---

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 34.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 32.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 27. *Chahār maqāla*, p. 43: "شاعری صناعتی است که شاعر بدان صناعت اتّساق مقدّمات مُوهمه کند والتئام قیاسات مُنتجه بر آن وجه که معنی خُرد را بزرگ گرداند و معنی بزرگ را خُرد، و نیکو را در خلعت زشت باز نماید و زشت را در صورت نیکو جلوه کند و به ایهام قوّت های غضبانی و شهوانی را برانگیزد، تا بدان ایهام طباع را انقباضی و انبساطی بود، و امور عظام را در نظام عالم سبب شود."

of Logic." In so doing, he clearly sides with a philosophical approach to his subject matter: "These four arduous functions and noble arts are amongst the branches of the Science of Philosophy; the functions of the Scribe and the Poet being branches of the Science of Logic; that of the Astrologer, one of the principal subdivisions of Mathematics; while the Physician's Art is amongst the branches of Natural Science."[21] Such a picture may well be unfamiliar to the modern reader; but in relating his object to logic, mathematics and natural science, the author of the *Four Discourses* aimed to provide a full compendium of the philosophy of his time. In the introduction, Niẓāmī ʿArūḍī describes Creation in terms borrowed from the *falāsifa*, the Muslim philosophers, to suggest that the action of the secretary, the poet, the astrologer and the physician are each closely related to a specific level of the universe. These associations serve as an epistemological background for the anecdotes on the four offices.

The Muslim philosophers accounted for the created world by means of a pattern in concentric circles ranging from the largest to the more specific, to end up with the apex and axis of creation, man. Creation was understood to be divided between the celestial and the sublunary worlds. The latter embraces the mineral, vegetable and animal realms, all subject to generation and corruption. Among the creatures that come into being, grow and die, animals are characterized by their capacity to sense, by which they may supply for their own needs. But reason was bestowed upon man alone, that most perfect of animals. According to the philosophers, however, sensation is not only a matter of the perception exerted by the five senses. It also implies the ability to raise oneself above the multiplicity of sensations and to relate them to one another. The sentient being is not merely the passive recipient of his perceptions. He can bring together individual sense-data to identify an object of the world, distinguish between two simultaneous sensations, or compare a present sensation to a past sensation. In the animal, these functions translate into the ability—by all means vital—to spot one's prey or to keep away from danger.

When he lists the capacities of the animal, Niẓāmī ʿArūḍī repeats the partition established by Avicenna, who distinguished the "external senses" (the five senses) from the "internal senses" (حواس باطن).[22] The latter are

[21] *Four Discourses*, p. 12.

[22] Varying versions of the list can be found in the *Kitāb al-ishārāt wa-t-tanbīhāt*, the *Qānūn*, the *Shifāʾ*, the *Najāt* and *Risāla fī ʾl-nafs*. See H.A. Wolfson's classic study, "The Internal Senses in Latin, Arabic, and Hebrew Philosophic Texts," *The Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 28, n° 2, Apr. 1935, pp. 69–133: "In Aristotle there is no general term for those

by no means the negative of the "external" senses. The "internal senses" can be described as an interface between the bare perception of objects and pure reason. They consist of a series of activities related to the complex process of sensation, where common sense (الحس المشترک)[23] numbers alongside retentive imagination (الخيال), the "imaginative faculty" (المتخيّلة), said to be "cogitative" (متفکّرة)[24] in the case of the human soul, the "apprehensive faculty" or "estimation" (وهم), and the "retentive faculty," (حافظة), otherwise called memory.[25] Each of these faculties possesses a location in the brain, and each is subject to the "animal spirit," which, in turn, is located in the heart of every animal.

Niẓāmī ʿArūḍī's summary of the Avicennian account of creation culminates with this record of the "internal senses." These details, in turn, help to define the scope of action of the four courtly ministries. The astrologer's skills include the observation of celestial spheres and the interpretation of their ascendancy over worldly matters. In other words, the astrologer is involved with the interrelations between the celestial and sublunary realms. As for the physician, at once a physiologist and a practitioner, he is in charge of bodily welfare. He watches over the proportions of body-fluids, making use of the active principles contained in plants. A master of eloquence, the secretary also has a role in preserving the equilibrium among living creatures, but on a political and diplomatic level. These professionals, each with their own talents, are called upon to secure the best possible balance among natural realms in the service of the sovereign. In this perspective, the role of the poet might seem more difficult to define. His social function can easily be understood: the poet spreads the king's fame and records the deeds and archives of his time. He must at once be knowledgeable and artful, and fit to extemporize on any matter of importance. He must be capable of moving his listeners, whatever their status. But to what circle of Creation does his action relate? According to Niẓāmī

---

faculties of the soul which he treats of in the Third Book of De Anima and in De Memoria et Reminiscentia to differentiate them as a class from the five senses which he treats of in the Second Book of De Anima. In Latin, Arabic, and Hebrew philosophic texts, however, these post-sensationary faculties, or some of them, or sometimes only one of them, are designated by the term 'internal senses', in contradistinction to the five senses which are designated by the term 'external senses' " (p. 69), "The use of the terms 'internal', 'spiritual', and 'cerebral' has been explained by the fact that the faculties to which they are applied reside *within* the *brain* and operate *without bodily* organs" (p. 70).

[23] On the philosophic history of "common sense," see Daniel Heller-Roazen, *The Inner Touch: Archaeology of a Sensation*, New York: Zone Books, 2007.

[24] On the distinction between these two faculties, see below, p. 29 sq.

[25] *Chahār maqāla*, pp. 12–13; p. 8 in the English translation.

ʿArūḍī, poetry pertains, in the natural order, to the field of imagination. The action of the poet is related to the internal faculty that embraces all levels of the created world by means of images. Poetry has its source in this internal sense alone, since the craft can be defined as "that art whereby the poet arranges imaginary propositions". And poetry finds its fulfillment in that same faculty, to the very extent to which it "[acts] on the imagination"[26] of its listeners.

To analyze the role of the poet and the status of poetry therefore involves a reference to natural science, insofar as it is concerned with the study of the human soul. This branch of natural science, also known as psychology, includes a focus on the "imaginative faculty," by which and on which the poet exerts his skills. But the *Four Discourses* offer only a simplified account of the process. How exactly are we to understand the faculty of the soul that defines the effect of poetry and the task of the poet? To better appreciate the tale of Rūdakī's feats, one must turn to the philosophers who gave a full theoretical account of the process Niẓāmī ʿArūḍī only hinted at. We shall therefore question Aristotle's definition of imagination before proceeding to the Avicennian constellation of senses. Only then will we begin to grasp the specific task the faculty was assigned in poetry. Perhaps Amīr Naṣr's sudden change of heart will then appear in a new light.

A "Non-Paradigmatic Sensory Experience"

In ancient discussions of the faculties of the soul, the status of imagination was critical to this tricky theoretical issue: How is one to account for the uniqueness of human nature within the animal realm? Where is one to draw the line between animal and human life? At what point, in other words, does bare sensation end and abstract thought begin? An intangible medium joining sense and concept, imagination provides a bridge between these two extreme dispositions. Imagination suggests a continuum between animal and man. The philosophical material on the question, however, is far from unequivocal. The five senses have a specific focus, as well as inherent limits: sight, for example, may not perceive an odor, and hearing cannot grasp the solidity of an object. The "internal

[26] *Four Discourses*, p. 27.

senses" were in need of similar definition. The exact role of imagination, for that matter, proved uneasy to ascertain.

In his *De Anima*, Aristotle gave the first detailed account of imagination. After him, Avicenna, believing that "to each of these faculties there corresponds a particular bodily organ and a specific name," established the following account of the faculties:

> The first is called common sense (الحس المشترک) and '*phantasia*': its organ is the spirit lying at the basis of the sensory nerve, especially in the anterior hollow of the brain. The second is called formative faculty (المصورة) and imagination (الخيال), and its organ is the spirit lying in the anterior hollow, especially in its hinder part. Third comes the estimative (الوهم), whose organ is the entirety of the brain, but more specifically the middle hollow. It is assisted by a fourth faculty whose function it is to combine and separate the nearest among the forms issuing from sense-perception and the ideas retained by the estimative; it also combines the forms with the ideas, and separates the ones from the others. When used by intelligence (العقل), it is termed cogitative (مفکرة), and when used by the estimative, it is called imaginative (متخيّلة). Its power is located in the anterior part of the middle hollow. It is like a faculty pertaining to the estimative and, by means of the estimative, to intelligence. The last faculty is memory (الذاکرة), and its power is located there where the spirit found in the hinder hollow [lies], which is its organ.[27]

This typology of the internal senses is far more elaborate than Aristotle's account of the vital faculties.[28] Avicenna even diverges from Fārābī's exem-

---

[27] *Al-ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt bi sharḥ al-ṭūsī* (*Remarks and Admonitions, with Commentary by Tusi*), ed. Sulayman Dunya, Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 4 parts, 3 vols. in 2, 1957–60, vol. 2, pp. 380–384. In my rendition of the passage I have benefited from the version offered by Amélie-Marie Goichon, ed. and trans., *Le Livre des directives et remarques* [Kitāb al-ishārāt wa-t-tanbīhāt], Beyrouth/Paris: Commission internationale pour la traduction des chefs-d'œuvre, United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Collection d'œuvres arabes/ Vrin, 1951, rpt. 1999, pp. 317–323. See also the more detailed description of the soul's faculties in Avicenna, *'Ilm al-nafs min kitāb al-shifā'*, in Ján Bakoš, ed., *Psychologie d'Ibn Sīnā* (*Avicenne*) *d'après son œuvre Aš-šifā'*, Prague: Nakladatelsví Čekoslovenské Akademie Véd, 1956, reed. Beyrouth, Éditions du Patrimoine Arabe et Islamique, 1982, 2 vols, vol. 1, chap. 4, pp. 157–197. The enumeration and definition of the faculties varies greatly, but their localization in the brain seems to be of Galenic origin. See Wolfson, "The Internal Senses," *op. cit.*, p. 73 and 96.

[28] See below, esp. Aristotle, *De Anima*, II, 3, 414 a 30–415 a 10, as well books II and III, *passim*; English trans. by J.A. Smith, *De Anima* (*On the Soul*), in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, New York: Random House, (6th printing) 1941 [Originally published in *The Works of Aristotle Translated into English*, ed. W.D. Ross, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 11 vols., 1908–1931], pp. 533–603 (hereafter *On the Soul*).

plary definitions. Both Aristotle and Fārābī conceived of imagination as a faculty that lies between the common sense and the cogitative faculty, or "intelligence". To them, imagination stood between the first synthesis of perceptions and the capacity to abstract and derive knowledge from them. But the definition of imagination proper remained in every sense uncertain, raising more questions than it answered. What was the task of the imagination for the ancient philosophers? How are we to understand Avicenna's distinction between the "second" and the "fourth" faculties of the soul? In other words, how does the "formative faculty" or "imagination" differ from the faculty which Avicenna alternatively calls "cogitative" and "imaginative?" The first is said to "combine and separate the nearest among the forms issuing from sense-perception and the ideas retained by the estimative;" the second, to "combine the forms with the ideas." Finally, how do these claims relate to the powers of poetry?

Avicenna may well have been forced to make this subtle distinction between two types of imagination to elucidate the Stagirite's conceptions. Complex and seemingly inconsistent, Aristotle's account of imagination provoked debate among later interpreters. The most extensive passage on the matter can be found in the third part of Aristotle's treatise on the soul. Here imagination (*phantasia*) is defined as "that in virtue of which an image arises for us" (or "that in virtue of which we say that a *phantasma* occurs to us"). "Imagination" seems therefore to be the name of our capacity to have *phantasmata*, mental images. But this definition is immediately followed by a question: "excluding metaphorical uses of the term, is it a single faculty or disposition relative to images, in virtue of which we discriminate and are either in error or not?" (428a).[29] Mental images shaped within the soul could turn out to be truthful or deceptive, but imagination would still remain obscure. Indeed, the passage offers little more than a negative outline of imagination, to the extent to which it differs from the two bordering faculties, sensation (*aisthēsis*) and cogitation (*nous*).

According to Aristotle, imagination differs from sensation in several respects. The sensing animal may only sense actual objects when all his senses are awake. Imagination, by contrast, may well function independently from any present sensation, as in dreams, when mental images appear to us while our eyes are closed. Such images in the mind cannot be said to proceed from an actual even of sight. Furthermore, were imagination identical to active sensation, a surprising consequence would

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 587 sq.

follow: imagination would be shared by all animals.[30] Mammals and animals that are capable of movement indeed show signs of possessing at least a minimal form of imagination. But can it seriously be argued that mussels, oysters, scallops and other mollusks, which cling to rocks and cliffs, also display this capacity? They must possess some kind of sensation, at least in the most elementary form of touch, since they react to contact to consume their prey. But they give no indication of possessing any capacity remotely resembling imagination. More decisive is the fact that "sensations are always true," whereas "imaginations are for the most part false" (428a 11–12).[31] Thus the white color sensed in an object, for example, cannot be false. But if we see a white object from afar and presume it is a man, we could well be mistaken. Blurred in the distance, the object could turn out to be a statue, or something different altogether. Thus imagination can prove deceitful when it compensates for the lack—or vagueness—of sensations (428a 10 and 428b 20).[32]

Yet insofar as it can be wrong, imagination also differs from cogitation. "Neither is imagination *any* of the things that are never in error: e.g. knowledge or intelligence" (428a 15),[33] Aristotle writes. Unlike cogitation and opinion, which are independent of our own will, imagination does not necessarily entail belief, "e.g. we imagine the sun to be a foot in diameter though we are convinced that it is larger than the inhabited part of the earth" (428b 1).[34] Our imagination, therefore, may deceive us. But other faculties will allow us to appraise its reality. Imagination can thus be either true or false, but it may never be accountable for our belief in the illusory. There are beasts, after all, which appear to possess imagination, but it is not possible to attribute to them beliefs. This seems to confirm the relative autonomy of imagination with regard to cogitation.

But though imagination differs in nature from both mere sensation and pure thought, it is nevertheless said to partake of the one and the other

---

[30] Aristotle never fully answered the question of animal imagination, despite the program announced in *De Anima*, II, 3, 414b 15 ("We must later clear up these points, but at present it may be enough to say that all animals that possess the sense of touch have also appetition. The case of imagination is obscure; we must examine it later," in *On the Soul*, pp. 559–560). Avicenna's distinction between the various operations of imagination permits a better separation between the animal and the purely human functions of the faculty. See esp. Amélie-Marie Goichon's notes, *Livre des directives et remarques*, *op. cit.*, pp. 322–323.

[31] *On the Soul*, p. 587.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 587 and 589, respectively.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 588.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 588.

in some obscure way. Indeed, as Aristotle explains, "imagination must be a movement resulting from an actual exercise of a power of sense" (429a 1).[35] Imagination can function in the absence of an actual sensation. But as the product of a reconstruction or a combination of past sensations, imagination seems to derive from some kind of memory of the senses. Therefore, it cannot be found in non-sensing beings. Besides, just as sensation can be said to apply solely to particular objects, so too imagination may only represent particular objects and provide us with images inspired from sensible objects.

What is more, there can be no cogitation without imagination, since Aristotle explains that the act of thinking is "in part imagination, in part judgment (*hupolēpsis*)" (427b 29).[36] The most famous example can be found in the passage of *De Memoria* (450a 1–5) where the philosopher compares abstract thought to the tracing of an imaginary figure in the mind. For example, if one undertakes to study the idea of triangle, imagination shall prop up the abstract notion with the representation of a triangle. This vision and its determinate proportions only operate as an assistant to the notion of triangle, which is itself indifferent to size.

But while Aristotle distinguishes it from other faculties in the mind, imagination's positive qualifications remain difficult to assert. In his *De Anima*, it is as if the philosopher simply outlined the faculty without ever defining it.

In his 1975 article, "Aristotle on the Imagination,"[37] Malcolm Schofield sought to clarify the import and extent of the notion of *phantasia* according to the Stagirite. The scholar aimed to trace, so to speak, "the conceptual mapping of imagination"[38] in Aristotle's works. In Schofield's words,

---

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 589.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 587.

[37] Malcolm Schofield, "Aristotle on the Imagination," first published in G.E.R. Lloyd and G.E.L. Owen, eds., *Aristotle on Mind and the Senses: Proceedings of the Seventh Symposium Aristotelicum*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978, pp. 99–130; reprinted in J. Barnes, M. Schofield, R. Sorabji, eds., *Articles on Aristotle, iv: Psychology and Aesthetics*, London: Duckworth, 1979, pp. 103–132. On Aristotle's conception of imagination, see also Jean Frère, "Fonction représentative et représentation. Φαντασία et φάντασμα selon Aristote," in Gilbert Romeyer Dherbey, ed., *Corps et âme. Sur le* De Anima *d'Aristote*, études réunies par Cristina Viano, Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1996, pp. 331–348; Monique Canto-Sperber, "Le rôle de l'imagination dans la philosophie aristotélicienne de l'action," *ibid.*, pp. 441–462; and Dorothea Frede, "The Cognitive Role of Phantasia in Aristotle," in *Essays on Aristotle's* De Anima, ed. Martha C. Nussbaum et Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997, pp. 279–296.

[38] Malcolm Schofield, "Aristotle on the Imagination," *op. cit.*, p. 132.

whereas Plato merely conceived of imagination as a blend of sense-perception and belief, Aristotle "gave the first extended analytical description of imagining as a distinct faculty of the soul." By clearly distinguishing imagination from sensation on the one hand, and from the act of thinking on the other, Aristotle retained something of the etymological connection between *phantasia* and the verb *phainesthai* "to appear," suggestive of vision. The *phantasmata*, the product of our imagination, are therefore "that which is made apparent," "what is presented," or even "depicted," such as the images that appear to us in dreams, or the immediate interpretations we tend to give of indistinct or puzzling sense data. But the question remains as to whether we are merely the passive recipients of these images or whether we can somewhat cause them to appear. In other words, it is unclear whether Aristotle conceived of an "active" imagination or whether he only acknowledged an involuntary exercise of the faculty. Commentators differ greatly in their answer to this question.

After an overview of the main modern readings of the Aristotelian doctrine of *phantasia*, Schofield undertakes a minute survey of the occurrences of the term in the philosopher's own works. Aside from the *De Anima*, one finds the notion in the *Parva naturalia*, the collection of treatises on natural history. Although discussions of *phantasia* may be considered merely incidental in these texts, they allow for a fuller understanding of Aristotle's views altogether. The attribution of the faculty to some animals[39] seems particularly worthy of note, as it entails a clear distinction between mere imagination and human reason. Imagination somehow compensates for the absence of reason in beasts, acting on the animal soul as a powerful incentive for fulfillment and self-preservation.

According to Aristotle, imagination shares certain features with sense-perception. But its capacities undoubtedly reach far beyond, since imagination may operate even in the absence of a sensible object. It is as though imagination were a further kind of sensation without a physical grounding. For this reason, Schofield, dubs imagination "non-paradigmatic sensory experience."[40] Hence imagination cannot be confused with the purely passive record of sense-data. Nor does the faculty belong to the field of judgment and assertive thought. Indeed, with the exception of pathological disturbances of the mind in fever or delirium, it is up to the

[39] As we have seen, this attribution raises a number of theoretical difficulties. Malcolm Schofield himself admits that "animal imagination is an obscure corner of Aristotelian doctrine," *ibid.*, p. 109, note 20.

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 106.

subject to add assent to the variegated "pictures" of imagination. When waking up from a long night's sleep, we thus remember having dreamt without confusing our visions with real life. Taking over a formula from Roger Scruton's *Art and Imagination*, Schofield accordingly suggests that, in the Aristotelian corpus, the action of imagination can be summarized in terms of non-assertive thought.[41] Imagination exceeds simple belief without yet reaching the sphere of deductive thinking: one may imagine without necessarily taking one's imagery as true.

While admitting that the unity of Aristotle's conception of *phantasia* is fragile and that many associated questions remain unsolved in his work, Schofield nevertheless insists on the Stagirite's pioneering treatment of imagination. This account was to lead the philosophy of the soul towards an ultimately influential path. Indeed, the Muslim philosophers strived to complete Aristotle's doctrine of the faculty with a more systematic description. Avicenna relied on Aristotle's analyses to unravel his own conception of *takhyīl*. And it was to clarify his predecessor's claims that the Iranian philosopher proceeded to distinguish not one but two distinct faculties.

Chimera and the Philosopher

Avicenna redistributes the multiple tasks allotted by Aristotle to the imaginative faculty, distinguishing between three distinct powers: the "formative" faculty (الخيال), the "cogitative or imaginative" faculty (القوة المتخيّلة أو المتفكّرة), and the "estimative" faculty (الوهم). The "formative" faculty is directly connected to the collection of sense-data. Shared both by men and beasts, it appears as a passive capacity to receive images in the mind. The second faculty, also called "cogitative" when it is exerted by the rational being, is that capacity in virtue of which the mind becomes able, by an act of assortment and composition, to process the images conveyed by the formative faculty. In man, the will takes an active part in this sorting of images. Last comes the "estimative" faculty (وهم), which can be conceived as a kind of judgment or instinct, since it prompts the mind to distinguish among the forms displayed by the formative

[41] "Imagination involves thought which is unasserted, and hence which goes beyond what is believed," Roger Scruton, *Art and Imagination: A Study in the Philosophy of the Mind*, London: Methuen, 1974, p. 97, quoted in Malcolm Schofield, "Aristotle on the Imagination," *op. cit.*, p. 105.

faculty, thereby preventing confusions between causes and effects. Avicenna holds this faculty responsible for the sheep's innate capacity to recognize the wolf among all other animals and to flee from it.[42]

Avicenna, therefore, claims that the faculty "in virtue of which" Aristotle explains that "we say that a *phantasma* occurs to us"[43] is truly not one but two.[44] The formative faculty extracts and retains the various forms come across by actual sense-data once cleared of their matter. Stored in the mind, the same particular forms become available to compensate for incomplete or blurred perceptions with images of past sensations. As for the "imaginative or cogitative" faculty, understood as "a faculty pertaining to the estimative and, by means of the estimative, to intelligence," it can manipulate those images gathered by the formative faculty so as to create new images of its own, from the splitting and reordering of abstract forms preserved by memory.

For the Iranian philosopher, the active power of imagination therefore implies a specific human usage of the faculty: an interpretative power that lies beyond sense-data, while still not being pure fallacy. In his explanations, Avicenna clearly insists on the voluntary nature of the operation: by an exercise of imagination, we can cause figures to appear that do not exist in reality, picturing things differently from how they appear to be. Indeed, what forbids anyone familiar with the appearance of both man

---

[42] "And we say that the estimative is the greatest judge in the animal," Avicenna, *ʿIlm al-nafs*, in *Psychologie d'Ibn Sīnā*, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, IV, 3, p. 177. See also Wolfson's detailed discussion of the faculty, which came to be known to scholastic philosophers as *virtus aestimativa*, in "The Internal Senses," *op. cit.*, pp. 86–95. Fārābī was the first to include it in his classification of the internal senses. The new "estimative" faculty owed much to Aristotle's attribution of *phronesis* ("sagacity, prudence or forethought") to animals, as corresponding to intellect in man. "What happened then is really this: The 'natural faculty' with which animals were endowed according to Aristotle was split up into two faculties, one becoming pure estimation and the other becoming estimation combined with imagination. But while estimation exists primarily in animals, taking in them the place of reason in man, it is said to exist also in man and to be often used by man in many of his judgments which are not affected directly by reason," *ibid.*, p. 91.

[43] *De Anima*, III, 3, 428a 1.

[44] After Avicenna, Niẓāmī ʿArūḍī restates the distinction between passive and active "imagination" in the following terms: the first (خيال) "preserves what the common sense has apprehended from the external senses, so that this remains in it after the subsidence of the sense-impressions," while the second (متخيّلة أو متفكّرة) can "combine or separate, as the mind may elect, those particular percepts which are stored in the Imagination," *Four Discourses*, p. 8 (translation slightly modified). On these distinctions, see Amélie-Marie Goichon's enlightening remarks, *Livre des directives et remarques*, *op. cit.*, pp. 320–321 n. 6, and p. 322 n. 1; and Wolfson, "The Internal Senses," *op. cit.*, *passim*.

and elephant to take their images apart and fit them together again in a shape that, however bizarre and unreal, it is possible for the mind to picture?[45] Is this capacity not the sole origin of centaurs, unicorns and other such improbable figures that people myths and tales? The role of the "creative imagination"[46] in pieces of art and fiction—reputed, for that matter, to be "imaginary"—could not but challenge philosophers.

When likening the poet's art to the arrangement of "imaginary propositions," Niẓāmī ʿArūḍī most likely alluded to this mental activity. But the author of the *Four Discourses* was content with observing the outcome of such operations of imagination in speech: an arrangement of "propositions". He did not venture further to interpret the psychological process at work in poetic creation. In fact, it would take another seven centuries for European authors, on the other side of the continent, to consider this aspect of imagination in accounting for the origin of poetic art. We are far, with our Persian authors, from the daring Baudelairian praise of the "queen faculty." Medieval Persian aesthetics does not aim to probe the creative mind in this way. It is mainly concerned with the reception of the works of imagination and with the effectiveness of poetry on the imagination of its audience,[47] as can be witnessed from the second part of Niẓāmī ʿArūḍī's definition of poetry: "by acting on the imagination, he [the poet] excites the faculties of anger and concupiscence in such a way that

---

[45] "La faculté imaginative est celle qui joint les unes aux autres les images perçues par la faculté formatrice, ou les sépare les unes des autres, de sorte qu'elle perçoit l'être humain sous telle ou telle forme, en imaginant par exemple un homme à deux faces ou un demi-éléphant; cette faculté opère toujours par synthèse ou par analyse, en faisant intervenir le semblable ou le contraire d'une chose, de telle façon que chaque fois que l'homme perçoit une chose, cette faculté introduit l'image d'une autre chose—ce qui est sa nature," Avicenna, *Le Livre de science*, trans. Mohammad Achena and Henri Massé, second edition revised by Mohammad Achena, Paris: Les Belles Lettres/ UNESCO, 1986, II, p. 63. Unfortunately, I have been unable to refer to the original Persian text of the *Dānish-nāma*.

[46] The expression is not Avicenna's but Kant's. However, many authors have employed it in discussing the active power Avicenna attributed to imagination. See Cynthia Fleury, *Métaphysique de l'imagination*, Paris: Éditions d'Écarts, 2000. Henry Corbin first made use of it when speaking of Ibn ʿArabī, in *L'Imagination créatrice dans le soufisme d'Ibn 'Arabî*, Paris: Flammarion, 1958.

[47] The philosophers nevertheless appropriated Aristotle's definition of the artistic process in *Nicomachean Ethics* VI, as "a productive disposition involving a true course of reasoning" (1140a 20), trans. W.D. Ross, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, *op. cit.*, p. 1025 (translation slightly modified). For a more detailed definition of ἕξις (lat. *habitus*), the Greek term that designates a "faculty or possession," or "permanent disposition," as opposed to διάθεσις: "affection" or "momentary disposition," see Aristotle, *Categories* X, 12a 25, trans. E.M. Edghill, *op. cit.*, p. 30; and *Metaphysics* Δ, 20, 1022b 5–10, trans. W.D. Ross, *op. cit.*, p. 771. ἕξις was translated in Arabic by *malaka*.

by his suggestion men's temperaments become affected with depression or exaltation; whereby he conduces to the accomplishment of great things in the order of the world."[48] What use of imagination is implicit in poetic recitation? And what effect on the soul of the listener can the poetic art claim for itself? Such are the questions raised in the Eastern tradition.

The Aristotelian doctrine of imagination was to acquire a canonical status among those who, in turn, wished to account for the nature of artistic production in general and poetry in particular. We saw that Aristotle made a clear distinction between imagination and belief on the one hand, and imagination and thinking on the other, specifying that to imagine does not entail that we add faith to that which is imagined. In other words, he who imagines does not quite perceive the product of his imagination in the same way he perceives his own sensations, which are always true. One need not grant one's imaginings the certainty of existence. This difference is of great importance for understanding how the ancient philosophers conceived of fiction and the poetic art as such. Indeed, they considered them to be genuine creations of the mind, capable of displaying a whole consistent world of their own. According to the philosophers, this capacity of invention called for a counterpart in the human mind: the ability to distinguish reality from verisimilitude and to enjoy a successful piece of fiction for its own sake.

Aristotle identified the suspension of judgment that comes with the event of imagination. Since imagination entails no belief other than one reasoned and willfully consented, its artful production is one which creates a situation of "make-believe" compatible with any degree on the scale of judgment, ranging from skepticism to credulity. For instance, one may admire a painting and its likeness to a model, while still not mistaking one for the other. "Again," Aristote recalls in his *Rhetoric*,

> since learning and wondering are pleasant, it follows that such things as acts of imitation must be pleasant—for instance, painting, sculpture, poetry—and every product of skilful imitation; this latter, even if the object imitated is not itself pleasant; for it is not the object itself which here gives delight; the spectator draws inferences ('That is a so-and-so') and thus learns something fresh. (I, 11, 1371b 5–10)[49]

---

[48] *Four Discourses*, p. 27.

[49] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, trans. W. Rhys Roberts, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, *op. cit.*, p. 1365.

If one examines the products of imagination and their reception, one must account for two other notions: pleasure (*hèdonè*) and imitation (*mimèsis*). Aristotle insists that a piece of art is expected to please. What is pleasurable in it is nothing other than its similarity to its model, a thing that exists and can be easily recognized by all. It is in virtue of this similitude that an artful product of imagination can be qualified as a work of "imitation." But to speak of "likeness" is also to acknowledge a difference between the thing itself and the artifact by which it is represented. For the pleasurable effect to be felt, the recipient must at once recognize an undeniable likeness between the artwork and its model and sense a no less undeniable difference between them. For the philosopher, an artful "imitation" is by no means a copy. In a famous passage of his *De Memoria*, Aristotle clarifies the double nature of such representations by giving the example of "a picture painted on a panel." It is "at once a picture," he writes, "and a likeness: that is, while one and the same, it is both of these, although the 'being' of both is not the same, and one may contemplate it either as a picture, or as a likeness" (I, 450b 20–25).[50] To describe the panel, one may equally claim to have seen the "likeness" of the model or a "picture." And the greater the resemblance between picture and model, the more successful the imitation and the more striking the painter's skills—his artistry shall only be better appraised.

According to the Stagirite, the pleasure one experiences before an artwork is directly proportionate to the double nature of the 'imitation:' imitative and yet independent from reality. It is related to the suspension of belief attained through imagination, since it is felt "even if the object imitated is not itself pleasant." The contrast becomes all the more apparent in the event of the representation of an object that causes fear or disgust in real life:[51] the spectator of the artwork can feel pleasure only insofar as he is aware that the object imitated is not identical to the thing itself. "When we think something to be fearful or threatening, emotion is immediately produced, and so too with what is encouraging; but when we merely imagine we remain as unaffected as persons who are looking at a

[50] Aristotle, *Parva Naturalia*, *De Memoria et Reminiscentia* (*On Memory and Reminiscence*), trans. J.I. Beare, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, *op. cit.*, p. 610.

[51] See also Aristotle, *Poetics* 4, 1448b 9–19, "…though the objects themselves may be painful to see, we delight to view the most realistic representations of them in art, the forms for example of the lowest animals and of dead bodies…," trans. Ingram Bywater, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, *op. cit.*, pp. 1457–8.

painting of some dreadful or encouraging scene" (427b 17–24).[52] Avicenna later appropriated the same example, which he developed in a poetic context:

> An evidence that imitation is delightful is that men are pleased by contemplating the portrayed forms of hateful and disgusting animals which they would avoid if seen in actuality. What is delightful is not that form itself nor what is portrayed but its being a precise imitation of something else. (III, 4, 3)[53]

No matter the object, aesthetic pleasure thus appears as the result of a successful imitation. Aristotelian *mimèsis*, rendered by the Arabic محاكات, refers to a type of representation and therefore to a product of imagination insofar as it corresponds to an artful—or stylized—transposition of reality. Avicenna, in turn, insists on the pleasure involved in the contemplation of a work of imagination. The wonder (تعجب) itself results from the event of "recognizing" the object imitated in the unusual appearance lent to it by the artist.

According to Avicenna, artistic imitation is therefore susceptible to a twofold critical appraisal, each part of which relies on criteria of its own. Viewed from the perspective of stylistic perfection, the piece must make show of completeness and consistency with itself. But from another standpoint, and however far removed it may be from sensible reality, an imitation must comply with the requirements of "recognition" (إستدلال), the absence of which would make it impossible for the viewer to identify any imitated object at all. In the philosopher's discussion, however, this rule is never formulated in terms of "likeness" with the real world, but rather in terms of verisimilitude, or, to be more precise, of "possibility" (إمكان).[54] From this it follows that the artist enjoys considerable freedom in his rendering of objects. But another consequence may prove more significant still: the dismissal of an imitation on account of its "falsity," in such a context, cannot be understood as a prohibition of picturing objects in a form that does not exist in reality. Rather, it expresses a rejection of representations proven to be inconsistent with themselves, as they betray

---

[52] *On the Soul*, p. 587.

[53] Ibn Sīnā, Abū 'Alī al-Ḥusayn (Avicenna), *Fann al-shi'r, min kitāb al-shifā'*, in 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, ed., *Arisṭūṭālīs: Fann al-shiʿr*, Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1953 (pp. 159–198), pp. 171–172; English trans. by Ismaïl M. Dahiyat, *Avicenna's Commentary on the* Poetics *of Aristotle: A Critical Study with an Annotated Translation of the Text*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974, p. 78.

[54] See *Fann al-shi'r*, p. 189 and 196; *Avicenna's Commentary on the* Poetics, p. 109 and 119.

the logical impossibility of there being any corresponding model whatsoever. The artist may picture actions and objects in a form other than that in which they appear in reality; but he is bound by an implicit agreement to represent solely forms that are "possible" or verisimilar, though they may not be real. Although his creations originate in his own imagination, the artist must comply with the demands of proper imitation. To paint an elephant-man or to compose contorted poetic metaphors such as may sometimes be formed by imagination would be merely to produce fallacies. The Avicennian conception of artistic imagery does not tolerate the spectacle of chimera.

Two centuries after Avicenna, Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī confirmed his master's views by specifying that "the error (غلط) of the poet lies in the falsity of imitation (سوءمحاکات), just as that of the painter who would, for instance, paint a horse with five feet or a lion with hoofs."[55] This type of judgment emanates from a specific branch of knowledge, namely, poetic criticism (نقد شعر). Developed at an early stage by the Arabs, this discipline finds an echo in the philosophical works that discuss the causes and nature of poetic imitations. But instead of searching for criteria to discern good poems from bad ones, as was usual among professional literary critics, the philosophers questioned the role and status of artistic imagination within human communities, as well as the artistic usages of the faculty.

What distinguishes poetry from all other instances of creative imagination is the specific medium through which it is exerted. Language is not merely the recipient of the poet's imagery; more profoundly, it is involved in the process of imagining itself. Language, as the means of the artistic transformation of reality, shapes the matter of imagination in poetry.[56] With this use of imagery, we are far from the engraver's tablet and stylus, the painter's panel and pigments, and their two or even three-dimensional pictures. Poetry represents with and by language; it alone is capable of stirring its audience's imagination through speech. It was no doubt to understand the remarkable powers of poetic speech that the

[55] Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, *Kitāb asās al-iqtibās*, ed. Mudarris Raḍavī, Tehran: Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Tihrān, 1998, p. 594. All translations from this author are my own.

[56] For a general literary survey of the role of imagination in classical Persian poetry, see Muḥammad Riḍā Shafīʿī Kadkanī, *Ṣuvar-i khiyāl dar shiʾr-i fārsī: taḥqīq-i intiqādī dar taṭavvur-i īmāzh-hā-yi shiʿr-i pārsī va sayr-i naẓariya-yi balāghat dar islām va īrān*, Tehran: Intishārāt-i Āgāh, 5th ed. 1994. In a chapter dedicated to the logical approach to imagination (pp. 28–39), the author praises Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī for having given the issue of poetic imitations its finest wording, p. 34.

medieval philosophers set themselves the following task: to account for the means by which poets "[arrange] imaginary propositions."[57]

A Rhythmic Imaginative Discourse

Poetry, according to logicians, is a rhythmic imaginative discourse.[58]

This sentence is found at the inception of *Miʿyār al-ashʿār* ("the standard of poetry"), the treatise on metrics that Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī composed in 649 h.q./ 1251.[59] This epitome on "the science of metrics and rhymes in Arabic and Persian poetry" can be read as a technical counterpart to the last chapter of the philosopher's digest of Avicennian logic, *Kitāb asās al-iqtibās* ("book of the foundations of knowledge"),[60] written seven years earlier (642 h.q./ 1244), which also discusses poetry.

At the time of the Mongol invasions, when Ṭūsī began to work on the subject, the principal findings of Avicenna's philosophical poetics may have already been known to the community of scholars still versed in Arabic letters. They were reflected, as we have seen, in Niẓāmī ʿArūḍī's *Four Discourses* in the 12th century. But their analysis was not fully articulated in Persian until the next century. A physician and, like Avicenna, an heir to Fārābī's groundbreaking works on logic, Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī was the first—and perhaps the sole—thinker in Iran to continue the project of his master; but he did so in Persian. This is why, however minor it may appear with respect to his abundant scientific writings, Ṭūsī's research on poetry can be considered a noteworthy contribution to the shaping of a rationalist philosophy in Iran. His treatment of poetry further bears witness to the systematicity of his scholarly project as a whole. When analyzing poetic

---

[57] *Four Discourses*, p. 27.

[58] Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, *Miʿyār al-ashʿār*, in *Shiʿr va shāʿirī dar āthār-i khāja naṣīr al-dīn ṭūsī*, ed. Muʿaẓẓama Iqbālī Aʿẓam, Tehran: Sāzmān-i Chāp va Intishārāt-i Vizārat-i Farhang va Irshād-i Islāmī, 1992, p. 165: "شعر به نزدیک منطقیان کلام مخیّل موزون باشد".

[59] Several editions of the work are currently available. Unfortunately, none of them can be said fully to meet the standards of a good critical edition. This lack should be filled by Professor Moḥammad Feshārakī's forthcoming edition. In the meanwhile, I have relied on the most recent edition: *Shiʿr va shāʿirī*, *op. cit.* I have given a French translation of this text in my Master's thesis, *Xʷāje Naṣīr al-dīn Ṭūsī: Meʿyār al-ašʿār dar ʿelm-e ʿarūḍ va qavāfī, L'Étalon des poésies, de la science de la métrique et des rimes. Traduction annotée*, mémoire de D.E.A. d'Études Iraniennes sous la direction de M. Yann Richard à l'Université de Paris III—Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2001–2002, unpublished.

[60] Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, *Kitāb asās al-iqtibās*, *op. cit.* For the last chapter, on poetics, see pp. 586–599. It is the Persian abridgement of Avicenna's *Fann al-shiʿr*, *op. cit.*

composition and the physiological effects of poetry on its listeners, Ṭūsī devices a genuine "physiology of passions" that owes as much to the science of the physician as to the systematic approach of the logician.

Without breaking with Avicenna's descriptions, Naṣīr al-Dīn's analyses constitute a step forward towards a global understanding of the poetic phenomenon. Naṣīr al-Dīn's philosophical perspective aims above all to formulate a general and universally applicable definition of poetry, rather than to describe individual features of poetic compositions in any given language. Yet by composing a treatise of comparative Arabic and Persian prosody, Ṭūsī agrees to put his philosophical conclusions to the test of a genuine corpus of poems, which are characterized by their own particular linguistic rules and usages. This allows him to illustrate his theoretical positions with experimental observations and to take linguistic determinations into account while examining the universal essence of poetry.[61] By drawing most of his citations from the Iranian poetic corpus, moreover, the philosopher sets Persian *exempla* on an equal footing with the traditional Arabic lines that ornate most scientific treatises.

Naṣīr al-Dīn's logical approach to poetry owes much to Avicenna's commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics*,[62] which is found at the end of the section of the *Shifā'* dedicated to logic and of which the *Kitāb asās al-iqtibās* constitutes an abridged Persian version. The "logic" section of the *Kitāb al-shifā'* itself is nothing other than a commentary of Aristotle's *Organon*, developed and broadened into a characteristically original contribution by the Iranian philosopher. Most of the writings that constitute the Aristotelian corpus on logic were in fact available to medieval philosophers in their Arabic translation as early as the 11th century.[63] These works gave rise to a copious tradition of commentaries by the *falāsifa*. The generic title *Organon*, which means "instrument," identifies the "science of logic" as the sole device fit to articulate formally any specific domain of

---

[61] One these grounds, the philosopher excludes the requirement for rhyme from the universal account of poetry. Unrhymed Greek poetry suffices to invalidate the essential attribution of rhyme to poetry.

[62] *Fann al-shi'r*, *op. cit.*

[63] See, among others, 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, *La Transmission de la philosophie grecque au monde arabe—cours professé à la Sorbonne en 1967*, 2nd ed., amended and enlarged, Paris: J. Vrin, 1987; Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture. The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early Abbasid Society* (*2nd–4th/8th–10th Centuries*), London and New York: Routledge, 1998; Richard Walzer, *Greek into Arabic: Essays on Islamic Philosophy*, Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1962. For a detailed discussion of the tradition of commentaries on Aristotelian logic, see the introduction to Averroès, *Commentaire moyen sur le* De Interpretatione, ed. A. Benmakhlouf and S. Diebler, Paris: J. Vrin, 2000.

knowledge. Logic, in a sense, is the science of sciences, as it provides the whole set of rules indispensable to the expression of any particular science—in other words: the universal "grammar" of reason, which lies above natural languages and encompasses them all. The abstract form of scientific discourse, logic does not presuppose any previous knowledge, but embraces them all. From the *Categories* and *On Interpretation* to the *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics*, the *Topics* and the *Sophistical Refutations*, the *Organon* sets forth the formal requirements of truthful reasoning. According to Aristotle, all logical utterances can be reduced to one among a given set of propositions stating "one thing" of "another thing;" more precisely, all consist of predicative assertions bearing truth or falsity. Thus knowledge is the process by which we come to deduce the unknown from what is already known to us. It is only by a logical arrangement of true propositions that one may ascertain new knowledge, deduced from the initial propositions. Any true predication must therefore be reducible to one of the possible forms of the "syllogism." In Aristotle's wording, the syllogism is "discourse in which,"

> certain things being stated, something other than what is stated follows of necessity from their being so. I mean by the last phrase that they produce the consequence, and by this, that no further term is required from without in order to make the consequence necessary.[64]

The syllogism thus appears as a condition for sound reasoning. For the syllogism establishes the necessity of the consequence: if two reliable premises are articulated in a proposition, a true conclusion will necessarily follow. A safeguard of formal reasoning, Aristotelian syllogistics relates primarily to the apodictic statements of science and dialectic, which aim at ascertaining theoretical truths. Syllogistics is opposed to sophistry, which only succeeds in producing counterfeit syllogisms to serve deceitful arguments. As for the types of utterances referred to in the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*, the inventor of logic never deemed them liable to adopt any syllogistic form in the strict sense. Aristotle explicitly excluded figurative and emotional expression from the scope of logic altogether, as he excluded such other non-propositional utterances as prayers and exclamations.[65]

---

[64] Aristotle, *Prior Analytics* (24b 15 sq.), trans. A.J. Jenkinson, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

[65] See Aristotle, *On Interpretation*, 17a, and in part. IV, 17a 1–5: "Every sentence has meaning, not as being the natural means by which a physical faculty is realized, but, as we have said, by convention. Yet every sentence is not a proposition; only such are propositions as have in them either truth or falsity. Thus a prayer is a sentence, but is neither true

The rhetoricians' enthymemes, which are in fact debatable opinions posing as scientific arguments, could at best be compared to incomplete syllogisms. For Aristotle, the comparison between rhetorical utterances and logical propositions went no further.

But the Muslim philosophers inherited the First Master's works in a very different form. Ironically, the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* gradually came to be incorporated into the *Organon* by the later Greek and Alexandrian commentators in the course of textual transmission. On receiving the corpus handed down to them by Ammonius, Philoponus, Olympiodorus and Elias, after it was translated into Aramaic and from there into Arabic, Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā thus naturally regarded the "enlarged" *Organon* that had reached them as the original whole designed by the Stagirite.[66] What could be deemed a serious misreading of the Aristotelian legacy was to meet an unexpected fate in the history of philosophy. Elucidating Aristotle's doctrine as they understood it, the *falāsifa* justified the connection between poetic and rhetorical utterances on the one hand, and the predicative assertions of logic on the other. Thus the Arabic thinkers developed a new account of the whole range of human utterances, all grouped in a single conception of rational discourse.

Consequently, it is in his capacity as logician (منطقی) rather than as a literary critic that Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, following Avicenna, undertook his study of poetics. This perspective is explicitly stated in *Asās al-iqtibās*. After enumerating the various fields of knowledge related to poetry, from prosody and the science of rhyme to literary criticism, music and grammar, Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī asserts the philosopher's specific prerogatives:

> The logician (منطقی) deals with the source of imagination, though [imagination itself] may in fact proceed along [various] paths. By essence, the art

---

nor false.—Let us therefore dismiss all other types of sentence but the proposition, for this last concerns our present inquiry, whereas the investigation of the others belongs rather to the study of rhetoric or of poetry," trans. E.M. Edghill, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, *op. cit.*, p. 42; and *Poetics*, 19, 1456b 5–10, *op. cit.*, p. 1474.

[66] See Richard Walzer, "Zur Traditionsgeschichte der aristotelischen Poetik," in *Studi Italiani di Filologia Classica*, n. s. 11, 1934, pp. 5–14, rpt. in *Greek into Arabic: Essays on Islamic Philosophy*, Oriental Studies n° 1, Oxford: Cassirer, 1962, pp. 129–136; Deborah L. Black, *Logic and Aristotle's Rhetoric and Poetics in Medieval Arabic Philosophy*, Leiden—New York: E.J. Brill, 1990. Aristotle's *Poetics* was translated into Arabic in the 11th century by Abū Bishr Mattā Ibn Yūnus al-Qunnā'ī (*circa* 256/870–328/940). One may refer to either one of the two modern editions of the text: *Kitāb arisṭūṭālīs fī al-shiʿr*, in ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī ed., *Arisṭūṭālīs: Fann al-shiʿr*, *op. cit.*, pp. 83–145; and ʿAyyād Shukrī's edition, Cairo: Dār al-Kātib al-ʿArabī li-ṭ-Ṭibāʿa wa-n-Nashr, 1967.

> [of poetry consists] in the production of [imagination]; the other conditions of poetry are found [only] by accident. Thus the matter of poetry is speech (سخن). Its form, according to the moderns is rhythm and rhyme, and according to logicians, it is imagination.[67]

In logical terms, poetry is thus to be classified last among the five "arts of speech" (صناعات پنجگانه). It follows demonstrative discourse (برهان), which aims to ascertain necessary truths, dialectic (جدل), which deduces theoretical truths from necessary premises, sophistry (مغالطه), which can only imitate rational logic, and rhetoric (خطابت), which seeks to determine opinions in practical affairs. Like its four counterparts, poetry is characterized by a specific use of "discourse" (کلام), understood as "an arrangement of words composed of letters designed to convey meanings, which depend on their position."[68] "Discourse" is that "meaningful (معنی دار) speech" which, in Ṭūsī's Aristotelian definition of poetry, stands for the genus (جنس), where imagination stands for the differentia (فصل).[69] Indeed, "imaginative discourse" differs from all other types of utterances by virtue of the typical response it calls for in its audience. In his enumeration of the kinds of rational discourse, Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī writes:

> Since assent is reached by means of apophantic utterances, any such apophantic utterance as breeds certainty by essence is called demonstration; any such [utterance] as breeds widely accepted opinions or [opinions] compliant with necessity is called dialectic; any such [utterance] as breeds improper apophantic belief is called sophistic; any such [utterance] as breeds non-apophantic belief is called rhetoric; and any such [utterance] as breeds imagination is called poetry. All apophantic utterances found in the sciences and disputes are employed to the extent to which they match the contents of one among these five types [of utterances].[70]

---

[67] *Kitāb asās al-iqtibās,* p. 587.

[68] *Miʿyār al-ashʿār,* p. 165: "کلام الفاظی باشد مؤلّف از حروف که بر حسب وضع بر معانی مقصود دالّ باشد".

[69] *Miʿyār al-ashʿār,* p. 165 and 171.

[70] *Kitāb Asās al-iqtibās,* p. 342. "و چون اکتساب تصدیق به واسطهٔ اقوال جازمه باشد پس هر قول جازم که مفید یقین بود بالذات آن را برهان خوانند، و هر چه مفید رائی مشهور یا مقتضی الزامی باشد آنرا جدل خوانند. و هر چه مفید اعتقادی جازم غیر مطابق بود، آن را مغالطه خوانند. و هر چه مفید اعتقادی غیر جازم بود آن را خطابت خوانند. و هر چه مفید

Despite the fact that it qualifies as an utterance, poetry appears to be fundamentally unlike all other kinds of discourse. While other utterances are expected to gain the audience's assent (تصدیق) and to convince the listener of their truth, poetic utterances can only be said to affect the audience indirectly. Unimpeded by the demand for truth, poetic utterances simply excite the listener's imagination and arouse his passions by means of "wonder and pleasure" (تعجب والتذاذ), imprinting themselves on his soul. Indeed, imaginative speech need not make predicative statements about the world. More radically, only insofar as they do not express existential judgments can imaginative utterances be identified to aesthetic compositions. But this is where a new question arises: if poetic utterances are in fact indifferent to truth and falsity, in what sense can they be said to be "rational?" And how can they be paired with the various syllogistic expressions of the truth?

Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī confidently appropriated Avicenna's definition of the ties between poetic discourse and its imaginative (مُخیّل) referent. This confidence would be decisive in the history of Persian poetics: it acknowledged the fact that poetry is a form of *logos* (نُطق; کلام), granting it full rights among the rational usages of human speech.[71]

تخییلی بود، آن را شعر خوانند. وجملهٔ اقوال جازمه که در علوم ومحاورات استعمال کنند باعتبار مواد این پنج قسم بود".

[71] To acknowledge poetry as one possible species of rational discourse is also undeniably to protect it from various attacks made by religious literalists. It is to grant the poet and his art a kind of legitimacy. In particular, an absolute distinction needs be made between sophistic fallacies and poetic imagination, which lays no claim to truth. This distinction alone draws a line between the actual practice of poetry and the Koranic accusations of folly, of willful lie or, even worse, of magic as a will to rival prophecy. On the need to distinguish Mohammedan prophecy from mere poetic announcements, see Koran XXI, 5; XXVI, 224–226; XXXVI, 69; XXXVII, 36; LII, 29–30; LXIX, 38–41, as well as a number of ḥadīth (among others Bukhārī I, 12, 745; IV, 54, 434; IV, 56, 724; VIII, 73, 175 and 176). The same sources that at times violently reject poetry also mitigate their judgments: see Buxārī IV, 56, 731 on the poet Ḥassan b. Ṭhābit, the zealous defender of Islam; VIII, 73, 166 reporting a syllogism by Abū Bakr according to whom "some poetry is true"; VIII, 73, 167 and 168 evoking poems cited by the Prophet. The status of poetry in Islam is far from unequivocal; from an early date, poetry came to be numbered among the commendable disciplines in the hierarchy of Islamic sciences. See L. Gardet and M.-M. Anawati, *Introduction à la théologie musulmane, essai de théologie comparée*, Etudes de philosophie médiévale, n° xxxvii, Paris: J. Vrin, 1948, 3rd ed. 1981, p. 111 for an overview of the classification of the sciences by Khārizmī, who ranks poetry and the science of prosody among the *ʿulūm al-sharīʿa*; and p. 117, by contrast, for the great disparager of the Muslim philosophers, Ghazālī, who nevertheless includes poetry among the permissible (مباح), albeit non-religious, sciences.

The Poetic Syllogism

Having defined poetry as a rational discourse, Muslim philosophers drew a number of consequences that would baffle a Western Aristotelian. They argued that if poetry is a matter of logic, and if all logical discourse is reducible to one syllogism or another, then poetry too may be explained in terms of a syllogism. The extension of formal syllogistics to the field of poetry was to remain altogether foreign to Western philosophy. In fact, what the *falāsifa* held to be a faithful continuation of the Stagirite's doctrine can be ascribed to them as an entirely fresh, albeit unintentional, innovation.

The aims of the syllogism were by nature altered when they were applied to poetry. In other rational discourses, the syllogism was understood as a formal requirement of demonstration designed to persuade the listener. But since poetry did not aim to convince, the object of its syllogism changed radically. Naṣīr al-Dīn makes it clear that "the 'imaginative' (مُخيّل) discourse is one that stirs passions producing a slackening (بسط) or a tightening (قبض) in the soul, or other, involuntary and invisible [passions], whether the discourse is fit or not to induce assent (تصديق). For assent is foreign to the production of imagination."[72] To be sure, the formal appearance of the syllogism is preserved. But the premises that lead to the conclusion differ radically in nature from those to be found in all other types of discourse. In poetry, premises, which express a statement about the world, are no longer necessarily true, as they are in a demonstrative syllogism. Premises do not even need be "widely accepted" or "well-know" facts, as they do in dialectics; they do not need to be "possible," as they do in rhetoric. The premises of a poetic syllogism are purely "imaginary."

As Wolfhart Heinrichs explains in a seminal article on imagination in the Arabic context,[73] "in philosophical parlance, *takhyīl* is, first and fore-

---

[72] *Kitāb asās al-iqtibās*, p. 587.

[73] W.P. Heinrichs, "*Takhyīl*," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2003, vol. X, pp. 128–132. See also Deborah L. Black, *Logic and Aristotle's Rhetoric and Poetics*, *op. cit.*, and her article "The 'Imaginative Syllogism' in Arabic Philosophy: A Medieval Contribution to the Philosophical Study of Metaphor," in *Mediaeval Studies*, n° 51, 1989, pp. 241–267; W.P. Heinrichs, "Die antike Verknüpfung von phantasia und Dichtung bei den Arabern," in *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, n° 128, 1978, pp. 252–298; Salim Kemal, *The Poetics of Alfarabi and Avicenna*, Leiden – New York: E.J. Brill, 1991; Gregor Schoeler, "Der poetische Syllogismus: Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis der 'logischen' Poetik der Araber," in *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* n° 133, 1983, pp. 43–92; and the recent book by Geert Jan van Gelder and Marlé Hammond,

most, a logical term, the meaning of which may be circumscribed as the 'evocation of images of things in the minds of listeners by means of figurative language'."[74] By means of figurative language and tropes such as metaphor and analogy, poetry stirs alternatively attractive and repulsive representations in the mind of the listener, which "prompt the recipient to aspire to, or recoil from, what is being described, without first forming an assent (*taṣdīq*) to the proposition offered (the truth or falseness of the poetic statement being irrelevant)."[75] Indifferent to the truth-value of propositions, *takhyīl* in poetry is nevertheless charged with a task similar to that endorsed by *taṣdīq* in other kinds of discourse, as "both [*taṣdīq* and *takhyīl*] produce action in the addressee." But the one appeals to the imaginative faculty in the listener, while the other addresses deliberative reason.

First conceived of by Fārābī,[76] the "poetic syllogism" was described at length by Avicenna, who insisted that the emotional effects of wonder and pleasure were inherent in poetry. Effective without being exactly convincing, the poetic syllogism can be identified with what Heinrichs called "a metaphor-generating syllogism." Avicenna's canonical example is as follows: "So-and-so is handsome (minor); everyone handsome is a moon (major); so-and-so is a moon (conclusion)."[77] Poetry's aversion for argumentative speech is proverbial, and such developed formulas, to be sure, are unlikely to be found in any existing poem. More often than not, the

---

eds., *Takhyīl: The Imaginary in Classical Arabic Poetics. Part 1: Texts. Part 2: Studies*, Exeter: Short Run Press, E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 2008.

[74] Heinrichs, "*Takẖyīl*," p. 129. This explains why Heinrichs believes the expression *aqwāl-i mukhayyal* [اقوال مخيّل] to be better translated by "image-evoking utterances" than by "imaginative discourse." In the present paper, I have nevertheless retained the latter, more in keeping with the synthetic construction of the original phrasing.

[75] *Ibid.*

[76] See Abū Naṣr Md. al-Fārābī, *Risāla fī qawānīn ṣināʿat al-shuʿarāʾ*, in ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī ed., *Arisṭūṭālīs: Fann al-shiʿr*, pp. 147–158, and *Kitāb al-shiʿr*, ed. M. Mahdi, in *Shiʿr* n° 12, 1959, pp. 1–6. An English translation of the latter can be found in Nabil Matar, "Alfārābi on Imagination: With a Translation of his 'Treatise on Poetry'," in *College Literature*, vol. 23, 1, 1996, pp. 100–110. But the syntagm "poetic syllogism" appears only in *Qowl al-fārābī fi al-tanāsub waʾl-taʾlīf*, in *Al-manṭiqiyyāt li al-fārābī. Al-mujallad al-thānī al-nuṣūṣ al-manṭiqiyyat*, ed. Muḥammad Taqī Dānishpazhūh, Qom: Maktabat Āyat-Allāh al-ʿUẓmā al-Marʿashī al-Najafī, 1985, 3 vols., vol. 1, pp. 504–506 and *Al-towṭiʾat fī ʾl-manṭiq*, vol. 1, pp. 11–17. See Maroun Aouad and Gregor Schoeler's comprehensive account of Fārābī's conception of the poetic syllogism in "Le syllogisme poétique selon al-Fārābī: un syllogisme incorrect de la deuxième figure," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, vol. 12 (2002), pp. 185–196.

[77] Avicenna, *Al-shifāʾ*, *al-manṭiq*, 4. *al-qiyās*, ed. S. Zayed and I. Madkhour, Cairo: Organisme Général des Imprimeries Gouvernementales, 1964, p. 57, 11–12.

conclusion of the syllogism appears in isolation, in the form of a metaphor or a comparison such as: "So-and-so is a moon," or "like the moon." As Heinrichs explains, the syllogism is merely an internal process that underlies poetic creation.[78] Indeed, the coining of such a notion as "poetic syllogism" suggests that the philosophers attempted to reconstruct the logic of poetic compositions, regardless of any existing body of poetry. The will to identify syllogisms in poetry proceeds from a retrospective analysis to account for the rational nature of such tropes as metaphor.

An instrument of poetic imagination, the "poetic syllogism" can thus be understood as a logical device that frames figures of style. This explains why Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, in line with Avicenna's teachings, included his discussion of tropes not in his technical treatise on prosody but in his summa of logic, *The Book of the Foundations of Knowledge*, where both comparison (تشبیه) and metaphor (استعاره)[79] are defined among types of "verbal imitations" (محاکات لفظی).[80] Such "imitations" may be simple (بسایط) or complex (مرکبات). They may rely on concrete objects (ذوات), "as when the bosom is pictured as pomegranates and the face as flowers," or on abstract objects, "as when the languor from one beauty's eye is depicted in terms of intoxication and sleepiness." One may further distinguish conventional (مشهور و ضائع) comparisons, "as when the eye is pictured as a narcissus and the stature as a slender cypress," from fresh (غیرمشهور) images. Poetic "imitations" thus embrace an infinite combination of images:

---

[78] Heinrichs, "*Takhyīl*," p. 130.

[79] Metaphors may be found in utterances that closely resemble apophantic propositions (e.g. "the three Bears are a revolving rounded pole," *Kitāb asās al-iqtibās*, p. 593); but the equivalence stated between the two elements of the comparison is not conceived of as grounded in truth. For further details, see Julie S. Meisami, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. *Este'āra*. The Arab critics debated the degree to which poetic images are motivated, and the extent to which fiction in general can be trusted. It suffices for Ṭūsī, still in keeping with Avicenna, to tackle the question through the issue of the "falsity of imitation," cf. *Kitāb asās al-iqtibās*, p. 594, where he also recalls the Arab proverb according to which "poetry is deceitful."

[80] *Kitāb asās al-iqtibās*, p. 593 (also for the following quotations). Let us simply note that, in Ṭūsī's text, the Arabic term محاکات (here rendered by "imitation"), translates the Aristotelian notion of *mimèsis*, as in the works of the *falāsifa*. To further discuss the radical change this notion underwent in the Arabic commentaries on the *Poetics*, where imitation was transferred from the field of dramatic representations of human "actions" to that of poetic and rhythmic imitations, would lead us into considerations removed too far from the scope of the present paper.

> As a whole, poetic imitation operates either by means of inference (به طریق استدلال) or by means of induction (به طریق اشتمال). Inference (استدلال) is that process by which a causal relation can be established between the state of one thing and that of another [thing], similar [to the latter]. As for induction (اشتمال), it is that by which one thing is exhibited [whereas] another [thing] is intended, as when one expresses a grave matter in guise of jesting.[81]

In actual poems, all that remains of poetic syllogisms is their conclusions, which appear in the form of metaphors. Similarly, the operations of "inference" and "induction" designate a process which, far from being displayed at full length in the poem itself, is generally only implicit in the poetic tropes. Logicians, as it appears, were not in search of a formal description of existing poetry. They were in search of a means to decipher the rationality of the figures of style and to understand their impact on the soul of the listeners. "Induction," therefore, is the key to the irony in those texts the "grave matter" of which must be grasped "in guise of jesting". As for "inference," it can be found in such figures as *ḥusn-i taʿlīl*, which establish a "causal relation" between "the state of one thing and that of another [thing], similar [to the latter]."

As shown by this reasoned survey of the major tropes, Naṣīr al-Dīn's poetics unmistakably sides with the logical analysis of speech-acts. He thereby distances himself from the more technical perspective of the specialist, famously exemplified by Shams-i Qays.[82] Instead of focusing on individual tropes and their *modus operandi* in the poem, the philosopher considers the set of stylistic devices (حیلتهای صناعی) as the many facets of one rational imaginative power. Viewed as an effect of combination and disjunction, parallel and contrast, figures of style thus form an open series of correlations, which can be re-arranged in infinitely many ways.

Possible Lies and Impossible Lies

Limitless in its forms, poetic discourse is also practically unbounded in its objects. Indifferent to truth-value, imagination grants the poet access

---

[81] *Kitāb asās al-iqtibās*, p. 594.

[82] The exact contemporary of Ṭūsī and the author of what can be considered the major and the most comprehensive treatise on poetry in the whole Iranian tradition, *Al-muʿjam, fi maʿāyīr ashʿār al-ʿajam*, *op. cit.* The last section is dedicated to the minute examination of figures of style, in accordance with the threefold structure customary in this literature: prosody (عروض), rhyme (قافیه) and figures of style (بلاغه).

to infinite provinces of meaning from which truth is altogether excluded. On account of the imagination, the poetic syllogism therefore opens the field of possible topics to a wide referential domain unaffected by the criterion of the true and false. The fact that the philosophers granted imaginative discourse such a prerogative can hardly be overestimated. Poetry is thereby justified to speak about matters over which truth may lay no claim. Of course, the poet may still wish to embrace universal themes, conjuring up documented facts or even recalling public opinion; but in such cases, poetry shall prove unable to emulate discourses of another type, better suited to the purpose.[83] Poetry can speak of everything, but it possesses a specific set of objects which other types of discourse cannot evoke, a field which remains inexpressible as such in other forms of speech. This much can clearly be deduced from the philosophers' discussions of poetic discourse. Most thinkers went no further in their analysis of the referential domain proper to poetry. But through a close reading of Avicenna's commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics* and of Ṭūsī's own rewording, one may draw the ultimate conclusions of their doctrine.

In the closing chapter of *Asās al-iqtibās*, Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī aims to define the scope of poetic discourse. In a telling yet allusive passage, a parallel between poetry and painting allows him to explain that:

> Not only does poetry imitate that which exists (**موجود**); it may also imitate that which does not exist (**غیرموجود**), such as the anticipation of a possible state of being, or the outlasting effect of some past state of being—just like the painter picturing a character about to engage in, or having completed an action, the outcome of which remains [visible] in him.[84]

Although brief, these lines are decisive, since they relate imaginative discourse to the specific realm of objects on which they bear. The fact that such objects—termed "states of being" in this instance—are described with regard to existence as equally liable to exist (**موجود**) or not to exist (**غیرموجود**) lends poetry—as well as painting for that matter—a capacity to illustrate what Avicenna identified as those "things that are probable

---

[83] See Avicenna, *Le Livre de science*, *op. cit.*, I, p. 118: "si les prémisses vraies ou les opinions interviennent en poésie, ce n'est pas à raison de leur vérité qu'on y recourt, mais à raison de leur caractère imaginatif."

[84] *Kitāb asās al-iqtibās*, p. 592. "وشعر نه محاکات موجود تنها کند، بل گاه بود که محاکات غیر موجود کند، مانند هیأت استعداد حالی متوقع، یا هیأت اثری باقی از حالی ماضی، همچنانک مصور صورر را بر هیأت کسی که مستعد ایجاد فعلی باشد، یا از ایجاد فارغ شده باشد و در او اثری از آن مانده تصویر کند."

but non-existent" (أمورٌ ممكنة أنْ توجد لكنّها لمْ توجد).[85] As we have seen, painters and poets should not represent chimera, or things that are "primarily unconceivable" to the human mind. But artists may lend an earthly shape to things whose existence is merely "possible," though unattested. In particular, they may represent "beings" or events that are merely imagined, insofar as they belong to the future; in other words, they may present things, which, according to Avicenna, are mere potentialities:

> The poet follows the same course as the painter: each of them is an imitator. The painter represents things in one of three ways: either such as they really are, or such as are said to have been and were, or such as may be or come about.[86]

To represent things "as they really are" is, in a way, to speak the truth, and to represent things "such as are said to have been and were" may come down to relating a tale or restating widely assented opinions. But what can it mean to imitate things "such as may be or come about?"

In a fundamental article, Jean Jolivet, discussing the Islamic foundations of Avicennian ontology, pointed out that Avicenna's metaphysics relies on two major concepts: the concept of "existent" (الموجود), and the concept of "thing" (الشيئ).[87] A definition of both can be found in the *Ilāhiyyāt* of the *Shifā'*, book I, chapter 5, which aims to "indicate the existent (الموجود), the thing (الشيئ), and their first division."[88] In this section, the "thing" is defined as that about which a *khabar* can be adduced, in other words, "that about which it is valid [to give] an informative statement" (أللذي يصحّ عنه الخبر).[89] Avicenna also identifies existence as "what is established" (مثبة) or "effective" (حاصل). As is well known, Avicenna insisted that existence must be distinguished from "essence" (إنيّة), or "quiddity" (ماهية). Indeed, the essence of one "thing" does not necessarily coincide with its existence; it is as if existence were added from the outside to an essence which may not exist on its own. For

---

[85] *Fann al-shi'r*, p. 189; *Avicenna's Commentary on the* Poetics, p. 109.

[86] *Fann al-shi'r*, p. 196; *Avicenna's Commentary on the* Poetics, p. 118.

[87] Jean Jolivet, "Aux origines de l'ontologie d'Ibn Sīnā," in *Études sur Avicenne*, Jean Jolivet and Roshdi Rashed, eds., Paris: Les Belles Lettres, Collection sciences et philosophies arabes (études et reprises), 1984, pp. 11–28.

[88] Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of* The Healing. *Al-shifā': al-ilāhiyyāt*. A parallel English-Arabic text translated, introduced, and annotated by Michael E. Marmura, Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, Islamic Translation Series, 2005, p. 22.

[89] *Ibid.*, p. 23.

Avicenna, existence is merely an accident of essence. Therefore one thing may "be" and yet still be "non-existent" in the world: the notion of "thing" remains, as such, absolutely undetermined with regard to existence. However, in order for what does not exist to be termed a "thing," in order for it to be known or spoken about, it must nevertheless be conceived in the mind; to some extent, it must thus be said to "exist" in the soul.

Future events are of this nature. They bear an indirect relation to existence, insofar as they are not actualized in the present. The word "thing" may thus be used to designate particular future events since, as Jolivet explains, the "thing" can equally be conceived as "existent" or "non-existent" (معدوم). It is more comprehensive a concept than that of the "existent," since the concept of "thing" applies to all quiddities, regardless of their existence. The only entity to which it cannot be applied is that which cannot be the subject of a meaningful statement and for which, therefore, there is no word at all: pure "no-thingness," entities which are by definition self-contradictory. In this respect, the "thing" can be likened to universals, to such *ma'ānī* as "humanity" or "horseness."[90] But unlike universal concepts, "things" remain absolutely singular, and specific, like future events. "Things", therefore, cannot fully be grasped by the human intellect; only God knows them eternally, since God knows the essence of all things even before they come to exist, making their essence pass from a state of mere "possibility" into existence.[91] For men, "things" may only be represented by imagination. According to Jolivet, the technical concept of "thing" cannot be traced to Aristotle or to any of the Greek authors available to Avicenna in his time. At the crossroads between *falsafa* and the *kalām*, the origins of the notion of "thing" can be found instead in the controversies of the *mutakallimūn* on the question of divine knowledge. In his ontology, Avicenna was an heir to the Mu'tazilite theologians, in particular to Abū Hāshim's doctrine of the "thing." In combining these theories with his own Aristotelian references, Avicenna thus succeeded in performing an original synthesis.[92]

---

[90] Jean Jolivet "Aux origines," *op. cit.*, p. 15.

[91] On this topic, see Michael E. Marmura, "Some Aspects of Avicenna's Theory of God's Knowledge of Particulars," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 82, n° 3, 1962, pp. 299–312; Emil L. Fackenheim, "The Possibility of the Universe in Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina and Maimonides," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, vol. 16, 1946–47, pp. 39–70; and Sari Nuseibeh, "Al-'Aql al-Qudsī: Avicenna's Subjective Theory of Knowledge," *Studia Islamica*, n° 69, 1989, pp. 39–54.

[92] Jean Jolivet "Aux origines," *op. cit.*, pp. 18–24. Further information about the Mu'tazilite origins of Avicennian ontology can be found in Ahmed Alami's, *L'Ontologie*

When Naṣīr al-Dīn claims that the poet's material includes the "anticipation of a possible state of being" and "that which does not exist" (غیرموجود), he thus refers directly to the Avicennian conception of potentiality. The poet, in other words, may always be confronted by the "thing;" he can represent objects that do not exist in reality or that may only come into existence in the future. Those future "things" that may be represented, despite being at present "non-existent," strongly recall the beings known to the Aristotelian philosophical tradition as "contingent."[93] Aristotle defined singular contingent events as "what exists potentially, but not actually," a definition that applies above all to future events. He also defined singular contingent events as "the indefinite, which can be both thus and not thus." Therefore, any statement concerning a contingent event shall remain undecided since potentialities, Aristotle affirms, by nature elude propositional truth.[94] This is why, according to Ṭūsī and Avicenna, poetry alone is entitled to express contingent matters and future events: since no existential judgment can be expressed with respect to their coming-into-being, such matters and events can only be contemplated by imagination.

To be precise, the philosophers distinguish among three types of discourse that express future events: rhetoric, prophecy and poetry. Future singulars are not accessible to human knowledge, or to any apophantic assertion as it were. In Aristotle's famous example, it is impossible to assess whether the statement "a sea-fight must take place tomorrow" is true or false. However, one may always deliberate about future events. Rhetoric may then pull that which is only possible towards the more probable, and favor this outcome or that in a given debate. But rhetoric cannot be said to speak about the future as such. Rhetoric may only influence the coming-into-existence of determinate future events. Poetry, by

---

modale. Étude de la théorie des modes d'Abū Hāšim al-Ǧubbā'i, Paris: J. Vrin, Études musulmanes 36, 2001.

[93] In my discussion of the relationship between poetry and potentiality, I am deeply indebted to Daniel Heller-Roazen and to his groundbreaking analysis in *Fortune's Faces: The* Roman de la Rose *and the Poetics of Contingency*, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.

[94] See Aristotle, *On Interpretation* IX, 19b 1–5, p. 48, for the first definition. Future singulars are undecided and doubtful by essence, as opposed to past and present events. It cannot be claimed that future singulars will or will not become actualized by necessity. They call for a suspension, so to speak, of all apophantic speech. See also the definition of contingency (τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον) in *Prior Analytics* 32b 5–15, *op. cit.*, pp. 77–78: ". . . . the expression 'to be possible' is used in two ways. In one it means to happen generally and fall short of necessity [. . . .]. In another sense the expression means the indefinite, which can be both thus and not thus [. . . .], or generally what happens by chance: for none of these inclines by nature in the one way more than in the opposite."

contrast, may always operate indirectly, by mere suggestion, picturing possible and future "states of being." When it comes to the revealed truth, however, only prophets are qualified to foretell the future, for they alone hold its truths from an inspiration of divine origin, which by far exceeds the capacities of human reason.[95] Poetry, therefore, can never rival prophecy.[96] Poetry must content itself with imagining its objects, so to speak, in a figurative language liable to be expanded in the form of a syllogism. Only when a radical partition between the divine origins of prophecy and the imaginative source of poetry has been posited can poetry be justified in the eye of the theologians. For then imaginative discourse can appeal to infinitely many figures, flowers, colors and ornaments without being accused of utter fallacy and lies. The poet, at any rate, must beware never to lay himself open to the suspicion that he has encroached on a truth that stands, in every sense, beyond his reach.

Therefore, when Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī speaks of the "lies" (كذب) associated with various tropes and devices of the poetic art, it is not because the poet pretends to speak the truth. The philosopher simply warns him against the evocation of things that, being both inexistent and opposed to logic, can hardly be called "things" at all. Since poetic imagination is a kind of "imitation," the only standard against which to appraise poetic *possibilia* and *impossibilia* lies in the internal consistency of the images assembled by the poet. A perfect coherence is expected on both an internal and an external level: poetic images must appear complete by themselves and also meet the fundamental requirement for "recognition" common to all artworks, which implies at least a "possible" reference to the created world. In Ṭūsī's view, the poet should therefore guard himself against the four main "causes of the falsity of imitation:" first, incompleteness (تقصير) of images and inversion (تحريف) of the elements of a comparison, which

[95] On Avicenna's account of prophecy by the imaginative faculty proper, see Michael E. Marmura "Avicenna's Psychological Proof of Prophecy," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 22, n° 1, 1963, pp. 44–56; Abdelali Elamrani-Jamal, "De la multiplicité des modes de la prophétie chez Ibn Sīnā," in *Études sur Avicenne*, *op. cit.*, pp. 125–142. See also Richard Walzer, "Al-Fārābī's Theory of Prophecy and Divination," *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 1957, pp. 142–148.

[96] Even though "some of the ancient poets could impress the soul of the ordinary people so radically that their power has been compared to that of the prophets, with which they share a number of characteristics." And, as the philosopher goes on to note: "likewise, for a number of reasons, good poems are more effective than sermons nowadays," *Kitāb asās al-iqtibās*, p. 590.

threaten the internal consistency of the poem; and unlikelihood in predication, which cancels the effect of "recognition" expected from an art of imitation, and is named after its two sub-species: the "possible lie" (كذب ممكن) and the "impossible lie" (كذب محال).

The philosopher gives examples of the last two flaws in poetic speech. The hemistich, "Thou hast, in jest, stripped the tulip of its color and fragrance" states a "possible lie," for, Ṭūsī explains, "it is a lie to ascribe the tulip a fragrance." Since the tulip is a scentless flower, the image produced by the poet is unsound. The "impossible lie," a more serious flaw, may be found in the following hemistich: "Like the new moon, his radiant face was eclipsed." A distinguished astronomer, Naṣīr al-Dīn comments: "it is impossible for the new moon to be eclipsed, and therefore the rational (ناطق) imitation for which the poet [claimed] to allege evidence is irrational (غیرناطق), for it is denied by the untruth he adduces."[97] Whether an attribution of an inexistent quality or an allegation of a scientific untruth, the lie does not follow the practice of metaphors as such; it arises from an inconsistent reference to reality. Accordingly, the poet must beware not to contradict science, nor to speak against that which is a common reference to the audience. This is why, in many classical treatises, it is often said that the poet must acquire a near encyclopedic knowledge, while still not randomly displaying as much in his speech.

From these observations, it becomes clear that the Iranian philosopher wished to add a finishing touch to the logical analysis of poetry carried out by his predecessors. Imaginative discourse was included in the field of logic from the time Aristotle's *Oganon* met its first extension. Ṭūsī also suggested that a logic inclusive of poetry broadened the scope of objects dealt with by rational discourse. With Ṭūsī's reading of the Avicennian doctrine, "non-existent" things, which seemed to elude rationality, could now appear in speech; they could be considered valid, if not scientific, as long as they complied with the minimal rules of discursive reason. While Avicenna insisted on the ethical and civic (مدنی)[98] character of poetry in his discussion of praise and blame,[99] Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī focuses instead

[97] The whole discussion can be found in *Kitāb asās al-iqtibās*, pp. 594–595.

[98] Avicenna, *Fann al-shiʿr*, I, 5. However, Ṭūsī does not fail to mention the moral and civic bearing of poetry.

[99] See Salim Kemal, *The Philosophical Poetics of Alfarabi, Avicenna and Averroës: The Aristotelian Reception*, London – New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003, in part. chap. 4 "Poetics, Morality and Society," pp. 128–173. Here we will not discuss the social purpose of poetry, which lies beyond the scope of this paper.

on the aesthetic potentialities of poetic discourse. When he considers the formidable inventiveness of poetry, he goes so far as to grant poetic "beauty" (حسن) a relative autonomy with regard to verisimilitude. For instance, metaphor, that master figure of poetic syllogism, may "rely on possibilities (ممكنات), as when a pleasant odor [is pictured] as the scent of musk."[100] But metaphor may also be based on impossibilities (محالات),

> as when we say: *zabān-i ḥāl* and *chishm-i dil*.[101] Whatever disagrees [in similar fashion] with possibility is called a "tale" (خرافات) on account of its impossibility. And it may even be considered all the more beautiful; and this is the reason why the saying goes that *the beauty of poetry is deceitful*.[102]

From this perspective, poetry testifies to the fact that anything, at least in theory, can be formulated in a rational form. As an artistic expression of non-assertive thought, in Malcolm Schofield's terms, poetry somehow dispels the specter of the inexpressible. It is the task of people other than the philosopher—theologians, politicians or moralists—to deliberate further about what may and may not be expressed. But on strictly philosophical grounds, poetry may no longer be considered invalid or irrational on account of its object. The assimilation of the imaginative discourse to a rational exercise of language grants legitimacy to poetic invention.

Reasonable Seductions

One may even take a step further. In poetry, the freedom of imagination does not merely broaden the field of rational topics and discursive objects. Philosophers insist that the main contribution of imaginative discourse lies in its unequalled inventiveness and in the virtually boundless connections of images it is able to arouse. While truths are necessarily limited in number and repetitive in form, the products of imagination are a constant source of formal innovation. Ṭūsī explains:

---

[100] As is the case in the synecdoche.

[101] Literally: "the tongue of the state of being" and "the eye of the heart," but both phrases remain ultimately untranslatable. The first refers to the "speechless language" of voiceless beings, such as plants or animals that find themselves personified in the poets' fabulous narratives; the latter points to the spiritual advent of an "interior vision" of the heart. While playing on the literal and figurative *double entendre* of these idiomatic expressions, the author tackles the issue of the semantic motivation of metaphors.

[102] *Kitāb asās al-iqtibās*, p. 594.

> Insofar as they are deemed obvious (مشهور) or nearly [obvious], opinions that are widely assented to (تصديقات مظنون) may be numbered; their sub-species may be easily [cited] according to their number. By contrast, the [products] of the imagination, because they are not obvious, may not be numbered, since the more special and exceptional [they are], the more pleasure [they provide] and the more imaginative [they become]. The impression [made] on the soul by a sudden affect will be stronger than [that] which arises from anything that befalls it gradually or that can be anticipated.[103]

Poetic imitation will thus be considered successful whenever it exceeds the listener's expectations and embodies novel forms. Once demonstrated and ascertained, truth lends itself to a mere play of repetition, the pure reiteration of a discourse doomed to lose all freshness from the moment it is uttered. This is no small inconvenience, because a discourse's novelty possesses a power that increases its content: novelty causes wonder (تعجب) in the listener. As Aristotelians know well, wonder is the first step towards the acquisition of knowledge.[104] Besides, the pleasure (لذّت) associated with wonder confirms the superiority of poetry over truth, at least in terms of seductiveness. For the human soul is naturally sensitive to the charms of harmonious compositions, as well as to the wonder aroused by novel objects. This explains why the soul bends more easily to imaginative discourse than to long-established truth. It is a fact that "most of the human souls obey imagination rather than they do assent." Naṣīr al-Dīn continues:

> Many are those who, when listening to a speech that appeals only to assent, turn violently away from it, because imitation (محاكات) arouses greater wonder (تعجب)[105] in the soul than the truth, since imitation is a source of pleasure. Besides, once the truth is made known to the public, it becomes like [a discourse endlessly] repeated and worn out from excessive use. It is certainly possible [. . . .] for the truth, which is not pleasurable [in itself], to

[103] *Kitāb asās al-iqtibās*, pp. 589–590.

[104] See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, A, 2, 982b 10: "For it is owing to their wonder that men both now begin and at first began to philosophize" (p. 692), 983a 15: "For all men begin, as we said, by wondering that things are as they are" (p. 693). This is what justifies the famous claim that "even the lover of myth [φιλόμυθος] is in a sense a lover of Wisdom [φιλόσοφος], for myth is composed of wonders" (982b 15, p. 692).

[105] It should be noted that the philosophical account, in which wonder is considered one of the constant effects of poetry on the soul of the listener, finds its counterpart in the works of the rhetoricians, who at times even regarded wonder (تعجب) as a figure of style. See in part. Rādūyānī, *Tarjumān al-balāgha*, ed. A. Ātesh, *Istanbul Üniversitesi Yayınlarından n° 395*, Istanbul, 1949, rpt. Tehran: Shirkat-i Intishārāt-i Asāṭīr, 1984, p. 91.

> appeal to the imagination as a source of pleasure. But by drawing the soul's attention to itself, the imagination may as well hinder the concentration demanded by truth. As for assent, no matter in what way it affects the soul, [be it even] in imaginative fashion, its effect [on the soul] arises from the assent to the statement, insofar as that [statement] conforms to the outside [world].[106] The effect of the imagination, by contrast, is proportionate to the pleasure and wonder [it causes] and to the utterance itself, regardless of the outside world; therefore the one [i.e., truth] agrees with the things described, whereas the other [i.e., imagination] agrees with the status of speech (حال قول).[107]

Naṣīr al-Dīn thus brings to light the striking paradox that *takhyīl* possesses a greater effect than *taṣdīq*, though poetry is indifferent to assent and truth-value. The Iranian philosopher insists on the following claim: truth is nothing other than a certain "agreement" or "compliance" of speech with reality. But poetry makes no statements about reality. It calls for no "agreement" other than one with "the status of speech," in other words: with itself. Poetry's effectiveness and "beauty" arise from its own internal consistency. In essence neither true nor false, imaginative discourse may "hinder the concentration demanded by truth." But poetry may also help spread the truth by lending it a seductive and entertaining power, as when "the truth, which is not pleasurable [in itself], [appeals] to the imagination as a source of pleasure." Metaphor and its underlying poetic syllogism may then bring about a propaedeutic turn toward truth.

According to philosophers, this heuristic propensity is inherent in metaphor, which is entitled, as it were, to "borrow" (إستعار) the qualities of one object and transfer them to another. In so doing, metaphor gives rise to new combinations of images. Such a process may be said to recall that of the acquisition of knowledge, by which one rises from the well-known to the hitherto unknown through inference and comparison. Education and imagination both rely on a kind of imitation. Yet the articulations that remain unexpressed in the poetic metaphor become explicit in the pedagogical context, where the underlying syllogisms are fully expressed. Although metaphor itself may have nothing to teach, the similarities it suggests may corroborate a number of practical or theoretical truths, the impact of which will be more powerful if conveyed by striking and unfamiliar images.

---

[106] "For the true judgment affirms where the subject and predicate really are combined," Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, E, 4, 1027b 20, p. 782.

[107] *Kitāb asās al-iqtibās*, p. 588.

In a famous passage of his *Ishārāt*, Avicenna suggests that it suffices to picture honey as "vomited bile"[108] to give even the unredeemable glutton a lasting distaste for his favorite meal. Henceforth, his soul will "abhor it, tightening at the mere thought of it." "In fact," Avicenna continues, "most men proceed toward what they undertake or forbear from what they dispense with [...] at the prompting of such propulsion or repulsion aroused by some movement in the soul, not in accordance with any kind of intellectual conviction or belief."[109] It follows, as we have seen, that:

> the imaginative (مخيّل) discourse is one that stirs passions producing a slackening (بسط) or a tightening (قبض) in the soul, or other, involuntary and invisible [passions], whether the discourse is fit or not to induce assent (تصديق). For assent is foreign to the production of imagination. One [and the same] utterance (سخن) may induce mere assent from a certain point of view, and from another, mere imagination.[110]

Poetry, therefore, is no less efficient for not being "convincing." For the wonder and pleasure it engenders prepares the listener's soul to welcome any passion of joy, sadness or anger, depending on its imagery. Since "there is no doubt that poetry aims to produce imagination and to imprint it on the soul," as Ṭūsī writes in his preface to *The Standard of Poetry*, one may easily understand how poetry succeeds in arousing movements in the soul "in the manner of a slackening and tightening (بسط وقبض)" that prompt it to action, for:

> The cause of an action has an origin similar [in the soul] to the impulse (صدور) to set about doing one thing or to refrain from doing [one thing], or to the advent of a figure [in the soul], such as satisfaction or displeasure, or whatever kind of pleasure is sought after.[111]

The effect is so powerful that it may shatter even souls that are impervious to scientific assent. But this effect cannot be dissociated from the essence of poetic speech, its constitutive *maʿānī*. As we have seen, poetic utterances, unlike demonstrative and assertive propositions, do not lend themselves to the search for truth. Unlike rhetoric and sophistry, poetry does not even

---

[108] By analogy, through the yellow color they have in common.

[109] Avicenna, *Al-ishārāt waʾl-tanbīhāt*, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 412–413; English translation: *Remarks and Admonitions. Part One: Logic*, trans. Shams Constantine Inati, Toronto: Pontifical Institute for Mediaeval Studies, 1984, p. 127 (translation modified). This example is repeated in various texts. See, for instance, *ʿIlm al-nafs*, in *Psychologie dʾIbn Sīnā*, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 177.

[110] *Kitāb asās al-iqtibās*, pp. 587–588. This passage restates Avicenna, *Fann al-shiʿr*, I, 2–4.

[111] *Miʿyār al-ashʿār*, p. 165.

claim to alter the listener's appreciation of the issue at stake. Instead, in poetry, imagination finds a means to cause aspiration and repulsion in the soul, because the "logic" of imagination coincides with the natural motion of the soul. Poetry compels its listeners to respond with vivid passion to its imaginary promptings. This explains why an audience may feel urged to action, letting the passions aroused by the poet find expression in real life. Thus, a mere combination of images may in fact have some bearing on the ethical or practical decisions of individuals. Aware that the *falāsifa* had in mind an actual impact of poetry on reality, Deborah Black goes so far as to liken the mental operations induced by the poetic syllogism to that of the "practical syllogism."[112] Indeed, are not desire and passion the most powerful causes of human action? As is well known, the capacity for desire cannot entirely be separated from the imaginative faculty.

In a comprehensive formula, Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī proposes the following definition:

> The poetic art (صناعت شعری) is a disposition (ملکه) whose acquisition makes it possible to stir whichever passions (انفعالات)[113] are sought after, by [laying out] the [products of] the imagination (تخیّلات) in harmonic cadences (ایقاع).[114]

The power of poetry can thus be identified with the evocative and emotional virtue of its imitations, which, unlike predicative statements, need not resort to assent to be effective. What is more, owing to its large variety of objects, ranging from the truly existent to the utterly inexistent, poetry can be said to have a fuller grasp on reality than predication. It may even be said that poetry can make an imagining pass into actuality where rhetoric and persuasion fail, just as Rūdakī's *qaṣīda* causes Amīr

---

[112] Salim Kemal has criticized Deborah Black severely on this particular point. In my opinion, however, Deborah Black's unraveling of the hypothesis is conclusive. See *Logic and Aristotle's Rhetoric and Poetics*, *op. cit.*, pp. 235–238. In support of this claim, see Monique Canto-Sperber, "Le rôle de l'imagination dans la philosophie aristotélicienne de l'action," in Gilbert Romeyer Dherbey, ed., *Corps et âme*, *op. cit.*, pp. 441–462.

[113] *Infiʿāl* translates the Greek παθος: "passion" or "affection," which, unlike the "disposition," refers merely to an accident of the substance. See Aristotle, *Categories* IX, 11b 1, trans. E.M. Edghill, *op. cit.*, p. 28; and *Metaphysics* Δ, 21, 1022b 15–20, trans. W.D. Ross, *op. cit.*, p. 772.

[114] *Kitāb asās al-iqtibās*, p. 586. "صناعت شعری ملکه ای باشد که با حصول آن بر ایقاع تخیلاتی که مبادی انفعالاتی مخصوص باشد بر وجه مطلوب قادر باشد."

Naṣr definitively to return to Bukhara in the tale transmitted by Niẓāmī ʿArūḍī Samarqandī.

Poetry truly "moves" the soul. Works of imagination set the soul in motion in a way made apparent by actual physiological symptoms: the correlative "slackening" and "tightening" of the soul, reminiscent of Galenic medicine.[115] The healer of the soul can no doubt diagnose such symptoms; perhaps he may cure them should it be necessary. The effects of poetry carry with them the full physiology of passions hinted at by Naṣīr al-Dīn and Avicenna, two renowned physicians. Here, too, the analysis of poetic speech causes logic and natural science to meet. The invention of a rational conception of the "imaginative discourse" by the Muslim philosophers, topped off with Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī's Persian account, lends the Aristotelian corpus a new unexpected consistency. The gap is bridged between the extended *Organon* on the one hand, and the natural history material from the *De Anima* and the *Parva Naturalia* on the other.

For the Muslim philosophers, the effectiveness of poetic discourse is certain. To those who might remain distrustful of the nature of poetry, the philosophers retort that poetic imagination remains foreign to both daydreaming and delirium, when the intelligence cannot distinguish between reality and the imaginings produced by a weakened mind. The action of poetry should not be confused with delusion, for poetic images arouse emotions in the soul without reducing its capacity to judge and discern.

The *falāsifa* thus bring us close to the true paradox of poetry: that of an enchantment that remains effective even as it reveals its craft. Metaphors move and affect us, yet they do not blind us. What other magician would dare disclose his ruses so, without fearing to break his spell? Fortunately, the rational dimension of imaginative discourse allows us fully—and shamelessly—to enjoy the enchantment of *siḥr-i ḥalāl*, the licit magic of poetry.

[115] A pair of complementary movements in the soul, *qabḍ* and *basṭ* most likely refer to the Galenic medical lexicon, as translations of the Greek terms επιτασις ("tension, intensity") and ανεσις ("slackening, relaxing").

Safarī kardam vaqtī be harī . . . be harī vaqtī kardam safarī:[116] Back from Herat

As our study nears its end, Niẓāmī ʿArūḍī's point appears more clearly. When persuasion in all its forms has failed, Rūdakī's poem alone can break down Amīr Naṣr's resistance. By nostalgic evocation and metaphor rather than by argument, the small *qaṣīda* succeeded in rendering the memory of Bukhara more appealing to the sovereign than the actual abundance of Herat. Yet the poet resorts only to the simplest of techniques. Let us attempt a brief semantic analysis of the text.

The scent of the river Mūliyān comes to us,
  The memory of the friend dear comes to us.
The sands of the Āmū, toilsome though they be,
  Beneath my feet are soft as silk to me.
On seeing the friendly face, the waters of the Jayḥūn
  Shall leap up to our horses' girth.

Without mentioning "Bukhara," the first three lines (the *nasīb*) conjure the blurred outlines of the city through a variation of the names of the river that runs through it. "Mūliyān," "Āmū," "Jayḥūn:" the phonetic combinations evocative of the Oxus recall the diversity of landscapes it waters and its fertile surroundings. The *radīf*—literally "(it) comes" or "is coming" (آید همی)—condenses the nostalgic dimension of the poem, before giving way to a genuine address in the second part of the poem. By exhibiting Bukhara in its absence, through its "scent," and through a "memory" which is at once sensible and intellectual, the poem arouses nostalgia, that pain caused by the nearness of the remote. This effect is enhanced by the anacrusis resulting from the secondary accents that fall, in the first line, on the monosyllabic *paronomasias* which carry those reminiscences: *būy-i jūy-i* . . . ("the scent of the river") and *yād-i yār-i* . . . ("the memory of the friend"), creating a syncopated rhythm at the inception of the poem. Finally, the transition from the "I," the subject of sensations (زیر پایم), to the collective "we" of the horsemen (خنگ ما را) extends the scope and

[116] An instance of retrograde verse cited by Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī as an illustration of "perfect complex conformity" (مشاکلت مرکب تامّ) in poetic discourse. The figure is named according to its syntactic pattern, as in the philosopher's account of most stylistic operations, *Kitāb asās al-iqtibās*, p. 597.

reach of the rising waters. It ascribes a universal bearing to the impetuous river's "softness."

O Bukhara, rejoice and hasten!
  Joyful towards thee hasteth our Amīr!
The Amīr is the moon and Bukhara the heaven;
  The moon shall brighten up the heaven!
The Amīr is a cypress and Bukhara the garden;
  The cypress shall rise in the garden![117]

Uttered in apostrophe by way of transition (گریزگاه), the name "Bukhara" suddenly summons the city in the poem's center. Personified in the invocation (ندا), this name lends a face to the "friend dear" of the first line: Bukhara, peerless confidant or forsaken lover, awaits to be reunited with her king.

Finally, the last two lines artfully blend praise (مدح) and request (تمنّا) in a single gesture. The close parallelisms uniting *jamʿ-u taqsīm* ("collection and redistribution") and the repetition of the rhyme-words *āsmān* ("heaven") and *būstān* ("garden") at the caesura express an urge. But there is more. A closer reading reveals a pair of genuine and almost fully articulated "poetic syllogisms" in this insistent imagery. They are based on metaphors, themselves the conclusion of other implicit syllogisms: "the Amīr's power is immense (minor); whoever is immensely powerful is a moon (major); the Amīr is a moon (conclusion)"—besides, since he is peerless, he is not merely 'a' moon, but 'the' one and only moon. Moreover, "Bukhara is the centre of power (minor); the centre of power is seated in the heaven (major); Bukhara is the heaven." Now, since the Amīr is the moon and Bukhara the heaven, and since the moon is seated in the heaven, it follows that the Amīr must head back towards Bukhara! This much the listener must figure out by himself. The celestial metaphors rely on the traditional imagery employed in praising sovereigns; but the metaphors of the cypress and the garden transfer a similar process and identical inference to the field of courtly love. The poet appeals to the resources of both political panegyrics and lyric poetry, while aiming at a single target.

The *radīf*, "*āyad hamī*," which could be read as a present continuous in the first lines, now takes on a new meaning. When placed after the conjugated verb, in an archaic usage in which it retains its autonomy,

[117] *Four Discourses*, p. 35. Translation modified.

the particle *hamī* lends the verb a "durative-iterative" meaning,[118] in Gilbert Lazard's terms. Combined with the aorist, it "[pictures] as already in progress a process that is just about to begin." The verbal form *āyad* can therefore be understood either as a present or as a future. In the last lines of the poem, the *radīf* can indeed be interpreted as an announcement: "he is coming," or more precisely, as an indirect request, that "he come . . ." With its present continuous or indefinite future, the refrain thus evokes an action which is still "inexistent" in the moment the poem is said. Yet this very action, the prince's return to Bukhara, is called into existence by the verses themselves.

Just as the memory of Bukhara evoked in the first part of the poem summoned the absence of the city with nostalgia, the unaccomplished verbal form of the refrain now seems to moderate the urge expressed in the syllogisms: the aspectual particle *hamī* allays the force imposed by the pragmatic inference on the addressee ("he *must* return"), while turning it into a request, to be heard as a wish: "*may* he return." This refinement ultimately speaks in praise of the perlocutionary powers of poetry: "When Rūdakī reached this verse, the Amīr was so much affected that he descended from his throne, all unbooted bestrode the horse which was on sentry-duty, and set off for Bukhara."[119] The feat related by Niẓāmī ʿArūḍī suffices to show why Abū ʿAbd-Allāh Rūdakī deserved the title of "Master" of the Persian language.

The author of the *Four Discourses* could not have better illustrated his logical conception of poetry, which he owed to the philosophers. As "that art whereby the poet arranges imaginary propositions" in such a way that they may "[act] on the imagination"[120] of the listener, poetry originates in and acts on a particular faculty of the soul, namely, the internal sense defined by the philosophical tradition as imagination. To this extent, the poetic art is an object of the branch of philosophy that treats of natural science and the description of the animal spirit. But as an "[arrangement of] imaginary propositions,"[121] that is, as a rational speech and a form of *logos*, poetry also falls within the scope of logic. Thus, according to the

[118] "[Présenter] comme déjà en cours un procès sur le point de s'engager." See Gilbert Lazard, *La Langue des plus anciens monuments de la prose persane*, Paris: Klincksieck, 1963, § 369: "(ha)mī + aoriste," pp. 284–290 [285].
[119] *Four Discourses*, p. 35.
[120] *Ibid.*, p. 27.
[121] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

falāsifa, poetic activity lies at the crossroad between logic and natural science.

Yet from the time Avicenna interpreted Aristotle's *Poetics* in the *Kitāb al-shifā'* (*fann al-shiʿr*) and briefly recalled his teachings in the section of the Persian *Dānish-nāma* devoted to logic, no author had openly conducted a philosophical study of poetry for the Iranian audience. Even when Niẓāmī ʿArūḍī's *Four Discourses* restated Avicenna's main claims, it was mainly to collect exemplary anecdotes from a didactic perspective. Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī may be the sole author to give a comprehensive philosophical account of poetry in Persian. He was certainly the first. Of course, the space devoted to the poetic art may appear negligible when compared to his other scientific and philosophical writings. What is more, unlike his predecessors, the rhetoricians Rādūyānī[122] and Rashīd al-Dīn Vaṭvāṭ,[123] and unlike his contemporary, Shams-i Qays-i Rāzī, Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī refused the title of poetry "specialist." Not only does he set himself a philosophical task in his compendium on logic, *Asās al-iqtibās*; even in his technical treatise on metrics, *Miʿyār al-ashʿār*, he appears exclusively as a logician and a poetry-lover.[124] He does not present himself as a scholar of poetics. Indeed, the philosopher has no need of a detailed account of the meters and rhymes to determine the universal features of poetry.

Following in the wake of Avicennian logic, Ṭūsī grants poetic discourse a form of rationality that distinguishes the poetic use of imagination from all others. But poetic imagination's actual effects, its capacity to induce pleasure or distaste, even to prompt the recipient to action, undeniably binds poetic speech to movements of desire which exceed deliberative judgment. Poetry is not any mere exercise of imagination. A type of non-assertive thought, poetry cannot be identified with any other rational discourse; in particular, it cannot be identified with the language of science, because poetry lays no claim to knowledge. The difficulty resides precisely in the interpretation of this particular space: for the philosophers, the "[arrangement of] imaginary propositions" that defines poetry lies at

[122] Author, by the late 11th century, of *Tarjumān al-balāgha*, *op. cit.*

[123] See Rashīd al-Dīn Vaṭvāṭ (1114–1182), *Dīvān-i rashīd al-dīn vaṭvāṭ, bā kitāb-i ḥadāʾiq al-siḥr fī daqāʾiq al-shiʿr, az rūy-i chāp-i marḥūm ʿAbbās Iqbāl Āshtiyānī*, ed. Saʿīd Nafīsī, Tehran: Kitābkhāna-yi Bārānī, 1339/1961.

[124] He composed a few poems himself in his spare time. These poems are collected in Muʿaẓẓama Iqbālī (Aʿẓam) *Shiʿr va shāʿirī dar āthār-i khāja naṣīr al-dīn ṭūsī*, *op. cit.*, pp. 111–157.

the intersection between one faculty of the soul and its translation into speech.

What would have happened had Rūdakī not uttered his poem and Naṣr remained in Herat? Had the noblemen at court rebelled against their sovereign, the order of the kingdom would no doubt have been upset. But the forefather of Persian poetry, an Orpheus of the Iranian world, had enough talent to move the king's soul with the vivid modulations of his song. Thus he confirmed the political influence of the pen over the sword, and the poet's contribution to "the accomplishment of great things in the order of the world."[125]

Bibliography

1. *Editions and Translations*

1.1. *Niẓāmī ʿArūḍī Samarqandī* (*Aḥmad b. ʿAlī*)

Chahār maqāla, critical ed. by Muḥammad Muʿīn after Muḥammad Qazvīnī, Tehran: Ṣidā-yi Muʿāṣir, 11th printing, 1379/2001.

English translation by Edward G. Browne, *Revised Translation of the Chahár Maqála* (*"Four Discourses"*) *of Niẓámí-i-ʻArúḍí of Samarqand*, London: Cambridge University Press, "E.J.W. Gibb Memorial" Series vol. xi, 2, 1921.

1.2. *Aristotle*

The Basic Works of Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon, New York: Random House, (6th printing) 1941 [Abridged rpt. of *The Works of Aristotle Translated into English*, ed. W.D. Ross, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 11 vols., 1908–1931].

Arabic translation by Abū Bishr Mattā Ibn Yūnus al-Qunnāʾī, *Kitāb arisṭūṭālīs fī al-shiʿr*, in ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī, ed., *Arisṭūṭālīs: Fann al-shiʿr*, Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1953, pp. 83–145; other ed. by ʿAyyād Shukrī, Cairo: Dār al-Kātib al-ʿArabī li-ṭ-Ṭibāʿa wa-n-Nashr, 1967.

1.3. *Abū Naṣr Muḥammad al-Fārābī*

Al-tawṭiʾat fi'l-manṭiq, in *Al-manṭiqiyyāt li al-fārābī. Al-mujallad al-thānī al-nuṣūṣ al-manṭiqiyyat*, ed. Muḥammad Taqī Dānishpazhūh, Qom: Maktabat Āyat-Allāh al-ʿUẓmā al-Marʿashī al-Najafī, 1409 h.q. (1985), 3 vols., vol. 1, pp. 11–17.

Kitāb al-shiʿr, ed. M. Mahdī, in *Shiʿr* n° 12, 1959, pp. 1–6.

English translation by Nabil Matar, "Alfārābi on Imagination: With a Translation of his 'Treatise on Poetry'," *College Literature*, vol. 23, 1, 1996, pp. 100–110.

Qowl al-fārābī fī al-tanāsub waʾl-taʾlīf, in *Al-manṭiqiyyāt li al-fārābī. Al-mujallad al-thānī al-nuṣūṣ al-manṭiqiyyat*, ed. Muḥammad Taqī Dānishpazhūh, Qom: Maktabat Āyat-Allāh al-ʿUẓmā al-Marʿashī al-Najafī, 1409 h.q. (1985), 3 vols., vol. 1, pp. 504–506.

Risāla fī qawānīn ṣināʿat al-shuʿarāʾ, in ʿAbd al-Raḥman Badawī, ed., *Arisṭūṭālīs: Fann al-shiʿr*, Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1953, pp. 147–158.

[125] *Four Discourses*, p. 27.

1.4. *Avicenna* (*Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥusayn Ibn Sīnā*)
Al-shifāʾ, al-manṭiq, 4. *al-qiyās*, ed. S. Zayid and I. Madkhour, Cairo: Organisme Général des Imprimeries Gouvernementales, 1964.
Fann al-shiʿr, min kitāb al-shifāʾ, in ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī, ed., *Arisṭūṭālīs: Fann al-shiʿr*, Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1953, pp. 159–198.
English translation by Ismaïl M. Dahiyat, *Avicenna's Commentary on the* Poetics *of Aristotle: A Critical Study with an Annotated Translation of the Text*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974.
ʻIlm al-nafs min kitāb al-šifāʾ, in Ján Bakoš, ed., *Psychologie d'Ibn Sīnā* (*Avicenne*) *d'après son œuvre Aš-šifāʾ*, Prague: Nakladatelsví Čekoslovenské Akademie Véd, 1956, rpt. Beyrouth: Editions du Patrimoine Arabe et Islamique, 1982, 2 vols.
Al-išārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt bi šarḥ al-ṭūsī (*Remarks and Admonitions, with Commentary by Tusi*), ed. Sulayman Dunya, Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 4 parts, 3 vols. in 2, 1957–60.
Remarks and Admonitions. Part One: Logic, trans. Shams Constantine Inati, Toronto: Pontifical Institute for Mediaeval Studies, 1984.
Le Livre des directives et remarques [Kitāb al-išārāt wa-t-tanbīhāt], ed. and trans. Amélie-Marie Goichon, Beyrouth – Paris: Commission internationale pour la traduction des chefs-d'œuvre, United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Collection d'œuvres arabes/Vrin, 1951, rpt. 1999.
Le Livre de science, trans. Mohammad Achena and Henri Massé, second edition revised by Mohammad Achena, Paris: Les Belles Lettres/UNESCO, 1986.
The Metaphysics of The Healing. *Al-šifāʾ: al-ilāhiyyāt*. A parallel English-Arabic text translated, introduced, and annotated by Michael E. Marmura, Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, Islamic Translation Series, 2005.

1.5. *Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī*
Kitāb asās al-iqtibās, ed. Mudarris Raḍavī, Tehran: Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Tihrān, 1376/1998.
Miʿyār al-ashʿār, in *Shiʿr va shāʿirī dar āthār-i khāja naṣīr al-dīn ṭūsī*, ed. Muʿazzama Iqbālī Aʿẓam, Tehran: Sāzmān-i chāp va Intishārāt-i Vizārat-i Farhang va Irshād-i Islāmī, 1370/1992.
French translation by Justine Landau, *Xʷāje Naṣīr al-dīn Ṭūsī: Meʿyār al-ašʿār dar ʻelm-e ʻarūḍ va qavāfi, L'Étalon des poésies, de la science de la métrique et des rimes. Traduction annotée*, mémoire de D.E.A. d'Études Iraniennes sous la direction de M. Yann Richard à l'Université de Paris III – Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2001–2002, unpublished.

1.6. *Other Ancient Arabic and Persian Sources*
Kaykāvūs ibn Iskandar ibn Qābūs ibn Vashmgīr ibn Zīyār (ʻUnṣr al-Maʿālī), *Qābūs-nāma*, ed. Gh.-Ḥ. Yūsufī, Tehran: Shirkat-i Intishārāt-i ʻIlmī va Farhangī, 1345/ 1967.
Rādūyānī, *Tarjumān al-balāgha*, ed. A. Ātesh and commentary by Malik al-Shuʿarā Bahār, *Istanbul Üniversitesi Yayınlarından n° 395*, Istanbul, 1949, rpt. Tehran: Shirkat-i Intishārāt-i Asāṭīr, 1362/1984.
French translation by Stéphane Diebler, *Mohammed b. 'Omar al-Rādūyānī: Livre de l'interprète de l'art du style. Traduction*, mémoire de maîtrise d'Études Iraniennes sous la direction de M. Yann Richard à l'Université de Paris III – Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1993–1994, unpublished.
Rashīd al-Dīn Vaṭvāṭ, *Dīvān-i rashīd al-dīn vaṭvāṭ, bā kitāb-i ḥadāʾiq al-siḥr fī daqāʾiq al-shiʿr, az rūy-i chāp-yi marḥūm ʿAbbās Iqbāl Āshtiyānī*, ed. Saʿīd Nafīsī, Tehran: Kitābkhāna-yi Bārānī, 1339/1961.
Rūdakī (Abū ʿAbd Allāh Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad), *Dīvān-i rūdakī-i samarqandī*, ed. Saʿīd Nafīsī and I. Braginski, Tehran: Muʾassisa-yi Intishārāt-i Nigāh, Adabiyāt-i Kilāsīk-i Īrān N° 20, 1373/1995.
Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Qays al-Rāzī, *Al-muʿjam, fī maʿāyīr ashʿār al-ʿajam*, ed. S. Shamīsā, Tehran: Intishārāt-i Firdaus, 1373/1995.

French translation by Stéphane Diebler, *Šams al-Dīn Moḥammad b. Qeys al-Rāzī: Le Livre de la Somme, sur les étalons des poésies des Persans. Traduction annotée par Stéphane Diebler*, mémoire de D.E.A. d'Études Iraniennes sous la direction de M. Yann Richard à l'Université de Paris III – Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1996–1997, 2 t., unpublished.

2. *Studies*

2.1. *On Poetic Imagination in Arabic and Persian Context*

Aouad, M. and Schoeler, G., "Le syllogisme poétique selon al-Fārābī: un syllogisme incorrect de la deuxième figure," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, vol. 12 (2002), pp. 185–196.

Black, D.L., "The 'Imaginative Syllogism' in Arabic Philosophy: A Medieval Contribution to the Philosophical Study of Metaphor," in *Mediaeval Studies*, n° 51, 1989, pp. 241–267.

——, *Logic and Aristotle's Rhetoric and Poetics in Medieval Arabic Philosophy*, Leiden – New York: E.J. Brill, 1990.

Gelder, G.J. van and Hammond, M., eds., *Takhyīl: The Imaginary in Classical Arabic Poetics. Part 1: Texts. Part 2: Studies*, Exeter: Short Run Press, E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 2008.

Heinrichs, W.P., "Die antike Verknüpfung von phantasia und Dichtung bei den Arabern," in *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, n° 128, 1978, pp. 252–298.

——, "*Takẖyīl*," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2003, vol. X, pp. 128–132.

Kemal, S., *The Poetics of Alfarabi and Avicenna*, Leiden – New York: E.J. Brill, 1991.

——, *The Philosophical Poetics of Alfarabi, Avicenna and Averroës. The Aristotelian Reception*, London – New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003.

Schoeler, G., "Der poetische Syllogismus: Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis der 'logischen' Poetik der Araber," in *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* n° 133, 1983, pp. 43–92.

2.2. *On the Philosophical Accounts of Imagination*

Canto-Sperber, M., "Le rôle de l'imagination dans la philosophie aristotélicienne de l'action," in Gilbert Romeyer Dherbey, ed., *Corps et âme. Sur le* De Anima *d'Aristote*, études réunies par Cristina Viano, Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1996, pp. 441–462.

Elamrani-Jamal, A., "De la multiplicité des modes de la prophétie chez Ibn Sīnā," in *Études sur Avicenne*, Jean Jolivet and Roshdi Rashed, eds., Paris: Les Belles Lettres, Collection sciences et philosophies arabes (études et reprises), 1984, pp. 125–142.

Frede, D., "The Cognitive Role of Phantasia in Aristotle," in *Essays on Aristotle's* De Anima, ed. Martha C. Nussbaum and Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997, pp. 279–296.

Frère, J., "Fonction représentative et représentation. Φαντασία et φάντασμα selon Aristote," in Gilbert Romeyer Dherbey, ed., *Corps et âme. Sur le* De Anima *d'Aristote*, études réunies par Cristina Viano, Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1996, pp. 331–348.

Michael E. Marmura "Avicenna's Psychological Proof of Prophecy," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 22, n° 1, 1963, pp. 44–56.

Schofield, M., "Aristotle on the Imagination," first published in G.E.R. Lloyd and G.E.L. Owen, eds., *Aristotle on Mind and the Senses: Proceedings of the Seventh Symposium Aristotelicum*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978, pp. 99–130; reprinted in J. Barnes, M. Schofield, R. Sorabji, eds., *Articles on Aristotle, iv: Psychology and Aesthetics*, London: Duckworth, 1979, pp. 103–132.

Walzer, R., "Al-Fārābī's Theory of Prophecy and Divination," *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 1957, pp. 142–148.

Wolfson, H.A., "The Internal Senses in Latin, Arabic, and Hebrew Philosophic Texts," *The Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 28, n° 2, Apr. 1935, pp. 69–133.

2.3. *Other References*

Ahmed Alami, *L'Ontologie modale. Étude de la théorie des modes d'Abū Hāšim al-Ǧubbā'i*, Paris: J. Vrin, Études musulmanes 36, 2001.

Averroès, *Commentaire moyen sur le* De Interpretatione, ed. A. Benmakhlouf and S. Diebler, Paris: J. Vrin, 2000.

Badawī, A.R., *La Transmission de la philosophie grecque au monde arabe—cours professé à la Sorbonne en 1967*, 2nd ed., amended and enlarged, Paris: J. Vrin, 1987.

Corbin, H., *L'Imagination créatrice dans le soufisme d'Ibn 'Arabī*, Paris: Flammarion, 1958.

Fackenheim, E.L., "The Possibility of the Universe in Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina and Maimonides," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, vol. 16, 1946–47, pp. 39–70.

Fleury, C., *Métaphysique de l'imagination*, Paris: Éditions d'Écarts, 2000.

Fouchécour, C.-H. de, *Moralia, les notions morales dans la littérature persane du 3e/9e au 7e/13e siècle*, Paris: Institut Français de Recherche en Iran, Bibliothèque Iranienne n° 32, 1986.

Gutas, D., *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture. The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early Abbasid Society* (*2nd–4th/8th–10th Centuries*), London and New York: Routledge, 1998.

Heller-Roazen, D., *Fortune's Faces. The* Roman de la Rose *and the Poetics of Contingency*, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.

——, *The Inner Touch: Archaeology of a Sensation*, New York: Zone Books, 2007.

Gardet, L., and Anawati, M.-M., *Introduction à la théologie musulmane, essai de théologie comparée*, Études de philosophie médiévale, n° xxxvii, Paris: J. Vrin, 1948, 3rd ed. 1981.

Jolivet, J., "Aux origines de l'ontologie d'Ibn Sīnā," in *Études sur Avicenne*, Jean Jolivet and Roshdi Rashed, eds., Paris: Les Belles Lettres, Collection sciences et philosophies arabes (études et reprises), 1984, pp. 11–28.

Lazard, G., *La Langue des plus anciens monuments de la prose persane*, Paris: Klincksieck, 1963.

Marmura, M.E., "Some Aspects of Avicenna's Theory of God's Knowledge of Particulars," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 82, n° 3, 1962, pp. 299–312.

Meisami, J.S., in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. *Este'āra*.

Nuseibeh, S., "Al-'Aql al-Qudsī: Avicenna's Subjective Theory of Knowledge," *Studia Islamica*, n° 69, 1989, pp. 39–54.

Shafī'ī Kadkanī, M.-R., *Ṣuvar-i khiyāl dar shi'r-i fārsī: taḥqīq-i intiqādī dar taṭavvur-i īmāzhhā-yi shi'r-i pārsī va sayr-i naẓariya-yi balāghat dar islām va īrān*, Tehran: Intishārāt-i Āgāh, 1350, 5th ed. 1372/1994.

Walzer, R., *Greek into Arabic: Essays on Islamic Philosophy*, Oriental Studies n° 1, Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1962.

KĀSHIFĪ'S POWERFUL METAPHOR: THE ENERGISING TROPE

Ch. van Ruymbeke

> "*…by far the most important point is facility with metaphor. This alone is a sign of natural ability, and something one can never learn from another; for the successful use of metaphor entails the perception of similarities.*" Thus speaks Aristotle in his *Poetics.*[1]

The ubiquitous Metaphor! The Queen of Tropes! This has perhaps been THE most discussed figure of speech or rhetoric device throughout the history of rhetorical analysis. The word has a Greek origin, literally meaning "transfer," thus denoting a transitive action, consisting in "carrying something over to something else." The metaphor can be defined as "a trope, or figurative expression, in which a word or phrase is shifted from its normal uses to a context where it evokes new meanings."[2] It may be understood in a general way as the term for a great many figures of speech, or it may be used in a more restricted manner, as in the present article. It is ubiquitous in poetry, but also in literary prose and everyday speech. It pervades most languages and is present in abundance in Persian, contributing, as most would argue, to the beauty and elegance of both the written and spoken word. This rhetorical device is present right at the beginnings of Classical Persian literary language and, over the centuries, it is never absent from either prose or poetry. The fashion for this—and other—figures of speech ('beauties' or محاسن (as Vaṭvāṭ names them), or 'poetical figures' or صناعی شعری (as Kāshifī terms them)) reached an almost unbearable peak in the 15th-century style at the Herat court—almost unbearable for the taste of the 19th and 20th centuries that is—which brought discredit to that particular literary style and what is perhaps mistakenly considered its spin-off,[3] the *sabk-i hindī*.

---

[1] Aristotle, *Poetics*, Ch. 22, tr. S. Halliwell, *The Poetics of Aristotle, translation and commentary*, London, 1987, p. 57.

[2] Preminger A. and T.V.F. Brogan, eds., *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1993, p. 760.

[3] I rest with the accepted view of inheritance by the latter of most of the former's style, though, a comparative study of the use of tropes in these two literary genres, proving

Judgment on the paragon of this intricate Herat style,[4] the prose of Vā'iẓ Kāshifī's (d. 910/1504–05)[5] *Anvār-i Suhaylī*, has followed the vagaries of taste. The work, leaving no-one indifferent, has been considered either the absolute height of elegance, or a stylistic nadir of debauchery.[6] E.G. Browne's discussion of this work is famous for its derogatoriness: "In general, it is full of absurd exaggerations, recondite words, vain epithets, far-fetched comparisons, and tasteless bombast. It represents to perfection the worst style of those florid writers who flourished under the patronage of the Timurids and North Eastern Persia and Transoxiana during the 15th and 16th century of our era. . . ."[7] It is perhaps surprising that Browne in his criticism does not mention metaphors in particular, but rather "far-fetched comparisons." (Incidentally, in an article analysing metaphors, we are, as it were, duty-bound to salute Browne's natty use of a double alliterative metaphor taken from the vegetal world!)

But the interest in analysing the use of metaphors in Kāshifī's famous prose work goes deeper than just the trend-setting power of this literary text. It so happens that this author, a polymath at the court of Sultan Ḥusayn Bayqarā, also composed a work on Poetics. We can thus examine Kāshifī's understanding of this seminal poetical image, and next observe him at work, putting the theory into practice, by analysing several random examples from the *Anvār*, according to present-day theories. Although some might consider the latter exercise anachronistic, it is actually an attempt to place this rich text within the frame of present-day rhetorical analysis, perhaps going deeper than the medieval Persian theoretical understanding, which the author himself had of his own prose skills.[8] In the light of this analysis, the present paper will argue that Kāshifī, although careful to retain the classical view on the metaphor as a Simple

---

their similarities and pointing out their differences remains, to the best of my knowledge, a *desideratum*.

[4] See M.E. Subtelny, "A taste for the Intricate: The Persian Poetry of the Late Timurid Period," in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlaendischen Gesellschaft*, 136 (1986).

[5] On this author, see for example the special issue of *Iranian Studies*, guest-edited by Maria E. Subtelny, *Iranian Studies* volume 36, number 4 (December 2003).

[6] See my article C. van Ruymbeke, "Kashefi's Forgotten Masterpiece: Why rediscover the Anvar-i Suhayli?" in *Iranian Studies*, vol. 36/4 (Dec. 2003), pp. 571–88.

[7] E.G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, II, Cambridge, 1906, vol. ii, pp. 352–3.

[8] Interestingly, Maria Simidchieva notes a similar analytical analysis "in hindsight" by Kāshifī himself, of figures used—but not identified formally—in the classical period. See M. Simidchieva, "Imitation and Innovation in Timurid Poetics: Kashifi's *Badayi' al-afkar* and its Predecessors, *al-Mu'jam* and *Hada'iq al-sihr*," in *Iranian Studies*, 36/4 (2003), p. 528.

Replacement Metaphor, was also aware of the Genitive Link Metaphor and made a point of including this in his discussion of the trope.

It is uncertain when Kāshifī wrote his *Badāyiʿ al-afkār fī ṣanāyiʿ al-ashʿār* (translated by M. Simidchieva as "Wondrous Thoughts on Poetical Tropes," or, as E.G. Browne has it, "New Ideas on Poetical Artifices"),[9] his work on the art of Rhetoric. Was it soon after Sultan Ḥusayn Bayqarā's ascent to the throne in 1496, as hinted by Kāshifī himself, or in 1506, as given by Nafīsī in *Tārīkh-i naẓm-u nathr*?[10] The work owes much, and looks back consciously, to the two great names in Persian poetics: Rashīd al-Dīn Vaṭvāṭ's classic twelfth-century work on *badīʿ*, the *Ḥadāʾiq al-siḥr*,[11] and Shams-i Qays's thirteenth-century comprehensive treatise on literary theory, *al-Muʿjam*.[12] This is not the place to compare these three works in general, or in what they have to say about metaphors, interesting as this would be. It has been said that the 15th-century Herat audience which the *Badāyiʿ al-afkār* targets was new to the literary arts. Thus, the court litterateur Kāshifī's aim was probably to provide a "simple work for beginners," a methodical elucidation of the basics of the poetical art and techniques.[13] One of his noteworthy innovations appears to be his conjoining of the philological and the philosophical definitions of poetry, showing the ease with which Kāshifī crosses interdisciplinary boundaries.[14]

---

[9] See also Steingass, *Persian-English Dictionary*, London, 1892, 5th ed., 1963, p. 793. I have used the 1977 Moscow facsimile edition, Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥusayn Vāʾiẓ Kāshifī, *Badāyiʿ al-afkār fī ṣanāyiʿ al-ashʿār*, ed. Rahīm Musul'mankulov, Moskow, 1977. I have also checked the passage against the Cambridge University 1086/1675 manuscript, E.G. Browne, *A Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the Library of the University of Cambridge*, Cambridge, 1896, No. CLXXX, Add. 794, 267–71, which presents, in the relevant passage on metaphors, only a few differences and slight modifications to the facsimile edition. I have not used the 1369/1990 Tehran edition by Mīr Jalāl al-Dīn Kazzāzī.

[10] See M. Simidchieva, *op. cit.*, 530 n. 73. Thus, the decision on a composition date places this work on rhetoric either a couple of years before Kāshifī composed the *Anvār-i Suhaylī*, or on the contrary several years later—and curiously, a year after the generally received date for Kāshifī's passing away in 1504–5. I have not pursued this avenue of research, but needed to point out the consequences of Nafīsī's dating.

[11] Rashīd al-Dīn Vaṭvāṭ, *Ḥadāʾiq al-siḥr*, ed. ʿAbbās Iqbāl, Tehran, 1984. I have not used N. Chalisova's (Moscow, 1985) edition and translation.

[12] Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Qays al-Rāzī, *al-Muʿjam fī maʿāyir ashʿār al-ʿajam*, ed. Muḥammad Qazvīnī, Leyden – London, 1909 in the E.J.W. Gibb memorial Series. (N. Chalisova has also produced a Russian translation (Moscow, 1997), which again, I have not seen.)

[13] See M. Simidchieva, *op. cit.*, 521 and 530.

[14] See M. Simidchieva, *op. cit.*, 524.

In the first chapter of the work "on poetical figures," containing about 200 entries, Kāshifī dedicates a long passage[15] to the استعارات *isti'ārāt*, the metaphor, which he places between the *taḍmīm-i muzdawij* (double inversion) and the *tamthīl* (synecdoche or metonymy, sometimes also the allegory). He clearly found his inspiration and model in Shams-i Qays's work,[16] though his entry is much briefer: he starts by informing us that *isti'ārāt* means "to borrow something" (چیزی بعاریت خواستن), as when a word is employed in a meaning other than its true meaning (از معنی حقیقی بمعنی دیگر). He adds that there must be a strong connection (علاقه) between the two meanings. He then includes as a first citation an example we don't find in his predecessor's work: "How stained with musk is the skirt of the garden! Is the wind perhaps carrying pure amber in its pocket?" (Unfortunately, he does not give us his analysis of this example, so that we are left guessing at the terms and relations he had in mind to illustrate the metaphor.) He then takes over Shams-i Qays's definition of the metaphor as a type of مجاز (figure). He keeps Shams's first quotation to illustrate the contrast between "hand" as a member of the body, used as such ("Put your hand to the sword"), and used in a metaphor, for which he proposes a fresh example: "He has no "hand" over you," where the meaning is "He has no power over you" and, returning to Shams's text, he points out that there is a relation of subservience between the two terms (ملازمتی میان دست وقدرت هست). Treading well-trodden ground, Kāshifī then notes that *isti'ārāt* is common to both poetry and prose, and he adds the rather trite remark that it lends an elegance to discourse and helps to make truth more eloquent.

He then continues, taking over the remark by his predecessors that the whole genre of dialogues (مناظره) between non-living and living beings (such as the candle and the moth, the rose and the nightingale, the sword and the pen) are all types of metaphors. He finishes his brief discussion of the metaphor with a flourish, departing from Shams's work, by citing four *bayt*s which form, according to him a "jesting (or delicate?) metaphor" (استعارات لطیفه), but which in actual fact, contain far more figures of speech than just a metaphor.[17]

---

[15] Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥusayn Vā'iẓ Kāshifī, *Badāyi' al-afkār fī ṣanāyi' al-ash'ār*, Cambridge Persian MS Add. 794, f. 36b–f. 37b and ed. Rahīm Musul'mankulov, Moskow, 1977, f. 22b–23a.

[16] Shams-i Qays, *op. cit.*, 336–9.

[17] For a further analysis of these and other figures of speech in Kāshifī's work, I refer the interested reader to my forthcoming monograph on Kāshifī's *Anvār-i Suhaylī*, which is still in progress and hopefully will be published soon.

Kāshifī's understanding of the figure deserves some analysis. It is presented as centring on the Simple Replacement Metaphor[18] as was the case in the works of his predecessors, Rādūyānī, Vaṭvāṭ and Shams-i Qays.[19] This is the type he analyses and explains. This is indeed the example where "hand" replaces "power." Aristotle's classic example of Pure Metaphor or Simple Replacement Metaphor is Homer's verse "Achilles sprang at the enemy like a lion." This is a comparison or simile, introduced with the word "like." This comparison is then opposed to "That lion sprang at them," where "that lion" is a metaphor.[20] "Lion," a word from a different semantic field (that of animals), is transferred to the semantic field "Achilles." It is not correct to say that it actually "replaces" Achilles, because from the context, the audience knows that "lion" stands there for "Achilles" and thus in their minds, the two concepts co-exist. In this sense, the metaphor is energizing speech: two meanings, two concepts are contained in one word. In the "Simple Replacement Metaphor," the proper term is not mentioned at all; the metaphor is assumed to be clear from the context or from the reader's intelligence. Thus, Achilles has been invested with some or most of the qualities of the metaphoric word "lion." But the metaphoric use does not necessarily keep all of the qualities contained in the metaphoric word. In this example, we are not necessarily meant to imagine that for Homer, Achilles was exactly similar to a lion, with a long blonde mane, big teeth, a growling voice! Rather, the poet most likely refers to the strength and courage of the lion. Metaphoric use often excludes more from the borrowed semantic field than it includes.

In Kāshifī's text of the *Anvār-i Suhaylī*, examples of Simple Replacement Metaphors are few and far between, although this is the type of metaphor he develops in his Treatise on *Badīʿ*, following the traditional understanding of this trope. When we say *fulān-rā bar tu dastī nīst*, the meaning of *dast* is in fact *qudrat* and there is a relation of *malāzimatī* (dependence) between hand and power.

---

[18] For a discussion on these types of metaphors, I have used Christine Brooke-Rose's comprehensive *A Grammar of Metaphor*, London, 1958.

[19] I have consulted the excellent unpublished PhD Thesis by Savina Zanardo, *Le Teorie Araba e Persiana del* badiʿ *dale Origini al XIII Secolo: Dati per un'Analisi Comparativa*, at the Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli, n.d.

[20] M. Dufour et A. Wartelle, Aristote. *Rhetorique. Livres I, II et III*, texte etabli et traduit par M. Dufour et A. Wartelle, 1980, repr. Saint-Amand (Cher), 1998, Livre III, 216, 1407b.

(چنانچه کویند فلا نرا بر تو دستی نیست اینجا مراد از دست قدرتست چه ملازمتی میان دست وقدرت هست[21])

Interestingly, he seems to use this example only in order to demonstrate the necessity for the metaphoric term to have a relation of dependence with the "real" term. We would rather call this a case of metonymy[22] and more specifically of synecdoche, which, in Classical rhetoric also included the substitution of the abstract quality for its possessor,[23] here "force" for its possessor, "hand."

However, Kāshifī's understanding of what a metaphor is, or can be, seems somewhat different, when we analyse the first example he gives, which he did not borrow from his predecessor's work:

دامن باغ ببین کونه که مشک الوداست باد در جیب مکر عنبر سارا دارد

> How stained with musk is the skirt of the garden!
> Is the wind perhaps carrying pure amber in its pocket?[24]

Since he takes no time to enlighten us as to his purpose in citing this example, but passes on immediately to the definition of the metaphor which he found in Shams's work, we are left to conjecture that he probably also had the same Simple Replacement Metaphor in mind. In which case, in his example, it must be "pure amber" replacing "scents of blossoms (or whatever vegetation the poet was smelling when he wrote that verse)," the only Simple Replacement Metaphor contained in the verse. However, what about the other metaphors this example contains? Did Kāshifī perhaps use the example because it contains figures such as "the garden's skirt," "stained with musk," and "the wind's pocket," which are very different types of metaphors but which he felt belonged to the same family of tropes?

There is a danger in analysing metaphors which are presented out of context. However, there is a great probability that anyone familiar with

---

[21] Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥusayn Vā'iẓ Kāshifī, *Badāyiʿ al-afkār fī ṣanāyiʿ al-ashʿār*, Cambridge Persian MS Add. 794, f. 36b and ed. Rahim Musul'mankulov, Moskow, 1977, f. 22b.

[22] "A figure in which one word is substituted for another on the basis of some material, causal or conceptual relation," for example, the container for the thing contained ("I'll have a glass"), Preminger A. and T.V.F. Brogan, eds., *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1993, 783.

[23] Preminger A and T.V.F. Brogan, eds., *op. cit.*, 1261.

[24] Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥusayn Vā'iẓ Kāshifī, *Badāyiʿ al-afkār fī ṣanāyiʿ al-ashʿār*, Cambridge Persian MS Add. 794, f. 36b and ed. Rahim Musul'mankulov, Moskow, 1977, f. 22b.

Persian poetry would agree to situate such a verse in the oft occurring genre of idyllic representations of nature in Spring. This is the assumption we are making here as well. The "garden's skirt" and "the wind's pocket" are parallel constructions. They represent a type of Genitive Metaphor: the Pure Attribution Genitive Metaphor. In this type, two nouns, coming from different semantic fields ("garden" (name of a place where one grows plants and trees and in which one can walk) and "skirt" (name of an item of dress)) are wedded on the pattern "the B of C" with a relation of identity (B is C) which is however not as immediately apparent as in other patterns of Genitive Metaphors (see below). The classical example, used by Christine Brooke-Rose's *Grammar of Metaphor* is "The cloak of Death." The cloak is not identical with Death, but it represents it in one aspect, here the engulfing darkness of Death. In Kāshifī's example, one may say that "the garden's skirt" probably represents the coloured meadow, which is spread out like the material for a giant skirt and in fact constitutes the garden. The "wind's pocket" is probably a way for the poet to translate the impression that smells are carried by air as material objects are carried in pockets. (The choice of a "pocket" is better than the "hand" for instance, as the *tanāsub*, the harmony between skirt and pocket, neatly knits the *bayt* together.) This pocket, containing scents, is in fact the wind. We also see in these two cases that the Genitive Link Metaphor attributing something to another object mostly goes hand in hand with personification; the garden (which is given a skirt), but more strikingly, the wind (which is given a pocket in which to carry scents) have been personified. The verbal form *dārad* (which we chose to translate as "is carrying"), which refers to the wind as subject simply animates the personified wind; it does not form a verbal metaphor. "Stained with musk" is an adjectival group which qualifies the "garden's skirt" and represents another metaphor which nests in the idea of the "skirt." Again, it brings together two different semantic fields: "musk" which pertains mainly to perfume (but also carries the idea that it is a black, rather oily substance); and "staining" which refers to colours, or the field of impurity, soiling material like cloth. For the metaphor to be effective, the shock must come from the combination of perfume with colour, of perfume which is ethereal with a colour stain, which is material.

Continuing this exploration into Kāshifī's metaphors, we now look at a randomly chosen passage containing several examples of metaphors, taken from the Fifth Chapter of the *Anvār*. As mentioned above, Kāshifī uses very few Simple Replacement metaphors and metonymies. It is the other kinds of metaphor, which abound in his *Anvār*: the "Genitive Link

Metaphor," just analysed above, and the "Verb Metaphor." The *Anvār's* fifth chapter, "On the detriment of giving way to negligence and of permitting the objects of desire to escape from one's hands," affectionately and familiarly known as "the story of the monkey and the tortoise," contains the following sentence:

سرور از دل و نور از بصر رخت رحیل بر بست و نهال قوت که میوه مراد باز آورد ی از سموم عجز و بیچارگی روی پژمردگی نهاد و چراغ طرب به تند باد آفت و تعب منطفی شد و بساط نشاط بهجوم امراض و غموم منطوی گشت[25]

> Cheerfulness began to pack up to depart from his heart, and light to quit his eye; the young plant of vigour, which had produced the fruits of desire, because of the Samum Wind of debility and helplessness, turned its face towards withering, and the lamp of cheerfulness was extinguished by the violent wind of calamity and trouble, and the carpet of pleasure (was) folded up by the invasion of diseases and suffering.[26]

All this, simply to inform the reader that the King Monkey is sad because he is feeling the ravages of old-age and is about to be replaced by a younger monkey at the head of the tribe!

"Cheerfulness began to pack up to depart out of (his) heart": more than a simple verbal personification of an abstract term (cheerfulness), this is in fact a very nice Verb Metaphor. The classical example of a Verb Metaphor is "the ship ploughed the waves," where the verb actually refers to the ship as doing an action which another noun would normally do (here, the plough, or the farmer). Similarly, in the analysed sentence, cheerfulness departs (this is the personification, lending a human action to an abstract noun), and in order to depart (*rakht-i raḥīl bar bast*, with *raḥīl* also holding connotations of a saddled camel), it packs its bags, or saddles its camel (an action cheerfulness is not expected to do, which rather refers to a traveller). The semantic field of the verb is that of the caravans saddling the camels for departure, carrying away the beloved, leaving behind desolation and regret for the lover who, arriving late, will only find the smoking embers of the abandoned camp fires. Similarly, cheerfulness will leave the heart of the King Monkey.

---

[25] Husain Va'iz Kashifi, *Anvar-e Suheli, or Lights of Canopus. Being the Persian Version of the Fables of Bidpai*, ed. By Lieut.-Col. J.W.J. Ouseley, Hertford, 1851, 317.

[26] My translation. See also the translation E.B. Eastwick, *Anvar-i Suheli, or The Lights of Canopus, being the Persian Version of the Fables of Bidpai*, Hertford, 1854, 371.

The threefold description which follows also rewards a closer look by the student of metaphor. Kāshifī[27] wants to express that youth is replaced by old age. To describe youth, he uses the following metaphors: *nahāl-i quvvat*, *chirāgh-i ṭarab* and *basāṭ-i nishāt*, the "young shoot of vigour," the "lamp of cheerfulness" and the "carpet of pleasure."

Broadly speaking, these are three Genitive Link Metaphors, like those seen above in the author's work on Poetics. However, they rather relate to the types of Pure Attribution Genitive Link Metaphor or to the Appositive Genitive Link Metaphor, slight variations on and slightly more straightforward types than the one analysed above. That the border between these types of metaphors is porous will become evident. In fact, the figures could also be explained as germane to each other and belonging to several types at once.

A classical example of the Pure Attribution Metaphor is "the hostel of my heart" i.e. "my body" according to the formula "A equals the B of C." This could be applied here, considering that "youth" is the *nahāl-i quvvat*. The plant, or young shoot is the metaphoric term proper, it is transposed from another semantic field (that of the vegetal realm) and it brings with it connotations of energy, sap, greenness, freshness. In the second example, "youth" is the *chirāgh-i ṭarab*, the proper term being the lamp, bringing with it ideas of brightness, light, warmth, contrasted to night and darkness. In the third example, "youth" is the *basāṭ-i nishāt*, with the term "carpet" being slightly more awkward to relate to youth when taken on its own. We must perhaps call up the idea of comfort, softness, colour.

Each of these concrete terms is linked by a Genitive to abstract terms with which they form a relation of attribution: *quvvat* "vigour," *ṭarab* "cheerfulness" and *nishāt* "pleasure." This ought to be very effective and startling, but this particular trope, which has been branded as "the laziest and most deceptive and ambiguous method of expressing a metaphor" by Christine Brooke-Rose is unfortunately so typical of Persian Genitive Link Metaphors and so constantly used, that the effect of surprise is rather spoiled. Pleasure then, was to be derived from the novelty of the associations, how they repeat each other in different semantic fields and, naturally how they fit with the general meaning of the passage. Here, the semantic fields of the two first concrete elements, "plant" and "lamp,"

[27] It is Kāshifī's own text. He has not, here, taken over any sentence or image from his predecessor's work, Nasrullāh Munshī's *Kalīla u Dimna*, as he sometimes does. However, this precision is not to mean that Nasrullāh Munshī does not also make abundant use of Genitive Link Metaphors.

produce an apposite reference to aspects of youth. It is possible that choice of the third term "carpet" is made less as an attribute of youth, than in relation to the verb "folding up," with which it forms an expression, which neatly recalls the opening of the passage with cheerfulness saddling the camel for departure.

But the second kind of Genitive Link Metaphors is perhaps more relevant still, though perhaps a little ambiguous. This is a two-term formula, such as "the fire of love," "the B of C," in which B equals C (fire is love, because love burns), C is itself the proper term with an Appositive Genitive expressing the identity. Here: the plant is vigour itself, because it grows; the lamp is cheerfulness, because it gives off light and warmth.

The third metaphor again (the carpet of pleasure), does not belong to this Appositive Genitive: we cannot say that the carpet IS pleasure. But we may relate it to the already seen type of Pure Attribution Genitive Link Metaphor (for which the example is "the cloak of Death" or "the hand of God"): the attribution is not identical with the term to which it is linked, but represents it in one aspect: pleasure when one is lying lazily on a carpet, one supposes. . . .

The agents of death are treated in two typical Apposite Genitive Link Metaphor constructions, with a doubling of the "C" term (which present a repetition of the concepts): "the Samum of debility and helplessness," "the violent wind of calamity and trouble." Again, the third element is different. One can say that calamity and trouble are like a violent wind, but this does not work for "the invasion of diseases and sufferings." The analysis of this figure is perhaps the least obvious of all our examples. Here the noun "invasion" refers to an action made by "diseases and sufferings." This is again, more than a simple personification, as the semantic field of "invasion" is that of war, conquest and plunder, while "diseases" relate to illness. But the construction can be considered a simple personification in relation to "sufferings."

The first of the three images also contains a Verb Metaphor—albeit a trite one—: i.e. the young shoot has "turned its face towards withering." We could consider it as just a stale expression, a compound verb, but the addition of "withering" which qualifies this action, somehow renews and "refreshes" it (to use a metaphor taken from the vegetal realm!). This is more than just a personification. Kāshifī has given a face to the plant, and the verb animates the object (the plant), making it "look in the direction of decay," which stands for "anticipating decay." And here, decay, which belongs to the semantic field of the plants, stands—a straightforward metaphor—for death, which applies to the Monkey's fate.

The other verbs, attached to the two other metaphoric terms: the lamp is "extinguished" and the carpet is "folded up," are not metaphors if we consider them linked to their grammatical subjects (lamp and carpet), but may be considered metaphors if we link them with the actual term, "youth"....

The "*nahāl-i qudrat*" the plant of vigour is also described by Kāshifī as having produced the fruits of desire, an additional qualifying phrase with, again, a Genitive Link Metaphor (fruits of desire, *mīva-i murād*), an appositive genitive, where the fruits are actually desire.

Metaphors can also be divided from the point of view of idea-content, into functional metaphors (A is called B by virtue of what it does) and sensuous metaphors (by virtue of what it looks like, or more rarely sounds like, smells like etc.). Most interesting metaphors combine both types. If we go back to youth being called the plant of vigour, this is a functional metaphor (the plant grows and is full of energy, just like youth), but it could also be a sensuous metaphor (the plant looks green and young, like personified youth).

Kāshifī's style is often said to induce indigestion. Now that we have gone through this formal analysis of just five lines of text, we perhaps understand better why. The reader who proposes to approach the *Anvār* as he would a book of modern prose will almost immediately suffer from an attack of acute metaphoritis. The energising metaphor, which, as we have seen, combines two semantic realms within one word, is rich food indeed in any type of text. The reader expects the device to pop up now and again, procuring surprise, excitement and a wealth of information but here, we are confronted with prose which piles up, as in the passage analysed just now, combinations of three metaphorical description for the single concept of youth, with the addition of rich verbal metaphors. As always, we have the choice: set the book aside and join its detractors, or try to adapt to the style and the spirit it was written in, marvel at the masterpiece and take the time to taste it to the full, measuring it out with a coffee spoon.

Kāshifī's own opinion of his masterpiece is naturally quite different. In his *Muqadimma* to the *Anvār*, he mentions heavy metaphors. But this appears in the discriminating comments he makes on his predecessor's version of the animal fables, where "through the introduction of strange words and by overstraining the language with the beauties of Arabic expression and hyperbole in metaphors and similes of various kinds, and exaggeration and prolixity in words and obscurity of expression,

the mind of the hearer is kept back from enjoyment of the meaning of the book."[28]

As to his own creation, he crows optimistically, and, piling up metaphors, animated by unquenchable enthusiasm, he warns the reader of impending delights. And this article will close on this quote which sets out his vision of the public's delight: "This insignificant person of small capital, Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī ʾl-Wāʾiẓ, known by the name of Kāshifī (...) should be bold enough to clothe the said book in a new dress,[29] and bestow fresh adornment on the beauty of its tales of esoteric meaning, which were veiled and concealed by the curtain of obscure words and the wimple of difficult expressions, by presenting them on the stages of lucid style and in the upper chambers of becoming metaphors, in such a fashion that the eye of every examiner, without a glance of penetration or penetration of vision, may enjoy a share of the loveliness of those beauties of the ornamented bridal-chamber of narrative...."[30]

کتاب مذکور را لباس نو پوشانید و زیبا روایات معانی آنرا که بہ تنق الفاظ مغلقہ و حجب کلمات مشکلہ محجوب و مستور بود بر مناظر عبارات روشن و عرفات استعارات لطیف جلوہ دہد...[31]

Bibliography

Aristotle, *Poetics*, tr. S. Halliwell, *The Poetics of Aristotle, translation and commentary*, London, 1987.

Brooke-Rose, C., *A Grammar of Metaphor*, London, 1958.

Browne, E.G., *A Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the Library of the University of Cambridge*, Cambridge, 1896, No. CLXXX, Add. 794, 267–71.

——, *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. 2, Cambridge, 1906.

Cicero, *De Oratore*, bk III, with an English tr. by H. Rackham, E.H. Warmington ed., The Loeb Classical Library, 1942, repr. 1968, III, xxxviii, 155, pp. 120–22.

---

[28] Ḥusayn Vāʿiẓ Kāshifī, *Anvar-e Suheli*, *op. cit*, translation E.B. Eastwick, *op. cit*., Hertford, 1854, 8. (and ed. Ouseley, Hertford, 1851, 8).

[29] It is interesting to note that this metaphor describing the trope "metaphor" as "clothes" is already present in Cicero who relates that this particular metaphor was first invented out of necessity ("it sprang from necessity due to the pressure of poverty"), but in the affluence of a mature language it became decorative and noble: "As clothes were first invented to protect us against cold, and afterwards began to be used for the sake of adornment and dignity, so the metaphorical employment of words began because of poverty, but was brought into common use for the sake of entertainment," Cicero, *De Oratore*, bk III, with an English tr. by H. Rackham, E.H. Warmington ed., The Loeb Classical Library, 1942, repr. 1968, III, xxxviii, 155, pp. 120–22.

[30] Kāshifī, *Anvar-e Suheli*, translation E.B. Eastwick, *op. cit.*, 10–11.

[31] Kāshifī, *Anvar-e Suheli, op. cit.*, Ouseley ed., 9.

Dufour, M., et A. Wartelle, Aristote. *Rhetorique. Livres I, II et III*, texte etabli et traduit par M. Dufour et A. Wartelle, 1980, repr. Saint-Amand (Cher), 1998, Livre III, 216, 1407b.

Eastwick, E.B., *Anvar-i Suheli, or The Lights of Canopus, being the Persian Version of the Fables of Bidpai*, Hertford, 1854, 371.

Preminger A. and T.V.F. Brogan, eds., *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1993.

Rashīd al-Dīn Vaṭvāṭ, *Ḥadāʾiq al-siḥr*, ed. ʿAbbās Iqbāl, Tehran, 1362/1984.

Ruymbeke, C. van, "Kashefi's Forgotten Masterpiece: Why Rediscover the Anvar-i Suhayli?" *Iranian Studies*, vol. 36, 4, Dec. 2003, pp. 571–88.

Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Qays al-Rāzī, *al-Muʿjam fī maʿāyir ashʿār al-ʿAjam*, ed. Muḥammad Qazvīnī, Leyden – London, 1909 in the E.J.W. Gibb memorial Series.

Simidchieva, M., "Imitation and Innovation in Timurid Poetics: Kashifi's *Badayiʿ al-afkar* and its Predecessors, *al-Mu'jam* and *Hada'iq al-sihr*" in *Iranian Studies*, 36/4, 2003, p. 528.

Steingass, *Persian-English Dictionary*, London, 1892, 5th ed., 1963.

Subtelny, M.E., "A taste for the Intricate: The Persian Poetry of the Late Timurid Period," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlaendischen Gesellschaft*, 136 (1986).

Vāʿiẓ Kāshifī, Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥusayn, *Badāyiʿ al-afkār fī ṣanāyiʿ al-ashʿār*, ed. Rahim Musul'mankulov, Moskow, 1977.

——, *Badayiʿ al-afkar fi sanayiʿ al-ashʿar*, Cambridge Persian MS Add. 794, f. 36b–f. 37b and ed. Rahim Musul'mankulov, Moskow, 1977, f. 22b–23a.

——, *Anvar-e Suheli, or Lights of Canopus. Being the Persian Version of the Fables of Bidpai*, ed. By Lieut.-Col. J.W.J. Ouseley, Hertford, 1851, 317.

Zanardo, S., *Le Teorie Araba e Persiana del badi' dale Origini al XIII Secolo: Dati per un' Analisi Comparativa*, at the Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli, n.d. (unpublished PhD Thesis)

WAXING ELOQUENT: THE MASTERFUL VARIATIONS ON CANDLE METAPHORS IN THE POETRY OF ḤĀFIẒ AND HIS PREDECESSORS

A.A. Seyed-Gohrab

I said: "My mad heart is burned,
do you have any news about what has happened?"
S/he smiled and said: "How can a candle be
informed of the burning and falling of a moth?"[1]

Introduction

The candle is one of the favourite standard metaphors in Persian poetry. It is hard to ascertain when the candle came into use in the Middle East. A word used in ancient Egyptian refers rather to a torch. Where the Old Testament refers to the seven-branched candlestick, the object is not a candle but rather lamps burning olive oil. The candle as we know it today also appears in medieval European literature, in use both for the light it gives and as an instrument to measure time.[2]

In medieval times, candles were made of wax or tallow around a wick manually. Candles made of tallow produced a distasteful odor and much smoke, but candles made of beeswax had a pleasant smell. To increase the pleasant smell, aromas were added to the wax. In classical Persian poetry, many references are made to various aromatic candles, such as *shamʿ-i kāfūrī*, 'the camphor candle' and *shamʿ-i ʿanbar* or *shamʿ-i muʿanbar*, 'a candle made with ambergris.' The production of candle changed in 1834 when Joseph Morgan invented the first candle-molding machine.

The fact that candles were not used only for their primary practical function, i.e., giving light, but have also had ritual functions and symbolic value, explains why they are still in use. Although electricity first became available in Persia in 1900, in Mashhad, for a long time people continued

---

[1] Jamāl Khalīl Shirvānī, *Nuzhat al-majālis*, ed., M.A. Rīyāḥī, Tehran: 'Ilmī, 1375, p. 171, quatrain 205.

[2] For a general information on the candle see M. Omidsalar in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Candle. For various compounds constructed with the word candle see 'A.A. Dihkhudā, *Lughat-nāma*, s.v. Sham' and other entries based on this term.

to use candles and other sources of light.[3] Candles have been used during Shiite religious rituals. Sometimes huge candles as tall as a man (*shamʿ-i qaddī*) are lit at the sides of a pulpit in a mosque or other places where the annual rituals on the mourning for the holy imams are conducted. These candles are usually used on the night of ʿĀshūrā, the tenth day of the month Muḥarram, when Shiites commemorate the tragic death of the third Imam, Ḥusayn, and his followers. The tenth day of Muḥarram is the climax of the mourning period. There are long processions, with people slapping their chests, whipping themselves, and conducting other types of mourning rituals. Although candles are used at night during the entire commemoration, there is a spectacular use during the eleventh night, usually called *Shām-i gharībān* ('the night of the strangers/exiles'), referring to the surviving women and children whose tents were set on fire by the enemy and who were transported in humiliation to the court of the Sunnite ruler Yazīd. To show their sympathy for the surviving family, people dress in black, sometimes putting clay on their heads and clothes as a symbol of mourning, and walk through the dark alleys and streets holding candles in their hands, chanting mournful songs. In this ritual, candles are burned for the martyrs at Karbalā but also as a symbol for the women and children left behind.

Another use of the candle in present-day Persia is at the *Saqqā-khāna*, (lit. 'water-house'). This is a niche carved in the walls of alleys and streets, in which a scene of Karbalā, especially of Ḥusayn's stepbrother Abu 'l-Faḍl is painted. Usually there is a tap, with a glass or cup. One of the characteristic sufferings borne by Ḥusayn and his family during the Karbalā tragedy was that the enemy had blocked their way to the Euphrates, so they were many days without water. Abu 'l-Faḍl tried several times to bring water for the children but he was finally killed in the attempt. Various scenes from these attempts are shown in painted murals. In front of the mural, in the niche, there is a space for people to light a candle, hoping that their prayer will be heard or their wish will be fulfilled.

The religious aspects of the candle were especially emphasized when they were made of beeswax. The bee and its honey is praised in the Koran, and one Surah is called 'the Bee.' There are many Islamic traditions and stories underlining the value of the honey and bees. The first Shiite imam

[3] See W. Floor and B. Hourcade in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Barq.

is called the "Commander of Bees" (*amīr al-naḥl*).[4] From an early period, we see how Islamic mystics refer to the candle as a symbol of the divine light. Candle metaphors are perfectly suited for mystics to depict the position of mankind in this world and his relationship with the divine beloved. As the wax was united with the honeycomb, man was originally united with God: now he is living in separation in this world.

Candles are also used at times of birth and death. When someone has died, candles are lit in the room and also later during the commemoration ceremonies on the third, seventh, the fortieth day and also during the first annual commemoration. Also when a baby is born, parents light a candle to avert the evil eye and evil spirits. Needless to say that candles play an essential part of birthday parties in many contemporary cultures. Candles are used to keep away evil spirits during the Persian New Year (Naw Rūz) rituals. Two candles are commonly placed with the *sufra-i haft-sīn*, a table or tray bearing seven objects starting in Persian with the letter "s," each symbolizing an aspect of a blessed life and prosperity.

Candles are also used to avert the evil eye. The first items that a bridegroom gives to the bride in the marriage ceremony are a mirror, two candle-sticks and a Koran, to be first brought to their new home. During the wedding, the candlesticks are placed in the 'wedding spread' (*sufra-i ʿaqd*) for the bride and bridegroom. The candlesticks are later moved to the bridal chamber where they are lit.

There are also various beliefs associated with lighting and extinguishing a candle. Blowing a candle out is censured because people believe that it might bring misfortune and the life of the person who does it will be shortened. It is believed that "the fire will curse whoever puts it out, "May the light of your life go out, just as you put me out."[5] Therefore, the candle is snuffed out with the fingers or "by pressing the wick between the heels of two shoes."

Candles were also used in torture. The Persian term *shamʿ-ājīn* refers to this repulsive use of the candle, in which a hole is made in the body of a captive and a candle or candles are placed in it so that the body is burned by the hot wax dropping on it.

---

[4] A. Schimmel, *Deciphering the Signs of God: A Phenomenological Approach to Islam*, Edinburgh University Press, 1994, p. 22.

[5] M. Omidsalar, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Candle.

Candle Imagery in Persian Literature

The candle, and metaphors relating to the candle, appear in New Persian literature from the tenth century. Firdawsī refers to candles in his epic *Shāh-nāma* numerous times, not merely because of its light, but also in metaphors describing his characters or relating to the setting. Often the reference is to the candle's flame and light, as in metaphors for the sun or moon, but there are also references to the candle's shape.

Poets of all generations have made new metaphors based on the candle, its tall stature, pallid colour, its flame, its giving light to the night, flowing wax, smoke, how the scissors trim the wick, how it is blown out and, of course, the moth and other insects that it attracts.[6] These and many other features of the candle provide the basis for a rich repertoire of metaphors, usually expressing various mystic concepts related to love, the lover and the beloved. After a brief discussion of the candle metaphor in early Persian poetry, I will examine how Ḥāfiẓ of Shiraz contrived candle metaphors in his lyrics.

The candle metaphor appears for the first time in the Persian literary tradition in the book *Kitāb at-tavāsīn*, an Arabic work by the famous Persian mystic Ḥusayn b. Manṣūr Ḥallāj, who was executed in Baghdad in 922 because of his blasphemous statement *anā' al-ḥaqq*, or 'I am the Truth."[7] The candle is not literally mentioned; it is a 'lamp' (*miṣbāh*) around which a moth is flying.[8] Other mystics, inspired by Ḥallāj, frequently used this metaphor to express the relationship between the lover and the beloved.

---

[6] The metaphor has also influenced European poets such as Johann Wolfgang v. Goethe (1749–1832) who used the metaphor in his poem "Selige Sehnsucht" in *West-östlicher Divan*. It is probably through Goethe that the metaphor entered European literature. G.J.H. van Gelder in *Encyclopeadia of Islam* (2), s.v Shamʿa. There are also other poets who have used the metaphor in their works. See J.W. von Goethe, *West-östlicher Divan*, München: W. Goldmann Verlag, p. 20. For an analysis see R.E. Dye, "'Selige Sehnsucht' and Goethean Enlightenment" in *Modern Language Association*, vol. 104, No. 2, 1989, pp. 190–200. The romantic Orientalists Sir Edwin Arnold and Sir Thomas Moore use this metaphor in their works, as does the novelist Anthony Trollope, in *The Claverings*. See S.E. Arnold, *With Saʿdi in the Garden or the Book of Love*, London: Trübner, 1888; A. Trollope, *The Claverings*, London: Oxford University, 1929, pp. 215 and 299.

[7] See A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill, 1975, index, s.v. *anā' al-ḥaqq* and Ḥallāj.

[8] For the imagery see J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Candle: ii. Imagery in Poetry. See also G.J.H. van Gelder, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), s.v. Shamʿa; J. Matīnī, "Parvāna va shamʿ" in *Īrān-Shināsī*, vol. vi, No. 4, Winter 1995; N. Pourjavady, "Parvāna va ātash: sayr-i taḥavvul-i yik tamthīl-i 'irfānī dar adabiyyāt-i Fārsī" in *Nashr-i Dānish*, 16, No. 2, 1378, pp. 3–15; M. Ismāʿīlpūr in *An Encyclopaedia of Persian Literature*, vol., I, ed., H. Anūshe, Tehran: Dānishnāma Cultural-Publishing, 1996, s.v. Ātash va parvāna.

Perhaps the oldest place in a Persian text in which the metaphor is used in the influential treatise on love entitled *Savāniḥ* by Aḥmad Ghazālī (d. 1126), the younger brother of the polymath Muḥammad Ghazālī (d. 1111). In this treatise, Ghazālī uses the metaphor of the moth several times, to explain an aspect of love. When he discusses the difference between love and intellect or knowledge in chapter three, he describes knowledge as "the moth of love, whose knowledge pertains to outward affairs; the first thing that should be burned in matters of love is knowledge." In his love philosophy, intellect is a means to bring the lover near to his destination, i.e., union with the beloved, but once the lover arrives, the intellect should be burnt, since it belongs to the boundary between existence and non-existence. In chapter 18, in which he discusses the concepts of 'annihilation' (*fanāʾ*) and 'perpetual union with the beloved' (*baqāʾ*), Ghazālī elaborates on this subject again. In his opinion, when the lover reaches the mystic station of *fanāʾ*, he should "unite himself like a moth from the boundary of *fanāʾ* to the realm of *baqāʾ*."[9] Ghazālī adds that this transformation is hard for reason to grasp, and he gives the following quatrain to elucidate this point:

> The essence of falling in love begins with the eye.
> When the eye beholds, infatuation flows.
> The bait lures many birds into a trap;
> Light's allure leads the moth into the fire.[10]

Ghazālī elaborates this metaphor in chapter 39 in which he explains how this metaphor represents the lover's journey, his attraction to the beloved, his annihilation and his eternal union, characterized as a burning in fire.

> The moth, which is the lover of the fire, feeds on illumination, (*ishrāq*), when it is far from the fire. The vanguard of illumination receives it and invites it. In the air/longing for searching for the fire, the moth is restless to make a flight of love by its wings of aspiration (*himmat*). Its wings are, however, such that they only bring the moth to the fire. When the moth arrives there, its journey (*ravish*) ends. Journeying pertains to the fire. The moth has no food. Food belongs to the fire. And this is a great secret. For one moment the moth becomes its own beloved. This is its perfection. All those flying and fluttering around (*tavāf*) is for the very moment. When can this moment appear? Previously we have delineated that this is the reality of union. For a while the

[9] The moth and the candle imagery is also used by ʿAbd Allah ibn al-Shahrazūrī to depict the lover's suffering on the path of union. See T.E. Homerin, "Preaching Poetry: The Forgotten Verse of Ibn al-Shahrazūrī" in *Arabica*, 1991, 38, pp. 93–4.

[10] Aḥmad Ghazālī, *Sawāniḥ: Aphorismen über die Liebe*, Herausgegeben von H. Ritter, Istanbul: Maʿārif, 1942, p. 40, *faṣl* 21, ll. 6–7.

> attribute of fire hosts the moth while it sends the moth out by way of turning it into ashes. The purpose of the moth's entire capacity is to reach the fire. The existence of the attributes of being all comprise the instrument for union.[11]

In this passage and elsewhere in the book, Ghazālī emphasizes that the lover does not have any power or means to attain union, because union is an attribute of the beloved. So long as the lover lives on the basis of his own attributes, he cannot attain union with the beloved. In other words, the lover must annihilate all of his attributes to be accepted by the beloved.

Aḥmad Ghazālī's student ʿAyn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī (executed in 1132) uses the metaphor several times in his *Maktūbāt* (*Epistles*) and his *Tamhīdāt* (*Preludes*). In the latter, the author identifies the essence of love with fire,[12] discussing love's fiery nature through the metaphor of the candle and the moth.[13] He compares the fluttering of the insect around the candle with the ritual circumambulation of the pilgrims around the House of God, the Kaʿba.[14] He explains that the reason why the moth throws itself into the fire (*nār*) is to transform itself into 'light' (*nūr*) and even into 'the light upon lights' (*nūrun ʿalā nūr*, Koran, 24:34). When the transformation is complete, the moth becomes the beloved of light. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's conclusion is in line with other Islamic mystics. He thinks that the path of love is only for those who are ready to annihilate their ego and sacrifice themselves for love's sake.[15]

As N. Pourjavady has pointed out, in Ghazālī and Ḥallāj's writings, the candle and moth do not speak to one other. Perhaps the first prose text in which the two entities enter a dialogue is the *Rawḍat al-Farīqīn* by Abu ʾl-Rajā Khumrakī. Here, a dialogue between the moth and candle highlights the candle's paradoxical aspect as source of light and cause of burning. These who benefit only from the light of the candle from a distance belong to the category of mystics who seek safety and easy love (*salāmat*), while those who wish to be scorched by the burning are lovers. The author states:

---

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 59–60, *faṣl* 39, ll. 6–15.

[12] *Tamhīdāt*, ed., ʿA. ʿUṣayrān, Tehran: 1962, p. 97. The author states that "love is the fire that wherever it reaches, it burns everything, changing everything to love's own colour."

[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 99–100.

[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 260–61.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 97.

> The candle possesses two qualities: light and heat. Some people are content with light and remain in the garment of safety. The moth said: "love and *salāmat* cannot be both [at the same time]." It went beyond the light. The light said: "The affair does not mean to pass from, but to return. You can neither reach your destination, nor can you return. The moth said: "love does not accept advice. I am surely its burned one. For me, it is nobility enough, just to be its burned one."[16]

Another mystic, Rūzbihān Baqlī (d.c. 1209) applies the metaphor both in his treatise on love *ʿAbhar al-ʿāshiqīn* (*The Lover's Jasmine*) and in his *Sharḥ-i shaṭḥiyyāt* (*Commentary on Ecstatic Sayings*),[17] which is a commentary on Ḥallāj's *Tavāsīn*. Another influential mystic, Najm al-Dīn Rāzī (d. 1256) better known under the name Dāya (Wet-nurse), also elaborates on the metaphor in his *Mirṣād al-ʿibād*.[18] After a comparison between a white falcon and a moth, Dāya concludes that, in the path of love, a mad moth (*parvāna-i dīvāna*) can make his home on the tip of the candle's flame.[19] Even the white falcon with his high position on the arm of a king does not dare to fly into the fire. In this metaphor, both the falcon and the moth stand for the soul and the high station it can attain on the path of love.

Aside from these prose texts, the metaphor enjoyed increasing popularity in various poetic forms such as the qaṣīda, ghazal and rubāʿī, and in extended or epic poems composed in rhyming couplets (*mathnavī*s).[20] The oldest Persian qaṣīda in which the candle is described is in the *Dīvān* of the Ghaznavid court poet Manūchihrī from Dāmghān (d.c. 1040) and is dedicated to the poet laureate 'Unṣurī.[21] In this poem, the poet offers an artistic description of the candle:[22]

---

[16] As quoted by N. Pourjavady, *Zabān-i ḥāl dar ʿirfān va adabiyyāt-i Fārsī*, Tehran: Hermes, 1385/2006, p. 872.

[17] The word *shaṭḥ* (pl. *shaṭḥiyyāt*) is translated variously as 'ecstatic sayings,' 'theophanic locutions', and 'paradoxical ecstatic sayings.' For a study see C. Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1985.

[18] For an exposition of this metaphor see *Mirṣād al-ʿibād*, pp. 224, 383ff; for an English translation see H. Algar, *Razi: The Path of God's Bondsmen*, Persian Heritage Series 35, New York: Caravan Books, 1982, pp. 233–35, 374–75.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 257–59.

[20] On the popularity and application of mathnavi see J.T.P. de Bruijn, *Of Piety and Poetry: The Interaction of Religion and Literature in the Life and Works of Ḥakīm Sanāʾī of Ghaznāʾī*, Leiden: Brill, 1983, pp. 185ff; idem in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), s.v. Mathnawī.

[21] For more information see J.T.P. de Bruijn in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), s.v. ʿUnṣurī.

[22] See Jerome W. Clinton, *The Divan of Manūchihrī Dāmghānī: A Critical study*. Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamic, 1972, pp. 31–43; J.T.P. de Bruijn in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Candle II. Imagery in Poetry. For the riddling character of this poem see my article "The Art of Riddling

1. O you who have placed your soul on the top of your head:
   Our body lives through its soul, while your soul lives through your body.
2. Each moment your soul lessens your body a little;
   It is as if your body becomes concealed in your soul.
3. If you are not a star, why do you appear only at night?
   if you are not a lover, why do you always weep for yourself?
4. Yes, you are a star, but wax is your heaven;
   Yes, you are a lover, your beloved is a dish.
5. You wear your shirt inside your body: everyone wears
   Their shirts over their bodies, you wear your body over your shirt.
6. When you die, and fire reaches you, you come to life;
   When you fall ill, you recover when decapitated!
7. You always laugh and weep at once; this is very rare;
   You are both beloved and lover, both idol and shaman.
8. You bloom without spring, and wither without autumn;
   You weep without eyes, you laugh without a mouth.
9. You are like me and I resemble you;
   We are both our own enemies, but friends of the company.
10. We both burn ourselves, at the friends' desire;
    Friends are at ease because of us, while we are afflicted.
11. We are both weeping, both pale and melting;
    We are both burning, both alone, and put to the test.
12. That which I have placed in my heart, I see upon your head;
    What you have placed upon your head, its homeland is my heart.
13. Your tears resemble pearls, melted and poured on gold;
    My tears resemble petals of jasmine scattered on gold.
14. Your face is like fenugreek newly opened at dawn;
    While mine is like fenugreek withered in the field.
15. The custom is not to sleep by day; yet because of you,
    I have no sleep the whole night long, and I slumber during the day.
16. Because of separation from your face, I have become the sun's enemy;
    because of union with you in the dark night, I am bewitched.
17. I have tested all my other friends, the commoner and the noble:
    Not one could keep a secret, no two are loyal.

---

in Classical Persian Poetry" in *Edebiyāt: Journal of Middle Eastern and Comparative Literature*, vol. 12, 2001, pp. 15–36.

18. O candle, you are the keeper of my secret, you are my friend;
    You are my confidant; I am yours and you are mine.
19. You ever shine, and I ever read, lovingly,
    Every night till dawn, the *Dīvān* of Abu'l-Qāsim Ḥasan.[23]

I have analyzed various courtly aspects of this poem elsewhere.[24] Here I will concentrate on the metaphors used to depict diverse features and properties of the candle. A poet who wished to imitate and also to outshine the Arab poets, Manūchirī wrote several poems in which he introduces imagery and metaphors that were novel in Persian. Candles appear in Arabic *qaṣīda* poetry, but a long description of a candle in a poem was novel in Persian poetry and for the courtly audience for whom it was composed. The candle is described with a wide range of metaphors, personifications, questions and contradictions by Manūchihrī. The poem is the *nasīb* ('opening section') of a *qaṣīda* Manūchihrī dedicated to the poet laureate 'Unṣurī.

This is a unique poem dedicated by one court poet to another. E.G. Browne offers only a translation without any analysis and Bertel's believes that Manūchihrī composed the poem only to test his fortune at the court. In his monograph on the poet, Clinton does not analyze the poem's style and how the poet composed his descriptive and artistic poem.[25] He states: "These reflections on the candle and its flame, which give the poet ample scope to display his verbal dexterity, lead on to a series of comparisons between himself and the candle. In these he presents himself in the various postures of the distraught lover."[26] He continues: "The meditative introduction displays the fertility of Manūchihrī's invention and his mastery of the subtle word play which is at the heart of Persian poetry."[27] Elsewhere, Clinton states that the reason Manūchihrī composed the poem was to "demonstrate his ability to control a variety of rhetorical figures, his verbal felicity, and, in particular, his capacity for invention"[28] in order

[23] *Dīvān-i Manūchihrī Dāmghānī*, ed., S.M. Dabīr Sīyāqī, Tehran: Zavvār, 1375, qasīda 50, pp. 79–80, couplets 1095–1113. Abu 'l-Qāsim Ḥasan is the name of the poet known as 'Unṣurī.

[24] See my *Courtly Riddles: Enigmatic Embellishments in Early Persian Poetry*, pp. 56–68.

[25] J.W. Clinton, *The Divan of Manūchihrī*, p. 31. Y.I. Bertel's, *Tārīkh-i adabiyyāt-i Fārsī*, vol. i, pp. 150–51. E.G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. ii, pp. 154–56.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 33.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

[28] *Persian Literature*, ed. E. Yarshater, p. 83.

to "obtain admission to the Ghaznavid court."[29] Clinton rightly emphasizes that "poets neither patronized other poets nor praised their rivals."

In the first couplet, the candle's fire is described as a soul, emphasizing the dependence of love on both body and the soul. Manūchihrī builds on this metaphor in the second couplet by riddling the reader about this wondrous object. The analogy between the fire and the candle and man's soul and body is questioned when the poet states that the soul of the candle lessens the body a little each moment. The riddle become more puzzling when the poet extends his metaphor even further by switching the position of the soul and the body: in this case it is the body that becomes hidden in the soul. In the third couplet, the poet leaves his extended metaphor to present a new set of metaphors for the candle. Here, the candle's fire is compared to a star, appearing only at night. Having said this, the poet finds further analogies between the candle and the lover: its slim stature, sleepless nights, shedding tears, and slow fading are similar to the separated lover. All these explicit and implicit allusions lead the poet to characterize the candle as a lover in the rhetorical questions he poses in line three. In line four, these extended metaphors are extended still, surprising the reader as to the nature of the candle. The poet goes on in his questions to the candle, ascertaining that it is indeed a star and the wax is its heaven; that it is the lover and the dish, i.e., the candle-holder, is the beloved. In conventional metaphors, the candle is compared to a lover separated from its beloved honey, as candles were then made from honey's wax.

Manūchihrī uses a novel image in the fifth couplet, comparing the candle's wick to a shirt worn inside its body. As we will see, this became a favourite image in Persian poetry in later centuries. By comparing the cotton wick to a shirt, the poet creates a perfect riddling question to tease his courtly audience. In the sixth couplet, he further builds on the element of feigned surprise, by describing how a candle is lit: as soon as fire comes to the candle, it comes to life. Closely related to this metaphor is the metaphor of decapitation. Here, it refers to restoring the candle's life by trimming the wick so that it can burn well. In later centuries, the decapitation metaphor became a favourite standard metaphor in Persian love poetry, emphasizing the lover's altruism, his readiness to offer his life for the beloved and how union is attained by effacing one's self. The candle's flickering fire is here described as laughing and its molten wax as tears. Manūchihrī uses these candle's dual qualities to increase the element of

[29] *Ibid*., p. 82.

surprise, underscoring this by repeating that the candle is both the lover and the beloved, an idol and a shaman. In couplet eight, Manūchihrī again astonishes the reader: the candle's reddish fire is compared to a flower that burgeons and perishes independent of the spring and autumn.

From couplet nine to eleven, the poet finds an analogy between himself and the candle, using the first personal plural "We." The candle can be both the friend and enemy of the assembly. Both the poet and the candle exert themselves to give something to the assembly: the candle burns its soul to give light while the poet digs into his soul to find novel metaphors in attractive poetry. The assembly benefits from their exertions. The analogy is not only to the poet and his profession, but also to the poet as a lover, because in couplet eleven, the analogy is between the candle and a lover: both weeping, are pale, alone and melting. Manūchihrī elaborates on these amatory features in the next couplet in which the metaphor of fire as the soul or the essential force returns, stating that the poet possesses in his heart what the candle has on its head. While the candle's tears are compared to pearls running over to the golden dish, the lover's tears are petals of jasmine spread on his pale face. The colour gold is used in Persian to refer to the pale face of the lover who, because of love becomes emaciated, has hollow eyes, etc. Having used a floral image to describe the lover's tears, Manūchihrī goes on, comparing the candle's face to newly opened fenugreek at dawn, which contrasts the withered fenugreek, i.e. the lover's face. In couplet fifteen, it becomes clear that the candle is a metaphor for the poet's beloved, as the candle is the source of the poet-lover's sleeplessness. The loving relationship between the candle and the poet becomes more evident in the rest of the poem. In couplet sixteen, the poet voices the reasons why he has become the "sun's enemy" and why he is bewitched. Being separated from the candle's face, and being himself a poet like ʿUnṣurī, he gives light to the audience including the other poets at the court. The sun may refer to the poet's novel metaphors and imagery that are used by other poets. The loving relationship is further cemented in couplets seventeen and eighteen in which the poet states that the beloved candle is the only friend that is able to keep a secret and is his confidant. The last line of the *nasīb*, in which Manūchihrī reveals the identity of this loving candle, shows the poet's virtuosity; he has used a large number of metaphors, imagery and tropes based on the candle to describe his relationship with the poet laureate Abu'l-Qāsim Ḥasan ʿUnṣurī.

In this poem, Manūchihrī artistically catalogues a rich set of candle metaphors such as the association of the candle's flame with the soul; the candle as a lover; the candle's comparison to a lamp; the candle's shirt

and so forth and so on. These features and properties of the candle are elaborated upon by a host of Persian poets such as ʻAttar, Saʻdi, Ḥāfiẓ, Ahlī of Shīrāz and many others.[30]

In addition to panegyrics, the metaphor has become the subject of *mathnavī*s. Perhaps the most popular *mathnavī* is the one by Muṣliḥ al-Dīn Saʻdī from Shīrāz ((1202–1292), who gives a brief presentation of this metaphor in the third chapter of his *Būstān* ('The Orchard'). The longest of the candle *mathnavīs* is the *Shamʿ-u parvāna* (*The Candle and the Moth*, composed 894/1489) by the fifteenth-century poet Ahlī from Shīrāz (858/1454–942/1535). However the first *mathnavī* about the candle and the moth is by Farīd al-Dīn ʻAṭṭār (d. 1220), in his masterpiece *Manṭiq al-ṭayr* (*The Conference of the Birds*).[31] In this work, ʻAṭṭār shows the three stages of becoming aware of the reality of the Beloved. These stages are commonly related to the verse in the Koran (56:95) in which they are named *ʿilm al-yaqīn*, 'knowledge of certitude,' *ʿayn al-yaqīn*, 'insight into certitude' and *ḥaqq al-yaqīn*, 'reality of certitude.' In Persian love mysticism, these three stages are combined with the lover's awareness through various tripartite metaphors. Poets usually use these three stages to indicate that the lover needs to be 'ripe' to unite with the beloved. The lover is first *khām*, unripe or inexperienced, and must endure the hardship of love to become *pukhta*, cooked or experienced. Only then can he be *sūkhta* 'burned' by and in the beloved.[32] In ʻAṭṭār's allegory, the moth is first acquainted with the existence of the candle. Afterwards, it goes searching for the candle and sees its flames with its own eyes. But when it madly flutters through the fire, it gains union. In ʻAṭṭār's story, one moth goes in search of a candle so it can explain to its friends what a candle looks like. It sees the candle light and comes back, explaining to its friends what it has seen. The moths doubt its findings and send another moth. This moth sees the candle's flame form nearby and returns to tell its

[30] Pieter Smoor, "The Weeping Wax Candle and Maʻarrī's Wisdom-Tooth: Night Thoughts and Riddles from Gāmiʻ al-awzān" in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Stuttgart, 1988, Band 138, Heft 2, pp. 283–312. M. Mansour Abahsain, "The Supra-Symbolic Moth in Arabic Religious Poetry from the Late Ottoman Period" in *Journal of Arabic Literature*, vol. 24, No. 1, 1993, pp. 21–7. A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, "De Kaars en de Nachtvlinder: Een Liefdesmetafoor in Perzische Poëzie" in *Sharqiyyat: Journal of the Dutch Association for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies*, 12, (2001), pp. 1–19.

[31] ʻAṭṭār, *Manṭiq al-ṭayr*, ed. S.S. Gowharīn, Tehran: Scientific and Cultural Publications Company, 1368/1989, pp. 222–23; for a poetic translation of this work see Dick Davis & Afkham Darbandi, *The Conference of the Birds*, Penguin Classics, 1984.

[32] In Saʻdī's story of the candle and the moth, the candle accuses the moth of being *khām* or inexperienced, while the candle itself knows the way of being a lover. In this story, the candle stands as a devoted lover, setting an example for the moth.

findings, but again its friends doubt what it tells them. A third moth goes and throws itself into the candle-fire and becomes entirely one with the fire. ʿAṭṭār's allegory shows that the lover can find knowledge of the Reality of the beloved, only when he is entirely annihilated by and in the beloved. A moth states at the end:

> He who has become without news (*bī khabar*) and without a trace,
> he has the news while he is entirely in the midst (of burning).
> Unless you become without news from body and soul,
> how can you find news of the beloved in one instance?

ʿAṭṭār also elaborates on the candle imagery in his *Dīvān* and in his *Mukhtār-nāma*[33] in which he devotes two chapters to the candle, contriving all types of metaphors to compare an aspect of love, lover and the beloved to the candle and sometimes to the moth.[34]

ʿAṬṬĀR'S *MUKHTĀR-NĀMA*

In *Mukhtār-nāma*, ʿAṭṭār devotes more than two hundred quatrains in three chapters (47–49) to the candle. Chapter 47 has the rubric "On ideas related to the candle" (quatrains 1816 to 1927); chapter 48 bears the rubric "On speaking with the tongue of the candle" (quatrains 1928 to 2027), and chapter 49, "On speaking with the tongue of the Moth" (quatrains 2028 to 2044). In chapter 47, the poet describes various aspects of the candle in the context of Persian mystical love. Several of these quatrains are on the theme of being beheaded and killed in the path of love. The trimming of the wick, which makes the candle burn better, is used by mystics as a metaphor for the lover's annihilation and attaining to eternal life with the Beloved. ʿAṭṭār usually combines the theme of beheading with other mystic concepts. In the following quatrain, he refers to *kitmān al-sirr* or 'concealing the secret.' Here, the poet explains why the tongue, *i.e.* the wick, of the candle is cut off. In such imagery, the fire of the candle is seen as the revelation of love, while according to the conventions of love, the

---

[33] See *Mukhtār-nāma*, ed. M.R. Shafiʿī Kadkanī, Tehran: Sukhan, second print, 1375, pp. 312–339, chapters 47–9. For more information about the contents of Mukhtār-nāma see D. Meneghini in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Mokt̲ār-nāma; idem, "Il Moxtārnāme di ʿAṭṭār: prefazione e capitolo nono su Ḥeyrat Sargaštegi," in *Scritti in onore Giovanni M.D'Erme*, eds., M. Bernardini and N.L. Tornesello, 2 vols., vol. II, Naples, 2005, pp. 709–731; also see Sayyid ʿAlī Mīr Afẓalī, "Āyā mukhtār-nāma az ʿAṭṭār ast?" in *Nashr-i Dānish*, vol. 17, no. 1, Spring, 2000, pp. 32–43.

[34] Chapters 47 and 48.

lover should keep his love secret. If the secret is revealed, the lover may be beheaded, like a candle. Examples of mystic lovers, such as Manṣūr Ḥallāj and ʿAyn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī, who were executed because they revealed too much of the mystic path, come to mind:

چون تن زده سر به راه می باید داشت بگشاده زبان گناه می باید داشت
چون شمع برون داشت زبان ببریدند در کام زبان نگاه می باید داشت

Since one should travel the path with one's head cut off,
an untied tongue should be seen as a sin
When the candle showed its tongue, it was cut;
the tongue should be held within the mouth.[35]

In the following quatrain, the poet emphasizes that God is the only Eternal being and all that is created is subject to death.

ای دل دیدی که هر که شد زنده بمرد جاوید خدای ما نداربنده بمرد
جان آتش و تن چو موم شمع است مرا چون موم بسوخت آتش سوزنده بمرد

O heart! Have you seen that whoever lives, dies?
The eternal God remains, while the servants die.
For me, the soul is the fire, the body the candle's wax:
when the wax has burned, the burning fire dies.[36]

In chapter 48, the candle speaks, and all the quatrains begin with the formula *shamʿ āmad-u guft*, "the candle came and said." The personified candle speaks about its condition, why it burns, and why its tongue and head are cut off. In several of these quatrains, the candle compares itself to the mystic Ḥallāj, stating that despite the pain it is suffering, it has not chanted "I am the Truth" as Ḥallāj did:

شمع آمد و گفت چند از افروختنم وز خامی خود سوختن آموختنم
چون من نزدم انا الحق چون حلاج فتوا که دهد به سوختن و سوختنم

[35] *Mukhtār-nāma*, ed., M.R. Shafiʿī Kadkanī, p. 319, quatrain 1880.
[36] *Ibid.*, p. 316, quatrain 1856.

> The candle came and said: "How long should I burn?
> From my rawness, I have learned burning.
> Since I have not chanted 'I am the Truth' like Ḥallāj
> Who will issue a fatwa to kill and burn me?[37]

Here, the candle refers to the three phases of the path of mystic love. These phases are commonly described in Persian poetry as *khām* (lit. 'raw,' 'unripe') or inexperienced, *pukhta* (lit. 'cooked') or experienced, and *sūkhta* or burned. The lover is first inexperienced and is commonly referred to as being 'raw' or 'unripe,' but when he disciplines his lower desires through ascetic practice, he becomes 'cooked.' The final stage is union with the beloved. This can be achieved by destroying oneself in the beloved through burning. These three stadia represent the lover's growing awareness of the nature of love and the beloved. Mystic poets have adopted the same three terms, as in a well-known couplet from Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (1207–1273): "the harvest of my life is no more than three words: I was raw, I became cooked, and I burned." The moth first learns of the existence of the candle. Then it goes searching for it, wanting to see it with its own eyes. Finally it flutters into the fire to see for certain the reality of the Light, and become one with the fire. These three stages can also be found in many places in ʿAṭṭār's writings. To give an example, in his hagiography *Tadhkirat al-awlīyā*, he recounts the story of Ḥallāj's execution in detail, referring to the three stages on the path of love:

> People say that during his execution someone asked him: 'what is love?' Ḥallāj answered: 'You will see it today and tomorrow and the day after tomorrow.' On the same day he was killed, the next day his body was burned and on the third day, his ash was thrown in the wind.[38]

In chapter 49, the moth speaks to the candle. All but the last quatrain start with the formula *parvāna ba shamʿ guft*, "the moth said to the candle. . . ." In these quatrains, the moth appears as a lover, longing to be united, by annihilation, with the candle's fire. In some of the quatrains, the moth boasts of its pure intention and how it is ready to offer all its existence in one moment, whereas the candle knows that it will burn on with a different head, i.e., each time its wick is trimmed. Several quatrains contain a dialogue between the candle and the moth, as in the following:

---

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 328, quatrain 1958.
[38] ʿAṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyā*, Tehran: Manūchihrī, 1370/1991, p. 515.

پروانه به شمع گفت میسوزم خویش شمعش گفتا که نیستی دورانديش
یک لحظه توسوختی ورستی ازخویش من شب تا روز سوختن دارم پیش

The moth said to the candle: "I am burning well."
That candle said: how short-sighted you are!
You burned for a moment and became free from yourself:
A burning from night to dawn lies ahead of me.[39]

In this and several other quatrains, the candle surprises the moth by claiming that it has more fortitude in matters of love and that it is a truer lover than the moth: the candle is itself in love with the honey from which it is separated, and longs to be united with it.

Khalīl Shirvānī's *Nuzhat al-majālis*

Khalīl Shirvānī's (d. 1331) quatrain collection *Nuzhat al-majālis* contains some 4,000 quatrains composed by more than 290 poets. Khalīl Shirvānī devotes one chapter to candle metaphors, showing their use in relation to the beloved and the lover.[40] The lover often compares his humbleness and awe for the beloved to the perspiration of the candle (i.e. running molten wax). This molten wax is commonly compared with water in which the lover is drowned, with only his tongue (i.e. the wick) out of water, because it is thirsty.[41] While the lover compares himself with the candle, he often claims that his burning is more intense than that the candle: "You (the candle) become fat by weeping, while I become emaciated."[42] The lover considers the wick as the 'cord of life' (*rishta-i jān*), which is thrown to the fire. Ready to sacrifice himself for the beloved, the lover compares the wick with the shroud.[43] The candle dies as soon as the beloved breathes.[44] The candle's tongue burns because it has revealed the secret of love. This is, of course, an allusion to the doctrine *kitmān al-sirr*, 'concealing the

[39] p. 338, quatrain 2037.
[40] *Nuzhat al-majālis*, ed., M.A. Rīyāhī, Tehran: 'Ilmī, second print 1375/1996, third chapter, pp. 164–74.
[41] *Ibid*., p. 168, quatrain 183.
[42] *Ibid*., p. 171, quatrain 204.
[43] *Ibid*., p. 169, quatrain 184.
[44] *Ibid*., p. 171, quatrain 201.

secret.'[45] The candle's smoke symbolizes the lover's sighs, the flame his passion. The lover identifies himself with the candle, taking the moth as his boon companion with whom he shares the sorrow and pangs of love and separation.[46] Sometimes the lover asks why he is the one who burns like a candle while it is the beloved whose brilliant face resembles the flames of the candle.[47] A separate study would be required to analyze all the candle metaphors in such thematic collections of quatrains.

Ḥāfiẓ's Candle Imagery

Ḥāfiẓ uses the word candle about 70 times in his *Dīvān*. The candle and its properties together with the moth form a set of recurrent metaphors in his poetry. In what follows, I will first analyse his ghazal with the *radīf*-rhyme *chu shamʿ* ('like a candle'), and then examine individual cases in which the poet uses the candle metaphor.[48] As in his other imagery and metaphors, the poet's treatment of the candle and the moth is novel, yet in several cases the metaphors from early Persian poets, notably Niẓāmī of Ganja (1141–1209), can be detected. Ḥāfiẓ was strongly indebted to Niẓāmī and praises him in one of his ghazals. In a typically *fakhr*-couplet, Ḥāfiẓ boasts in a literary fashion his superiority:

چو سلک در خوشاب است شعر نغز تو حافظ که گاه لطف سبق می برد ز نظم نظامی

> Ḥāfiẓ, your marvellous poetry is like a string of pearls from fine water that sometimes surpasses the grace of Niẓāmī's verse.[49]

Examining Niẓāmī's influence on Ḥāfiẓ, H. Jāvīd states that the word candle in one of Ḥāfiẓ's *ghazals* refers to Niẓāmī's romance *Khusraw and Shīrīn*. Jāvīd's analysis is convincing and exceptionally insightful, showing

---

[45] See H. Ritter in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), s.v. Abū Yazīd Bisṭāmī, en A.J. Arberry, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), s.v. Al-Djunayd. Zie ook H. Mason, "Hallāj and the Baghdad School of Sufism" and T. Graham, "Abu Saʿīd ibn Abi'l-Khayr and the School of Khurāsān" in *Classical Persian Sufism*, ed., L. Lewisohn, pp. 65–81 and 83–135 respectively.

[46] *Nuzhat al-majālis*, p. 166, quatrain 162.

[47] *Ibid.*, p. 166, quatrain 164.

[48] Ḥāfiẓ's a ghazal is imitated by a number of poets, especially Ṣā'ib of Tabriz, who wrote several ghazals with the same rhyme scheme. See Ṣā'ib, *Dīvān-i Ṣā'ib-i Tabrīzī*, vol. 5, ed. Muḥammad Qahramān, Tehran: 'Ilmī va Farhangī, 1989, pp. 2468–2471, 2473–2474.

[49] The number and order of the couplets differ in critical editions. See Muḥammad Shams al-Dīn Ḥāfiẓ, *Dīvān*, ed. P. Nātil Khānlarī, Tehran: Khārazmī, 1362/1983 p. 936, gh. 460, l. 10.

how new metaphors are contrived based on the existing imagery. Before elaborating on Jāvīd's interesting approach, I will outline his analysis of this ghazal in the same order of couplets that Jāvīd has cited. The opening couplet is as follows:

در وفای عشق تو مشهور خوبانم چو شمع شب‌نشین کوی سربازان و رندانم چو شمع

1. Being constant in your love, I have become famous among the lovers like a candle; I stay awake at nights, retreating to the alley of those who gamble their heads and vagabonds like a candle.[50]

Interpreting this line, Jāvīd emphasizes that Niẓāmī uses 'candle' as an epithet for Shīrīn. Her lovers Khusraw and Farhād call her 'the candle of loveliness' (*shamʿ-i nikūʾī*), 'beautiful' or 'harmonious candle' (*shamʿ-i ṭarāz*), 'the world-illuminating candle' (*shamʿ-i jahāntāb*), 'the night-illuminating candle' (*shamʿ-i shab-afrūz*), etc. Shīrīn's female companions refer to her as 'the candle of the lovers' (*shamʿ-i khūbān*), saying publicly that they are ready to offer their heads or lives for Shīrīn (*sar-bāzī kardan*). Jāvīd states that the radīf-rhyme "like a candle" in this ghazal relates it to the romance of Kusraw and Shīrīn.

In the next couplet, the poem's persona, a distraught lover, says that he cannot sleep because of the grief of separation:

روز و شب خوابم نمی‌آید به چشم غم پرست بس که در بیماری هجر تو گریانم چو شمع

2. Day and night, sleep does not come to my sorrow-worshipping eyes
Because, in the illness of separation, I am weeping like a candle.

Here, Jāvīd points out that in Niẓāmī's work, Khusraw and Farhād cannot sleep day or night because of their separation from Shīrīn. Indeed, he says, all the qualities of the candle that Niẓāmī refers to, such as burning, shedding tears, staying awake, are included in Ḥāfiẓ's ghazal.

In the next couplet, Ḥāfiẓ refers to the revelation of love's secret.

گر کمیت اشک گلگونم نبودی گرم رو کی شدی روشن به گیتی راز پنهانم چو شمع

3. If the horse of my red tears was not light-footed
how could my hidden secret be revealed to the world like a candle.

---

[50] Ḥāfiẓ, *Dīvān*, *ghazal* 289, pp. 594–95.

As Jāvīd rightly indicates, the comparison of tears with a horse is quite novel. The word *kumayt* means a 'red horse' or a 'horse with red mane.' Tears are compared to a light-footed horse, galloping inexorably. The word gulgūn and the horse create a chain of associations to Shīrīn and her horse Gulgūn. In Niẓāmī's epic, Gulgūn transports Shīrīn several times between Persia and Armenia and is her close companion. Niẓāmī even devotes a chapter to describing this horse and Khusraw's horse, Shabdīz. The word *gulgūn* literally means rose-coloured: the lover weeps tears of blood, due to intense suffering, and/or his red eyes are as visible as a lighted candle.

In Jāvīd's view this line refers to the incident in which Khusraw comes to the gate of Shīrīn's palace on a cold snowy night but Shīrīn shuts him out and Khusraw is forced to return. Later, Shīrīn regrets her behaviour and goes after Khusraw on her horse Gulgūn, weeping. In Jāvīd's opinion, until this night, Shīrīn had not revealed her love to Khusraw. Thus, the revelation of the secret of love in Ḥāfiẓ's ghazal refers to this happening. Jāvīd cites couplets from this romance in which the word gulgūn is used twice. In the following line Shīrīn's horse and her tears are described:

به گلگون برکشید آن سنگدل تنگ فرس گلگون و آب دیده گلرنگ

The stone-hearted one sat stooped over Gulgūn
A horse the colour of a red rose (*gulgūn*) and tears the colour of rose.

In another passage we read a similar couplet:

بهر گامی که گلگونش گذر کرد به گلگون آب دیده خاک تر کرد

With every step that Gulgūn took
She wet the earth with red tears.

In the next couplet, Ḥāfiẓ uses the antithesis of water and fire to express the lover's pain. Water refers to tears and fire to the burning of the heart. In candle metaphors, 'water' refers to the molten wax beneath the flame:

درمیان آب و آتش همچنان سرگرم توست این دل زار نزار اشک بارانم چو شمع

4. This burning and emaciated heart, shedding rains of tears like a candle, is between fire and water, constantly thinking of you.

Jāvīd believes that this couplet is inspired by the following lines from Niẓāmī, in which Shīrīn compares herself with a candle:

من آن شمعم که در شب زنده داری همه شب می‌کنم چون شمع زاری
چو شمع از بهر آن سوزم بر آتش که باشد شمع وقت سوختن خوش

I am that candle that does not sleep at night
The whole night I weep like a candle
Like a candle I am burning in the fire
Because the candle is pleased at the moment of burning

Jāvīd suggests that Ḥāfiẓ has invented the compound *sar-garm* (lit. 'head-warm') which means 'being entirely occupied with a thought or something,' based on the idea of the burning torch or candle 'placing its soul on its head' (*jān dar sar nihādan*). The musician Nakīsā sings for Khusraw on behalf of Shīrīn the following:

چو مشعل سر در آوردم بدین در نهادم جان خود چون شمع بر سر

Like a torch I raised my head outside this door
Placing my soul on my head like a candle.

In the next couplet, Ḥāfiẓ uses a hyperbole, warning the beloved that if he does not send a moth as a symbol of union, he will burn the whole world like a candle. The image turns on the double meaning of *parvāna*: in relation to a candle, it means 'moth,' but in combination with the verb 'send,' one thinks of the meaning 'letter of permission':

در شب هجران مرا پروانه وصلی فرست ورنه از دردت جهانی را بسوزانم چو شمع

5. Send me a moth/permission of union in the night of separation,
Otherwise, I will burn a world through pain for you, like a candle.

Analysing this couplet, Jāvīd concentrates on two concepts: *jahān-sūz* ('world-burning') and *parvāna*, stating that "Farhād is the brightest candle in the banquet of Khusraw and Shīrīn." Farhād refers to himself as world-burning in the following couplet:

منم یاری که بر یادت شب و روز جهان سوزم به فریاد جهان سوز

I am that lover who in memory of you, day and night
is burning the world through the cry, 'burn the world.'

Jāvīd links this burning with the moth mentioned in the first hemistich, explaining that the word *parvāna* means 'moth' also means 'decree,' and 'permission. In his opinion, the 'moth of union' means 'permission to visit,' 'tidings of union' and 'the messenger between two lovers.' Jāvīd convincingly shows that Shāpūr, in *Khusraw and Shīrīn*, is depicted as a *parvāna* in the sense of a messenger. It is also in the context of Shāpūr's activities that the concept of the 'moth of desire' is used.

In the next couplet, the lover emphasizes that without the shining face of the beloved, all days are nights.

بی جمال عالم آرای تو روزم چون شبست با کمال عشق تو در عین نقصانم چو شمع

6. Without your world-adorning beauty, my day is like night;
despite the perfection of love for you, I am waning like a candle.

In this line, there is also a subtle comparison and antithesis between night and day, the sun and the moon, perfect love and diminishing love. The compound "world-adorning beauty" refers to the sun whose lack turns the lover's day into night. In this context, 'waning' connotes the moon, while also referring to the candle shrinking as it burns. In the presence of the beloved's perfect love, the lover is diminishing like the moon or the candle. Jāvīd states that "world-adorning beauty" refers to Khusraw in the passage in which Shāpūr presents a portrait of Khusraw to Shīrīn and describes his unconditional love for her:

جمالش راکه بزم آرای عیدست سزا اصلی و زیبائی مزید است(...)
بدین فرو جمال آن عالم افروز هوای عشق تو دارد شب و روز
خیالت را شبی در خواب دیدست ازآن شب عقل وهوش ازوی رمیدست
نه می نوشد نه با کس جام گیرد نه شب خسبد نه روز آرام گیرد

His beauty which is the adornment of the feast
increases loveliness and is the essence of virtue. (…)
with such a divine halo, world-illuminating beauty
he has the passion of your love day and night
One night he saw your image in his sleep.
From that night on, logic and reason have fled from him.

He neither drinks wine, nor lifts a cup with anyone;
neither sleeps at night, nor rests by day.[51]

In Jāvīd's view, there is little difference between Ḥāfiẓ's 'world-adorning beauty' and Niẓāmī's 'world-illuminating beauty,' while Niẓāmī's 'passion of love' is changed to the 'perfection of love.' The sleeplessness and restlessness of Niẓāmī's second couplet occur both in the second couplet of Ḥāfiẓ's ghazal and in the following:

کوه صبرم نرم شد چون موم در دست غمت تا در آب و آتش عشقت گدازانم چو شمع

7. The mountain of my patience is softened like wax in the hands of your sorrow, until I turn to the fire and water of your love, like a candle.

Jāvīd's interpretation links this couplet to Niẓāmī's descriptions of Farhād, elaborating on words such as stone, mountain and wax. Shāpūr introduces Farhād to Shīrīn as follows:

به پیشه دست بوسندش همه روم به تیشه سنگ خارا را کند موم

as for his occupation, all Byzantium kisses his hands
flint-stone is turned into wax by his axe.[52]

The reference is to Farhād's work as a master architect, an artist in stone. Niẓāmī describes Farhād's digging the mountain, using the phrase *kūh chūn mūm*:

چنان از هم دریدانم آن بوم که می شد زیر زخمش کوه چون موم

He tore apart the elements of that region in such a way
that the mountain turned into wax under his blows.[53]

To reinforce his argument, Jāvīd cites the following which comes very close to Ḥāfiẓ's second hemistich:

مرا عشقت چو موم زرد سوزد دلم برخویشتن زین درد سوزد

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 70, ll. 12, 14–16.
[52] *Ibid.*, p. 216, l. 11.
[53] *Ibid.*, p. 220, l. 7.

Love for you is burning me like yellow wax
my heart burns for my condition, because of this pain.[54]

The last couplet of Ḥāfiẓ's ghazal that Jāvīd analyzes is the following, in which Jāvīd sees an allusion to Farhād's death as it appears in Niẓāmī's romance:

همچو صبحم یک نفس باقیست با دیدار تو چهره بنما دلبرا تا جان برافشانم چو شمع

8. Like dawn, I have only one breath to see you
O sweetheart, show your face so that I offer my soul to you like a candle.

After ordering that Farhād should be killed, by throwing him from a mountain, Khusraw sends a letter of condolence to Shīrīn, saying that it is not a wonder that a lover such as Farhād should die for such a beloved. According to Jāvīd, the above couplet is inspired by the following passage (the last couplet is my addition):

تو روزی او ستاره‌ای دل‌افروز فرو میرد ستاره چون شود روز
تو صبحی او چراغ ار دل پذیرد چراغ آن به که پیش از صبح میرد
تو مستی شمع و او پروانه مست چو شمع آید رود پروانه از دست

You are the day and he the star whose heart burns,
When the day breaks, the star sets
You are the dawn, he the lamp: if the heart accepts it,
it is better for the lamp to die before the dawn.
You are the candle and he the drunken moth,
When the candle is brought in, the moth swoons away.[55]

Jāvīd's interpretation shows how Ḥāfiẓ artistically leans upon Niẓāmī's metaphors and stories, yet it must be said that many of these metaphors, tropes and imagery also occur in the works of other poets, and that Niẓāmī uses candle metaphors and attributes such as sleeplessness for protagonists other than those in the romance of *Khusraw and Shīrīn*. Niẓāmī's influence on Persian poets is immense, but the influence of other poets should not be underestimated. If we are to believe the statement of Niẓāmī the Prosodist, a neophyte poet was expected to know by heart

[54] *Ibid.*, p. 245, l. 5.
[55] *Ibid.*, p. 265, ll. 6–8.

20,000 couplets from previous poets.[56] Notwithstanding, Ḥāfiẓ and many other poets are indebted to Niẓāmī, especially with regard to their allusions to Khusraw, Farhād, Shīrīn and other lovers whom Niẓāmī immortalised. As I have shown elsewhere, the number of references to these lovers increased enormously after Niẓāmī wrote his romances.[57]

We can, for example, see how poets such as Saʿdī exploited various aspects of Shīrīn's love in their candle imagery. Shīrīn's name means 'sweet,' so it was natural for poets to turn to her when contriving new metaphors on the candle, since candles were made of beeswax.[58]

In Saʿdī's treatment of the candle and the moth, the candle claims to be the true lover on account of her fortitude, enduring the burning pain of love and being ready to offer her head. Here, the moth lives in the illusion of being a committed lover, but the candle explains that she is the lover, living in separation from honey. In other words, as the wax is separated from the honey, the candle's 'sweet' (*Shīrīn*) beloved, the candle weeps at its separation and longs to be reunited. In a subtle pun on the word Shīrīn, Saʿdī shows his mastery: *shīrīn* refers both to 'sweet' and to the ideal beloved in Persian romantic literature. By referring to Shīrīn, poets such as Saʿdī and Ḥāfiẓ point to the complexity of love. While the moth loves the candle, the candle loves the honey, reflecting the love relationship between Khusraw, Shīrīn and Farhād. Khusraw loves Shīrīn but Shīrīn, experiencing Khusraw's fickleness, falls in love with Farhād. The love story between Farhād and Shīrīn first appears as an episode in Niẓāmī's romance *Khusraw and Shīrīn*, but it was later developed as an independent romance. Both the moth and Khusraw learn that they have a rival. In Khusraw's case, he succeeds in killing Farhād so that he can be united with Shīrīn, whereas the moth listens and learns from the candle how to exercise love, and how to develop its traits as a lover:[59]

چو شیرینی از من بدر میرود چو فرهادم آتش بسر میرود

As sweetness (*shīrīnī*) has left me, the flames
rise from the top of my head like Farhād.[60]

---

[56] Niẓāmī ʿArūḍī, *Chahār-maqāla*, ed. M. Qazvīnī, Leiden: 1909, p. 30.

[57] A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, *Laylī and Majnūn: Love, Madness and Mystic Longing in Nizāmī's Epic Romance*, Leiden: Brill, pp. 69–70.

[58] For the preparation of a candle in medieval times see M. Omidsalar in de *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Candle, i. Making and Uses.

[59] The romance is composed for the first time by Vahshī Bāfiqī.

[60] Muṣliḥ al-Dīn Saʿdī, *Būstān*, ed. Gh. Yūsufī, Tehran: Khārazmī, 1996, p. 114, l. 1967.

In this couplet, Saʿdī emphasizes the qualities of being a lover. The candle compares its patience, loyalty, chastity and self-effacement to Farhād. As the epitome of an altruistic lover, Farhād offers his life for Shīrīn. There is also an analogy between the waning and burning candle and a lover such as Farhād, both dying as a kind of martyr to love. Although of Iranian stock, Farhād's type of love belongs to the Arabic category of ʿUdhrite lovers.[61] In the ʿUdhrite tradition, unrequited love is the central theme. The lover spends his life in separation, loneliness, sleeplessness, delirium, and finally dies. His death is then characterized as martyrdom.

The theme of martyrdom appears time and again in candle metaphors. ʿAṭṭār wrote the following quatrain in which he states that the body of a martyr does not need to be washed:

پروانه به شمع گفت از روز نخست چون کشته شوم برسرت از عهد درست
زنهار به اشک خود بشویی تو مرا شمعش گفتا شهید را نتوان شست

The moth said to the candle:
"because of the true covenant, because of that first day,
would you wash my body with your tears, if I be killed for your head?
The candle answered: "A martyr needs no washing."[62]

To return to Jāvīd's interpretation of Ḥāfiẓ's *ghazal*; while Ḥāfiẓ is certainly influenced by Niẓāmī, this influence is traceable primarily in the depiction of a lover's psychological condition in general, and the possibility of interpreting a poem in a spiritual and a mundane sense, rather than in the repertoire of images. The terms Ḥāfiẓ uses in his candle ghazal are also used by Ḥāfiẓ's predecessors and are commonplaces in Persian (mystic) love poetry. The compound *shab-nishīn* (lit. 'sitting at night') or 'keeping vigil' is an essential attribute of the lover theorised in many ghazals and rhyming couplets (*Būstān*) prior to Ḥāfiẓ. The same may be said of the word *sarbāz* in the first couplet of Ḥāfiẓ's candle ghazal, referring to the lover's readiness to wager his head, which represents absolute sacrifice and self-effacement. The images in the second couplet refer to the psychological state of the separated lover, who because of love suffers from sleeplessness, has become ill and is weeping like a candle.

[61] R. Jacobi, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), s.v. ʿUdhrī.
[62] *Mukhtār-nāma*, p. 337, quatrain 2030.

Jāvīd's claim that Ḥāfiẓ's candle imagery is associated with Shīrīn is true to some extent, but Niẓāmī commonly refers to the psychological states of lovers, whether male or female, through candle metaphors. He depicts Laylī's loving feelings and her incarcerated situation many times through candle metaphors, and Majnūn calls Laylī a candle several times. In the following example, Majnūn is the moth and Laylī the candle:

ای شمع نهان خانه جان پروانه خویش را مرنجان

O candle of the hidden house of the soul
Do not harm your own moth.[63]

In the following couplet in the Kaʿba episode, Majnūn compares his burning with love for Laylī to a candle:

گرچه زغمش چو شمع سوزم هم بی غم او مباد روزم

Although I am burning like a candle with pain for her,
I do not wish that my days should be without her pain.[64]

In another passage, Niẓāmī uses the metaphor of decapitation, showing how Majnūn desires to be beheaded:

چون شمع دلم فروغناکست گر بازبری سرم چه باکست
شمع از سر درد سرکشیدن به گردد وقت سر بریدن

Like a candle, my heart is full of light
why should I fear if you chop off my head.
The candle is released from its headache
the moment its head is cut off.[65]

In several places in Majnūn and Laylī, Laylī is compared to the candle. She gives light by altruistically burning herself down. The most moving candle-imagery appears in the following short passage in which Niẓāmī expresses Laylī's suffering, while she hides her loving emotions from her tribe. Niẓāmī uses this candle imagery to show Laylī's double life, out-

[63] Niẓāmī Ganjavī, *Laylī u Majnūn*, ed. A.A. Alizada, Moscow: Dānish, 1965, chapter 15, l. 28.
[64] *Ibid.* chapter 19, l. 42.
[65] *Ibid.* chapter 35, ll. 55–6.

wardly smiling and giving light to her family, but inwardly burning with the fire of love:

چون شمع به زیر خنده می زیست شیرین خندید و تلخ بگریست
می سوخت به آتش جدائی نه دود در او نه روشنائی (...)
پیدا شغبی چو باد می کرد پنهان جگری چو خاک می خورد

Like a candle, she lived with a forced smile,
she laughed sweetly and wept bitterly. (...)
She was burning through the fire of separation,
neither smoke, nor light could be seen in her.
Outwardly she lamented like the wind,
inwardly she consumed her heart like the earth.[66]

Similarly, Jāvīd's suggestion that Ḥāfiẓ's image in couplet four, 'placing the soul on the head' is based on Niẓāmī's romance cannot be corroborated for certain. Such imagery is much older than Niẓāmī. As we have seen, Manūchihrī's candle poem, in the first line of his qaṣīda, introduces this idea: "O you who have placed your soul on the top of your head."[67] The idea of placing the soul on the head is usually elaborated in various ways in candle metaphors, in which the fire is the soul of the candle, expressing both the candle's burning and its vulnerability, since it can be snuffed out by a wind. Saʿdī says:

زبان ز گفتن و ناگفتنی نگه می دار که شمع، مستی خود در سر زبانه کند

Hold your tongue from saying or unsaying,
for the candle let its existence glow on the tip of its tongue.[68]

A last example comes from ʿAṭṭār, who shows how the lover openly addresses the beloved, revealing his love:

جانا منم ز مستی سر در جهان نهاده چون شمع آتش تو بر فرق جان نهاده

[66] *Ibid.*, chapter 24: 34, 36–7.

[67] In the same ghazal, in which the poet mentions his own name, he refers to the same idea: "How wondrously, Ḥāfiẓ held the fire of your love on his head."

[68] *Kullīyāt-i Saʿdī*, ed. M.ʿA. Furūghī, Tehran: Muḥammad, 1987, p. 179, l. 12. Also see Sanāʾī who uses the same concept in one of his qaṣīdas. See Ḥakīm Majdūd-i Ādam Sanāʾī, *Dīvān*, ed. M.T. Mudarris Raḍavī, Tehran: Sanāʾī, 1983, p. 527, ll. 8–9.

O love, I'm one who in love's drunkenness wanders the world
with your fire on top of my soul, like the candle.[69]

Jāvīd's analysis of this ghazal is on several points extremely insightful. For instance, his approach to couplet five is original, convincingly connecting the ambiguous *parvāna* to Shāpūr in Niẓāmī's romance. This is not the only instance that Ḥāfiẓ uses this *double entendre*. In ghazal 112/3, depicting the lover's union with the beloved, Ḥāfiẓ uses it again. The line can be translated: "in union with you, a person finds the moth like the candle," translating *parvāna* as 'moth,' but if it is translated as the messenger bringing an invitation, it is:

کسی به وصل تو چون شمع یافت پروانه که زیر تیغ تو سر دم سری دگر دارد

A person invited to union with you is like a candle
which constantly submits a new head to your blade.

Prior to Ḥāfiẓ's time, the candle metaphors were already in common use to foreground the theme of union and the lover's sacrifice, depicted through the imagery of being beheaded by the sword of the beloved. Another example of the *parvāna* appears in ghazal 320/2, in which the theme of union is concealed under the concept of offering one's life. In this example, the use of the word *dam* meaning 'breath,' 'blow,' 'instantly,' etc. is interesting. Breath normally gives life but in the case of the candle, it kills, and here it is a metaphor for the lover's death:

پروانه او گر رسدم در طلب جان چون شمع همان دم به دمی جان بسپارم

If, in the search for life, his decree-moth should reach me
I will, like the candle, relinquish life in one breath.

In another couplet (326/3), Ḥāfiẓ connects the word *parvāna* to *rāḥat* forming a compound, meaning the decree/moth of comfort. Here again, the compound is used as a metaphor for union which presupposes the lover's annihilation. Death releases the lover from scorching pain of separation:

[69] Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār, *Dīvān*, ed. T. Tafazzulī, Tehran: ʿIlmī va Farhangī, 2005, p. 583, ghazal 834, l. 1.

پروانه راحت بده ای شمع که امشب از آتش دل پیش تو چون شمع گدازم

O candle, give the messenger/moth permission easily, because tonight
in your presence, heart's fire is melting me like a candle.

Another use of the ambiguous *parvāna* appears in ghazal 417/3 in which the theme of offering life and union is depicted:

به مژده جان به صبا داد شمع در نفسی ز شمع روی تو اش چون رسید پروانه

With soul rejoicing, the candle offered its life in a breath
when the moth/decree reached it from the candle of your face.

Using the analogy of the candle and the fearless moth, the poet describes in the second line (417/1) how the lover is attracted by the beloved's mole, and approaches with no fear. Here the poet makes a pun on the word *parvāna*: in one reading the lover is a moth while in another reading the lover 'has no fear' *parvā na*:

چراغ روی تو را شمع گشت پروانه مرا ز خال تو با حال خویش پروانه

The candle has become the moth for the lamp of your face:
I have no regard for my own condition because of your mole.

Jāvīd's correlating approach to the candle-ghazal highlights the concepts and imagery that may well derive from earlier work, but he does not give a coherent analysis of the poem as a whole; of how the poet builds up his imagery from the first to the last line. In what follows I will give a brief analysis of the entire poem, to indicate how one set of metaphors is used by Ḥāfiẓ to depict several aspects of love in a novel way.

The poetic persona in this ghazal is a lover who is describing his suffering due to unrequited love. The person of the lover is highlighted by the rhyme throughout, which is the first person singular suffix *-am*. In each couplet the lover expresses one aspect of his love and suffering. While referring to the lover's constancy in the opening couplet, the poet uses antinomian terminology, enabling at least a two-layered interpretation, of profane or antinomian mystic love. The lover spends his time in the alley of those who gamble and risk their lives. He is apparently following the way of rogues and ruffians who spent their time in taverns and brothels, ready to risk everything, including their lives for the beloved.

In the second couplet, the poet concentrates on the lover's patience, which is melting like wax in the hands of the beloved's sorrow, especially because the lover is melting like a candle.

The emphasis of the third couplet, which is included in Khānlarī's edition but left out in Jāvīd's analysis, also deals with the lover's patience. The line runs as follows:

رشته صبرم به مقراض غمت بریده شد همچنان در آتش مهر تو خندانم چو شمع

> The scissors of your sorrow snipped the cord of my patience
> yet I am still smiling in the fire of your love like a candle.

While in the previous couplet, patience is softened like wax in the hands of the beloved's sorrow, in this couplet she has the scissors of sorrow. A pair of scissors often appear in candle poems, since they are used to trim the cotton wick (*rishta*) so that it burns better, but here Ḥāfiẓ uses it in a different way, achieving utmost effect. In this case, it is the wick of the lover's patience which has been cut by the beloved's sorrow. Like the trimmed candle, the lover burns more intensely in the fire of love.

The next two couplets of Ḥāfiẓ's ghazal are on the lover's weeping. Through Jāvīd's perceptive approach, we have already touched upon the imagery. In addition to Jāvīd's analysis, we can note that tears are used here as the revelation of love's secret.[70] There is also a paradox in the candle imagery. While it sheds tears and reveals its love, it is also shrinking. This shrinking is linked to the antithesis in the next couplet between the perfect nature of the beloved's love, and the beloved's lofty position, while

[70] The concept of the secret, in combination with the candle, appears in the *Dīvān* three times. In the following couplet (87/2), the candle is depicted as the one revealing the secret through its light, but the poet-lover thanks God that the heart's secret remains in its tongue, i.e. the wick in the flame: "The candle wanted to reveal our private secret; / thank God that the secret of its heart remained in its tongue." Although Persian poets usually present the candle's tears and burning as a tattletale revealing the secret of love, here Ḥāfiẓ uses a reversed image. The image is strengthened in the next couplet (289/4), extending the candle metaphor to the fire of love in the chest of the lover. Using hyperbole, the poet states that the Sun, which illuminates the sky, is only part of the hidden fire in his heart: "The sun's a flame from this hidden fire in my chest, / a flame that's taken to the heavens." Ḥāfiẓ also uses the word *sirr* in the sense of ' love's mystery' and 'secret' in the next line (481/6) in combination with the *tanāsub* (pair of harmonious images) of 'the candle and the moth,' stating that the moth has nothing to say about the secret, but the candle reveals it through its tongue: "Perhaps the candle can express the secret of this dictum with its tongue: / if not, the moth has no way with words." In both these examples the 'tongue' is both the eloquent means to reveal love's secret, and the burning wick.

the lover is shrinking and being consumed by the fire of love. Perfection and shrinking are placed in parallel with day and night.

Having contrasted the lover and the beloved, the next couplet treats the theme of union. As Aḥmad Ghazālī has pointed out in his theoretical treatise *Savāniḥ*, the union belongs to the beloved. Without the beloved's consent, union cannot be achieved, which is why the lover here implores the beloved for union. Ghazālī maintains that union is the rank (*martaba*) of the beloved, whose attributes include self-sufficiency, supremacy and glory, whereas separation belongs to the lover, whose attributes consist of self-abasement, needfulness and poverty.[71] Ghazālī takes the lover and the beloved as a pair of opposites, who despite this opposition are each other's complements. The beloved becomes aware of her own attributes when she compares them to those of the lover. In fact, the attributes of the beloved will not manifest themselves, unless she has seen the lover's attributes.

The theme of union is further elaborated in the next couplet in which the lover states that the moment of union is near. By referring to the time of union, which is at dawn, the differences between night and day are removed. To express his servile position, the lover compares himself to the dawn that meets the morning, the shining sun. Just as the candle is extinguished at the rising of the sun, the lover longs to efface himself, to offer his life for the beloved. The paradoxical candle is a perfect metaphor for the lover's union in death: like the candle that comes to life when its head, the wick, is trimmed, the lover achieves a new life by self-annihilation. The candle's death has become a cliché image for the union with the beloved. In Saʿdī's dialogue between the candle and the moth, in which the candle teaches the moth the etiquette of being a lover, when the candle is snuffed out it says to the moth, "O boy, this is the end of love; if you want to learn to be a lover, you should be freed from burning by death."

To achieve union, the lover warns the beloved that if he does not send the permission/moth of union, the lover will burn a world through the pain of love's longing. The ambiguous word *parvāna* provides and apt correspondence to the lover's death: union is seen as the annihilation of the lover, which releases him from burning and suffering. In the last line, in which Ḥāfiẓ appears as the poet, it becomes clear that the poetic persona may be Ḥāfiẓ, who is in love and is searching for a way to find union with the beloved.

---

[71] *Savāniḥ*, pp. 60–1, *faṣl* 39 (3), ll. 18ff.

In sum, Ḥāfiẓ's ghazal compares several psychological aspects of the lover with the candle: the lover sheds tears like the candle, the lover's sleepless nights are like the nights the candle spends awake, in fiery tears. The lover' pain is likened to the burning flames. The lover's emaciation is an analogy with the candle's form. As the candle tip bears molten wax and burning flame, the lover is constantly between fire and water: outwardly he weeps and inwardly he is on fire. Sometimes the lover says that he cries to extinguish the fire in his heart with his tears. Ḥāfiẓ treats the wick as a symbol of the lover's patience, but to make the fire burn better, it should be cut off. If this happens, the lover complains that the burning of separation is increased. The candle is presented as a symbol of fidelity, and of beheaded lovers.

Other Candle Imagery

In addition to this candle-ghazal, Ḥāfiẓ uses many other candle metaphors for a wide range of subjects. In many of these, the candle stands for the beloved, referring to his brilliance, eloquence, constancy, indifference, revealing the secret of love, etc. In ghazal (28/3), for instance, Ḥāfiẓ depicts how the lover has lost his religion and heart for the beloved's sake, but the beloved keeps reproaching (*malāmat*) him, accusing the lover of choosing the easy and safe path of love (*salāmat*). Here the flickering flame of the candle is described in terms of 'laughing,' and boasting of his love, yet at night it is awake, asking the lovers to pay their debt. The burning of the candle is described in terms of boasting. In several Persian candle metaphors, the burning of the wick is the candle's way of showing off its quality as a lover who burns but endures all the hardship of love's fire and separation from its beloved, i.e. honey. In this couplet, Ḥāfiẓ describes two aspects of the candle; it is burning well, illuminating its surroundings as if boasting in public of the glories of its Beloved's lips, while in private, in the meetings of lovers, it redeems its guilt for this boasting by staying awake at night:

شمع اگر زان لب خندان به زبان لافی زد پیش عشاق تو شب‌ها به غرامت برخاست

> While the candle boasted with its tongue of those smiling lips,
> it rose many nights to pay its debt in the presence of your lovers.

In several ghazals, Ḥāfiẓ uses the candle metaphor in an amatory context. The beloved comes to a Magian temple with a cup of wine in his hand,

so drunk that his drunken eyes intoxicate those present in the temple. Using the antithesis between sitting and rising, Ḥāfiẓ describes how the longing of those present in the Magian temple is aroused at seeing such a beautiful beloved. When the beloved rises, the candle of the heart of the sweetheart sits, but when he stands up, the lovers lament:

شمع دل دمسازم بنشست چو او برخاست وافغان زنظربازان برخاست چواو بنشست

When he rose, the candle of the heart of my sweetheart sat down:
when he sat down, the cry of the lovers of boys arose.

In another ghazals (41/9), the poet compares the constant burning of his heart to the burning of a candle:

ای مجلسیان سوز دل حافظ مسکین از شمع بپرسید که در سوز و گداز است

O friends of the gathering! As for the burning in the wretched Ḥāfiẓ's heart,
ask the candle that is burning and melting.

The metaphor of candle is sometimes used to strengthen a hyperbolic depiction of the beloved, as in the following couplet (47/2) in which the beloved's round and shining face is compared to the full moon, outshining the candle flame in the middle of the night:

گو شمع میارید در این جمع که امشب در مجلس ما ماه رخ دوست تمام است

Say: "do not bring a candle to this gathering, for tonight
in our gathering, the moon of the Friend's face suffices.

In ghazal 68/1, Ḥāfiẓ uses the metaphor of the candle for the beloved. The first metaphor appears in the opening couplet in which the poet describes the beloved as a 'candle burning from the heart' (*shamʿ-i dil-afrūz*). Since the ghazal contains the radīf-rhyme *kīst* or 'who is it?', the poet asks where the beloved is:

یارب این شمع دل افروز ز کاشانه کیست جان ما سوخت بپرسید که جانانه کیست

O lord! In whose house does this burning-heart candle belong?
Our soul is burning; whose beloved is he?

In the same ghazal (68/4), Ḥāfiẓ uses another compound, namely *shamʿ-i saʿādat partaw* or the 'candle with rays of happiness.' The poet asks who

is the lover blessed with union with such a candle, this time using the image of the moth:

دولت صحبت آن شمع سعادت پرتو باز پرسید خدا را که به پروانه کیست

The good fortune of companionship with that candle with rays of bliss:
ask again, O God, for whose moth is it?

In another ghazal (70/5), Ḥāfiẓ again uses the metaphor of the candle with a burning heart (*shamʿ-i dil-afrūz*) for the beloved. Here the poet-lover asks the luminous beloved to return because in the absence of her/his face, there is no light or purity. Purity here also has the connotation of transparency (as of pure wax) and joy.

بازآی که بی روی تو ای شمع دل افروز در بزم حریفان اثر نور و صفا نیست

O burning-heart candle, come back! for without your face
there's no trace of light or purity in lovers' feasts.

In the next metaphor, in ghazal 77/4, Ḥāfiẓ combines the metaphor of the candle with a mystic convent. His compound *shamʿ-i ṣawmiʿa-afrūz* or 'the candle that lights the mystic's convent':

وفا مجوی ز دشمن که پرتوی ندهد چو شمع صومعه افروزی از چراغ کنشت

Seeking fidelity from the foe who gives no light
is like lighting the cloister candle from a heathen temple's lamp.

In another ghazal (82/3), Ḥāfiẓ uses candle imagery to describe the lover's pain and burning. Using hyperbole, the poet says that the smoke from the tip of the candle is not comparable to the smoke coming from the burned liver of the lover.

بر شمع نرفت از گذر آتش دل دوش آن دود که از سوز جگر بر سر ما رفت

Last night, that smoke, which through the liver's burning rose to our head
from the fire of the heart, did not rise from any candle.

In the next couplet, Ḥāfiẓ uses the traditional paradox of the new life that comes from cutting off the candle's head (i.e., wick) to express the new lease of life which he feels, presumably from the 'fire of the heart' in the previous couplet:

آن شمع سرگرفته دگرچهره برفروخت وین پیر سالخورده جوانی ز سرگرفت

The face of the candle whose head is cut glows anew,
And this old man, consumed by years, starts his youth.

The Candle and Jealousy

The concept of jealousy (*ghayrat*) appears a number of times in combination with the candle. The term *ghayrat* comes from Islamic love mysticism and refers to a lover's jealousy. Aḥmad Ghazālī is perhaps one of the first theorists of love to elaborate on this concept in the context of blame (*malāma*). In his opinion, the lover's attention towards the material world is cut by the sword of the beloved's jealousy (*ghayrat*). This sword forces the lover to pay attention to the beloved, becoming detached from all but love. In other words, the lover should divest himself of any exterior interest, seeking everything in his interior reality.

The following couplet contains both the term *ghayrat* and the candle. It is not accepted by Khānlarī in his critical text edition, but appears in other editions and is usually commented upon:

سرکش مشو که چون شمع از غیرتت بسوزد دلبر که در کف او موم است سنگ خارا

Do not rebel because the beloved, like a candle, burns you out of jealousy,
The beloved in whose hands flint-stone is wax.[72]

Here the beloved's fiery quality is compared to a candle. Aḥmad Kasravī said that the couplet had no meaning and contained much nonsense. But Khurramshāhī rightly counters that the beloved in this case is the immaterial beloved.[73] The words *sarkash* or rebellious (lit. 'head-rising') and *ghayrat* or jealousy can refer to the relationship between God and Iblīs or Satan at the dawn of creation. When God created Adam, he invited the angels to admire him. The angels hesitated when they learned that man was going to be God's vicegerent on earth (2:30), fearing that man would abuse his power. As a high-ranking angel, Iblīs begins to argue with God,

[72] This couplet does not occur in Avary's translation. *The Collected Lyrics of Háfiz of Shíráz*, trans. P. Avery, Cambridge: Chetwynd House, 2007.

[73] Bahā 'l-Dīn Khurramshāhī, *Ḥāfiẓ-nāma*, vol. I, pp. 134–35.

and disobeys him by refusing to prostrate himself before mankind.[74] Iblīs refused to kneel before something made of dust, and he argued that as a true lover of God, he could not have two beloveds.

In other references to Iblīs, Ḥāfiẓ uses the term *ghayrat* meaning jealousy and offended honour. In the following couplet, the jealous Iblīs becomes all fire and strikes Adam's soul:

جلوه‌ای کرد رخت دید ملک عشق نداشت عین آتش شد از این غیرت و بر آدم زد

When Your countenance was revealed, it saw that angels had no love,
its honour offended, it became all fire, and was ignited in Adam's soul.[75]

The concept of *ghayrat* appears in combination with the candle in ghazal 443/8 in which the lover explains why thousand souls have been burned: the beloved appears each night and day at another assembly.

هزار جان مقدس بسوخت زین غیرت که هر صباح و مسا شمع مجلس دگری

A thousand holy souls burned because of this jealousy
That you are the candle of a different assembly each night and dawn.

The idea of jealousy is connected in the next couplet to the idea of *har-jā'ī*, a quality of the beloved elaborated upon in Persian love poetry. The term *har-jā'ī* means literally 'belonging to every place' alluding to the fact that the beloved goes to all kinds of places and associates with all types of people, living a promiscuous life, which arouses the lover's jealousy. The term has become a symbol for the beloved's disloyalty and not keeping his promises. Khalīl Shirvānī devotes a chapter to this aspect of the beloved in his *Nuzhat al-majālis*.[76] In the following couplet (309/7), the lover implores the beloved not to become the candle of every assembly because he (the lover) will burn with jealousy. In the second line, he warns the beloved that if he frequents all types of people, he will erase him from his mind:

شمع هر جمع مشو ور نه بسوزی ما را یاد هر قوم مکن تا نروی از یادم

---

[74] P.J. Awn, *Satan's Tragedy and Redemption: Iblis in Sufi Psychology*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983, pp. 169ff; see also N. Pourjavady, *Sulṭān-i ṭarīqat*, pp. 45–9; D. Āshūrī, *Hastī-shināsī*, pp. 171–80.

[75] Ḥāfiẓ, *Dīvān*, p. 312, gh. 148, l. 2.

[76] *Nuzhat al-majālis*, pp. 394–96.

Do not be the candle of every gathering, lest you burn us,
Do not think of every people, lest you may not pass from my thoughts.

The candle as the centre-point of an assembly is a favourite with Ḥāfiẓ, who refers to this aspect of the candle at least nine times.

The Candle and the Moth

The moth appears in many candle metaphors, and has done so in Persian love lyrics since the tenth century.[77] In one of his lyrics, Rūdakī describes the moth fluttering around the luminous face of the beloved:

چو عارض برفروزی می بسوزد چو من پروانه بر گردت هزارا

If you were to light your cheek, it would burn
the moth that like me flutters around you a thousand times.

Bābā Ṭāhir-i ʿUryān (the Naked) also uses the candle and moth in one of his quatrains.[78] The pair become increasingly popular from the twelfth century onwards, especially through the poetry of ʿAṭṭār, Saʿdī and later of Ahlī from Shiraz. In the fourteenth century, this imagery had become over-used by many poets. In addition to the anecdote of the candle and the moth in his *Conference of the Birds*, ʿAṭṭār has a chapter with the rubric *Dar sukhan guftan ba zabān-i parvāna* or "On speaking with the tongue of the moth" in his *Mukhtār-nāma*. Here the poet presents 17 quatrains in which the moth addresses the candle, elaborating on its burning love, sacrifice, and union. In several cases, the candle teaches the moth how to endure the pain of love, how devotedly it should offer its head for the beloved, and how to spend the anguished moments of separation. I will give just one example:

The moth said to the candle: "how long should I burn?
The candle said: "I will teach you how to burn.
You burn your wing in just one moment while the whole night
I am burning, weeping and glowing."[79]

---

[77] This metaphor has been studied by Pourjavady in chapter 32 of his *Zabān-i ḥāl*, pp. 871–94.

[78] In one of the quatrains attributed to this poet, he uses the imagery in an amatory context. On this poet see L.P. Elwell-Sutton, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Bābā Tāher.

[79] *Mukhtār-nāma*, p. 338, quatrain 2039.

Although many metaphors in the candle and moth motif had been contrived by the poets of previous centuries, Ḥāfiẓ was able to devise new ones. The candle and moth appear more than ten times in his ghazals, and in each case he has found a new way to exploit this cliché.

Ḥāfiẓ's candle and moth metaphors usually add a new element. In ghazal 18/4, in which the radīf-rhyme is *bisūkht* or 'burned,' Ḥāfiẓ expresses several thoughts in a concise manner:

سوز دل بین که ز بس آتش اشکم دل شمع دوش بر من ز سر مهر چو پروانه بسوخت

See the heart's burning, see how for love's sake, last night,
the fire of my tears burned the heart of the candle like a moth for me.

The poet begins the couplet by asking the reader to see the intense burning of the lover's heart. The blazing fire of tears shed for love's sake, running on the lover's cheeks, is burning the heart of the candle, as a candle burns a moth. But 'the heart of the candle' could also be understood as 'the candle of [my] heart.' Both the candle and the lover are burning. The heart's burning stands for both the lover and the beloved. "The fire of my tears" stands for the beloved, the heart of the candle, which is in turn the lover in relation to the fire of the tears, but the heart of the candle is the beloved in relation to the moth.

Ḥāfiẓ's use of the *parvāna* as a lover is also novel. In the couplet translated below, 165/5, the poet uses two harmonious images (*tanāsub*), the nightingale and the rose, and the moth and the candle, linked by the common elements of fire and adoration. The novelty of the imagery lies in the poet's associative connection between fire and the colour of the rose, and the introduction of the nightingale's 'harvest.' The word for harvest, *kharman*, refers to harvested grain that has been gathered in one place. To have one's *kharman* burnt is to be bankrupt, *kharman-sukhta*. So we have the nightingale being bankrupted by the fire of the rose, placed in parallel with a moth destroyed by the candle:

آتش رخسار گل خرمن بلبل بسوخت چهره خندان شمع آفت پروانه شد

The fire on the cheek of the rose burned the nightingale's harvest;
the laughing face of the candle was the moth's calamity.

In another couplet, 179/6, Ḥāfiẓ returns to the candle's flame as a metaphor for love's fascination. Seen from a distance, it is a flickering 'laugh,' but experienced in the flesh it sets fire to everything:

آتش آن نیست که از شعله او خند د شمع آتش آن است که در خرمن پروانه زدند

Fire is not that through whose flame the candle laughed;
fire is that which was ignited in the harvest of the moth.

The word 'laughing' is also used in combination with the candle and the moth in a completely different sense. In the couplet below (268/7), the poet addresses the beloved as the candle of the assembly, imploring him to be honest and not to have more than one lover. The beloved should follow the example of the moth that makes efforts in its love and smiles happily. Although the word *khandān* or 'smiling' can also refer to the moth's death, it is the moth's contentment that is emphasized here.

تو شمع انجمنی یکزبان و یکدل شو خیال و کوشش پروانه بین و خندان باش

You are the candle of the assembly, be of one tongue and of one heart.
Look at the thoughts and the efforts of the moth, and smile.

In most candle and moth imagery, the candle's light is an object of fatal attraction. The moth longs to unite itself with the beloved by offering its life. In the following couplet (176/7), the candle is a demanding beloved who does not accept easily a lover, but the reluctant beloved is warned of the shortness of the night. Better to take union while it is offered:

غنیمتی شمر ای شمع وصل پروانه که این معامله تا صبحدم نخواهد ماند

O candle! Count union with the moth as a gain,
for this bargaining cannot continue to the early morn.

In certain cases, both the candle and the moth are used as metaphors for an aspect of the lover and the beloved. In the next instance, in ghazal 200/4, the beloved's luminous cheeks are compared to the candle's light and the lover's scorched heart to the fearless moth:

یاد باد آن که رخت شمع طرب می افروخت وین دل سوخته پروانه ناپروا بود

May the memory be of your cheek that lit the candle of delight
and of this burned heart as the fearless moth.

In the following couplet (252/1), the candle and the moth stand for the lover and the beloved, with an emphasis on sacrificing one's life for the beloved:

روی بنما و مرا گو که ز جان دل برگیر پیش شمع آتش پروانه به جان گو درگیر

Show your face and say to me, "remove life's heart:"
In the presence of that moth's fire, the candle, say to the soul, "ignite."

In the following couplet (255/4), the lover is paradoxically unlike the moth:

پروانه را ز شمع بود سوز دل ولی بی شمع عارض تو دلم را بود گداز

The candle makes the moth the burning-hearted one, but as for me,
without the candle of your cheek, my heart is melting.

In three cases Ḥāfiẓ uses the candle metaphor to refer to the sun. In the following couplet the compound *sham'-i āftāb* ('the candle of the sun') is contrasted to the *chirāgh-i murda* ('dead lamp').[80] The couplet is part of a ghazal in which the poet shows the differences between two entities, in this case, between 'the face of the friend' (*rūy-i dūst*) and 'the heart of the enemies':

ز روی دوست دل دشمنان چه دریابد چراغ مرده کجا شمع آفتاب کجا

What could the heart of the enemy divine from the face of the friend?
What has the dead lamp to do with the candle of the sun?[81]

In another couplet, Ḥāfiẓ uses the metaphor of 'the candle of the dawn' to refer to the sun. The word *mihr* is ambiguous, meaning both love and sun, and has been translated twice:

چو شمع صبحدمم شد ز مهر او روشن که عمر در سر این کار و بار خواهم کرد

Since the candle of dawn takes light from the sun of his love
I'll devote all my life to this venture.[82]

---

[80] Bahā 'l-Dīn Khurramshāhī, *Ḥāfiẓ-nāma*, vol. I, p. 107.
[81] Ḥāfiẓ, *Dīvān*, gh. 2, l. 5.
[82] Ḥāfiẓ, *Dīvān*, gh. 131, l. 5.

In the following couplet, the sun is the candle of the east, spreading its rays in all directions:

بامداد ان که ز خلوتگه کاخ ابداع شمع خاور فکند بر همه اطراف شعاع

> Early each morning when, from the solitude of the palace of new creation, the candle of the east is casting beams in all directions, . . .[83]

Conclusion

In this study, I have examined the development of the candle metaphor from the ninth to the fourteenth century. We have seen how the metaphor was used by mystics such as Ḥallāj, Ghazālī and ʿAṭṭār to refer to the immaterial beloved, explaining various aspects of the loving relationship between man and his Creator. The light of the candle is a fitting image for the attraction drawing the lover to union with the divine beloved, through divesting himself of ego and attachments. Candle and moth imagery offered mystic poets a tangible presentation of dying in, and living through, the beloved. Persian mystic poets surprise the reader by contriving new candle images to refer to man's relationship with the immaterial beloved.

In addition to its spiritual referent in mystic poetry, the candle also functioned as an erotic object. The fact that both dimensions of the repertoire of candle imagery are alive in the poetic tradition gives an added depth to whichever may be primarily intended in a particular case.

Candle metaphors were also used to describe the position of a woman in society, as in Niẓāmī's romances in which both Shīrīn and Laylī are depicted as candles, giving light but consuming themselves. In the case of Shīrīn, she becomes fatal for her devoted lover Farhād, whereas in the case of Laylī, the poet uses the candle metaphors to depict her feelings and emotions for Majnūn and also how she hides her feelings from her father and the husband she had been forced to marry.

Although the conventions of classical Persian poetry hardly allow the poet to make completely new imagery, the poets of subsequent centuries such as Ḥāfiẓ contrived new and effective metaphors based on the candle. The process continues: in the seventeenth century for example,

[83] Ḥāfiẓ, *Dīvān*, gh. 288, l. 1.

Ṣā'ib wrote several ghazals imitating Ḥāfiẓ's candle poem.[84] He introduced several new metaphors such as the wick as 'the belt of disbelief,' the flame as a rose without a thorn, the lover's finger compared to a candle, etc.

Bibliography

Abahsain, M.M., "The Supra-Symbolic Moth in Arabic Religious Poetry from the Late Ottoman Period" in *Journal of Arabic Literature*, vol. 24, No. 1, 1993, pp. 21–7.

Algar, H., *Razi: The Path of God's Bondsmen*, Persian Heritage Series 35, New York: Caravan Books, 1982.

Arberry, A.J., in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), s.v. Al-Djunayd.

Arnold, S.E., *With Saʿdi in the Garden or the Book of Love*, London: Trübner, 1888.

Āshūrī, D., *Hastī-shināsī-i Ḥāfiẓ: kāvushī dar bunyād-hā-i andīsha-i ū*, Tehran: Markaz, 1377/1998.

ʿAṭṭār, Farīd al-Dīn, *Dīvān*, ed. T. Tafazzulī, Tehran: ʿIlmī va Farhangī, 1384/2005.

——, *Manṭiq al-ṭayr*, ed. S.S. Gowharīn, Tehran: Scientific and Cultural Publications Company, 1368/1989.

——, *Mukhtār-nāma*, ed., M.R. Shafīʿī Kadkanī, Tehran: Sukhan, second print, 1375/1996.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī, *Tamhīdāt*, ed. ʿA. ʿUṣṣayrān, Tehran: third edition 1370/1991.

Bertel's, Y.I., *Tārīkh-i adabiyyāt-i Fārsī*, vol. I, Persian trans. S. Izadī, Tehran, 1995.

Browne, E.G., *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. ii, Canbridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956.

Bruijn, J.T.P. de, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Candle: ii. Imagery in Poetry.

——, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), s.v. ʿUnṣurī.

——, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), s.v. Mathnawī.

——, *Of Piety and Poetry: The Interaction of Religion and Literature in the Life and Works of Ḥakīm Sanāʾī of Ghaznāʾī*, Leiden: Brill, 1983.

Clinton, J.W., "Court Poetry at the Beginning of the Classical Period" in *Persian Literature*, ed. E. Yarshater, Albany, 1988.

——, *The Divan of Manūchihrī Dāmghānī: A Critical study*. Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamic, 1972.

Davis, D., & Afkham Darbandi, *The Conference of the Birds*, Penguin Classics, 1984.

Dīvān-i Manūchihrī Dāmghānī, ed. S.M. Dabīr Sīyāqī, Tehran: Zavvār, 1375/1996.

Dye, R.E., " 'Selige Sehnsucht' and Goethean Enlightenment" in *Modern Language Association*, vol. 104, No. 2, 1989, pp. 190–200.

Elwell-Sutton, L.P., in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Babā Tāher.

Ernst, C.W., *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1985.

Floor, W., & B. Hourcade in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Barq.

Gelder, G.J.H. van, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), s.v. Shamʿa.

Ghazzālī, Aḥmad, (*Sawāniḥ*) *Aphorismen über die Liebe*, Herausgegeben von H. Ritter, Istanbul: Maʿārif, 1942.

Goethe, J.W. von, *West-östlicher Divan*, München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1998.

Graham, T., "Abu Saʿīd ibn Abi'l-Khayr and the School of Khurāsān" in *Classical Persian Sufism*, ed., L. Lewisohn, London: KNP, 1993, pp. 83–135.

Ḥāfiẓ, Muḥammad Shams ad-Dīn, *Dīvān*, ed. P. Nātil Khānlarī, Tehran: Khārazmī, 1362/1983.

——, *The Collected Lyrics of Háfiz of Shíráz*, Trans. P. Avery, Cambridge: Chetwynd House, 2007.

[84] See *Dīvān-i Ṣāʾib-i Tabrīzī*, vol. 5, *ghazal*s no. 5126–128, and 5129, 5131, 5136–137.

Homerin, T.E., "Preaching Poetry: The Forgotten Verse of Ibn al-Shahrazūrī" in *Arabica*, 1991, 38, pp. 87–101.
Ismāʿīlpūr, M., in *An Encyclopaedia of Persian Literature*, vol., I, ed., H. Anūshe, Tehran: Dānishnāmeh Cultural-Publishing, 1996, s.v. Ātash-o parvāna.
Jacobi, R., in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), s.v. ʿUdhrī.
Khurramshāhī, Bahā ʾl-Din, *Ḥāfiẓ-nāma*, Tehran: 1375/1996.
Mason, H., "Hallāj and the Baghdad School of Sufism" in *Classical Persian Sufism*, ed., L. Lewisohn, London: KNP, 1993, pp. 65–81
Matīnī, J., "Parvāna va shamʿ" in *Īrān-Shināsī*, vol. VI, No. 4, Winter 1995.
Meneghini, D., in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Moḵtār-nāma.
——, "Il Moxtārnāme di ʿAṭṭār: prefazione e capitolo nono su Ḥeyrat Sargaštegi," in *Scritti in onore Giovanni M.D'Erme*, eds., M. Bernardini and N.L. Tornesello, 2 vols., vol. II, Naples, 2005, pp. 709–731
Mīr Afẓalī, Sayyid ʿAlī, "Āyā mukhtār-nāma az ʿAṭṭār ast?" in *Nashr-i Dānish*, vol. 17, no. 1, Spring, 2000, pp. 32–43.
Niẓāmī ʿArūḍī, *Chahār-maqāla*, ed. M. Qazvīnī, Leiden: 1909.
Niẓāmī Ganjavī, *Laylī u Majnūn*, ed. A.A. Alizada, Moscow: Dānish, 1965.
——, *Khusraw u Shīrīn*, ed. V. Dastgirdī, Tehran: ʿIlmī, 1363/1984.
Omidsalar, M., in de *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Candle, i. Making and Uses.
Pourjavady, N., "Parwāna wa ātish: sayr-i tahavvul-i yik tamthīl-i ʿirfānī dar adabiyyāt-i Fārsī" in *Nashr-i Dānish*, 16, No. 2, 1378/1999, pp. 3–15.
——, *Sulṭān-i ṭarīqat*, Tehran: Āgāh, 1358/1979.
——, *Zabān-i ḥāl dar ʿirfān va adabiyyāt-i Fārsī*, Tehran: Hermes, 1385/2006.
Ritter, H., in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), s.v. Abu Yazīd Bistāmī.
Saʿdī, Muṣliḥ ad-Dīn, *Būstān*, ed. Gh. Yūsufī, Tehran: Khārazmī, 1375/1996.
——, *Kulīyāt-i Saʿdī*, ed. M.ʿA. Furūghī, Tehran: Muḥammad, 1366/1987.
Ṣāʾib, *Dīvān-i Ṣāʿib-i Tabrīzī*, vol. 5, ed. Muḥammad Qahramān, Tehran: ʿIlmī va Farhangī, 1368/1989.
Sanāʾī, Ḥakīm Majdūd-i Ādam, *Dīvān*, ed. M.T. Mudarris Raḍavī, Tehran: Sanāʾī, 1362/1983.
Schimmel, A., *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975.
——, *Deciphering the Signs of God: A Phenomenological Approach to Islam*, Edinburgh University Press, 1994.
Seyed-Gohrab, A.A., "The Art of Riddling in Classical Persian Poetry" in *Edebiyāt: Journal of Middle Eastern and Comparative Literature*, vol. 12, 2001, pp. 15–36.
——, "De Kaars en de Nachtvlinder: Een Liefdesmetafoor in Perzische Poëzie" in *Sharqiyyat: Journal of the Dutch Association for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies*, 12, 2001, pp. 1–19.
——, *Courtly Riddles: Enigmatic Embellishments in Early Persian Poetry*, Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2010.
——, *Laylī and Majnūn: Love, Madness and Mystic Longing in Nizāmī's Epic Romance*, Leiden: Brill, 2003.
Shirwānī, J. Khalīl, *Nuzhat al-majālis*, ed., M.A. Rīyāhī, Tehrān: ʿIlmī, 1375/1996.
Smoor, P., "The Weeping Wax Candle and Ma'arrī's Wisdom-Tooth: Night Thoughts and Riddles from Gāmiʿ al-awzān" in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Stuttgart, 1988, Band 138, Heft 2, pp. 283–312.
Trollope, A., *The Claverings*, London: Oxford University, 1929.

LOVE AND THE METAPHORS OF WINE AND DRUNKENNESS IN PERSIAN SUFI POETRY

N. Pourjavady

Wine and drunkenness are two of the most common metaphors in Persian mystical love poetry, and it would be appropriate to start my paper with a few lines of a poem by Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, a poet who has become somewhat popular in Western countries, particularly in America, in the last two decades.

چنان مستم چنان مستم من امروز که از چنبر برون جستم من امروز
به جان با آسمان عشق رقتم به صورت گر در این پستم من امروز
گرفتم گوش عقل و گفتم ای عقل برون رو کز تو وارستم من امروز
بشوی ای عقل دست خویش از من که در مجنون بپیوستم من امروز
چنانم کرد آن ابریق پر می که چندین خنب بشکستم من امروز
نمی دانم کجایم لیک فرخ مقامی کاندر او مستم من امروز

So drunk am I, so drunk am I today
That I have leapt out of my loop today
In spirit, I went out with the Heaven of Love,
Though in body, I am still in this world today.
I took Reason by the ear, and said,
"Get out of here; I am free of you today!
Reason, wash your hands of me,
For I am one with the mad lover today."
The cup of wine has carried me to such a state,
That I have smashed unnumbered vats of wine today.
I know not where I am today,
But this surely is a blessed place to be today.[1]

---

[1] For the whole poem in the original Persian see: *Kulliyāt-i Shams*, edited by B. Furūzānfar, second printing, Hermes Press, Tehran 1386/2007, p. 442 (no. 1043). For the English translation here, I have consulted and to some extent used A.J. Arberry's translation of this poem in *Mystical Poems of Rumi*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1968, p. 126.

In these lines, Rūmī speaks of two ideas, or two main states of mind, which he has experienced, one being drunkenness and the other love. He starts by saying how drunk he is and what a unique experience of intoxication he is going through, an intensity of intoxication that he does not recall ever having had before. Then he equates his inebriation with love. Although physically he is in this world, within his soul he has been able to transcend the material world and arrive in the heavenly domain of love. Whether we designate this state by drunkenness or by love, it has one main characteristic, and that is breaking the rules that are set by reason, the ordinary rationality that governs our worldly life and behavior.

But what kind of state is this drunkenness and what does the poet mean by it? Why does he equate it with love, or with the state of being in love? Rūmī, as we know, was a full-fledged mystic and in his lyric poems (*ghazals*), just as in his epic ones, known as the *Mathnavī*, he uses the idea of love in a mystical sense. What is this mystical love that Rūmī, as well as all the other Persian mystical poets and writers, have in mind, something they have often characterized as drunkenness? By this term, Rūmī obviously does not mean the intoxication induced by wine or other alcoholic beverages. He is clearly using the word drunkenness metaphorically, just as all other mystical poets in Persian (as well as in Ottoman Turkish and Urdu) have traditionally done. Since using drunkenness metaphorically for love depends on the meaning of love for the mystics, we must first examine the nature of this love.

At the outset, it seems clear to us what the word love means and even how the mystics, in different religions, use it or what they mean by it. Yet it is also clear to us, and the Sufis almost unanimously agree, that the nature of love cannot be described by words or sentences and its meaning is beyond our comprehension.[2] But they also say that there are certain things we *can* say about the mystical idea of love without taking the risk of going after the impossible.

The obvious thing we can say is that love, whether used in a mystical sense or non-mystical, designates a relationship, and as such it happens between two sides, an object and a subject, called the lover and the beloved. In ordinary usage, this word is used to refer to the relationship

[2] The idea that the nature of love is beyond our comprehension is discussed in various ways by Aḥmad Ghazzālī in his book on love, *Sawānih, Inspirations from the world of Pure Spirits*. Translated by Nasrollah Pourjavady, London, 1986. One of these ways is the following poem on page 21 which may well belong to the author himself: "Love is covered and no one has ever seen it revealed. / How long will these lovers boast in vain?"

between two human beings, but the mystics particularly use it to refer to the human relationship with God. For the Muslim mystics or the Sufis, this usage is based on several Koranic verses, particularly the verse which calls both God and human beings lovers: "He (God) loves a people and they love Him" (Koran V, 54). And here, the verb form used is from the root *ḥubb*.

Even though the idea of love between God and human beings was used in the scripture, both in the Koran and in sayings by the Prophet Muḥammad,[3] the Sufis were criticized and even threatened by the exoteric scholars for using this term to refer to the relationship between God and human beings. One reason for this criticism is that the term slavery (*ʿubūdiyya*), or the master-slave relationship, is the main concept used in the Koran and in other sacred writings to designate the human relationship to God. Human beings are all slaves (*ʿabd*), while God is the Lord and master.

But the main reason for the objection raised against the Sufis on this point was not to their use of the Koranic word *ḥubb* and its derivatives *muḥibb* and *maḥbūb* to describe the relationship of human beings with the Divine, but rather for using a particular non-Koranic term *ʿishq* and its derivatives *ʿāshiq* and *maʿshūq*. In Arabic the word *ʿishq* was used to refer to the amorous relationship between two human beings, ordinarily between a man and a woman. From early centuries, there was a discussion among both philosopher-physicians and theologians about the definitions and the nature of this love.[4] Among various definitions that were put forward, there was even a belief that *ʿishq* was a kind of mental derangement or insanity (*junūn*), and lovers were looked on as socially abnormal and mentally disturbed people. Naturally, many orthodox theologians were displeased with or even angry at the few Sufis who had begun to use the word *ʿishq*, which was considered non-Koranic and even profane, to

[3] A well-known example of such sayings is the *ḥadīth al-nawāfil*, often quoted by the Sufis. "God said: . . . My servant draws near to Me by means of nothing dearer to Me than that which I have established as a duty for him. And My servant continues drawing nearer to Me through supererogatory acts until I love him; and when I love him, I become his ear with which he hears, his eye with which he sees, his hand with which he grasps, and his foot with which he walks . . . ." (For this saying and its sources, see:" William A. Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam*, the Hague and Paris 1977, pp. 98–9 and 173–4).

[4] For various opinions on the essence and nature of love, see Abu'l Hassan al-Daylami, *A Treatise on Mystical Love*, translated by Joseph N. Bell and Mahmood Abdul Latif Al Shafie, Edinburgh 2005, pp. 65–74.

describe the human relationship with God.[5] At one point, there was even disagreement among some Sufi masters themselves on this issue. This disagreement was somewhat similar to, and may even have been affected by, the debate among early Christian theologians about the permissibility of the use of *eros*, rather than *agape*, to describe the human relationship to God.[6] Sufi reservations about the use of the word *ʿishq* lasted until the second half of the eleventh century (that is, the fifth century of Islam). The famous Sufi master of Nishāpūr, Abu ʾl- Qāsim al-Qushayrī, avoids the word *ʿishq*, and even a generation later the famous theologian and Sufi, Abū Ḥāmid Ghazālī, shows a reluctance to use the word *ʿishq* in this sense.

However Abū Ḥāmid's younger brother, Aḥmad Ghazālī, had no qualms about using the word *ʿishq* in a mystical sense. This Aḥmad Ghazālī, who wrote a whole book on Love, entitled the *Sawāniḥ*, is notorious not only for his ideas about love and the way he expressed them, but also for the way he practiced mystical love by way of directing it to human beings first. For example, Ahmad thought that the way human beings, as mystics, can really attain to absolute Beauty is to appreciate the relative beauty in God's creation, particularly in human beings. In fact, for Aḥmad Ghazālī, there was no substantial difference between man's love for God or even God's love for man, on the one hand, and man's love for other human beings. Erotic love, referred to as *ʿishq*, was just the same kind of thing as the mystic's love for God. That is why Aḥmad Ghazālī uses examples of humans' love for each other to explain and illustrate his metaphysical ideas about love. Thus, according to Aḥmad Ghazālī, employing the word *ʿishq* for mystical purposes is not only permissible, it is not even

---

[5] For a study of why the word *ʿishq* was inapplicable to God in Persian, see my *Bāda-i ʿishq*, Tehran 1387/2008, pp. 28–36. Hujwīrī is one of the classical authors who has discussed this issue in his *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, translated by R.A. Nicholson, London 1976 (first edition 1911), p. 310. Nicholson has totally misunderstood Hujwīrī's words when at the end of the page he writes "It has been said that excessive love is applicable to God, on the ground that neither God nor excessive love has any opposite." What Hujwīrī is saying is that since love (*ʿishq*) entails two opposite things (the lover and the beloved), it cannot be applied to God, for there is no opposition (no duality) in the Divine nature.

[6] M. Arkoun, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), s.v. ʿIs̲h̲ḳ. It is interesting to note that just as Pseudo-Dionysius believed that the use of the term Eros for God does not violate scriptural authority, the Islamic mystics who turned to the word *ʿishq* to describe an essential attribute of God tried to show that this usage is at least in accordance with the Tradition of the Prophet. For an examination of Pseudo-Dionysius' ideas on this issue see Lisa Marie Esposito Buckley, "Ecstatic and Emanating, Providential and Unifying: A Study of the Pseudo-Dionysian and Platonian Concepts of Eros", in *The Journal of Neoplatonic Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Fall 1992, pp. 48–54.

a problem. For him, the debate between those who thought *ʿishq* could describe the divine love and their opponents was a shallow debate of semantics, not a real debate of substance. What mattered to him was the reality of love, not how or what we called it—whether we use the word *ḥubb* or *ʿishq* or even the Persian word *mihr*. They all refer to the same thing, the same reality.[7] In fact, he prefers *ʿishq* and its derivatives *ʿāshiq* and *maʿshūq* rather than *ḥubb* or *maḥabbat* and its derivatives. This may be because the term *ʿishq* had already gained more power than *ḥubb* and thus seemed more suitable for designating, as we shall see, a cosmic power which originates from the divine Essence.

Now what is this reality that can be called *ʿishq, ḥubb*, or *mihr*? We have said that love is a relationship between two beings, but these beings need not necessarily be human. Either one or both sides of the relationship may be beings beyond the physical world. Love, in the Persian school of love-mysticism, is a reality that transcends this world. Its activity starts in the spiritual world, but its essence goes even beyond that. To speak in the language of the theologians, love is essentially a divine attribute, and thus ultimately identical with the divine Essence. That is why love cannot be defined and grasped truly by our minds. The poets would find other ways to speak of this ineffability.

Though love belongs to the level of absolute being, or the divine Essence, it makes its appearance or presents itself in this relative world of ours. In one of his metaphors, Aḥmad Ghazālī calls love a falcon that has left its nest in Eternity, entering first the heaven of the spiritual domain at the dawn of Creation, and then descending here to our material world.[8] Since its origin, or its nest, is in Eternity (*azal*), the ultimate goal of the falcon of love is also Eternity (*abad*). Love has to go back to where it came from. It does not belong to the world of "the many," this world of plurality. It has to ascend to the Original Unity, the transcendental Oneness of Being. Here, love manifests itself to us as something that exists between a lover and a beloved. But love cannot tolerate the duality of the lover and beloved. By its very nature, love strives for union. Yes, union of the lover and the beloved, even in our world, between all those who love one another. If lovers make love to one another it is because the love between them wants them to be united, in soul and body, and more so in

[7] I disagree with Louis Massignon in translating *ʿishq* in French as *desire* and *ḥubb* as *amour*, as if these two terms were really referring to two different things.

[8] A. Ghazzālī, p. 30.

soul than in body. In fact, love has come to this world in order to take our individual souls from this world back to the spiritual world of Soul, where all souls are united, and from there to the transcendental Unity (*tawḥīd*). This idea is expressed quite succinctly by Aḥmad Ghazālī in a profound metaphysical quatrain which he places at the opening of the first chapter of his book on love:

> Our steeds came to this world of beings from the world beyond,
> accompanied by love,
> Our night bright with the lamp of union.
> When we return to that realm again, beyond all beings,
> You will not find our lips parched, but moist,
> Moist with that wine which is not forbidden
> in the religion of love.[9]

As we have seen, there is one love that enters the world of Creation, one falcon that leaves its nest in Eternity and then seeks to return there. This means that, while love manifests itself as a relationship between innumerable lovers and beloveds, essentially it is one and remains one. Thus, love between two human beings is the same as love between human beings and God. There is, in other words, no substantial difference between the love of a mother to her child, of a lover like Romeo for Juliet or of Majnūn for Laylā, the love of Saints and mystics for God, and even the love of God for mankind. The only difference between human love and divine love is that of degree. This is analogous to light and its different gradations. Just as the light of a candle and that of the sun are both light and their difference lies only in degree, candlelight weak and sunshine strong, love between human beings differs from the divine love only in being weaker.[10]

This essential unity of love gives human love an extremely high status. Since love has originated from the divine Being, and essentially belongs to the immaterial and transcendental world, it is sacred. This means that even the love between human beings is sacred. In the Persian school of love-mysticism, there is no such a thing as profane love. If two people love each other, their love in essence is just as sacred as God loving them. Divine love, as the source of all love, is naturally of the most extreme

---

[9] *Ibid*., p. 17 (with some changes here to my original translation).

[10] In Islamic philosophy, this is called *tashkīk*, and it is applied to the idea of Existence in Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophy.

intensity, but it is not something essentially different from the weaker love that binds human beings together.

This essential similarity of all love leads the Sufis to view human love as an important preliminary step for those who are seeking and striving to experience divine love. That is why some Sufi masters accept only novices who have already experienced human love, so that they can be ready to love God. This is equally true of our experience of the beauties of creation as a preparatory stage for experiencing highest beauty. In other words, to be able to experience divine Beauty, one must first be able to see the manifestation of divine Beauty in the phenomenal world. To use a Platonic metaphor, the seeker of the Truth, the philosopher who has left the dark cave and stepped into the open space, must first look at the image of the sun, its icon, in water. That is why one is expected to love another person before he can love God.

The importance of human love for the Sufis lies not only in the fact that this love prepares the novice for an advanced stage of love, but it also makes him realize his humanity. Just as the love of the divine Being is the prerogative of mankind, the love of human beings for each other, in its relative degree of intensity, is what makes us human. To have not experienced love at all, in one way or another, means, for some Sufis, that one has not really actualized his full capacity of being human. As is customary among the Sufis, this idea is illustrated with an amusing anecdote.

A Sufi master of the school of love was giving a sermon in a public gathering.[11] Before the sermon, a man who had heard about the Sufi's piety and his ability to perform miracles, stood up and announced that he had lost his donkey, so would the Sufi shaykh, with his power of clairvoyance, help him to find his donkey? The shaykh nodded and asked the man to sit down. His sermon was about love and, while he was speaking of the necessity of love in order to tread the spiritual path, he asked the audience if there was anyone who had not fallen in love with another person. A crude and rustic man stood up and said: "I have not." "Very well," the shaykh responded, turning his head and looking at the man who had lost his donkey, "Here is an ass in place of yours, bring your bridle and take him away from here."

---

[11] This story is attributed to different shaykhs, including Sayf al-Dīn Bākharzī. For the sources of the story see "Laṭā'f-i qur'ānī dar majālis-i Sayfu al-Dīn Bākharzī" in *Pazhūhish-hā-i ʿirfānī*, by N. Pourjavady, Tehran, 1386/2006, pp. 268–9.

The experience of human love not only makes us human, it also gives us the capacity to understand the nature of love. In his preface to the second book of the *Mathnavī*, Rūmī has a line which illustrates this point.

> Somebody asked us: "What does it mean to be in love?"
> "You will know," I said, "Only when you become a lover like us."[12]

Rūmī here points out exactly what we said about the ineffability of love, the fact that it is beyond our comprehension. At the same time, he is saying that there does exist one way that we can understand what love is, and that is by feeling it or experiencing it simply by falling in love. This experience is sometimes called, by the Sufis, "tasting" (*dhawq*), and Rūmī himself, in the same preface, mentions the often quoted Sufi saying that "He who does not have the experience of tasting, does not understand" (*man lam yadhuq lam yadir*).

The use of the word "tasting" to mean an immediate experience of love already introduces us to another metaphor which is widely used in Persian mystical poetry: that of wine and drinking. We have already seen how Aḥmad Ghazālī used this metaphor when he wanted to speak, in his quatrain, of wine in "the religion of love." Aḥmad's brother, Abū Ḥāmid Ghazālī, who is primarily known as a celebrated theologian, has also used the image of wine drinking in a poem in order to show that the only way one can appreciate love is by immediate tasting:

> You may keep *pouring* two thousand cups of wine, or more,
> But you will not become drunk unless you *drink* a couple of cups, or more.[13]

You will note here that, unlike his brother Aḥmad, who meant love when he used the word wine, Abū Ḥāmid, the theologian, is using the words "wine" and "drunk" more literally. But even though he is more literal, he is also expressing the mystical teaching. The theologian is saying that just as you have to drink wine in order to feel its effect, you have to have an immediate taste of mystical realities to know what they are.

The metaphor of wine is used by Sufi poets not only for the immediate "tasting" of love, but also for the whole process of the cultivation and growth of love in the mystic's soul. As a lover, the mystic goes through

---

[12] Jalaluddin Rumi, *The Mathnawi*, Volume I., Edited by Reynold A. Nicholson, London 1985 (first printing 1925), p. 246.

[13] Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī, "Ey farzand", in *Makātīb-i fārsī*, ed. 'Abbās Iqbāl, Tehran, 1363/1984, p. 93.

different states of sorrow and joy, fear and hope, expansion and contraction, the pain of separation from the beloved, and the joy of losing his or her ego in approaching the beloved. The most powerful metaphor that the Sufis have found to express the different psychological states of the lover (technically called *aḥkām-i vaqt*) is wine drinking and its affect on the person. In a mystical ode, the poet often speaks of two things, the states of the lover and the perfections or beauty of the beloved. For each of these, a set of metaphors is used. The states of the lover are described with metaphors of wine and whatever relates to it, such as the cup, the tavern, the wine seller, etc., while for the attributes of the Beloved, the lineaments of the human face or body are used. This language of metaphors is brilliantly illustrated in the following miniature, in which the lover holds a cup of wine, symbolizing his love and passion while the beloved holds a flower, symbolizing beauty.[14]

Both sets of metaphors, one relating to the lover and the other to the beloved, may be found in mystical lyrics, as in the following one by Ḥāfiẓ, describing a nocturnal visit by the beloved:

> Tress awry, sweating, laughing-lipped, drunk,
> Shirt in shreds, lyric-lisping, wine-cup in hand,
> His eyes spoiling for a fight, lips complaining,
> In the middle of last night he came and sat by my pillow.
> He brought his head down to my ear and in an aggrieved voice
> Said, "O ancient lover of mine, can you be asleep?"
> A mystic to whom a night-stealing cup such as this is given,
> Would be a heretic to love if he were not a worshipper of wine![15]

Drinking wine not only shows the different emotional states of the lover, it can also describe the different states of consciousness as well as unconsciousness of the lover. As we have seen, the first stage of awareness is taste. This proceeds to the next stage of drinking and drinking, until the stage when the lover is drunk. Continuing on this path leads to the excess of drinking which then leads to being absent from the self (*ghāʾib*) and ruined or wasted (*kharāb*). The Sufis have even recognized a stage prior to tasting, when the person, the novice, hears about love or reads about it.

---

[14] The miniature is from the Yellow Pavilion tale (Bahram Gur and Humay from Byzantium, his second bride) in Niẓāmī's Khamsa.

[15] *The Collected Lyrics of Hafiz of Shiraz*, Translated by Peter Avery, Cambridge 2007, p. 51.

Sultan Muhammad; Zada, Shaykh: Khamsa (Quintet) of Nizami; (fol. 213). illustrated manuscript, folio, made in present-day Afghanistan, Herat. A.H. 931/1524–1525. (Author: Nizami (Ilyas Abu Muhammad Nizam al-Din of Ganj), probably 1141-1217; Calligraphers: Sultan Muhammad Nur, Mahmud Muzahib). New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Ink, opaque watercolor, silver and gold on paper. Painting: h. 7 1/2" (19.1 cm), w. 4 1/2" (11.4 cm); page: h. 12 5/8" (32.1 cm), w. 8 3/4" (22.2 cm). Gift of Alexander Smith Cochran, 1913. Inv. 13.228.7.9© 2011. Image copyright The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Art Resource/Scala, Florence.

To express this preliminary stage, Sufi writers, including Aḥmad Ghazālī,[16] have often quoted the following profane line by the second/eighth century poet Abū Nuwās, addressed to a cup-bearer:

> Bring me wine, and tell me it is wine.
> Do not hide it when you can bring it openly.[17]

This poem has been said to mean that in drinking wine, all the senses have their enjoyment, except the sense of hearing. In other words, we can see the wine, smell its fragrance, and feel it touch our lips, and taste it on our tongues, but the ears enjoy nothing. So, the poet, seeking complete and perfect enjoyment from drinking, asks the cup-bearer to make an announcement that he or she is serving wine.

For the Sufis, the effect of wine, however, is not in hearing its name from the cup-bearer or even seeing its color. The real effect starts with tasting it, taking it in, and then finding the presence of wine inside (*yāft* or *vajd*), an experience that leads to becoming absent (*ghāʾib*) from oneself. At this stage, the lover is so stupefied that he cannot even perceive the beloved adequately. To illustrate this, the Sufis, including Aḥmad Ghazālī in the *Sawāniḥ*,[18] have used a favorite story about the drunkenness of love with which I will close my contribution.

The story is about a man who lived in Baghdad, in a district called Naḥr al-Muʿallā. This man fell in love with a woman who lived in another district called Karakh, located on the other side of the Tigris River. Every evening, even during the winter, the man would jump into the water and swim across the river to visit his beloved. But one night, when he had crossed the river and came into the presence of his beloved, he saw a mole on her face. Suddenly surprised, he asked her: "Where did this come from?" "Well," she responded, "I have had this mole all my life, from birth. But now, you should not try to cross the river tonight." When the evening was over and it was time for him to take his leave, the man, not taking her advice seriously, went into the water to swim back, like every other night, but since he was no longer drunk with love, he died of cold.

---

[16] See *Sawāniḥ*, p. 74.
[17] Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, ed. Aḥmad Abdul-Majīd al-Ghazālī, Beirut, 1953, p. 28.
[18] On page 66.

Bibliography

Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, Edited by Ahmad Abdul-Majid Al-Ghazali, Beirut 1953.
Arkoun, M., in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), s.v. ʿIs̲h̲ḳ.
Buckley, L.M.E., "Ecstatic and Emanating, Providential and Unifying: A Study of the Pseudo-Dionysian and Platonian Concepts of Eros," in *The Journal of Neoplatonic Studies*, vol. 1, No. 1, (Fall 1992) pp. 48–54.
al-Daylami, Abu'l Hassan, *A Treatise on Mystical Love*, translated by Joseph N. Bell and Mahmood Abdul Latif Al Shafie, Edinburgh, 2005.
Ghazzālī, Abū Ḥāmid "Ey farzand", in *Makātib-i fārsī*, ed., ʿAbbās Iqbāl, Tehran, 1363/1984.
Ghazzālī, Aḥmad, *Sawanih, Inspirations from the world of Pure Spirits*, translated by Nasrollah Pourjavady, London, 1986.
Graham, W.A., *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam*, the Hague/Paris, 1977.
Ḥāfiẓ, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad, *The Collected Lyrics of Hafiz of Shiraz*, translated by Peter Avery, Cambridge, 2007.
Hujwīrī, ʿAlī b. ʿUthmān, *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, translated by R.A. Nicholson, London, 1976 (first edition 1911).
Pourjavady, N., *Bāda-i ʿishq*, Tehran, 1387/2008.
——, (ed.) *Pazhūhish-hā-i ʿirfānī*, Tehran, 1386/2006.
Rūmī, Jalāl al-Dīn, *Kulliyāt-i Shams*, ed., B. Furūzānfar, second printing, Hermes Press, Tehran, 1386/2007.
——, *Mystical Poems of Rumi*, translated by A.J. Arberry, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago. 1968.
——, *The Mathnawi*, vol. 1, ed., Reynold A. Nicholson, London, 1985 (first printing 1925).

ONE CHASTE MUSLIM MAIDEN AND A PERSIAN IN A PEAR TREE: ANALOGUES OF BOCCACCIO AND CHAUCER IN FOUR EARLIER ARABIC AND PERSIAN TALES

F.D. Lewis

Two rather well known European tales which appear in a wide variety of renditions throughout the medieval and early modern period have earlier analogues in Islamicate literatures. The first is actually an episode within a larger tale, namely the Pear Tree Episode, involving the cuckolding of Nicostratus by Lidia and Pirro in the *Decameron*, and the cuckolding of January by May and Damyan in the *Canterbury Tales*. The second is an example of the Chaste Woman or Persecuted Empress type, famously epitomized by the Constance (Custance) legend in Europe. For the Constance legend, there are at least two analogues—one Persian, and one Arabic—which have not previously been noticed. For the Pear Tree Episode, there are two additional analogues, again, one in Persian, and one in Arabic. Although the Persian analogue of the Pear Tree Episode was identified as such over a century ago, its significance has never been properly acknowledged or explored, while the Arabic analogue for the Pear Tree Episode in Chaucer has not previously been remarked, to my knowledge.

European scholarship on sources and analogues for Chaucer has produced an impressive bibliography, some of which treats the question of "oriental" sources.[1] Similarly, motif and folklore indices, as well as other useful resources can help in tracing the occurrence of such tales in Islamicate sources.[2] This article aims, then, to contribute to this literature

[1] Including, inter alia Frederick James Furnivall, Edmund Brock and W.A. Clouston, eds. *Originals and Analogues of Some of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*, London: N. Trübner & Co., 1872–87; reprint 1901; W.F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster, eds. *Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941; Robert M. Correale and Mary Hamel, eds. *Sources and Analogues of the Canterbury Tales*, 2 vols. Cambridge & Rochester, NY: D.S. Brewer, 2002–2005; Katherine Gittes, *Framing the Canterbury Tales: Chaucer the Medieval Frame Narrative Tradition*, New York: Greenwood Press, 1991; and Carol Heffernan, *The Orient in Chaucer and Medieval Romance*, Woodbridge, Suffolk & Rochester, NY: D.S. Brewer, 2003.

[2] Inter alia, René Basset, *Mille et un contes, récits et légendes arabes*, 3 vols., Paris: Librairie Orientale et Américaine—Maisonneuve Frères, 1926; Hasan M. El-Shamy, *Folk Traditions of the Arab World: A Guide to Motif Classification*, 2 vols., Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995, and several of the works by Ulrich Marzolph, including his *Typologie*

by introducing these four Persian and Arabic tales, establish their analogic relationship to their European counterparts, and to explore the possibility of common sources for, or cross-fertilization of, these two tale types in their various European and Middle Eastern renditions. I approach the topic as a Persianist, and while confessing, along with Chaucer's Shipman, that "ther is but litel Latyn in my mawe," I do believe that these Persian and Arabic analogues will prove of particular interest to European medievalists. The material here presented cannot definitively establish the chronological primacy of the Islamicate versions of these tales, though it does provide a richer picture of the background and pre-history of two of Chaucer's tales, and does, I believe, suggest that during the Crusader era the literary cultural currents in the Mediterranean which carried the flotsam and jetsam of the "sea of story" along with other more tangible commodities, generally circulated from the east to the west.

That Arabic works of science and philosophy were translated to European languages during the medieval period is a well-established fact. The extent to which literary texts and performance practices of the Islamicate world may have influenced troubador poetry, inspired the popularity of the frame-tale structure in Europe, or provided a model for particular tales or tale types in Europe, remains in dispute.[3] In some isolated cases, such as *Barlām wa Būdasif* or *Kalīla wa Dimna* (the Fables of Bidpai), the transmission history from one language to the next can be documented and traced (languages implicated in this process may include Sanskrit, Middle Persian, Syriac, Arabic, Greek, Hebrew, Georgian, etc.).[4] Indeed, it seems quite reasonable to assume that, along with foodstuffs, textiles, and

---

des persischen Volksmärchens, Beirut: Orientinstitut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, 1984; and *Arabia Ridens: Die humoristische Kurzprosa der frühen adab-Literatur im internationals Traditionsgeflecht*, 2 vols., Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1992; and *Ex Orienta Fabula*, Dortmund: Verlag für Orientkünde, 2005.

[3] Robert Briffault, *The Troubadors*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965 and Maria Rosa Menocal, *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987, describe the dynamics of this debate and argue that the degree of influence of Arabo-Islamicate literary sources on Europe has not been sufficiently appreciated.

[4] For the Buddhist and Manichaean background, as well as transmission history of Barlām wa Būdasif, see J.P. Asmussen, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Barlaam and Ioasph; For Kalīla, see Carl Brockelmann, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), s.v. Kalīla wa-Dimna, and Victor Chauvin, *Bibliographie des ouvrages arabes ou relatifs aux Arabes: publiés dans l'Europe chrétienne de 1810 à 1885*, vol. 2, Liége: H. Vaillant-Carmanne, 1897, s.v. Kalîlah, as well as Johannes Hertel, *Das Pancatantra, seine Geschichte und seine Verbreitung*, Leipzig/Berlin; B. G. Teubner, 1914.

other goods, such as images on fabrics or paintings in books, that stories were also traded back and forth in the Mediterranean oecumene. With the increased contact brought about by the Crusades, and with the movement of captives and slaves, as well as efforts to translate scientific and philosophic texts in Andalusia, Sicily and elsewhere, ample opportunity for the exchange of stories, oral and even literary, existed.[5] Already over a century ago, it was observed that:

> a very considerable proportion of Asiatic fictions turn upon the luxury, profligacy, and craft of women . . . it is probable that this class of tales became popular in Europe in consequence of the Crusades, through which the westward stream of Asiatic tales and apologues was largely swelled. Stories of female depravity and craft, which are traceable to Persian and Indian sources, often occur in the earliest collections of *exempla*, designed for the use of preachers . . .[6]

Among tales that can be so traced, the most important transmitter was Petrus Alfonsi, born and educated a Jew in Andalusia, converted to Christianity in 1106 in Aragon, was serving by 1116 at the court of Henry I in England, and subsequently taught in northern France. His *Disciplina Clericalis*[7] translates exempla (as well as lines of poetry) from Arabic to Latin, and in several cases provides the earliest recorded European source for tales of Middle Eastern origin.[8] However, corroborating evidence that would prove or establish precise avenues of transmission for story

---

[5] On the relation between cultural exchange and commerce, see, inter alia: Edward Schafer, *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand: A Study of T'ang Exotics*, Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963; Thomas T. Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: A Cultural History of Islamic Textiles*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, and *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

[6] Clouston, in *Originals and Analogues*, p. 343.

[7] For the Latin text, see *Die Disciplina Clericalis des Petrus Alfonsi* (das älteste Novellenbuch des Mittelalters), ed. Alfons Hilka and Werner Söderhjelm, Heidelberg, 1911. For an English translation, *The Disciplina Clericalis of Petrus Alfonsi*, ed. and tr. by Eberhard Hermes, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970.

[8] See John Tolan, *Petrus Alfonsi and His Medieval Readers*, Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1993, esp. pp. 73–91; U. Marzolph, *Arabia Ridens*, vol. 1, pp. 18off.; Charles Burnett, "Learned Knowledge of Arabic Poetry, Rhymed Prose, and Didactic Verse from Petrus Alfonsi to Petrarch," in John Marenbon, ed. *Poetry and Philosophy in the Middle Ages: A Festschrift for Peter Dronke*, Leiden: Brill, 2001, pp. 29–62; and Marc Wolterbeek, *Comic Tales of the Middle Ages: An Anthology and Commentary*, New York: Greenwood Press, 1991, p. xiv, which draws attention to the *ridicula*, including the poem of the eighth epistle of Fulcoius of Beauvais, written in the late eleventh century, prior to Petrus Alfonsi and the rise of the fabliaux.

analogues is typically lacking. Since we can neither exclude the possibility that yet earlier common sources (e.g., Hellenistic, Biblical, Talmudic) might separately inform both the medieval European and Islamicate tokens of particular tale types (as suggested below), nor can we always be certain in which direction any borrowing took place, arguments about influence frequently founder in the doldrums of circumstantial inference and conjecture. Nor can we entirely discount the possibility of polygenesis when similar archetypes, themes or legendary events are observed in chronologically proximate European and Middle Eastern versions. Not every similarity, even chronologically and geographically proximate ones, results from borrowing.

Part I: The Pear Tree Episode

A version of the "Pear Tree episode" occurs at the end of Chaucer's Merchant's Tale, dating from the 1390s, and in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, in an earlier and somewhat different iteration, as well as in still earlier Italian and Latin versions. The Islamicate versions of this tree of deceit, told as a self-contained tale in Persian by Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 1273, henceforth Rūmī) and in Arabic by Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 1201), exhibit some gender or botanical variation from their later European counterparts, but clearly recount in their essence the self-same episode found in Boccaccio and Chaucer. Rūmī's version was briefly noted as an analogue to Chaucer's Merchant's Tale as long ago as the 1880s, but the chronology of the Islamicate versions and their relationship with the European versions were not correctly understood and never properly explored. Pre-Chaucerian versions of the Pear Tree Episode can be found in the *Comoedia Lydiae* from the twelfth century; in the Italian Novellino, and in the *Decameron*, the composition of which occupied Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375) from about 1350 to 1352, though it is set in 1348 during the Black Plague.

Boccaccio: Pirro and his Pears

The pear tree episode is presented as an exploration of the gender wars; more precisely, it is a fabliau illustrating the wiles of wives. Boccaccio's version appears among the tales told on the seventh day under the rubric of tricks which, either in the cause of love, or for motives of self-preservation, women have played upon their husband (*delle beffe, le quali o per amore o per salvamento di loro le donne hanno già fatte a' suoi mariti,*

senza essersene avveduti o sí).[9] Boccaccio's narrator, Panfilo, sets the ninth tale (novella) of the seventh day in Argos, associating it with the most famous ancient lore of the kings of Greece (*In Argo, antichissima città d'Acaia, per li suoi passati re molto piú famosa che grande*, 862:5). It concerns an elderly nobleman named Nicostrato, who has been blessed by Fortune with a charming and courageous wife, a noble lady named Lidia. Panfilo foreshadows the outcome and provides a prophylactic moral at the outset by warning his lady listeners that they should not emulate Lidia in her behavior; her affairs were blessed by Fortune more than by reason (*sue opere fu troppo piú favorevole la fortuna che la ragione avveduta*, 862:4), and not every husband will prove as gullible as was hers. Panfilo thus sets the stage for the tale of a clever but unfaithful wife.

Lady Lidia, though well provided for by Nicostrato, is much younger than him and blames fortune on this account (*se la fortuna m'è stata poco amica in darmi cosí vecchio marito*, 863:10). Although we know that Nicostrato engages in the physical activity of hunting and hawking, he apparently does not satisfy the sexual appetite of his young, full-blooded and frisky wife (*io son giovane e fresca donna e piena*, 863:9) in the way other young women are gratified, he being mismatched to her in age (*gli anni del mio marito son troppi se co' miei si misurano, per la qual cosa di quello che le giovani donne prendono piú piacere io vivo poco contenta*, 863:9). Lidia finds herself attracted to her husband's trusted young male servant, Pirro, and pines away in love for him, though he does not seem to recognize or requite her attention. So Lidia communicates her love via her chambermaid, Lusca, but Pirro rejects the suit, both out of loyalty to Nicostrato, and on the suspicion that this may all be a stratagem devised to test Pirro's loyalty. Lidia instructs Lusca to try again—a tree is not felled all at one blow, and, when Lusca returns a few days later, Pirro's resolve has somewhat waned. Her arguments sound increasingly persuasive: a high-born lady can bring him certain advantages, Pirro should be flattered, Nicostrato would not likely remain so scrupulously chaste if the situation were reversed. To ensure himself that Lidia's avowal of love for him is true, Pirro requires her to do three things: to kill Nicostrato's beloved sparrow-hawk in his presence, then to pluck a hair from his beard, and then to pull one of his teeth, and to send it to Pirro. Lidia complies with the

[9] Boccaccio *Decameron*, ed. Vittore Branca, Torino: Giulio Einaudi, 1980, p. 785; for Settima Giornata, Novella nona (vii: 9), pp. 861–75. For the English, translations consulted include G.H. McWilliam, Penguin, 1972 and J.M. Rigg, London, 1921, available online at the Decameron Web: (www.stg.brown.edu/projects/decameronNew/DecIndex.php).

challenge and adds with some bravado that she will even contrive for she and Pirro to carnally enjoy one another in the very presence of Nicostrato and successfully convince him that he has not seen anything of the sort.

Having schemed to fulfill the three requests of Pirro (a portion of the tale that does not directly concern us), Lidia then contrived to make love to him before the eyes of Nicostrato. She feigned sickness and Nicostrato, suggesting that she might feel better in the garden, carried her, with the help of his servant Pirro, from her room and set her down on the lawn at the foot of a beautiful pear tree (*d'un bel pero*, 872:58). Saying that she had a great desire for some of the pears, she asked Pirro to climb the tree and knock down some of its fruit for her (*"Pirro, io ho gran disidero d'avere di quelle pere, e però montavi suso e gittane giú alquante*," 872:58).

Here we must note Boccaccio's double-entendre and word-play. He regales us with plosives and alliteration as he has Nicostrato and Pirro put Lidia down in the garden, posed at the foot of the pear: *nel giardin la portarono e in un pratello a piè d'un bel pero la posarono* (872:58). The name Pirro and the word for pear tree (*pero*), and its fruits (*pere*) provides one pun—I desire pears / Pirro—as well as the near homonym in the conjunction "but" (*però*): Pirro, I greatly desire to have some of those pears, perhaps you can climb . . . " As for the symbolism of the pear, it has been said to represent by its shape the testicles, and by extension, male virility. The *Comoedia Lydiae*, which takes even greater delight in punning, implicitly links testicles and pears, when at the end of the deception of Decius, Lusca must hide her smiles, Pirrus his pears and Lidia her belly (*Lusca tegit risum, Pirrus pira, Lidia uentrem*, line 555).[10] Alternatively, by their shape the pears may suggest the womb and female fertility, as January's gesture of patting May on the womb in Chaucer's version of the pear tree episode ("And on hire wombe he stroketh hire ful softe," Merchant's Tale, line 2414),[11] would seem to suggest.

Lidia had, of course, pre-arranged with Pirro what they were to do at the pear tree, and when he had clambered quickly up the tree and looked down, he began to remonstrate with Lidia and Nicostrato for the lewd indecency of their sexual dalliance right there before his eyes. Had they not many private rooms in the house for this purpose, and was this not

[10] "Lidia," edited by Edmond Lackenbacher in *La "Comédie" latine en France au XII^e siècle*, ed. Gustave Cohen, Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles-Lettres," 1931, p. 247.

[11] Citations of the *Canterbury Tales* follow Larry D. Benson and F.N. Robinson, eds. *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988. The line numbers are given in the text.

a miraculously quick recovery on Lidia's part? Lidia, sitting calmly beside Nicostrato, asks him if Pirro may be mad, while Pirro insists upon what he sees, wondering how they suppose he could not see what they were doing. Nicostrato suggests that Pirro must be dreaming, but Pirro denies this—both of them are very much awake, and in fact, he describes seeing Nicostrato knocking about with such vigor that, were one to similarly knock the pear tree about, not a single fruit would be left on it (*anzi vi dimenate ben sí, che se cosí si dimenasse questo pero, egli non ce ne rimarrebbe sú niuna*, 872:63).

At this, Lidia wishes aloud that she were well, so that she could climb the tree and see for herself those marvels Pirro professes to see (*per vedere che maraviglie sieno queste che costui dice che vede*, 873:64), planting the suggestion that the pear tree is enchanted. From his vantage point in the tree, Pirro continues with outraged exclamations about the impropriety of his Lord and Lady's behavior, until Nicostrato orders him to come down. When he climbs down, Nicostrato again questions him about what he claimed to see from the pear tree, and Pirro says, "I saw you lying atop your lady" (*vedeva voi addosso alla donna vostra*, 873:66). No amount of disavowal and protestation by Nicostrato convinces Pirro otherwise. Nicostratus, his curiosity aroused, wonders whether the pear tree may not be enchanted and decides to climb it for himself to see what marvels it might reveal (*Ben vo' vedere se questo pero è incantato e che chi v'è su vegga le maraviglie!*, 873:69). As soon as he has climbed the tree, Pirro and Lidia entwine in a very real embrace, whereupon Nicostrato cries out aggrieved, calling Lidia a strumpet and Pirro untrustworthy. Of course, they claim that they are merely sitting still, and as Nicostrato begins to climb down, they also resume more innocent positions.

But Nicostrato calls them names, until Pirro "realizes" that both of them have had the same misperception, and that Nicostrato had been telling the truth when he had said that he and Lidia had not budged from their original sitting position. Pirro allows that he has misperceived when he was up the pear tree (*io falsamente vedessi mentre fui sopra il pero*, 874:71). Both Pirro and then Lidia in turn aver that they would never commit adultery, but should they have a mind to do so, Nicostrato may rest assured that it would not be out in the open, under his very eyes. Nicostratus then relents in his abuse, and begins to remark how miraculous a tree it is, that changes the sight of whoever climbed it (*cominciò a ragionare della novità del fatto e del miracolo della vista che cosí si cambiava a chi sú vi montava*, 875:76).

Lidia pretends to be offended by the accusation against her honor and orders Pirro to get an axe to chop down the pear tree so that neither she

nor any other woman would suffer dishonor from it again. She goes on to suggest that it is really Nicostrato whose skull should be cracked by the axe, since he should not have so quickly allowed his mind to accept what his eyes seemed to see.[12] Pirro chops down the pear tree, and Lidia agrees to forgive Nicostrato, now that the shame to her honor has been removed (*il nemico della mia onestà*, 875:79). But, of course, the lady and her lover will continue as opportunity presents itself to cuckold Nicostrato at leisure in the comfort of the palace. At the outset of the following story, the ladies who had been in the audience listening to this tale mourn the felling of the guiltless pear tree (*del pero tagliato che colpa avuta non avea si dolevano*, 876:2).

Chaucer's Pear Tree Episode

Chaucer's Pear Tree episode presents an analogue of Lidia and Pirro's pear tree escapade, and is similarly introduced in the context of the gender wars. Chaucer's Merchant, married all of two months, is most unhappy with his shrewish wife, whom he suspects could hold her own toe-to-toe with the Devil himself:

> I have a wyf, the worste that may be;
> For though the feend to hire ycoupled were,
> She wold hym overmacche, I dar wel swere.
>
> (Merchant's Prologue, 1218–1220)

The Merchant offers these comments in response to the Clerk's tale, which comes before it, and features the long-suffering patience exhibited by the heroine, Griselda—a wife much wronged by her husband. The Clerk concludes from it that wives should not be meek and humble before their husbands as was Griselda, but should—in imagery that seems to connect strong women with the Orient—noisily clap their tongues to defend themselves from offense, and to be as strong as camels and as aggressive as Indian tigers in so doing:

> Ye archewyves, stondeth at defense,
> Syn ye be strong as is a greet camaille;
> Ne suffreth nat that men you doon offense
> And sklendre wyves, fieble as in bataille,

[12] May uses a similar line of reasoning with January in the Merchant's Tale.

Beth egre as is a tygre yond in Ynde;
Ay clappeth as a mille, I yow consaille.
(Lenvoy to the Clerk's Tale, 1195–1200)

The Merchant's tale actually blames the silly old husband, January, a knight from Lombardy who has been a confirmed bachelor playboy all his life, for deciding at the age of sixty to take a wife (Nicostrato is also verging on old age when he marries Lidia). January has all sorts of pious and practical reasons for this, about which he waxes rapturously, before insisting, however, that his bride must be under the age of twenty. May, the young wife whom he winds up selecting, is marrying above her station into ease, but on their wedding night May finds her spouse somewhat less attractive than she had hoped, and somewhat less vigorous, despite various aphrodisiacs, than she had expected. But May is a dutiful wife, and she remains with January, who has a favorite enclosed garden, which he keeps locked up, and where he delights in taking his young bride to amorously disport.

January's manservant, Damyan, has fallen in love at first sight with May, and has fallen ill through pining for her. January now inadvertently paves the way for Damyan's suit by sending May to look in on him (Nicostrato had also inadvertently abetted his wife's affair by having Pirro help him carry Lidia to the garden). Damyan gives her the love letter he wears around his neck, and May reads it that night in the privy before throwing it away. She remains dutiful to her husband—she does stand to gain a sizeable inheritance—but out of pity for poor Damyan (so she tells herself), she resolves to satisfy Damyan one day.

January subsequently goes blind (involving a different defect of sight than the "illusion" of Nicostrato), and becomes insanely jealous, never letting go of May's hand. She copies the garden key and by exchange of letters has Damyan enter the garden to meet her there. One June day in the garden, January talks to May of his insecurities, and asks her to pledge to remain faithful. She vows to do so, though in saying this, she sees Damyan sitting under the bush she had appointed, and signals him to climb up a tree full of fruit, a "pyrie," or pear tree.

Pluto, the king of the fairies, observes all this from on high and tells his wife, Proserpine, that he will restore January's sight so that January can witness his wife's cuckolding deceit and his own servant's treachery (Merchant's Tale, 2234–2263). However, Proserpine vows—on behalf of all womankind—to give May the quick wit to answer her husband back (2264–2310). When May sees Damyan, all "myrie," perched up in the lush

green leaves of the "pyrie," she turns to tell January that she must eat of the fruit of that tree, or die:

> I moste han of the peres that I see,
> Or I moot dye, so soore longeth me
> To eten of the smale peres grene.
> Help for hire love that is of hevene queen!
> I telle yow wel, a womman in my plit
> May han to fruyt so greet an appetit
> That she may dyen but she of it have.
>
> (Merchant's Tale, 2331–37)

Here again, we have a double-entendre for the "pears" which May sees. More subtly than in Boccaccio, we may understand both the fruit of the tree, and the contemplated forbidden fruit, perhaps even the (pear-shaped) genitalia of Damyan.

January laments that he cannot get the fruit for May, since he is blind. May craftily then offers to climb the tree herself, if his jealousy will permit. He can hold onto the trunk of the tree (to ensure that no one else climbs it), and she will boost up off his back:

> "Allas," quod he, "that I ne had heer a knave
> That koude clymbe!" "Allas, allas," quod he
> For I am blynd!" "Ye, sire, no fors," quod she,
> But wolde ye vouche sauf, for Goddes sake,
> The pyrie inwith youre armes for to take,
> For wel I woot that ye mystruste me,
> Thanne sholde I clymbe wel ynogh," quod she
> So I my foot myghte sette upon youre bak.
>
> (Merchant's Tale, 2338–45)

May thus ascends into the tree, assisted by her husband. At this point, Chaucer excuses himself for his inability, or unwillingness, to gloss over the rather rude and quite raucous scene that ensues:

> Ladyes, I prey yow that ye be nat wrooth;
> I kan nat glose, I am a rude man—
> And sodeynly anon this Damyan
> Gan pullen up the smok, and in he throng.
>
> (Merchant's Tale, 2350–2353)

Pluto promptly restores January's sight, "and made hym se as wel as evere he mygthe." Naturally, his beloved wife is the very first thing he longs to look upon, and he casts his two eyes up at the tree, only to begin roaring and shouting at what the lady is doing, and what Chaucer professes himself unable to courteously express:

and saugh that Damyan his wyf had dressed
in swich manere it may nat been expressed
But if I wolde speke uncurteisly;
And up he yaf a rorying and a cry,
As dooth the mooder whan the child shal dye:
"Out! Help! Allas! Harrow!" he gan to crye,
O stronge lady stoore, what dostow?"

(Merchant's Tale, 2360–65)

On behalf of womankind, however, Prosperine quickly endows May with the quick wit to reply as follows:

And she answerde, "Sire, what eyleth you?
Have pacience and resoun in youre mynde.
I have yow holpe on bothe youre eyen blynde."

(Merchant's Tale, 2368–70)

May explains that she had been told that she could cure January's blindness by following a certain medicinal regimen of "struggle with a man upon a tree," and has done this with full good intent.

January, not yet taken in, replies to this, describing the event with a pungent Middle English term for coition (swyve):

"Strugle?," quod he, "Ye, algate in it wente!
God yeve yow bothe on shames deth to dyen!
He swyved thee; I saugh it with myne yen . . . "

(Merchant's Tale, 2376–2380)

May counters that her medicine must be false, for if he could see properly, he would not have said such things to her. His sight must still be damaged: "Ye han som glymsyng, and no parfit sighte" (2383). January counters with the protest that he sees as well as he ever did:

"I se," quod he, "as wel as evere I myghte,
Thonked be God! With bothe myne eyen two,
And by my trouthe, me thoughte he dide thee so."

(Merchant's Tale, 2383–86)

May feigns a protest—the thanks I get!—and January begins to apologize, asking for her to come down from the tree, as he entertains the possibility that he may have erred, even though he still believes he has seen what he has seen:

"But, by my fader soule, I wende han seyn
How that this Damyan hadde by thee leyn,
And that thy smok hadde leyn upon his brest."

(Merchant's Tale, 2393–2395)

May helpfully explains that a man has blurry vision when he first wakes up from sleep, and so must it be with a man just returning from long blindness—your sight will settle down aright in a couple days, and until then you may see some strange things. Be careful, for the one who misconceives, misdeems:

> "Beth war, I prey youw, for by hevene kyng,
> Ful many a man weneth to seen a thyng,
> And it is al another than it semeth.
> He that mysconceyveth, he mysdemeth."
>
> (Merchant's Tale, 2407–10)

And with these words she leaps down from the tree. January takes her in his arms, kisses her, strokes her softly on her womb (suggesting, as noted above, a symbolic relationship of fertility or fecundity between the pear, and May's womb), and takes her home.

The Persian Pear Tree of Deception

The two Islamicate versions of this tale, which we will consider in chronologically reverse order, vary as to the type of fruit tree in question, so we require a more inclusive title than the "Pear Tree Episode" for this tale-type. We might re-christen it "The Fruit Tree of Sexual Deception." The younger of these two versions occurs in perhaps the most widely read poem in the medieval world from Bosnia to Bengal, the *Mathnavī-i maʿnavī* of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, which is divided into six books (*daftar*). Rūmī himself provides the date for the composition of Book Two of the *Mathnavī* as 662 A.H./1263–1264, following a hiatus after the completion of Book One. Hagiographical accounts calculate this hiatus at two full years,[13] which would then place the composition of Book One sometime in 660 A.H./1262. Book Four has to have been completed therefore no earlier than 1264 and no later than the poet's death in 1273. If each book (containing on average about 4,500 lines) took approximately one year to complete, Book Four would date to sometime around the years 1266–1267. What complicates this dating is that Rūmī first alludes to, but does not tell, the story of this deceitful tree in Book One, where it comments upon a Bedouin's boast over his own voluntary poverty and his total avoidance

[13] Shams al-Dīn al-Aflākī, *Manāqib al-ʿārifīn*, ed. Taḥsīn Yāzījī, 2 vols. 2nd ed., Tehran: Dunyā-i Kitāb, 1983, vol. 2, pp. 742–3.

of covetousness or concupiscence (*ṭamaʿ*). This story, though it entails no ribald scenes of adultery, does concern the marital conflict between a Bedouin and his wife. The narrator exhorts us:

> *zi sar-i amrūd-bun bīnī chunān*
> *zi ān furūd ā tā namānad ān gumān*
> *chūn tu bar gardī u sar gashta shavī*
> *khāna rā gardanda bīnī u ān tu'ī* [*tuvī*][14]
>
> On the top of the wild pear tree you see such things
> come down from it so that your suppositions will not remain.
> When you turn around and make yourself all dizzy,
> you'll see the room spin around, but that is you (who spins).

A typical procedure for composition of the *Mathnavī* with its more than 25,500 lines, involved Rūmī dictating the poem to Ḥusām al-Dīn Chalabī in the evenings. The pear tree joke may have been orally told on the occasion this section of Book One of the *Mathnavī* was first orally composed, but omitted from recording in the written text because it was initially thought too bawdy, or perhaps too popularly colloquial, for inclusion (Rūmī presents most of the fabliaux and ribald tales of the *Mathnavī* in Book Four). It is, of course, equally likely that the original place of this tale has been moved (as we know to have been the case with tale sequences in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* from various manuscripts of that poem), or that these lines in Book One were inserted into the text at this point after the whole poem, including Book Four (where the full tale is in fact related), had been concluded, and a final corrected presentation copy of the text was being prepared from a draft of all the Books. In any case, this tale evidently had some enduring didactic value for Rūmī, enough that he recounts it at one place and refers to it at another junction.

Rūmī's telling of this pear tree fabliau in the 1260s predates Boccaccio's version by eighty years, and Chaucer's by over 120 years. Written in Anatolia, in an ethnically and religiously diverse society of Turks, Greeks, Arabs and Perisans at the Seljuq capital at Konya, where a Sunni Muslim

---

[14] Book 1: 2363–4. The numbering of verses from Rūmī's *Mathnavī* follows that established by R.A. Nicholson, *The Mat<u>h</u>nawí of Jalálu'ddín Rúmí*, E.J.W. Gibb Memorial, n.s., 3 vols., London: Luzac and Co., 1925–1933. A version incorporating all of Nicholson's correction is provided by Hassan Lahouti, *Mathnavī-i Maʿnavī*, 4 vols., Tehran: Nashr-i Qaṭra, 2004. The oldest known manuscript, the Konya ms. of 677 A.H./1278 has been published in facsimile with an introduction by Abdülbâki Gölpınarlı *Masnavī: Mavlānā Calāl-ad-Dīn Rūmī* (Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı [Ministry of Culture], 1993), and it is this latter manuscript that provides the basis for the reading and transliteration given in the Appendix here. The translations are mine.

government ruled over a territory in which many Greeks and Armenians remained Christian, many of the Turks were as yet not completely Islamicized, and pagan Mongol power exercised its influence. Rūmī tells the tale proper in fourteen lines of Ramal meter verse (*Mathnavī* 4:3544–74), preceded in the text by a prose heading, summarizing the story along with a somewhat defensive discussion of the genre of its moral (see Appendix I and II for a transliteration of the Persian and an English translation of the tale). Rūmī's heading places us squarely in the realm of the sexual deception of a spouse and a pear tree that produces illusions or misperception. After the dramatic part of his verse narrative concludes, Rūmī elaborates the moral in verse, giving a spiritual meaning to the fabliau, and urging the reader toward the celestial tree that reveals true vision.

We may formulate a short-hand title for this tale from the first two lines of the prose heading "Story of that debauched wife (*zan-i palīd-kār*) who told her husband those illusions (*khayālāt*) appears to you from the top of the wild pear tree (*amrūd-bun*)." In view of its introduction as a parable (*mithāl*), we may refer to it as "The Parable of the Debauched Wife and the Pear Tree of Illusions." Rūmī then narrates (lines 3544–48) how a woman wished to "do it"[15] with her lover in full view of her deluded husband. Toward that specific goal, she pretends to climb a tree to pick fruit for him. At the top of the as-yet-unspecified fruit tree, she looks down and, weeping, calls her husband "a degenerate fag" (*maʾbūn-i radd*), saying she sees some lout humping him (*bar tu mīfitad*), and that he is spread-eagled like a woman beneath this fellow, and must therefore be secretly effeminate (*mukhannath*). She thus verbally unmans her husband with this accusation before actually cuckolding him (3547–8).

In lines 3549–55, the husband insists he is all alone and suggests the wife's head is spinning from the height of the tree. She provides a detailed description of the other man, wearing a cap and really bearing down hard on the husband's back. The husband shouts for her to come down, thinking she has lost her mind. As soon as she gets down from the tree, he clambers up, whereupon she quickly takes her paramour into her intimate embrace. "Who is that, you whore," shouts the husband, "all over you like a monkey!" She retorts, "No, there's no one here but me; you must be

[15] The compound verb *bar zadan* can have a great multiplicity of meanings, including to cheat at cards, to despoil or plunder, to steal, to dock (of a boat at the shore), etc., but the basic meaning involves physical contact (*zadan* = hit) of one thing upon (*bar*) another: to rub up against. It seems clear that because she wishes to do this with her love (*mul*) in the presence of her deluded husband, that it is an action verb for sexual intercourse.

dizzy." When he insists upon what he sees, she suggests it is due to the "*amrūd-bun*," which dictionaries define as a pear tree (*amrūd* / *armūd* = pear, *bun* = root). An item of foodstuffs specified from the Achaemenid era as **umrūta* in the Persepolis fortification tablets points to a very antique Persian origin for the word *amrūd*, though the precise botanic species intended by the Cuneiform and by Rūmī's usage in thirteenth-century Anatolia may diverge somewhat.[16] In modern Persian, the word *gulābī* would be expected for pear, but that is not often attested for the earlier period of Persian literature, and seems in any case to be a specific subspecies of *amrūd*, the apparently more comprehensive classificatory term.[17]

In another story from Rūmī's *Mathnavī* (3:1614ff), a dervish vows not to pick any fruits off the trees, but to wait only for the wind to blow them down, presumably demonstrating his reliance upon God for his sustenance. He lives in a mountain where there are numberless mountain pears (*murūd-i kūhī*),[18] but when the wind blows no pear to the ground for five days straight, he reaches up to pluck the fruit from an *amrūd-bun* branch. This breaking of his vow brings on a divine punishment which "opened his eyes and boxed his ears" (3:1676), perhaps alluding to the association between the pear-rood and false perception, and perhaps even to the tree of the forbidden fruit. The dervish is mistakenly arrested with a band of thieves, and his hand is cut off in punishment, thus symbolically connecting the plucking of the pear with castration.

Frazer's *Golden Bough* notes a European folklore practice of planting a pear tree with the birth of a girl and an apple tree with a boy.[19] Perhaps,

---

[16] Abdol-Majid Arfaee of the Persepolis-Pasargadae Research Institute confirmed for me the appearance of the word in the Persepolis Fortification Tablets in a lecture he gave at the Regenstein Library at the University of Chicago in 2006. Matthew Stolper of the University of Chicago kindly pointed out the citation for *Umrūta in the meaning "pear" (Middle Persian *ʾurmōd*, New Persian *ʾarmūd*, *amrūd*) in Jan Tavernier, *Iranica in the Achaemenid Period (ca. 550–330 B.C.): Linguistic Study of Old Iranian Proper Names and Loanwords, Attested in Non-Iranian Texts*, Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2007, p. 460, No. 4.4.20.18.

[17] On the terminology of plants and flowers as they appear in Persian poetry, see *Lughat nāma-i Dihkhudā* and Bahrām Girāmī, *Gul va giyāh dar hizār sāl-i shiʿr-i Fārsī: tashbīhāt va istiʿārāt*, Tehran: Sukhan, 2007, p. 451.

[18] *Mathnavī* 3:1634 and 1373 give the metrically altered form *murūd*, but elsewhere in the story, the word *amrūd* occurs (3:1672). The word *amrūd* does not often occur in the *Dīvān* of Rūmī either; it appears to be a hapax legomenon in the form *murūd* (ghazal 914 of the Furūzānfar edition). Likewise, I have found no instance of *amrad* in the *Dīvān*, so the pun on *amrūd* / *amrad* seems unique in Rūmī to the Debauched Wife and the Pear Tree of Illusion tale.

[19] James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, 2nd ed., 3 vols., London/New York: MacMillan, 1900, vol. 3, p. 393.

then, the *amrūd-bun* and its fruit have folkloric associations with virility or with aphrodisiacal properties, but in Rūmī's episode of the pear tree of deception, the *amrūd*-root has a particular etymological utility and semiotic charge. As we have seen, Boccaccio's punning on the word pear and the name Pirro constituted an important element of his (and the *Comoedia Lydia*'s) iteration of the pear tree tale. Since *amrūd* phonetically suggests the word *amrad*, meaning catamite (or more precisely a beardless youth, or "ephebe"), we are also in the presence of a pun on the Persian word for pear.[20] The wife claims to see her husband turned into a catamite, an *amrad*, specifically here the object (*maf'ūl*) of anal penetration in a male-male sexual encounter.[21] The wife finally explains to him (3556), "You cuckold (*qaltabān*), I too misperceived (*kazh hamī-dīdam*) while in the tree," and tells him to come down (3557).

Rūmī now cautions the reader (lines 3558–78) not to think of this fabliau (*ḥazl* = jesting, often of a lewd nature, a thematic genre label approximately corresponding to the Latin terms *facetiae*, *ridicula*) as merely funny—it is also instructive. We are not to think of the actual pear tree, but of the pear tree of existence, atop which our ego deceives us, makes us squint, and see awry. If we come down from selfishness (*hastī u manī*), we will see straight and speak aright. Rūmī proceeds to say that if you are humble, God grants true vision (which even the Prophet Muhammad had to pray for), and then the pear tree will become to you a tree of Moses, transformed by God's creative command "Be" (*amr-i kun*—another phonetic pun on *amrūd-bun*) into a Burning Bush. Now you may see, through divine alchemy, the True tree mentioned in the Koran (14:24) as having firm root, its branches in the heavens.

The Arabic Date Tree of Deception

An Arabic version of the tree of deception dating probably to the years between 1170 and 1194, and therefore preceding Rūmī's Persian instance of

[20] Rūmī elsewhere uses the word *amrad* in a jocular but scathing critique of the pederastic proclivities of some dervishes (*Mathnavī* 6: 3843), contrasting the treatment meted out to two brothers, one who has grown a little chin hair and one who has not.

[21] Judith Wilks of Northwestern University (personal communication, 20 February 2004) suggested that the Turkish word *armut* (pear) is used as an insult in some parts of Turkey. Although the insulting connotation was said to arise from its similarity to an ethnic term, *Arnavut* (Albanian), perhaps a relationship between Pers. *amrud* / Turkish *armut*, and *amrad* (catamite) has lingered to the present day in Turkey.

the tale, is attested in the work of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Jawzī, an author at least some of whose work was well known to Rūmī.[22] Ibn al-Jawzī was a Ḥanbalī jurist, ḥadīth scholar, and historian, born in Baghdad about 511 A.H./1118 and died in 597 A.H./1201, a prolific author credited with anywhere from two hundred to one thousand titles, about two dozen of which have survived. Though the Hanbali school opposed innovations not based upon scripture and the practice of the Prophet, Ibn al-Jawzī nevertheless inclined toward certain aspects of Sufism, as well as belles lettres. Beginning in the early 1160s, he taught as a *madrasa* professor at several institutions, under the patronage of Ibn Hubayra, the Hanbali vizier to the Caliphs al-Muqtafī (r. 530–555 A.H./1136–1160) and al-Mustanjidd (r. 555–566 A.H./1160–70). By the middle of the 1160s, he was authorized to act as a popular preacher (*wāʿiẓ*) in the Caliphal palace, and by the reign of the following Caliph, al-Mustaḍīʿ (r. 566–74 A.H./1171–79), when Saladin helped re-establish the Abbasid *khuṭba* in Cairo after the demise of the Fatimids, Ibn al-Jawzī wielded great influence in Baghdad society, his sermons attended by thousands. However, when the vizier Ibn Yūnus was dismissed and arrested, and replaced in office by a Shiʿite vizier, Ibn al-Qaṣṣāb, in 590 A.H./1194, Ibn al-Jawzī—who had been active in opposing Shiʿites—suffered house arrest for five years, until shortly before his death in 597 A.H./1201.[23]

Ibn al-Jawzī tells a version of the fruit tree of deceit in his *Kitāb al-adhkiyā'* (*Book of the Intelligent*), one of a trio of works by him that compile anecdotes illustrating clever and foolish behavior. The *Book of the Intelligent* recounts anecdotes of a mostly amusing nature structured like religious traditions or ḥadīth, giving an *isnād*, or chain of transmission.[24] For the particular story that concerns us here, Ibn al-Jawzī seems unable to trace the origin, signaling only that it is not original to him by the phrase *balaghanā* ("it has reached us," or "it has been conveyed

[22] The association was noted in Muḥammad Istiʿlāmī's commentary to his edition of *Mathnavī-i Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Balkhī*, 7 vols., revised ed., Tehran: Sukhan, 2000, vol. 4, p. 396. The link between Ibn al-Jawzī's tale, the *Comoedia Lydiae* and Boccaccio's *Lidia* was pointed out by R. Basset, *Mille e un contes*, vol. 2, pp. 150–51.

[23] See H. Laoust, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), s.v. Ibn al-Djawzī, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ....

[24] He has also composed (577 A.H. /1181) a collection of *Maqāmāt* in the style of al-Ḥarīrī, though like al-Zamakhsharī, Ibn al-Jawzī does not begin with an *isnād* or mention a transmitter for his picaresque scenarios, but instead narrates in first person in the name of the character Abū al-Taqwīm. See Devin Stewart, "The Maqāma," in *Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period*, ed. Roger Allen and D.S. Richards, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 145–58, esp. 154–6.

to us.")[25] This may constitute a literary fiction to establish more antique authority for something created by the imagination of the writer, to distance the author from ribald or theologically suspect material, or simply to maintain a consistent format with the other stories. It may also indicate, on the other hand, that this tale was popularly circulating in the public domain during the time Ibn al-Jawzī recorded it, as a kind of joke for which no particular authorship could be attributed. Although Ibn al-Jawzī's authorial career seems to have flourished from the 1160s, and his history, *al-Muntaẓam*, covers the caliphate up to the year 574 A.H./1179, the date of *Kitāb al-adhkiyā'* has yet to be definitively established. We may simply note that the time-frame for the appearance of this Arabic tree of sexual deceit roughly corresponds with the appearance of the *Comoedia Lydia*, thought to have been composed, like the other Latin comedies, in west-central France in the latter half of the twelfth century.

Ibn al-Jawzī's tale, told in a prose paragraph in Arabic, shares the same core features with the others we have discussed, except that we find not a pear, but a tall date tree (*nakhla*), and the sexual overture comes at the initiative of the lover, rather than of the wife. The plot develops as follows (See Appendix III for a transliteration of the Arabic and Appendix IV for the first [?] English translation). A woman had a lover who demanded that she devise a stratagem by which "I might swyve you" (to use a Chaucerian word for the equally blunt Arabic term, *aṭa'a-ki*) in the husband's very presence. Failing to do this, the lover will never speak to the woman again (1–2). She promises to arrange for this to take place at the date palm in their yard (a space of nature enclosed by a wall, like January's garden and presumably also like the garden of Nicostrato, though Rūmī's pear tree is not specified to an enclosure). The wife tells her husband that she wants to climb and pick some dates (3), and from the tree top looks down to accuse him of copulating with another woman, in plain view of his own wife! (4–5). The husband swears that he is all alone, but upon coming down from the tree, the wife continues her quarrel with him, until finally the innocent man threatens to divorce her if she will not believe him to have been alone. He has her sit down while he climbs the tree for himself (6–7).

The next scene should be quite predictable by now: the wife calls her companion, who promptly engages in an act of carnal knowledge with

[25] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Kitāb al-adhkiyāʾ*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Karīm Al-Nimrī, Beirut: Muḥammad ʿAlī Bayḍūn and Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2001, p. 99.

her (8). The husband takes notice (*iṭṭalaʿa*—perhaps of the noises of love-making, or perhaps of the strange nature of the tree), witnesses the scene below, and immediately forgives the wife for her earlier obstinate assertions about him, realizing that she must also have been deceived by the marvelous view afforded from the tree (8–9). For, he says, "whoever climbs this palm tree sees the like of what you saw" (*kullu man yaṣʿadu hādhihi al-nakhla yarā mithla mā raʾayti*, 9–10). This anecdote comes in the chapter entitled "Mention of those who have outsmarted others through their intellect to get what they want."

In Search of the Source of the Pear Tree Episode

In 1888 William Alexander Clouston briefly noted Rūmī's pear tree tale as an analogue to the tale of January, May and Damyan in Chaucer's Merchant's Tale. Clouston did not, however, succeed in drawing much attention to this startling analogue, in part because of his marginal inclusion of the example from Rūmī, which he mentions only in a supplement ("Additional Notes") to his main treatment of the sources and analogues for this tale, and in part because he was more interested in later Islamicate versions of the tale, which he mistook as direct evidence of its original source.[26] The specific Persian text attracting his attention was the *Bahār-i dānish* ("Spring of Knowledge"), composed by ʿInāyat Allāh Kanbū of Delhi in 1061 A.H./1651.[27] One of the many episodes in this tale does indeed involve a lady who tells a lucky Brahmin that "in the garden of such-and-such a land-owner, there is a palm tree (*nakhlī*) with exceedingly delicious dates (*khurmā*), and even more amazing, whoever goes up it sees many

[26] Furnivall, Brock, Clouston, eds. *Originals*, p. 544, as part of his "Additional Notes" to "The Enchanted Tree," the main discussion of which comes under Clouston's "Asiatic Versions and Analogues of Chaucer's Merchant's Tale," on pp. 341–64. Clouston notes (p. 544) that in E.H. Whinfield's abridged translation of Rūmī's *Mathnavī*, the details of "the woman's accusing her husband of pederasty, the unnatural vice to which Persian and Turks, and indeed Asiatics generally are said to be much addicted" is modestly omitted.

[27] The *Bahār-i Dānish* was then quite popular in India and had been much-lithographed in the nineteenth century. An English version had been done in Dublin as early as 1769 (*Persian Tales: The Baar danesh; or, Garden of Knowledge.* Dublin: P. and W. Wilson). Jonathan Scott's translation "from the Persic of Einaiut Oollah" appeared as *Bahar-Danish; or Garden of Knowledge: an Oriental Romance* (Shrewsbury: J. and W. Eddowes, 1799). The Persian text was lithographed in Cawnpore in 1261 A.H./1845 and again in 1886, but a more recent printing appeared as *Bahār-i dānish*, ed. Ḥājī Muḥammad Qamar al-Dīn bin Janāb Ḥājī Shaykh Muḥammad Yaʿqūb, Cawnpore: Maṭbaʿ-i Qayyūmī, 1954, which gives the date of composition quoted above, p. 4.

wondrous things."[28] The *Bahār-i dānish* version of the tale occurs among the "strange tales and surprising anecdotes in debasement of women, and on the inconstancy of that fickle sex" related to Sultan Jahāngīr (r. 1605–1627) by his courtiers in order to cure him of lovesickness. Naturally, it sets the tale in India, with a Brahmin in the role of lover, and Clouston (following Edelstand du Méril) supposed India to be the tale's birthplace.[29] However, the Islamicate versions of the story do not first appear in an Indian setting, or with Indian characters, and the *Bahār-i dānish* may itself be contaminated by the Mughal emperor Akbar's (r. 1556–1605) campaign of translation of Persian works to Sanskrit and vice versa, or as is even more likely, ʿInāyat Allāh Kanbū or his sources may well have been aware of the earlier versions (like Ibn al-Jawzī, he makes it a date tree). However, in the Sanskrit tales told by a parrot, the *Śukasaptati*, originating in or before the twelfth century (Hemacandra, d. 1172, was aware of them) but not attested in writing until the fifteenth, a different variation of the tree of sexual deception appears. This tale, "The Officious Father-in-Law" does not involve fruit or climbing of the tree, but as Clouston relates, sexual deception under a tree.[30] The framing premise of the tales presented in the *Śukasaptati* pivots around a wife wishing to run off with her lover while her husband is away, but who is captivated by a clever parrot's seventy stories until the husband returns. In 730 A.H./1330 Nakhshabī prepared a Persian version of these parrot tales, the *Ṭuṭī-nāma*, on the basis of the Sanskrit. Here, the tale of the Officious Father-in-Law occurs, vaguely reminiscent of our fruit tree of deception tale, except that no tree is involved at all.[31] This cannot qualify as an analogue for the European "Pear Tree Episodes," but a later Turkish rendition from the History of the Forty Vezirs, a text dedicated to Murād II (r. 1421–51), does present

[28] *Bahār-i dānish*, p. 87.

[29] Clouston, who reproduces Scott's translation of the tale (*Originals and Analogues*, pp. 344–50), was convinced of its antiquity, which he thought for certain of "Hindu extraction, and I think it very probable it may be found in the Suka Suptati…" p. 349 n1. Clouston's suggestion was taken up both by E. Lackenbacher in his introduction to "Lidia" in Cohen, ed. *La "Comédie" latine*, p. 218, and by A.C. Lee, *The Decameron: Its Sources and Analogues*, London: Nutt, 1909; reprint NY: Haskell House, 1996, pp. 236–7. Clouston credits Edelstand du Méril with having discovered the analogue (p. 343).

[30] Clouston, pp. 355–7.

[31] Żīyā al-Dīn Nakhshabī, *Ṭūṭī-nāma*, ed. Fatḥ Allāh Mujtabāʾī and Ghulām-ʿAlī Āryā, Tehran: Manūchihrī, 1372 sh./1993, pp. 80–81. As we shall see below, this text also contains a version of the chaste wife tale.

the basic form of the fruit tree of deception tale found in Ibn al-Jawzī and Rūmī.[32]

Clouston also mistook a token of this tale type found in the *Arabian Nights* cycle for an earlier version than Rūmī's, specifically "Er-Rahwan, the prime minister of King Shah Bakht." We now know this particular tale was a later addition to the written form of the Arabian Nights cycle, of which the earliest surviving manuscript dates to the fourteenth century, and does not include the Pear Tree episode.[33] Clouston relied upon the Habicht-Fleischer edition of the Arabian Nights, putatively based upon a late Tunisian manuscript, which must in fact have been an eclectic compilation of various manuscripts and editions, constituting an altogether new and modern recension of the work, which may be infected with translations into Arabic of tales originally composed in Persian or Turkish, or even French.[34]

As for Boccaccio's version of Nicostrato and Lidia, it has been divided into two components for purposes of identifying the precursor versions: "the tale of the fetid breath" and "the tale of the pear tree."[35] The former

---

[32] Sheykh-Zāda, *Ḥikāyat arbaʿīna ṣabāḥin wa masā*, or in its popular Turkish title, *Qirq Vezīrin ve Qirq Khatunin Hikāyetleri*, translated as *History of the Forty Vezirs*, trans. E.J.W. Gibb, London: George Redway, 1886, pp. 303–306. The existence of another Turkish version of this tale (*Ḥikāyat*, though it is also transmitted as a joke, or *laṭīfa* in the genre of works in Ottoman Turkish known as *Laṭāʾif-nāma*) in a manual on sexual intercourse attributed to, or more likely translated by, Kemalpaşazade (d. 1534) has been pointed out to me by Bariş Karacasu of Bilkent University (personal correspondence, 15 December 2007), in a manuscript version of this work entitled *Rücû'ş-Şeyh ilâ Sibâh fi'l-Kuvveti alâ'l-Bâh* (Ankara: Milli Kütüphane, 06 MK. Yz. B514, folios 120a and b). An Arabic work by the same title, *Rujūʿ al-shaykh ilá ṣibāh fī al-quwwa ʿalá al-bāh*, has been published in an edition by Ṭalʿat Ḥasan ʿAbd al-Qawī, Syria: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 2001. Though attributed to Kemalpaşazade (along with his Turkish translation), the Arabic text was perhaps more likely authored by Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf Sharaf al-Dīn al-Tīfāshī, who died in the thirteenth century, possibly before Rūmī composed the *Mathnavī*. This would constitute a potential link between the versions of Ibn al-Jawzī and Rūmī, if the Turkish *Rücû'ş-Şeyh* indeed takes this tale from the Arabic work of the same name, *Rujūʿ al-shaykh* (non vide).

[33] See the critical text edited by Muḥsin Mahdi, *Kitāb alf layla wa layla: min uṣūlihi al-ʿarabiyya al-ūlá*, 3 vols., Leiden: Brill 1984–94, and also Robert Irwin, *The Arabian Nights: A Companion*, London: Allen Lane, 1994.

[34] *Tausend und Eine Nacht Arabisch. Nach einer Handschrift aus Tunis herausgegeben von Dr. Maximilian Habicht* (etc.), *nach seinem Tode fortgesetzt von M. Heinrich Leberecht Fleischer*, 12 vols., Breslau: J. Max & Comp., 1825–43. It also appears in J.B. Macdonald, "Maximilian Habicht and his Recension of the Thousand and One Nights," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1909, pp. 685–704; and Ulrich Marzolph and Richard van Leeuwen, *Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*, 2 vols., Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2004, s.v. "Habicht," pp. 579–80; and Irwin, *Arabian Nights: A Companion*, pp. 21–2. Clouston himself was aware of the corrupt nature of Habicht's text (*Originals*, p. 353).

[35] Lee, *The Decameron: Its Sources and Analogues*, p. 231.

does not concern us here, but Boccaccio's sources for the latter portion of his ninth story of the seventh day may have included a Latin verse fable by Adolphus, composed in 1315, which can be summarized as follows:

> A blind and jealous man has a pretty wife. In a garden one day she asks him to go to a certain pear tree (*pyri*). She climbs up to a young man who is hidden in the fork of the tree, and they fulfill their desire. The husband hears the noise they make (*audit vir strepitum*) because where one sense is lacking, a person's other faculties grow stronger. He accuses his wife of having an adulterer with her, and complains to God, who restores his sight. He now bitterly reproaches his wife (*Fallax Femina! . . . quam fraude mulier mala varia sordet*). She says she had spent much on doctors for him in vain, then in sleep she was bidden (*insonuit auribus illa meis*) to play with a youth high up a tree (*Ludere cum juvene studeas in roboris alto*) and her husband would be cured. This she had done and he is whole. He praises her and continues loving her (*excolit hanc, adamat vir, alter eam*).[36]

As in the Arabic of Ibn al-Jawzī, the element of the husband noticing or hearing the noise of love-play appears here as well. Like Chaucer, Adolphus makes the jealous husband blind.

An earlier Italian novella, preserved in a late twelfth- or early thirteenth-century manuscript entitled "il libro di novelle e di be' parlare gentile" ("the book of novel tales and of speaking well and courteously"), also relates a version of the tale.[37] A later manuscript from the end of the thirteenth or beginning of the fourteenth century contains a similar novella, in which the rich and doting husband also goes blind, after which he never allows his beautiful wife to leave his side. A young man is pining away in love for her, but cannot speak to her. She takes pity upon him and makes a long tube out of a cane to put to his ear. She tells him to go to the garden and climb a pear tree laden with beautiful pears (*uno pero che v'àe molto belle pere*) and await her. She tells her husband she wishes pears, and when she insists on getting the pears herself, he holds onto the tree trunk so that no one can follow her. The love-making that ensues up the pear trunk shakes the tree, dropping pears onto the husband, who asks

---

[36] The Latin text of the fable is given in Bryan and Dempster, *Sources*, pp. 352–3; summary translations appear there and in Lee, *The Decameron*, p. 238. It first appeared in print as *Adolphi fabulae in Polycarpi Leyseri Historia poetarum et poematum medii Aevi decem*, Halae Magdelburgiae, 1721, (non vide).

[37] The manuscript is in the Biblioteca Nazionale in Florence, Codice Panciatichaiano-Palatino, 32. See Correale and Hamel, eds. *Sources*, vol. 2, p. 480. The title, suggesting a rhetorical manual, or perhaps a preacher's guide such as Petrus Alfonsi provides in his *Disciplina Clericalis*, recalls one route by which the European genre of anecdotes and tales may have been cross-fertilized by the corresponding Middle Eastern genre of *Ḥikāyāt*.

his wife why so many pears? The wife says that she wants the pears of a certain branch and cannot have any other. St. Peter asks God to restore the husband's sight to stop this deceit, but God says that the woman will find an excuse. When the husband looks up and asks what his wife is doing with the man in the tree, she explains that if she had not done this, he would not have regained his sight. The husband seems content with this reply, and so, the moral concludes, you see how unfaithful married women and young girls are, and how quickly they find excuses.[38]

Whether or not Boccaccio knew this Italian example of the tale, he did know a Latin rendition of this tale, the Latin comedy entitled *Comoedia Lydiae* composed by Arnulf of Orléans in France[39] in the latter half of the twelfth century, approximately 1175.[40] Boccaccio copied this into his miscellany, Codice Laurenziano XXXIII.[41] This 556-line verse (= 228 elegaic distichs) provides not only the basic plot, but (with the exception of the husband, Decius) even the names of the principal characters of Day Seven, Story 9 of the *Decameron*: Pyrrhus (Pirro), Lydia (Lidia) and her elderly maidservant, Lusca. It also features several central puns, including many centered on the name Pyrrhus and the pear (*pirus*) [e.g., lines 8–9]; the opinion that woman is a virus that destroys man (*virum*) [line 36]; the inability of Decius, or even ten (*decem*) men, to satisfy his lusty wife [line 102]; that Lidia likes play (*ludus*) and playing around (*ludere*)

---

[38] See the text, from Guido Biagi, ed. *Le Novelle Antiche dei Codici Panciatichiano-Palatino 138 e Laurenziano-Gaddiano 193*, Florence: Sansoni, 1880, reproduced along with a translation by N.S. Thompson as "Il Novellino," in Correale and Hamel, eds., *Sources*, vol. 2, pp. 518–21. The text was also given by Bryan and Dempster, eds. *Sources*, pp. 341–3. Both Lee, pp. 236–44, and Bryan and Dempster, pp. 341–56, give numerous later European tokens of the tale.

[39] Matthieu de Vendôme (b. c. 1130) was once thought to be the author, but a consensus is beginning to emerge in favor of an argument first propounded by E. Faral, "Le fabliau latin au Moyen Age," *Romania* 50 (1924): 321–85, that this comedy was not composed by Vendôme. Bruno Roy, "Arnulf of Orléans and the Latin 'Comedy'," *Speculum* 49, 2 (April 1974), pp. 258–66, proposed Arnulf as the author. The Latin text was edited, with French translation, by Lackenbacher as "Lidia" in *La 'Comédie' latine*, vol. 1, pp. 211–46. For English translations, see Larry D. Benson and Theodore M. Andersson, "The Comedy of *Lydia*" in *Literary Context of Chaucer's Fabliaux*, Indianapolis/New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971, pp. 206–237; and Alison Goddard Elliott, *Seven Medieval Latin Comedies*, Garland Library of Medieval Literature, v. 20, Series B, New York: Garland Publishing, 1984, pp. 126–46.

[40] The date of 1175 is provided by Elliott, *Seven Medieval Latin Comedies*, p. xlv, following Ferruccio Bertini, "Una novella del Boccaccio e l'Alada di Guglielmo di Blois," *Maia* 29–30 (1977–78), pp. 135–41. Douglas Radcliff-Umstead, "Boccaccio's Adaptation of Some Latin Sources for the Decameron," *Italica* 45, 2 (June 1968), p. 186, dates it to 1174 (still ascribing it to Matthieu de Vendôme).

[41] Branca, *Decameron*, p. 861n2 and Correale and Hamel, vol. 2, p. 480n8. Cf. Elliott, p. xlvi, who implies the attribution of Boccaccio as scribe is not conclusive.

[line 147].[42] Here, then, we have the proximate written source of Boccaccio's pear tree episode in the comedy of Lidia, which itself claims to imitate classical models of old [line 3], though the strong suggestion of an "Oriental" origin lingers,[43] specifically the connection with Petrus Alfonsi's *Disciplina Clericalis* and Spain as "the gateway through which oriental tales entered Europe in this period," mixing Buddhist, Christian and Muslim apologues in the form of exempla.[44] The Pear Tree Episode, in the form told by Adolphus, also occurs in mid-fifteenth-century European translations of Aesop, such as William Caxton's English edition, *The Book of the Subtyl Hystoryes and Fables of Esope* (1484), and the Spanish *La Vida del Ysopet con sus fabulas hystoriadas* (1489), which admix tales in Book VIII from Petrus Alfonsi, Poggio Bracciolini and others with Aesop.[45]

The Analogous Nature of the Fruit Tree of Deception Tales

Chaucer's pear tree episode in the Merchant's Tale is classed by Germaine Dempster as an early exemplar of the "Blind Husband and the Fruit Tree" tale, for which she distinguishes two sub-categories, one wherein the blind man is cured spontaneously by two supernatural onlookers (to

---

[42] Elliott, p. xlvi. She also notes that this is the most cynical and most misogynistic of the Latin comedies. On Boccaccio's rhetorical strategies in adapting material, see Jonathan Usher, "Rhetorical and Narrative Strategies in Boccaccio's Translation of the "Comoedia Lydiae," *The Modern Language Review* 84, 2 (April 1989), pp. 337–44, and on the symbolic changes he introduces to his source, see Albert Russell Ascoli, "Pyrrhus' Rules: Playing with Power from Boccaccio to Machiavelli," *Modern Language Notes* 114, 1 (Italian Issue, January 1999), pp. 14–57.

[43] Correale and Hamel, vol. 2, pp. 479–81, 480n8 and 484. The alternate title, *Comoedia Lidiades*, invokes Ovid's *Heroides*, and several other classical works or scenes are mentioned.

[44] Douglas Radcliff-Umstead, "Boccaccio's Adaptation of Some Latin Sources for the Decameron," *Italica* 45, 2 (June 1968), pp. 171–94, esp. p. 177, suggests Alfonsi. Clouston, p. 364, suggests other collections of exempla, such as the *Sermones* of Jacques de Vitry (#248 and 260), the *Liber de Donis* of Etienne de Bourbon, the *Promptuarium Exemplorum* of John Herolt, the *Summa Praedicantium* of John Bromyard might contain similar tales. Branca, p. 861n2, adds the *Speculum* of Vincenzo di Beauvais (III ix 15).

[45] Furnivall, Brock and Clouston, pp. 181–2, and also Correale and Hamel, vol. 2, p. 534, give the Caxton version of the tale "of a blynd man and of his wife," from his book of Alfonse, tale 12. In the Spanish, the pear tree tale of the blind husband comes in Book VIII, story 12. On the history of the text, see *Aesop's Fables*, trans. John Keller and L. Clark Keating (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1993), pp. 3–4, and pp. 217–18 for the story. The English and Spanish editions follow the Heinrich Steinhöwel edition in German and Latin (Ulm, c. 1482), which attributes the tale to Petrus Alfonsi (Ex Alefonso, xii), although it does not appear in the *Disciplina Clericalis.* See *Steinhöwels Äsop*, ed. Hermann Österley. Band 117 (Tübingen: Litterarischer verein in Stuttgart, 1873); pp. 326–8.

which Chaucer's version belongs), and other versions in which sight is restored after the man appeals to a deity (to which Adolphus' Latin version corresponds).[46] On the grounds that it does not involve blindness, but enchantment ("incantato" in the *Decameron* and "fantasmata" in the Latin of *Comoedia Lydiae*), she rather adamantly distinguishes Chaucer's "Blind Husband and the Fruit Tree" tale type from the "optical illusion caused by an enchanted tree" tale type which appears in Boccaccio's *Decameron.* For this reason, she argues that categorizing these tales together as "the pear-tree story" has introduced confusion, and that we know of no oriental version of the blind-husband story. Margaret Schlauch had earlier detailed how some of the "western versions" of the Pear Tree Episode follow a blind husband premise (e.g., Adolphus, Chaucer), whereas others follow the premise of illusion or deception, characteristic of the "Oriental versions" and the two "western" instances of the *Comoedia Lydiae* and Boccaccio's *Decameron*.[47] Clouston had made a similar distinction, arguing that since no oriental versions rely upon the husband's blindness, this plot device must be a European invention,[48] though he also speculated that the *Comoedia Lydiae* constituted a common source for both Chaucer and Boccaccio.[49] Dempster believed that Chaucer could not have known the Lidia versions of either Boccaccio or the *Comoedia Lydiae*, and assumed he was therefore ignorant of the versions of the tale not predicated upon the husband's blindness.

The argument has since then been ventured that Chaucer may have seen Boccaccio's version of the pear tree tale while in Italy and adopted elements from it.[50] If true, the two western classes of blindness and misperception/deception cannot be considered as mutually exclusive or unaware of one another. Indeed, Chaucer incorporates components of both the putative "Blind Husband" and "Optical Illusion" tale types, since January begins the Merchant's tale with his sight, becomes blind in the middle, and then has his sight restored, after which May successfully

---

[46] Bryan and Dempster, p. 341n1.

[47] Margaret Schlauch, "Chaucer's Merchant's Tale and a Russian Legend of King Solomon," in *Modern Language Notes* 49, 4 (April 1934), pp. 229–32. R. Basset, *Milles et un contes*, p. 151, also makes this distinction between the "L'arbre enchanté" and the blind husband types.

[48] Clouston, *Originals*, p. 364.

[49] Clouston attributes the Latin poem, as per then received opinion, to Matthieu de Vendôme. He also felt that a folk tale version must have existed and circulated prior to that.

[50] Peter G. Beidler, "Chaucer's Merchant's Tale and the Decameron," in *Italica* 50, 2 (Summer 1973), pp. 266–84.

convinces him that he has not seen what he saw: like a man first waking up, he is bound to be bleary-eyed, his vision unreliable at first. Thus, May places the strong suggestion of an optical illusion in January's mind to deceive him, just as the husbands in Ibn al-Jawzī, Arnulf, Rūmī, and Boccaccio are deceived by their wives into believing they had seen an illusion. By contrast, in the Novellino version, the husband recovers his sight and understands perfectly well what he saw, and his wife does not attempt to deny what he has seen, but explains that it was a regimen prescribed to cure his blindness, which argument contents the husband (*istette contento*), although the narrator goes on in the final sentence to castigate womankind for her wiliness.[51]

Taking the evidence of the two Islamicate versions into account, the distinction between blindness versus illusion cannot clearly and neatly delineate one type of Pear Tree Episode from another. In the Arabic date tree tale we clearly have an analogue of our Persian pear tree tale. The major differences between these two Middle Eastern versions involve the type of fruit tree and the protagonist instigating the love tryst (in the Arabic, the wife's lover; in the Persian, the wife herself). In both Middle Eastern versions, furthermore, it is the wife who first goes up the tree, and makes a show of looking down upon a scene of love-making. By contrast, the wife's lover / lord's man first looks down from the tree in Boccaccio and the *Comoedia Lydia*, making a pretended protest over the immodest scene of marital merry-making. In all four of these versions, the husband is the second person to climb the tree (ostensibly to see what has caused all the fuss), upon which he is treated to a vision of the real act taking place below. In Ibn al-Jawzī the husband entertains no doubt about the illusory nature of the tree, and immediately forgives his wife for her earlier accusation against him, whereas in Boccaccio and *Lydia* the husband first shouts accusatorily at the wife (who has never set foot in the tree), and only after considerable doubt, he eventually allows himself to be convinced it was an illusion. In Rūmī, the wife tells her husband that he has seen the same illusion (a man vigorously lying atop of the spouse) which she had seen from the treetop, and here the dramatic portion of the tale ends, unconcerned with the husband's reaction.[52]

---

[51] Correale and Hamel, eds., *Sources*, vol. 2, p. 521.

[52] Except insofar as Rūmī's moral makes the reader identify with the husband, cautioning us that unless we attain a true vision of reality in the spiritual realm, we will remain deluded, even cuckolded, in the world.

Chaucer, the Novellino version, and Adolphus all situate the flagrante delicto up in the tree, with both the wife and her lover having climbed up separately. Although in all cases the tree is a pear, the versions differ insofar as the husband in Adolphus sees what he sees, but forgives the wife because her dalliance with a youth (*Luder cum juvene studeas in roboris alto / Prisca viro dabitur lux cito, crede mihi*, lines 47–48) was a medicinal regimen vouchsafed to her in a dream after other expensive cures for the husband's blindness had failed.[53] Chaucer has May offer a similar reason for her infoliate indiscretion, but she must still convince January of the illusory nature of what he has seen. Her excuse and her moral conclusion ("he that misconceyveth, he misdemeth"), bears some similarity to Rūmī's disquisition on the nature of optical illusions at the end of his Pear tree telling. Interestingly, the blind husband of Adolphus suspects infidelity even before his sight returns, because he hears the noise of love-making in the tree above him (*audit vir strepitum*, line 27), and in the Arabic version of Ibn al-Jawzī, although the husband can see perfectly well, he first "notices"—evidently by hearing—the swyving (*fa-waṭa'a-hā fa-ṭṭala'a al-zawj*, 8), before looking down to see the deed.

Meanwhile, shared in the version of Boccaccio and Chaucer are that the cuckolding is perpetrated against the lord of the manor by his own man (Damyan, Pirro), whereas in the Middle Eastern versions, the husband has not previously laid eyes upon the paramour. Ibn al-Jawzī's version, like Chaucer's, locates the origin of sexual desire and unchastity in the person of the wife's lover. But in the Arabic, like in Boccaccio and the *Comoedia Lydiae*, the lover demands for the cuckolding to take place in the presence of the husband. In Chaucer, Damyan pines away for May and declares his love to her, but since January never lets her out of his reach, it is she who devises a way to furtively tryst with Damyan. By contrast, Lidia, the wife, initiates the affair in Boccaccio with a loyal and initially suspicious Pirro. Rūmī's Persian, meanwhile, posits the wife as the sole instigator of the foliate flagrante delicto, while her paramour is merely a prop with no speaking lines.

Rūmī may well have known the Arabic version, since he retells other tales by Ibn al-Jawzī.[54] His change from a date tree to a pear tree (*amrūd*)

---

[53] Text as per Bryan and Dempster, eds., p. 353.

[54] Rūmī's sources for the stories in Book 1 of the *Mathnavī* are given in Franklin Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present, East and West*, Oxford: Oneworld, 2000, pp. 289–91, including one taken from the *Kitāb al-adhkiyā'*. Elsewhere Rūmī borrows from Ibn al-Jawzī's *Talbīs Iblīs*, which has been edited by al-Sayyid al-Jumaylī, Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1985.

seems to result from its punning relevance to *amrad*. Of course, a desire to localize the tale to the native flora of Anatolia could have spurred a deliberate change, just as the pear tree's association with sexuality and fecundity could have. In the Arabic recitation of this tale, the fruit tree of deception remains standing, and the reader can almost sense the husband's delight in the enchanting powers of the tree, as if he might open it to tourism. For Rūmī, by contrast, the base-minded may search for the wild pear tree, but those with spiritual insight will look instead to the heavenly tree of true and undistorted perception. Thus, the potential for the tree of deception to produce future mishaps remains open in the Middle Eastern versions, as it does in Chaucer, where May merely leaps down from the pear tree to return to the embrace of January. In contrast, after Lydia/Lidia identifies the pear tree as the source of the unchaste "illusion," it must be felled—in the *Comoedia Lydiae* by the order of the husband (Decius), and in the *Decameron* by the hand of the lord's man / wife's lover (Pirro).

Thus, the common components of the fruit tree tale cannot be so clearly disentangled into clear categories of a blind husband and an optical illusion form of the pear tree tale, as Dempster had argued. If, indeed, the "western" and the "oriental" versions of the pear tree tale had polygenetic origins, the components seem to have cross-pollinated and intertwined by the thirteenth century. Perhaps they even share a common source or sources. The Persian pear tree tale of Rūmī in Antaloia (c. 1265–70) antedates that of Adolphus (1315) by forty or fifty years. The Arabic date tree version by Ibn al-Jawzī at Baghdad, and the Latin pear tree of Arnulf's *Comoedia Lydiae* in western France both stem from the second half of the twelfth century. Arnulf claims to have imitated his Lydia from tales of old (*Ut noua Lidiades ueteres imitata placeret*, line 3) while Ibn al-Jawzī suggests the tale has reached him second-hand, as well (*balagha-nā*). We may yet hope to discover even earlier examples.

The Chaste Wife / Persecuted Empress Tale

Chaucer's recitation of the Chaste Wife tale, narrated by the Man of Law in the *Canterbury Tales*, probably dates to the years between 1388 and 1395.[55] For his tale of Custance, Chaucer drew on two immediate sources:

[55] According to Larry Benson, *The Riverside Chaucer*, pp. xx, xxv.

the Anglo-Norman Chronicle of a Dominican scholar at Oxford, Nicholas Trevet, a universal history written in French about 1335 and dedicated to Princess Mary of Woodstock, daughter of Edward I;[56] and John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, written circa 1386–1390, with the final revision coming in 1393.[57] Complete consensus has not been reached as to whether Chaucer's or Gower's version came first, though Gower's is usually given chronological precedence. Both of them clearly used Trevet, who associated the tale—appearing in the final section of his Chronicles, under the rubric "les gestes des Apostles, Emperours, et Rois"—with the Emperor Tiberius Constantinus, whom Trevet places in Rome, though he actually ruled at Byzantium from 578 until 582, when his successor, Mauritius, married to Constantina, assumed the throne.[58] Many suggestions have been offered as to earlier versions of this tale, or components thereof, which may possibly have informed Trevet's presentation of the material. These include the French verse romance *La belle Hélène de Constantinople* from the mid-fourteenth century; the fourteenth-century Middle English *King of Tars* (which tells of the marriage of an Armenian princess to a Tartar khan);[59] the Latin *Vita Offae Primi* (from the *Vitae duorum Offarum*), written in England about 1250 and previously attributed to Matthew of Paris;[60] the long German chronicle of Roman kings and emperors, called

[56] His name is also given as Nicolai Triveth, and Trivet, and the title of his universal history is variously titled, but see *Cronicles que frère Nichol Trivet escrit à ma dame Marie la filhe moun seignour le roi d'Engleterre Edward* (unpublished Ms. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale). See Susan Crane, "Anglo-Norman Cultures in England, 1066–1460," in David Wallace, ed. *Cambridge History of Middle English Literature*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 51. Robert M. Correale provides an edition and translation of Trevet's story of Constance in Correale and Hamel, vol. 2, pp. 296–329. An earlier edition of the French appears in Bryan and Dempster, pp. 165–81.

[57] For John Gower's version of the tale of Constance, see the Liber Secundus (Envy) of his *Confessio Amantis*, ed. Russell A. Peck, Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press and Medieval Academy of America, 1980, pp. 108–136; or the edition of G.C. Macaulay from *The Complete Works of John Gower*, vol. 2 (1901; reprint 1968, pp. 146–73), which is reproduced in Correale and Hamel, vol. 2, pp. 330–350; and in Bryan and Dempster, pp. 181–206.

[58] Correale and Hamel, vol. 2, p. 279. Cf. Carol Heffernan, *The Orient in Chaucer*, p. 27.

[59] Lillian Hornstein, "Trivet's Constance and the King of Tars," *Modern Language Notes* 55 (1940): 354–7.

[60] For the dating of this work, see Correale and Hamel, vol. 2, p. 280. Cf. also Bryan and Dempster, pp. 156–7, asserting that the *Vita* was "probably written in the early twelfth century," and Edith Rickert, "The Old English Offa Saga" I & II, *Modern Philology* 2 (1904–5), pp. 29–76 and 321–76, esp. p. 360. Rickert estimates the work was written between 1195–1214. It is in the second part of the Offa saga in the *Vita Duorum Offarum*, that we encounter the earliest of the eighteen European versions of the Constance Legend (pp. 356–7), which

the *Kaiserchronik* of 1147;[61] the Arabic chronicle *Annales Eutychii*, written circa 937 by the Greek Orthodox patriarch of Alexandria, Saʿīd ibn Biṭrīq (877–940);[62] the Ancient Greek novels, especially *Clementine Recognitions* and *Apollonius of Tyre* (though the female role there is downplayed); and even an Egyptian festival of Isis, have all been suggested.[63] Several other tokens of the tale as we know it from Trevet, Gower and Chaucer occur in various guises in other European languages, for example, the *Romance*

Rickert judges stylistically inconsistent with the first part, and therefore of foreign origin (pp. 355–6).

[61] J. Schick, "Die Urquelle der Offa-Konstanze Sage," *Brittanica* ("Festschrift Max Förster"), Leipzig, 1929, pp. 31–56, where the German is said to give "an intermediate stage between [the third-century Greek novel *Clementine*] *Recognitions* and the so-called *Crescentia* version of the cycle," Bryan and Dempster, p. 160. The date is given by Dempster, though *the Oxford Companion to German Literatur*e, ed. Henry and Mary Garland, Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1997, s.v. "Kaiserchronik," p. 442, ascribes the work to a priest in Regensburg, writing under the patronage of Emperor Lothar III and Duke Heinrich der Stolze, sometime between 1135 and 1150.

[62] His work survives in two Arabic recensions, one authorial and one augmented sometime between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries. See Sidney Griffith in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Eutychius. For the relation between Trevet's and Eutychius' version, see Phillip Wynn, "The Conversion Story in Nicholas Trevet's 'Tale of Constance,'" *Viator* 13 (1982): 259–74, esp. pp. 260–61 for the origins of the Muslim conversion episode that begins Trevet's Constance saga. Wynn suggests this was brought to Europe by crusaders and grafted on to the Calumniated Queen part of the tale. The episode in the *Annales Eutychii* concerns Chosroes II seeking refuge with the Emperor Maurice during the uprising of Bahrām, and was perhaps based upon the Arabic translation by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ of the Middle Persian *Khwatāy Nāmag*, basis for Firdawsī's *Shāh-nāma*. Chosroes II (Khusraw), according to Persian tradition, married Mary, daughter of Maurice, and in a banquet celebrating the victory over Bahrām, wore a robe with a cross upon it. For the Arabic text and German translation of *Annales Eutychii*, see Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalum. Scriptores Arabici, vols. 44–45, *Das Annalenwerk des Eutychios von Alexandrien*, ed. Michael Breydy, Louvain: Peeters, 1985. The Arabic text along with a Latin translation was published by John Selden (Johanne Seldeno) and Edward Pococke (Edwardo Pocockio), *Contextio Gemmarum, sive, Eutychii Patriarchae Alexandrini Annales*, 2 vols., Oxford: impensis Humphredi Robinson, 1658–59.

[63] See in addition to Correale and Hamel, eds., vol. 2, pp. 277–93, the various ideas propounded in A.B. Gough, *On the Constance-Saga. Palaestra* 23, Berlin: Mayer and Müller, 1902; Margaret Schlauch, *Chaucer's Constance and Accused Queens*, New York: New York University Press, 1927, and her "Historical Precursors of Chaucer's Constance," *Philological Quarterly* 29 (1950); Nancy Black, *Medieval Narratives of Accused Queens*, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003; A.H. Krappe, "The Offa-Constance Legend," *Anglia* 61 (1937), esp. p. 368; Elizabeth Archibald, "The Flight from Incest: Two Late Classical Precursors of the Constance Theme," *Chaucer Review* 20 (1986), pp. 259–72; and Marijane Osborn, *Romancing the Goddess: Three Middle English Romances about Women*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998.

of Emaré,[64] and eventually, Shakespeare's *Pericles, Prince of Tyre.* It is duly indexed as a folk motif.[65]

The basic plot of these stories seems to have originated "in the East under Byzantine influence," and the "form of the story of Chosroes as Trevet knew it was transmitted to the West, as Krappe and others pointed out, by the crusaders."[66] In his *Historia rerum in partibus transmarinsi gestarum*, William Archbishop of Tyre refers to the Arabic *Annales Eutychii* as a source of his now lost *Gesta Orientalium Principum*, written about 1182 and known to have reached Europe by the 1220s.[67] But that concerns specifically the portion of Trevet's tale that treats the Christian conversion of an eastern potentate, and not the main kernel of the Custance / persecuted queen saga. For the main body of the Custance saga, we can find two close analogues in Islamicate literatures, both much older than Trevet, and indeed predating the composition of the *Gesta orientalium*. To my knowledge, the analogic relationship between these two Islamicate recitations of the tale and the European versions has never previously been noticed; it is not mentioned in the *Sources and Analogues* literature for Chaucer.[68]

The first analogue treated here comes from Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār's mystical *mathnavī*, the *Ilāhī-nāma*, written in the twelfth century in Nishāpūr, in eastern Iran.[69] A faithful translation in lineated prose of ʿAṭṭār's *Ilāhī-nāma* has been published as *The Book of God* by John Boyle, but the length of the tale precludes reproduction of the translation here.[70] Instead, a

---

[64] See *The Romance of Emaré*, ed. Edith Rickert, Early English Text Society, e.s. 99, London: Early English Text Society / K. Paul, Trench and Trübner, 1906; issued in 1908.

[65] Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957, 4.473 (K2110.1, 477 (K 2117) 6.301 (S51). See also Schlauch, *Chaucer's Constance*, pp. 69–70.

[66] Correale and Hamel, vol. 2, pp. 279, 282. See also Heffernan, *The Orient in Chaucer.*

[67] Wynn, "The Conversion Story," pp. 272–4.

[68] I.e., it was not found in Furnivall, Brock and Clouston, eds. O*riginals and Analogues*; Bryan and Dempster, eds. *Sources and Analogues* (1941); or the revised Correale and Hamel, eds., *Sources and Analogues* (2002–2005).

[69] The text has been published at least three times: *Ilahi-Name: Die Gespräche des Königs mit seinen sechs Söhnen*, ed. Hellmut Ritter, Bibliotheca Islamica, Band 12 (Istanbul: Staatsdruckerei, 1940; reprinted Tehran: Ṭūs, 1359/1980); *Ilāhī-nāma-i Shaykh Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār-i Nayshābūrī*, ed. Fuʾād Rawḥānī, originally 1339/1960; sixth reprint Tehran: Zavvār, 1376/1997; and *Ilāhī-nāma-i ʿAṭṭār*, ed. Muḥammad-Riḍā Shafiʿī-Kadkanī, Tehran: Sukhan, 1387/2008.

[70] Translated by John Andrew Boyle as *The Ilāhī-nāma, or Book of God of Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976), pp. 31–45, under the heading "Story of the virtuous woman whose husband had gone on a journey." A modern English blank verse version is offered by Franklin Lewis " 'Tale of the Righteous Woman (whose

summary outline, detailing the correspondences with Chaucer's Custance, will be offered below.

The *Ilāhī-nāma* is a frame tale poem structured as the advice given by a wise king to his six sons on how to rule their passions and their realm.[71] ʿAṭṭār relates his chaste wife / persecuted empress tale under the rubric "The Righteous Wife whose Husband had Gone on a Journey" (*zan-i ṣāliḥa ki shawhar-ash bi safar rafta būd*). Her name is given as Marḥūma. The Marḥūma saga in the *Ilāhī-nāma* is the first tale told by the king to the first son and, at 310 lines, it is one of the longest of the approximately 900 tales told in ʿAṭṭār's various works. Badīʿ al-Zamān Furūzānfar estimated the poet's birth to about 540 A.H./1145, and calculated the composition of the *Ilāhī-nāma* on the basis of the author's invocation of the "sixty years of age" topos, to approximately the years 1200–1205.[72] We can establish a terminus a quo in either 573 A.H./1178 or 583 A.H./1187, the two alternate dates for the composition of the *Manṭiq al-ṭayr*, thought to have been composed after the *Asrār-nāma*, but before the *Ilāhī-nāma*.[73] ʿAṭṭār died probably in 618 A.H./1221, giving us the terminus ad quem. No earlier versions of Marḥūma's tale are known in Persian, though later versions do appear in the *Javāhir al-asmār* of ʿImād bin Muḥammad al-Naʿrī (or al-Thaghrī), dating perhaps to about 715 A.H./1315, and in Żīyā' al-Dīn Nakhshabī's *Ṭūtī-nāma* of 730 A.H./1330, and in Dārā Shukūh ("Qādirī")'s Mughal era reworking of that book in 1069 A.H./1658.[74]

There are thus three versions of the chaste wife tale in Persian before Trevet's account. Heshmat Moayyad has traced ʿAṭṭār's version back to a possible source in one of the early canonical works of Imami Shiʿite law, the *Kitāb al-kāfī* (the Sufficient Book) by al-Kulaynī (d. ca. 940; his name is occasionally also rendered as Kulīnī). Al-Kulaynī probably began the work in Rayy, or in Qom, in central Persia, and completed it in

husband had gone on a journey)': A Poetic Translation from the *Ilāhī-nāma* of Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār," in *Converging Zones: Persian Literary Tradition and the Writing of History. Studies in Honor of Amin Banani*, ed. Shah Wali Ahmadi, Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, forthcoming, 2011.

[71] The rubric for the tale appears thus in the editions of Ritter, p. 31; Shafīʿī-Kadkanī, p. 131, but the edition of Rawḥānī, p. 27, gives the rubric "*Zan-i pārsā*" (the chaste woman, or the ascetic woman).

[72] Badīʿ al-Zamān Furūzānfar, *Sharḥ-i aḥvāl va naqd va taḥlīl-i āthār-i Shaykh Farīd ad-Dīn Muḥammad ʿAṭṭār-i Nayshabūrī*, Tehran: Chāpkhāna-i Dānishgāh-i Tihrān, 1339–40/1961, pp. 77–87.

[73] Benedikt Reinert, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. ʿAṭṭār.

[74] Moayyad, "Sargudhasht," p. 427. Nakshhabī's *Ṭūtī-nāma* relates the tale on the 32nd night, pp. 265–74.

Baghdad in the first half of the tenth century.[75] The work does not appear to have been widely read among Shiʿites until the mid-eleventh century, but al-Kulaynī's rendition of this chaste wife tale establishes a far earlier date than all the Persian and the European iterations noted above. It is roughly contemporary with the *Annales Eutychii*, which does not provide the chaste wife narrative, but only the opening component in Chaucer's Man of Law's Tale of the conversion by a non-Christian Middle Eastern king to Christianity.

ʿAṭṭār and al-Kulaynī's chaste wife and the travails and peregrinations she suffers on account of her beauty provide a close analogue for Custance, with the exception that ʿAṭṭār and al-Kulaynī both lack the Christian-Muslim intermarriage component which sets the plot of Chaucer's Man of Law's Tale in motion.[76] We will therefore leave aside Custance's unwilling and unhappy betrothal to the Sultan and the latter's murder by the hands of his mother, the evil Sowdaness, focusing instead on the tribulations which ensue for Custance, juxtaposing these against the peculiar tribulations and sufferings of ʿAṭṭār's chaste wife, Marḥūma, after her husband leaves for pilgrimage. Though the chaste wife is sundered from her husband by completely different circumstances in Chaucer and in ʿAṭṭār, she is then subjected to a strikingly similar series of tribulations brought about by the lust which her beauty engenders in other men, and which she ultimately overcomes through her unassailable righteousness and piety.

While neither the Persian nor the earlier Arabic instance of the tale can be construed as a direct source for Chaucer, these versions nevertheless document that tokens of this tale type circulating in the Islamicate literatures antedate the known European tokens. Naturally, world literature does not lack for other paragons of the chaste and long-suffering wife (Sītā in the *Rāmāyana* comes to mind), and we might well class the chaste wife as a Jungian archetype, or as a polygenetic emblem of suffering

---

[75] Heshmat Moayyad, "Sargudhasht-i zan-i pārsā-i ʿAṭṭār," *Irānshināsī*, 9, 1997, pp. 427–42. For a biography, see W. Madelung, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), s.v. al-Kulaynī.

[76] While ʿAṭṭār does not couple the Muslim-Christian intermarriage motif with this chaste wife tale, he recounts in his *Conference of the Birds* (*Manṭiq al-ṭayr*) the tale of a Muslim man, Shaykh Ṣanʿān, who falls in love with a Christian girl and ostensibly gives up his religion for her sake. This motif of Christian-Muslim intermarriage recurs frequently in both European and Middle Eastern languages, functioning in both cultural contexts as a symbol of political and religious relations, as well as the quality of faith of the characters involved. I elsewhere offer an attempted analysis of this cross-confessional love/marriage theme in 'Aṭṭār," *Journal of Iranian Studies* 42, 5 (special issue: Love and Desire in Pre-Modern Persian Poetry and Prose, 2009): 693–723.

feminine virtue that simply reflects the power imbalance inherent in patriarchal societies, irrespective of their cultural and religious contexts. In this particular case, however, I think the strong parallels in structure, detail and meaning of the tokens of this tale eliminate the possibility of polygenesis or similarity by coincidence. ʿAṭṭār and Chaucer's versions may descend, albeit through collateral lines, from a common story or group of folk stories, to which other elements may have accreted. Reflecting on Chaucer's Custance and ʿAṭṭār's Marḥūma as respective Christianate and Islamicate analogues of a chaste woman narrative may assist the project of constructing a fuller stemma for the transmission and diffusion of the 'chaste woman' tale type.

Chasing a hypothetical ur-version of the tale could, of course, take various directions. It has recently been proposed that the Persian romances of the eleventh century—*Vāmiq u 'Adhrā'*, *Varqa u Gulshāh* and *Vīs u Rāmīn*—echo central topoi and plot elements from the Hellenistic novels, including Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, Xenophon of Ephesus' *An Ephesian Tale*, Heliodorus' *An Ethiopian Story* and Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon*.[77] They share the plot, or structural premise, of separated spouses or lovers who either die at one another's graveside or are, after much misadventure and peregrinated suffering, reinstated to one another's arms. The similarity of Persian romances to these Greek tales of the early common era may not be due to direct borrowing or translation from written sources, but to oral transmission of the vestiges of Hellenistic culture in Parthia and other parts of the Sasanian realm which survived into the Islamic period.[78] If so, it would constitute a kind of poetic justice, in that several of the Greek originals draw, or purport to draw, their matter from a Persianate milieu, perhaps with the classical character of Panthea in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* as their ultimate model. Dick Davis points out that ʿAṭṭār's recitation of the 'chaste wife' may indeed reflect the lingering popularity of a character type encountered in the Hellenistic

[77] Dick Davis, *Panthea's Children: Hellenistic Novels and Medieval Persian Romances*, New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 2002, pp. 1 and 54–55. On the Hellenistic novels, see the study of Tomas Hägg, *The Novel in Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); for English translations of the principle texts, see *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, ed. B.P. Reardon, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.

[78] Bo Utas and Tomas Hägg, *The Virgin and Her Lover: Fragments of an Ancient Greek Novel and a Persian Epic Poem*, Leiden: Brill, 2003, show that the Persian romance of Vāmiq and ʿAdhrā' is based upon the fragmentary Greek novel *Metiokhus and Parthenope*, but that the mode of transmission into modern Persian is uncertain (they rule out Middle Persian and Syriac intermediaries, but not necessarily an Arabic one).

novel.[79] The means of transmission for the substance of these Greek romances into Persian or Arabic presents somewhat different possibilities than the avenues of transmission considered above for the Pear Tree Episode.[80] Yet we cannot discount that our Islamicate recitations of the chaste wife tale may have alternative, or additional, associations with the Judaic lore (*Isrāʾīliyyāt*) that passed into Islamic literatures via popular preaching, and via such written genres as the Stories of the Prophets (*Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*).

The *Ilāhī-nāma* begins after the customary doxology and eulogies by structuring the narrative around a frame. A Caliph/king seats his sons before him and asks each of them about their desires from life and the world. The first son desires to possess the peerless virgin daughter of the King of the Fairies (*Shāh-i pariyān*), and complains that if he cannot have her, he will be reduced to madness. The father responds, "what a fine worshipper of the sensual urges you are" (*zahī shahvat parastī*), drunk with lust. He advises the son that men who are fixed on the female pudenda (*dil-i mardī ki qayd-i farj bāshad*), expend their entire life's energy on it, whereas a manly person must be a complete stranger to lust, as was the woman about whom he shall presently hear, who was free of lust, and indeed stood at the front of all men at the threshold of God.

Like Chaucer's Custance, who is "Mirour of allye curteisye," Marḥūma is exceedingly beautiful and pious, though ʿAṭṭār foreshadows the heroic deeds she will accomplish by describing her as "a lion among men." There was a beautiful and good woman (*zanī būd ast bā ḥusn u jamāl-ī*) named Marḥūma.[81] Twelve lines are lavished on her beauty, and to a lesser extent, her piety and abstemiousness. We then learn that she happens to have a husband, but he is no sooner introduced in one hemistich (*miṣraʿ*), than he sets off on pilgrimage in the next. We also learn that the wife herself has the qualities of a brave lion of a man (*shumurdīsh az shumār-i shīr mardān*), a quality which she will need for what happens next.

The husband appoints his younger brother, who it turns out is not a chivalrous young man (*va lākin būd mardī nā javānmard*), to attend to

[79] Davis, *Panthea's Children*, 26–7, 104.

[80] For a general discussion of the possible means of transmission, see Tomas Hägg, "The Oriental Reception of Greek Novels: A Survey with Some Preliminary Considerations," *Symbolae Osloenses* 61 (1986), pp. 99–131. Rather than Spain, we might look to Byzantium as the channel of conduit.

[81] Ritter later discovered another manuscript which gave her a different name, Marjūma. See Moayyad, "Sargudhasht," p. 440, n 6. We will return to the question of her name, below.

his wife's cares and needs, and then sets off on pilgrimage. The brother diligently tends to his sister-in-law's needs for some time, until one day he happens to see her face behind the veil, or curtain (*bidīd az parda rū-i ān dilafrūz*) and falls head over heels in love, losing all control of himself. He tries to win her through force of gold and pleading, but she drives him abjectly away, saying that he should be ashamed before God, religion and his brother, and should put all such notions out of mind. He rebuffs this reproach with a threat—it's no use, you must satisfy me immediately, or I will stop attending to you and, worse, denounce you and bring about your ruin. She replies, I have no fear, better ruin in this world than in the next. The brother-in-law hires four false witnesses to testify against her and accuse her of adultery. The judge rather injudiciously accepts their testimony and condemns her to stoning. They take her to the plain and rain down stones upon her, leaving her there to die as a warning to others.

However, she regains consciousness in the morning and begins to moan and groan, whereupon a Bedouin passing by on camel hears her. He asks who she is, but she does not identify herself, saying only, I am one afflicted and abject. The Arab picks her up, sets her on his camel and quickly takes her home to nurse her. After much care and many days, she begins to recover her health, her charm and beauty. Seeing how very beautiful she is, the Bedouin asks her to become his lawful wedded wife (though he already has one wife), as he is dying from love and only union with her can resuscitate him. She rejects the offer, explaining she has a husband already, but the Bedouin nevertheless calls her to him in secret to have his way, whereupon she upbraids him for turning from religion and God. Having accomplished a good deed by nursing her to health, it made no sense for him to do an evil deed to erase it. In any case, she has already refused such offers in the past, for which she has suffered stones and calamity, and because she is of pure faith (*pāk-dīn*), she will not knuckle under, or allow any blemish upon her chaste body, even should he tear her to pieces.

Moved by the righteousness (*ṣidq*) of this chaste woman, the Arab Bedouin adopts her as his sister, coming to regret his earlier ill intentions. But, her troubles hardly end here. The Bedouin has a black servant, who falls in love with Marḥūma upon seeing her face, and propositions her. She rejects him, too, explaining (in accordance with medieval prejudices) how she had refused his white master and was not about to accept him. The slave now threatens her—either be mine, or by some stratagem, I'll have you turned out. She replies, do what you want, I have no fear of death. This enrages the slave, who goes to kill the infant child of his master's

wife, sleeping in its crib, and slips the knife under Marḥūma's pillow. The wife goes to nurse the baby in the morning, and finds its corpse. When they investigate, the knife is found under Marḥūma's pillow and all accuse her of the foul deed. The slave and the mother of the child begin to ferociously beat Marḥūma, who, incidentally is described androgynously at this juncture, as a "youth" (*javān*)—usually a term for a male, and in this circumstance perhaps hinting at Joseph. The Bedouin comes to reproach her too, but when she explains that he should be reasonable and think what motive she would have to repay the Bedouin's kindness to her with such injustice, he realizes she is guiltless in the matter. Nevertheless, given the suspicions his wife will feel upon seeing Marḥūma's face each day, he tells her it is best she should leave that place as a free woman, and he gives her 300 dirhams to support herself.

She sets off and comes upon a village where a young man is being hung or crucified upon a gallows (*dār*, but as the punishment is affected with the victim upside down, *nigūnsār*, perhaps it is crucifixion) for inability to pay his taxes. Further inquiry reveals that 300 dirhams is the amount needed to clear his account and set him free, so the woman buys his life with the money she has, and sets out on her way. The youth streaks after her like an arrow, perhaps to thank her, but upon seeing her face, of course, he falls hard in love, and says that to die on the gallows would have been better than to die so wretchedly in love. He now tries his powers of persuasion to seduce the woman, but she rejects him, asking, "Is this how you repay me for my kindness?" They continue on in this conversation until they reach the sea, where the youth, turning against her, decides to sell her to some merchants in a ship. He tells them she is an exquisitely beautiful servant girl (*kanīzak*), but that she is so refractory that he wants to get rid of her. Though she warns the merchants not to buy her because she is a free woman, they will not listen. They buy her for one hundred dinars, and manage to get her into the boat and set sail.

The merchant who paid for her sees her face and figure and is seized by the leviathan of lust, and goes to rape her. She falls down and calls out to the other passengers for help: "O Muslims, I am a Muslim like you, and a free woman and have a living husband, as God is my witness. Don't you have mothers and sisters and daughters in their veils, and would you consent for such a thing to happen to them?" This speech managed to win her a reprieve, and all hands on deck were sympathetic to her plight, except that as soon as any one of them saw her face, he would fall in love with her. Soon the whole company was yearning for her, and planning to take her by surprise, pin her down and rape her as a gang.

She calls out in prayer to God for deliverance from this evil scheme, and this prayer stirs up all the elements to her aid—flames of fire rise up within the waves, turning the entire company of ill-doers aboard ship to ashes. The wind drives the unpiloted ship safely to dry land. In order to save herself from further attempts upon her chastity, before the locals come around the ship to look upon her, she fashions for herself the clothes of a man. They therefore see her sitting alone in the ship as a beauteous youth (a *ghulām*, like Joseph). They ask questions about how s/he came to be in a ship filled with wondrous goods, but s/he will talk only to the king. The king is called, and Marḥūma tells him the story of how she got there, only allowing him to think that she is a male youth, after whom the others on board had lusted. She turns over the riches in the ship to the king, asking only that a temple (*maʿbad*) be built for her next to the sea, where she is to be left alone to worship God.

This wins over the king and his army as her disciples, and they build the temple, which looks just like the Kaʿba. As the Shah is about to die, he wills that Marḥūma, the ascetic youth, be made his successor, and the advisors and populace are pleased with this. Although Marḥūma, good ascetic that she is, does not desire worldly dominion in the least, they plead with her and she accepts. However, she says that she will need to wed to do this, and asks that all the noble women of the town gather together with their daughters on the pretext that s/he can select a bride. When this woman's gathering is held, s/he reveals herself to them as a woman, as if to say, it is not fitting for a woman to be king. She charges them to go back to their husbands (subtly transferring power from the hands of women back to the hands of men) and inform them that she must be excused from this task. All are shocked at this discovery, but they send back a woman messenger to say that, since she is the heir apparent, she must choose the man who would be king, or rule, like a man, herself. This provides the narrator-King an opportunity for an aside to his son—look at this woman who was unmoved by the prospects of rule—see if you can do as well. Anyway, her repute as the woman who is better than man reaches everywhere, and cripples begin coming to be healed by her breath (865).

Finally, her husband returns from pilgrimage to find his wife gone and his brother a blind and immobile quadriplegic. His brother tells him that the wife had been found guilty of adultery and stoned to death. The man was sorely grieved by his wife's death, and her infidelity. Eventually he decides to take his brother to see the famous woman, whose prayers are answered by God, and who can cure the blind and the crippled. Of course,

their path leads by the Bedouin's place, and the Bedouin offers them hospitality. The Bedouin reveals that his black servant is blind and crippled after having beaten a wise woman that had been there. The Bedouin will therefore accompany them with this servant to see the saintly woman. Naturally, they now come by the youth's home who had sold Marḥūma. He too, is blind and crippled, and his mother decides to tie him to a mount and bring him to see the saintly woman.

One morning Marḥūma comes out to see her husband approaching in the distance. Weeping with great joy, she prays, and devises a way to keep her identity from him (out of shame at having her honorable reputation besmirched). Then she recognizes the other three companions who had been her erstwhile tormentors. She veils her face and comes up with a plan to prove her innocence—each of them will have to openly confess their sins, or they will not be cured. They all do so, and are cured of their afflictions. She then sends them out of the room and removes her veil (*niqāb*) in front of her husband. He cries out and falls down, astounded, so close is the resemblance between this woman and his dear departed wife. Now Marḥūma gives him the glad-tidings that she is neither dead, nor a sinner.

The husband falls prostrate to the ground to pray and thank God. The three oppressors are ashamed but also glad, as Marḥūma gives them money. She makes her own husband king of that realm, with the Bedouin as his vizier. Having laid the foundations for a happy kingdom, she occupies herself with prayer.

Analogic Features of the Tales of Custance and Marḥūma

The tale of Chaucer's Custance is well enough known that, for the sake of space, we will not need to recount the plot here, but will concentrate only on the analogic features in the tales of Custance and Marḥūma:

1) The abandonment of the chaste woman by a responsible male.

Custance's father sends her to Syria, abandoning the daughter in his charge to uncertain circumstances with a strange man, because it will benefit Christendom (perhaps it will also benefit his estate, but that is only hinted). Due to the machinations of her mother-in-law, she is abandoned and set adrift.

Marḥūma's husband leaves his wife in his brother's care, for a journey to Mecca. This abandonment by her rightful protector, who does so in

furtherance of his religious obligations, leads to trying circumstances for her because of the treachery of an in-law.

2) The concealed nature of her identity.

The Sultan of Syria falls in love with Custance sight unseen. After this, her identity as Empress and Christian is lost, and, with the exception of the knight in the Constable's castle, other men seem to fall in love with her through second-hand report: in the case of king Alla, through the report of the Constable; in the case of the evil steward at the second Castle, by report of other folk who have been watching the sight of a woman washed on shore with a ship. Back on land, Custance's aunt does not recognize her, and Alla has to stare at her before recognition comes upon his face. Her father does not at first recognize her, either, though he does see her child, who reminds him of his "deceased" daughter.

The brother-in-law of Marḥūma, and indeed the other men she comes in contact with, treat her well enough until they see her face (the brother-in-law, the Bedouin, the crucified youth, the merchant who buys her, the passengers aboard ship). She finally decides to change her appearance to that of a man. Later, due to her veil, her erstwhile victimizers, as well as her husband, do not initially recognize her when they are reunited at the end of the tale.

3) The false accusation of murder against the chaste woman. In the home of her new master, after she is rescued, the chaste woman is accused of murder. The murderer, whose hot-blooded advances the chaste woman has spurned, takes revenge on her by murdering his master's loved one.

In the Bedouin's home, the black slave kills the Bedouin's child and leaves the bloody knife under Marḥūma's pillow. Although she convinces the Bedouin of her innocence, she must leave because the Bedouin's wife cannot countenance her any longer.

In the Constable's castle, Custance refuses the advances of a young knight who did "love hire so hoote, of foul affection." This knight therefore kills Dame Hermengild and places the bloody knife beside Custance. By divine intervention, she is acquitted, and marries Alla, becoming royalty once again, and giving birth. Alla then goes on a journey, beginning the cycle of Custance's abandonment and persecution all over again.

4) Attack aboard ship by would-be rapists.

Both Custance and Marḥūma are saved by prayer and the assailant(s) are either drowned or burned, leaving the chaste woman adrift in a ship full of merchandise and provisions.

5) Seafaring in a rudderless boat filled with provisions.

6) Reunion with husbands.

Both Custance and Marḥūma wind up, after many adventures, reunited with their husbands. Marḥūma becomes queen/king of the realm, and is then visited by her husband, who does not initially recognize her. Custance, who has been princess all along, is not immediately recognized by Alla, or by her father, but she eventually resumes her rightful role as queen.

7) Through their piety, the chaste women convert others.

Marḥūma as a pious hermit sets an example for the king and all in his realm, becoming a saint famed for her healing powers. She also brings about the repentance of all those who had earlier harmed her. Custance converts the Sultan, the Constablesse, the Constable, Alla and the whole town in England where she dwells to Christianity.

8) Both women attain power, but end life in prayer.

Marḥūma as king/queen transfers power to her husband and practices prayer in her hermitage. Custance reunited again with King Alla, sees her son christened Emperor, transferring her inborn royalty to him. After Alla's death, she returns to Rome to live with her father, the Emperor, in virtue and holy alms-giving.

There are many other points of similarity, and though there are some significant differences as well (for example, the scene in the saga of Custance in which the false letters are exchanged is absent in Marḥūma), these can be explained by the melding of the basic Chaste Woman / Persecuted Empress tale with components of other tales, in this case specifically the legend of Alla, an historical king of Anglo Saxon Britain. The chaste woman tale in both instances concerns ladies abandoned by their male protector to the vicissitudes of fate, whose beauty tempts others to seduce her, but whose virtue and sinlessness preserve her from harm, whose prayers invoke the miracle of divine intervention, and whose piety converts others to the true religion. This is further strengthened by the several particulars which both stories share in common—the shelter given by a foreign man (English constable/Bedouin) who is married; the murder by knifing of a sleeping victim in this protector's household, and the placing of the bloody knife on the bed / under the pillow of the sleeping chaste woman; the voyage at sea in a well-provisioned but uncaptained boat; the transcending of temporal power to do worship and alms, etc.

The Arabic Chaste Wife Tale

An Arabic persecuted woman narrative in the Arabian Nights cycle was noted by Clouston well over a century ago,[82] but he relied upon a version appearing in Burton's complete translation of the Arabian Nights, which is not attested in the early collection of the cycle. Given the tampering with the textual tradition in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it provides a rather impugnable witness of the Arabic recitation of the tale.

But al-Kulaynī's token of the tale is verifiably antique. It may have been collected by him while studying with Shiʿite scholars in Qom during the years from about about 903–913, sometime after which he moved to Baghdad, where he resided the rest of his life. His compendium *al-Kāfī*, which he worked on for about twenty years, did not become a widely used text until the eleventh century. Al-Kulaynī divided his book, as per the science of Islamic law (*fiqh*), into the "roots" (*al-uṣūl*) or principles for deriving law, and the "branches" (*al-furūʿ*) or norms of the law, so that the eight volumes of *al-Kāfī* are divided according to which portion of law they treat. Our tale occurs in a section of *al-Furūʿ min al-kāfī* that al-Kulaynī designates the "Book of Marriage" (*Kitāb al-nikāḥ*), which begins with chapters (*bāb*) on the love of women, on their good qualities and evil qualities, on choosing a wife, on lust and how nine-tenths of it is allotted to women, etc. This makes the book as much a compendium of manners and folklore, verging into themes of the wiles of women literature, as it is a book of law (though dowry, temporary marriage, rules for coitus during menstruation, etc., are also covered). These chapters are punctuated by sections containing interesting anecdotes (*nawādir*), included, it would appear for their entertainingly illustrative value, though they do have an *isnād*, or chain of transmission, as do traditional hadith. Appendix V contains an English translation, apparently the first of this narrative.[83]

The chief differences between ʿAṭṭār's chaste woman and the version in al-Kulaynī's *al-Furūʿ min al-kāfī* are that Kulaynī places the story in a Jewish setting, with a Jewish king and judge, and it is a prophet of the Israelites

[82] W.A. Clouston, "The Innocent Persecuted Wife: Asiatic and European Versions of Chaucer's Man of Law's Tale," reprinted in Furnivall, Edmund Brock and W.A. Clouston, *Originals and Analogues of Some of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*, pp. 365–414.

[83] Thiqqat al-Islām Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad bin Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī al-Rāzī, *al-Furūʿ min al-kāfī*, ed. ʿAlī Akbar al-Ghaffārī, vol. 5, Tehran: Muʾassisa-i Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya (Bāzār-i Sulṭānī), 1958, reprinted Tehran, 1984; an offset reprint appeared in Beirut: Dār al-Aḍwā', 1985, pp. 556–9.

sent by God who leads the people to find her and confess their sins. Guilt also attaches to the husband for having left on business when the chaste wife had asked him not to, thus leaving the wife vulnerable to her ensuing tribulations. It is likely that ʿAṭṭār takes the name of the wife, Marḥūma, from al-Kulaynī, because she has both been stoned (*fa-rajama-hā*) by her husband's brother, and also given mercy (*fa-raḥma-hā*) by the hermit. Here again, we have a pun, though it is somewhat subtle and not made central to the tale. The reader may think of our un-named chaste wife by two epithets, graphically distinguished in the Arabic one from the other by a single dot: as *Marjūma*, "the woman who was stoned," or as *Marḥūma*, "the woman granted mercy." The latter could be understood as one who was blessed by God's taking pity upon her, but also as "the deceased woman," based upon the conventional adjective applied to the dearly departed (*marḥūm*), which affirms they are now in the care of the divine mercy. The latter meaning would, of course, be ironically humorous in ʿAṭṭār's account, since others mistakenly assume her to be deceased, while in fact she has been "reborn" as a saint. This symbolic rebirth takes place after stoning, when in al-Kulaynī's version she climbs out of the hole dug to partially bury her for stoning, so that she emerges from the womb of the earth, not unlike Joseph's emergence from the well.

The homonymic convergence of the words for "mercy" and for "womb" in both Hebrew and Arabic from the root R-Ḥ-M (Hebrew *reḥem* = womb, mercy; Arabic *raḥim* = womb, kinship, esp. on the maternal side; *ruḥm*, *raḥma* = mercy, tenderness, compassion), make the chaste wife Marḥūma a paradigm of the female virtue of mercy and forgiveness in name, as well as in the deed of granting mercy to her erstwhile persecutors. We might therefore also think of her as the merciful one (*al-rāḥima*), or perhaps, if you will, "Saint Ruth." Indeed, she may even represent a vestigial memory of the pagan Greek spirit (*daimona*) of mercy, Eleos (Latin: Misericordia, Clementia), who had an altar in the agora at Athens. In any case, the Hebrew word *raḥūm* (translated as merciful or gracious) is one of the important names Yahweh announces for Himself in the presence of Moses in Exodus 34:6, along with slow to anger; forgiver of iniquity, and transgression and sin, though not by leaving sin wholly unpunished (we are reminded that it is visited from son to father for three to four generations). The Septuagint here translates Hebrew *raḥūm* as *eleēmōn* (ἐλεήμων; rendered *clemens* in the Vulgate), and closely associated with this root is the word *eleos* (ἔλεος), which usually translates the Hebrew *ḥesed* (mercy, lovingkindness), as it does in Exodus 34:7, although it sometimes also renders Hebrew *reḥem*.

In al-Kulaynī's Arabic recitation of the chaste woman tale, God is rather coy in his revelation to one of the prophets of Israel; he apparently does not wish to reveal the gender of the pious creature, whose forgiveness should be sought by the populace (*khalqan min khalqihi… ḥattá ta 'tū khalqī hādhihi wa tuqirrū lahu bi-dhunūbikum thumma tas'alū dhālika al-khalq an yaghfira lakum…*) and who will become the means of salvation and forgiveness of the people. As Marḥūma's gender was obscured when she donned men's clothes and became king, the gender of the creature whom these penitents are to seek is temporarily obscured in Kulaynī's telling, specifically from the moment the Prophet delivers God's message, until the people arrive on the island and see the woman, whom the husband does not even recognize. Marḥūma had become king, but in al-Kulaynī the realm already has a king, so the chaste woman is apotheosized into a saint, and when she reveals her identity to her husband, he does not stand to become king, though he does gain the riches of her boat. But this chaste wife does effectively punish her husband for his abandonment, by demanding freedom from their matrimonial relationship. Al-Kulaynī's chaste wife, unlike Custance who marries Alla and becomes a mother, rejects life with men altogether, and sends her husband away, so that she may occupy her days in prayer, transfigured into a permanently chaste hermitess (she had, after all, found "rebirth" at the door of a hermitage).

Al-Kulaynī's explicit association of the chaste wife tale with the Israelites strongly suggests the material reached him as part of the literature about the Hebrew prophets (*Isrā'īliyyāt*). In fact, an apochryphal book of the Bible about Daniel and Susanna features some elements of the persecuted wife. The persecutors of Susanna are two less than noble Israelite judges, and in al-Kulaynī's telling of the chaste wife, the judge who gives the injudicious decision to stone the lady is likewise explicitly complicit, highlighting his role as one of her tormentors in a way that is not so clear in ʿAṭṭār (see discussion of Daniel and Susanna, below).

Conclusions: Archetypal Beauty, Archetypal Trees

In the Torah's Joseph narrative, of course, it is rather the beautiful male who is persecuted by a more powerful woman, the wife of Potiphar. The persecuted beautiful youth is also the most involved narrative in the Koran (Sura 12), which presents another detail of the Joseph story, in which the female friends of the wife of ʿAzīz, Joseph's overseer, are turned into lascivious ladies upon seeing Joseph's beauty. Marḥūma in ʿAṭṭār's chaste

woman tale becomes an emblem of the Koranic Joseph when she adopts a male disguise, and suggests to the King that the shipmen had desired him/her. Joseph, the beautiful slave/youth (*ghulām*) sold by merchants for a paltry price after they bring him up out of the well (Koran 12:19–20), is quite explicitly linked to the chaste and persecuted wife in the version told by Nakhshabī, where she is named Khʷurshīd; after her brother-in-law throws Khʷurshīd in a well, Lady "Sun" emerges Joseph-like when some merchants dip a bucket down for water.[84]

Meanwhile, however, this chaste wife narrative may also put us in mind of the cult of Thecla, a saint of virgin piety and devotion, to whom temples were dedicated at Seleucia and at Iconium (Konya), and whose image was widespread in Christian contexts in the Near East.[85] Indeed, she has been called perhaps the most important figure outside the trinity with the exception of the Virgin Mary.[86] Her narrative in the apochryphal Acts of St. Paul, composed in the second century CE, shares with our chaste wife recitation her successful resistance of a man's advances and attempted rape; her miraculous escape from death (from burning at the stake, from devouring by lions and bears); the flocking of people to her—a reclusive female saint living on a mountain—for healing; and the donning of a man's garb (Thecla does so to meet Paul at Myra).[87] While the antiquity of individual topoi from our chaste wife narrative are present here, the structure of the narrative and the individual scenes do not establish the Thecla material in the Acts of Paul as an analogue for our chaste wife narrative, though it does serve to illustrate that narratives of chaste feminine piety flourished in the Near East in various eras.

The pointing of Rūmī's version of the pear tree tale with its moral—in selfishness we misperceive, and our ego sees awry—bears a remarkable similarity to the moral drawn by May in the Merchant's Tale: He that misconceyveth, he misdemeth. This concern with epistemology and

---

[84] *Ṭūṭī-nāma*, p. 268.

[85] Stephen J. Davis, *The Cult of Saint Thecla: A Tradition of Women's Piety in Late Antiquity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, provides extensive iconographic evidence for Thecla's cult.

[86] Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 29.

[87] Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, pp. xii and 32, dates the deliberately forged text to the early 2nd century CE, and discusses the relationship between such narratives and the ancient Greek novels, pp. 36–7. Ehrman also provides a translation in his *Lost Scriptures: Books that Did Not Make it into the New Testament*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 113–21.

misperception has been proposed as one of the characteristic features of the fabliau genre,[88] and perhaps we can now re-confirm that the seeds of this genre were scattered across the Mediterranean with the increased interchange and international exchange provoked by the Crusades. Yet Rūmī is not ultimately concerned with the ribald fabliau portion of this tale, but with the transformation of the wild pear tree of deception and mis-perception into the Mosaic tree of revelation, and the cosmic Koranic tree of firm root and over-arching branches (14:24). The association of paradise with a garden reaches back etymologically to the Iranian word, *pairidaeza*, walled enclosure, meaning a private garden or park, much like what we find in the gardens of Nicostratus and January, as well as in the yard (*dār*) of Ibn al-Jawzī's Arabic version of the fruit tree of deception. The Septuagint rendered the Hebrew word *gan* in Genesis 2:3 as *parádeisos*, thus associating it with the Eden of Adam and Eve. The Koran, too (18:107), borrows (whether from Greek or Persian) the Persian word *firdaws* (= *pairidaeza*) as part of the lexicon of paradise. Rūmī specifically describes the transformation we undergo after descending from the pear tree of crooked vision (3563), upon which our selfish ego has made our vision crooked (3562). We now see a fortunate tree with its branches above the seven heavens (3564) through which God grants us straight vision, on account of our new-found humility (3566). It is the same pear tree, but grown verdant from the divine command (3569), which we can now safely re-climb. It has become like the Mosaic tree (3570) and the fire only makes it green, and its branches cry out, like the mystic Ḥallāj, "Verily, I am God!" (3571).

Within the Islamic topography of paradise at least three trees might suggest themselves in connection with the transformed tree of true vision. Rūmī himself uses the metaphor of the burning bush, but from his description, he may also have in mind the olive tree that is neither of the east or the west, and whose oil gives light, though fire does not touch it (Koran 24:35). But Rūmī's tree of straight vision may rather evoke as its primary Koranic association the *Sidrat al-muntahā*, the lote-tree beyond which there is no passing. This tree stands near the Garden of abode (Koran 53:12–18) where, in the Prophet Muḥammad's ascent into the heavens, he stood within a bow-length of the divine essence, the nearest any being may approach. Here his sight did not swerve or err as he witnessed one

[88] Roy J. Pearcy, "Investigations into the Principles of Fabliau Structure," In *Versions of Medieval Comedy*, ed. Paul G. Ruggiers, Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1977, pp. 67–100.

of the greatest revelations of God. Elsewhere, we learn that the *sidr* trees of paradise are thornless (Koran 56:28), and one hadith explains that the cutting down of a *sidr* tree is forbidden by the Prophet, since they offer shadow to man and animal alike. In modern folklore, the leaves of the botanical *sidr* tree were used as an antidote against sorcery—perhaps further indication that the antidote to the pear tree of deception should be the lote-tree of prophetic vision, whose leaves may prophylactically guard against sorcery.[89]

Another important tree in Islamic lore is the tree of Ṭūbā, which though it does not appear in the Koran is perhaps the most cosmically significant tree in the Islamic, and especially Shiʿite, tradition. God tells Jesus that God himself planted it. It stands at the foot of God's Throne in paradise. Its trunk takes a thousand years to cross, it yields wonderful fruit and has roots of pearl, a trunk of rubies, branches of chrysolite and silk brocade leaves (or other luxurious materials). Its name comes from the question posed to the Prophet, What is bliss (*ṭūbā*), to which he replied, it is the tree of bliss (*shajarat al-ṭūbā*) in paradise which has no terrestrial parallel.[90]

Of course, for those familiar with the Hebrew Bible's account of Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:9 and 17), the fruit tree of deception must also conjure up a memory of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil (*ʿeṣ haddaʿat ṭov waraʿ*) and its forbidden fruit. Eve, tempted by the serpent, believes the tree good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and hopes it will make one wise. She eats of the fruit, and gives it to her husband as well (Gen. 3:6), whereupon they become ashamed of their nakedness (Gen. 3:7) and are banished from the garden, apparently to prevent them from also eating of the tree of life (Gen 3:22–23).[91] The Koran does not give the tree of knowledge a particular name, referring to it simply as "this tree" (*hadhihi al-shajara*) in both Sūrat al-Baqara (2:35–6) and Sūrat al-Aʿrāf (7:19–26). In both accounts, God speaks directly to Adam, telling him to dwell in the Garden with his wife and eat whatever they like, but not to go near "this tree," or they will be of the unjust. Satan tempts them (without the intermediary of a snake) with an evil suggestion, hoping to reveal to them their

[89] See Remke Kruk in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2) s.v. Sidr, and David Waines in the *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, s.v. Trees. (Both online: www.brillonline.nl).

[90] Nerina Rutomji, *The Garden and the Fire: Heaven and Hell in Islamic Culture*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2009, pp. 67–69, 116–17, 160; and Waines, "Trees," *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*.

[91] See David Lyle Jeffrey, ed. *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdman's, 1992, s.v. "Tree of Knowledge."

shame. God does not want you to become immortal angels, Satan says, but I am your sincere adviser. By this deceit, he brings about their fall, for when they taste of the tree, their shame becomes manifest to them, and they began to sew together the leaves of the garden over their bodies. The Lord calls them out for their succumbing to the enemy, Satan, and they admit to the wrong they have done themselves. God sends them down to dwell on earth in enmity for a time (until the resurrection).[92]

The tree of knowledge provides a locus of primal disobedience to God, an act of carnal knowledge, a failure in the face of temptation, and the over-reaching pride and desire to become angels (a suggestion planted by Iblīs, who has refused to bow to Adam, since he is only a human fashioned of clay, whereas Iblīs is an angel fashioned of light, Koran 7:11–18). "This tree" (of knowledge) is thus also a tree of shame, that tests Adam and Eve and finds them wanting. In Christian tradition, the fruit of this tree of knowledge has of course become associated with the apple, largely because of the homonymic confusion—a primal pun, perhaps one that suggested the paranomasic transference Pirrus piro—between the Latin for *malum* (apple) and for evil (*malum*). Meanwhile, fruit trees and love are archetypally associated around the world in folklore and mythology, in particular the apple, with love; Hellenistic and Roman depictions of *Venus genetrix* show her holding an apple- or quince-like fruit.[93] In the opening frame tale of the Arabian Nights Shāhzamān observes the queen, wife of his brother Shahriyār, walk into the garden with twenty maids, ten white and ten black, who sit down and remove their clothing to reveal ten black men and ten white girls. After the queen calls for her own lover, Masʿūd, to come down from the tree where he has been hiding, he jumps to the ground and mounts the queen, and a veritable orgy ensues in the garden. Masʿūd's tree is not described as a fruit tree, however. In our pear tree tales, the pear may either suggest the male genitalia (though specifically the testicles, by extension also, the *membrum virile*) as a symbol of virility, or the female womb, as a sign of fecundity.

In Arabic we have seen the date palm tree as a site of illicit sexual encounter, but the date tree and its fruit can also symbolize fertility. The Koran mentions many different types of tree, but perhaps none so frequently as the date palm, which is not surprising, given the fauna of the

---

[92] See Brannon M. Wheeler, *Prophets in the Quran: An Introduction to the Quran and Muslim Exegesis*, London/New York: Continuum, 2002, pp. 15–35, for some of the Islamic traditions about Adam and Eve.

[93] Jeffrey, ed. *Dictionary of Biblical Tradition*, s.v. "Apple."

Hijaz. But one particular association of the date palm tree, suggests that the date may also function as a fertility symbol. This comes in the scene where Mary suffers in labor all alone after withdrawing from her family "to a place in the East," presumably because of the suspicions surrounding her pregnancy. God sends an angel to her in the form of a man to announce the tidings of the birth of a sanctified son, but she is fearful of the man and incredulous that she can give birth when no man has touched her and she is not unchaste. She withdraws to a distant place where the pangs of childbirth come upon her, and she repairs to a palm tree, where in her loneliness, she wishes she were dead. A voice then calls to her, pointing out that a stream has been made to flow beneath the tree, and instructing her to shake the trunk of the palm-tree towards herself, as this will let fresh ripe dates fall down upon her. In this way she can eat and drink (Koran 19:16–26) and the pain of parturition and of loneliness is eased.[94] The scene certainly suggests fertility and divine mercy, but at the same time the shaking of the tree trunk and the raining down of its abundant dates recalls the bountiful pears knocked down on the blind husband by the frolicking lovers in the Latin pear tree tale.

Rūmī's pear tree likewise has a janus-face. It is both a tree of deception, as well as a tree of true vision, depending upon the viewer's spiritual orientation. As such, the fruit tree of sexual deception might plausibly remind us of the Tree of Knowledge, a sacrosanct tree with unspoken virtues, the violation of which leads to the explusion from paradise. As an inverted image of this tree in paradise, the Koran names a fearful tree in hell as the Tree of Zaqqūm (*shajar min zaqqūm*, Koran 37:62; 44:43; 56:52) which is elsewhere implicitly intended by the designation "The tree damned in the Koran" (*al-shajarata l-malʿūna fī l-Qurʾān*, 17:60). The Arabic root Z-Q-M suggests hastily swallowing or devorously eating something. In fact, in pre-Islamic times Zaqqūm could apparently mean buttered dates, which one would presumably like to gobble up, and which must have quickly slid down the throat. According to Ibn Hishām's life of the Prophet, in fact, Abū Jahl ridiculed Muḥammad's depiction of hell, where the Zaqqūm tree grows, by suggesting the threat of the Zaqqūm tree is nothing but the threat of tasty buttered dates.[95] The Koran asserts, however, that it is a bitter punishment swallowed by the unbelievers, washed down with

[94] Wheeler, *Prophets in the Quran*, pp. 299–304, for some of the traditions relating to the pregnancy of Mary and the birth of Jesus.

[95] N. Rustomji, *The Garden and the Fire*, pp. 11–12 and 68–9.

boiling water, that will make them experience the raging thirst of diseased camels (Koran 56:22–25). The tree itself appears monstrously grotesque, with its roots in the bottom of hell-fire and fruit-stalks like the heads of devils (Koran 37:62–68), and what is more, the Koran mentions the Tree of Zaqqūm in connection with a fearful vision:

> Surely your Lord encompasses men. And we did not make the vision which we showed you but as a trial for men, and the cursed tree in the Koran, as well. And We cause them to fear, but it only adds to their obstinancy (17:60).

Can it be that "this tree" in paradise is the same Zaqqūm tree in hell, depending upon the spiritual orientation of the people who approach it? If we view the earthly plane as a mirror, and hell and heaven below and above it, the grotesque image of the Zaqqūm tree inverts the astoundingly rich beauty of the Ṭūbā tree (or perhaps the tree of knowledge, or the Sidrat al-Muntahā). Indeed, in the iconographic tradition, grotesque faces appear on the leaves of the Zaqqūm tree, whereas angelic faces appear on the leaves of the tree of knowledge.

Rabbinic material made much of feminine chastity as an index of the community's piety. Whether or not a version of the persecuted wife / empress appears in Talmudic lore—as indeed, the Arabic version tends to suggest by situating it in an Israelite kingdom—the persecuted chaste wife motif does occur as the central theme of one Biblical Greek Apocryphon, the Book of Daniel and Susanna, a book perhaps composed initially in Hebrew about 100 BCE. In this Book, set in Babylon, Susanna, a very beautiful and very pious woman raised in the law of Moses, marries Joakim, a wealthy man whose house serves as the local court (1–4). Two of the judges, elders in the community, independently lust after her and scheme to find her alone, knowing that she strolled in the garden at noon each day after the people left court (5–13). The two elder judges discover one another's desire for Susanna, and conspire together to find her alone (14). They hide in her husband's locked garden to spy upon her and one day she bathes there (in a scene often depicted by painters in the European renaissance), and sends her maids in waiting to fetch soap. The judges come out of their hiding places and demand that she yield to their desire, or they will falsely charge her with adultery (15–21). She refuses ("I will not do it. It is better to be at your mercy than to sin against the Lord"), and is condemned to death for adultery (22–41). During the trial Susanna, who was normally tightly veiled, is required by the judges to unveil, so that "they might feast their eyes on her beauty" (32–33). Susanna prays to God, who sends the young Daniel for her deliverance (42–6). Daniel

reopens the trial and exposes the perjury by asking each judge separately under which tree the act took place (46–59). One answers clove, the other yew, but these are English-language translation tricks to preserve a pun in the Greek text, to the effect that each judge will be sawn down—"cloven" in two and "hewed" in half. The Greek Septuagint literally has one judge reply a mastic tree (ὑπὸ σχῖνον, hupo schinon) and the other judge, an oak tree (ὑπὸ πρῖνον, hupo prinon), while Daniel urges them to be mindful that an angel stands at the ready to cut (σχίσει, schisei) the first and pry apart the other (πρίσαι, prisai). The false judges are condemned to death instead of Susanna (60–62) and Susanna's parents and her husband give praise for her innocence.[96]

The two judges may just as well have answered with Date Palm or Pear Tree, or even "this tree," although they have ended up with the Zaqqūm tree. Whatever the name of the particular tree, the Book of Daniel and Susanna might be a likely ur-seed for the chaste woman tale. Certainly the tree of knowledge is Biblical, though our pear/date tree ostensibly performs the opposite function of deceiving, or inducing ignorance and blindness to truth, while in the Book of Daniel, we may even have a foreshadowing of the fruit tree of the cuckolded husband fabliau, except that the would-be adulterers are discovered and executed because of the falsehood they attempt to perpetrate with the tree.

In any case, Chaucer's Custance, and all the other European instances of the chaste empress or persecuted queen tale have early analogues in Persian and Arabic versions. Perhaps we may therefore close by adapting the words of Chaucer's host at the conclusion of the Man of Law's Tale, and say of both Chaucer's Custance and his Pyrie Tree, "this was a thrifty Middle Eastern tale for the nones!"

---

[96] Following The New English Bible, with the Apocrypha. Oxford Study Edition, New York: Oxford University Press, 1970. Greek etext of *Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes* by J. Gippert at TITUS (based upon the CCAT text [Center for Computer Analysis of Texts at the University of Pennsylvania]), http://titus.fkidgı.uni-frankfurt.de/texte/etcs/grie/sept/sept.htm, Book: Sus.Th. 6.

APPENDIX I

THE DECEITFUL PEAR TREE, FROM RŪMĪ'S *MATHNAVĪ*, BOOK 4
TRANSLITERATION OF THE PERSIAN TEXT

Prose Heading

1	ḥikāyat-i ān zan-i palīd-kār kay shawhar rā guft: "ān khayālāt az sar-i	حکایت آن زن پلیدکار کی شوهر را گفت: آن خیالات از سر
2	amrūd-bun mīnamāyad turā, kay chunīn-hā namāyad chashm-i ādamī rā sar-i ān	امرودبن می نماید ترا کی چنینها نماید چشم آدمی را سر آن
3	amrūd-bun. Az sar-i amrūd-bun furūd āy tā ān khayāl-hā bi-ravad."	امرودبن. ازسر امرودبن فرود آی تا آن خیالها برود
Folio, 4	Va agar kasī gūyad kay āncha ān mard mīdīd khayāl nabūd, javāb:	واگر کسی گوید کی آنچ آن مرد می دید خیال نبود، جواب:
5	īn mithāl-īst, na mithl. Dar mithāl hamīn qadr bas buvad kay: agar bar sar-i amrūd-	این مثال لیست نه مثل. در مثال همین قدر بس بود کی اگر بر سر امرود
6	bun na-raftī hargiz ānhā na-dīdī khʷāh khayāl khʷāh khʷāh [sic] ḥaqīqat	بن نرفتی هرگز آنها ندیدی خواه خیال خواه خواه حقیقت

[Poetic Text, following Nicholson's line numbers]

3544	ān zan-ī mīkhʷāst tā bā mūl-i khʷud / bar zanad dar pīsh-i shūy-i gūl-i khʷud	آن زنی می خواست تا با مول خود بر زند در پیش شوی گول خود
3545	pas bi-shawhar guft zan k-"ay nīk-bakht / man bar āyam mīva chīdan bar dirakht"	پس به شوهر گفت زن کای نیکبخت من برآیم میوه چیدن بر درخت
3546	chun bar āmad bar dirakht ān zan girīst / chun zi bālā sūy-i shawhar bi-ngirīst	چون برآمد بر درخت آن زن گریست چون ز بالا سوی شوهر بنگریست

3547 guft shawhar rā ki “ay maʾbūn-i rad[d] / kīst ān lūṭī ki bar tu mīfitad?

گفت شوهر را که ای مأبون رد
کیست آن لوطی که بر تو می‌فتد

3548 tu bi-zīr-i ū chu zan bughnūdaʾ[ī] / ay fulān ~ tu khʷud mukhannath būdaʾ[ī]?!”

تو به زیر او چو زن بغنوده‌ای
ای فلان تو خود مخنث بوده‌ای

3549 guft shawhar, “na, sar-at gūʾī bi-gasht / varna īnjā nīst ghayr-i man bi-dasht.”

گفت شوهر نه سرت گویی بگشت
ورنه اینجا نیست غیر من به دشت

3550 zan mukarrar kard k-“ān bā barṭula / kīst bar pusht-at furū khufta? Hila !”

زن مکرر کرد کان با برطله
کیست بر پشتت فرو خفته هله

3551 guft “ay zan hīn furūd ā az dirakht / ki sar-at gasht u khirif gashtī tu sakht”

گفت ای زن هین فرود آ از درخت
که سرت گشت و خرف گشتی تو سخت

3552 chun furūd āmad bar-āmad shawhar-ash / zan kishīd ān mūl rā andar bar-ash

چون فرود آمد بر آمد شوهرش
زن کشید آن مول را اندر برش

3553 guft shawhar “kīst ān, ay rūspī / ki bi-bālā-i tu āmad chūn kapī?”

گفت شوهر کیست آن ای روسپی
که به بالای تو آمد چون کپی

3554 guft zan “na, nīst īnjā ghayr-i man / hīn sar-at bar gashta shud, harza ma-tan.”

گفت زن نه نیست اینجا غیر من
هین سرت برگشته شد هرزه متن

3555 ū mukarrar kard bar zan ān sukhun / guft zan, “īn hast az amrūd-bun.

او مکرر کرد بر زن آن سخن
گفت زن این هست از امرودبن

3556 az sar-i amrūd-bun man hamchunān / kazh hamī-dīdam ki tu, ay qaltabān.

از سر امرودبن من همچنان
کژ همی دیدم که تو ای قلتبان

3557 hīn furūd ā tā bi-bīnī hīch nīst / īn hama takhayyul az amrū-bun-īst.”

هین فرود آ تا ببینی هیچ نیست
این همه تخییل از امروبنیست

3558 hazl taʿlīm ast ān rā jid shinaw / tu ma-shaw bar ẓāhir-i hazl-ash giraw

هزل تعلیمست آن را جد شنو
تو مشو بر ظاهر هزلش گرو

3559	har jidī hazl ast pīsh-i hāzilān / hazl-hā jidd ast pīsh-i ʿāqilān	هر جدی هزلست پیش هازلان هزلها جد ست پیش عاقلان
3560	kāhilān amrūd-bun jūyand līk / tā bi-dān amrūd-bun rāhī-st nīk	کاهلان امرودبن جویند لیك تا بدان امرودبن راهیست نیك
3561	naql kun z-amrūd-bun k-aknūn bar-ū / gashtaʾ[ī] tu khīra-chashm o khīra-rū	نقل کن ز امرودبن کاکنون برو گشته‌اي تو خیره چشم و خیره رو
3562	īn manī u hastī-i avval buvad / ki bar ū dīda kazh u aḥval buvad	این منی و هستی اول بود که بر و دیده کژ و احول بود
3563	chun furūd āʾī az-īn amrūd-bun / kazh na-mānad fikrat u chashm u sukhun	چون فرود آیی ازین امرودبن کژ نماند فکرت و چشم و سخن
3564	yak dirakht-i bakht bīnī gashta īn / shākh-i ū bar āsimān-i haftumīn	یك درخت بخت بینی گشته این شاخ او بر آسمان هفتمین
3565	chun furūd āʾī az-ū gardī judā / mubdal-ash gardānad az raḥmat, khudā	چون فرود آیی ازو گردی جدا مبدلش گرداند از رحمت خدا
3566	z-īn tavāḍuʿ ki furūd āʾī, khudā / rāst-bīnī bakhshad ān chashm-i turā	زین تواضع که فرود آیی خدا راست بینی بخشد آن چشم ترا
3567	rāst-bīnī gar budī āsān u zab / Muṣṭafā kay khʷāstī ān rā zi rab?	راست بینی گر بدی آسان و زب مصطفی کی خواستی آن را ز رب
3568	Guft: “bi-nmā juzv-i juzv az fawq u past / ānchunānka pīsh-i tu ān juzv hast”	گفت بنما جزو جزو از فوق و پست آنچنان که پیش تو آن جزو هست
3569	baʿd az-ān bar raw bar-ān amrūd-bun / ki mubaddal gasht u sabz az amr-i kun	بعد از آن بر رو بر آن امرودبن که مبدل گشت و سبز از امر کن
3570	chun dirakht-i Mūsavī shud īn dirakht / chun suy-i Mūsā kishānīda tu rakht,	چون درخت موسوی شد این درخت چون سوی موسی کشانیده تو رخت

3571 ātash ū rā sabz u khurram mīkunad / shākh-i ū “*innī ana llāh*” mīzanad

آتش او را سبز و خرم مي‌كند
شاخ او انی انا الله می زند

3572 zīr-i ẓill-ash jumla ḥājāt-at ravā / īn chunīn bāshad ilāhī-kīmīā

زیر ظلش جمله حاجاتت روا
این چنین باشد الهی کیمیا

3573 ān many-u hastī-at bāshad ḥalāl / ki dar-ū bīnī ṣifāt-i Dhu l-Jalāl

آن منی و هستیت باشد حلال
که در و بینی صفات ذوالجلال

3574 shud dirakht-i kazh muqavvim, haq-namā / “*aṣluhu thābit u farʿu-hu fī l-samā*”

شد درخت کژ مقوم حق‌نما
اصله ثابت و فرعه فی السما

APPENDIX II

THE DECEITFUL PEAR TREE TALE, RŪMĪ'S *MATHNAVĪ*

Translation from the Persian by Franklin Lewis

[Prose heading, 1] Story of the impure wife who told her husband, "Those illusions appear to you from the top of [2] the wild pear tree, for the top of that wild pear tree reveals such things to the human eye. [3] Come down from the pear tree so that those illusions disappear." [folio verso, 4] And the answer, if anyone should say that what that man was seeing from the top of the wild pear tree was not an illusion: [5] This is a parable, not a similitude. As a parable, it is sufficient, for if he had not gone to the top of the wild pear [6] tree, he would never have seen those things, whether they were real or an illusion

[verse]

3544 A wife there was who wished to do it with her beau in full view of her deluded husband

3545 And so she told her husband, "You're in luck, I'll go up the tree to pick some fruit."

3546 When she reached the treetop, the woman wept as she gazed down upon her husband

3547 She told her husband, "You degenerate fag! Who is that butch who's laying into you!?

3548 You're lying spread out beneath him like a woman—you . . . ! you're a closet fairy!"

3549 "No," said the husband, "your head must be spinning, for there's no one down here on the plain but me!"

3550 The woman repeated, "Who's the guy with the slanted cap who's bearing down so hard on your back!?"

3551 He said, "Woman, get down from that tree! You're head is spinning and you have completely lost your mind."

3552 When she came down, up went her husband. The woman took her beau into her arms.

3553 The husband said, "Who is that, you prostitute, all on top of you like a monkey?!"

3554 The woman said, "No, there's no one here but me. Look, you're head is all spun around, don't talk nonsense."

3555 He repeated his words to his wife. The woman said, "It must be from the pear tree.
3556 I too saw all amiss, like you, from the top of the pear tree, you cuckold!
3557 Come on down now, and you'll see it is nothing. All these illusions are from the pear tree."

***

3558 In jesting is a lesson, give it serious ear—don't tarry on the surface of the joke
3559 To jesters all things serious are jokes; to the wise, all jokes are serious
3560 The lazy seek out this wild pear tree, the other wild pear tree is a good ways off.
3561 Tell of the wild pear tree upon which you now are dumbfounded and deceived—
3562 that is, primal egotism and self-assertion, upon which the eye squints and blurs
3563 When you come down from that wild pear tree, your thoughts, sight, and speech are no longer crooked
3564 You'll see it has become a tree of good fortune, its branches touching the highest heaven
3565 When you come down from it and leave it, God in his mercy will transform it
3566 Come down in all humility and God will grant your eyes true vision
3567 If true vision came so easily to us, why then did (Muḥammad) the Chosen One beseech the Lord for it?
3568 He said, "Reveal each and every atom from above and below, as they are in Your own sight"
3569 Only then go up that wild pear tree, which has been transformed, made verdant by God's command "Be!"
3570 How does this tree become Mosaic bush? When you draw yourself toward Moses.
3571 The fire makes it green and verdant; its boughs cry out, "Verily, I am God!"
3572 Beneath its shade your every desire is licit—such is the alchemy divine.
3573 Egotism and self-assertion are licit to you, insofar as you see within them the attributes of the All-Majestic
3574 The crooked tree, now straight, reveals the truth: "Its roots firm, its branches in the sky" [Koran 14:24]

APPENDIX III

THE DECEITFUL PALM TREE FROM IBN AL-JAWZĪ, *KITĀB AL-ADHKIYĀʾ* TRANSLITERATION OF THE ARABIC TEXT

[1] Balaghanā anna ʾmraʾat^{an} kāna lahā ʿashīq^{un}, fa-ḥalafa ʿalay-hā, “in lam taḥtālī ḥattá aṭaʾa-ki bi-maḥḍar^{in} [2] min zawji-ki, lam ukallim-ki.” Fa-waʿadat-hu an tafʿala dhālika, fa-wāʿada-hā yawm^{an}. Wa kāna fī dārihim nakhlat^{un} [3] ṭawīlat^{un} fa-qālat li-zawji-hā, “ashtahī aṣʿada hādhihi l-nakhlata fa-ajtaniya min ruṭabi-hā bi-yadī.” Fa-qāla, [4] “ifʿalī.” Fa-lammā ṣārat fī raʾsi l-nakhla, ashrafat ʿalá zawji-hā wa qālat, “yā fāʿil^{un}! Man hādhihi [5] l-marʾat^{u} allatī maʿa-ka?! Waylu-ka! A-mā tastaḥī tujāmiʿu-hā bi-ḥaḍratī!” Wa akhadhat tashtimu-hu wa taṣīḥu, [6] wa huwa yaḥlifu anna-hu waḥda-hu wa mā maʿa-hu aḥad. Fa-nazalat fa-jaʿalat tukhāṣimu-hu, wa yaḥlifu bi-ṭalāqi-hā anna-hu [7] mā kāna illā waḥda-hu. Thumma qāla la-hā, “uqʿudī ḥattá aṣʿada anā.” Fa-lammā ṣāra fī raʾsi l-nakhla, [8] istadʿat ṣāḥiba-hā, fa-waṭaʾa-hā. Fa ʾṭṭalaʿa l-zawj^{u} fa-raʾá dhālik fa-qāla la-hā, “juʿiltu fidā-ki! Lā [9] yakūnu fī nafsi-ki shay’^{un} mimmā ramaytī-nī bi-hi, fa-inna kulla man yaṣʿadu hādhihi l-nakhlata yarā mithla mā [10] raʾayti

APPENDIX IV

THE DECEITFUL PALM TREE FROM IBN AL-JAWZĪ, *KITĀB AL-ADHKIYĀʾ*

Translation from the Arabic by Franklin Lewis

[1] It has come to us that a woman had a lover, who swore the following oath to her: "Unless you devise some stratagem whereby I can swyve you in the presence [2] of your husband, I won't speak to you." So she promised him she would do it, and he appointed a day for it.

There was a tall palm tree in their home [3] and she said to her husband, "I feel like climbing this palm tree and plucking some of its dates with my own hands."

[4] "Go ahead," he said.

When she reached the top of the palm tree, she looked down upon her husband and said, "You cad![1] Who is that [5] woman with you?! You miserable fellow! Aren't you ashamed to swyve her in my presence?!" And she began to revile him and shout.

[6] For his part, he swore he was alone and there was no one with him. She came down and took up quarreling with him, he swearing, upon pain of divorcing her, that he [7] had been all alone. Finally he said, "You sit here while I climb up."

When he had reached the top of the palm tree, [8] she called for her companion and he swyved her. Well, the husband took notice and saw it all and said to her, "Bless your heart![2] [9] There's nothing wrong with you in all (the accusations) you flung at me, for whoever climbs this palm tree sees the likes of what [10] you saw.

---

[1] *fāʿil* is the agent participle, "doer" in Arabic; grammatically it is both an active participle and a technical term meaning "subject." In legal and medical terminology, however, it means the active partner in sexual relations who penetrates the other party, be it a female or a male orifice. There is thus a double-entendre here. Something like, "You pecker" (who are involved in an act of penetration), and "What are you doing!"

[2] *juʿiltu fidā-ki*, literally "may I be your sacrifice!"

APPENDIX V

AL-KULAYNĪ, THE CHASTE WIFE OF THE ISRAELITE JUDGE'S BROTHER

Translation from the Arabic by Franklin Lewis

> From a number of our companions, from Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, from Ibn Faḍḍāl, from al-Ḥakam b. Miskīn, from Isḥāq ibn ʿAmmār, from Abū ʿAbd Allāh (peace upon him),[1] who said:

There was a king among the Israelites [*Banī Isrāʾīl*] who had a judge. This judge had a brother who was a righteous man. This man had a wife, who was born to the prophets. The king wanted to send a man on a mission [*ḥāja*], so he said to the judge, "I'm looking for a trustworthy man." The judge said, "I know of no one more trustworthy than my brother."

So, he summoned him to send him on the mission. The man was reluctant to do that (*fa-kariha dhālika*), and said to his brother, "I would hate to neglect my wife." But it had been decided upon him, and he found no recourse but to go, so he said to his brother, "My brother, I have nothing more important over which to appoint a deputy than my wife. Watch over her for me and see that her needs are taken care of." The brother said, 'Alright.'

And so the man set out, though the wife was extremely unhappy about his leaving. But the Judge would come to her and ask her what she needed and attend to it. She was attractive to him [*fa-aʿjabat-hu*], and so he invited her to see him in private. She rejected him, whereupon he swore an oath that, "If you don't do it, then we will inform the king that you committed adultery" [*innaka qad fajarti*].

"Do what you think best" [*iṣnaʿ mā badā laka*], she said. "I will in no way grant what you are after."

So he came to the king and said, "The wife of my brother has committed adultery, and the responsibility of punishment lies with me." The King told him, "Purge her of the sin" (*ṭahhir-hā*). So he went to her saying, "The

---

[1] Typically signifying Ḥusayn, the Prophet's grandson and frequent source of Shiʿi hadith.

king has commanded me to stone you. What do you say now? Grant my request, or I'll stone you."

She said, "I will not grant your request, so do what you think best."

And so he took her out and buried her in a hole and stoned her, along with the people. When he supposed she was dead, he went away and left her.

When the night came over her there was still a breath of life in her. She stirred herself and came out of the hole, and then, crawling on her elbows, dragged herself [*mashat ʿalā wajhi-hā*] beyond the outskirts of the city. She ended up at a hermitage [*dayr*] in which a hermit lived, and she slept at the door of the hermitage. When [p. 557] the hermit awoke, he opened the door, saw her and asked what had befallen her [*qiṣṣati-hā*]. She told him and, taking mercy on her, he brought her into the hermitage. He had a small son—an only son. He was of good character and treated her until her wounds healed and she recovered fully. He then entrusted to her his son, and she was bringing him up.

The hermit had an attendant [*qahramān*] who would look after his affairs. She was attractive to him [the attendant], so he invited her to see him in private, but she refused. He persisted in his efforts [*jahida bi-hā*], but she refused. He told her, "If you don't do it, I will strive to kill you." She told him, "Do what you think best." He attacked the boy and crushed his windpipe, and went to the hermit, saying, "You relied on a whore who had committed adultery and entrusted your son to him, and she's killed him!"

The hermit came and when he saw it, he said to her, "How could this be! You know the good deed I've done you!" She told him the story, whereupon he said to her, "It is no longer agreeable for you to be here with me. Leave." He sent her away in the night and paid her twenty dirhams, saying "Buy yourself provisions. This is what's coming to you."

She went out into the night and when morning came she was in a village. There was a man there, crucified [*maṣlūb*] on a log [*khashaba*], still alive. She asked what had happened to him and they told her, "He owes a debt of twenty dirhams. Whoever among us owes a debt, his creditor has him crucified until he discharges the debt." So she took out the twenty dirhams and paid his creditor, saying, "Don't kill him. Bring him down from the log."

He said to her, "No one has ever done me a greater kindness than you have. You saved me from crucifixion and death, so I will follow you [*anā maʿaki*] wherever you go." So off he went where she went, until they arrived at the shore of a sea. He saw a crowd and some boats. "Sit here," he told her, "while I go work for them and get some food to bring you."

He went up to them and asked, "What's in this ship of yours?" "In this one there is some merchandise," they said, "—jewels and ambergris and things to sell. As for the other one, we're riding in that." "How much is it worth," he asked, "—the things in your ship?" "Alot!," they replied. "More than we can reckon." He said, "I have something better than what's in your ship!" "What do you have?," they asked. "A slave girl whose like you've never seen." They said, "We'll buy her." He said, "Okay, upon the condition that one of you go look at her and then come to me and buy her without letting her know. He'll pay me the amount without letting her know about it until I am gone." They said, "Whatever you say." So they sent someone to look at her, who said, "I've never seen one comparable to her." And they bought her from him for ten thousand dirhams. They paid him the dirhams and off he went.

When he had disappeared from view, they went over and told her, "Get up and get in the ship." She asked, [p. 558] "What for?" They said, "We've bought you from your owner." She said, "Who says he's my owner?!" They said, "Are you going to get up then, or do we carry you?" She got up and went with them and when they reached the shore, some of them didn't trust the others with her, so they put her in the ship with the jewels and merchandise, while they rode themselves in the other ship.

They shoved off into the water and God, the mighty and exalted, caused the winds to whip up against them [*fa-baʿatha Allāh . . . ʿalayhim riyāḥan*] which sank them and their ship. The ship she was in was saved, and it came to rest on one of the islands in that sea. She moored the ship and made her home on the island, for there was water on it, and trees with fruit. "This is water for me to drink from and fruit for me to eat of," she said. "I will worship God in this place."

Then God, the mighty and exalted, revealed [*awḥá*] to one of the prophets [*anbiyāʾ*] of the Israelites to go before that King and say, "On an island in the sea is one of my creatures. Set out—you and those in your realm—until you come to this creature of mine. Confess your sins to this creature and then beg this creature to forgive you. If this creature forgives you, I will forgive you."

So the king went with the subjects of his realm to that island, where they saw a woman. The king approached her and said, "This judge here came to me and informed me that the wife of his brother had committed adultery and I commanded him to stone her though there was no evidence presented to me. I fear I may have presided over something which was not permissible for me and I would very much like [*uḥibbu an*] for you to forgive me." She said, "God has forgiven you. Sit down."

Then her husband, not recognizing her, came and said, "I had a wife who was virtuous and righteous,[2] but I went away from her, though she was strongly opposed to it. I set my brother to watch over her, but when I returned and asked about her, he informed me that she committed adultery and he had stoned her. I fear that I have brought about her ruin, and I seek your forgiveness." She said, "God has forgiven you. Sit down." And she sat him down at the side of the king.

Then the judge came and said, "My brother had a wife and she was attractive to me. I invited her to sin, but she refused, so I let the king know that she had committed adultery, and he ordered me to stone her, so I stoned her, though I had forged a lie against her. I seek your forgiveness." She said, "God has forgiven you."

Then she turned to her husband and said, "Listen." Then the hermit came forward and told his story. Then he said, "I sent her out into the night and I fear that wild beasts may have fallen upon her and killed her." She said, "God has forgiven you. Sit down."

Then the attendant came forward and told his story, whereupon she said to the hermit,[3] "Listen. God has forgiven you."

Then the crucified man came forward and told his story, and she said, "God has indeed forgiven you."

Then she turned to her husband and said, "I am your wife and all this you have heard [p. 559] is my story. I have no need of men. I desire for you to take this ship and what is in it, and set me free [*tukhallīy sabīlī*]. I will worship God, the mighty and exalted, in this island, for you have seen what has befallen me at the hands of men."

And that is what he did. He took the ship and what was in it and set her free and the king and his subjects departed.

Bibliography

Adolphi fabulae in Polycarpi Leyseri Historia poetarum et poematum medii Aevi decem, Halae Magdelburgiae, 1721.

Aesop's Fables, trans. John Keller and L. Clark Keating, Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1993.

---

[2] *Wa kāna min faḍli-hā wa ṣalāḥi-hā.* The latter word, *ṣalāḥ*, righteousness, perhaps provides the title for the story that appears in some of the manuscripts of ʿAṭṭār's versions, "*ḥikāyat-i zan-i ṣāliḥa*."

[3] Sic. If this is not an error of the copyist, perhaps the lady addresses the hermit instead of his attendant because the attendant and his actions are the responsibility of his master, the hermit?

al-Aflākī, Shams al-Dīn, *Manāqib al-ʿārifīn*, ed. Taḥsīn Yāzījī, 2nd ed., 2 vols., Tehran: Dunyā-i Kitāb, 1983.
Allsen, T.T., *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: A Cultural History of Islamic Textiles*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
——, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
Archibald, E., "The Flight from Incest: Two Late Classical Precursors of the Constance Theme," *Chaucer Review* 20, 1986, pp. 259–72.
Ascoli, A.R., "Pyrrhus' Rules: Playing with Power from Boccaccio to Machiavelli," *Modern Language Notes* 114, 1, Italian Issue, January 1999, pp. 14–57.
Asmussen, J.P., *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Barlaam and Ioasph.
ʿAṭṭār, Farīd al-Dīn, *Ilāhī nāma-i ʿAṭṭār*, ed. Muḥammad-Riḍā Shafīʿī-Kadkanī, Tehran: Sukhan, 2008.
ʿAṭṭār, Farīd al-Dīn, *Ilāhī nāma-i Shaykh Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār-i Nayshābūrī*, ed. Fu'ād Rawḥānī, originally 1960; sixth reprint Tehran: Zavvār, 1997.
——, *Ilahi-Name: Die Gespräche des Königs mit seinen sechs Söhnen*, ed. Hellmut Ritter, Bibliotheca Islamica, Band 12, Istanbul: Staatsdruckerei, 1940; reprinted Tehran: Ṭūs, 1980.
ʿAṭṭār, Farīd al-Dīn, *The Ilāhī-nāma, or Book of God of Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār*, Translated by John Andrew Boyle, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976.
Basset, R., *Mille et un contes, récits et légendes arabes*, 3 vols., Paris: Librairie Orientale et Américaine—Maisonneuve Frères, 1926.
Beidler, P.G., "Chaucer's Merchant's Tale and the Decameron," in *Italica*, 50, 2, Summer 1973, pp. 266–84.
Bertini, F., "Una novella del Boccaccio e l'Alada di Guglielmo di Blois," in *Maia*, 29–30, 1977–78, pp. 135–41.
Biagi, G., ed. *Le Novelle Antiche dei Codici Panciatichiano-Palatino 138 e Laurenziano-Gaddiano 193*, Florence: Sansoni, 1880.
Black, N., *Medieval Narratives of Accused Queens*, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003.
Boccaccio, *Decameron*, ed. Vittore Branca, Torino: Giulio Einaudi, 1980.
Briffault, R., *The Troubadors*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965.
Brockelmann, C., *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), s.v. Kalīla wa-Dimna.
Bryan, W.F., & G. Dempster, eds. *Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941.
Burnett, C., "Learned Knowledge of Arabic Poetry, Rhymed Prose, and Didactic Verse from Petrus Alfonsi to Petrarch," in John Marenbon, ed. *Poetry and Philosophy in the Middle Ages: A Festschrift for Peter Dronke*, Leiden: Brill, 2001, pp. 29–62.
Chaucer, G., *The Riverside Chaucer*, eds. Larry D. Benson and F. N. Robinson, 3rd ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.
Chauvin, V., *Bibliographie des ouvrages arabes ou relatifs aux Arabes: publiés dans l'Europe chrétienne de 1810 à 1885*, vol. 2, Liége: H. Vaillant-Carmanne, 1897.
Clouston, W.A., "The Innocent Persecuted Wife: Asiatic and European Versions of Chaucer's Man of Law's Tale," reprinted in Furnivall, Edmund Brock and W.A. Clouston, *Originals and Analogues of Some of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*, London: N. Trübner & Co., 1872–87; reprint 1901, pp. 365–414.
Cohen, Gustave, ed. *La "Comédie" latine en France au XII^e siècle*, Paris: Société d'Édition «Les Belles-Lettres», 1931.
Correale, R.M., & M. Hamel, eds. *Sources and Analogues of the Canterbury Tales*, 2 vols., Cambridge & Rochester, NY: D.S. Brewer, 2002–2005.
Crane, S., "Anglo-Norman Cultures in England, 1066–1460," in David Wallace, ed. *Cambridge History of Middle English Literature*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
Davis, D., *Panthea's Children: Hellenistic Novels and Medieval Persian Romances*, New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 2002.

Davis, S.J., *The Cult of Saint Thecla: A Tradition of Women's Piety in Late Antiquity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
Dihkhudā, ʻA.A., *Lughat-nāma*, new ed., 15 vols., Tehran: Mu'assasa-i Intishārāt va Chāp-i Dānishgāh-i Tihrān, and Intishārāt-i Rawzana, 1993–94, and http://www.loghatnaameh.com.
Ehrman, B.D., *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
——, *Lost Scriptures: Books that Did Not Make it into the New Testament*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
Elliott, A.G., *Seven Medieval Latin Comedies*, Garland Library of Medieval Literature, v. 20, Series B, New York: Garland Publishing, 1984.
El-Shamy, H.M., *Folk Traditions of the Arab World: A Guide to Motif Classification*, 2 vols., Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.
Eutychios, *Das Annalenwerk des Eutychios von Alexandrien*, ed. Michael Breydy, Louvain: Peeters, 1985.
Faral, E., "Le fabliau latin au Moyen Age," in *Romania*, 50, 1924, pp. 321–85.
Frazer, J.G., *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion,* 2nd ed., 3 vols., London/New York: MacMillan, 1900.
Furnivall, F.J., & Edmund Brock & W.A. Clouston, eds. *Originals and Analogues of Some of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*, London: N. Trübner & Co., 1872–87; reprint 1901.
Furūzānfar, Badīʿ al-Zamān, *Sharḥ-i aḥvāl va naqd va taḥlīl-i āthār-i Shaykh Farīd al-Dīn Muḥammad ʻAṭṭār-i Nayshābūrī*, Tehran: Chāpkhāna-i Dānishgāh-i Tihrān, 1961.
Garland, H. and M. Garland, eds., *The Oxford Companion to German Literature*, Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
Girāmī, B., *Gul va giyāh dar hizār sāl-i shiʿr-i Fārsī: tashbīhāt va istiʿārāt*, Tehran: Sukhan, 2007.
Gittes, K., *Framing the Canterbury Tales: Chaucer the Medieval Frame Narrative Tradition*, New York: Greenwood Press, 1991.
Gölpınarlı, Abdülbâki, ed. [*Mathnavī*, facsimile] *Meşnevî: Mevlânâ Celâleddîn Rûmî*, Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı [Ministry of Culture], 1993.
Gough, A.B., *On the Constance-Saga. Palaestra* 23, Berlin: Mayer and Müller, 1902.
Gower, John, *Confessio Amantis*, ed. Russell A. Peck, Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press and Medieval Academy of America, 1980.
——, *The Complete Works of John Gower*, ed. G.C. Macaulay, vol. 2, Oxford: Clarendon, 1901; reprint Grosse Point, MI: Scholarly Press, 1968.
Griffith, S., in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Eutychius.
Habicht, M., ed. *Tausend und Eine Nacht Arabisch. Nach einer Handschrift aus Tunis herausgegeben von Dr. Maximilian Habicht* (etc.), *nach seinem Tode fortgesetzt von M. Heinrich Leberecht Fleischer*, 12 vols., Breslau: J. Max & Comp., 1825–43.
Hägg, T., "The Oriental Reception of Greek Novels: A Survey with Some Preliminary Considerations," in *Symbolae Osloenses* 61, 1986, pp. 99–131.
——, *The Novel in Antiquity*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.
Heffernan, C., *The Orient in Chaucer and Medieval Romance*, Woodbridge, Suffolk & Rochester, NY: D.S. Brewer, 2003.
Hertel, J., *Das Pancatantra, seine Geschichte und seine Verbreitung*, Leipzig/Berlin; B. G. Teubner, 1914.
Hornstein, L., "Trivet's Constance and the King of Tars," in *Modern Language Notes*, 55, 1940, pp. 354–7.
Ibn al-Jawzī, *Kitāb al-adhkiyā'*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Karīm Al-Nimrī, Beirut: Muḥammad ʿAlī Bayḍūn and Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2001.
——, *Talbīs Iblīs*, ed., al-Sayyid al-Jumaylī, Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1985.
ʿInayat Allāh, *Persian Tales: The Baar danesh; or, Garden of Knowledge*, Dublin: P. and W. Wilson, 1769.
——, *Bahar-Danush; or Garden of Knowledge: an Oriental Romance*, translated by Jonathan Scott, Shrewsbury: J. and W. Eddowes, 1799.

——, *Bahār-i dānish*, ed. Ḥājī Muḥammad Qamar al-Dīn bin Janāb Ḥājī Shaykh Muḥammad Ya'qūb, Cawnpore: Maṭba'-i Qayyūmī, 1954.
Irwin, R., *The Arabian Nights: A Companion*, London: Allen Lane, 1994.
Isti'lāmī, M., *Mathnavī-i Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Balkhī*, 7 vols., revised ed., Tehran: Sukhan, 2000.
Jeffrey, D.L. *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdman's, 1992.
Krappe, A.H., "The Offa-Constance Legend," in *Anglia*, 61, 1937, pp. 361–69.
Kruk, R., in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), s.v. Sidr.
Laoust, H., in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), s.v. Ibn al-Djawzī, 'Abd al-Raḥmān.
Larry D. Benson and Theodore M. Andersson, "The Comedy of *Lydia*" in *Literary Context of Chaucer's Fabliaux*, Indianapolis/New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971, pp. 206–237.
Lee, A.C., *The Decameron: Its Sources and Analogues*, London: Nutt, 1909; reprint New York: Haskell House, 1996.
Lewis, F., " 'Tale of the Righteous Woman (whose husband had gone on a journey)': A Poetic Translation from the *Ilāhī nāma* of Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār," in Shah Wali Ahmadi, ed., festschrift for Amin Banani, forthcoming.
——, "Sexual Occidentation: the Politics of Conversion, Christian-love and Boy-love in 'Aṭṭār," in a special issue of the *Journal of Iranian Studies*, ed. Dominic Brookshaw, 42, 5, 2009, pp. 693–723.
——, *Rumi: Past and Present, East and West*, 2nd revised ed., 2008. Oxford: Oneworld, 2000.
Macdonald, J.B., "Maximilian Habicht and his Recension of the Thousand and One Nights," in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1909, pp. 685–704.
Madelung, W., in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), s.v. al-Kulaynī.
Mahdi, M., ed. *Kitāb alf layla wa layla: min uṣūlihi al-'arabiyya al-ūlá*, 3 vols., Leiden: Brill 1984–94.
Marzolph, U., *Ex Orienta Fabula*, Dortmund: Verlag für Orientkünde, 2005–.
—— & Richard van Leeuwen, *Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*, 2 vols., Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2004.
——, *Arabia Ridens: Die humoristische Kurzprosa der frühen adab-Literatur im internationals Traditionsgeflecht,* 2 vols., Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1992.
——, *Typologie des persischen Volksmärchens*, Beirut: Orientinstitut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, 1984.
Menocal, M.R., *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987.
Moayyad, H., "Sargudhasht-i zan-i pārsā-i ʿAṭṭār," in *Iranshenasi*, 9, 1997, pp. 427–42.
Nakhshabī, Żīyā al-Dīn, *Ṭūṭī-nāma*, ed. Fatḥ Allāh Mujtabā'ī and Ghulām-'Alī Āryā, Tehran: Manūchihrī, 1993.
New English Bible, with the Apocrypha. Oxford Study Edition, New York: Oxford University Press, 1970.
Osborn, M., *Romancing the Goddess: Three Middle English Romances about Women*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998.
Pearcy, R.J., "Investigations into the Principles of Fabliau Structure," in Paul G. Ruggiers, ed. *Versions of Medieval Comedy*, Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1977, pp. 67–100.
Petrus Alfonsi, *Die Disciplina Clericalis des Petrus Alfonsi* (*das älteste Novellenbuch des Mittelalters*), ed. Alfons Hilka and Werner Söderhjelm, Heidelberg, 1911.
——, *The Disciplina Clericalis of Petrus Alfonsi*, ed. and trans. Eberhard Hermes, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970.
Radcliff-Umstead, D., "Boccaccio's Adaptation of Some Latin Sources for the Decameron," in *Italica*, 45, 2, June 1968, pp. 171–94.
Reardon, B.P., *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.
Reinert, B., *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. 'Aṭṭār.
Rickert, E., "The Old English Offa Saga" I & II, in *Modern Philology*, 2, 1904–5, pp. 29–76 and 321–76.

——, ed. *The Romance of Emaré*, Early English Text Society, e.s. 99, London: Early English Text Society / K. Paul, Trench and Trübner, 1906; issued in 1908.
Roy, B., "Arnulf of Orléans and the Latin 'Comedy'," in *Speculum*, 49, 2, April 1974, pp. 258–66.
Rujū' al-shaykh ilá ṣibāh fī al-quwwa 'alá al-bāh, ed. Ṭal'at Ḥasan 'Abd al-Qawī, Syria: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 2001.
Rūmī, Jalāl al-Dīn, *The Mathnawí of Jalálu'ddín Rúmí*, ed. R.A. Nicholson, E.J.W. Gibb Memorial, n.s., 3 vols., London: Luzac and Co., 1925–1933.
——, *Mathnavī-i Maʿnavī*, 4 vols. ed. Ḥasan Lāhūtī, Tehran: Nashr-i Qaṭra, 1383 sh. /2004.
Rustomji, N., *The Garden and the Fire: Heaven and Hell in Islamic Culture*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.
Schafer, E., *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand: A Study of T'ang Exotics*, Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963.
Scheper, G.L., in *Dictionary of Biblical Tradition,* s.v. Apple.
Schick, J., "Die Urquelle der Offa-Konstanze Sage," *Brittanica* ("Festschrift Max Förster"), Leipzig, 1929, pp. 31–56.
Schlauch, M., "Chaucer's Merchant's Tale and a Russian Legend of King Solomon," in *Modern Language Notes* 49, 4, April 1934, pp. 229–32.
——, "Historical Precursors of Chaucer's Constance," in *Philological Quarterly*, 29, 1950, pp. 402–412.
——, *Chaucer's Constance and Accused Queens*, New York: New York University Press, 1927.
Selden, John (Johanne Seldeno) & Edward Pococke (Edwardo Pocockio), *Contextio Gemmarum, sive, Eutychii Patriarchae Alexandrini Annales*, 2 vols., Oxford: impensis Humphredi Robinson, 1658–59.
Sheykh-zāda, *History of the Forty Vezirs*, trans. E.J.W. Gibb, London: George Redway, 1886.
Steinhöwels Äsop, ed. Hermann Österley, Bibliothek des Litterarischen *Vereins* in Stuttgart, Band 117, Tübingen: Litterarischer verein in Stuttgart, 1873.
Stewart, D., "The Maqāma," in *Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period*, ed. Roger Allen and D.S. Richards, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 145–58.
Tavernier, J., *Iranica in the Achaemenid Period* (*ca. 550–330 B.C.*)*: Linguistic Study of Old Iranian Proper Names and Loanwords, Attested in Non-Iranian Texts*, Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2007.
Thiqqat al-Islām Abī Ja'far Muḥammad bin Ya'qūb al-Kulaynī al-Rāzī, *al-Furū' min al-kāfī*, ed. 'Alī Akbar al-Ghaffārī, vol. 5, Tehran: Mu'assasa-i Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya—Bāzār-i Sulṭānī, 1378 A.H./1958; reprinted Tehran, 1363 sh. /1984 then offset reprint in Beirut: Dār al-Aḍwā', 1405 A.H./1985.
Thompson, S., *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957.
Tolan, J., *Petrus Alfonsi and His Medieval Readers*, Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1993.
Usher, J., "Rhetorical and Narrative Strategies in Boccaccio's Translation of the "Comoedia Lydiae," in *The Modern Language Review*, 84, 2, April 1989.
Utas, B., & Tomas Hägg, *The Virgin and Her Lover: Fragments of an Ancient Greek Novel and a Persian Epic Poem*, Leiden: Brill, 2003.
Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes, J. Gippert at TITUS, http://titus.fkidg1.uni-frankfurt.de/texte/etcs/grie/sept/sept.htm, Book: Sus.Th. ΣΟΥ6ΑΝΝΑ (*sic*).
Waines, D., in the *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, s.v. Trees. (online: www.brillonline.nl).
Wheeler, B.M., *Prophets in the Quran: An Introduction to the Quran and Muslim Exegesis*, London/New York: Continuum, 2002.
Wolterbeek, M., *Comic Tales of the Middle Ages: An Anthology and Commentary*, New York: Greenwood Press, 1991.
Wynn, P., "The Conversion Story in Nicholas Trevet's 'Tale of Constance,'" in *Viator* 13, 1982: 259–74.

TRANSLATING PERSIAN METAPHORS INTO ENGLISH

A. Sedighi

Introduction

Literary translation has been a concern of many scholars and translators throughout history. It entails many problems, some linguistic in origin and others culturally generated. One of the problematic issues in literary translation is the translation of metaphorical expressions. Peter Newmark (1984: 324) argues that "metaphor is at the centre of all problems of translation theory, semantics and linguistics." He also believes that… Problems usually arise due to cross-cultural variation. Since translation is considered as a socio-cultural activity—that is, it deals with cultural elements as well as linguistic ones—the translator usually faces challenging problems of various sorts and this of course includes the translation of metaphor. The translatability of a source language (SL) metaphor thus depends on the particular cultural experiences it utilizes, and the extent to which these can be reproduced in the TL depends on the degree of the overlap between the two languages and cultures.

Metaphor and its Types

Metaphor is generally defined as a direct comparison between two or more seemingly unrelated items. However, in Newmark's terms (1988b: 104), metaphor refers to any figurative expression and basically has two purposes; one is the referential purpose which is cognitive and the other a pragmatic purpose, which is related to the aesthetic patterns. According to Newmark (Ibid) a metaphor may be one-word or extended. It may be a word, collocation, sentence, idiom, proverb, allegory, or a complete imaginative text. The main components of a metaphor are:

1. Topic ('object' or 'tenor'): topic is what the metaphor describes (the thing being talked about).
2. Image (or 'vehicle'): this is the picture conveyed by the metaphor.
3. Point of similarity (or common ground): the way the topic resembles the image.

Apart from being one-word or extended, Newmark (1988: 106–13) defines six types of metaphors which are:

1. Dead metaphors: metaphors that have been normalized to the normal language through time so that people are hardly aware of their metaphoric image.
2. Cliché metaphors: metaphors that have lost their metaphorical characteristics over time and are used as a substitute for clear thought but without corresponding to the facts of the matter.
3. Stock metaphors: standard metaphors in a language which in informal contexts can convey a situation efficiently, both referentially and pragmatically.
4. Adapted metaphors: these metaphors should be replaced by an equivalent adapted metaphor.
5. Recent metaphors: newly coined and rapidly spreading metaphors.
6. Original metaphors: metaphors created by the writer or speaker.

Translation and Culture

Translation and culture cannot be considered as two dissociated concepts. Culturalists such as Bassnett (1980: 13) believe that the process of translation includes something more than mere "transfer of meaning contained in one set of language signs into another set of language signs through competent use of the dictionary and grammar." In fact, no language can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture and vice versa.

The term culture includes personal activities, that is, the way individuals think; collective operation and the way people behave or act in society; and finally the way society expresses itself. The role of cultural context in translation in general (and metaphor translation in particular) has been notably highlighted by various scholars. Larson (1984: 431), for example, declares that "all meaning is culturally conditioned and the response to a given text is also culturally conditioned. Each society will interpret a message in terms of its own culture. The receptor audience will decode the translation in terms of his/her own culture and experiences, not in terms of the culture and experiences of the author and audience of the original document. The translator then must help the receptor audience understand the content and intention of the source document by translating with both cultures in mind." She (Ibid) also quotes from Dostert (1955: 124) that translation is "the transference of meaning from one set

of symbols occurring in a given culture . . . into another set of patterned symbols in another culture . . ."

Newmark (1998b: 193) also believes that words are conditioned by a certain cultural context. Words are related to the "ways of thinking and behaving within a particular language community." In the text to be translated there may be cultural terms or universal words "denoting a specific material cultural object." In general, one may say the cultural context is the most difficult to cope with, concerning the act of translation, since it refers to the environment in which we live. It is this environment that forms one's way of thinking which is definitely different from the way people of other cultures think. Vermeer (1986) concludes: "the concept of culture as a totality of knowledge, proficiency and perception is fundamental in our approach to translation. If language is an integral part of culture, the translator needs not only proficiency in two languages; he must also be at home with the two cultures. In other words, he must be bilingual and bicultural." The context which is essential for adequate understanding of the text is also the first necessity in the process of translating. Translating without understanding the text is nonsensical, and understanding a text without understanding its culture is impossible.

Some Problems in Translation of Metaphor

Translation cannot be separated from culture, and this includes the translation of metaphor. Culture involves ideas, values, attitudes, assumptions and so on. Although cultures may be similar in dealing with the universal issues and problems, each culture has its own way of approaching them, and unique ways of expressing beliefs and ideas, analysing problems and finding solutions, interpreting phenomena, communicating messages or thoughts, and reacting to particular situations. People of a specific culture have knowledge of the world that may be quite different from people within another culture, due to their different experiences and background.

The fact that different cultures conceptualise reality in varying ways means that metaphors incorporate cultural specifics, and their interpretation depends on cultural conditioning. This creates a greater or lesser degree of untranslatability, depending largely on the amount of cultural overlap between the two languages. Snell-Hornby (1988: 41) remarks that "the extent to which a text is translatable varies with the degree to which it is embedded in its own specific culture, also with the distance that separates the cultural background of source text and target audience

in terms of time and place," and also states (1988: 57) that "the essential problem posed by the metaphor in translation is that different cultures, hence different languages, conceptualise and create symbols in varying ways and formats, and therefore the sense of a metaphor is frequently culture-specific."

On the problems encountered in translation and interpretation of metaphors, Newmark (1988a: 88) also notes that metaphors involving animals are usually interpreted differently in various cultures. Horses, for instance, are royal and strong in English while in French they are the symbol of health and diligence and in German contexts they are interpreted as hard-working. The same holds true for specific insects and birds. Thus in translating metaphors, great care must be taken to ensure that the image is familiar to the target language reader. The re-production of the original metaphor in the target text is often unsatisfactory, for various reasons. Mildred Larson identifies five major problems in interpretation and rendition of metaphorical expressions. According to Larson (1984: 250–1),

1. The image used in a metaphor may be unknown in the target language;
2. The topic of the metaphor is not always expressed explicitly in the source text;
3. The point of similarity might be implicit and hard to identify;
4. The point of similarity may be understood differently in one culture than the other; and
5. There is also the possibility that the receptor language does not make comparisons of the type that occurs in the source text metaphor.

Methods of Translating Metaphors

Each language is a vast system of structures, different from those in other languages. Every language analyses the linguistic context as well as the real world in a distinct way. This is why some scholars, such as Jakobson (quoted in Munday, 2001) reject the idea of absolute synonymy and believe in approximation. Such scholars believe that it is a fallacy to assume that two words, idioms, metaphors, etc, in two languages have exactly the same meaning and impact in two different languages. However, this doesn't mean that translating from one language into another is impossible. In fact, according to Nida (1964) what can be expressed in one language can be translated into another. But the question is, 'How?' Does a literal translation of metaphors always work? Is an expression that suits some specific nation always appropriate in another culture when

translated literally into the target language? Newmark (1988a) believes that metaphor is culturally specific, so that unless a literal translation is mandatory, a metaphor should be translated according to the context requirements, which may require it to be modified, omitted or substituted with another metaphor.

Various scholars have proposed rather similar strategies in coping with the rendition of metaphors. Larson (1984: 254) suggests five methods:

1. The metaphor may be kept if the receptor language permits. In other words, the translator may retain the image if it sounds natural and is comprehended by the target language audience.
2. The metaphor may be translated as a simile by adding 'like' or 'as'.
3. It may be replaced by another metaphor belonging to the receptor language and culture which had the same meaning.
4. The metaphor may be kept and the meaning explained. The translator can add the topic or image (if implied) and make the point of similarity explicit.
5. The meaning of the metaphor may be translated without keeping the metaphoric imagery. This is converting the metaphorical expression into sense.

Newmark (1988a: 88–91) adds two more items to these five methods: (6) deletion, and (7) using the same metaphor combined with sense. In the 1990s, Lawrence Venuti described two main cultural translation strategies: domestication and foreignization. In fact the roots of these two strategies can be traced back to a lecture delivered in 1813 by Friedrich Schleiermacher, who believed in two methods of "leaving the author in peace as much as possible and moving the reader toward him, or leaving the reader in peace as much as possible and moving the author toward him."

By a domesticating strategy, Venuti meant a translation strategy in which a transparent, fluent style is adopted to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text for a target language reader; while by a foreignizing strategy, he means a translation strategy in which a target text deliberately breaks target conventions by retaining something of the foreignness of the original (Venuti, 1998). In translating metaphor, a translator can either stick to the SL structures and try to retain the metaphorical expressions as much as possible, or domesticate the text by adopting the TL structures and norms, which may mean generating a new image and changing the entire metaphor. In fact, these two strategies can be considered as the updated versions of the traditional methods of free and literal translation originally defined by Nida (1964).

Case Study

To investigate and determine the dominant method adopted in translating metaphors in poetry from Persian into English, some 40 metaphors and their translations were randomly selected from *The Divan of Hafiz* translated by Wilberforce Clarke, and *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* translated by Edward FitzGerald. Each metaphor was compared with its translation in English and the method adopted was recorded. The results revealed that Clarke overwhelmingly adopted for foreignisation (85%), while FitzGerald was mostly inclined to the domestication strategy (80%).

این کهنه رباط را که عالم نام است و آرامگه ابلق صبح و شام است
بزمیست که واماندہ صد جمشید است قصریست که تکیه گاه صد بهرام است

FitzGerald (XVI):

> Think in this battered Caravanserai
> Whose Doorways are alternate Night and Day
> How Sultán after Sultán with his Pomp
> Abode his Hour or two and went his way.

The poet has compared this immortal world to کهنه رباط. However the translator has chosen another image which still belongs to the source language (battered caravanserai) and thus has applied a limited universalization strategy, which is one of the few foreignizing procedures he has applied in his translation of the original quatrains.

نیکی و بدی که در نهاد بشر است شادی و غمی که در قضا و قدر است
با چرخ مکن حواله کاندر ره عقل چرخ از تو سزار بار بیچاره تر است

FitzGerald (LII):

> And that inverted Bowl they call the Sky,
> Whereunder crawling coop'd we live and die,
> Lift not thy hands for It for help—for IT.
> As impotently moves as you or I.

Here چرخ stands for the 'sphere' which is revolving. FitzGerald has changed the image and instead of چرخ has used 'inverted bowl,' since the English readership may be more familiar with this image than the original

one. This reveals the translator's tendency to employ the domesticating strategy.

این چرخ فلک که ما در و حیرانیم فانوس خیال از او مثالی دانیم
خورشید چراغدان و عالم فانوس ما چون صوریم کاندر و حیرانیم

FitzGerald (XLVI):

For in and out, above, below,
'Tis nothing, but a Magic Shadow-show
Play'd in a Box whose Candle is the Sun
Round which we Phantom figures come and go.

This quatrain contains several metaphors. The first metaphor 'چرخ فلک' has been explained in the translation rather than being reproduced (in and out, above, below). Again 'فانوس خیال' stands for the sky 'فلک' but the translator has once more made some alterations by replacing it with another image (magic shadow). The next metaphor in which the sun is compared to 'چراغدان' has been rendered as 'candle is the sun' which shows change of image. Instead of 'عالم‌فانوس' the translator has used the image 'box.' Finally, the last metaphor in which the human beings are compared to 'صور' is translated as 'phantom figures,' a literal translation of the image with some expansion, which is the only use of foreignisation in this translation.

ای دوست بیا تا غم فردا نخوریم وین یکدم عمر را غنیمت شمریم
فردا که از این دیر فنا درگذریم با هفت هزار سالگان سر بسریم

FitzGerald (XX):

Ah, my Belovéd, fill the Cup that clears
To-day of past Regrets and future Fears—
To-morrow?—Why, To-morrow I may be
Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n Thousand Years.

FitzGerald deletes the metaphor 'دیر فنا' without attempting to find an appropriate equivalent. Deletions happen when a translator intends to present a domesticated natural translation.

افسوس که نامه جوانی طی شد و آن تازه بهار زندگانی دی شد
آن مرغ طرب که نام او بود شباب فریاد ندانم که کی آمد و کی شد

FitzGerald (LXXII):

> Alas, that Spring should vanish with the Rose!
> That Youth's sweet-scented Manuscript should close!
> That Nightingale that in the Branches sang,
> Ah, whence, and whither flown again, who knows!

In translating this quatrain, the image of the first metaphor 'تامه جوانی' has changed into 'youth's manuscript' with the addition of 'sweet-scented.' The next image 'تازه بهار" to which 'youth' has been compared has undergone some reductions and is translated as 'spring.' The next image 'دی' which represents 'old age' has been converted into sense (that spring should vanish). And finally through using synonymy, the translator has translated the last image 'مرغ طرب' into the 'nightingale'.

نرگش عربده جوی و لبش افسوس کنان نیم شب مست به بالین من آمد بنشست

Clarke:

> Eye, contest. Seeking, lip lamenting,
> came at midnight to my pillow (there) sat.

Here the translator has not used the image 'نرگس' (narcissus) to which the eye has been compared. Instead, he has made the topic explicit as such comparisons are not so common in the target language and culture. In other words, the translator has domesticated the text to make it more readable for the target audience.

در این شب سیاهم گم گشت راه مقصود از گوشه ای برون آ ای کوکب هدایت

Clarke:

> In this dark night (the world) lost to me became the path of my purpose (knowledge of the true Beloved),
> O, star of guidance (Murshid, perfect, excellent) come forth from the corner (help).

The translator here has used the same images as in the Persian ("dark night" and "star of guidance"). However he has also added some extra information in the form of intragloss to make the metaphors more comprehensible. This kind of explication (keeping the SL item plus addition in parenthesis) is characteristic of a foreignizing strategy.

ای آفتاب خوبان می سوزد اندرونم یکساعتم بگنجان در سایه عنایت

Clarke:

> O, sun of lovely ones! My heart consumeth,
> contain me a moment, in shade of thy protection.

In the verse the true beloved has been compared to the sun of lovely ones. The translator retains this image and reproduces the same metaphor in the target text. Again he uses a foreignizing strategy.

دل من در هوس روی تو ای مونس جان خاک راهیست که در پای نسیم افتاده است

Clarke:

> O friend of my soul! In desire of thy perfume,
> my heart behind the wind as road-dust fell.

Here the heart is compared to road dust. The translator uses the same image. But he also adds "as" and so changes the metaphor into simile.

چندان بود کرشمه و ناز سهی قدان کاید بجلوه سرو صنوبر خرام ما

Clarke:

> The coy glance the grace of those straight of stature (illusory beloved ones) is only ill, with grace moving like a lofty pine tree, cometh the cypress (the true beloved) of ours.

In this verse سهی قدان ('those with straight stature') stands for the illusory beloveds while سروصنوبرخرام represents the true beloved. In dealing with these metaphors, the translator has tried his best to remain as close as possible to the SL structure though his rendition is not a one-to-one translation of the Persian version (consider the expansion he has made in translating the first metaphor).

Conclusion

Similarities and differences between cultures are natural. Translation is a matter of approximation: a perfect translation is impossible, particularly when translating poetry into poetry. Since metaphor is a primary ingredient of poetry, it is very important for the translator to recognise a metaphorical expression and find a proper equivalent for it. There is a choice of effective strategies for doing so. The results of case study showed that in translating metaphorical expressions in Persian poetry, different translators may choose different strategies. No one strategy can be regarded as

dominant, since each translator may have a different tendency, based on factors such as the purpose of the translation (is the translation going to be more readable and acceptable in the target language and culture, or is the aim to present an accurate and faithful translation), the audience, norms, and so on. No single translator is 100 percent domestication oriented or foreignisation oriented. All we can talk about is the dominance of one strategy over another. The demonstration of this fact has important pedagogical and practical implications. Translators can be made aware of the uses of these strategies, and so relieved of confusion about the 'right' way to translate metaphor. Problems in finding an appropriate equivalent may be presented to them in an analytic framework, such as cultural and linguistic differences, so that the translation of metaphor is made more of an art and less of a mystery.

Bibliography

Bassnett, S., *Translation Studies*, London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1980.
Clarke, H.W., *Ghazaliyat of Hafiz*, Tehran: Padideh, 1981.
FitzGerald, E., *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, Intro by A.S. Byatt, New York: Quality Paperback Book Club, 1996.
Larson, M.L., *Meaning-based Translation: A Guide to Cross-language Equivalence*, Boston: University Press of America, 1984.
Munday, J., *Introducing Translation Studies, Theories and Applications*, London and New York: Routledge, 2001.
Newmark, P., *Approaches to Translation*, London and New York: Prentice Hall, (1988a).
——, *A Textbook of Translation*, London and New York: Prentice Hall, (1988b).
Nida, E.A., *Toward a Science of Translating: With Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating*, Leiden: Brill, 1964.
Snell-Hornby, M., *Translation Studies: An Integrated Approach*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins, 1988 (repr 1995).
Venuti, L., *The Translator's Invisibility: a History of Translation*, London and New York: Routledge, 1995.
——, *The Scandals of Translation: Toward an Ethics of Difference*, London and New York: Routledge, 1998.
Vermeer, H.J., "Skopos and Commission in Translational Action," in *Readings in Translation*, ed. Andrew Chesterman, Helsinki: Oy Finn Lectura Ab, 1989.

THE RING AS A TOKEN IN THE *BARZŪ-NĀMA*: ON THE IMPORTANCE OF LINEAGE AND ORIGIN

G.R. van den Berg

The most famous episode of the *Shāh-nāma* is no doubt that of Rustam and Suhrāb: and more specifically, the culmination of this story, in which Suhrāb is killed by his father Rustam. Until the very last moment, Suhrāb, the son does not know he is fighting his father, although to the reader or the listener nothing could be more obvious. The father, Rostam, does not know the formidable hero he is fighting is in fact his own son Suhrāb, born from an affair he had with the princess of Samangān, Tahmīna. A secret affair this was; though in most *Shāh-nāma* manuscripts it has been promoted to something more official, by inserting a number of verses in which a priest comes to perform a kind of instant marriage service:

بفرمود تا موبدی پر هنر بیاید بخواهد ورا از پدر
چو بشنید شاه این سخن شاد شد بسان یکی سرو آزاد شد
بدان پهلوان داد آن دخت خویش بدان سان که بودیش آیین و کیش
چو بسپرد دختر بدان پهلوان از آن شاد گشتند پیر و جوان
ز شادی همه جان بر افشاندند بدان پهلوان آفرین خواندند
که این ماه نو بر تو فرخنده باد سر بدسگالان تو کنده باد[1]

He ordered a worthy priest to come
And to ask her from her father;
When the king heard these words he became glad,
He became proud as a cypress;
He gave his daughter to that hero,
As befitted his traditions and beliefs
When he handed over his daughter to that hero,
Old and young rejoiced therein,

[1] Firdawsī, *Shāh-nāma*, ed. Dj. Khaleghi-Motlagh, vol. 2, California and New York, 1990, p. 124, footnote 1.

From joy all were beside themselves,
And they praised the hero,
Saying: may this new month be prosperous to you,
May the head of those who wish you ill be severed.

Dick Davis, who proposed an introductory typology of interpolations to the *Shāh-nāma*, has described this kind as type 3, 'interpolations made on moral or ideological grounds.'[2] Even in the oldest manuscripts known, the Florence ms dated 1217, the verses containing the official marriage have been added in the margin. The prudent scribes did not deem it paradoxical that this line was followed by the verse:

چو انباز او گشت با او به راز بود آن شب تیره دیر و دراز

And when in secret she'd become his mate,
The night that followed lasted late and long.[3]

The added lines would make the union of Rustam and Tahmīna hardly a secret. But as Dick Davis argues, Islamic family values outweighed such discrepancies, at least in the manuscript tradition. But what the scribes and with them the audience failed to acknowledge was that the secret union between Rustam and Tahmīna was solemnized, not by a priest, but by a precious gift from Rustam to Tahmīna. This gift was the famous *muhra* or seal from Rustam's arm. He gave this seal to Tahmīna, so that, if she should become pregnant, she could give it to her child:

به بازوی رستم یکی مهره بود که آن مهره اندر جهان شهره بود
بدو داد و گفتش که این را بدار اگر دختر آرد ترا روزگار
بگیرو بگیسوی او بر بدوز بنیک اختر و فال گیتی فروز
ور ایدونک آید ز اختر پسر ببندش به بازو نشان پدر

[2] Dick Davis, "Interpolations to the Text of the Shahnameh: An Introductory Typology," in *Persica*, no. XVII, 2001, pp. 35–49; on this specific interpolation see pp. 40–41.

[3] Text and translation from Jerome W. Clinton, *The Tragedy of Sohráb and Rostám*, University of Washington Press, Seattle and London, 1987, revised edition 1996, pp. 18–19, verse 90. Khaleghi-Motlagh's edition of the *Shāh-nāma* has the following verse: chu anbāz-i ū gasht bā ū ba rāz / bibūd ān shab-i tīra-u dīryāz: Firdawsī, *Shāh-nāma*, ed. Dj. Khaleghi-Motlagh, vol. 2, California and New York, 1990, p. 124, verse 82 (in the following, Khaleghi-Motlagh's edition of the story of Rustam and Suhrāb from the *Shāh-nāma* is referred to as: KM2, R&S).

بیالای سام نریمان بود به‌مردی و خوی کریمان بود
فرود آرد از ابر پران عقاب نتابد بتندی بر او آفتاب

Upon his arm Rustam had placed a seal [muhra],
A jewel that was famous through the world.
He gave it to her as he said: "Keep this.
And if the times should bring a girl to you,
Then take this gem and plait it in her hair—
A world-illumining omen of good luck.
But if the star of fate should send a son,
Then bind this father's token to his arm.
He'll be as tall as Sām or Narīmān,
In strength and manliness a noble youth,
He'll bring the eagle from the clouds above.
The sun will not look harshly on this boy."[4]

The token or *nishān* is embodied in the *muhra* or seal. It is a token to confirm the union, and to identify future offspring. Would it be possible to see this *muhra* or seal as a metaphor for union and identity, or would it perhaps be better to regard the *muhra* as a symbol for the bond between Rustam and Tahmīna?

A token in the tangible form of a seal, a ring or a bracelet is in any case a recurrent theme, a Leitmotiv in both the story of Rostam and Suhrāb and in what is usually characterised as an imitation of this story, the *Barzū-nāma*. Even though the *Barzū-nāma* is in many respects reminiscent of the story of Rustam and Suhrāb, it is not really an imitation: but it may certainly be considered as its successor. It is an epic poem named after its main hero Barzū or Burzū, son of Suhrāb and grandson of Rustam. In the *Shāh-nāma*, Suhrāb dies childless: Firdawsī did not include the story on Barzū in his *Shāh-nāma*, though the legend of Barzū might have been heard of in the days of Firdawsī. However, the story of Barzū can be found quite frequently in *Shāh-nāma* manuscripts, like a number of other legends, such as the *Garshāsp-nāma*. In *Shāh-nāma* manuscripts, many kinds of interpolations may be found; verses, passages, but also long stories, often linked to one of the *Shāh-nāma* stories. Davis defines this kind of interpolations as "interpolations that add elements from mythological and legendary material available to the copyist but absent from

[4] Text and translation from Jerome W. Clinton, *The Tragedy of Sohráb and Rostám*, pp. 18–19, verses 93–97. The verses are identical in Khaleghi-Motlagh's edition.

Firdawsī's text."[5] Many interpolations of this category belong to the Sistan cycle of epics: Garshāsp, the hero of the *Garshāsp-nāma*, is the ancestor of both Rustam and Barzū. The epics of the Sistan cycle have in common that they deal with the dynasty of the princes of Sistan, amongst whom Rustam has a pivotal role. One only has to consider the role of Rustam in the *Shāh-nāma* to see that he must have been acquainted with the stories from the Sistan cycle. Firdawsī however used only part of this rich material. A variety of other stories which Firdawsī omitted were adopted by others, often anonymous poets, who elaborated on other heroes from the Sistan cycle, often the ancestors or the offspring of Rustam.[6] They adapted material from the Sistan cycle to the 'new format,' the heroic epic poem composed in the *mutaqārib* metre, in the same vein as Firdawsī's masterpiece.

This group of epic poems which gradually came into being in this manner is sometimes referred to with some contempt as the 'secondary epics' because they have been seen as lesser imitations of Firdawsī's *Shāh-nāma*. A more neutral term is 'later epics,' since in their present forms these epics are of a later date than the *Shāh-nāma*. The *Shāh-nāma* was completed around 1010, at least so it is assumed: the earliest manuscript, preserved in Florence, dates from 1217. The *Barzū-nāma* is thought to date from the 11th century, and its earliest manuscript dates from 1425.[7] The earliest examples of *Barzū-nāma* interpolations can be found in *Shāh-nāma* manuscripts dating from the 15th century;[8] many more examples of *Barzū-nāma* interpolations may be found in manuscripts copied after the first half of the 16th century.[9] The Sistan cycle epics have also been grouped together with a number of other epics under the term 'Persian epic cycle,' by analogy with the term 'Greek epic cycle,' denoting epics conceived after Homer's Iliad and Odyssey.[10] The number of Persian epic cycle poems is not entirely clear, though there seem to be at least a dozen.

---

[5] Dick Davis, "Interpolations to the Text of the Shahnameh. . . . ," Interpolation no. 2, p. 39.

[6] See for example William Hanaway, "The Iranian Epics," in *Heroic Epic and Saga*, ed. Felix Oinas, Bloomington & London, 1978 (pp. 76–98), pp. 89–90.

[7] Cambridge University Library, Ms. King's Pote 56.

[8] For example in the St. Petersburg *Shāh-nāma* manuscript S1654, dated 1445; for a list of *Barzū-nāma* interpolations in *Shāh-nāma* manuscripts as well as separate *Barzū-nāma* manuscripts, see Francois de Blois, *Persian Literature*, vol. v, pt. 2, London: 1994, pp. 569–570.

[9] Karin Rührdanz, "About a group of truncated *Shāh-nāmas*: A Case Study in the Commercial Production of Illustrated Manuscripts in the Second Part of the Sixteenth Century," in *Muqarnas*, 14 (1997), pp. 118–135.

[10] Coined by F. de Blois, 'Epics', in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Epic, p. 475.

Most of these feature as interpolations in the *Shāh-nāma* manuscript tradition, though certainly not all in the same measure. A number of heroes whose names form part of the titles of these epic poems also occur in the *Shāh-nāma*, and sometimes they have a rather large role: this goes for example for Farāmarz, one of the sons of Rustam. Rustam's alleged grandson Barzū, however, is not even mentioned in the *Shāh-nāma*.[11]

When interpolated in a *Shāh-nāma* manuscript, the *Barzū-nāma* usually has between 2000 and 4000 verses. Though it would be logical to expect a *Barzū-nāma* interpolation in the *Shāh-nāma* after the episode of Rustam and Suhrāb (Barzū being the son of Suhrāb) and before Siyāvush, it is seldom found there. Much more often a *Barzū-nāma* interpolation can be found after the episode of Bīzhan and Manīzha and before the episode of the Yāzdah rukh, later on in the *Shāh-nāma*.[12] Where a *Barzū-nāma* interpolation does follow the story of Rustam and Suhrāb, the story starts with Suhrāb meeting the future mother of Barzū, named Shahrū. However, when in a *Shāh-nāma* manuscript a *Barzū-nāma* is inserted after Bīzhan and Manīzha, the meeting of Shahrū and Suhrāb is related by Shahrū to Rustam much further into the story, and Suhrāb has no further role as a living character in the story.

A possible link between the story of Rustam and Suhrāb and the story of Barzū might be the spurious passage in which Suhrāb finds himself a horse (*asp guzīdan-i Suhrāb/ṣifat-i asp-i Suhrāb*). In a large number of *Shāh-nāma* manuscripts, this passage is included early on in the episode of Rustam and Suhrāb. However, the passage on Suhrāb choosing a horse is believed by Djalal Khaleghi Motlagh to be apocryphal, for it does not occur in the oldest manuscripts and there are too many Arabic words in this passage which are not commonly used in the *Shāh-nāma*.[13] This passage is probably another interpolation, comparable to the interpolation on the marriage of Rustam and Tahmīna. This interpolation might be identified according to Davis' typology as an interpolation made on structural and aesthetic grounds,[14] but it could also be considered an interpolation made for immediate rhetorical effect.[15]

---

[11] In the *Shāh-nāma* as it appears in critical editions.

[12] Gabrielle van den Berg, "The *Barzunama* in the Berlin *Shahnama* Manuscripts," in *Shahnama Studies I*, ed. Charles Melville, Cambridge, 2006, pp. 97–114.

[13] The passage, consisting of 29 verses, has been included as a footnote in Khaleghi-Motlagh's edition, Dāstān-i Rustam-u Suhrāb (KM2, R&S), p. 127.

[14] Dick Davis, "Interpolations to the Text of the Shahnameh . . ., p. 41.

[15] Ibid., p. 45.

Be that as it may, this passage, even if it is an interpolation as well, still may form the connection between Barzū and Suhrāb. Suhrāb goes out to find himself a suitable horse for battle, and whilst in the land of Shingān he meets a beautiful young girl near a spring. She is all alone, for her father is away hunting lions. Suhrāb leads her into temptation and soon perceives her to be pregnant, upon which he gives her a ring:

برون کرد ز انگشتش انگشتری نگینش درخشنده چون مشتری
بمن داد و گفتش که ہین گوش دار بدانچت بگویم نکو هوش دار
نگهدار این چون پسر آیدت همه رنج گیتی به سر آیدت
به هنگام آن کو شود کینه ور ببندد به پیکار جستن کمر
بگویش که دارد مر این را نگاه که باشد فروزنده چون مهر و ماه
اگر دختر آید نکو چون پری در انگشت او باید انگشتری
بگفت این و اندر زمان به اسپ اندر آمد چو باد دمان
بیامد به پیکار و خود کشته شد ز دردش مرا دیده آغشته شد
جهانجوی برزو ز من شد جدا به مانند سهراب نر اژدها
همه سال او بود همساز من نگفتم بدو هیچ این راز من
به برزیگری گشت هم داستان به کردار فرزانه باستان
ازان بیم کش نایدش ساز جنگ به برزیش می داشتم زیر سنگ
نباید که همچون پدر زار و خوار شود کشته بر دشت پیکار زار
بناگه یکی روز افراسیاب به وی بازخوردش چو دریای آب[16]

He took a ring from his finger—its stone shone like Jupiter
He gave it to me and said: Listen carefully to what I have to say
Keep this safe: if a son is born to you, all the grief of the world will be upon you

[16] *Barzū-nāma*, ed. M. Dabīr Siyāqī, Tehran, 1382, p. 75, 1784–1797. At the time of writing this paper, the newer edition of the *Barzū-nāma* edited by Akbar Nahvi (Tehran, 2008) was not available to me.

When he will go to battle, he will prepare himself to fight
Tell him to keep this with him, for it will shine like the moon and the sun
If you have a daughter beautiful as a fairy, she will need a ring on her finger
He said that and soon after he mounted his horse and sped away like the wind
He went to battle and he himself was killed—from pain my eyes were wet
The champion Barzū was born from me—a valiant dragon, just as Suhrāb
All these years he was my comfort; I did not tell him about my secret
He embarked upon farming as a wise man from ancient times
From fear that he would like to go fighting I kept him burdened with farming
He must not be killed like his father, humiliated and despised on the battlefield
But suddenly one day Afrāsiyāb bumped into him as a river streaming

These lines are all reminiscent of Firdawsī's verses on the birth of Suhrāb: however, what is markedly different, is the role of the mother of Barzū, Shahrū. In the story of Rustam and Suhrāb, Suhrāb is being described a spitting image of his father and forefathers. His mother, Tahmīna, does not hesitate to convey to him his true lineage once Suhrāb asks for this:

بدو گفت مادر که بشنو سخن بدین شادمان باش وتندی مکن
تو پور گو پیلتن رستمی ز دستان سامی و از نیرمی
ازیرا سرت زآسمان برتراست که تخم تو زان نامور گوسراست
جهان آفرین تا جهان آفرید سواری چو رستم نیامد پدید
چو سام نریمان به گیتی که بود؟ سرش نیارست گردون پسود
یکی نامه از رستم جنگجوی بیاورد و بنمود پنهان بدوی
سه یاقوت رخشان و سه مهره زر کز ایران فرستاده بودش پدر
بدو گفت افراسیاب این سخن نباید که داند ز سر تا به بن
پدر گر شناسد کنون زین نشان شدستی سرافراز گردنکشان
چو داند بخواندت نزدیک خویش دل مادرت گردد از درد ریش[17]

[17] KM 2, R&S, 106–115: a variant reading for *muhra* is *badra*, purse.

'His mother answered him, "Don't speak so harshly,
But hear my words and be rejoiced by them.
Your father is the pahlaván Rostám.
Your ancestors are Sam and Narimán.
And so it is your head can touch the sky.
You are descended from that famous line.
Since first the World Creator made the earth.
There's been no other horseman like Rostám.
Nor one like Sam the son of Narimán.
The turning sphere does not dare brush his head."
And then she brought a letter from his father,
Rostám, and showed it secretly to him.
Enclosed with it Rostám had also sent
Three shining emeralds in three golden seals.
"Afrasiyáb must never know of this,"
She said, "he must not hear a single word.
Your father, if he learns that you've become
A brave and noble warrior like this,
Will call you to his side, I know,
And then your mother's heart will break."[18]

Tahmīna proudly shows Suhrāb a letter of Rustam containing three rubies and three golden seals, and refers to these as a token (*nishān*).[19]

Shahrū, in contrast, keeps Barzū's true descent a secret, although this motherly protection might be interpreted as an act against the will of God.[20] The ring, hidden by Shahrū, has sealed the fate of Barzū, and is a testimony to his identity; he cannot escape the confrontation with Rustam.

However, in contrast to Suhrāb in the episode of Rustam and Suhrāb, Barzū knows who he is fighting, even though Rustam again does not know his opponent. The battle scene in which Barzū's true descent is revealed, is present in all versions of the *Barzū-nāma*. This passage is a sort of reprise of the last combat between Rustam and Suhrāb, although in the *Barzū-nāma*, Barzū has no other mission than to defeat Rustam as a favour to Afrāsiyāb. He is not looking for his father, nor does he seem to be curious

[18] Translation Jerome W. Clinton, *The Tragedy of Sohráb and Rostám*, University of Washington Press, Seattle and London, 1987, revised edition 1996, p. 23, 113–122.

[19] One might speculate that the allusion to this gift is another possible link with the story of Barzū, since there were more seals and stones, one of which Suhrāb could have given to the mother of his son Barzū.

[20] In Ms. Or. fol. 4252, Staatsbibliothek Berlin, the following verse is added in the scene where Shahrū tells how she kept secret the ancestry of Barzū: nashāyad zi taqdīr-i yazdān guzasht / bi taqdīr-u tadbīr yiksān guzasht. "It is improper to deviate from God's fate: to avoid fate and prudence alike."

to find out who he is. By contrast, in the episode of Rustam and Suhrāb, Suhrāb sets out to find his father, and to make him king, but fortune is against him. In spite of various occasions during which disclosure was close at hand, they only realise they are father and son when the dying Suhrāb shows the seal on his arm to Rustam. Tahmīna was not there to protect Suhrāb against this fate, and it is Suhrāb himself who is to reveal to Rustam who he is:

تو زین بی‌گناهی که این کوژپشت مرا بر کشید و بزودی بکشت
به بازی به کوی اندهمسال من به ابر اندر آمد چنین یال من
نشان داد مادر مرا از پدر ز مهر اندر آمد روانم به سر
همی جستمش تا ببینمش روی چنین جان بدادم به دیدار اوی
کنون گر تو در آب ماهی شوی وگر چون شب اندر سیاهی شوی
وگر چون ستاره شوی بر سپهر بری ز روی زمین پاک مهر
بخواهد هم از تو پدر کین من چو داند که خاکست بالین من
ازین نامداران گردنکشان کسی هم برد سوی ستم نشان
که سهراب کشتست و افکنده خوار ترا خواست کردن همی خواستار[21]

I brought this on myself, this is from me,
And Fate has merely handed you the key
To my brief life: not you but heaven's vault—
Which raised me and then killed me—is at fault.
Love for my father led me here to die.
My mother gave me signs to know him by,[22]
And you could be a fish within the sea,
Or pitch black, lost in night's obscurity,
Or be a star in heaven's endless space,
Or vanish from the earth and leave no trace,
But still my father, when he knows I'm dead,
Will bring down condign vengeance on you head.

[21] KM 2, R&S, 857–865.

[22] The fourth verse, not present in Dick Davis' translation below, may be translated as follows: I looked for him so that I could see his face / This is how I gave up life, looking for him.

One from this noble band will take this sign
To Rustam's hands, and tell him it was mine,
And say I sought him always, far and wide,
And that, at last, in seeking him, I died.[23]

An anguished Rustam then asks for proof of this:

بپرسید از آن پس که آمد به هوش بدو گفت با ناله و با خروش
که اکنون چه داری ز رستم نشان که کم باد نامش ز گردنکشان![24]

And when Rustam regained his wits once more,
He asked Suhrāb with sighs of grief and pain,
What sign have you from him—Rustam? Oh may
His name be lost to proud and noble men![25]

The dying Suhrāb tells Rustam how Tahmīna gave her son a seal as an identity marker when he left and Rustam is devastated when he recognizes the seal:

کنون بند بگشای ازین جوشنم برهنه نگه کن تن روشنم
چو برخاست آوای کوس از درم بیامد پر از خون دو رخ مادرم
همی جانش از رفتن من بخست یکی مهره بر بازوی من ببست
مرا گفت کین از پدر یادگار بدار و ببین تا کی آید به کار
کنون کار گر شد که بی کار گشت پسر پیش چشم پدر خوار گشت
چو بگشاد خفتان و آن مهره دید همه جامه پهلوی بر درید
همی گفت کای کشته بر دست من دلیر و ستوده به سر انجمن[26]

---

[23] Translation by Dick Davis: *Shahnameh. The Persian Book of Kings*, London: 2006, first published 1997, p. 209. I have taken Davis' translation for this passage and the following, because Jerome Clinton's translation is based on the Moscow edition of the *Shāh-nāma*, and in the Moscow edition this passage differs considerably from Khaleghi-Motlagh's edition, cited here. Dick Davis' prose translation is largely based on Khaleghi-Motlagh's edition. However, in between the prose Dick Davis has inserted verse translations, and this is one of them.

[24] KM 2, R&S, 868–869.

[25] Jerome W. Clinton, *The Tragedy of Sohráb and Rostám*, University of Washington Press, Seattle and London, 1987, revised edition 1996, p. 153.

[26] KM 2, R&S, 872–878.

> 'Open the straps that bind my armor and look on my naked body. When the battle drums sounded before my door, my mother came to me, her eyes awash with tears, her soul in torment to see me leave. She bound a clasp on my arm and said, "Take this in memory of your father, and watch for when it will be useful to you'; but now it shows its power too late, and the son is laid low before his father." And when Rustam opened the boy's armor and saw the clasp he tore at his own clothes in grief, saying, "All men praised your bravery, and I have killed you with my own hands." '[27]

Shahrū, in contrast to Tahmīna, kept both Barzū's identity and the proof of this identity secret until the very last. Only in the final combat between Barzū and Rustam, she intervenes just in time to save Barzū from the fate of his father Suhrāb. This intervention at the last fight between Rustam and Barzū is a crucial moment in the *Barzū-nāma* and is often illustrated.[28] In these illustrations, Shahrū intervenes holding out her hand, a bezel ring on one of her fingers.

چو شیری نشست از برسینه اش بر آن تا بخواهد ازو کینه اش
برآورد خنجر به کین از میان خروشید مانند شیر ژیان
نگه کرد مادرش اورا بدید که رستم بخواهد سرش را برید
بگفتا به من این زمان گوش دار شوم تا بگویم به تو هوش دار
ترا شرم باید ز یزدان پاک که چنین جوانی براین تیره خاک
به زاری برآری روان از تنش به خونش کنی لعل پیراهنش
ز تخم نریمان و فرزند تو نبیره ی جهاندار و پیوند تو
ترا او نبیره تو مستی نیا برو دل چه داری پر از کیمیا
جهاندار فرزند سهراب گرد بدین زور و بازو و این دستبرد

[27] Dick Davis: *Shahnameh. The Persian Book of Kings*, p. 210.

[28] In illustrated manuscripts, the illustration of the intervention scene is often placed after the third verse of the cited passage: *nigah kard mādarish ū-rā bidīd / ki Rustam bikhwāhad sarish rā burīd*. This verse may be considered as a breakline verse for this scene. For the concept of the breakline, see Farhad Mehran, 'The breakline verse: The link between text and image in the 'First Small' *Shahnama'* in *Shahname Studies I*, edited by Charles Melville, Cambridge 2006, pp. 151–169.

بخوایش کشتن بدین دشت زار نترسی ز یزدان پروردگار
که گاهی نبیره کشی گاه پور بهانه ترا کین ایران و تور
ترا خود بدیده درون شرم نیست جهان را به نزدیکت آزرم نیست
همیگفت و میراند خون جگر همان خاک آورد کرده به سر
همیکند موی و همی یخت خاک همه جامه نامور کرده چاک[29]

Like a lion he was sitting on his breast,
in order to take his revenge
He roared like a furious lion
and took out his dagger
His mother watched him
and saw that Rustam wanted to cut off his head
She said: 'Now listen to me,
I will tell you something: heed my words!
Shame on you before the pure God,
that you would kill such a young man
On this black earth and that you
would make his shirt ruby-red by his blood
He is a descendant from Narimān and your son:
he is the grandson of a king and your kin
He is your grandson, you are his grandfather—
why is your heart full of deceit against him?
The royal son of Suhrāb the hero,
with this strength and excellence
Would you kill him on this lamentable plain,
do you not fear God the Creator?
For now you kill the grandson, after the son—
your excuse is the rivalry between Iran and Turan
You have no shame:
the world has no peace if you are around!
She said this and she showed her deep affliction:
she piled the dust of the battle upon her head
She pulled out her hair and poured out dust
and she tore apart the famous clothes

In this manner Shahrū reveals her secret to Rustam during his last, almost fatal fight with Barzū, when Rustam is about to stab Barzū to death.

[29] *Barzū-nāma*, ed. M. Dabīr Siyāqī, Tehran, 1382, p. 75, 1734–1747.

Rustam asks for an explanation and a proof, just as he did in case of his combat with Suhrāb:

نشانی چه داری مر این را بگوی بگو پیش من تیز و مخراش روی[30]

What token do you have, tell me this!
Tell me quickly and do not scratch your face in grief.

Shahrū then recounts the love affair between her and Suhrāb, and tells Rustam how Suhrāb perceived that she was pregnant, and how he took the ring with the seal from his finger and gave it to her.[31] Rustam then wants to see the ring:

بدو گفت بنمای انگشتری چه داری نهان کرده همچو پری
بدو داد انگشتری زود زن برهنه رخان پیش آن انجمن
نگه کرد رستم بدو بنگرید نگین جفت آن مهره ی خویش دید[32]

He said to her: Show the ring!
What do you have there, hidden as if you were a fairy?
The woman quickly took out the ring,
with unveiled cheeks in front of that crowd
Rustam looked and watched it closely;
he saw that the jewel formed a pair with his own seal

Instead of a tragic ending, this eventful revelation heralds a new epoch in the life of Barzū and Rustam. Barzū becomes a warrior for Iran and the battle against Tūrān continues with fresh vigour. When Afrāsiyāb hears of the new bond between Barzū and Rustam, he is for a short while defeated and desperate, for it seems that the line of Sistani heroes will never stop vexing him. In the version of *Barzū-nāma* published by M. Dabīr Siyāqī, this turning point is placed in the middle of the story, which goes on for about 1850 verses. In other versions of the *Barzū-nāma*, the story is almost at its end when the true descent of Barzū is revealed. In either case, many

[30] *Barzū-nāma*, p. 75, 1750.
[31] *Barzū-nāma*, p. 75, 1784–1797: given above. In a number of manuscript versions of the *Barzū-nāma*, this passage can be found in the beginning of the story, and instead of Shahrū relating this to Rustam, it is in those cases a description of Suhrāb giving the ring to Shahrū.
[32] *Barzū-nāma*, p. 75, 1798–1800.

adventures precede this climax of the story, in which again a ring has a crucial role as a token when Barzū has been captured by Farāmarz and thrown in the Citadel of Hisārak in Sistan. Via the intervention of a minstrel, the ring becomes a means for mother and son to communicate.[33]

Although there are a number of obvious similarities between the story of Rustam and Suhrāb and the story of Barzū, there are just as many striking differences. The ring or seal, the *nishān*, is vital in both stories, even though the outcome of this identifier-gem is completely different. In the end, the mothers make the difference. Shahrū is presented as an energetic and independent woman at times, who actively seeks her son and tries to save him in any way possible. Tahmīna is in pain when her son leaves for battle, but she does not follow him. But then again, Shahrū may have been spurred on by her secret, while Tahmīna had no such secret anymore, since she already revealed Suhrāb's descent in an early stage—and this in fact led Suhrāb to his fatal meeting with Rustam. At first sight, Shahrū is characterised by protectiveness and secrecy, while Tahmīna displays a naive pride in the true descent of her son. Shahrū has a prominent role througout the story of Barzū, while Tahmīna disappears from the stage, and is only referred to in passing by Rustam at the end. To some this was not satisfactory, which is why, in a number of manuscripts and editions, Tahmīna is credited with a lament for her son, which is certainly apocryphal.

In the story of Barzū, the ring is perhaps more a Leitmotiv than a metaphor, like the seal or bead mounted in a bracelet in the story of Rustam and Suhrāb. The ring runs like a thread through the story: without the ring there would be no case. The ring embodies and symbolises the bond between Shahrū and Suhrāb, Barzū and Suhrāb, Barzū and Shahrū and ultimately between Rustam and Barzū. The story of Rustam and Suhrāb and the *Barzū-nāma* seem to be interlinked by the tokens of identification and by the great emphasis laid on lineage and origin. It is inevitable that Barzū stands out, even though he is brought up as a farmer. This is already made clear by Afrāsiyāb in the beginning of the *Barzū-nāma*. While Barzū is busy as a farmer, Afrāsiyāb passes by on the way back from a fight with Rustam. He sees Barzū and is surprised at his appearance:

[33] *Barzū-nāma*, pp. 44–45, in particular 1054–1057.

مرا سال بگذشت بر چار صد ندیدم چنین مرد روز نبرد
نه سام نریمان نه گرشاسپ بود نه گوش یلان نیز چنین شنود
ستادست زانگونه بر پهن دشت کزین سان سپاهی براو برگذشت
نیامد ز ما بر دلش هیچ باک چه پایم پیشش چه یک مشت خاک
بگفت این و آهی ز دل برکشید به کردار دریا دلش بر دمید
به رویین چنین گفت روتازیان مر او را بیاور به نزدم دوان
بدان تا بدانم که تخمش ز کیست چه گوید بدین دشت ازبهر چیست[34]

I am more than 400 years old:
such a man I have not seen on the day of battle
Neither Sām son of Narīmān, nor Garshāsp—
nor has the ear of heroes ever heard like this
He stood firm like that on the steppe
when such an army as this passed him by
He did not feel any fear for us in his heart—
we might as well have been a handful of earth
He said this and sighed,
and his heart swelled like the sea
He spoke to Rūʾīn: Go now quickly,
bring him forward in haste
So that I know from whose seed he is,
and why he is here on the steppe.

It is with a certain fatalism that Afrāsiyāb tries to ascertain the origin of Barzū—as if he already recognized Barzū as the offspring of Rustam. The message conveyed in the story of Barzū is that one cannot betray fate; but one's fate is not taken for granted, despite obvious signs of strength and courage. One's destiny needs to be proven by an object, an object beyond all doubt; and to this end, no object is more appropriate than the symbolic ring, bracelet or seal.

[34] *Barzū-nāma*, p. 75, 15–21.

Bibliography

Barzū-nāma, ed. M. Dabīr Siyāqī, Tehran, 1382/2003.
——, ed., Akbar Nahvi, Tehran, 2008.
Berg, G. van den, "The Barzunama in the Berlin Shahnama Manuscripts," in *Shahnama Studies I*, ed. Charles Melville, Cambridge, 2006, pp. 97–114.
Blois, F. de, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Epics.
——, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey*, vol. V, pt. 2, London, 1994.
Clinton, J.W., *The Tragedy of Sohráb and Rostám*, University of Washington Press, Seattle and London, 1987, revised edition 1996.
Davis, D., 'Interpolations to the Text of the Shahnameh: An Introductory Typology,' *Persica*, no. XVII, 2001, pp. 35–49.
Firdawsī, Abu 'l-Qāsim, *Shahnameh. The Persian Book of Kings*. Translated by D. Davis, London 2006, first published 1997.
——, *Shāh-nāma*, ed. Dj. Khaleghi-Motlagh, vol. 2, California and New York, 1369/1990.
Hanaway, W., "The Iranian Epics," in *Heroic Epic and Saga*, ed. Felix Oinas, Bloomington & London, 1978, pp. 76–98.
Mehran, F., "The breakline verse: The link between text and image in the 'First Small'Shahnama" in *Shahnama Studies I*, ed. Charles Melville, Cambridge 2006, pp. 151–169.
Rührdanz, K., "About a group of truncated *Shāhnāmas*: A Case Study in the Commercial Production of Illustrated Manuscripts in the Second Part of the Sixteenth Century," in *Muqarnas*, 14, 1997, pp. 118–135.

THE FUNCTION OF THE CATALOGUE OF POETS IN PERSIAN POETRY[1]

S. Sharma

Classical Persian poets often included a catalogue of objects, places, and sometimes people, in order to display their rhetorical skills in a particular poem. Although the term 'catalogue' is a rhetorical device used in medieval Western literary scholarship, the Persian rhetorical figure of *murāʿāt al-naẓīr* or *tanāsub* (other terms used are *iʿtilāf*, *talfīq*, *tawfīq*), defined as "observance of the similar or congruity"[2] perhaps approximates the definition of catalogue. A catalogue of poets was utilized by poets in all periods of Persian literature; however, the function that this catalogue plays in a poem varied from poem to poem. Most often, a list of poets from the past provided a mini literary canon and furnished an intellectual genealogy for the poet. In general, there are two broad categories of poems, in all the major forms such as *mathnavī, qaṣīda* and *ghazal*, in which such catalogues are found: one in which the poet lists the accomplished masters of a specific genre or form; the second in which the names of poets, their *takhalluṣ*, also carry their semantic meaning, as demonstrated in the discussion below. Rather than merely accepting these catalogues as random instances of displays of literary skill, such poems require further scrutiny into their literariness and enduring popularity across forms and genres over time. On a comparative level, in Elizabethan English poetry, in a nascent form of literary criticism, poets employed the "method of the 'roll-call,' a catalogue of poets, in which one name follows another, each with its tag of critical comment. These comments are limited by a narrow range of critical terminology, a few words of praise or blame, some commonplace, some more highly coloured, and the judgments that they express are those of a well established literary tradition or of the common

[1] I would like to thank Anna Livia Beelaert, M.A. Movahhed and Nasrollah Pourjavady for their comments on this paper when I presented it. Anna Livia's feedback, that included drawing my attention to several poems that are discussed here, was particularly helpful.

[2] E.G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951, v. 2, p. 51.

opinion of their time."[3] The Persian poems show a more complex and subtle use of the 'roll-call' in the overall structure of the poem and, perhaps, another European context is closer to it. This device is also used by the medieval German poet Gottfried von Strassburg who uses the catalogue of poets metaphorically "to reflect and substantiate his own aesthetic programme of the correlations of 'wort' [word] and 'sin' [meaning]."[4] This suggests a useful framework for approaching the Persian poems where the act of creating and interpretation of the poem are motivated by specific aesthetic and metaphoric programmes. A study of representative verses and poems in which catalogues of poets are found will allow us to study the full range of uses of this rhetorical device as a metaphor for the composition of poetry.

Most poets who make use of the catalogue of poets do not theorize about its rhetorical application in the structure and meaning of their poems because Persian poetic language was to a great extent analogical and depended on unspecified associations.[5] One poet who does provide a template for reading such verses is ʿAṭṭār (d. ca. 1220) in ten lines from his long didactic-mystical poem, *Mūṣībat-nāma*.[6] In the context of a discourse on poetry, ʿAṭṭār states that poetry (*shiʿr*), the empyrean (*ʿarsh*) and religious law (*sharʿ*) share the same letters and are fundamental to the two worlds. When the earth is illumined by the sky, the three letters cause the two worlds to share the same attributes. He then says: Although the sun has become heavenly (*samāʾī*), in luminosity it has become a brilliant genus (*jins-i sanāʾī*). The reference here is to Sanāʾī (d. 1131), the late Ghaznavid poet, who was the primary influence on ʿAṭṭār. This then allows him launch into a catalogue of poets, using their *takhalluṣ*es in their semantic meaning:

از کمال شعر و شوق شاعری چرخ را بین از رقی و انوری
باز کن چشم و ز شعر چون شکر از بهشت عدن فردوسی نگر

---

[3] *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature in 18 Volumes*, eds. A.W. Ward et al., New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1907–21, Volume VII. Cavalier and Puritan, XI. Jacobean and Caroline Criticism, § 10. The Elizabethan "roll-call". http://www.bartleby.com/217/1110.html (25 September 2008).

[4] Walter Haug, *Vernacular Literary Theory in the Middle Ages: The German Tradition, 800–1300, in Its European Context*, trans. Joanna M. Catling, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 221.

[5] For a discussion of the analogical qualities of classical Persian poetry, see Julie S. Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987, pp. 32–33, passim.

[6] Ed. Nūrānī Viṣāl, Tehran: Zavvār, 1338/1959, p. 46.

From the perfection (**Kamāl**) of a poem and zeal for poetry
Regard the azure (**Azraqī**) and bright (**Anvarī**) sky.
Open your eyes and with sweet poetry
look at the Edenic heaven as paradisial (**Firdawsī**).[7]

He then asks his audience to consider poetry as the fortune of Jamshīd and to regard affection as the sun. He goes on to say,

وز زبالا سوی ارکان بنگری هم شهابی بینی و هم عنصری
ور در این علمت کند شاهی هوس علم اگر در چین است خاقانیت بس

And if you look from above at the fundamentals,
You will see them to be both meteoric (**Shihābī**) and elemental (**ʿUnṣurī**).
If a king desires to gain this knowledge,
Even if knowledge be in China, kingship (**Khāqānī**-yat) is enough.

Since the heavens, sky, and sun, and the elements of wind, fire, earth and water, have a semantic connection with the names of these poets, then the material world is actually the other poets (*pas jahān shāʿir buvad chūn dīgarān*).[8] In paying homage to the master poets who have preceded him and indulging in this literary display of punning on their names, ʿAṭṭār equates them with the heavens while the mundane world is that of living poets. The act of composing poetry approximates the ontological state of existence and the mention of names of poets is a metaphor for the entire universe.[9] Thus, the poets of the past with their achievements complement those who are active in the present time, for no writing in the present is

[7] All translations are by me unless indicated otherwise. I have had to sacrifice the poetic sense of some verses to convey the puns in English. In some cases, when my sources only provided an English translation or the poems are too long I have not given the Persian text. I have also not identified the various poets mentioned in the paper, leaving this as a quiz for the reader.

[8] Hermann Landolt briefly mentions these lines as an instance of 'fantastic aetiology' since many of these names are celestial, "ʿAttār, Sufism and Ismailism," *Attār and the Persian Sufi Tradition: The Art of Spiritual Flight*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn and Christopher Shackle, London: I.B. Tauris, 2006, p. 6.

[9] In discussing the topics of unity in poetry and rhetoric in the case of the medieval Persian literary theoretician, Shams-i Qays, Jerome W. Clinton writes that "the principal rhetorical means he uses [....] is [....] metaphor. Description serves to convey what the elements of poetry are [....], but metaphor is employed to convey the sense of composition [....]. Moreover, the ground of these metaphors is predominantly that of the skilled crafts," p. 77, 'Esthetics by Implication: What Metaphors of Craft Tell us about the "Unity" of the Persian Qasida,' *Edebiyat* IV/1 (1979). From the crafts to the craftsman is a further associative move that allows the poet to name renowned poets.

free of the presence of the predecessors. Later in the work, ʿAṭṭār considers himself to be the seal of the poets (*khātim al-shuʿarā*) and in direct descent from the old masters.[10] Of course, not all poets argue their views in the sophisticated way that a didactic poet such as ʿAṭṭār did, but they also often have a similar programme in their use of the catalogue of poets. Given the range of poetic forms and genres, it can be seen how the catalogue changes with each use and is transformed into a more explicit canon of poets.

The most familiar instances of lists of poets' names occurs in long narrative poems in the *mathnavī* form, especially those who are overtly writing in imitation of one of the two masters of the genre such as Niẓāmī (d. ca. 1209) and Amīr Khusraw (d. 1325). The following lines from the poet, ʿIsāmī (d. 1350), who wrote the *Futūḥ al-salāṭīn*, also referred to as the *Shāh-nāma* of India, is an example where the poet makes a declaration of *imitation*—he uses the term *tazmīn* below—and allusions are sufficient to acquaint the reader with the literary genealogy of the work being presented:[11]

دو شاعر در این فن چو کار آگهن ربودند گوی کمال از جهان
یکی جلوه ای داد طاوس را چو فردوس آراست مرطوس را
دوم بلبل آورد اندر نوا شرف داد مر گلشن گنجه را
ز طاوس و بلبل بهندوستان یکی طوطیی زاد شکر فشان[11]

Two poets, expert in this art [*mathnavī*]
have achieved perfection in the world.
One [**Firdawsī**] made a peacock manifest itself
and adorned Tus like paradise.
The second [**Niẓāmī**] made a nightingale sing
and graced the garden of Ganja. . . .
From the peacock and nightingale, in India,
a melodious parrot [**Khusraw**] was born.

For ʿIsāmī, the natural world again provides associative metaphors to build his catalogue of poets. The three poets who excelled in narrative poetry

[10] *Mūṣībat-nāma*, p. 364.

[11] *Futūḥ al-salāṭīn*, ed. A.S. Usha, Madras: University of Madras, 1948, p. 609. Such poems are discussed in Sunil Sharma "Amir Khusraw and the Genre of Historical Narratives in Verse," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* XXII 1–2 (2002): pp. 114–15.

are birds, and specifically those that have an emblematic role in classical Persian poetry.[12] The birds are connected to specific geographic places, allowing for the exclusion of the proper names of the poets. In presenting his work to his patron, Abū al-Muẓaffar Bahman Shāh, ʿIsāmī acknowledges his debt to his predecessors (*basī bayt-i Shāh-nāma u Khamsa ham/ ba tazmīn darīn nāma kardam raqam*) and hopes his work will be acceptable to the world (*ba gītī qabūl uftad īn dāstān*). Thus, as with ʿAṭṭār's metaphor of the seal of poets, the act of composing poetry is a continuous one that passes from poet to poet, similar to the way that the living world endures in the universe.[13]

One of the earliest examples of a poem that contains a catalogue of poets is a *qaṣīda* by the Ghaznavid court poet Manūchihrī (d. 1040/41), who was *malik al-shuʿarā* to Sultan Masʿūd (r. 1030–40). Entitled *sharḥ-i shikāyat*, a declaration of one's dissatisfaction with the times is a frequent topos for court poets; in this poem Manūchihrī voices his dissatisfaction with the prevailing situation for professional poets and vows to desist from composing either panegyrics or satire for neither is any longer a profitable commodity. Whereas in the old days people would suspend excellent poems with a golden chain from the Kaʿba, a reference to the practice in pre-Islamic Arabia, and poets such as Imrʾul Qays, Labīd, Akhtal and Aʿsha-i Qays would lament over the traces of the camp of the beloved, now people lament over the state of poetry:

ما همه بر نظم و شعر و قافیه نوحه کنیم نه بر اطلال و دیار و نو و حوش و ظباء[14]

We all lament over versification, poetry and rhyme,
not over the camp's ruins, nor wild creatures, nor deer.

[12] A Persian poet as a nightingale is commonplace enough and Amīr Khusraw Dihlavī was honoured with the sobriquet *ṭūṭī-i Hind* (parrot of India). Firdawsī as a peacock is a somewhat unusual image, but the association is between the meaning of his name to the peacock who is found in paradise. For the use of ornithological imagery in Persian poetry, see Annemarie Schimmel, *A Two-Colored Brocade: The Imagery of Persian Poetry*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992, pp. 178–89.

[13] In this regard, consider the line such as the following by Sultan Valad: *ʿAṭṭār rūh būd u Sanāʾī du chashm-i dil/mā qibla-i Sanāʾī u ʿAṭṭār āmadīm*, *Dīvān-i Sulṭān Valad*, ed. Saʿīd Nafīsī, Tehran: Rūdakī, 1338/1959, p. 240. There is also a long poem in the *dīvān* where Sultan Valad represents himself as coming at the end of a long line of figures beginning with the prophets, caliphs, Sufis and those associated with his father, Mawlānā Jalāluddīn Rūmī, pp. 521–3.

[14] *Dīvān-i Manūchihrī-i Dāmghānī*, ed. M. Dabīr-Siyāqī, Tehran: Zavvār, 1370/1991, p. 131.

He goes on to mention other Arabic poets from the Abbasid period, such as Abū Nuwās, Abū Haddād, Abū Malīk, Ibn al-Bashīr, Abū Duwād, Ibn Durayd, Ibn Ahmar, Abū al-ʿAlā', Abū al-ʿAbbās, Abū Sulayk and Abū al-Mathal. Then he resorts to an *ubi sunt* mode of expression and asks:[15]

ازحکیمان خراسان کوشهید و رودکی بوشکور بلخی و بوالفتح بستی هکذا

> Among the learned men of the Khurasan, where is Shahīd and Rūdakī?
> Bū Shakūr-i Balkhī, Būʾl-Fatḥ-i Bustī and others like them?

The first three of these were renowned Persian poets from the Samanid court while the last, Abū al-Fatḥ al-Bustī, was an Arabic poet from the Ghaznavid court. He calls these learned men to come and observe the times when composing poetry is not a worthy activity. In the golden age when these poets lived and practiced their craft everyone had the desire (*ishtihā*) for composing verse. In contrast, in his day the market of poetry has deteriorated to such a low point that panegyric poetry is considered to be equal to mendacity (*durūgh*). In conclusion, Manūchihrī provides another list of Arabic poets, this time invoking the sanction bestowed on panegyric by the Prophet Muḥammad, for if this kind of poetry was not truthful, then would the prophet have listened to the poetry of Ḥassān ibn Thābit, or prayed for Nābighah, or given a cloak to Kaʿb? The other Arabic poets mentioned in conclusion are ʿAbbās, Talhah, Hamzah, Jaʿfar, Saʿd, Saʿīd, Sayyid Umm al-Qurā. Manūchihrī's poem has a cluster of names of Arab poets in the beginning and at the end, with the three Persian poets exactly in the middle. He appears to be nostalgic for the poetic culture of the distant past, more remote in the Arabic case, but also poets of a few generations before him in Persian, instead of those closer to his own time such as the highly regarded 'Unṣurī. Heavily invested in the weight

---

[15] For this mode of poetry, see Cynthia Robinson, "*Ubi Sunt*: Memory and Nostalgia in Taifa Court Culture," in *Muqarnas* 15, 1998, pp. 20–31. One of the personas that a poet writing in this vein assumes is that of "the moralistic arbiter who sits in judgment on his culture and, when comparing it to the glory of past civilizations, finds it lacking," p. 21. Manūchihrī's poem varies the topos of the poet dwelling on places from the past by focusing on poets from the past. Poets writing at a very late date can resort to the 'ubi sunt' topos in the *ghazal*, as when Abū Ṭālib (d. ca. 1806), the Indo-Persian traveler to Britain, says in an unusual poem praising the women of that land: The connoisseurs of this *ghazal* are Saʿdī, Ḥāfiẓ, Amīr [Khusraw], Fighānī and Hazīn and that entire assembly—ubi sunt? (*qadr-shināsān-i īn ghazal Saʿdī u Ḥāfiẓ u Amīr/hāy Fighānī u Hazīn va ān hama anjuman kujāst*), *Masīr-i Ṭālibī*, ed. Ḥusayn Khadīvjam, Tehran: Inqilāb-i Islāmī, 1363/1984, p. 144.

and sanctity of the Arabic tradition, Manūchihrī's critique of the Persian poetic milieu seems that much more damning.

Whereas the poets that Manūchihrī evoked were from the Arabic past and his list of Persian poets sparse by comparison, the situation would change over time with the expansion of the world of Persian poetry. In contrast, consider a *qaṣīda* by Farīd-i Aḥval Isfaraʾinī (or Isfahānī), a thirteenth century poet in the service of the Āl-i Sāʿid in Esfahan, and later at the court of the Salghurid Muẓaffar al-Dīn, which is a variation on the catalogue of poets poem. Farīd was patronized in particular by Saʿd ibn Abī Bakr and, according to Zabīhullāh Safā, his poetry is "characterized by the use of difficult rhymes and refrains (*radīf*) and the preponderance of embellished rhetorical devices, particularly in his qaṣīdas, many of which are in emulation of former masters of the genre."[16] In a panegyric *qaṣīda* to Ziyā al-Dīn, Farīd arrays a stunning display of his rhetorical skills by providing two catalogues within a single poem: one of Persian poets and the other of the various constellations. As seen in the opening lines, Farīd uses the names of the poets in their semantic meaning as well as for denoting their poetic personas:

چون گشت چرخ ازرقی از ماه انوری پر نور چون اثیر شد اجرام عنصری
فردوسیان قدس منوچهری از سپهر لبر مهر رخ نموده چو جوزه بدلبری
از فرخی نمود رخ از پرده، افق مسعود سعد اکبر یعنی که مشتری[17]

When the azure sky (Azraqī) became luminous from the bright (Anvarī) moon,
when ether (Athīr) became the elemental ('Unsurī) celestial bodies,
the pardisial (Firdawsī) ones of celestial (Manūchihrī) countenance in the sky
displayed their faces as Orion in love to the sun.
Out of prosperity (Farrukhī), from the veil of the horizons
the great felicitous fortune (Masʿūd-i Sa'd), i.e. Jupiter, showed its face.

The two different readings of the lines, one with the semantic meanings of the poets' names and the other with the proper names of the poets, become blurred for the reader or audience as a result of being dazzled by the panoply of terms and meanings. These lines are reminiscent of those by ʿAṭṭār discussed above in the preoccupation with the natural elements

[16] Zabīhullāh Safā, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Farīd Esfarāyenī, p. 280.
[17] *Dīvān-i Farīd Isfahānī*, ed. Muḥsin Kiyānī, Tehran: Anjuman-i Āsār va Mafākhir-i Farhangī, 1381/2002, p. 195.

and celestial metaphors that are sustained throughout the poem. Farīd goes on to mention other Persian poets such as **Qaṭrān**, **Muʿizzī**, **Buḥturī**, **Āzarī**, **Sūzanī**, **Rūdakī**, **Ashharī**, **Adīb**, and **Vaṭvāṭ**, not adhering to the pattern of always punning on a poet's name. Finally, in the *gurīz* portion of the *qaṣīda*, he makes his point about the art of poetry:

اینند شاعران که گذشتند بعد ازاین منت مراست بر سر شعر تر دری
گر شاعریست این که گروهی همی کنند هان ای فرید تا نزنی دم ز شاعری[18]

Those were poets, they who have passed, after them
I am under obligation to fresh poetry in Dari.
If this is poetry that this group compose,
truly, Farīd, don't even speak of it.

Of course, this last statement is a purely rhetorical stance, for as is the intention with a catalogue of poets Farīd actually views himself as the heir to the great masters of the past and wishes his patron to recognize this fact as well. In this case, the patron happens to be a man of learning who, according to the poet is in the prime of his youth and is accomplished in all forms of religious sciences (*dar ʿunfvān-i sinn-i javānīyat ḥāṣil ast/ tafsīr u ʿilm-i fiqh u ḥadīth-i payāmbarī*); he is likened to legendary figures such as Ḥātim Ṭaʾī, Barmakī, Rustam and Suhrāb, thus providing another catalogue of notables within the poem. For Farīd the catalogue of poets is one rhetorical device among many to be exploited in his poem and his selection of the names of poets is governed more by their semantic potential than by any exclusive literary criteria.

The Mughal poet of Akbar's court Fayḍī's (d. 1595) use of the catalogue of poets is characterized equally by professional pride and anxiety regarding his situation as an Indian born poet among the majority Persian-speaking elite from Iran and Central Asia. In a long *qaṣīda* dedicated to the emperor, Fayḍī alludes to some poets of the past through the names of their works, a variation from the geographic allusions discussed above. Beginning *saḥar-i navīd-rasân-i qâṣid-i Sulaymânī*,[19] he assures his patron, who is a connoisseur of poetry, that the tradition of the canon of poets is not closed (*ḥadīth-i ṭāyifa-i shiʿr nīst pāyānī*).[20] The great poets of the

[18] *Dīvān*, p. 196.
[19] *Dīvān-i Fayḍī*, ed. H. Âhi, Tehran: Furūghī, 1362/1983, pp. 112–21; it appears in H. Beveridge's translation of Abū al-Faḍl's *Akbar-nâma*, v. 2, pp. 447–62.
[20] *Dīvān*, p. 116.

past were of wise disposition (*ḥakīm mazājan*) and pure of heart (*pāk-dil*) who are present in spirit (*bi-mashhad-i jān hāzir*) although absent in body (*bi-tan ghāyib*). When Fayḍī is asked by the emperor about his models, he begins the roll-call of the great poets with Firdawsī, by mentioning the *Shāh-nāma* but not the name of the its author, who he calls the creator of verses from the region of Tus (*sukhan-āfrīn-i khiṭṭa-i Ṭūs*) who was the gentry of the garden of poetry (*ki dar riyāḍ-i sukhan bud pīr-i dihqān*).[21] The only fault with him was that he lived in the time of the slaves of the Samanids, a direct reference to the proverbial shabby treatment of Firdawsī at the hands of Sultan Maḥmūd the Ghaznavid. Of course, this is also an indirect allusion to the freedom enjoyed by poets, and everyone in general, during the reign of the emperor Akbar. An association with one place, Ghazna in this case, leads to the next poet Sanāʾī, called the wine-imbiber of Ghazna (*sabū-kash-i Ghaznīn*), whose *Ḥadīqa* is mentioned and praised. Mention of Shirvān leads to Khāqānī's well-known work: *naqqāra-i sukhanash Tuḥfat al-ʿIrāqayn ast*. Niẓāmī is referred to as the treasurer of Ganja (*ganjūr-i Ganja*) whose achievements are only comparable to the Arabic poet Mutannabī's imaginative powers (*takhayyul*). The rest of the poets who are named outright are Anvarī, Zahīr, Kamāl, ʿAṭṭār and his *Manṭiq al-ṭayr*, Saʿdī and his *Būstān* and *Gulistān*, Amīr Khusraw, and Ḥāfiẓ, and a few others. The final name is again by allusion, sage of Jam (*ʿārif-i Jām*), the Timurid poet Jāmī (d. 1492) who is the seal of the canon:

به جمعیت او بعد از او کسی نگذشت ز نظم و نثر بر و ختم شد سخنرانی[22]

In his society no one appeared after him,
And he is the seal of prose and poetry.

Fayḍī appears to contradict himself since he declared earlier that the canon of poets is an open-ended one. In any case, this list of classical masters provides him the occasion to launch into a scathing attack on the hack poets of his time who have chosen the dominion of Satan over their country (*guzīda bar mulkī gīr u dār-i Shaytānī*). In the end, there is only one poet who is worthy and best equipped with the stuff of poetry, i.e. himself (*gharīb-i mulk-i maʿnī darīn ribāt manam/zi kārvān-i sukhan bā*

[21] *Dīvān*, p. 116.
[22] *Dīvān*, p. 118.

tamām sāmānī).[23] Fayḍī's anxiety of being a stranger in the land of Persian poetry is resolved through a declaration of his poetic prowess.

Even as a new attitude to the literary past and the poetic canon began to predominate in the post-Timurid so-called *sabk-i Hindī* period, although there was ample attention paid to the masters of the tradition there was an equal emphasis on the present. As Safavid poets debated the merits of shifting to the Mughal court in search of better prospects of patronage, many of the success stories of poets who had done so were celebrated. The individual poem was a site for the negotiation of the new frontier and canon of Persian. At around the same time that Fayḍī was writing, **Rasmī** Qalandar Yazdī, was an émigré poet from Iran and in a *qaṣīda*, in the form of a conventional petition in verse to seek entry into the coterie of the Mughal general and patron of poets, ʿAbdurraḥīm Khān-i Khānān, he gathers together names of poets who are for the most part contemporaries of his:

> The slave feels pride in hearing your praise, just as the poet *Khāqānī* did while praising the Khaqan of China.
>
> Due to the auspicious praise of you, the fame of that accomplished poet from Shiraz (*ʿUrfī*) went from East to West. He became familiar with a new style, like a beautiful face that is made up by a bride's waiting woman.
>
> By the grace of your name, *Fayḍī* like *Khusraw* conquered the seven climes all at once with his Indian sword.
>
> With crumbs from your table, the poet *Nazīrī* has reached a position that other poets compose *qasida*s in *his* praise and the hearts of poets bleed with jealousy. . . .
>
> Connoisseurs take as gifts the works of *Shakībī* to Khorasan, like the kohl of Esfahan.
>
> By praising you *Ḥayātī* found a new life; indeed, talent is patronized by a generous temperament.
>
> How can I describe the case of *Nawʾī* and *Kufrī*, they will live until the day of resurrection for praising you. From your generosity *Nawʾī* received the wealth that Mīr *Muʿizzī* did from Sanjar. . . .
>
> Until the limpid water of your praise became the guide for *Rasmī*, there was a mirage like the water of life where he stepped.[24]

Among the personages mentioned, ʿUrfī, Fayḍī, Nazīrī, Shakībī, Ḥayātī, Nawʾī, Kufrī, and Rasmī, of course, were all living poets. The constellation of personal and place names in these lines delineates the itinerary of

[23] *Dīvān*, p. 119.

[24] Quoted in Aḥmad Gulchīn-Maʿānī, *Kārvān-i Hind*, Mashhad: Āstān-i Quds-i Razavī, 1369/1990, pp. 439–40.

poets and texts, as well as illustrates the refined process by which negotiations over the literary borders of Persian were taking place. Significantly, Rasmī identifies Amīr Khusraw and Fayḍī, who even though they are not displacing the old masters become central to the Indo-Persian literary project, as being the conquerors of the seven climes. In the context of imitation in the *ghazal*s of Ṣāʾib (d. 1677), Paul Losensky has discussed how Safavid and Mughal poets often expressed a "sense of belatedness."[25] Ṣāʾib, whose professional career spanned the Indo-Iranian world, was a "confident and generous imitator of the 'ancients' . . . and sure of his ability to honor and revive the spirit of past masters in fresh new creation." He is, in fact, "more ambivalent toward his immediate predecessors" whom he mentions in these lines:

> In poetry, he does not fall short of **ʿUrfī** and **Ṭālib**—
> **Ṣāʾib**'s fault is this: that he does not belong to the ranks of the predecessors.[26]

Whereas in the poems of earlier poets the choice of poets was random, or at best governed by the possibility of rhetorical play and punning the names afforded, from the Timurid period there is a serious attempt to present the names more selectively and regard the clusters of names as literary canons. Michael Glünz discusses one such *qaṣīda* by Khvājah ʿIṣmat (d. 1426 or 1436) that "reads like a Who's Who of the classical literary canon, indicating to us the typical models whom a Persian poet of the fifteenth century would strive to emulate."[27] In praising a manuscript of the *dīvān* of his patron, Khalīl Sultān, ʿIṣmat imagines the poets who are masters of different forms sanctioning their approval to it:

> **Salmān** is busy gathering excerpts from the light of its qasidas.
> **Saʿdī** feels at ease with its soul-nourishing ghazals.
> **Khāqānī** has received abundant gifts from its rhetorical artifices.
> **Anvarī** is filled with shame in face of its brilliant meanings.
> Because of its masnavis the spirit of **Niẓāmī** is full of joy,
> Because of its single *bait*s and *qiṭʿas* **Ibn Yāmīn** is uttering its praises.[28]

---

[25] "The Allusive Field of Drunkenness": Three Safavid-Moghul Responses to a Lyric by Bābā Fighānī," *Reorientations/Arabic and Persian Poetry*, ed. Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994, pp. 249–50. Losensky shows how by an "active engagement of his models, Sāʾib prepares the ground for the troubled spirit of his models into his sterner moral vision," p. 254.

[26] "The Allusive Field of Drunkenness," p. 250.

[27] "Poetic tradition and social change: the Persian qasida in post-Mongol Iran," *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa*, edited by Sr. Sperl and Chr. Shackle, Leiden: Brill 1996, pp. 197–8. For a discussion on the poetic canon and post-Mongol Persian literature, pp. 194–5.

[28] "Poetic tradition and social change," p. 198.

Instead of the usual rhetorical devices of association of the names of places as seen in ʿIsāmī or punning on the *takhalluṣ*es of the poets, here is a straightforward list of names of poets that is both exclusive, in the very existence of the canon, and inclusive, in allowing ʿIṣmat's patron to be grouped among the greats. However, it is the attention to the classification of poetic forms: *qaṣīda, ghazal, mathnavī, bayt* [*fard*] and *qiṭʿa*, that these verses are remarkable, for it represents a significant moment in the history of Persian literature, and a shift in the metaphoric imagery connected with catalogues of poets.

The poetic canon became even more exclusive over time as the mini-catalogue of poets in the following lines indicates. Recorded by both Timurid men of letters, Dawlatshāh (d. 1487) and Jāmī (d. 1492), this verse by a poet named ʿAzīzī is actually a paring down of the basic poetic genres/forms in Persian and the best, albeit minimalist, representative of each:

در شعر سه تن پیامبرانند سر چند که لا نبی بعدی
اوصاف وقصیده وغزل را فردوسی وانوری وسعدی[29]

> The sphere poetic hath its prophets three,
> (Although *'There is no Prophet after me*')
> **Firdawsī** in the epic, in the ode,
> **Saʿdī**, and in *qaṣīda* **Anvarī.**[30]

This succinct statement indicates the way literary critics of this period began to view and categorize the various poetic genres and forms in Persian. The term *awṣāf* (descriptions), probably chosen to fit the metre here as well, is used for epic or the *mathnavī* form, since the modern term *ḥamāsa* would not have been employed. But using *mathnavī* would have not have been an option either since that would have excluded the other two masters of the form, Niẓāmī and Amīr Khusraw, who wrote romantic *mathnavī*s rather than epic ones. The appellation of prophets for the best poets of the three different poetic forms is indicative of a romantic and reverential attitude towards the past, and ʿAzīzī the poet does not insert himself in the group. For him, the past is sealed and is separated from the present by a distinct boundary. In fact, it is during the Timurid period, an age of philological and codicological endeavours, that a consciousness of

[29] *Bahāristān*, ed. Ismāʿīl Ḥākimī, Tehran: Iṭṭilāʿāt, 1374/1995, p. 105; *Tadhkirat al-shuʿarā*, ed. Muḥammad Ramazānī, Tehran: Padīdah Khāvar, 1366/1987, p. 41.

[30] E.G. Browne's translation, *A Literary History of Persia*, v. 2, 116.

a core canon of poets who represented the achievements of the literary tradition came to be articulated.[31] Whereas Manūchihrī and Farīd listed their poets for different purposes, here the choice is quite deliberate and exclusive regarding the canon that is being proposed.

ʿAzīzī's verses are echoed three centuries later in Iran by Ādhar Baygdilī (d. 1780) who also comes up with an identical list, with the addition of one name, to provide a canon of the four greatest classical poets. Another major difference is that he does not link the poets to forms or genres but reverts back to their geographic affiliations:

جهان نظم را سلطان چهارند که‌ هر یک باغ دانش را بهارند
یکی فردوسی آن کز خاک طوس است کز و روی سخن روی عروس است
وزان پس انوری کو سر برآورد چو آب روشن از خاک ابیورد
دگر سعدی که تا دم زد ز شیراز رسد شیرازیان را در جهان ناز
دگر سرو ریاض قم نظامی که شد ملک سخن او را تمامی
ز حق رحمت به روح پاکشان باد گل فردوس زیب خاکشان باد[32]

The world of poetry has four rulers like spring in the garden of knowledge
One is **Firdawsī** of Tus because of whom poetry's face is as a bride,
Then **Anvarī** who arose like sparkling water from Abivard,
Then **Saʿdī** of Shiraz who will always be pride for the Shirazis.
Then the cypress of Qum's garden **Niẓāmī** who was the seal of poetry.[33]

Despite their absence, an educated reader would know that four types of poetic forms and genres are meant here: epic, *qaṣīda, ghazal*, and romance. The geographic associations have a different purpose at this latter date since they designate spaces within the boundaries of the newly emerging modern nation of Iran. As a proponent of the *bāzgasht*

[31] Paul E. Losensky writes about this period, "Bibliophilism and the cult of the book gave concrete shape to the emerging concept of the classical canon of Persian poetry. The artistic value of certain works were underwritten by the institutional authority of royal investment and expenditure," *Welcoming Fighānī: Imitation and Poetic Individuality in the Safavid-Mughal Ghazal*, Costa Mesa: Mazda, 1998, p. 146.

[32] *Ātashkada*, ed. Ḥasan Sādāt Nāṣirī, Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1336–78/1957–99, v. IV, pp. 12–13.

[33] Niẓāmī's affiliation with Qum rather than Ganja is supported by an alternate tradition to that effect. Perhaps his family was from Qum.

movement, Ādhar was less interested in the achievements of poets in the larger Persianate world and more fixated on the local and national.

As late as the twentieth century poets were employing these catalogues, no longer for rhetorical display, it would seem, but in a form of literary criticism. The following poem by the Iranian poet Malik al-shuʿarā Bahār (d. 1956), with the title *Hasht shāʿir dar ʿArab va ʿAjam*, is reminiscent of the older verses where attention is paid to poetic forms and genres, but geography is still important:

هشت تن در هشت معنی شهره اند اندر ادب چار شاعر عجم پس چار شاعر در عرب
در گه رامش زبیر و نابغه هنگام خوف گاه کین اعشا قیس و عنتره گه غضب
ور ز اشعار عجم خواهی و استادان خاص رو ز شعر چارتن کن چار معنی منتخب
وصف را از طوسی و اندرز را از پارسی عشق را از سجزی و هجو را از ابیوردی طلب
اولی وصفی حقیقی دومی پندی دقیق سومی عشقی طبیعی چارمی هجوی عجب[34]

Eight individuals in eight fields are renowned in literature,
four among the Persians, and four among the Arabs.
In times of joy Zuhayr, and Nābigha for dread,
for enmity Aʿsha Qays, and ʿAntara in passion.
If you want Persian poetry and the special masters,
turn away from the four individuals and pick four topics.
Seek description in the Tūsī [**Firdawsī**] and counsel from the Farsi [**Saʿdī**],
Love from the Sijzī [**Farrukhī**], and satire from the Abīvardī [**Anvarī**].
The first has realistic description, the second pointed counsel,
the third natural love, and the fourth marvelous satire.

Of course, the obvious question is: Why is there a list of Arabic poets at this late date when it is no longer of significance to poets, unlike the period of Manūchihrī when Arabic poetry was still a living reality? Interestingly, the four Arabic poets mentioned are all pre-Islamic ones; is Bahār perhaps valorizing a golden age for the Arabic literary tradition that ended with the appearance of Islam? Bahār's generic classification is in contrast to that provided by the earlier Timurid poets (*awṣāf, qaṣīda, ghazal*) which is more based on poetic form rather than genre or topos. Since Bahār was a major literary critic of the classical tradition, his views in such verses

[34] *Dīvān-i ashʿār*, Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1344–45/1965–66, v. 2, p. 430.

are fundamental in fully understanding his theoretical ideas on Persian literature.[35]

Finally, when we turn to other Persianate traditions, such as Ottoman and Chaghatai Turkish and Urdu, that often looked to Persian poets and poetry for models, it is striking that the catalogue of poets in poems in those languages are often exclusively of Persian poets, which has interesting implications for rethinking our ideas on the interconnectedness and multilingualism of these literary cultures. The examples below come from the *ghazal* form, which had a universal appeal and wide readership in the Persianate world. Jāmī's contemporary, Mīr ʿAlīshīr Navāʾī (d. 1501), the great man of letters of Chaghatai who was equally adept in Persian, puts forward a genealogy of the masters of the *ghazal*:

> In the gazel three persons attained that,
> Which can not be done better than they.
> One is an Indian sorcerer [**Khusraw**] possessing wonderful gift,
> Whose inspiration lovers with passion inflame.
> Another is one from Shiraz [**Saʿdī**], a rind with the breath of Jesus,
> A drunkard and care-free in this fleeting world.
> The third is a pious old man, a sage of Jham [sic] [**Jāmī**],
> Whose broken cup is like the wealth of Jhamshid [sic].
> In **Navoi**'s poetry not a single beit can be seen,
> Free from the influence of all these three![36]

Once again, without the mention of proper names the geographical allusions are sufficient to convey the information about the poets to the reader. Navāʾī does mention his own name, as the *takhalluṣ* of his *ghazal*, as the successor of the great men of letters, but no other Turkish poet is mentioned. Similarly, in the followings *ghazal*, translated in its entirety, the Urdu poet Valī (d. ca. 1720) indulges in a pure wordplay with the meanings of the poets' names, but in essence providing a list of poets that were familiar names to an eighteenth century Urdu poet in India:

> Your face is bright (**Mashriqī**), your beauty luminous (Anvarī), your splendor beautiful (**Jamālī**).
> Your eyes are intoxicating (**Jāmī**), your forehead paradisial (**Firdawsī**), your eyebrows like the new moon (**Ḥilālī**).

---

[35] For a useful discussion on Bahār's position on classical poetry and the literary scene of his own day, see Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, *Recasting Persian Poetry: Scenarios of Poetic Modernity in Iran*, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1995, pp. 124–26.

[36] From *Favāʾid al-kibār*, quoted in *Miniatures Illuminations of Amir Hosrov Dehlevi's Works*, Tashkent: Academy of Sciences of the Uzbek SSR, 1983, p. 22.

You are scholarly (**Riyāzī**-fahm), your nature is as a garden (**Gulshan**), you are wise (**Dānā**) and noble (**ʿAlī**) in nature (**Fitrat**).
Your tongue is eloquent (**Fasīhī**) and your poetry is limpid (**Zulālī**).
Graceful (**Fayḍī**) in aspect and seeker (**Ṭālib**) and mad (**Shaydā**) for a divine (**Qudsī**) temperament.
A perfect (**Kamāl**) moon, with kindred (**Aḥlī**) heart and eyes like a gazelle (**Ghazālī**).
You are a king (**Khusraw**) of bright conscience and straight (**Ṣāʾib**) and majestic (**Shawkat**).
Your eyebrows are to lovelorn (**Bedil**) me a continuous (**Viṣālī**) imperial signature (**Tughrā**).
Valī has become fond (**Shawqī**) of and inclined (**Māʾil**) to your form and brow,
May every distich be lofty (**ʿĀlī**) and every hemistich imaginary (**Khiyālī**).[37]

This poem is a dazzling tribute to the masters of the Persian tradition who have had an impact on the nascent Urdu literary culture. It is perhaps also meant to function as a quiz of sorts, testing the listener/reader's ability to identify as many names as possible.

Mapping the different ways that poets used the device of the catalogue of poets supplies us with useful data for a broader study of canon formation and reception of classical Persian poets at various points in history. Such verses not only allow poets to display their familiarity with the classical literary tradition and place themselves in it, but they also provide an inclusive role for the audience whose knowledge of the canon is tested throughout, as is the poet's rhetorical prowess. There was a certain aesthetic enjoyment of the punning and allusions in the poems as well, as there is for us today when we read these poems. It is also seen that men of letters thought in terms of categories of literary genres and forms from an early date, which facilitated choosing the 'best poet' in each of them. As the Persianate world expanded to its greatest extent to include the Iranian lands, Central and South Asia, and Ottoman dominions, and then shrank again over time, poets continuously engaged with their literary past and their own position in the present world. The existence of the 'roll-call' of Persian poets suggests a continuity in the long literary history, with intertextuality being at the core, in which each generation of poets received the past, but ultimately it also served as a metaphor for composing poetry, for as ʿAṭṭār had said, the whole world is a poem.

[37] *Kullīyāt-i Valī*, ed. Nurūl Ḥasan Hāshmī, Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Urdu Akademi, 1989, *ghazal* 391, p. 299.

Bibliography

ʿAṭṭār, Farīd al-Dīn, *Mūṣībat-nāma*, ed. Nūrānī Viṣāl, Tehran: Zavvār, 1338/1959.
Bahār, Malik al-Shuʿarā, *Dīvān-i ashʿār*, Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1344–45/1965–66.
Browne, E.G., *A Literary History of Persia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951.
Clinton, J.W., 'Esthetics by Implication: What Metaphors of Craft Tell us about the "Unity" of the Persian Qasida,' in *Edebiyat* IV/1, 1979.
Dawlatshāh, *Tadhkirat al-shuʿarā*, ed. Muḥammad Ramazānī, Tehran: Padīdah Khāvar, 1366/1987.
Dīvān-i Farīd Isfahānī, ed. Muḥsin Kiyānī, Tehran: Anjuman-i Āthār va Mafākhir-i Farhangī, 1381/2002.
Dīvān-i Fayḍī, ed. H. Âhi, Tehran: Furūghī, 1362/1983.
Dīvān-i Manūchihrī-i Dāmghānī, ed. M. Dabīr-Siyāqī, Tehran: Zavvār, 1370/1991.
Futūḥ al-salāṭīn, ed. A.S. Usha, Madras: University of Madras, 1948.
Glünz, M., "Poetic tradition and social change: the Persian qasida in post-Mongol Iran," in *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa*, edited by Sr. Sperl and Chr. Shackle, Leiden: Brill 1996.
Gulchīn-Maʿānī, A., *Kārvān-i Hind*, Mashhad: Āstān-i Quds-i Razavī, 1369/1990.
Haug, W., *Vernacular Literary Theory in the Middle Ages: The German Tradition, 800–1300, in Its European Context*, trans. Joanna M. Catling, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
Jāmī, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, *Bahāristān*, ed. Ismāʿīl Ḥākimī, Tehran: Iṭṭilāʿāt, 1374/1995.
Karimi-Hakkak, A., *Recasting Persian Poetry: Scenarios of Poetic Modernity in Iran*, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1995.
Kullīyāt-i Valī, ed. Nurūl Hasan Hāshmī, Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Urdu Akademi, 1989.
Landolt, H., "ʿAṭṭār, Sufism and Ismailism," in *ʿAttār and the Persian Sufi Tradition: The Art of Spiritual Flight*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn and Christopher Shackle, London: I.B. Tauris, 2006.
Losensky, P.E., "The Allusive Field of Drunkenness": Three Safavid-Moghul Responses to a Lyric by Bābā Fighānī, in *Reorientations/Arabic and Persian Poetry*, ed. Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.
——, *Welcoming Fighānī: Imitation and Poetic Individuality in the Safavid-Mughal Ghazal*, Costa Mesa: Mazda, 1998.
Luṭf ʿAli Beg Ādhar, *Ātashkada*, ed. Hasan Sādāt Nāṣirī (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1336–78/1957–99), v. IV.
Masīr-i Ṭālibī, ed. Ḥusayn Khadīvjam, Tehran: Inqilāb-i Islāmī, 1363/1984.
Meisami, J.S., *Medieval Persian Court Poetry*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.
Miniatures Illuminations of Amir Hosrov Dehlevi's Works, Tashkent: Academy of Sciences of the Uzbek SSR, 1983.
Robinson, C., "*Ubi Sunt*: Memory and Nostalgia in Taifa Court Culture," in *Muqarnas* 15 1998.
Safā, Z.A., *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Farīd Esfarāyenī.
Schimmel, A., *A Two-Colored Brocade: The Imagery of Persian Poetry*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992.
Sharma, S., "Amir Khusraw and the Genre of Historical Narratives in Verse," in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* XXII 1–2, 2002.
Sulṭan Valad, *Dīvān-i Sulṭān Valad*, ed. Saʿīd Nafīsī, Tehran: Rūdakī, 1338/1959.
The Cambridge History of English and American Literature in 18 Volumes, eds. A.W. Ward et al., New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1907–21, Volume VII. Cavalier and Puritan, XI. Jacobean and Caroline Criticism, § 10. The Elizabethan "roll-call". http://www.bartleby.com/217/1110.html (25 September 2008).

THE ORIGINS OF THE *MUNĀẒARA* GENRE IN NEW PERSIAN LITERATURE[1]

F. Abdullaeva

The starting point of my interest in this genre was the study of the unique manuscript of the Anthology of Persian poetry from the Bodleian Library.[2] This manuscript is remarkable for several reasons; one being that it contains the only copy of the so-called fifth *munāẓara* of Asadī Tūsī,[3] the Debate between the Arab and the Iranian,[4] which has received

---

[1] I thank G.J. van Gelder and Ch. Melville for taking their time reading the draft of this paper and making invaluable suggestions.

[2] Bodleian Library Ms. Elliott 73. The title and the name of the author are not mentioned in the manuscript, but were identified by one of its previous owners, Sir Gore Ouseley, who wrote in Persian inside the front cover: *Daqāʾiq al-ashʿār* by ʿAbd al-Wahhāb. In his *Catalogue of the Persian, Turkish, Hindustani and Pushtu manuscripts in the Bodleian Library*, Oxford, 1889, no. 1333, Hermann Ethé suggests that the author could be ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Bukhārī Dawlatābādī (d. 1190/1766), who compiled a *Tazkira-i Bīnazīr*. In the chapter dedicated to the *Tadhkira-i Bīnazīr*, Aḥmad Gulchīn Maʿānī mentions the Bodleian Ms. as a *jung*, with reference to the copy of *Muʾnis al-aḥrār* of Muḥammad b. Badr al-Jājarmī from the Tehran University library. He also mentions the opinion of Mīrzā Muḥammad Qazvīnī, who thought that at least half of the Bodleian *Daqāʾiq al-Ashʿār* was borrowed from the *Muʾnis al-aḥrār* (A.G. Maʿānī, *Tārīkh-i tazkirahā-i Fārsī*, jild-i 1, Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Tihrān, 1/1236 (Ganjīna-i fihrist-u kitābshināsī, 12), Tehran, 1929, 200–1).

[3] In the past, some doubt has been expressed about the identity of Asadī Tūsī, thought by Hermann Ethé to be two separate authors, father and son (H. Ethé, "Über persische Tenzonen," in *Verhandlungen des fünften internationalen Orientalisten-Congresses*, Berlin, 1882, II/1, 48–9). Constantin Chaykin, however, demonstrated that there was only one Asadī (К.И.Чайкин, Асади-старший и Асади-младший: Фердовси 934–1034, Leningrad, 1934, 119–161), and since then this has been the common opinion among scholars (F. de Blois, *Persian literature. A bio-bibliographical survey*, vol. V, Poetry of the pre-Mongol period, London, Routledge 2004, 77–8; J. Khaleghi-Motlagh, "Asadī Tūsī," in *Majalla-i Dānishgāh-i Adabiyāt-u ʿUlūm-i Insānī-i Dānishgāh-i Firdawsī*, Mashhad, 1977, 643–678; 1978, 68–130). However some still consider that there were two authors with the same name (Dr F. Mujtabāʾī, see N. Pourjavady, *Zabān-i ḥāl dar ʿIrfān-u adabīyāt-i pārsī*, Tehran, 2006, 99 n. 11). F. Abdullaeva, "The Bodleian manuscript of Asadi Tusi's Debate between an Arab and a Persian: its place in the transition from ancient debate to classical panegyric", in: *Iran, Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies*, vol. XLVII (2009), pp. 69–95.

[4] Ms. Elliott 73, ff. 233r–234v, 236r. Asadī Tūsī (ca. 1010–ca. 1070) is known as the author of five debates: *Munāẓara-i rumḥ-u qaws*, (the Debate between Lance and Bow) and *Munāẓara-i āsmān-u zamīn* (Debate between Heaven and Earth), *Munāẓara-i musalmān-u gabr* (Debate between the Muslim and the Zoroastrian), *Munāẓara bā ʿArab kunad ba faẓl-i ʿajam* (Debate between the Arab and the Iranian) and *Munāẓara-i Shab-u Rūz* (Debate between Night and Day).

surprisingly mixed attention from the scholars, ranging from deliberate neglect to exclusive interest.[5]

Contents of the *Munāẓara* in Brief

The poem is a typical debate between an Arab and an Iranian (technically, *ʻajam* means simply a non-Arab, but it is clearly applied here, as usual, to an Iranian), each of whom tries to prove that he is better. But the peculiarities start from the very first bayt. We see that the Iranian is actually the poet himself,[6] and he tells the story as if it were a real event in his own life:

روزی من وجوقی عرب جلد وسخندان بودیم به بزم از می خوش و خندان

> Once upon a time I and several Arabs, fast and eloquent in speech
> Were at a nobleman's party, happy and joyful from wine. . . .

At first everything is fine, they all enjoy each other's company, jokes and music. But when alcohol takes its toll one of the Arabs suddenly shouts: *ʿajam chīst?! Fakhr aḥl-i ʿarab-rā rasad ay ablah-i nādān*—What is an Iranian? Glory belongs to Arabs only, you, ignorant idiot! This starts a monologue of 21 bayts, in which the Arab contestant mentions all the advantages of his people, such as their religion, language, skills, crafts and features of national character in particular hospitality, courage and generosity. Then comes the turn of the poet to answer, and his part con-

---

[5] Both Ethé ("Über persische Tenzonen," pp. 48–135) and Riḍā Qulī Khān Hidāyat (*Majmaʿ al-fusaḥā*, Tehran, 1878, I, 110) chose not to print it in their editions of Asadī's *munāẓaras*. Ethé published three of Asadī's debates using the text in the Bodleian library. He considers the debate under discussion to be the earliest one (Ethé, "Über persische Tenzonen," p. 70). Riḍā Qulī Khān Hidāyat's neglect may be due to the fact that the poem existed in only one copy, which he could consider to be rather suspicious. Bertels's supposition was that they both thought that the quality of the poem was not good enough to ascribe it to Asadī. E. Wagner followed Ethé in ignoring these two poems, but gave no reason for doing so (see his entry Munāẓara, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*). Nevertheless it then attracted special attention from C. Salemann and E. Bertels (Е.Э.Бертельс. Пятое муназере Асади Тусского. История литературы и культуры Ирана. Избранные труды. М., 1988, pp. 207–241) and Dj. Khaleghi-Motlagh published his text (together with the other four *munāẓaras*) in 1978 in the *Journal of Mashhad University* ("Asadī Tūsī," op. cit.). More recently, N. Pourjavady has published fragments of all Asadī's *munāẓaras* (*Zabān-i ḥāl*, pp. 430, 444, 527, 627–632).

[6] Obviously Asadī plays both roles, first putting on the mask of the Arab and then taking it off. The part that he is performing on behalf of the Arabs helps to reveal his sound knowledge and sincere interest in Islamic and pre-Islamic Arab history and culture.

sists of 80 *bayts*. His long monologue is invaluable due to the information the poet mentions in his arguments, covering all fields of human life from dress fashion to gastronomy, with the main focus on religion.

In quite a rude way he abuses and accuses his opponents of uncivilized customs, such as eating lizards, insects and mice, smelling of camel excrement, murdering newly born girls and selling the children of their female slaves. He boasts of Iran's natural resources, literature and poets, mentioning Rūdakī as the author of a divan of 180,000 *bayts* (!) as well as ʿUnṣurī, ʿAsjadī and probably Kisāʾī,[7] but without a single hint of Firdawsī: even when he mentions the stories of Rustam, Sām, Bizhan and of course Garshasp.

The poem has a very peculiar conclusion: having expressed these numerous decisive arguments, which were bound to bring victory to the author and humiliate his opponents, the poet then suddenly proposes peace: he says we are both Muslims who, according to the order of God, are like brothers. We should not pay so much attention to our material life, we are equal before God, and we should remember that we will have nothing but our good deeds and faith on the Day of Resurrection.

After a couple of *bayts* praising Islamic virtues, the author moves on to express the main purpose of the poem (*qaṣd*): praise of two Muḥammads. Thanks to one of them the Kaʿba is flourishing, and thanks to the other, whose name is *ʿamīd* Muḥammad Abū Jaʿfar, the Mashhad of Nuqān[8] [is flourishing] (*bayts* 105–6).

This is the end of the text published by Bertels, but it is followed by another 14 *bayts* of praise, the very last of which contains the text's final surprise: the poet mentions another dedicatee, *Khwāja* Abū Naṣr. Khaleghi-Motlagh suggests he should be identified as the Amir of Justan and probably also his son: *Ba khwāja Abū Naṣr-i ʿazīz-u pisar-at shād*. . ., who can probably be identified as the young *amīr* (?) Shams ad-Dīn, with the *kunya* Abu ʾl-Maʿālī and the *laqab* Tāj al-Mulk.[9]

So we have three dedicatees in one poem! Khaleghi-Motlagh attempted to provide a very detailed account of the *mamdūḥ*s / dedicatees in all

[7] Not clear from the manuscript; it could be: *kasān-ē ki*—those from [other parts of the country].

[8] Ṭūs consisted of two parts, Ṭabarān and Nuqān (V. Minorsky, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), s.v. Ṭūs; Bertels, op. cit., p. 226).

[9] The name of Abū Naṣr's son was taken from the *musammaṭ*, which is ascribed to Asadī again only in the Bodleian manuscript of *Daqāʾiq al-ashʿār*. Other anthologies attribute this *musammaṭ* to Qatrān, for which reason it is usually included in his *Dīvān*: Khaleghi-Motlagh, "Asadī Ṭūsī," pp. 658–9.

Asadī's *munāẓaras*. In his article he suggests that Abū Naṣr could be either the ruler of Justan himself, or his *vazīr*.[10] In this case, praise of his son, and another *vazīr, Siyyīd* Abu Jaʿfar Muḥammad *khwāja ʿamīd* Mashhadī, would not be so surprising. However, I support Bertels' suggestion that this poem was written in Asadī's native Ṭūs (or probably his birthplace, Nuqān), as the reference to Muḥammad Abū Jaʿfar's patronage of Mashhad is otherwise rather inexplicable. This would also explain why the quality of the poem betrays the hand of a rather inexperienced author.[11]

Two Genres or One?

In the brief résumé of the *munāẓara* given above, we see that it contains several elements that are associated with the panegyric—the debate itself, and the dedication to a contemporary figure, the patron, at the end. As Asadī's work is the first to display such features in a mature form, it raises the question of the earlier development of the genre and its relationship with the *qaṣīda*: what is the difference between the two literary forms, why and how could they be combined together, and finally, are they two separate genres historically, or should we follow the definition of Persian poetics, saying simply that *munāẓara* is a kind of *qaṣīda*?

Going back to the earlier examples of the *munāẓara* genre, it seems that the origins of the *munāẓara* and *qaṣīda* are the same. The *qaṣīda* gradually incorporated poems of different purpose with one main aim: to praise or to mock a targeted person. For this reason we identify as *qaṣīdas* the poetry of *madḥ* (praise), *fakhr* (self-praise) and *hajv/hijā* (anti-praise / satire) not to mention elegy, which is the best expression of the idea of 'le roi est mort, vive le roi!'[12] If *qaṣīda* is indeed the collective term for *madḥ, fakhr and hijā*, the *munāẓara* by Asadī under discussion actually is all three in one in the final stage of its development.

This should be clarified again by pointing out that the literary form of *qasīda* was borrowed from Arabic literary tradition into Persian, already

[10] Ibid., p. 667; C.E. Bosworth, *Islamic dynasties* (revised Russian translation), Moscow, 1971, p. 127.

[11] Bertels, Пятое муназира, pp. 226–7.

[12] The main body of a standard *marthīya* (elegy) usually contains a description of poet's grief and sorrow and praise of the late king, with a detailed list and description of his qualities. In the finale the author mentions the name of the new king, who is actually already substituting for the previous *mamdūḥ*, sometimes even surpassing him in his qualities. But of course the elegy could be written in memory of a friend, teacher, or other official.

having fully shaped functions, the main one of which was praise, and the form of a poem.[13] *Munāẓara* as a rhetorical procedure functioned mostly in the form of *qaṣīda*, i.e. poetic panegyric, but could also take the form of a *ghazal*, or a *rubāʿī* as we shall see later.[14]

However, some of the pre-Islamic, ancient literary debates did not have the main feature of a *qaṣīda*, namely the open praise of the patron; the debate merely ending when the author considered that it was obvious whose side was winning. I therefore prefer to think of the *qaṣīda* and *munāẓara* as originally two different genres, which combined into one. To be able to speak about the difference between the two genres we should first identify the features of the *munāẓara*.

In his article, "The Conceit of Pen and Sword", G.J. van Gelder gives a very good definition of literary debate, which he formulated for the Arabic material.[15] The description coincides in detail with a typical Persian *munāẓara*, with the distinction that the Persian ones are all poems and that the judge could be a third party, obviously expressing the opinion of the author, but not necessarily named.[16]

The number of participants can vary, the simplest structure being when two contestants participate in a verbal battle, trying to justify their superiority over the rival using many different arguments; there is no judge at the end to nominate the winner, and the debate hardly recalls a dialogue: the participants have only one chance to say what they want, with all the arguments piled up at once. For this reason, the weaker debater starts and

---

[13] See Charles-Henri de Fouchecour, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Iran v: (2) Classical Persian literature in Persian Literature, p. 419.

[14] This is very close to one of the panegyric functions of the oldest full-fledged *munāẓara maqāma* in Arabic, one of the best examples of which could be the debate by Aḥmad b. Burd al-Aṣghar (first half of 11th century), recently translated by G.J. van Gelder (in press).

[15] "It may be circumscribed here as a text in prose, often rhymed, or in poetry, in which two or more contestants, often objects or concepts, are represented as speaking in turn and proclaiming their own superiority and the inferiority of the other by means of praise and blame. Rhetorical persuasion may alternate or combine with logical argumentation, and quiet reasoning with violent vituperation. Additional optional elements include an introduction in which the situational context or the occasion for the dispute is given, and a conclusion in which a judgment is pronounced by an arbiter, who may be the author, or the dedicatee. The conflict may end either undecided, or with a clear victory of one of the contestants, or with the reconciliation." (G.J. van Gelder. "The Conceit of Pen and Sword: on an Arabic Literary Debate" in *Journal of Semitic Studies*, xxxii/2, Autumn 1987, pp. 329–60, 330).

[16] For example, in the debate between the Cup and the Water-Pipe, the judge was a Serving Table, who was not given any features of either a dedicatee or an author, see "Jang-i Jām-u Qalyān (the Debate between a Goblet and a Water-pipe)," in Сказки попугая. Спор чашки с кальяном. Сост. В.А.Жуковский, СПб., 1901, pp. 22–23.

the stronger concludes the dispute on a very high note, so that nobody would have any doubt about to whom to give the prize and the praise. However, more sophisticated structures already existed in the earliest examples, as shown by Sumerian literature (see below).

A Brief History of the Debate Genre in the East

The evolution of the genre, so far as we can see it, went through two main stages: the earliest evidence from antiquity in almost all languages of the Near and Middle East (Sumerian, Akkadian, Egyptian, Aramaic, Syriac, Middle Persian or Pahlavi, and Arabic) represents the debate between two sides. The range of opponents juxtaposed against each other does not have any visible restrictions: they can represent different natural phenomena and seasons (summer and winter, months of the year),[17] belong to the same class of objects (ladder and staircase), can represent flora and fauna (goat and palm tree, as in the below-mentioned Parthian/Pahlavi text, or grain and sheep, as in the Sumerian one),[18] they can be different plants (rose and narcissus), or different animals (sheep and goat) or birds (owls and nightingales), or birds and animals (dogs and cocks), countries or geographical places (Egypt and Syria, East and West), even more abstract ideas, such as human features (miserliness and generosity), or literature (prose and poetry), and parts of the human body (mouth and anus). One can see no particular difference between the behaviour of personified birds, flowers, animals or objects and human beings, as in the debates of the Lovers of Girls and Boys, Blacks and Whites, Arabs and non-Arabs. The mythological mentality traced here indicates the very ancient origin of this literary genre, which is reflected for example in the Sanskrit Animal Fables, continued in the Arabo-Persian *Kalīla and Dimna*.[19]

The early Middle Ages provides another explanation for the existence of this genre, as a reflection of the parley common in single combat, in which two usually aristocratic representatives of two opposing armies

[17] S.P. Brock, "A dispute of the Months and Some related Syriac texts," in *JSS* 30, 1985, pp. 181–211. See more bibliography on this subject in G.J. van Gelder, "The Conceit of Pen and Sword," 333.

[18] The Electronic text. Corpus of Sumerian Literature online (http://www-etcsl.orient.ox.ac.uk).

[19] Ethé, "Über persische Tenzonen," pp. 55–9, 74–5; Van Gelder, "Sword and pen," p. 334; E. Wagner, *Die Arabische Rangstreitdichtung und ihre Einordnung in die allgemeine Literaturgeschichte*, Kl., Jhrg. 1962, No. 8, pp. 435–76.

would perform a verbal battle before the actual one. Their weaponry was their skill in eloquence, their audience was their soldiers, and the result of their verbal combat could be treated not simply as a rehearsal, inspiring soldiers and their generals to victory, but might itself have half decided the outcome of the battle for both armies.

In the Arabic Bedouin tradition this seems to be developed into a parley between the representatives of two tribes, tribal poets, mastering their skills in public before the battle. Gradually, in times of peace, these performances would move to the bazaar, where the poets would expect a rather similar reaction from their audience. The history of the genre shows that this is one of the most ancient surviving literary genres, found in literatures as early as those of Sumer and Babylon.[20]

Unlike the situation with the Arabic material, there is little difficulty in tracing the debate in Persian literature directly back to the pre-Islamic period, as witnessed by the well-known Buz ud Drakht-i Asūrīk ([The Debate between] the Goat and the Assyrian / Date Palm Tree),[21] a poem[22] in the Parthian language,[23] written in Book Pahlavi script[24]—we can only regret that we do not have more material for drawing comparisons.[25]

The importance of the debate between the Goat and the Assyrian tree is determined by the contesting parties, who may represent the opposition between two faiths, with the goat representing Zoroastrianism and the palm tree representing the pagan religions of Assyria and Babylonia,

---

[20] J.P. Asmussen, "Ein iranisches Wort, ein iranischer Spruch und eine iranische Märchenformel als Grundlage historischer Forschungen," in *Temenos* 3, 1968, pp. 7–18.

[21] BNF Supplément Persan 1216; published facsimile by E. Blochet: "Textes pehlevis inédits relatifs à la religion mazdéenne," in *Revue de l'Histoire de religions*, 32, 1895, pp. 18–23. See also J.M. Unvala, "Buz ud Draxt-i Asurīk," in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, vol. 2, No. 4, 1923, pp. 637–67. See also Ch.J. Brunner, "The Fable of the Babylonian Tree Part I: Introduction" in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 39, No. 3, July 1980, pp. 191–202, especially p. 191, n. 1 about the name of the tree. See also Vogelzang, "Some questions about the Akkadian disputes," pp. 48–9, regarding its possible Akkadian precursor, the debate between the Palm and the Tamarisk.

[22] E. Benveniste was the first to identify the text as a poem, see his "Le texte du *Draxt Asūrīk* et la versification pehlevie," in *JA* 218, 1930, pp. 193–225. See also G. Lazard, "Le mètre du Draxt asûrîg," in *Orientalia Suecana*, vol. LI–LII (2002–2003), pp. 327–336.

[23] C. Bartholomae was the first who identified the language of the debate as Parthian, see his *Zur Kenntnis der mitteliranischen Mundarten* IV, Sb. der Heidel-berger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-hist. Kl., Abh. 6, Heidelberg, 1922, pp. 23–8.

[24] W.B. Henning, "A Pahlavi Poem," in *BSOAS*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 1950, pp. 641–648; G. Lazard, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* s.v. Poetry, iv. The Poetics of Middle Persian. For full bibliography see A. Tafazzoli, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Draxt-i Assurig, pp. 547–9.

[25] Even this debate is an incomplete text (missing the beginning) of about 120 verses.

in which the cult of the tree formed an important part.[26] However it is more likely that they represent the contrast between pastoral life, symbolized by the goat, and the agricultural life, symbolized by the palm tree,[27] as in the Sumerian 'Debate between Grain and Sheep.[28]

The question of the origin of the genre in Arabic and Persian literature would not be so complex if the two traditions had not been so much intertwined at the stage of the so-called New or Classical period of their development. For Arabic, this period starts mostly with the beginning of the Muslim era, whereas for Persian it starts only with the "Renaissance" of Persian literary culture after two centuries of silence ('non-existence' other-existence under the lid of the Arabic linguistic and partly cultural domination) and the change in alphabet from Pahlavi to Arabographic.

Munāẓara in Classical Arabic and New Persian Literature: Who Borrowed from Whom, or a Shared Literary Culture

There are several opinions on the origin of the Arabic *munāẓara*, which were discussed by various authors of the proceedings of the International Symposium and a Workshop on the Literary Debate in Semitic and Related Literatures, held in Groningen in 1989.[29] There were different evaluations of the influence of *maqāmas*, mostly compiled in *sajʿ*,[30] and of the Koran.[31]

One view is of a development independent from other previous literary traditions, reflecting the rather Arabo-centric idea that there was a straight and continuous line from early Arabic literature to the Abbasid

---

[26] S. Smith, "Notes on 'The Assyrian Tree'," in *BSO(A)S* 4, 1926–28, pp. 69–76.

[27] M. Rūḥ al-Amīnī, "Justārī mardum-shināsī az manẓūma-i Dirakht-i āsūrīg," in Y. Mahdavī and Ī. Afshār, eds., *Haftād maqāla. Armaghān-i farhangī ba Duktur Ghulām-Ḥusayn Saddīqī*, Tehran, 1369/1990, pp. 323–36.

[28] Tafazzoli, Draxt, pp. 548.

[29] *Dispute poems and Dialogues in the Ancient and Medieval Near East: Forms and Types of Literary Debates in Semitic and Related Literatures*, ed. G.J. Reinink and H.L.J. Vanstiphout, Leuven, 1991.

[30] John Mattock says: "It (*munāẓara*) is really so closely related to, and perhaps directly descended from, the *maqāmah* as to constitute a subclass of the latter. It cannot, frankly, be said to be an important genre within Arabic literature. The authors from whose hands we possess *munāẓarat* are in many cases obscure and, in others, not those who are noted principally for their "literary" writings, however distinguished they may be in other spheres." (J.N. Mattock, "The Arabic Tradition: Origin and developments," in *Dispute poems and Dialogues*, p. 163).

[31] Van Gelder, "Sword and pen," pp. 329–30.

period, at which time it acquires extraneous accretions from other literary cultures. The second is that it was borrowed, influenced by neighbours and inherited from predecessors, by the eighth century, when there was a great intrusion of Arabic and Arabic culture into the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia, Persia and Syria. The first specimens of *munāẓara* appeared only in the 9th century and what is more peculiar, in their fully developed shape.

The first approach was propagated by Wagner,[32] and is discussed at length by Van Gelder, who argues cogently against it, while not wishing to eliminate the indigenous Arab components of the debate.[33] The mature appearance of the Arab *munāẓara* form after a lengthy gestation is also the most striking point for Persian literature. Having appeared, or rather re-appeared, in New Persian literature two centuries after it did so in Arabic, the Persian *munāẓara* already had all the features characteristic of its mature period.

It would seem rather natural that the reappearance of the debate genre in New Persian Literature came as a direct borrowing from Arabic Classical literature, together with the whole complex of the Arabic literary tradition. The question is why this happened only in the 11th century and already in such a mature state.[34]

One can suggest that there were other examples, preceding the final step in the evolution of the genre, which however haven't survived. This would also be the natural result of such an evolution: connoisseurs kept the best, abandoning less interesting works. But if we talk about the final step of the evolution, what should we consider as the earliest steps?

If we agree that the genre of *munāẓara* was borrowed into the New Persian literature from Arabic in 11th century in the shape that it had already acquired by the 9th century, we could perhaps also agree that as the development of the genre happened in the 9th–10th centuries, when the Arab dominance over the conquered Iranian territories penetrated the substrate cultures. The most likely direct influence on the Arabic model is an Iranian one. Furthermore, it is very unlikely that Iran's

[32] Die Arabische Rangstreitdichtung, p. 468.

[33] Van Gelder, "Sword and pen," pp. 335–6.

[34] I thank G.J. van Gelder for pointing out that one of the striking differences between the Arabic and the Persian *munāẓara* tradition is the fact that the Arabs preferred the *maqāma* form (in ornate prose) and the Persians poetry; this must be connected with the Arabs' aversion to, and the Persians' preference for, narrative verse, which reached its peak in the form of *mathnavī*, or long epic poems, like the *Shāh-nāma*.

literary traditions could have disappeared altogether, however dormant they might have appeared.

We do not have examples of debate literature in Old Persian. In fact we do not have any secular literature *per se* of the Achaemenid period. But does this mean that there was none? On the other hand can we be absolutely sure, following the common opinion expressed by Ph. Huyse, that until the late Sasanian period, pre-Islamic Iran was mainly an oral society,[35] influenced by the bias against poetry displayed by the Zoroastrian clergy, who adhered for a long time to an oral tradition of transmitting religious texts.[36] Later, during the Arab invasion, the Zoroastrian clergy felt responsible for preserving the religious texts, which is obviously the reason why the surviving texts of that period are predominantly religious.

The similar rivalry between poetic and religious texts, caused by their almost equal influence on human nature, can be seen in the polemics of Muḥammad with his audience in the earliest Sūrahs of the Koran, where he is explaining the difference between prophet and poet.[37] From this comes the opinion in early Islam that poetry is the Koran of Satan.[38]

The remaining evidences of the material culture of the pre-Islamic period reflect the great receptiveness of the Iranians: Persepolis is the best example of the imaginative use of the achievements of the peoples incorporated into the Empire. The Achaemenid civilization was a shared treasure for all its peoples; the same could be true of the literature, which hasn't survived. Can we imagine that the shared literary tradition existed in the multinational cultural milieu, but not necessarily in one of the Iranian languages? This by no means suggests that speakers of the ancestors of the New Persian language ever stopped using it to such an extent that it would require artificial revival.

The main barriers to the gradual development of the language were changes in the script.[39] The main help in the process of transition from one stage to another, making these intermissions smoother and less

---

[35] Philip Huyse, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Iran viii. Persian literature (1) Pre-Islamic, p. 410.

[36] M. Boyce. "The Parthian gōsan and Iranian minstrel tradition," in *JRAS*, 1957, pp. 10–45; J.T.P. de Bruijn, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2) s.v. Iran vii.–literature, p. 54.

[37] Koran: 36.69, 69.41, 21.5, 37.36, 52.30.

[38] J.Ch. Bürgel, *The Feather of Simurgh. The "Licit Magic" of the Arts in Medieval Islam*, New York and London, 1988, p. 11.

[39] The change of script has always had a stronger political and ideological element than purely cultural, when the nation could be cut off from its origins (as in the case of Turkey), unless the written heritage is transferred to the new script (as in case of the cyrillic-based Central Asian languages). The transitional period between the use of the previous script

painful for society, was provided by translations from the main or 'state' language to others, very often back to the languages in which the literature had originally been created.

As for the genre of the literary debate, despite being rather widespread in the Ancient world, it was not as popular as one might expect in New Persian literature, and when it did enter the literature, it did not do so in its pure form. It was already impregnated with the main features of another genre, which was dominant during the whole classical period: namely the *qaṣīda*, with the very well developed panegyric part placed in the finale, where the poet introduces the name and the description of *mamdūḥ*, dedicatee.

It seems that having been cultivated in the 'greenhouse' of the Iranian literary tradition, in the fertile soil of the New Persian language (covered by the lid of the Arabic linguistic and more general cultural domination), the genre already had within it the living seeds of self-destruction, or rather the hybrid seeds of another genre, more popular and sustainable, which later devoured the *munāẓara*.[40]

Expressed in another way, we could say that the marriage of the old tenzone and the young *qaṣīda* resulted in a baby whose nature is inherited from his young (Arabic) mother, with rather a strong link to the old (Iranian) father. So we have a *qaṣīda*, which formally is organized as a debate and only in the finale reveals its 'qasidian' features. At the same time, the *munāẓara* had a younger sister—*lughz* (riddle), whose usually long introduction aims to puzzle the reader/addressee and whose conclusion dissolves the riddle, deciphering the *mamduḥ* in a powerful apotheosis.

Origins, or Pure Literary Debate Literature

Compared with the single Parthian/Pahlavi "Goat and the Palm tree," there are several surviving debates in Sumerian, which give a vivid picture of the maturity of the genre in ancient Sumer. In fact the Sumerian

---

and the new one would usually create a gap in the continuity of a literary tradition inside even a monolingual milieu.

[40] It would be fair to mention that the genre of *munāẓara* has not disappeared without a trace. It still exists in Modern Persian literature, especially in poetry following the rules of *ʿarūḍ* i.e., Parvin E'tesami.

debates already contain all the features that were preserved, developed, or lost in their later versions.

First of all they start with a rather detailed narrative in the preamble, where the author explains the circumstances in which the debate started and what caused it. For example, the 'Debate between Grain and Sheep' begins with the description of the life of gods and humans in the very early days, attributing the origin of the debate to the times when "the people did not know about eating bread, they did not know about wearing clothes; they went about with naked limbs in the Land, like sheep they ate grass with their mouths and drank water from the ditches." After watching this, the gods Enki and Enlil created two sisters, Sheep and Grain, on the Holy Mound and sent them to the Land. The world was changed due to them, and the gods were happy. Once they drank a lot of sweet wine and sweet beer and started a quarrel in the dining hall. This debate is already a dialogue: Grain started boasting, Sheep replied, Grain added some more arguments, Sheep answered again and Grain as well. At this stage Enki addressing Enlil gives his verdict: "Sheep and Grain should be sisters and stand together but Grain shall be the greater. Let Sheep fall on her knees before Grain, let her kiss her feet . . ." Then we see a very important feature—Enki concludes: "From sunrise till sunset may the name of Grain be praised . . . Whoever has silver, whoever has jewels, whoever has cattle, whoever has sheep shall take a seat at the gate of whoever has grain, and pass his time there . . . Sheep is left behind and Grain comes forward, praise be to Father Enki!" Here we have of course the debate between two forces, in a society changing from the cattle breeding state to the agricultural one. The change is legitimised and sanctioned by the supreme God Enki.[41]

In another debate between Summer and Winter, the origin of both personages is explained in the introduction also through divine intervention—they are two sons of the god Enlil: Enlil copulated with the Earth and there was a roar like a bull's; at night the hill opened her loins, she bore Summer and Winter as smoothly as fine oil. They grew up and started to work hard, cultivating the land, producing cattle and grain, bringing harvest of plenitude. The quarrel started once when they were resting after a very tiring day, and Winter started to rebuke his brother that he did not recognize his labour appropriately. They started to argue, though Summer "acted as if in a friendly manner to the insults that Winter

[41] The opposite result of the Parthian/Pahlavi debate, when the Goat overwhelms the Palm Tree, may reflect its even more ancient origin, when the nomadic society was stronger than the new agricultural social structure.

had spoken to him." For a second time they started to argue on the day of the big festival, and when they both were about to start fighting, "like great bulls about to tear each other's horns" their father Enlil intervened, saying: Summer, my son! Winter controls all the life-giving waters of all the lands . . . how can you compare yourself to your brother?" After this he bowed to Winter and offered him a prayer and they spent a day at a succulent banquet . . . and they achieved harmony with each other . . . praise be to the Great Mountain, father Enlil!

This debate has also a very strong structure: with an introduction, the main part of the debate itself, and the conclusion where the verdict is given by God, for which he is praised. If we compare this with the Persian *munāẓara* of the 11th century, it is clear how much they have in common. The mythological mentality seen here not only points to the very ancient origin of this literary genre, but also links it to other literary traditions of personification of non-humans, as in the Sanskrit Animal Fables, continued in the *Kalīla and Dimna* cycle, or represented in the Koran by speaking mountains, heaven and earth,[42] thunder, and everything.[43]

We can therefore suggest that the genre evolved through many cultural and linguistic traditions, enriching itself but keeping its structure basically intact from its very origin. All the elements and personages are already present in the earliest Sumerian examples: the author, who introduces the situation, the two arguing counterparts, and the judge. The only and absolutely striking transformation to occur during the seven millennia can be associated with the figure of the judge.[44]

In the Sumerian debates the judge was the god, who in many cases was the creator of the contesting personages. In the earliest New Persian *munāẓara*s the god is replaced by the patron. So we can identify the debate and the *qaṣīda* as having the same origins, which through a gradual transformation, boosted by the formation of Classical Arabic poetry, developed into a genre more suitable for the new conditions of life. The genre of the literary debate in its pure form dissolved into other genres, which became more popular and came to replace it: *qaṣīda, ghazal*, and romantic epics.

---

[42] The debate between heaven and earth in particular was popular among other authors, see N. Purjavadī, p. 430.

[43] For more examples see van Gelder, "Sword and pen," p. 332.

[44] Ch. Brunner mentions the verbal contest in the Iranian tradition in the context of the judicial process, which links it with the didactic literature of so-called *andarz* genre (Ch. Brunner, The Fable of the Babylonian tree. Part I: Introduction, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 39, No. 3, July 1980, p. 193. F.B.J. Kuiper also discussed the ritual contests in the ancient Indian tradition in "The Ancient Aryan Verbal Contest," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 4, 1960, pp. 217–81.

Form of Dialogue in New Persian Poetry

The structure of a dialogue became very popular in Persian court poetry throughout the whole Classical period. The poets of the Ghaznavid court, especially such prominent panegyrists as ʿUnṣurī and Farrukhī, and later Ḥāfiẓ the master of the *ghazal*, actively used the figure *suʾāl-u javāb* (question and answer) in both *qaṣīda*s and *ghazal*s. Most of them represent a dialogue between a lover (in panegyrics—a poet) and the beloved (a patron).[45] However, some of them would follow the idea of a poet expressing his own doubts, arguing with himself or with some real or imagined conversant. One of the first and the most brilliant examples is Rūdakī's *Qaṣīda* on his old age, when Rūdakī is 'talking' to his young friend, whose name was probably Māhrūy.[46]

مرا سود و فرو ریخت سرچه دندان بود — نبود دندان لابد چراغ تابان بود . . .
چه نحس بود همانا که نحس کیوان بود — نه نحس کیوان بود و نه روزگار دراز
چو بود منت بگویم قضای یزدان بود . . .
همی چه دانی ای ماهروی مشکین موی — که حال بنده ازین پیش برچه سامان بود . . .

Every tooth, ah me! Has crumbled, dropped and fallen in decay!
Tooth it was—no? say rather, 'twas a brilliant lamp's bright ray;

Whose the fault? 'Twas surely Saturn's planetary rule, long lapse of days;
No the fault of Saturn 'twas not, not the long lapse of days;

What then? I will answer truly: "Providence which God displays" . . .
Oh thou moon faced, musky tressed one, how cans't thou e'er know or deem
What was once thy poor slave's station—how once held in high esteem? . . .[47]

[45] See Julia Scott Meisami's example of Farrukhī's panegyric dedicated to Amir Yusuf on the birth of his son: *Structure and Meaning in the Medieval Arabic and Persian poetry*, 217. It is also noticeable that the word Arabic word *ḥarīf*, borrowed into Persian was in heavy use in such poems in both meanings: enemy, rival and friend, beloved.

[46] *Māhrūy-i mishkīn -mūy*—"Musk-haired moon-face [youth]" could be of course a sequence of standard epithets for a beloved.

[47] Translation by A.V. William Jackson.

Pure anaphoric dialogue, where every new bayt or sometimes even *misrāʿ* has an accentuated incipit, like "Said he…, Said I", was very often used as an independent poem or a part of a bigger work, as, for example, in long epic poems, like the verbal battle of Farhād and Khusraw in Niẓāmī's *Khusraw-u Shīrīn*:[48]

نخستین بار گفتش کز کجائی — بگفت از دار ملک آشنائی
بگفت آنجا به صنعت در چه کوشند — بگفت اندوه خرند و جان فروشند
بگفتا جان فروشی داد و نیست — بگفت از عشقبازان این عجب نیست
بگفت از دل شدی عاشق بدنسان — بگفت از دل تو می گوئی من از جان
بگفتا عشق شیرین بر تو چونست — بگفت از جان شیرینم فزونست[49] …

First he asked: Where are you from?
Said he: From the land of love
Said he: What are they doing there?
Said he: They buy grief and sell their souls.
Said he: It is not good to sell your soul!
Said he: For those who are in love it is not surprising.
Said he: You fell in love in such a way with all your heart!
Said he: It is you who speak of "the heart", I [speak] of the soul
Said he: What is the love to Shīrīn for you
Said he: It is more than my sweet soul…

Sometimes even one *misrāʿ* can contain both a question and an answer, as in the *ghazal* by Ḥāfiẓ, starting with, 'Said I: "I grieve for you"; said he:

[48] Two other examples of debates incorporated into bigger *mathnavī* works, Maḥmūd ʿĀrifī's *Gū-yu Chawgān* and Badr al-Dīn Hilalī's *Shāh-u Gadā*, can be found in Ethé, "Uber Persischen Tenzonas," pp. 123–35.

[49] Niẓāmī, *Khamsa*, Tehran, s.a., p. 56.

"Your grief will end"…'[50] or even the whole dialogue, where the action is extremely compressed in such a masterpiece as the *dubaytī* ascribed to Rūdakī:

آمد برمن، که؟ یار، کی؟ وقت سحر ترسنده ز که؟ ز خصم، خصمش که؟ پدر
داد مش چی بوسه، بر کجا؟ بر لب تر لب بد؟ نه، چه بد؟ عقیق، چون بد؟ چو شکر

She came. Who? My beloved. When? At dawn.
She was frightened. By whom? By her enemy. Who was her enemy? Her father…
I gave her… What? A kiss. Where? On her juicy lips.
Were they lips? No! What was it? Cornelian. Like what? Like sugar.

The ability to tell a whole love story in five bayts was mastered by Farrukhī. In the following *ghazal*, he is talking to his beloved, who is leaving him in the first bayt and has left him by the last one, despite his complaints and oaths to God:

همی روی و من از رفتن تو ناخشود نگار روی منا تا مرا بدرود …
مرو که گر بروی با زجان من برود من از تو ناخشود و خدای از تو ناخشود[51]

You are leaving, I hate you leaving!
Oh, look at me to say at least goodbye…
Don't go! As if you do—my own soul will leave with you!
How unhappy I am with you, and so is God!

… تو رفتی و ز رفتن تو از غم تو خدای داند تا من چگونه خواهم بود

…You've left, and after you've left because of this longing for you
God knows what will become of me!

A good example of a dialogue between a human, here the poet himself, and a personified element of nature, which was also characteristic of Farrukhī's poetry, could be a fragment from his Sada *qaṣīda*, starting with

[50] Translation by J. Scott Meisami, *Structure*, p. 218.
[51] Farrukhī, *Dīvān*, ed. M.S. Dabīr Siyāqī, Tehran, 1378/1999, p. 435.

the rather standard description of the cruel beloved who has just left the poet (*biraft yār-i man-u man nizhand-u shifta-vār*…). Farrukhī in severe frustration goes to the garden, where the inhabitants of the garden are trying to cheer him up:

بنفشه گفت که گر یار تو بشد مگری بیاد گار دو زلفش مرا بگیر و بدار
چه گفت نرگس گفت ای ز چشم دلبر دور غم دو چشمش بر چشمهای من بگار[52]

The violet said: if your beloved has left, maybe
To replace her in your memory you'll take and keep me?
What did the daffodil say? She said: for the eyes of the friend who is far away
Accept my eyes for the grief her eyes [caused you]…

Then the poet talks to the cypress trees, which are as sympathetic as the flowers. In the middle of the dialogue Farrukhī is summoned to the court by a young courtier Jalīl, the son of *vazīr* Aḥmad Maymandī. His appearance changes the whole tone of the poem, transferring it from an elegiac *ghazal* to a march-like *qaṣīda* in praise of Jalīl:

دراین مناظره بودم که بازخواندمرا به پیش بحر ثنا گفتن شاه ابرار…

When I was talking he called me to him
to compile a praise in honour of the just king

[52] Farrukhī, *Dīvān*, p. 157.

Addressees of Debate Literature: From Bazaar to Court

There could be another criterion by which to identify the difference between the ancient debate and a *munāẓara* of the Muslim era: the audience. It is not difficult to understand for whom the Persian poems of the 11th century and later were written—the main target is of course a king and his entourage.

But who were the authors, the audience, and the purpose of the debate poems—Sumerian 'Goat and Grain', or Parthian/Pahlavi 'Goat and Assyrian Tree', and many others in Akkadian, Syriac, Greek, Arabic? Is it possible to give a universal identification for the genre? There have been given several definitions, such as "exercises in scholarly frivolity,"[53] "exercises in rhetorical skill."[54] However, it is obvious that the same form of a debate in the shape of a dialogue can have different purposes in particular cases and can be didactic, or entertaining, and ideally both. G.J. van Gelder supports the opinion of J.N. Mattock about the not very high status of the Arabic literary debate. Van Gelder suggests that for an author of the debate poem it was a matter of finding a way of escaping the odium of frivolity through either eulogistic rhetoric, or erudite learning, or homiletic piety.[55] It seems that it was already at that stage when the debate combined with the *qaṣīda* and entered the court, not through the secret back door as a part of jest's equipment but through the glorious front door as a splendid tool of the panegyrist. Its status was changed completely, and this seems to have happened at the Persian court. Before that the debate would live either in the bazaar square of a big and noisy Mesopotamian town, a school, or in the cell of a Syrian scholar, carefully choosing Biblical topics for his poem.[56] It is obvious that most of them, especially the earliest, were designed to be performed orally in public. In the Parthian poem we can even hear the words by means of which the author/declaimer was addressing the people gathered around to see the performance:

> Goat: O men, the tree of even dry wood, whose top was golden. . . .[57]

In the Akkadian debate literature the role of the audience must have been especially significant, even though according to Marianna E. Vogelzang,

---

[53] Mattock, "The Arabic Tradition," p. 163.

[54] Herman L.J. Vanstiphout, "Lore, Learning and levity in the Sumerian disputations," in *Dispute poems*, p. 24, ref. 5.

[55] Van Gelder, "Arabic Debates of Jest and Earnest," in *Dispute poems*, p. 209.

[56] Brock, "Syriac dispute poems," in *Dispute poems*, p. 114.

[57] Unvala, *Draxt i Assurīk*, p. 650.

"we do not possess a dispute in which it is stated that the contest was won by one of the speakers through royal decision during the performance at court or acclamation of the audience, in other words, the winner is the speaker most loudly applauded."[58]

It is a great pity that the only pre-Islamic Iranian debate[59] has reached us in a reduced version without the beginning,[60] where one would expect to find the explanation of why and how the debate started.[61] Only the two last surviving sentences of the preamble give the idea that both contestants were debating in the presence of people and introduced by a human author:

> . . . A tree stands grown up there in the land of Assyria.
> Its trunk is dry, its top is fresh, and its root resembles the [sugar] cane,
> Its fruit resembles the grape. It produces [such] sweet fruits!
> For the judgement of men that MY high tree contested with a goat [saying]:
> I am superior to thee in various things . . . .[62]

---

[58] Vogelzang, "Some questions about the Akkadian disputes," in *Dispute poems*, 56, notes that the endings of all the disputes are missing but that 'direct address to the audience is particularly appropriate to oral literature.'

[59] It seems that this debate has a long history. In Strabo's Geography there is a possible reference to the poem, which could be the origin of the Parthian debate about the Assyrian tree and the Goat: "There is said to be a Persian song in which 360 advantages of the palm tree are recited . . ." (Strabo, *The Geography*, ed. Horace Leonard Jones, London-New York, 1930, 214–5; J. Asmussen, "A Judeo-Persian precedence," 52. The number of 360 could link this "song" with the liturgic texts used for the calendar ceremonies, and later was influenced by the oral Mesopotamian version of the old Sumerian debate of Enkidu and Dumuzi, representing a farmer and a herdsman (Ch. Brunner, 196).

[60] According to E.W. West, *GIrPhil*, II, 119, 85 words out 800 were lost in the beginning; Unvala, Draxt i Assurīk, 637.

[61] In one of the early Arabic sources, namely al-Jāhiz, there could be found a hint that this debate happened at the reception of King Khusraw. In fact he speaks of a "representation (or even enactment?) of the contest between sheep and palm-tree before the Sasanian king: "One of the things by which the sheep may boast of being superior to the goat is the fact that the *tamthīl* (representation, enactment?) that took place before Kisrā, and the preference (of one above the other, *takhyīr*), was between ewe and palm tree, whereas the goat was not mentioned." In an older, very defective edition of this text one finds a bee (*naḥla*) instead of a palm-tree (*nakhla*), but this is to be rejected. The meeting of Kisrā with the Arabs al-Nuʿman b. Mundhir and Hajib b. Zarara is recorded in Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih's *Al-ʿIqd al-Farīd* (Al-Hayawān, 7 vols, Cairo, 1948–53, v. 5, 472; repr. Dār al-Kutub al-ʿArabī, 1983, ii, 4–21); thanks to G.J. van Gelder for this reference. The idea that this debate could be initiated by the king himself as a common element of the royal customs at the court could be supported by the beginning of another debate known in the Sumero-Accadian tradition, namely the Dispute between the Tamarisk and the Date Palm, which starts: "In the shadow of the tamarisk he (the king) arranged a banquet . . ." (W.G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*, Oxford, 1960, 150; J. Asmussen, "A Judeo-Persian precedence," 52).

[62] Unvala, Draxt i Assurīk, 641–2.

The finale, however, gives a very interesting picture of the end of the debate: the Goat finishes her long speech rather abruptly and leaves, celebrating her total victory, which would not be so obvious just from her arguments. There is no figure of the Judge, introduced to help to make the decision. It is made by the author himself:

> [Goat:] "... everybody uproots thee here, who is hungry", and the Goat went away in triumph.[63]

Further, there follows a passage that is extremely important for us: the author praises himself in the third person for compiling this debate:

> May he who has written [this] obtain ... good fame and steadfastness in the faith; may he himself live long! ... May he see the head of the enemy dead! ...

So this finale is a good indication that this work was produced for performing in public, any prepared or unprepared audience, who happened to be around. It is possible to imagine that the narrator would expect the appreciation of not only a king, who was most probably the main target of the performance, but of the bazaar audience as well, gathered on the main town square, so that the author/actor could introduce himself in the most favourable way at the end of the performance before passing the hat around.

How shall we interpret this part of the dispute? On one hand, it is a different, rather original way to finish, caused by the circumstances of its writing and performance; on the other, it is in fact the same idea of panegyric, here self-praise (*fakhr*), probably what later became identified as the place for the signature verse (*takhalluṣ*).

It seems that in Asadī's debates, and one in particular—between the Arab and the Iranian—the genre completed the full circle of its evolution, combining the characteristic features of being both didactic and entertaining, with an obvious preference for the first in this case. This *munāẓara* embraces all three elements: eulogistic rhetoric, erudite learning, and homiletic piety, which Van Gelder identified as typical for this genre in Arabic, with maybe rather limited frivolous contents.[64]

Another feature, which could be peculiar to the Persian cultural tradition, though borrowed from Arabic, can be seen in the final part of

---

[63] *Ibid.*, 666.

[64] Only the start of the *qasīda* could be treated rather frivolously: "this happened when we were sitting in a nice company, getting drunk ..."

the *munāẓara* under discussion. This is the *bayt* where the poet calls his patron a Man of the Pen and the Sword:

حری که شجاعت خطرافزود و سیاست از تیغ درافشانی و از کلک زرافشان

A nobleman whose courage increased danger [for enemies] and justice
By means of a shining sword and a gold-scattering pen

This double epithet, with the elegant decoration rhyming the attributes for *tīgh* (sword)—*dirafshān* (shining) and *kilk* (pen)—*zar-afshān* (scattering gold) could be a borrowing from Arabic poetry. This image is related to a very early source, like the sayings of Alexander the Great, which is difficult to attribute precisely: "This world's affairs are determined by two things only, and one of them is inferior to the other: they are the sword and the pen, and the sword is inferior to the pen."[65] These two things ruling the world are very often juxtaposed in Arabic literature, though with different results: sometimes the sword is winning, sometimes the pen, sometimes they are equal, probably depending on the particular situation in which the poet found himself—whether the military or civil power was dominant. This image was rather common, despite the fact that the first fully shaped literary debate of pen and sword in Arabic was contemporary to Asadī—it was written in Spain by Aḥmad b. Burd the Younger (d. 445/1053–4).

The combination of two qualities in one person also occurred in the Arabic tradition, but this seemed to be the exception rather than a common practice, as opposed to the Iranian tradition. Asadī's contemporary Qatrān uses the same image praising his patron:

خلف بود همیشه میان تیغ و قلم کنون به بخت ملک متفق شدند باهم

There was always rivalry between the sword and the pen
Now they have united in the good fortune of the king.[66]

Asadī's addressee in his *qaṣīda* is a representative of the old Iranian aristocracy, an educated knight—a man of pen and sword, both of which skills he learned from his childhood. This tradition of educating young

[65] Detailed bibliography see in G.J. van Gelder, "Pen and Sword," reference 29.
[66] Qaṭrān Tabrīzī, *Dīvān*, Tehran, 1362/1983, 23

aristocrats, supported by the literature known as 'Mirrors for Princes,' and surviving from pre-Islamic times, would include rather detailed manuals of the qualities a young noble must possess, the arts of using the sword and pen being the most important.[67]

Conclusion

To conclude, the twin peculiarities of the genre, or sub-genre, of *munāẓara* in the early period of Classical Persian literature—debate and panegyric—amalgamate into one and undergo a change of status. Asadī Ṭūsī, whose poems are the earliest surviving examples, should be accorded the most important role in this process.

Asadī's debate contained all the elements of the *qaṣīda*, developed in Arabic in the previous two centuries. Although his are the first examples to survive in New Persian, it is difficult to say whether he was the one who helped to merge the two genres into one, as they are already excellent examples of the genre and betray its mature state. We have traced many of these elements back to Antiquity, to Sumerian times and to pre-Islamic Iran, surviving examples containing the debate form but without the panegyric element, although the figure of the judge (God) or author could be seen already as a precursor of the figure to be praised (*mamdūḥ* or patron). It was most probably the Arabs who added this element to the existing forms they found as their empire spread across the ancient Near East and Iran, and the Persians in turn reclaimed their former heritage, having never entirely lost their interest in poetry expressed in the form of dialogue.

Asadī's *munāẓaras* are certainly the first and most important evidence of the gradual metamorphosis of the dialogue of the *munāẓara* into the *nasīb* of the *qaṣīda*, and the role of judge into that of patron, made in the most elegant and at the same time entertaining way. As for the genre (or sub-genre) itself, it is significant to identify this as the probable stage of the conflation of the debate and panegyric, when the debate re-entered New Persian literature. This return marked the change of its status, raising

[67] The most detailed manual of such kind is the Mirror, compiled by the Ziyarid King Kaykāvūs for his son in 1082: *Qābūs-nāma of Kay Kāʾūs b. Iskandar b. Qābūs b. Vashmgīr*, ed. R. Levy, Gibb Memorial series, New Series, XVIII, London, 1951. This book could be a continuation of the pre-Islamic tradition, reflected in the Pahlavi text "The King and his Page," transcr. with annotated transl. by J. Unvala, Paris, 1921.

it from a jester's entertaining tool to part of the equipment of the serious court poet.

Asadī's debates are a good example of the literary reflection of the *shuʿūbiyya* movement.[68] He plays quite an unusual role of peacemaker between the different sides: the Arabs, carriers of Islam, and the Iranians, representatives of the ancient pre-Islamic tradition. Excellent quality literary works on this topic had been produced by the representatives of both sides,[69] whose attitude towards their opponent would be clear and unchangeable,[70] even in such awkward situations as that of Bashshār b. Burd, an Iranian writing in Arabic.

In the case of Asadī, his conformist suggestion to put aside the ethnic and cultural contradictions between Arabs and Persians and remember only that they are brothers in religion, which in a way betrays the ideals of the *shuʿūbiyya*, was based on his own ambiguous identity, representing both Muslims and Iranians. This provides evidence of the maturing integration of Iranian society into the Muslim community.

Bibliography

Arberry, A., *Classical Persian Literature*, London, 1958, 1967 (2nd ed.).

Asmussen, J.P., "Ein iranischer Wort, ein iranischer Spruch und eine iranische Märchenformel als Grundlage historischer Forschungen," in *Temenos* 3, 1968, pp. 7–18.

——, *Studies in Judeo-Persian literature. A Judeo-Persian precedence-Dispute poem and some thoughts on the history of the genre*, II, Leiden, 1973.

Bartholomae, C., *Zur Kenntnis der mitteliranischen Mundarten* IV, Sb. der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-hist. Kl., Abh. 6, Heidelberg, 1922.

Benveniste, E., "Le texte du *Draxt Asūrīk* et la versification pehlevie," in *Journal Asiatique*, 218, 1930, pp. 193–225.

---

[68] See C.E. Bosworth, entry "Shuʿūbiyya" in *EAL*, 717, S. Enderwitz, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), s.v. Shuʿūbiyya, 513–16, H.T. Norris, "Shuʿūbiyyah in Arabic Literature," in *CHALABL*, 31–47, *J.* & D. Sourdel, entry Shuʿûbiya in *Dictionnaire historique de l'islam*, 2004, 753–754.

[69] On the superiority of Arabs over the Iranians see Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawhīdī, Al-Imtāʾ wa-l-muʾānasa, I, 70–96, and a brilliant example of anti-Arab polemics in Arab verse by Bashshār b. Burd (8th century)—the translations of both are being prepared for publication by G.J. van Gelder. Some other older texts are known only by their titles, as given in Ibn al-Nadim's *Fihrist* (ed. Flügel, 146: Ibn Abī Tāhir Tayfūr (d. 280/893), *Fašl al-ʿarab ʿalā l-ʿajam*; 123: Saʿīd ibn Humayd (d. *c.* 257/871), *Intisāf al-ʿajam min al-ʿarab*; idem (?), *Faḍl al-ʿarab wa-ftikhāruhā*; 128: Ishāq ibn Salama, *Faḍl al-ʿajam ʿalā l-ʿarab*. Al-Madāʾinī (d. 228/842–3) wrote *Mafākhir al-ʿarab wa-l-ʿajam* (Fihrist, 104).

[70] One of the best examples could be the verses attributed to Firdawsī (*Shāh-nāma*, ed. Bertels, reign of Yazdagird III, bayt 24600): *Zi shīr-i shutūr-u khurdan-i sūsmār / Arab-rā ba jāy rasīdast sunnat-kār*, From drinking camel's milk and eating locusts / Arabs reached [the stage of] producing laws.

Blochet, E., "Textes pehlevis inédits relatifs à la religion mazdéenne," in *Revue de l'Histoire de religions* 32 (1895), pp. 18–23.
Blois, F. de, *Persian literature. A bio-bibliographical survey*, vol. V, Poetry of the pre-Mongol period, London: Routledge, 2004.
Bosworth, C.E., in *Encyclopaedia of Arabic Literature*, s.v. Shuʿūbiyya, London: 1998.
——, *Islamic dynasties* (revised Russian translation), Moscow, 1971.
Boyce, M., "The Parthian gōsan and Iranian minstrel tradition," in *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, 1957, pp. 10–45.
Brock, S., "Syriac dispute poems," in *Dispute Poems and Dialogues in the Ancient and Mediaeval Near east: Forms and types of Literary Debates in Semitic and Related Literature*, ed. G.J. Reinink & H.L.J. Vanstiphout, Leuven: Peeters, 1991, pp. 109–119.
Brock, S.P., "A dispute of the Months and Some related Syriac texts," *JSS* 30 (1985), pp. 181–211.
Bruijn, J.T.P. de, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), s.v. Iran vii.–Literature.
Brunner, Ch. J., "The Fable of the Babylonian Tree," Part I: Introduction in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 3, Jul., 1980, pp. 191–202.
Bürgel, J.Ch., *The Feather of Simurgh. The "Licit Magic" of the Arts in Medieval Islam*, New York and London, 1988.
Chaykin, K., (К.И.Чайкин, Асади-старший и Асади-младший: Фердовси 934–1034, Leningrad, 1934, 119–161).
Enderwitz, S., in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), s.v. Shuʿūbiyya.
Ethé, H., "Über persische Tenzonen," in *Verhandlungen des fünften internationalen Orientalisten-Congresses*, Berlin, 1882, II/1.
——, *Catalogue of the Persian, Turkish, Hindustani and Pushtu manuscripts in the Bodleian Library*, Oxford, 1889.
Farrukhī, *Dīvān*, ed. M.S. Dabir Siyaqi, Tehran, 1378/1999.
Forms and Types of Literary Debates in Semitic and Related Literatures, ed. G.J. Reinink and H.L.J. Vanstiphout, Leuven, 1991.
Fouchécour, Charles-Henri de, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. "Iran viii: (2) Classical Persian literature.
Gelder, G.J. van, "Arabic Debates of Jest and Earnest." in *Dispute Poems and Dialogues in the Ancient and Mediaeval Near east: Forms and types of Literary Debates in Semitic and Related Literature*, ed. G.J. Reinink & H.L.J. Vanstiphout, Leuven: Peeters, 1991, pp. 199–211.
——, "The Conceit of Pen and Sword: on an Arabic Literary Debate," in *Journal of Semitic Studies*, xxxii/2, Autumn 1987, pp. 329–60.
Gulchīn Maʿānī, Ahmad, *Tārīkh-i tazkirahā-i Fārsī*, jild-i 1, Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Tihrān, 1/1236, Ganjīna-i fihrist-u kitābshināsī, 12, Tehrān, 1348/1929.
Henning, W.B., "A Pahlavi Poem," in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (1950), pp. 641–648.
Hidāyat, Rizā Qulī Khān, *Majmaʿ al-Fuṣahā*, Tehran, 1878.
Huyse, P., in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Iran viii. Persian literature (1) Pre-Islamic.
Ibn al-Nadim, Muhammad ibn Ishaq, *al-Fihrist*, ed. G. Flügel, Beyrut: 1964.
al-Jāhiz, *Al-Hayawān*, 7 vols, Cairo, 1948–53, v. 5, 472; repr. Dār al-Kutub al-ʿArabī, 1983.
Jang-i Jām-u Qalyān (the Debate between a Goblet and a Water-pipe), in *Skazki popugaya. Spor chashki s kalyanom*, ed. V.A. Zhukovskiy, SPb., 1901, 22–23.
Kay Kaʾūs b. Iskandar b. Qābūs b. Vashmgīr, *Qabūs-nāma*, ed. R. Levy, Gibb Memorial series, New series, XVIII, London, 1951.
Khaleghi-Motlagh, Dj., "Asadī Tūsī," in *Majalla-i Dānishgāh-i Adabiyāt-u ʿUlūm-i Insānī-i Dānishgāh-i Firdousī*, Mashhad, 1356 h.sh/1977, pp. 643–678; 1357 h.sh./1978, pp. 68–130.
Kuiper, F.B.J., "The Ancient Aryan Verbal Contest," in *Indo-Iranian Journal*, 4, 1960, pp. 217–81.
Lambert, W.G., *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*, Oxford, 1960.
Lazard, G., in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Poetry, iv. The Poetics of Middle Persian.

——, "Le mètre du Draxt asûrîg," in *Orientalia Suecana*, vol. LI–LII (2002–2003), 327–336.
Mattock, J.N., "The Arabic Tradition: Origin and developments" in *Dispute Poems and Dialogues in the Ancient and Mediaeval Near east: Forms and types of Literary Debates in Semitic and Related Literature*, ed. G.J. Reinink & H.L.J. Vanstiphout, Leuven: Peeters, 1991, pp. 153–63.
Meisami, J.S., *Structure and Meaning in the Medieval Arabic and Persian poetry*, London: Routledge, 2003.
Minorsky, V., in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), s.v. Ṭūs.
Norris, H.T., "Shuʿūbiyyah in Arabic Literature," in The *Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Arabic Belles Lettres*, ed. J. Ashtiyany, T.M. Johnstone, J.D. Latham, R.B. Serjeant and G. Rex Smith, Vol. II, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 31–47.
Pourjavady, N., *Zabān-i ḥāl dar ʿirfān-u adabiyāt-i pārsī*, Tehran, 1385/2006.
Qaǰrān Tabrīzī, *Dīvān*, Tehran, 1362/1983.
Rūḥ-al-Amīnī, M., "Justārī mardum-shināsī az manẓūma-i Dirakht-i āsūrīg," in *Haftād maqāla. Armaghān-e farhangī be doktor Gholām-Hosayn Saddīqī*, eds. Y. Mahdawī and Ī. Afshār, Tehran, 1369/1990, 323–36.
Salemann C., and E. Bertels, Е.Э.Бертельс. Пятое муназере Асади Тусского. История литературы и культуры Ирана. Избранные труды. М., 1988, 207–241.
Smith, S., "Notes on 'The Assyrian Tree'," in *BSO(A)S* 4, 1926–28, 69–76.
Strabo, *The Geography*, ed. Horace Leonard Jones, London-New York, 1930.
Tafazzoli, A., in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Draxt-i Assurig.
The King and his Page, transcr. with annotated transl. by J. Unvala, Paris, 1921.
Unvala, J.M., "Buz ud Draxt-i Asurīk," in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, vol. 2, No. 4, 1923, 637–67.
Vanstiphout, H.L.J., "Lore, Learning and Levity in the Sumerian Disputations: a Matter of form, or Substance?," in *Dispute Poems and Dialogues in the Ancient and Mediaeval Near east: Forms and types of Literary Debates in Semitic and Related Literature*, ed. G.J. Reinink & H.L.J. Vanstiphout, Leuven: Peeters, 1991, pp. 23–46.
Vogelzang, "Some questions about the Akkadian disputes," in *Dispute Poems and Dialogues in the Ancient and Mediaeval Near east: Forms and types of Literary Debates in Semitic and Related Literature*, ed. G.J. Reinink & H.L.J. Vanstiphout, Leuven: Peeters, 1991, pp. 47–57.
Wagner, E., *Die Arabische Rangstreitdichtung und ihre Einordnung in die allgemeine Literaturgeschichte*, Abh. Der Akad. Der Wiss. Und der Litteratur in Mainz, geistes- un sozialwissensch. Kl., Jhrg. 1962, Nr 8, pp. 435–76.
——, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), s.v. Munāẓara.
West, E.W., "Pahlavi Literature," in *Grundriss der iranischen Philologie*, II, Strassburg: 1895–1904.

INDEX