

# The Wine Song in Classical Arabic Poetry

*Abū Nuwās and the Literary Tradition*

PHILIP F. KENNEDY

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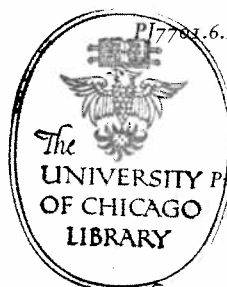
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## PREFACE

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There is a story about Abū Nuwās which is typically engaging, often told and—one may fancy—conveniently symptomatic: he offended the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd by insulting Khalisa, a concubine, with the following effusion: “Because written on this door my poetry hath gathered blight (*ḡā’a*) . . .” (Ingrams, *Abū Nuwās in Life and Legend*, 41). Summoned to see the ruler he past by the door on which he had written his flippant verse and erased the tale of the *‘ayn* from the verb *ḡā’a*; the verse acquired a new and inverse sense: “Because written on this door my poetry has gathered light (*ḡā’a*) . . .”. The anecdote may not trace an actual event—it probably doesn’t—but there is some symbolic value: Abū Nuwās’s poems were not, by his design, etched in stone; even less so was, is, or should be any single interpretation of them—a handy caveat against reading analyses written three years ago and more, as closed and trenchant texts.

Discrepancies thus evoked lead me to say a word about the editions of Abū Nuwās’s poetry which have been consulted. For the analysis of his poetry I have used Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Majīd al-Ghazālī’s edition of the *Diwān*. Only after amassing the bulk of my references was the third volume of Ewald Wagner’s edition of the *Diwān* (containing the *khamriyyāt*) made available to me. I have thus continued to refer to al-Ghazālī’s edition for all references, whilst ensuring that for the most significant *khamriyyāt* of the *Diwān* (or those discussed at length in this monograph) there are no major discrepancies between the two editions, such as might affect my reading of any particular poem. Where there are discrepancies I have indicated them in the footnotes.

The literary tradition referred to in the title is the one which Abū Nuwās inherited from the *Jābiliyya*; it is not intended to refer to the (same) one which continued after him and which, in some areas, he had a role in shaping. His influence on the vinous theme amongst subsequent generations of poets—especially the intimations that the seeds of a mystic sensibility are in his verse—are not discussed; others might wish to develop this fascinating subject. Even within

the temporal and thematic compass spanned by this monograph, analysis is not exhaustive; much work remains to be done on stylistic and formal aspects, for example; and there are some tedious statistics which I have elected not to include.

Concerning the translations, except in one or two places, where I may have essayed a poetic turn of phrase, my renditions of the Arabic are attempts to make the original language (and sense) accessible and clear. Here one runs the risk of rendering the aesthetic qualities of the original "emasculated by excessive literalism" (in the phrase of Kritzeck). Each reader will judge for him or herself.

For transliteration I have followed the style of Alan Jones's *Early Arabic Poetry*, vol. 1, though for *shin* I have preferred *š* to *sh*. The conventions are familiar enough, I feel, to require no explanation.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Over a number of years I have received much financial, academic, and moral support. For the sponsorship of my original research I am grateful to the James Mew Fund and the British Academy. I am indebted also to Pembroke College, Oxford, and to the Oriental Institute and its staff from whom I have received much and varied assistance both as a graduate student and junior lecturer. Heartfelt thanks are due also to the Fellows of St John's College, Oxford, for electing me to a Junior Research Fellowship and allowing me to complete this project in such supportive and serene surroundings.

For constant encouragement throughout the years, and for his valuable comments on various drafts I am grateful to Professor John Mattock. For thought-provoking conversations, suggestions, readings, and other advice I owe thanks to Dr Jeremy Black, Professor Andras Hamori, Dr Julie Meisami, and Mr Ron Nettler. For her enthusiasm and searching comments I am grateful to my friend Dr Reem Saad; I have fond memories of our discussions.

Some of my reticence about publishing this material has been dissolved by the fact that it has passed under the eagle eye of my friend and colleague Dr James Montgomery. Similarly, the inspiring expertise and thoroughness of Dr Geert Jan van Gelder has been invaluable. To both scholars for their painstaking help and sundry suggestions I owe a great debt—it is a burden for which I am grateful!

For immeasurable support, guidance, and patience; for making this publication possible on many different levels (including the most backbreaking task of all—producing the Arabic bromides), and perhaps most of all for instilling in me a sense that, in the end, it is the poems that speak best for themselves, I owe my warmest thanks and a debt I cannot repay to my teacher, Alan Jones.

All mistakes and errors of judgement are, of course, my own.

Aléria  
July 1996

P.K.

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## INTRODUCTION

This monograph has emerged from a study of classical Arabic wine poetry, from the earliest material in the *Jābiliyya* ('Amr ibn Qamī'a, 'Adī ibn Zayd, *et al.*) to the early 'Abbāsīd period. Its aim is four-fold: (i) to give an idea of the development of *khamr*<sup>1</sup> and the *khamriyya* in the classical Arabic tradition of poetry; (ii) to provide some thematic and generic perspectives from which this development can be understood; (iii) following from (ii) to analyse *khamr*, as far as possible, in the context of both the traditional polythematic *qaṣīda* and the (monothematic) *khamriyya*, viewing each of these as integral and complete poems; (iv) in the light of (i)–(iii), to highlight some of the principal qualitative traits, both structural and thematic, of the wine poems of Abū Nuwās (d. 813/15). Since he is deemed by most literary historians to be the finest wine poet of the Arabic tradition,<sup>2</sup> the continuum which can be traced serves

<sup>1</sup> *Khamr*, throughout this book, refers to *dhikr al-khamr* or *al-qawl fī l-khamr* (mention/discussion of wine); i.e. it refers to the treatment of wine in both the *qaṣīda* and the *khamriyya* (the independent wine poem).

<sup>2</sup> This is acknowledged both explicitly and implicitly. All studies of wine poetry, both ancient and modern, make mention of Abū Nuwās as the greatest exponent of the "genre"; see, for example, Wagner (*Abū Nuwās* (Wiesbaden, 1965), 289), "Die Weinlieder haben Abū Nuwās berühmt gemacht. Sein Name ist für die Araber auf das engste mit dem Begriff des Weinliedes verbunden. Er ist für sie der Weindichter schlechthin"; see also Sa'id, Ḥawī, Bencheikh, whose work is examined briefly below, pp. 7–13.

For general overviews which place Abū Nuwās (and the wine poem) within the context of classical Arabic literature see for example: Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, i (Weimar, 1898), 75–7 (p. 76: "Unter seinen Gedichte nehmen die Weinlieder die erste Stelle ein. Er hat auf diesem Gebiet allerdings schon Vorgänger gehabt, die er nachahmte; vor allem scheint Welid b. Jezid und indirekt dessen Vorbild 'Adī b. Zaid ihn beeinflusst zu haben."); I. Pizzi, *Letteratura Araba* (Milan, 1903), 128–31; H. A. R. Gibb, *Arabic Literature* (London, 1926), 42–3 (p. 42: "Abū Nuwās stands head and shoulders above the poets who thronged the court. For combined versatility, sentiment, elegance of diction, and command of language he has few rivals in Arabic . . . He is at his happiest in his wine-songs . . ."); R. A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (Cambridge, 1930), 292–6 (esp. p. 294: "love and wine were two motives by which his genius was most brilliantly inspired. His wine-songs (*khamriyyāt*) are generally acknowledged to be incomparable."); Cl. Huart, *Littérature arabe*, Paris, 1939, pp. 70–2; J.-M. Abd-el-Jalil, *Brève histoire de la littérature arabe* (Paris, 1946), 95–8 (p. 97: "Là où il n'a pas eu d'égal, là où son inspiration poétique a trouvé son expression la plus originale et la

to elucidate the distinct character of his bacchic poetry in the context of the tradition which he inherited. Hence, this study provides a literary context for Abū Nuwās—one which shows his most deft wine poems to be compositions of refined artistry within a developed literary mould, drawing on elements (mainly thematic) which had been relevant to the bacchic theme in earlier poetry (both within the polythematic *qaṣīda* and amongst *qitʿas* and fragments).<sup>3</sup>

The first three chapters of this monograph—perspectives of analysis—have been suggested by the following important observations of generic influence: most early wine poetry, from pre-Islamic to 'Abbāsid times, was influenced by: (i) *ḥikma*—a simple gnomic matrix within which, or against which, much of the thematic content of the *qaṣīda* derived its meaning or significance; (ii) the *nasīb*—the erotic, and essentially nostalgic, opening section of the polythematic *qaṣīda*; the main theme here is *ghazal* (love). This, however, is not the only subject treated; for within the make-up of

plus simple à la fois, c'est dans les chansons bachiques et dans les poèmes d'amour purement animal et le plus souvent contre nature. Ses poèmes les plus réussis sont les chansons bachiques . . ."; p. 98: "Abū Nuwās aura des imitateurs plus ou moins heureux, mais il n'aura pas d'égal."); C. Pellat, *Langue et littérature arabe* (Paris, 1952), 100–4 ("Poésie moderniste—Poésie bachique": "Le plus célèbre représentant du genre est Abou-Nowās qui est certainement l'un des plus grands poètes arabes et domine toute la poésie moderniste . . ."); F. Gabrieli, *Storia della Letteratura Araba* (Milan, 1962), 155–61 (p. 155: "con Omar ibn Abi Rabia e forse ancor più di lui il più squisito artista di lingua arabe giunto sino a noi. . . Il suo vasto divano . . . comprende accanto a 'qaside' del vecchio stile il meglio della poesia neoterica, descrittiva, erotica e soprattutto bacchica, genere quest'ultimo in cui Abu Nuwās ha raggiunto nella letteratura araba un assoluto primato . . ."); I. M. Filshinsky, *Arabic Literature*, trans. from the Russian by Hilda Kasanina (Moscow, 1966), 91–6 (p. 92: one observation which he makes is misleading, albeit not wholly untrue: "His [Abū Nuwās] fame rested chiefly upon his wine-songs, the *khamriyyāt*, which he was the first to transform into an independent genre."); Gaston Wiet, *Introduction à la littérature arabe* (Paris, 1966), 88–91 (p. 89: "il représente à merveille cette première époque abbasside . . . c'est peut-être le plus grand poète de l'islam arabe: il reste une figure"); André Miquel, *La littérature Arabe* (3rd edn., Paris, 1981) 48–50 (p. 50: "Nul doute que l'alcool existe, dans les faits et dans la poésie, avant l'époque abbasside. Mais Bachchār, Ibn al-Mu'tazz et surtout Abū Nuwās l'élèvent au rang d'un des ressorts premiers de la poésie . . .").

<sup>3</sup> Harb, and to a certain extent Bencheikh, consider that these fragments of bacchic poetry—those of the early Islamic period—constitute *khamriyyāt* (below, pp. 8–13); however, Abū Nuwās was clearly trying to perfect a genre—a goal or impulse which explains some of the structural and thematic qualities of his poetry. The latter view is expressed briefly by Schoeler in *CHALABEL*. See below, n. 41.

<sup>4</sup> *Ḥikma* is not considered one of the major themes, genres, "*aghrād*" or "*funūn*" in medieval Arabic literary theory; however, in its commonest form it is an omnipresent topic of ancient Arabic poetry. See ch. 2, *passim*.

the *nasīb* there is a variety of lyrical subject-matter which interacts with the nostalgic keynote introduced in this section of the poem. Whilst principally celebrating a beloved, the *nasīb* itself also works under the influence of *ḥikma* and *fakhr*—wine poetry can exist within the *nasīb*, either in collusion with its nostalgic mood or in antagonism to it (mostly in the latter case *khamr* is informed by *fakhr*); and (iii) *hijā'*, one of the major categories of poetry; it is a mood which informs bacchism in every period. Though considering wine in terms of *nasīb/ghazal*, *ḥikma*, and *hijā'* (antagonism) does not exhaust the contextual possibilities of this poetry, it nevertheless uncovers some of the most important layers of significance.<sup>5</sup>

A standard view of the relationship between genres can be gleaned from the discussions of the medieval Arab literary theoreticians. None recognize *khamr* (wine) as a significant independent theme, mode, or genre (it is mostly deemed to constitute *wasf* or *fakhr*). This omission, which was justified by the near-sophistry of most medieval critics, is evident from the overviews of medieval Arabic literary theory provided by Trabulsi, Bonebakker, Heinrichs, and Schoeler.<sup>6</sup>

Trabulsi divides the genres of Arabic poetry into four categories: "Le genre laudatif"; "Le genre satirique"; "La poésie légère"; and "Le genre descriptif". This constitutes a division of subject matter according to an essential cerebral or emotional impulse, that is, a mood. Light poetry comprises both bacchic and erotic poetry,

<sup>5</sup> The examination of *khamr* under the influence of *ḥikma*, *nasīb/ghazal*, and *hijā'*/antagonism is suggested primarily from the analysis of Arabic poetry in cultural isolation—it is a true expression of early Arabic culture, in tune with relevant preoccupations. The configuration is also a common feature of bacchic celebration in other cultures; this can be gleaned from the Greek Anthology, a thousand years earlier than the first extant Arabic poetry, and the effusions of Goliardic monks from medieval Europe, notably the *Carmina Burana* of 13th-cent. Germany, to name but two. Carl Orff's arrangement of the latter collection exhibits the common desire to set the exuberant and lyrical celebration of love and wine into a sombre view of life and Fate: "O fortuna!"—an appeal to Fate begins and ends the cantata. A corroboration of this contextual aspect of bacchism exists in the title and content of Raymond Scheindlin's *Wine, Women and Death* (Philadelphia, 1986) (selected translations from Hebrew verse).

<sup>6</sup> Amjad Trabulsi, *La Critique poétique des Arabes* (Damascus, 1956). See esp. "La poésie légère" in "Les genres poétiques", pp. 230 ff.; S. A. Bonebakker, "Poets and Critics in the 3rd Century A.H.", in *Logic in Classical Islamic Culture*, 1st G. L. della Vida conference; Wolfhart Heinrichs, "Literary Theory, The Problem of Its efficiency", in *Arabic Poetry: Theory and Development*, 3rd G. L. della Vida conference; Gregor Schoeler, "Die Einteilung der Dichtung bei den Arabern", *ZDMG* 123 (1973), 9–55.

though Trabulsi himself does not discuss the relationship between *ghazal* and *khamr* and their parallel development. Bonebakker's overview highlights the absence of the new genres from the early 'Abbāsīd period: "It would be possible to ignore completely such genres as the *Ṭardiyyāt*, the *Khamriyyāt*, the *'Itāb* and the *Zuhdiyyāt*, genres that nevertheless sometimes had their roots in ancient poetry, *only if one made a distinction between these and the older genres*."<sup>7</sup> In other words, the new genres did not arise *ex nihilo*. In this connection Heinrichs makes an important point: "The reason why Blachère [in *Analecta*] advocates a study of themes rather than a study of genres lies in the fact that different themes may be combined in one and the same poem, either loosely juxtaposed or more logically and firmly connected and interlocked . . . with regard to later development some themes and sub-themes gradually transformed into clear-cut independent genres, such as the *khamriyyāt* . . ."<sup>8</sup> This observation is too abstract but it provides a useful pointer; though this monograph is the study of a genre, Blachère's warning is heeded since each chapter concentrates as far as possible on a given theme.

It remains to answer how and when the *khamriyya* can be deemed to establish itself as a separate genre, and what in its developed form remained of the influence of other themes.<sup>9</sup> The medieval critics, with their bias towards the more formal genres in the ancient canon of poetry, were uneasy about recognizing the existence of this lesser genre. It is significant in this respect that Heinrichs has viewed the inclusion of *lahw* as a category of poetry in Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm's *Kitāb al-burhān fī wujūh al-bayān* as an attempt to embrace "the most prominent *muḥdath* genres: *ghazal*, *ṭarad*, *ṣifat al-khamr* and *mujūn*. The author, thus, has the merit of doing justice to the existing forms of poetry, while his colleagues seem to pretend that there is only ancient poetry."<sup>10</sup>

Schoeler has shown that some of the early *dīwān* collators also recognised the *muḥdath* genres. Significantly, the earliest *dīwān* to have been arranged according to subject matter was that of Abū Nuwās.<sup>11</sup> al-Ṣūlī (d. 946) arranged the *dīwān* in the following

<sup>7</sup> "Poets and Critics", 98. My italics. <sup>8</sup> Heinrichs, "Literary Theory", 36.

<sup>9</sup> Such an approach is akin to the work done by Schoeler in *Arabische Naturdichtung, die zahrīyāt, rabī'īyāt und rauḍīyāt von ihren Anfängen bis aṣ-Ṣanaubarī: eine gattungs-, motiv- und stilgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Beirut, 1974).

<sup>10</sup> Heinrichs, "Literary Theory", 42.

<sup>11</sup> "Die Einteilung", 33: "Als zeitlich erster ist der *Dīwān* des Abū Nuwās (st.

manner: (1) *Khamriyyāt* (Wine poems); (2) *Ṭardiyyāt* (Hunting poems); (3) *Madiḥ* (Eulogy); (4) *Hijā'* (Lampoon); (5) *Mudhakkar* (love poetry celebrating a male); (6) *Mu'annath* (love poetry celebrating a female); (7) *Mujūn* (Licentiousness); (8) *Mu'atabāt* (poems of reproach); (9) *Marāthī* (Elegies); (10) *Zuhd* (Homiletic poetry). Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī (d. after 961) added to this list the *naqā'id* and, further, rearranged the order into: (1) *Naqā'id* (Flytings); (2) *Madiḥ*; (3) *Marāthī*; (4) *'Itāb*; (5) *Hijā'*; (6) *Zuhdiyyāt*; (7) *Ṭarad*; (8) *Khamriyyāt*; (9) *Mu'annathāt*; (10) *Mudhakkarāt*; (11) *Mujūniyyāt* (Licentious poems). According to Ḥamza (quoted from *Dīwān Abī Nuwās*, ed. Wagner, p. 3), the first six categories of his arrangement share the impulses either of *madiḥ* or *hijā'*, and hence are, in a sense, related genres of poetry; the last four categories, on the other hand, belong to *lahw* and *hazl*.<sup>12</sup>

Schoeler then gives a standard view of the emergence of the wine poems of Abū Nuwās from the ancient canon of poetry; since his succinct outline is coloured by his concern with the question of "genre" it merits quotation in full:<sup>13</sup>

Wein- und Gelagebeschreibungen hat es in der arabischen Dichtung seit je gegeben. In der gāhiliya-Poesie wurde das Thema in der Regel im Zusammenhang der Qaside behandelt, und zwar entweder als (fakultatives) "Element des *fakhr*", des Selbstruhms, oder als (ebenfalls fakultative) "Abschweifung in der Beschreibung der Dame" (BLACHÈRE: Histoire, p. 447), genauer gesagt: als sich verselbständigender Vergleich des Speichels der Geliebten mit Wein.

Diese Tradition der Weinschilderung innerhalb der Qaside setzt sich in der frühislamischen und Umayyadenpoesie ununterbrochen fort—die bedeutendsten Namen, die hier zu nennen wären, sind die der beiden Christen al-A'ṣā (st. bald nach 629) und al-Akhal (st. um 710)—und erlischt selbst in der 'Abbāsidenpoesie nicht.

Doch finden sich in der arabischen Dichtung schon früh neben den

zwischen 813 und 815) nach dem Inhalt geordnet . . .". See also, p. 34: "Im Falle seiner Dichtung lohnte sich daher zum ersten Mal eine Gliederung nach inhaltlichen Gesichtspunkten."

<sup>12</sup> Here Schoeler has sensed the influence of the above-mentioned Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm; see *ibid.*, 36: "Ḥamza hat denn auch sowohl den von Ishāq eingeführten Oberbegriff *lahw* . . . als auch dessen Unterteilungen übernommen.—Die Anordnung der einzelnen *lahw*-Gattungen läßt kein bestimmtes Prinzip erkennen."

<sup>13</sup> A similar though substantially more extensive account is given by Wagner in *Grundzüge der klassischen arabischen Dichtung*, vol. ii: *Die arabische Dichtung in islamischer Zeit* (Darmstadt, 1988), 34 ff.

Qasiden-Gelageszenen auch selbständige Weinschilderungen in der *qit'a*-Form. Der christliche Dichter 'Adi b. Zaid (st. um 600) aus Ḥira hat wohl als erster eine größere Anzahl solcher isolierter *khamriyyāt* verfaßt. In der frühislamischen Zeit ist vor allem Abū Miḥjan (st. nach 638) für seine Weingedichte bekannt geworden. Als eigentlicher Begründer der Gattung ist aber wohl erst der Umayyadenkalif al-Walid b. Yazid (st. 744) anzusehen, der übrigens einer Überlieferung im *Kitāb al-aḡānī* zufolge direkt an 'Adi b. Zaid angeknüpft hat<sup>14</sup> und an den "Abū Nuwās dann wiederum anknüpfen konnte".

Nun wird die Entstehung der drei wichtigsten "modernen" Dichtarten, Wein-, Liebes- und Jagddichtung, von europäischen Gelehrten häufig durch Isolierung der entsprechenden Themen aus der Qaside erklärt. Man spricht von einem "Zerfall der Qaside", der zu Ende der Umayyadenzeit oder zu Beginn der 'Abbāsidenzeit stattgefunden haben soll, und wertet diese Erscheinung als ein wesentliches Kennzeichen der *muḥdathūn*-Dichtung.

Dagegen zeigt die oben skizzierte Entwicklung der Weindichtung, und speziell die "Genealogie" 'Adi b. Zaid → Walid → Abū Nuwās, daß diese "moderne" Dichtart sehr wohl auch schon formale Vorbilder in der alt-arabischen Poesie gehabt hat. Unbestritten ist freilich, daß der größere Teil der älteren Weindichtung im Zusammenhang von Qasiden auftritt und daß die "Modernen" in der Motivik ihrer *khamriyyāt* häufig auch an solche Qasiden-Gelageszenen anknüpfen. So hat schon Ibn Qutaiba gezeigt, daß der Eingangsvers des berühmtesten Abū Nuwās'schen Weingedichts "Unterlaß es, mich zu tadeln . . ." motivlich von einer ähnlichen Entwicklung A'sā's abhängig ist (die in der Weinszene einer Qaside auftritt).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> For a brief discussion of this tradition see C.-A. Nallino, *La Littérature arabe*, trans. C. Pellat (Paris, 1950), 60. The most significant detail is that al-Walid b. Yazid is said to have listened to the wine poems of 'Adi b. Zayd whilst he drank.

<sup>15</sup> "Die Einteilung", 37–8. Translation: "Descriptions of wine and festive scenes have always existed in Arabic poetry. In *jāhiliī* poetry the theme was normally treated in the context of the *qaṣīda*, and as such constituted either an element of *fakhr*—self-praise—or a digression in the description of women; [in the latter case] it was more precisely an increasingly independent simile comparing the saliva [of the beloved] to wine.

This tradition of bacchic description within the *qaṣīda* survived intact in early Islamic and Umayyad poetry—the most celebrated names are the two Christians al-A'sā (d. soon after 629) and al-Akhṭal (d. c. 710)—and by no means died out in 'Abbāsīd poetry.

However, from an early time alongside the bacchic scene within the *qaṣīda* there were also independent descriptions of wine in the *qit'a* form. The Christian poet 'Adi b. Zayd (d. c. 600) from Ḥira is supposed to have been the first poet to compose a large number of such independent *khamriyyāt*. In early Islamic times above all Abū Miḥjan (d. after 638) was renowned for his wine poems. Yet regarded as the actual founder of this genre is the Umayyad Caliph al-Walid b. Yazid (d. 744), whose [poetic] lineage can—according to a tradition in the *Kitāb al-aḡānī*—be traced back directly to 'Adi b. Zayd; Abū Nuwās continued this lineage.

The origin of the three most important 'Modern' genres of poetry—wine, love,

This schematic view shows that the *qaṣīda* influenced the bacchic element; it is not, however, clear that the independent *khamriyya* may have inherited a residual imprint of the various themes of the *qaṣīda*. For this we must look to more detailed works on the subject.

A number of contemporary scholars have produced studies of the *Khamriyya*. These include Jamil Sa'id, Iliyyā Ḥāwī, Bencheikh, and most recently Ḥarb.<sup>16</sup> Each one of these authors in various ways has touched upon the perspectives which interest us. For example the antagonistic aspect of wine poetry can be deduced from Sa'id's chapters on *Anṣār al-khamr wa-khuṣūmu-hā* (The supporters and opponents of wine) and *Mawqif al-mu'tazila wa-l-murji'a min al-šarāb; mawqif l-madhāhib al-islāmiyya min al-sukr* (The position of the Mu'tazilites and Murji'ites vis-à-vis the consumption of wine; the position of the Islamic schools of law vis-à-vis intoxication). In Ḥāwī's chapter on the *mukhaḍḍam* poet, Abū Miḥjan al-Thaqafi (d. 637), there is a separate subheading, namely *Zuhdu-hu bi-hā [al-khamra] wa-hijā'u-hu la-hā* (His abstinence from and satire of wine);<sup>17</sup> then in the conclusion to the chapter on the Umayyad poet, Ḥāritha b. Badr (d. 686), he states: *ḥawwala-hā l-šā'iru bi-ilzāmin min wāqī'i-hi ilā māddatin fikriyyatin wa-qadiyyatin diniyyatin wa-akhlāqiyyatin yad'ū da'wata-hā wa-yu'aridu l-mutaḥarrijina 'alay-hi bi-hā* (forced by his situation the poet transformed wine into an intellectual as well as a religious and ethical issue whose cause he pleaded, and on the basis of which he opposed those who shamed him about it).<sup>18</sup> This is picked up dis-

and hunting poetry—is often explained by European scholars as the isolation of the corresponding themes from the *qaṣīda*. One speaks about 'the break-up of the *qaṣīda*' which is supposed to have taken place at the end of the Umayyad period or beginning of the 'Abbāsīd period; this phenomenon is considered to be an essential characteristic of *Muḥdath* poetry.

The above sketch of the development of wine poetry—especially the genealogy 'Adi b. Zayd → al-Walid → Abū Nuwās—nevertheless shows that this 'modern' poetry had already found formal models in ancient Arabic poetry. It is uncontested that the greater part of the older wine poetry appeared in the context of the *qaṣīda* and that the 'modern' poets in their treatment of motifs in their *khamriyyāt* often continued [in the manner of] these *qaṣīda*-saturnalia. Ibn Qutayba has already shown that the introductory verse of the most famous poem by Abū Nuwās 'Do not censure me . . .' is a motif dependent on a similar development in al-A'sā (which appears in the wine scene of a *qaṣīda*).

<sup>16</sup> *Taṭawwūr al-Khamriyyāt fī l-Ši'r al-'Arabī* (Cairo, 1945); *Fann al-Ši'r al-Khamrī wa-Taṭawwuru-hu 'inda l-'Arab* (Beirut, 1981); "Khamriyya", *EP*, vol. iv; see CHALABL, ch. 13, pp. 219–34.

<sup>17</sup> Ḥāwī, *Fann al-Ši'r al-Khamrī*, p. 92.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 86.

tantly—though the reader must make the connection—in the analysis of Abū Nuwās' famous poem *Da' 'an-ka lawm: inna l-lawma lladhī taḥaddatha 'an-hu fī l-maṭla'i ja'ala-hu yaṣifu l-khamrata li-yuḡhira l-asbāba llatī ja'alat-hu yu'āqiru-hā wa-yahimu bi-hā. Thumma 'āda fa-dāfa'a 'an ra'yi-hi amāma l-Nazzāmi wa-adkhala 'alā uslūbi-hi l-ma'ānī l-fiqhiyyah* (The censure which he spoke about in the first verse led him to describe wine in such a way as to make apparent the reasons for his addiction to it. He then returned (in the final two lines) to defend his opinion before al-Nazzām, inserting into his style terms and notions from Islamic jurisprudence).<sup>19</sup>

Like the others, Ḥarb ignores antagonism in the *Jāhiliyya* and speaks of it only in the context of "early Islamic wine poetry": "the legal controversy over wine provides frequent matter for *jeux d'esprit* in 'Abbāsīd poetry, as in Ibn al-Rūmī's lines:

The Iraqi holds *nabīdh* to be permitted, and the drinking of it,  
but says that grape-wine and intoxication are forbidden;  
The Hijazi says both drinks are alike. The two dicta together  
license wine—  
I'll take one half from each and drink wine—let the burden of  
guilt rest on him who imposes it."<sup>20</sup>

This is a vibrant and charming example of its kind. I would add only that even this kind of "*jeux d'esprit*" existed in the early Islamic period amongst poets such as Ḥāritha b. Badr and Ibn Sayḥān.<sup>21</sup>

The way that the *khamriyya* feeds off the repertory of *ghazal* and *nasīb* has been observed in various ways by most scholars: in the Introduction to Ḥāwī's book, where a method is outlined, commentary is limited to two psychological aspects of wine poetry: the expression of an "existentialist" (*wujūdī*) view of life and the shared emotional significance of wine and woman; Ḥāwī's comments here are by design general and impressionistic, perhaps overstating the case when suggesting, for example, that man's emotional rapport with wine is equal to his rapport with women.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Ḥāwī, *Fann al-Ṣi'r al-Khamrī*, 228.

<sup>20</sup> CHALABL 223.

<sup>21</sup> See ch. 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Fann al-Ṣi'r al-Khamrī*, 6. Though Ḥāwī's comment should not be made so baldly, I have often felt that if one were to undertake a "Jungian" analysis of such poetry, it might be substantively argued that wine is a symbol of the "Anima" (the female aspect of the male psyche)—or in some manner a reflection of this "Archetype".

A related issue—wine's role in the *nasīb*—is mentioned briefly in the summary of *jāhili* features: *inna-hā (al-khamra) kānat mukarrasatan fī maṭāli'i l-qaṣā'idi ka-l-ṭalal*.<sup>23</sup> The more developed and later relationship between *khamr* and *ghazal* is picked up intermittently as an attempt to characterize certain poets; for example, Abū Jilda (d. 686) is deemed to highlight the role of chaste *ghazal* in Umayyad wine poetry,<sup>24</sup> whilst of Mālik b. Asmā' (d. 715), Ḥāwī writes: *Wa-laqaḍ talaqqā l-mar'ata mutawahhidatan fī nafsi-hi ma'a l-khamrati, bi-ḥaythu yamtaziju l-ṣi'ru l-khamrī wa-l-ghazalī fī qaṣā'idi-hi fa-nakādu lā numayyizu idhā kāna yata'arraḍu li-l-mar'ati 'abra l-khamrati aw li-l-khamrati 'abra l-mar'ati* (In his psyche woman and wine formed a whole such that they are intermixed in his odes—we can scarcely distinguish whether he is alluding to woman through wine or vice versa).<sup>25</sup> The observation is vital; however, it is not one that should be confined to Mālik.

Of the modern studies, by far the most enlightening on the development of the "genre" is Bencheikh's article entitled "Khamriyya" in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (new edition). It is a lucid outline which allows one to sense the main landmarks of Arabic bacchic poetry in the context of significant literary and social changes. No poetry is quoted; however, Bencheikh makes plausible generalizations which place the theme of wine in its original context (principally literary but also social) and analyses the thematic interplay which nurtures the celebration of wine within individual compositions. From this essay one gains a sense of the way in which wine fed off the other genres of poetry.

Bencheikh's characterization of *khamr* in the *Jāhiliyya* as the "inserted statement" makes apparent its dependence on the other themes of the *qaṣīda*: "with the elegiac poet Muraqqiṣ al-Aṣghar . . . the bacchic statement presents itself in the *nasīb* as a syntactic and semantic intrusion". Other examples of "inserted statements" listed include a wine passage "in the heterogeneous sequence of animal description of Mutammim b. Nuwayra".<sup>26</sup> Bencheikh comments that "as a tool for comparison, it [*khamr*] does not have an autonomous function". One might add, here, that the bacchic elements are influenced by and themselves influence the mood of the passage in which they are inserted.<sup>27</sup> Further, in a poem by 'Abd al-Masīḥ b. 'Asala, also referred to by Bencheikh, *khamr* is not

<sup>23</sup> *Fann al-Ṣi'r al-Khamrī*, 75.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 138.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 150.

<sup>26</sup> *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, No. 9, vv. 28–30.

<sup>27</sup> See Appendix A.



simply an inserted statement, as he suggests; rather it is the very object of satire.<sup>28</sup>

On the question of "scattered and corollary statements" versus "themes properly so-called" existing in an "established framework", 'Alqama b. 'Abada<sup>29</sup> and the later *mukhaḍram* poet 'Abda b. al-Ṭabīb<sup>30</sup> are adduced to demonstrate the latter—a framework variously encompassing *nasīb*, *fakhr*, and *wasf*. From the period of 'Abda the poetry of al-A'ṣā furnishes ample evidence for positing a framework and repertoire of bacchic verse which "remains dependent on the major framework" of the *qaṣīda*.<sup>31</sup>

It is in the context of the "precursors of al-Ḥīra" that Bencheikh discusses bacchic expression in terms of the "existential attitude" which Ḥāwī has spoken of. Here only Ṭarafa, al-Aswad b. Ya'fur, and 'Adi b. Zayd are mentioned. Whilst these poets do expressly celebrate a simple philosophy, it is nevertheless possible to view much of the poetry of the period as being governed by an existential attitude which provides a substrate for most of the varied material of the poem—including *khamr*.<sup>32</sup>

Moving to Ḥijāzī bacchism he highlights the relationship between amorous and bacchic poetry, which were inspired by the "hedonism" of an idle aristocracy. Both types of poetry "lent support to each other and shared between them some large thematic areas". In this context we should link up what he says about wine and love in this period with later observations, such as his comments about Mālik b. Asmā' b. al-Khārijī<sup>33</sup> and al-Walīd b. Yazīd: "the Bacchic inspiration is here very close to the amorous inspiration which predominates".<sup>34</sup> This relationship between *ghazal* and *khamr* (in terms of imagery, theme, and poetic techniques) has been alluded to by Heinrichs elsewhere:<sup>35</sup> "[The Ḥijāzī school of] poetical expression (the anecdotic description of actions and reactions of persons interspersed and enlivened by direct speech) was not discontinued when the Ḥijāzī school dwindled around the year A.D. 725, but was adopted again, though imbued with a wholly different mood, in Iraq by some of the early *muḥdathūn*, particularly Abū Nuwās."

<sup>28</sup> See below, Ch. 3, 'The *Jāhiliyya*'.

<sup>29</sup> *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, No. 120, vv. 39–45.

<sup>30</sup> *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, No. 26, vv. 66–81. See also *Ši'r 'Abda b. al-Ṭabīb*, the *Lāmiyya*, pp. 57–83.

<sup>31</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>32</sup> "Khamriyya", 1002.

<sup>33</sup> See ch. 2 and Appendix A.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 1003.

<sup>35</sup> "Literary Theory", 24.

At times Bencheikh's hunches cannot be fully substantiated. I have found this to be the case in his suggestions about the significance of the Umayyad poet al-Aḥwaṣ—a love poet in whose *diwān* there are no surviving traces of wine poetry.<sup>36</sup> However, his assumptions are valuable for they show to what extent his analysis of bacchic poetry is based on an implicit understanding that *khamr* works in conjunction with *ghazal* and draws its inspiration from it.<sup>37</sup> Bencheikh further discusses this particular aspect in a final section on "relations within frameworks". The most significant suggestion—applicable only to the early 'Abbāsīd period—is the following: "At the point at which the courtly poetry refines its nuances but takes refuge in abstraction, the Bacchic *ghazal* on the other hand cloaks itself in the concrete."<sup>38</sup>

About 'Irāqī bacchism Bencheikh offers another issue for consideration—antagonism. Of Ḥāritha b. Badr al-Gūhdānī's poetry he observes that "numerous Abū Nuwās-like processes were already in use". This appears to be explained by the following statement: "he defied the prohibition on drinking where bedouin bragging takes on quite significant tones of rebellion". This spirit of rebellion is first attributed to Abū Miḥjan al-Thaqafī (d. c.637) whose "personality may be viewed as a means to illustrate the attitude that would characterise his successors".<sup>39</sup> It is reiterated in the overview of the "libertines of Kufa" in the Umayyad period: "Ḥammād 'Ajrad shows that the bacchic genre is directly opposed to laudatory poetry, whose official function is specific . . . one is left thinking that the poetry of rebellion, based on an existential attitude, and transcribed in a literary and non-literary form has perhaps drawn vigour and vivacity from a people absolutely excluded from the cultural system." Three issues are brought into relief: (i) the transformation of formal literary genres; (ii) the poet's perception of an order and/or world-view distinct from the dominant

<sup>36</sup> See *Ši'r al-Aḥwaṣ*.

<sup>37</sup> Bencheikh allows one to understand that the term *khamriyya* may tell us little about the attendant themes of any given wine poem—there is a problem of terminology here which requires that one clarify the themes being treated in any given case. Examine J. N. Mattock's introductory remarks to his "Description and Genre in Abū Nuwās": "I propose to deal exclusively with a relatively limited sub-division of the *Khamriyyāt* and *Ghazal* poetry of Abū Nuwās" (*Quaderni di Studi Arabi*, 5–6 (1987–8), 528). This statement might incline one to think that the author is referring to two separate genres of poems, whilst in fact he speaks of wine poems (*khamriyyāt*) which contain essential elements of *ghazal*.

<sup>38</sup> This is borne out in ch. 1, which deals with the seduction poem.

<sup>39</sup> See ch. 3.

societal system; and hence (iii) the existence of a rogue culture. The third issue seems to coalesce with Hamori's identification of Abū Nuwās as a "ritual clown", performing on the fringes of society.<sup>40</sup> However, I would add, it is precisely through the apparent process of generic transformation that Abū Nuwās can also be viewed as someone drawing this rebellious culture into the formal midst of society by cultivating his wine poetry, as far as possible, in terms of the formal canon. Whilst Abū Nuwās often adopted the posture of turning his back on traditional poetry he was aware of the status that it could give his own bacchic canon. There is a paradox here, but it is one which the poet must have cherished.

Discussion of Abū Nuwās, "the glory of a genre", comes under the major heading of "the assertion of a literary style". Into the latter are also inserted the subheadings: "A great forerunner: al-Walīd b. Yazīd", "The libertines of Kūfa", and "The pre-Nuwasians". One senses originality in his poetry as both a synthesis of all the major impulses that preceded him and also a more enhanced self-consciousness in the craft of composition. For in Abū Nuwās exists the imagery of al-A'šā, plus the thematic interdependence of that early poetry; there is also the rebellion of Abū Miḥjan and the libertines of Kūfa, the "existential" attitude of Ṭarafa, plus—most significantly—a more enhanced "conception of an art and the practice of a language" than is to be found in al-Walīd b. Yazīd. Ironically, Bencheikh's succinct pronouncements about Abū Nuwās are the least satisfying of his article; they state little more than that he was the apogee of the genre. Furthermore, the judgement that in Abū Nuwās there is no originality to speak of is surely unjust. Bencheikh's view is simply that Abū Nuwās composed more than everybody else and in some poems struck "a resounding note of success". The nature of this "note" needs to be explored. A useful starting-point is the premiss that Abū Nuwās, with regard to some of his finest poems, effectively perfected a genre and was not simply its glory.<sup>41</sup> With this in mind one can examine his poetry

<sup>40</sup> See Hamori, *On the Art of Medieval Arabic Literature*, (Princeton, 1974), ch. 2.

<sup>41</sup> This premiss in essence concurs with the view expressed by Schoeler: "A possible explanation for the frequency with which Abū Nuwās prefaces his drinking-songs with preludes might be that he wanted to raise this genre, which he had made his own, to the rank of the *qaṣīda*." We should add Schoeler's cautionary aside: "though it should be borne in mind that many of the *khamriyyāt* are improvisatory in manner and do not aspire either to the linguistic or to the structural complexity of the panegyric *qaṣīda*" (CHALABL 294).

in terms of the various generic and thematic influences on wine poetry discerned by Bencheikh during the course of its early development. In the context of these influences (essentially "the relationship within frameworks" which Bencheikh speaks of in a void at the end of his article) one can also examine: (i) the literary process: "the organisation of allotted space", i.e. thematic texture and structure; and in conjunction with this: (ii) "how its expression was fed by a variety of philosophic tendencies, and how it analysed a series of spiritual attitudes in historical relationship with given socio-cultural situations".

Examination of Abū Nuwās in other studies has also left room for further work. In an important chapter of Ḥāwī's monograph entitled *al-Tajdīd fī uslūb al-khamra* (Innovation in bacchic style), a section is devoted to *al-waḥda l-fanniyya* (Artistic unity), of which Ḥāwī says, *ma'ānī [Abī Nuwās] salafat fī l-šī'ri l-khamrī l-qadīm . . . ahammu mumayyizāti l-tajdīdi fī uslūbi-hi kānat mizata . . . l-waḥdati l-fanniyyah* (The themes of his wine poetry have antecedents in the ancient canon . . . [but] the most important element of innovation in his style was that of artistic (or organic) unity).<sup>42</sup> The main feature which is understood to nurture this artistic unity is *waḥdat al-mawdū'* (The unity of subject-matter), an aspect of wine poetry by no means unique to Abū Nuwās. The promise that one of the most significant aspects of the poet is to be unveiled by analysis is disappointed when Ḥāwī limits his attention to narrative wine poems, that is poems whose structural coherence is largely inevitable: *wa-la'alla qaṣā'ida-hu llati fī-hā l-ḥadīthu 'an 'abathi-hi wa-mughāmarāti-hi l-layliyyati hiya aṣaddu qaṣā'idi-hi tarābuṭan wa-a'maqu-hā waḥdatan fanniyyatan* (Perhaps his poems in which there is discussion of his cavorting and nocturnal adventures are those most strongly held together and those most deeply artistically whole).<sup>43</sup> His discussion of this type of poem merely highlights the mercurial nature of Arabic poetry with its shifting thematic foci—the narrative element simply gives this feature a structural encasement. It is essential, however, to understand that structural cohesion is variously part of the thematic (and generic) imprint of the poem, or feeds off the imagery of the individual piece.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> *Fann al-Ši'r al-Khamrī*, 92.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* 276.

<sup>44</sup> See below, esp. chs. 1 and 3.

Ḥarb's review of 'Abbāsīd bacchism focuses understandably on Abū Nuwās; he tells us of the "spirit of the new age", evidence for which is culled from individual lines:

... a diversity of theological and philosophical schools were disseminating their teaching, and translations from Greek and Persian were being circulated; these found an echo in poetic allusions and gave further developments to the paradoxical and witty side of the *khamriyyah* genre: "In the way that I exalt [wine] I am like a Qa'adī exalting the *taḥkīm*," writes Abū Nuwās: the *taḥkīm* (*lā ḥukma illā li-llāh*, "judgement belongs to God alone") was the battle-slogan of the Khārijīs, while a Qa'adī (stay-at-home) was one who, though sympathizing with the cause, was debarred by age or physical incapacity from taking part in the fighting . . .

This is a fascinating and well-judged example of social history emerging from the bacchic text. However, the way this particular image works within the poem is a literary trait of Abū Nuwās and tells us something essential about the artistic persona of the poet; for the line is part of the amusing and loquacious obstinacy with which he frequently resists the Caliph's call to abstinence.<sup>45</sup>

In outlining the most common descriptive imagery of the 'Abbāsīd wine poem—"examples [which] give some idea of the interaction of old and new"<sup>46</sup>—Ḥarb presents a useful *caveat* against discerning psychological traits of individual poets in evocative yet conventional topics. For example, the image of wine as a virgin is highly charged in 'Abbāsīd *khamr*. The conventionality raises the question: "can all these poets have had a 'sexual' love of wine? The fact is, description of wine as a virgin is a poetic commonplace, especially among the contemporaries of Abū Nuwās."<sup>47</sup> Unwittingly, Ḥarb's observation questions the validity of much of the analysis of al-Nuwayhī and al-'Aqqād, who impute to Abū Nuwās personal psychological traits based on the evidence of commonplace imagery.<sup>48</sup> The sexual imagery of wine should also be viewed as part of the mischievous interplay between *khamr* and *ghazal* which reaches its literary apogee in the Hakamite's verse and

<sup>45</sup> See ch. 4, pp. 214–17.

<sup>46</sup> CHALABL 228.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 229.

<sup>48</sup> A similar re-evaluation can be surmised from a comment by Mattock *in re* Abū Nuwās' licentious confessions: "I do not propose here, or anywhere else, for that matter, to concern myself overmuch with Abū Nuwās's psychological makeup. Avowed predilections for carousing and for pederasty may be no more than matters of fashion, circumstances or convention." See "Description and Genre in Abū Nuwās", 536.

which is achieved largely by developments in the description of the cupbearer (*sāqī*) and attendant players.

The role of the *sāqī* is of great significance. More than merely casting a role in the narrative *khamriyya*, treatment of the *sāqī*—the poet's catamite—is the subject of a literary game that forces consideration of the poem in terms of the generic framework of Arabic lyrical poetry. For, alongside the *mughanniya*, the cupbearer provides a stimulus to bring into juxtaposition the language of *nasīb* and both chaste and licentious erotic verse. With these considerations in mind we can sense the inadequacy of the following illustration of the catamite's role: "The poem beginning, 'Come on, give me wine, and say "It's wine"; don't do it secretly when openness is possible', contains a conversation with the proprietress of a tavern, and ends with her bringing the drinkers a boy to bugger . . .". This relegates the erotic finale to a stark, prosaic fact whilst in truth eroticism is expressed via a consistent impulse of essential contrasts, ambivalence, and intertextuality.<sup>49</sup> What can be salvaged from Ḥarb's observation, however, is the intimation of bathos and burlesque.

Wagner touches on this aspect of the *khamriyya* in his monograph on Abū Nuwās:<sup>50</sup> "Dealing with wine is often portrayed as courting of a woman. The feminine gender of *khamr* makes this imaginative feature possible" (p. 300). More significant is the following observation: "The description of the wine-pourer (male and female) brings an element of love poetry into the wine song" (p. 302).<sup>51</sup> However, one might disagree with the way he expands upon this observation: "The inclusion of erotic passages . . . is not so much the result of a deliberate literary composition as of contemporary drinking habits" (p. 302).<sup>52</sup> Certainly one cannot deny the *khamriyya* a reflection of social mores but to reject the conscious literary process involved in the expression of erotic bacchism is, I think, a mistake. This can be shown using a statement by Wagner himself as a starting-point: "Abū Nuwās even enjoys the

<sup>49</sup> See ch. 1.

<sup>50</sup> *Abū Nuwās*, 300: "Der Handel um den Wein wird gern als Werbung eine Braut dargestellt. Das weibliche Genus des Wortes *hamr* macht diese Vorstellung möglich . . .".

<sup>51</sup> "Mit der Beschreibung des Schenken und der Schenkin dringt ein Stück Liebesgedicht in die Weinlieder ein."

<sup>52</sup> "Die Einführung der erotischen Partien in die Weinlieder ist also weniger das Ergebnis einer beabsichtigten literarischen Komposition als die Folge der damaligen Trinksitten."

intoxicating effect of wine because it makes it easier for him to make an advance upon stubborn boys" (p. 306).<sup>53</sup> It is precisely the role of wine in delivering a youth to the libidinous poet which gives many wine poems their structure.

Some wine poems, however, are chaste by design; consider *Li-ḍaw'i barqin*<sup>54</sup> of which Hamori has said "it would fly apart if it were not for a variety of echoes and symmetries". *Khamr* and *ghazal* feed off each other in a unique combination, for the desolate state of the poet in the evocative scene depicted (a scene with resonances of the *nasīb*) offers a rare avowal of abstinence from wine. It is an exceptional poem: rather than the wine offering the *sāqī* as a sacrificial lamb to the sexuality which commonly gives the wine poem its momentum, the strength of chaste emotions overrides this normally propitious mood—*khamr* and *ghazal* are merged into an organically unified poem with echoes of the ancient poetry.

Casting an eye over all that has been said about wine and love in the poetry of Abū Nuwās we see that there is variety in generic synthesis that needs to be explored.

Hamori's *On the Art of Medieval Arabic Literature* contains the most engaging study of Abū Nuwās' wine poems to have appeared in recent years. Two issues are relevant here: "the transformations in poetic genres" and "how poems were made to hang together". These broad issues are dealt with in separate chapters (i–iii and iv). In the chapter on the poet as "ritual clown" Hamori tells us that "the heroic life ceased to be a model of coherent and balanced human experience".<sup>55</sup> Thus "the new genres that developed in the 8th century signaled that there was an inadequacy in all the aliases of the old, but also that something in the driving power of pre-Islamic verse had found a trick of metamorphosing itself."<sup>56</sup> This is evinced by the love poems of Jamil and the drinking songs of Abū Nuwās: "the molds for such poems were present in the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda*: in the *nasīb*, and in the often encountered drinking scene . . .".<sup>57</sup> Explaining the development of genres Hamori states cogently: "Quite as important as social conditions are the literary conditions that furthered the development of new genres and

<sup>53</sup> "Ja, Abū Nuwās liebt die berausende Wirkung des Weines sogar, weil sie störrische Knaben in einen Zustand versetzt, der es ihm leichter macht, sich ihnen zu nähern."

<sup>54</sup> *Diwān Abī Nuwās*, ed. Ghazālī, 50–1.

<sup>55</sup> Op. cit. 32.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. 36.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. 37.

shaped the poet's attitudes and interests. Literary change, like linguistic change, is triggered by a variety of events . . . but it follows such open lines as the original structure makes available."<sup>58</sup> Illustration of this process is limited—in the case of Abū Nuwās at least—for his wine poems are not discussed against a specific background of wine songs; moreover, between the *Jāhiliyya* and the 'Abbāsīd period there are interim developments which need some consideration.

This notwithstanding, some of Hamori's observations are essential and, like the article by Bencheikh, in some measure coalesce with the perspectives of analysis adopted in ensuing chapters. For example, in the section entitled "the antinomian turn of religious experience" he comments: "To a pious Muslim the revolutions of the wheel of fortune appeared a beneficial reminder that in this world nothing endured."<sup>59</sup> With this in mind Hamori senses the irony of Abū Nuwās' *tazawwad min šabābin laysa yabqā* (Store up provisions of youth which does not last), a verse drawing its inspiration from, for example, Qur'ān, 2/197 *tazawwadū fa-inna khayra l-zādi l-taqwā* (Store up provisions; for the best of provisions is the fear of God). The poet inverts a pious motif. This is important, for as al-Nuwayhī has noted elsewhere, Abū Nuwās' bacchic art adopted a posture in antagonism to the *zuhdiyya* of his day—it is with the pious poem that one can sense a conscious literary game played out between authors familiar with each other's output.<sup>60</sup>

In the preamble to discussion of the "Assimilation of religious experience" we read that "borrowing [of sundry religious motifs] may remind us that a game is afoot, with rules that parody the rules of something serious".<sup>61</sup> This ties in with another paragraph: "Imagery with transcendental associations creates in the *khamriyya* a sense of something like a rival religion. Such a development is perhaps natural enough in a religious society, but it is ironic . . . for it is the end of the line for a genre that sprang from a poetic refusal

<sup>58</sup> Hamori, op. cit. 37.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. 54.

<sup>60</sup> In discussion of *al-naṣwa l-dīniyya* al-Nuwayhī speaks of "*imānu-hu l-'amīqu bi-llāhi, muḥāwalatu-hu l-jāddatu fi l-tawbati wa-l-ṣalāh* and *kathratu tafkiri-hi fi l-mawti*". In this context he presents examples of verses where the poet reiterates the atheistic force of the ancient *gnōmē* of fleeting life; one is given to understand that such verses, plus the poet's lack of stability in *tawba*, were part of a literary discourse explained as a "*munāfasatun li-mu'āširi-hi Abī l-'Atāhiyati l-ladhi ṣtāhara bi-šī'ri-hi fi l-taqwā wa-l-zuhd*" (see *Nafsiyyat Abī Nuwās* (Beirut, 1970), 93). See below, chs. 2–4.

<sup>61</sup> Hamori, op. cit. 61.

to accommodate to the religious model of human experience. The wine song fosters its myth; it is never quite free of the shadow of Islam."<sup>62</sup> Wine does indeed seem to have its own transcendence, both in the imagery with which it is described, and through the reiteration of the transcendence of *al-dahr* as treated in the ancient poetry. The wine song does "foster its own myth"; however, the statement "it is never quite free of the shadow of Islam", might be recast as "it invites the shadow of Islam". For there is an attempt on the part of the poet to acknowledge Islam facetiously as much as there is—in a more obstreperous mood—a "refusal to accommodate to it". Indeed the wine poem of Abū Nuwās, in its own playful manner, acknowledged Islam more directly than much 'Abbāsid poetry which often still simply reworked the ethos of *muruwwa* that had informed the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda*. Islam was an essential dimension of the wine poem: it was one of the elements of ethical plurality, one of the elements of antagonism—the poet waved a red cape before the eyes of a bullish orthodoxy—and one of the elements contingent upon the particular unfolding of each individual *khamriyya*.

<sup>62</sup> Hamori, op. cit. 67.

## I

## *Khamr, Nasīb, and Ghazal*

The poems of al-A'šā (d. c.629) amply evince how in early material the treatment of wine may be subordinated to the mood of the *nasīb*. Here wine consoles despondent love and in this role is informed variously by both *fakhr* and nostalgia. This treatment of *khamr*—its dynamic containment within the polythematic *qaṣīda*—survived in al-Akhṭal in the Umayyad period, and in poets such as Muslim b. al-Walīd and Abū l-Šiṣ in the early 'Abbāsid period. al-Akhṭal intensified the descriptive repertoire whilst approximating to the language of the *Jāhiliyya*, whereas Muslim retained the same basic structure (in panegyric poems) but celebrated *khamr* in a language typical of a new quality of lyricism and influenced largely by developments in *badi'*.

It is against this background that this chapter will demonstrate an important characteristic of Abū Nuwās in the celebration of wine: the fusion of elements of *nasīb* and *ghazal* into single poems of a composite but cohesive texture. This itself breaks down into two features: (i) the contrast of emotions, and (ii) the narrative focal point of seduction. Both features impart to his poems a tighter structure than is discernible in either his predecessors or contemporaries. In the extent of his achievement he is unique, and can be seen to synthesize possibilities in pre-existing poetry. The existence of *khamr* in *nasīb*, or in relationship with *nasīb*, is simply a starting-point. Indeed in the interim between al-A'šā and Abū Nuwās, developments in *ghazal* (as distinct from *nasīb*) are more relevant for discussion in that they cast their shadow on the language, imagery, and structure of bacchic verse.

### DEVELOPMENTS IN GHAZAL

In the *Jāhiliyya*, *khamr* worked in conjunction with love poetry in two ways. It could either be the fleeting description of the beloved's

saliva, which is limited in its resonances,<sup>1</sup> or a boast of hedonistic pleasure directed expressly at the beloved. The poet attempted to console despondent love in a self-vaunting manner; there are numerous examples.<sup>2</sup> They all simply suggest a complementarity in the contrasting emotions of *nasīb* and *lahw*. One simile which stands out survives in a *qāfiyya* by 'Adi b. Zayd.<sup>3</sup> It is a poem of 22 lines in which lines 1–8 describe the beloved in the morning and lines 9–22 describe wine which is compared initially to saliva on the beloved's teeth. The link between the two themes is static: there is no narrative focal point, no contrast of emotions, and no feminine imagery in the descriptive topics of the wine; indeed, the wine scene may be said to dissipate rather than contrast the emotions of lines 1–8.

The *mukhaḍram* poet, Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhālī (d. c. 649) gives us a glimpse of a later period and a distinct tone of love poetry which correspondingly can be seen to affect the treatment of wine. His expression of love is a stage beyond the monochrome austerity of the *Jāhiliyya* which seeks, according to the formulation of Jacobi,<sup>4</sup> to set a failed love affair resolutely in the past. In his depth of feeling Abū Dhu'ayb presages the 'udhrī poets; he is also as spirited, intermittently, as 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a. His *bā'iyya*<sup>5</sup> celebrates (lines 1–6) a love which threatens to kill the poet (6: *fa-qultu li-qalbī yā la-ka l-khayru inna-mā l-yudallī-ka li-l-mawti l-jadīdi ḥibābu-hā*). Jacobi considers this metaphor in part to represent the originality of the poet, who emerges as a forerunner of the 'udhrī poets (in his depth of feeling) and of 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a, who often depicts himself in dialogue with his own heart.<sup>6</sup> The enhanced quality of the extended wine simile that ensues, when compared to earlier

<sup>1</sup> One example is discussed in Appendix A: see al-A'sā poem 1; see also n. 10 therein. Other examples are to be found in Salāma b. Jandal *Diwān*, p. 132, lines 17–19; al-Muraqqiṣ al-Aṣghar: *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, poem 55, lines 8–15; and Ḥassān b. Thābit (the *Hamziyya*) *Diwān*, i. 17, lines 6–10. For a discussion of one such simile see Michael A. Sells's analysis of "semantic overflow" in Ka'b b. Zuhayr's "Bānat Su'ād" ("Guises of the Ghul . . ." in *Reorientations: Arabic and Persian Poetry* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1994), 137 ff.).

<sup>2</sup> See al-A'sā, poems 8 and 22; Labid, *Mu'allāqa*, lines 57–8 (al-Tibrizī's recension); al-Muraqqiṣ al-Akbar, *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, poem 51, lines 5 ff.; Ḥātim al-Ṭā'i, *Diwān*, 19, poem 31; al-Ḥādīra, *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, poem 8; al-Aswad b. Ya'fur, *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, poem 44; al-Ḥārith b. Ḥilliza, *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, poem 62, line 4; al-Munakhhāl al-Yaškuri, *Aghāni*, 21/9–11. <sup>3</sup> See *Diwān* 'Adi b. Zayd, 76–8.

<sup>4</sup> See "Time and Reality in *Nasīb* and *Ghazal*", JAL 16 (1985), 1–17.

<sup>5</sup> See *Kitāb Sharḥ Aṣ'ār al-Hudhaliyyin*, i. 42 ff.

<sup>6</sup> See "Die Anfänge der arabischen Gazalpoesie", *Der Islam*, 61 (1984), 218–50.

examples, is that the tone in which wine is celebrated approximates to the tone of the initial *ghazal*. This is especially discernible in lines 12, 13, and 14, which depict wine as the object of sanctification and pilgrimage. In line 12 the Banū Thaḳīf are described circum-ambulating the beverage (*fa-ṭāfa bi-hā abnā'u āli mu'attabi*); here the verb *ṭāfa* echoes its use in the introductory section where the poet describes himself hovering around the beloved's encampment.<sup>7</sup>

Whilst the *bā'iyya* demonstrates that with the birth of Islam both *ghazal* and *khamr* came to be expressed with a new sensitivity, later parallels in the treatment of love and wine do not appear to owe a direct debt to him.

In *Taṭawwur al-ghazal* Shukrī Fayṣal has spoken of the early Islamic period—before the 'udhrī poets and 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a (d. c. 712)—as a new phase in the development of *ghazal*. Of significance to this study is that he illustrates some of the characteristics of this period by examining the wine poetry of Abū Miḥjan al-Thaḳafi (d. c. 637) in conjunction with the love poetry of Ḥumayd b. Thawr al-Hilālī (d. ante 680).<sup>8</sup> The two poets are seen to represent equivalent developments in the treatment of two distinct themes. Fayṣal's examination is cursory, but occasional gleanings are valuable, especially where he posits the equivalence between the following two lines—the first by Ḥumayd and the second by Abū Miḥjan:

الا هل صدی أم الوليد مكلّم صدای إذا ما كنت رمسا وأعظا  
Will the echo [of Umm Awfā's soul] speak to mine once I am but  
bones and a tomb?

إذا مت فادفني إلى جنب كرمه ثروى عظامي بعد موتی عروقها  
If I should die, bury me by a vine whose roots after my death may  
slake the thirst of my bones.

Essential to both examples is recognition of life after death. In this respect a possibly better analogue of Abū Miḥjan's line is the following fragment from 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a:<sup>9</sup>

فيا ليت أني حين تدنو ميثي شمت الذي ما بين عينيك والقمر

<sup>7</sup> Abū Dhu'ayb's *bā'iyya* is one of five poems which treat love and wine in a similar manner (see poems 5, 6, 9, and 18).

<sup>8</sup> See *Taṭawwur al-Ghazal* (Damascus, 1969), 211 ff.

<sup>9</sup> *Diwān* 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a, 388. This fragment is discussed by Montgomery

وَلَيْتَ طَهْرِي كَانَ رَيْقَكَ كُلَّهُ      وَلَيْتَ حَنَوطِي مِنْ مُشَاشِكَ وَالْدَمِ  
وَلَيْتَ سُلَيْمِي فِي الْمَمَاتِ صَجِيعِي      هُنَالِكَ أَمْ فِي جَنَّةٍ أَمْ جَهَنَّمِ

I wish that I, when my death draws nigh, might smell what lies  
between your eyes and mouth,  
That the water with which I am purified might be compounded of  
your bones (lit. cartilages) and your blood  
And that Sulayma might [lie beside me] in death, whether in the  
verdant Garden or in Jahannam.

Thus, the new perspectives of "Time and Reality" discussed by Jacobi affected wine poetry as well as *ghazal*. A sense of the future certainly has a growing role to play in the rebellious bacchism of the Umayyad and 'Abbāsid period.<sup>10</sup> Whilst Islam added a temporal dimension to the inspiration of these poets, it also brought a new tension, for both love and wine were set against the strictest of religious cautions. Both the love poet and the wine poet came to defy Islam, either by assimilating its imagery, or by adopting a rebellious stance.<sup>11</sup>

The most significant developments in *ghazal* in the Umayyad period are represented by 'Umar b. Abi Rabi'a on the one hand and the 'udhrī poets on the other. To 'Umar the 'Abbāsid *khamriyyāt* of Abū Nuwās appear to owe—possibly directly—features such as erotic narrative and dialogue. From the 'udhrī tradition in general the wine poem inherited some descriptive imagery, once, towards the end of the Umayyad period, wine came to be celebrated conventionally with both feminine and specifically erotic imagery. Though one might view Abū Nuwās as developing an element of bacchic verse already evident in al-A'šā, he appears to owe as much to 'Umar. For the narrative of certain seduction *khamriyyāt* is conspicuously similar in various ways to aspects of many of 'Umar's poems. The Meccan poet often creates a narrative feel around the broad subject of *lahw*, which might signify both *ghazal* and *khamr*.<sup>12</sup>

and Mattock in "The Metaphysical 'Umar?", *JAL* 20/1 (1989), 12–19; I quote here their translation.

<sup>10</sup> See for example the poems of Ḥāritha b. Badr discussed in Ch. 3.

<sup>11</sup> The incompatibility between love and religion is illustrated at an early stage in poetry in al-A'šā's encomium on the Prophet; see poem 18, line 24: *wa-lā taṭlabanna jāratan inna sirra-hā* | *'alay-ka ḥarāmūn fa-nkiḥan aw ta'abbadā*.

<sup>12</sup> *Dīwān 'Umar b. Abi Rabi'a*, 38.

بِتَنَا بِأَنْعَمِ لَيْلَةٍ وَالذَّهَاءِ      لِلنَّفْسِ مَا سَتَرَ الصَّبَاحَ حِجَابُهُ  
حَتَّى إِذَا مَا الصُّبْحُ أَشْرَقَ ضَوْؤُهُ      عَنْ لَوْنٍ أَشْقَرَ وَاضِحٍ أَقْرَابُهُ

We spent a night most enjoyable and pleasurable to the soul, for as  
long as the morning was concealed by its veil,  
Until when the light of dawn shone forth to reveal a light hue—  
its imminence [now] clear.

The lines share a simple temporal framework with most later narrative *khamriyyāt*: night→morning. Further narrative excerpts reminiscent of wine poems are numerous; see the *rā'iyya*<sup>13</sup> where we find the familiar phrase *fa-yā ṭība lahwin mā hunāka lahawtu-hu* (How good were the pleasures I enjoyed there!). In this poem both a *bikr* and a *ghulām*, who perform the role of intermediaries, remind one of the *sāqī*, especially when the *ghulām* is commanded: *iqḍi ḥājatan la-nā* (Give us what we need). Moreover, motifs which set the keynote of the early part of this poem are also suggestive of the language of *khamr*: for example, *dawā'* (cure), *malām* (blame) and *ṣarī'* *al-hawā* ("slain by love"—the equivalent phrase in wine poetry is *ṣarī'* *al-mudām*).<sup>14</sup> Consider also the following excerpts:

فَبِتَ أَسْقَى عَتِيقَ الْخَمْرِ خَالِطُهُ      شَهْدٌ مُشَارٌ وَمِسْكٌ خَالِصٌ ذَوْرُ ...  
فَبِتَ أَلْتَمُهَا طَوْرًا وَيُمَتِّعُنِي      إِذَا تَأَيَّلَ عَنْهُ الْبَرْدُ وَالْخَصْرُ  
حَتَّى إِذَا اللَّيْلُ وَلَّى قَالَتَا زَمْرًا      قُومَا بِعَيْشِكُمَا قَدْ نَوَّرَ السَّحَرُ  
فَقَمْتُ أَمْشِي وَقَامَتْ وَهِيَ فَائِرَةٌ      كَشَارِبِ الْخَمْرِ بَطَى مَشِبَهُ السَّكْرُ

I spent the night being fed wine that had been mixed with honey  
and excellent pure musk.  
I would kiss her and as she reeled she would indulge me with the  
pleasure of her cool [lips],  
Until, when night had passed, two [girl-attendants] said nervously,  
"Get up, the two of you—it is now first light!"  
So I got up to leave, and she rose languidly like a wine-drinker  
whose gait has been disturbed by intoxication . . .<sup>15</sup>

فَاتْرُكِي عَنْكَ مَلَامِي وَاعْلَبِي      وَاتْرُكِي قَوْلَ أَخِي الْإِفْكِ الْأَثِيرِ ...  
فَإِذَا قَتْنِي لَذِيذًا خِلْتُهُ      ذَوْبَ نَحْلِ شَيْبَ بِلَاءِ الْخَصِيرِ

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 129–31.

<sup>14</sup> See line 4: *fa-hāti dawā'an li-lladhī bī minā l-jawā* | *wa-illā fa-da'-nī min malāmi-ka wa-'dhari*.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 138.



مُدَامُ عُنِقَتْ فِي بَابِلٍ      مِثْلَ عَيْنِ الدِّيكِ أَوْ خَمِرِ جَدَرٍ  
فَتَقَفْتُ لَيْلَتِي فِي نِعْمَةٍ      مَرَّةً أَلْتَمُهَا غَيْرَ حَصِيرٍ  
وَأَقْرَى مِرْطَهَا عَنْ مُخْطَفٍ      ضَامِرِ الْأَحْشَاءِ فَعَمِرِ الْمُؤَنَّرِ  
فَلَهَوْنَا لَيْلَنَا حَتَّى إِذَا      طَرَبَ الدِّيكُ وَهَاجَ الْمُدَكِّرِ  
حَرَكْتُ نِثْمَ قَالَتْ جَزَعًا      وَدُمُوعُ الْعَيْنِ مِنْهَا تَبْتَدِرُ  
قُمْ صَفَى النَّفْسِ لَا تَفْضُخْنِي      قَدْ بَدَا الصُّبْحُ وَذَا بَرْدُ السَّحَرِ

Stop censuring me . . . and ignore the lies of my calumniator . . .  
She gave me to taste her sweet [saliva] which I imagined to be  
honey mixed with cold limpid water.  
Or a wine aged in Babel, the colour of a cock's eye . . .  
So my night was spent in pleasure, and at times I would kiss her  
without restraint,  
Whilst tearing her silk garment from her slim waist and full hips.  
We amused ourselves through the night until when the cock  
crowed and the nostalgic one became moved  
She prodded me and said distraughtly as tears poured from her  
eyes,  
"Get up in good spirit, do not create a scandal for me. Morning  
has come—this is the cold [wind] of dawn."

As in the *khamriyya* a hedonistic episode is prefaced by what comes close to a motif of censure, thus enhancing the carefree spirit of indulgence.<sup>16</sup> The sixth line quoted here, in confining its commentary to *lahw* (following on from the reference to *ni'ma* in line 4), is especially harmonious with bacchic depictions. Also worthy of commentary are elements of lines 6–7: *hāja l-mudhakkiru* . . . *wa-dumū'u l-'ayni tabtadiru*: a similar welling of emotions often operates in Abū Nuwās at the finale of the bacchic scene.<sup>17</sup>

The other influence 'Umar may have had on bacchic poetry is in the consolidation of some imagery, especially that of the ailment of love and its cure, and the imagery of fatal love and love which resurrects:<sup>18</sup> *amūtu idhā šaḥaṭat dāru-hā | wa-ahyā idhā anā*

<sup>16</sup> For similarities in the treatment of the censurer in both the *khamriyya* and *ghazal* compare the following two verses: 'Alī b. Jabala (*Ṭabaqāt al-Šu'arā'*, 184): *wa-idhā takallama 'ādhilun fī ḥubbi-hā | aghrā l-fu'āda bi-hā wa-raḡqa l-'ādhilū*; Abū Nuwās: *da' 'an-ka lawmī fa-inna l-lawma iḡhrā'u*.

<sup>17</sup> See esp. Abū Nuwās: *bā'iyya* (*Dīwān*, 110–1).

<sup>18</sup> An excellent example of this motif exists in a verse from *Ṭabaqāt al-Šu'arā'* attributed to 'Awf b. Muḥallim al-Khuzā'i (p. 192): *qattalti-ni ḥinan wa-ḥinan a'ašti-ni | fa-afnayti 'umrī bi-l-imātati wa-l-našri*.

*lāqaytu-hā || fa-uqsimu law anna mā bī bi-hā | wa-kuntu l-ṭabība lādāwaytu-hā* (When her abode is distant I die but when I encounter her [again] I am revived. || I swear that were she to suffer as I do—and I were the doctor—I would cure her);<sup>19</sup> *muqabbalu-hā . . . ka-anna madhāqa-hu khamru . . . ya'tī bi-hi l-našru* (Her mouth tastes of wine and by it one is revived);<sup>20</sup> *law suqiya l-amwātu riqata-hā | ba'da ka'si l-mawti la-ntašarū* (If the dead were given her saliva to drink—after having sipped from the "cup of death"—they would come to life again).<sup>21</sup> This imagery explains the existence of the two related phrases (already discussed briefly): *šarī' al-khamr* and *šarī' al-hawā*; either of these could summarize the state depicted in the following verse: *šara'at-ni 'aynā-hu sukrān | qabla taštū bi-rāḥatay-hi l-'uqāru* (His eyes had already slain me [and left me] drunk before the attack of the wine [held] in his two palms).<sup>22</sup>

The poetry of al-Walid b. Yazid (d. 744) also merits discussion, as most scholars share the view that Abū Nuwās developed in the mould of al-Walid—who certainly had an influence on the so-called libertines of Kūfa, especially Muṭī' b. Iyās<sup>23</sup> (d. 785). However, this misses the point, for it is as important to distinguish between the two as it is to posit their similarity, which serves only to diminish what is unique in Abū Nuwās. Similar in inspiration and diction to the earlier poet Yazid b. Mu'āwiya (d. 683), al-Walid consciously developed the imagery and language of both *ghazal* and *khamr* such that they became in certain respects interchangeable. His language is light and lyrical, and his mood is consistently one of incitement—his poems are characterized by initial imperatives that set a keynote after which follow brief depictions of wine, women, and song. Importantly, he is constantly defiant of Islam, an attitude first shown by Abū Miḥjan al-Thaqafī. Typical, therefore, of al-Walid are the following lines which evince a preoccupation with wine and love in defiance of Islam:

أَرَانِي قَدْ تَصَابَيْتُ      وَقَدْ كُنْتُ تَنَاهَيْتُ  
وَلَوْ يَتْرُكُنِي الْحُبُّ      لَقَدْ صُمْتُ وَصَلَيْتُ

I see I have become passionate though once I restrained myself.  
And if I am unlucky in love, [at least] I will have [the advantage  
of having once] fasted and prayed!<sup>24</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *Dīwān*, 76.      <sup>20</sup> Ibid. 179.      <sup>21</sup> Ibid. 184.      <sup>22</sup> *Quṭb al-surūr*, 386.

<sup>23</sup> See G. E. von Grunebaum, "Three Arabic Poets of the Early Abbasid Age (The Collected Fragments of Muṭī' ibn Iyās, Salm al-Khāsir and Abū 'š-Samaqmaq)", *Orientalia*, 17 (1948), 160–204.      <sup>24</sup> *Ši'r al-Walid b. Yazid*, poem 13, p. 28.



أَشْهَدُ اللَّهَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةَ الْأَبْرَارَ وَالْعَابِدِينَ أَهْلَ الصَّلَاحِ  
أَنْتَى أَشْتَهِي السَّمْعَ وَشَرِبَ الدِّرَاحِ وَالْعَصَّ فِي خُدُودِ الْمِلَاحِ

I call upon God to be my witness, as well as pious angels and  
righteous people,  
That I desire music and song, to drink wine and to bite the cheeks  
of nubile youths.

al-Walid channels his various passions into a humorous counter-  
testament of religious faith. Whilst in sentiment he is reminiscent of  
Abū Nuwās, his poems display a different structure;<sup>25</sup> love and  
wine exist side by side without the contrived contrast of emotions  
that gives Abū Nuwās' *khamriyyāt* a relative complexity. Typical of  
al-Walid and even later contemporaries of Abū Nuwās is the mere  
juxtaposition of love and wine: *uḥibbu l-ghinā'a wa-ṣurba l-ṭilā'i* |  
*wa-unsā l-nisā'i wa-rabba l-suwar* (I love the song, the drinking  
of wine, the intimacy of women and the Lord of the Sūras). The  
attitude and content of this verse is an apt summary of al-Walid's  
bacchism.

#### FEMININE IMAGERY

In his unpublished thesis "The Symbol of Wine in Pre-Islamic  
Poetry" Birairi discusses the use of feminine imagery. He quotes  
from *Ḥalbat al-Kumayt* various epithets for wine, all of which are  
feminine metaphors: *al-'arūs*, *ummu l-dahr*, *ukhtu l-masarrāh*,  
*ibnatu l-'inab*, *al-'ajūz*, *al-ṣamṭā'*, *ummu Laylā*, *ummu l-khabā'ith*,  
etc. These epithets were the basis for the enhancement of the sexual  
allegory in much of the poetry of later periods. By the Umayyad  
period wine came to be celebrated in terms of a natural equivalence  
in the use of erotic language between *ghazal* and *khamr*. The  
poetry of al-Walid b. Yazīd and Abū l-Hindī, then later Muslim b.  
al-Walid and Abū Nuwās (to name only a representative few) pro-  
duced amorous and bacchic imagery that coalesced in femininity,  
sexuality, and the interchangeable roles of the *sāqī* (who was typi-

<sup>25</sup> For an analysis of structure in the poems of al-Walid see R. Jacobi's two  
articles: "Theme and Variations in Umayyad *Ghazal* Poetry", *JAL* 23/2 (1992), 109–  
19; and "Zur *Ghazal*poesie des Walids Ibn Yazīd", in W. Heinrichs and G. Schoeler  
(edd.), *Festschrift Ewald Wagner zum 65. Geburtstag*. vol. ii: *Studien zur*  
*Arabischen Dichtung* (Beirut 1994), 145–61.

cally the object of eroticism in the Nuwasian seduction poem) and  
the wine.<sup>26</sup>

#### Al-Walid b. Yazīd

لَيْتَ حَظِّي الْيَوْمَ مِنْ كُ  
قَهْوَةٍ أَبْذُلُ فِيهَا  
طَارِفِي ثُمَّ يَلَادِي  
هَائِمًا فِي كُلِّ وَادِي  
وَفَلَاحِي وَرَشَادِي  
إِنَّ فِي ذَالِكَ صَلَاحِي

Would that today, my share of all the livelihood and provisions  
which I have were to consist in  
A wine on which to spend my newly acquired wealth and then my  
inheritance;  
So that because of it (the wine) my heart could wander distractedly in  
every *wādī*.<sup>27</sup>  
Therein lies my piety, my salvation and my right-guidance.<sup>28</sup>

The third line humorously describes a passion for wine in a language  
borrowed directly from the Qur'ān and in a sentiment reminiscent  
of 'udhrī poetry. That al-Walid was familiar with and owed his  
imagery to both the 'udhrī and *ibāḥī* tradition is stated expressly in  
another poem:<sup>29</sup> *qultu qawlan li-Sulaymā mu'jiban* | *mithla mā qāla*  
*Jamilun wa-'Umar* (I spoke finely to Sulaym in the manner of Jamil  
and 'Umar). The religious/blasphemous imagery with which he  
continues and modifies this statement is thus declared—obliquely—  
to be of 'udhrī inspiration: *law ra'aynā li-Sulaymā atharan* | *la-*  
*sajadnā alfa alfin li-l-athar* || *wa-ttakhadhnā-hā imāman murtadan*  
| *wa-la-kānat ḥajja-nā wa-l-mu'tamar* || *innamā bintu sa'īdin*  
*qamarun* | *hal ḥarijnā in sajadnā li-l-qamar* (If we were to see a  
trace belonging to Sulaymā | we would prostrate ourselves to [this]  
trace a million times; || we would adopt her as our Imām | and she  
would be the goal of both our full and lesser pilgrimage. || Bint Sa'īd  
is the very moon; | should we feel shame if we prostrate ourselves

<sup>26</sup> For further examples of this kind of imagery see Ḥāwī's comments on Mālik  
b. Asmā' (d. c.715) and Abū Jilda al-Yaškūrī (d. c.700) in *Fann al-Ši'r al-Khamrī*.  
See also the poetry of al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḍaḥḥāk, esp. *Aṣ'ār al-khalī'*, 62–3.

<sup>27</sup> This verse clearly echoes *āya* 225 of *Sūrat al-Šu'arā'* (26) which offers a  
stylized and certainly critical view of the poets in the pre-Islamic period: *a-lam tara*  
*anna-hum fi kulli wādin yahimūna*.

<sup>28</sup> *Dīwān*, poem 34, p. 53.

<sup>29</sup> *Dīwān*, poem 32, p. 51.

to the moon?). The imagery here is significant since divinification also exists in the treatment of wine; whilst the earliest example can be traced back to al-A'sā,<sup>30</sup> perhaps the most spirited and deliberately blasphemous example exists in the *dīwān* of Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya.<sup>31</sup>

*Abū l-Hindī*

وَقَدْ كُنْتُ حِينَئِذَا بِهَا مُغْرَمًا      كَحَبِّ الْغَلَامِ الْفَتَاةَ الرِّدَا  
فَلَمْ يَبْقَ فِي الصَّدْرِ مِنْ حُبِّهَا      سِوَى أَنْ إِذَا ذُكِرْتُ قُلْتُ أَحَا

I was once passionate for her [the wine], with the love of a young boy for a sensuous young girl.

But now nothing remains of my love, except that, whenever she is mentioned, I sigh "Ah . . ."

In the manner of al-Walīd above the poet speaks with muted sincerity of his passion for wine. The arousal of emotion at the mention of the beloved's name alludes to *'udhrī* poetry; compare the second verse to the following examples attributed to Majnūn:<sup>32</sup> *wa-ahwā minā l-asmā' i mā wāfaqa sma-hā* | *wa-ašbaha-hu aw kāna min-hu mudāniyā* (I love every name that is the same as hers, or like to it, or in any way resembles it); and, *wa-dā'in da'ā idh nahnu bi-l-khayfi min Minā* | *fa-hayyaja aḥzāna l-fu'ādi wa-mā yadrī* || *da'ā bi-smi Laylā ghayra-hā fa-ka-annamā* | *aṭāra bi-Laylā ṭā'iran kāna fī ṣadrī* (Often has someone called out, when we were on Minā's slopes, and has stirred unwittingly my heart's griefs; he has called by the name Laylā someone other than my love, and it was as though [by the very word] "Laylā" he caused a bird in my breast to fly up).

In *Ṭabaqāt al-Šu'arā'* Ibn al-Mu'tazz transmits a 16-line poem by Abū l-Hindī, which is one of the finest examples of the erotic in bacchic description:<sup>33</sup> (lines 1–2)

<sup>30</sup> See *Dīwān*, ed. Husayn, p. 85: *wa-ṣahbā'a ṭāfa yahūdīyyu-hā* | *wa-abraza-hā wa-'alay-hā khutum* || *wa-qābala-hā l-rīḥu fī dānni-hā* | *wa-ṣallā 'alā dānni-hā wa-rtasam*.

<sup>31</sup> See Šī'r Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya, 47: *mā ḥarrama llāhu šurba l-khamri 'an 'abathin* | *min-hu wa-lākin li-sirrin mūdā'un fī-hā* || *lammā ra'ā l-nāsa aḍḥaw mughrāmīna bi-hā* | *wa-kulla fannin ḥawaw-hu min ma'āni-hā* || *awḥā bi-taḥrīmī-hā khawfan 'alay-bi bi-an* | *yudḥū la-hā sujjadan min dūni-bi tihā*.

<sup>32</sup> See al-Jāḥiẓ, *Risālat al-Qiyān*, ed. Beeston, p. 20 (of Arabic text).

<sup>33</sup> See Ibn al-Mu'tazz, *Ṭabaqāt al-Šu'arā'*, 140.

وَفَارَةً مِنْ عَذَارٍ شَمَمَتْهَا      يَنْفُوحُ عَلَيْنَا مِنْهَا وَعَبِيرُهَا  
سَمَوْتُ إِلَيْهَا بَعْدَ مَا نَامَ أَهْلُهَا      غُدُّوْا وَلَمَّا تَلَقَّ عَنْهَا سَتُورُهَا

I remember smelling a diffusion of Musk from a cheek whose fragrance wafted towards us,

So I made my way to see her, when her relatives were asleep in the early morning, and the curtains had not yet been thrown aside to reveal her.

The identity of the feminine in the first line is equivocal—only a quality is being extolled. In the second line the phrase *samawtu ilay-hā ba'da mā nāma ahlu-hā*, as Abu Deeb has pointed out elsewhere,<sup>34</sup> alludes to imagery in the erotic adventures of Imru'u l-Qays and 'Umar b. Abī Rabī'a (who himself drew on the poet of Kinda). The third line, without in any clear way articulating transition and thereby identifying the feminine entity in 1–2, finds focus in bacchism: "Abū l-Hindī will find a rich substitute for Sālīm's milk-skins in fawn-like [wine-]vessels . . .". Line 8 sustains the erotic note struck in the first two verses and enriches the texture of the composite descriptive passage into which it is set: (lines 8 and 9)

أَقْبَلْتُهَا فَوْقَ الْفِرَاشِ كَأَنَّهَا      صَلَابَةُ عَطَّارٍ يَنْفُوحُ زَرِيرُهَا  
إِذَا ذَاقَهَا مِنْ ذَاقٍ جَادٍ يَالِئِ      وَقَدْ قَامَ سَاقِي الْقَوْمِ وَهَنًا يُدِيرُهَا

I kissed her on the bed; [she had the fragrance] of a perfumist's stone-pounder<sup>35</sup> . . .

He who drinks her will give his money away generously after the *sāqī* has passed her around amongst the people in the middle of the night . . .

It is the second of these two lines which identifies the feminine persona as wine. Thus the poet describes the pleasurable consumption

<sup>34</sup> See K. Abu Deeb, *Jadaliyyat al-Khafā' wa-l-Tajallī*, 76–86. His introductory remarks about this poem are consonant with our observations: *mundhu bidāyati-hā tafūhu qaṣīdatu Abī l-Hindī bi-'abirin tamtaziju fī-hi šūratu l-mar'ati—l-khamrati imtizājan kullīyyan* . . . *wa-tamtaliku l-šūratu ltibāsan dākhiliyyan ghaniyyan ya'alu-hā tatanāwasu bayna l-mar'ati wa-l-khamrati dūna ḥallin ḥāsimin li-l-tawatturi bayna-humā*. Thereafter, Abu Deeb's analysis focuses principally on the binary opposition of pleasure and anxiety; Abū l-Hindī channels this duality into the expression of a self-subsistent world-view, where the bacchic setting furnishes its own impulses for conventional elements of composition—a process which is detectable perhaps to a greater extent in Abū Nuwās.

<sup>35</sup> The word *ṣalāya* may constitute another allusion to the *Mu'allāqa* of Imru'u l-Qays where it occurs at line 62 (of the Kufan recension). This is suggested by the rare occurrence of the word together with the clear allusion to Imru'u l-Qays in line 2b.

of wine as an amorous embrace. With respect to the entire poem it seems that intertextuality has a function: allusions to Imru'ū l-Qays frame conventional bacchism with elements of ancient poetry (erotic adventure/*nasīb*) and by this very device enhance the quality of the poem; an extra dimension is imparted to the piece which is attached to the established canon of poetry; at the same time these allusions articulate a simple and engaging narrative: "I went to a fragrant wine at dawn whilst others were sleeping (1-2) . . . and by the time the sun was in the sky I was in such a state that it seemed to me the houses of the village were collapsing (line 16)." Loss—the departure of the beloved and the frustrated love of the ancient *nasīb*—is transmuted to the loss of control that accompanies a drunken stupor (it is the word *dūr* in the last line of the poem that suggests this interpretation—*dūr* being an alternative plural for *diyār*).

#### Abū Nuwās

The highest incidence of feminine imagery in wine poetry exists in the *dīwān* of Abū Nuwās.<sup>36</sup> The plethora of such material demands that it be separated into various categories, all of which are complementary in producing a composite texture of erotic bacchism.

Scholars have commonly observed that in descriptive passages wine is often figuratively married to (i.e. mixed with) water.<sup>37</sup> A variant of this motif is the depiction of the carousers as suitors, whose object is to be married to the wine, and hence the purchasing of wine is expressed as the payment of a dowry. One poem coheres as a conversation between the poet and the wine: *qālat fa-man khātībī hādhā fa-qultu anā l qālat fa-ba'liya qultu l-mā'u in 'adhubā* (She said, "Who is asking for my hand?" I said, "It is I." She said, "And who will be my husband?" I said, "Fresh water.")<sup>38</sup> Other examples are more akin to a sexual fantasy in the imagery that is forged and thus complement the promiscuous attitude which characterizes many saturnalian narratives: *zawwajtu-hā l-mā'a kay tadhilla la-hū l fa-mta'adat hīna massa-hā l-dhakaru ll ka-dhālika l-bikru 'inda khalwati-hā l yazharu min-hā l-hayā'u wa-l-khafaru* (I married her

<sup>36</sup> One reason for this is simply that more extant wine poetry is attributed to him than to any other poet.

<sup>37</sup> See for example ch. 1 of al-Nuwayhī's *Nafsiyyat Abī Nuwās*. It should be noted that the marriage metaphor also exists in Muslim b. al-Walid's poetry; a fine example can be found in the *lāmiyya*, *Dīwān*, pp. 33-43.

<sup>38</sup> *Dīwān*, 91.

to the water that she might submit herself to it; but she grew vexed when its virility touched her. Such is a maiden when you are alone with her: she becomes timid and shy).<sup>39</sup> Related to the marriage metaphor is the commonplace description of wine as a maiden, *bikr*; the piercing of the amphora's seal results in an image with deliberately sexual overtones:<sup>40</sup> *wa-bikri sulāfatin fī qa'ri dannin l la-hā dir'āni min qārin wa-ṭini . . . šakaktu buzāla-hā wa-l-laylu dājin . . .* (I have often of a dark night pierced the seal of a maiden wine [which lay] in the depths of a vat, twin-coated with tar and clay.)

There are many instances in the poetry where the wine and the *sāqī* perform analogous roles in intoxicating the poet. Such images, for the most part encapsulated within a single line, may help to fuse the disparate elements of the poem into a tableau of erotic intoxication;<sup>41</sup> examples are numerous (all from *Dīwān*):<sup>42</sup>

عَذَبُ الشَّائِلِ طَيِّبُ اللَّثْمِ	... يَسْعَى إِلَيْكَ بِهَا أَخُو هَيْفٍ
(p. 178) مَمْزُوجَةٍ مِنْ فِيهِ بِالْظَّلْمِ	... يَسْقِيكَ كَأْسًا مِنْ مُشْعَشَعَةٍ
وَتَدُورُ أُخْرَى مِنْ يَدَيْهِ عُقَارٌ	يَسْقِيكَ كَأْسًا مِنْ عَصِيرِ جُفُونِهِ
(p. 688)	
(p. 52) فِيهِ رُضَابًا يَجْرِي عَلَى بَرْدٍ	اشْرَبْ مِنْ كَفِّهِ شَمُولًا وَمِنْ
(p. 62) بَعْدَ رَاوَيْنِ مِنْ خَمَرٍ وَآلٍ	فَطَلْتُ لَدَى دَسَاكِرِهِ عَرُوسًا
(p. 74) مُدِيرٌ طَرْفٍ بِهِ أَحْوَارٌ	مَا أَسْكُرَتْنِي الشُّمُولُ لَكِنْ
وَسُكْرٌ مِنْ رَحِيقِ خُسْرُوَانِي	فَلِي سُكْرَانٌ مِنْهُ سُكْرٌ طَرْفٍ
(p. 103)	
وَمَرَّةٌ مِنْ فَضْلَةِ الْكَاسِ	أَشْرَبُ مِنْ رَيْقَتِهِ مَرَّةً
تَقُلُّ بِهِ خَطَرَةٌ وَسَوَاسِ	مَتَى يُرْمِ فِي سُكْرِهِ مَنْطِقًا
(p. 106) وَالتَّوْمُ قَدْ عَانَقَ جُلَاسِي	حَتَّى انْتَنَى مِثْلَ صَرِيحِ الْهَوَى

There is an equivalence in these lines between *šarī' al-hawā* (slain

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 673.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 32.

<sup>41</sup> Abū Nuwās is by no means unique in producing this type of imagery. There are instances of it in Muslim b. al-Walid, Ibn al-Mu'tazz, and later poets which are in no way distinct from examples quoted forthwith.

<sup>42</sup> It would be invidiously repetitive to translate the examples given which are all creative variations of a single topic.

by love) and *ṣarī' al-mudām* (slain by wine). The shared repertory of images for both love and wine creates a single texture of *lahw* (dalliance).

كَيْفَ التُّرُوعُ وَقَلْبِي قَدْ تَقَسَّمَهُ      لَحْظَ الْعُيُونِ وَلَوْ أَنَّ الرَّاحَ فِي الْكَأْسِ  
(p. 140)

بَسَقِيكَ بِالْعَيْنَيْنِ خَمْرًا إِذَا      نَاغَاكَ بِالْكَأْسِ بِإِعْجَالٍ  
(p. 143)

مَجٌّ فِي الْكَأْسِ رَيْقَهُ وَسَقَانِي      مِنْ شَرَابٍ مُعْتَقٍ مَخْتَوْمٍ  
(p. 177)

يُغَلِّلُنَا بِصَافِيَةِ وَوَجْهِ      كَبِيرٍ لَاحٍ مِنْ خَلَلِ السَّحَابِ  
(p. 188)

قَدْ تَحَسَّيْتُهَا عَلَى وَجْهِ سَاقٍ      خَالِجٍ فِي هَوَايَ كُلِّ عِذَارٍ  
كَمْ شَمَمْنَا مِنْ خَدِّهِ الْوَرْدَ غَضًّا      وَمَزَجْنَا رُضَابَهُ بِعُقَارٍ  
(p. 183)

The sexuality of the *sāqī* contained in this final verse is foreshadowed in an earlier line where he is described as *khātibun* (seeking the wine in marriage). Of particular significance are similar motifs where seduction, or the intimation of a seduction, emerges. Such images enhance the organic unity of the poetry:

شَمَسُ الْمُدَامِ بِكَفِّهِ وَبَوَاجِهِ      شَمَسُ الْجَلَالِ فَبَيَّنَا شَمْسَانِ  
(p. 195)

The verse is contained in a 14-line poem in which a contrast is played out between love typical of the *nasīb* (line 1, *furqatu l-aqrāni*) and indulgence: the poet drinks in order to fulfil his desires, lines 13–14: *mā ziltu ašrabu ka'sa-hum . . . li-anāla min-hum . . . taḥiyyatan . . . bi-ṭarfi lisani*.

تَسْقِيكَ مِنْ عَيْنِهَا خَمْرًا وَمِنْ يَدِهَا      خَمْرًا فَمَا لَكَ مِنْ سُكْرَيْنِ مِنْ بَدِيٍّ  
لِي تَشَوَّتَانِ وَلِلنَّدَامَانِ وَاحِدَةً      شَيْءٌ خُصِّصَتْ بِهِ مِنْ بَيْنِهِمْ وَحْدِي  
(p. 27)

The eroticism of the two lines (lines 4 and 5 of a 5-line poem) contrasts with the resonances of frustrated love contained in the names typical of the *nasīb*: (line 1a) *lā tabki Laylā wa-lā taṭrab ilā Hind*. The dominant role which the poet plays in most of this poetry is crystallized in the final hemistich.

وَعَزَالٍ يُدِيرُهَا بَيْنَانٍ      نَاعِمَاتٍ يَزِيدُهَا الْعَمْرُ لَنَا  
(p. 30)      يَتْرُكُ الْقَلْبَ لِلْسُرُورِ خَدِينَا

This *khamriyya* sets out the partnership between love (represented by the *ṭulūl*) and wine in the opening line: *ghanni-nā bi-l-ṭulūli kayfa balinā | wa-sqi-nā nu'ṭi-ka l-thanā'a l-thaminā*.

نَأْخُذُ صَهْبَاءَ بِنْتِ كَرَمٍ      عِذْرَاءَ لَمْ تَوْهِيَ الْجِجَالُ  
(p. 129)

This verse occurs in a poem where there is a hint of seduction taking place; consider the following two lines:

(تَبَهَّتْ) مُحَمَّدًا خَيْرٌ مِنْ يُرْجَى      يَفْضُرُ عَنْ وَصْفِهِ الْمَقَالُ  
فَقُلْتُ خُذْهَا فَذَلِكَ نَفْسِي      فَكُلْ شَيْءٌ لَهُ زَوَالُ

It is the invitation to wine (*khudh-hā*) which signposts the consummation of desires that ensues in the narrative (see below, "Seduction and *Mujūn*").

أَشْرَبْتُ كَأْسًا مِنْ كَفِّهَا وَلَهَا      كَأْسُ سُقَامٍ فِي النَّفْسِ تُجْرِيهَا  
(p. 191)

The description of love in this seduction poem evokes the *'udhrī* notion of a *liebestod*:

لَوْلَا بِلَاقِي لِمَا تَجَنَّبْتُ أَهْ      وَالْأَلَا يُرَى الْمَوْتُ فِي أَدَانِهَا  
وَلَا تَعَرَّضْتُ لِلْحُتُوفِ بَنَفْ      سِ كَانَتْ بَعْضُ الْغُرَامِ يُسْلِيهَا

This emotional intensity is not atypical and offers a third category of erotic imagery:

أَلَا لَا تَلْمَنِ فِي الْعُقَارِ جَلِيسِي      وَلَا تَلْحَنِي فِي شَرِبِهَا بِعُبُوسٍ  
لَقَدْ بَسَطَ الرَّحْمَانُ مِنِّي مَوَدَّةَ      إِلَيْهَا وَمَنْ قَوْمٍ لَدَيَّ جُلُوسٍ  
تَعَشَّقُهَا قَلْبِي فَبَغَضَ عَشْقُهَا      إِلَيَّ مِنَ الْأَمْوَالِ كُلِّ نَفِيسٍ  
جُنِنْتُ عَلَى عِذْرَاءَ غَيْرِ قَوِيَّةٍ      شَدِيدَةً بَطْشِي فِي الرَّجَاجِ شَمُوسٍ  
تَرَى كَأْسَهَا عِنْدَ الْمِزَاجِ كَأَنَّمَا      نَشَرْتُ عَلَيْهَا حُلَى رَأْسِ عَرُوسٍ  
فَتَهْنِئِكَ أَسْتَارَ الضَّمِيرِ مِنَ الْحَشَا      وَتُبْدِي مِنَ الْأَسْرَارِ كُلِّ حَبِيسٍ

Do not blame me for [drinking] wine my friend, do not reproach me this way . . .

Merciful God has decreed a love for her of me and those with whom I sit [and drink].

My heart has fallen for her, and this passion has made me  
 think little of spending [on her] the highest price . . .  
 I have become insane for a delicate virgin who is excessively  
 violent in the glass, headstrong.  
 You would consider her cup in the mixing to be decked out  
 in the head-dress of a bride.  
 She rends the veils of one's heart and causes one's  
 innermost secrets to be divulged.

(p. 99)

This poem is quoted in full, for there is no finer example of a *khamriyya* drawing its lyricism from *'udhrī ghazal*. As in the poetry of Jamīl and Majnūn, love for wine is divinely ordained (2a); this excuse meets the force of the censorer's rebuke. Line 3 stresses love for wine, and excuses reckless spending. The word *junintu* in line 4, which describes the poet's affected state, shares the root and, to some degree, the significance of the name Majnūn, thus sustaining the *'udhrī* resonances of line 2; that the wine is *'adhrā* further fulfils the ideals of this register of love poetry. Moreover, chiming with the poet's emotional response, line 5 further celebrates the femininity of wine, the bubbles of which upon its being mixed with water are like the jewels in which a bride is decked out. In line 6, wine, as if charmed, extracts hidden secrets.<sup>43</sup>

The influence of *'udhrī* imagery is pervasive and varied. The inheritor of this imagery in the Abbāsīd period, al-Abbās b. al-Aḥnaf, may describe his beloved in a way that adumbrates the mystic poets: *law barazat bi-l-layli mā ḡalla man yasrī* (When she comes out at night he who travels before dawn cannot go astray);<sup>44</sup> similarly Abū Nuwās lauds an ancient wine: *fa'alat fi l-bayti idh muzijat | mithla fi'li l-ṣubḥi fi l-ḡulami* (When she is mixed her effect in the house is the same as the dawn on night's darkness). Often the poet describes his own moribund state: *inna-ka in lam tasqi-ni mittu dūna-hā* (If you do not give me her to drink I will die without her). Or he will add an emotive dimension to an otherwise conventional motif; that is, the mixing: *law niltumā mā niltu mā muzijat | illā bi-dam'i-kumā mina l-wajdi . . .* (If you were in the same passionate state that I am in you would [find yourself] mixing the wine with your tears). *Hawā* (love) is frequently what the poet professes to feel for wine: *buh bi-smi man tahwā wa-da'-nī mina*

<sup>43</sup> Abū Nuwās reworks this image to describe the wine in *Yā sāḥir al-ṭarf*, which is discussed in detail below.

<sup>44</sup> *Dīwān*, 34.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* 41.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* 138.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* 182.

*l-kunā* (Speak openly the name of the one you love and set aside allusion);<sup>48</sup> *a-'ādhilu lā talum-nī fi hawā-hā | fa-inna 'itābu-nā fi-hā yaṭūlu* (Censurer, do not blame me for loving her—reproof will endure [too] long);<sup>49</sup> the poet's attitude to wine may recall the attitude of a co-operative lover: *laysa min šiyamī l-'usr* (It is not in my character to cause distress). Consider also the following line:<sup>50</sup> *fa-šammartu athwābī wa-harwaltu musri'an | wa-qalbiya min šawqin yakādu yahīmu* (I tucked up my garments and hastened [towards the taverner] with my heart in raptures for love); this comes in the midst of description of wine and introduces a bacchic narrative; clearly, therefore, the poet's passion (*šawq*) is for wine. The poet's amorous confession, one which evokes the *'udhrī* register in the use of the verb *yahīm*, is enhanced elsewhere in the poem when the wine is likened to the effaced traces of the *aṭlāl*:<sup>51</sup> *a-lasta tarā-hā qad ta'affat rusūmu-hā | ka-mā qad ta'affat li-l-diyāri rusūmu* (Do you not see that its traces are effaced in the manner of the traces of the [proverbial] abode). Finally, the poet may describe his relationship with wine as one of intimacy (*uns*):<sup>52</sup> *tilka lā a'dama-nī-hā llā | -hu unsī 'idlu rūḥi || yajnaḥu l-qalbu ilay-hā | fi l-hawā ayya junūḥi || 'aṭafat nafsī 'alay-hā | bi-hawan ḡhayri nazūḥi* (She, may God preserve her for me, is my intimate, equal to my soul. My heart inclines heavily towards her as does my soul with unmitigated love). But contrary to what one might expect to find in an *'udhrī* poem such intensity need not determine a chaste experience:

زُرْتُهَا خَاطِبًا فَزُوجْتُ بِكَرًا  
 فَفَضَضْتُ الْخِتَامَ غَيْرَ مُلِيمٍ

عن فتاةٍ كأنها . . .

لَسْتُ عُمَرَى عَنْ شَرِبِهَا بِمَسْؤُومٍ  
 فِيهَا لَذَنِي وَغَايَةُ أُنْسَى

I visited her to seek her hand and married her in a virgin state,  
 so without incurring reproach I tore the seal

From a young girl . . .

In whose company is my pleasure and my most intimate  
 experience, and whom I shall never in my life tire of  
 drinking.

(p. 175)

Emotions such as those displayed above often feed off the emotions implicit in the *aṭlāl* topos (which may either be reworked or

<sup>48</sup> *Dīwān*, 28.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* 184.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* 131.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* 132.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* 695.

rejected) and other *nasīb* topoi; that is, feminine imagery within the poems is by and large offset against the frustrated love of *nasīb* and, to a certain extent, against the self-denial of *'udhrī ghazal*. Such material is extensive.

#### THE MANIPULATION OF THE ROLE OF NASĪB

Abū Nuwās' treatment of the *aṭlāl* motif has been commented on at length by scholars who deduce historical and political significance from this trait. Most commonly the poet has been viewed as a *šu'ūbī*,<sup>53</sup> and recently the same evidence has been re-examined to posit the participation of the poet in the diatribes of *'aṣabiyya*.<sup>54</sup> It is salutary simply to view the two movements as part of the historical and political background of a consummate poet, whose main concerns were literary. Arazī's article "Abū Nuwās: Fut-il Šu'ūbite?",<sup>55</sup> notes that the majority of scholars interpret his disdain for the bedouin as being due to his Persian origins.<sup>56</sup> Those

<sup>53</sup> Though much continues to be written about *Šu'ūbiyya* there is no more convenient summary of the subject than Goldziher's in *Muslim Studies*, vol. i (see also H. Norris's *Šu'ūbiyyah* in *CHALABL* 31-45). The *šu'ūbiyya* ideology based itself on Qur'an, 49/13, which speaks of the equality of the non-Arab *šu'ūb* (people) and the Arab *qabā'il* (tribes). Those nearest to God are the most pious, regardless of ethnic origin. This ideological foundation drew around it those of non-Arab lineage, notably Persians, who felt a need to express their own cultural parity, even superiority, in the face of Arab hegemony. With the rise of the 'Abbāsids in the 2nd century of the *hijra* noble Persian families, such as the Barmakids, came to power at the caliphal court; this encouraged Persians to voice openly their resentment of Arab racial arrogance. It is important for the purpose of this discussion to highlight a distinction: the *šu'ūbiyya* party was, to quote Goldziher, "a group of authors and scholars and not of dissatisfied people and rebellious mobs". It was a literary phenomenon mostly confined to works on genealogy and philology.

<sup>54</sup> Goldziher touched on this subject in his comments about the near-contemporary of Abū Nuwās, Dik al-Jinn al-Himṣī (d. 850-1). He was (op. cit. 144): "a representative of a particularly Syrian patriotism; he was a descendant of Tamīm to whom the following statement is attributed in the *Aghānī*: 'The Arabs have no precedence over us, since our descent is united in Abraham; we have become Muslims like them; if one of them kills one of us he is punished by death; and God had never announced that they are preferred to us.'" Goldziher adds in a footnote: "It is obvious that such a person must also have condemned the racial hatred between Qaysites and Yemenites. Instructive in this connection is a poem by him (*Aghānī* 12/149) inspired by the fact that the Yemenite inhabitants of Emesa deposed a preacher of Northern Arab descent." Thus, whilst he was akin to Abū Nuwās in mocking the *aṭlāl* motif at least twice in his poetry (see *Dīwān Dik al-Jinn al-Himṣī*, 91), he was distinct in his stance *vis-à-vis* *'aṣabiyya*.

<sup>55</sup> Albert Arazī, "Abū Nuwās: Fut-il Šu'ūbite?", *Arabica*, 26 (1979), 1-61.

<sup>56</sup> Of the orientalist who share this view Gabrieli is perhaps the most notable

who have most noticeably challenged this view are Wagner and Arazī himself. In the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (new edition) Wagner states: "Abū Nuwās can hardly be called a *šu'ūbī*. He merely reflects the cultural ambience of his time in which Persian elements had a growing part to play."<sup>57</sup> Further, by putting greater emphasis on Abū Nuwās' role in the diatribes of *'aṣabiyya* Wagner has led Arazī to posit that the poet's defence of the southern Arabs provides a more plausible explanation for his apparent *šu'ūbī* tendencies. Arazī's discussion divides broadly into two parts: (i) the literary aspect and (ii) the socio-political aspect. Concentrating on the poetry itself he says:

L'apologie du vin ne constitue pas un acte politique ni l'expression d'un complot contre les principes de la société Musulmane. Une analyse purement littéraire a permis de montrer qu'il ne s'agit pas de *šu'ūbiyya* mais d'une quête de bonheur individuel.<sup>58</sup>

Amongst other topics Arazī discusses the evidence of the mention of Persian kings. Kisrā Anūšīrwān and other figures of Persian ancestry feature in a total of 35 verses. But they must in principle be viewed as conventional—and in this sense neutral—motifs of wine poetry, serving merely to express the age of the wine.<sup>59</sup> There is, admittedly, one poem in which Abū Nuwās is perhaps overly exuberant in lauding the tranquillity and courtesy of Persian drinking companions; he enjoys their company especially since they incline little to boast of their lineage: *fakhru-hum fī 'iṣratin ma'dūm*. Such attitudes are offset, however, by other poems where the dominant sentiment is, perhaps not by design, pro-Arab: in a poem in which he expresses a desire for the Azd 'Umān (southern Arabs) to be his companions, the wine is depicted as having witnessed the destruction of Thamūd; that is, it has existed in a purely Arabian context.<sup>60</sup> Collectively, therefore, there is a certain ecumenicism in Abū Nuwās' tableaux—as an observer of life he was often a spokesman for the attitudes of those in whose company

(see "Abu Nuwas, Poeta Abbaside", *Oriente Moderno*, 33 (1953)). Of the Arab critics only Ṣawqī Ḍayf and 'Abbās Maḥmūd al-'Aqqād have avoided attaching to Abū Nuwās the *šu'ūbī* label. For the opinion of Ḍayf see *al-'Aṣr al-'Abbāsī l-Awwal* (Cairo, n.d.), 231. For al-'Aqqād see the summary of his views provided by Semah in *Four Egyptian Literary Critics* (Leiden, 1974), 54.

<sup>57</sup> See "Abū Nuwās". For Persian elements in Abū Nuwās' poetry see Wagner's *Abū Nuwās: Eine Studie*, 74, 138-9, 193, 213.

<sup>58</sup> Op. cit. 14.  
<sup>59</sup> The motif exists in the earliest extant examples of wine poetry, e.g. in 'Adī b. Zayd. See ch. 2.

<sup>60</sup> *Dīwān Abī Nuwās*, 208.

he found himself. In one of several narrative *khamriyyāt* he depicts a crusty Jewish wine merchant:<sup>61</sup> "He was a Jew, who might appear to like you, but hide treachery inside; we said to him, 'What is [your] name?' He said 'Samuel, however I have a *kunya* of Abū 'Amr, though no 'Amr is my son; indeed no Arabic *kunya* can do me honour (*wa-mā šarrafat-ni kunyatun 'arabiyyatun*) nor fill me with haughty pride.'" There is ambivalence in the phrase, *wa-mā šarrafat-ni kunyatun 'arabiyyatun*, in which it is possible to detect the voice of the poet himself; thus one may come away from the poem feeling some sympathy for the molested taverner.

Arazi deals cogently with the evidence presented. It is his view that the Muḍar and the Bedouin were one and the same to Abū Nuwās; the poet himself was a *mawlā* of the south Arabian tribe of Ḥakam and in the intertribal disputes of *'aṣabiyya* he could be a venomous satirist: "you have mentioned the abodes of Banū Asad—God curse you! Who are the Banū Asad? And who are Tamīm and Qays and their brethren; the *a'arīb* are nothing in God's eyes." Throughout Abū Nuwās' *dīwān* there are intermittent references to the ignominies (*mathālib*) of the various northern tribes: Quraysh, Tamīm, Asad, Bakr b. Wā'il, and Taghlib etc. Thus Arazi posits that the poet did not wholeheartedly identify with the Persians, as is normally assumed; the most forceful evidence offered is that he sets the military achievement of the southern Arabs against the failure of the Persians. Arazi concludes: "C'est donc au nom de la civilisation citadine sub-arabique que les *aṭlāl* sont voués aux gémonies."<sup>62</sup> Arazi is convincing—to a degree. However, there is an implication that every negative or humorous reference to the *aṭlāl* is a further jibe at the northern Arabs. This almost invites an examination of the motif as a peculiarly northern trait, and thus over-politicizes an essentially literary issue. Furthermore, Abū Nuwās' poetry is too varied in its treatment of subject matter to conform to such judgements. For example, a *khamriyya* which begins with a line of mild *'aṣabiyya* ("I oft remember [my] friend of Yemeni descent who was a [veritable] adornment to the company of morning tipplers . . .") ends with the same Yemeni (a southern Arab) singing a *qaṣida* with the *aṭlāl* in the *maṭla'*: "O wind! what is it that you do with desert traces?"<sup>63</sup>

Whilst Arazi's interpretation is extremely valuable, the stress he

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. 61.

<sup>62</sup> Op. cit. 29.

<sup>63</sup> *Dīwān Abi Nuwās*, 137. This poem is analysed in detail in ch. 2.

lays in viewing Abū Nuwās' poetry as having some socio-political significance should be mitigated by approaching the evidence from a more exhaustive literary perspective; this invites consideration of generic influences.

In treating the *aṭlāl* and related motifs Abū Nuwās was drawing on a broad and fossilized tradition of poetry that could be manipulated in order to give his poems a structural frame. An integral poem, which in the *dīwān* of Abū Nuwās the *khamriyya* had become, requires a discernible beginning and end. In considering an opening to a composition Abū Nuwās would inevitably have been drawn to the *aṭlāl* and other corollary motifs of the *nasīb*. Since the motif was unsuitable in anything other than a formal panegyric, he was led not to eschew the motif but to declare its very unsuitability, and thereby show himself to be a master of its lexicon whilst effectively—and impishly—providing the *khamriyya* with its own *nasīb*.

There are several aspects of his use of the *nasīb* which remain to be outlined. I divide these into seven; they are intended to suggest ways of reading the material as a literary manipulation of tradition. It is not suggested that Abū Nuwās contrived any such categories, nor is any single category exclusive with respect to the material which may be assembled within it. In literary terms treatment of *nasīb* motifs gives the Nuwasian *khamriyya* an added thematic dimension; an emotional complexity which enhances the bacchic spirit and also cultivates ambivalence; finally, a dimension of intertextuality, which is important in preserving the spirit of bacchic poetry whilst attaching it, somewhat elliptically, to the more formal ancient tradition.

#### *The Aṭlāl in the Panegyric Qaṣida*

The following example is from a poem in praise of al-Amīn:<sup>64</sup> (lines 1, 3 and 4)

وقد طال تَرَدَّادِي بها وَعَنَانِي	لقد طال في رسم الديار بكائي
عن الدَّارِ واستَوَى على عَزِي	فلما بدا لي اليأسُ عَدَيْتُ نَاقِي
على ولا يُنْكِرَنَّ طولَ نَوَائِي	إلى بَيْتِ حَانٍ لا تَهْرُ كَلَابِه

Long have I cried at the trace of the campsite, and long did

I frequent it and suffer . . .

<sup>64</sup> *Dīwān*, 402.

So when despair showed me its face I prodded my camel  
away from that "abode"—solace now took over me—  
Towards a tavern whose guard dogs do not bark<sup>65</sup> at me,  
and do not find my stay too lengthy . . .

The pattern of themes is conventional, namely *nasīb/aṭlāl* → *raḥīl*  
(as a token motif) → *khamr*. Wine provides solace.

#### The Aṭlāl in the Khamriyya

أَرْبَعٌ عَلَى الطَّلَالِ الَّذِي انْتَسَفَتْ  
منه المعالم أنجم النخس...  
فلئن عفا وعفت معالمه  
فلقد خضعتُ وكتُّ ذا نفس

Stop at the traces whose features have been ravaged  
by the stars of ill-fortune . . .

[This] place and its features have become effaced,  
yet I have become resigned to this though once  
I was possessed of value/esteem.<sup>66</sup>

The poet's resolve leads to a nostalgic bacchanal. In another poem, "*Li-man ṭalalun*",<sup>67</sup> a deft and detailed *nasīb* appears to have an ironic rhetorical function: it elicits an emotional response such as to induce an abstainer to drink.<sup>68</sup>

#### Rejection of the Aṭlāl

The most common occurrence of the *aṭlāl* motif is where it is rejected in favour of wine. It may be rejected at the beginning of a *qaṣīda*, at the end, or both. A further permutation is where the *aṭlāl* is rejected at one end of the poem but treated positively at the other. Abū Nuwās plays ironically with his material; whilst he may appear to contradict himself, he simply imparts to his wine poems a recurring emotional complexity, which resonates with all the possibilities of the tradition that he inherited. The rejection of the *aṭlāl* in favour of the celebration of wine often affects a judgemental stance about what is an apt subject for poetry. Commonly Abū Nuwās

<sup>65</sup> In harmony with a mannered recreation of the *nasīb* is the fact that this is a bedouin motif; it expresses generosity since dogs which do not bark at strangers have grown accustomed to many visitors—those seeking the munificence of the host.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. 215. For this meaning of *dhū nafsīn* see the *rā'iyya* of Ka'b b. Zuhayr (*Dīwān*, p. 27, verse 10) where *dhātu nafsīn* is said of a she-camel: *ghafalat ghaflatan fa-lam tara illā dhāta nafsīn takūsu 'aqīran*.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. 68–9. <sup>68</sup> See ch. 3.

refers to description (*waṣf* or *na't*), thus indicating his perception of this poetry as a primarily descriptive art.<sup>69</sup> In rejecting the *aṭlāl* he also effects a contrast of emotions between the various subjects that are brought into juxtaposition; finally, he contrives a sense of movement towards the venue of bacchism (a *raḥīl* of sorts). Thus description, emotion, and what I will label *sayr* all variously effect the contrast between traditional *nasīb* and the new bacchic context.

#### Description

احسن من وصف دارس الدمن  
ومن ديار عفت معالمها  
فتلك أشهى من نعت دعبلة  
ومن حمار يبكي على قن  
ريحانة ركبت على أذن  
ومن صفات الطلول والدمن

(*Dīwān*, 196)

لست لدار عفت بوصاف  
ولا أسلى ألهموم في غسق اللد  
ولا على ربعها بوقاف  
يل يحاد في البید عساف (p. 148)

فالتعت ذا لا نعت دار خلّت  
سقى لدا الوصف حيث كان ولا  
بهم في أطلالها أحمق (p. 157)  
سقى لدار أوت مغانها (p. 192)

All examples suggest, with an affectation of formality, that wine is the proper subject of poetry—*inna fī-hā la-mawḍi'an li-l-maqāl*.<sup>70</sup>

#### Emotional Contrast—Khuliqat li-l-hammi Qāhīratan

In one weak example emotion is implicit in thought only:<sup>71</sup> *da' 'an-ka yā ṣāḥi l-fikara* | *fī-man taghayyara aw hajara* (My friend, stop thinking of one who has changed or left). The second hemistich does not mock the *aṭlāl*, but borrows another topic from the *nasīb* (*firāq*)—the line anticipates the imperative with which the second line begins, *iṣrab* (Drink!). There are other examples where, instead of the *aṭlāl*, the poet treats the departure of the beloved to effect a contrast between failed love and wine:<sup>72</sup> *la-in hajarat-ka ba'da l-waṣli Arwā* | *fa-lam tahjur-ka ṣāfiyatun 'uqārū* (Though Arwā left you after your tryst the pure wine did not). The *khamriyya* also treats *bukā'*:<sup>73</sup> *laqad junna man yabkī 'alā rasmi manzilī* (He who

<sup>69</sup> Awareness of poetry as *na't* and, equally, a sense of what should be celebrated in poetry is not uncommon in earlier poetry; consider the following line by al-A'sā (poem 20, line 27): *fa-'mad li-na'tin ghayri-hā hā* | *-dhā miṣḥalun yan'ī l-nakārah*.

<sup>70</sup> *Dīwān*, 97.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. 681.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. 180.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. 679.



cries over an abode is insane); wine is a more apt object of lament: (line 4) *wa-lākinna-nī abkī 'alā l-rāḥ*. Though the poet affects this response (*abkī*) to ape the language of *nasīb*, wine is not something he has abandoned, rather his attitude is defiantly that he will tittle in the future: (line 5) *sa-ašrabu-hā širfan*. In a different vein the poet may adopt a more rational and considerably more wry approach—about the *dār* he states: *in kāna fī-hā lladhī ahwā aqamtu bi-hā* (If the one I love were there I would stay there).<sup>74</sup>

The simple paradigm of emotions which Abū Nuwās celebrates may seem limited in its scope; however, there is a poem in which this kind of material moves with originality beyond the compass of what we have already observed. The fabric of the poem is one informed by *badī'*.<sup>75</sup>

مُطِيعِ الْإِطْرَاقِ عَاصِيِ الْعَيْنِ      وَمُؤَانِي الطَّرْفِ عَفِيفِ اللِّسَانِ

[I often remember] the youth with the yielding glance but chaste tongue, the promising coy look but recalcitrant manner.

The poem is structured around a clear dichotomy: lines 1–7 are *ghazal*; lines 8–15 are *khamr*—line 15, the *envoi*, reiterates this simple thematic schema. The initial *ghazal* section celebrates chaste, courtly love and is akin to the poetry of al-'Abbās b. al-Aḥnaf. A tension is sustained throughout between the youth's enticing features and his recalcitrance: (1a) *muwātī l-ṭarf* contrasts 'affi *l-lisān*; (1b) *muṭmi'i l-iṭrāq* contrasts 'aṣī *l-inān*. The youth instils desire then denies its fulfilment. This continues: (2a) he fills the poet with both hope and despair: *māzījin lī min rajā'in wa-ya'sin*; his words entice but his deeds reject: (2b) *nāziḥin bi-l-fī'li wa-l-qawli dāni*. In line 3 the poet attempts to restrain himself; the line is a fine conceit which sustains the antithetical pulse of the first two lines:

فَلِذَا خَاطَبَكَ الْجِدُّ عَنْهُ      أَكْذَبَ الْجِدُّ حَدِيثَ الْأَمَانِ

If a sense of gravity warns you away from him, the whisper of your hopes gives the lie to this gravity.

Tension between desire, restraint and frustration culminates in line 7:

فَكَأَنِّي تَابِعُ حُسْنِ شَيْءٍ      مِنْ أَمَامِي لَيْسَ بِالْمُسْتَبَانِ

It was as if I followed [the shadow] of a beautiful [spectre] that [moved] before me yet would never quite appear.

<sup>74</sup> *Dīwān*, 674. A similarly rational approach is the following: *ubkhu 'alā l-dāri bi-taklimi* | *fa-mā laday-hā raj'ū taslimi*. <sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* 18; ed. Wagner, pp. 308–10.

Desire remains constantly at one remove from being fulfilled; it is this consistent picture of frustration which invites the strength of solace contained in the feminine imagery of the bacchic section: (line 8)

فَتَعَزَّيْتُ بِصِرْفِ عُقَارٍ      نَشَأْتُ فِي حِجْرِ أُمِّ الزَّمَانِ

So I found comfort in a pure wine that grew up in the lap of the Mother of Time.

In this transitional line the function of wine is made clear (*fa-ta'azzaytu*) and creates a connection between the parts of the poem. Moreover, the solace which wine procures is made effective by the powerful imagery with which it is described in the first three lines of *khamr* (8b–10): wine has survived the depredations of Time. In line 11 the poet telescopes transcendent Time into the moment where the wine's seal of virginity is broken: *fa-ftara'nā muzzata l-ta'mi fī-hā nazaqu l-bikri*. The thinly veiled sexuality of the image allows a contrast to emerge between bacchism and the frustrated eroticism of lines 1–7. That the schema of this poem is akin to other poems in which the *aṭlāl* are treated can be gleaned from the final line which changes the linguistic register of the piece (from *ghazal* to *nasīb*) but reiterates the disparity between wine and love:

فَلِ الصَّهْبَاءِ أَبْكِي عَلَيْهَا      وَالْمَعَانِي لِيُكَاهِ الْمَعَانِي

I have a white wine to cry over—[I leave] desert traces for those who would cry over them.

In the next poem the description of wine is cast from the rejected imagery and sentiments of the *nasīb*:<sup>76</sup>

يَا مُبِيعَ الدَّمْعِ فِي الطَّلَلِ      رَاكِبًا مِنْهُ إِلَى أَمَلٍ  
أَلَهُ عَمَّا أَنْتَ طَالِبُهُ ...      بَيْنَاتِ الشَّمْسِ ...

You who shed tears at the *Aṭlāl* riding from it to a hope . . .  
Console yourself . . . with wine (*bi-banāti l-šams*) . . .

Lines 3–9 ensue as *wasf*. The images are both feminine and sexual. Line 3 sets the tone of this feature where the wine is anything but coy: *mā mana'at nafsa-hā min lamsi mubtadhili* (She did not refuse the touch of a shabby man). At line 7 the image employed to

<sup>76</sup> *Dīwān*, 677; ed. Wagner, p. 251; Wagner's text contains 5 extra lines between Ghazālī's lines 1 and 2—they describe essentially a tearful state at the *aṭlāl*.

describe the mixing of wine and water sustains the promise of fulfilment which informs the descriptive passage:

فَإِذَا مَا الْمَاءُ وَقَعَهَا أَظْهَرَتْ شَكْلًا مِنَ الْعَرَلِ

Whenever the water falls upon the wine (i.e. is mixed with it; *wāqa'a* also means to have sexual intercourse) it makes a show of coquetry.

At line 8 the bubbles of wine echo the tears shed at the *aṭlāl*—they are:

لَوْ لَوَاتٍ يَنْحَدِرْنَ بِهَا كَانَحْدَارِ الدَّمْعِ فِي عَجَلٍ

Pearls [of water] falling into the [wine] like tears pouring quickly.

Wine provides a new lyrical context of feminine intimacy—one which is consummated in the final line of the piece: (9)

فَإِذَا مَا الْمَرْءُ قَبَّلَهَا أَسْكَرَتْهُ لَذَّةُ الْقَبْلِ

Whenever a man kisses [the wine], the pleasure of embrace intoxicates him.

#### Sayr

*Sayr*, or movement towards the venue of a bacchanal, creates in the space of one to three lines a sense that the *khamriyya* has both a *nasīb* and a *raḥīl*; equivalent to *sayr* is *wuqūf* (i.e. stopping at the tavern rather than the abandoned traces). Movement is usually achieved through the use of the imperative 'uj, and sometimes 'arrij. The following example shows movement towards wine (scilicet the tavern) to be preferable to a lingering at the *aṭlāl*:<sup>77</sup> *da'i l-wuqūfa 'alā rasmin wa-aṭlāl . . . wa-'uj bi-nā naṣṭabiḥ ṣafrā'a wāqidatan*. In an original and striking example *wuqūf* and *sayr/raḥīl* are drawn humorously into the imagery of *khamr*: (lines 6–7 of a 12-line poem)<sup>78</sup>

أَحْسَنُ عِنْدِي مِنْ أَنْكِبَاكِ بِأَدِ خَيْرٍ مُلِحًا بِهِ عَلَى وَتَدِ  
وَقُوفٌ رَاحِيَةً عَلَى أَدْنِ وَسِيرٌ كَأَسْرٍ إِلَى قَمَرٍ يَدِ

Better for me than falling prostrate in al-Fihr, persisting, there, by the tent peg  
Is the standing of basil above my ear and the movement of the cup to the mouth via the hand!<sup>79</sup>

<sup>77</sup> *Dīwān*, 680. <sup>78</sup> *Ibid.* 52.

<sup>79</sup> This hemistich echoes a line from Zuhayr b. Abī Sulmā's *Mu'allāqa* (line 13 of al-Tibrizī's recension): *bakarna bukūran wa-staḥarna bi-subḥatin | fa-hunna wa-wādī l-rassi ka-l-yadi fī famī*.

The new-found context of *wuqūf* and *sayr* within the descriptive imagery of bacchism shows the *khamriyya* to be playing with traditional language in a highly parodic fashion.<sup>80</sup>

#### Humour

Treatment of the *aṭlāl* constitutes from time to time no more than a joke:<sup>81</sup>

قُلْ لِمَنْ يَبْكِي عَلَى رَسْمٍ دَرَسَ وَاقِفًا مَا ضَرَّ لَوْ كَانَ جَلَسَ

Say to one crying at a deserted trace, standing, there's no harm in sitting down!

Consider also:<sup>82</sup>

رَاحَ الشَّقِيُّ عَلَى الرُّبُوعِ بِهِمْ وَالرَّاحُ فِي رَاحِي وَرُحْتُ أَهِيْمُ

The wretch went off wandering at the *aṭlāl*, whilst I wandered off with the wine in the palm of my hand.

Humour is conveyed in the play on the word *rāḥ* and the roots *rā'*, *wāw*, *ḥā'*.

#### Assimilation of Nasīb

A handful of *khamriyyāt* assimilate and/or adapt the imagery or lexicon of *nasīb*. These poems do not effect an overt judgement about the inappropriate nature of any particular register of poetry:<sup>83</sup>

طَرَبْتُ إِلَى خَمْرِ وَقَصَفِ الدَّسَاكِرِ وَمَتَزَلَّ دِهْقَانٌ بِهَا غَيْرَ دَائِرِ

I felt an urge for wine and the pleasures of a Persian village, especially the house of a *dihqān* there that was not yet effaced.

See also the descriptive *khamriyya* beginning:<sup>84</sup> *yā ṣaḡīqa l-naḥsi*

<sup>80</sup> The rejection of the *aṭlāl* in favour of wine effects a contrast which may simply reside in a statement of comparison; this is evident in a 6-line poem where four elatives are used: *aḥsan* three times and *aladhdh* once (*Dīwān Abī Nuwās*, 160). The contrast between wine and the *aṭlāl* is analogous in such cases to the less common contrast between wine and battle (ibid. 162): *aḥsanu min mawqifin bi-mu'tarakin | wa-rakbi khaylin 'alā halā wa-habi || ṣayḥatu sāqin . . .* The role of mock-heroism in the *khamriyyāt* has been discussed by J. N. Mattock in "Description and Genre in Abū Nuwās".

<sup>81</sup> *Dīwān*, 134.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.* 193.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* 208.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* 41.

*min ḥakamī l nimta 'an laylī wa-lam anamī* (My soul-mate from Ḥakam, you slept last night whilst I lay awake). This line forms a brief "emotional ingress" for the wholly descriptive tableau that ensues. The second hemistich is clearly drawn from the motif of *araq* (insomnia) which is common in the *nasīb* and derivative love poetry.<sup>85</sup>

Perhaps the finest example of the assimilation of *nasīb* comes in the *khamriyya* beginning:<sup>86</sup> (1–3)

عفا المصلى وأقوت الكتبُ	ميتى فالبريدان فاللبيبُ
فالمسجد الجامعُ المرووة والـ	مدین عفا فالصيحان فالرحبُ
منازل قد عمرتها يفعاً	حتى بدا في عذارى الشهبُ

The prayer-place is now effaced of me [as are my old haunts],  
the sand dunes of the two markets of Mirbad and Labab—  
Faded is the mosque which brought together noble qualities and  
religion, faded too are al-Ṣiḥān and al-Raḥab,  
Abodes where I spent my youth until this greyness appeared in  
my side-whiskers . . .

The *qaṣīda* brings together the lexical and thematic repertory of the *khamriyya* and the formal canon of Arabic poetry. To this end Abū Nuwās converts and inverts tradition: first, he converts the usual objects of effacement from the *aṭlāl* into the pious gathering places of youth in Baṣra—here there is an autobiographical note, since Abū Nuwās spent his youth in Baṣra and then moved to Baghdad (as indicated in line 10). He also inverts what at the time of composition was a growing yet essentially inherited trend within the whole corpus of Arabic lyrical poetry, namely the conspicuous progression within the poet's life from hedonism to repentance, piety, and abstinence (*tawba*).<sup>87</sup> The notion of a mosque becoming effaced within the poet's lifespan is amusingly absurd—even if in reality the verse is simply expressing the poet's move from Baṣra to Baghdad. More significantly the first two lines are irreligious: religion, symbolized by the mosque (*al-Muṣallā*), represents eternity in contra-

<sup>85</sup> See for example the first line of poem 46 of the *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt* by al-Muraqqiṣ al-Akbar: *sarā laylan khayālun min Sulaymā l fa-arraqa-nī wa-aṣḥābī hujūdu*. The motif is treated further in another *khamriyya*: *yā laylatan ṭāba lī bi-hā l-araqū l ḥattā badā min ṣabāḥi-hā l-falaqū* (*Dīwān*, 53).

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. 3–5; ed. Wagner, pp. 29–35.

<sup>87</sup> This is analogous to a common feature of *jāhili* poetry, where hedonism is superseded by *ṣayb* and acquired *ḥilm*. See ch. 4.

distinction to the ephemeral nature of life—a theme propagated by the *zuhdiyyāt* of this period; yet via the resonances of the language he employs Abū Nuwās transmutes the transcendent eternity of Islam to the fading traces of a bedouin campsite.<sup>88</sup>

### Quotation<sup>89</sup>

In a significant number of poems Abū Nuwās quotes a verse or two from another poet; there are quotations from amongst the most famous of his antecedents, for example al-A'ṣā, Dhū l-Rumma, Jarīr and Abū Miḥjan al-Thaqafī. In the finest examples quoted lines are woven meaningfully into the thematic context of the poem and may pass oblique commentary on the events of a simple narrative.

Most commonly quotation exists as the last line or hemistich of a poem; often the poet affects an emotional response (e.g. *hāja ṣawqī*) to the beauty of the song:<sup>90</sup>

وَلَمَّا لَاحَ ضَوْؤُ الصُّبْحِ عَنَّا	وَحَرَكَ عَوْدَهُ بَدْرٌ وَسِيمٌ
بَصُوتِ أَخِي الْحِجَازِ فَهَاجَ شَوْقِي	لِمَنْ طَلَّلَ بِرَامَةٍ لَا يَرِيمُ

When the light of morning appeared to reveal us,  
a comely youth played his lute,  
Singing with a Hijazi accent, he stirred up my  
yearning: "Whose traces are these at Rāma . . ."

Another poem begins with scornful rejection of the *aṭlāl* but ends with a quotation that is devoid of judgement. The poem is circular and simply invites its audience to consider the appropriate context in which to celebrate the ancient poetry. Compare lines 1 and 12:<sup>91</sup>

أَنْسَ رَسْمَ الدِّيَارِ ثُمَّ الطُّلُولَا	وَاهْجَرَ الرَّبْعَ دَارِسًا وَمَحْيَلَا
--	--

Forget the traces of her abode and its remnants, and  
abandon the spring quarters that have become  
bare over the course of many years . . .

<sup>88</sup> The *qaṣīda* is discussed in detail in ch. 2; the full text of the Arabic plus a translation is contained in Appendix B.

<sup>89</sup> For further discussion of this subject see: Andras Hamori, "Convention in the Poetry of Abū Nuwās", *Studia Islamica*, 30 (1969), 25–6; and Alan Jones, "Final *Tadmīn* in the Poems of Abū Nuwās", *Arabicus Felix* (Oxford, 1991), 61–73.

<sup>90</sup> *Dīwān*, 158. The quoted hemistich is from Zuhayr b. Abī Sulmā.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. 673.

وَتَغَنَّى عَلَى الْمُدَامِ ثَلَاثًا أَجْزَرَ الْعَيْنَ أَنْ تُبْكِيَ الطُّلُولَا

Then he sang over the wine three times, "That you should cry for the remnants has made my eyes shed tears . . ."

Abū Nuwās often adds another dimension to such unresolved contradictions. This is most strikingly the case in a 12-line poem:<sup>92</sup> the first six lines reject various aspects of the wasteland treated in traditional poetry; then four lines of bacchic description and revelry are followed by recapitulation of the initial sentiments (11); the bacchic scenario is said to be more spiritually and physically sustaining, "especially when a youth with pearl earrings sings: (12b) 'yā dāru aqwat bi-l-taffi min judadi'." Irony is clear and is further understood by considering that whilst mocking the imagery and diction of the *aṭlāl*, the poem nevertheless devotes 8 of 12 lines to discussing them, thereby giving the language of *nasīb* a significant and essential role. Furthermore, this is the poem in which basil "stands" in the ear (*wuqūfu rayḥānatin 'alā udhun*) and the wine cup "travels" to the mouth (*wa-sayru ka'sin ilā famin*). Even in forging his own images the poet has an eye to the language of *nasīb*.<sup>93</sup>

A significant use of quotation is where, at the finale of a *khamriyya*, it reawakens the despondent emotions of the carousers—emotions which the poet initially attempts to eschew. The best example is a lengthy, 25-line *khamriyya*, which begins:<sup>94</sup>

دَعِ الرَّيْعَ مَا لِلرَّيْعِ فَيْكَ نَصِيبُ وَمَا إِنْ سَبَتْنِي زَيْنَبُ وَكَعُوبُ

Leave aside the spring quarters in which you have no part.

Neither Zaynab nor Ka'b have ever captivated me.

In the final four lines the sentiments implicit in the celebration of these two proverbial names are rekindled amongst the group of carousers: (lines 22–4)

وَعَنَى لَنَا صَوْتًا يَلْحَنُ مُرَجَّعُ سَرَى الْبَرْقُ غَرِيْبًا فَحَنَّ غَرِيْبُ

فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنَّا عَاشِقًا فَاضْ دَمْعُهُ وَعَاوَدَهُ بَعْدَ السُّرُورِ نَحِيْبُ

فَمَنْ بَيْنَ مَسْرُورٍ وَبَالِكٍ مِنَ الْهَوَى وَقَدْ لَاحَ مِنْ ثَوْبِ الظَّلَامِ غُيُوبُ

He sang to us with a melodic refrain, "Lightning travelled westwards into the night and the traveller became distressed."

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. 52.

<sup>93</sup> An unusual permutation of quotation occurs in a poem where we find it at both the beginning and the end; *ibid.* 109.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. 110–11.

So those amongst us who were in love shed copious tears and became despondent again having revelled for a while, [So we were] a group of happy men and those crying because of love whilst cracks appeared in the mantle of darkness.

Lightning is considered by some to be a *nasīb* topos;<sup>95</sup> therefore, since it appears to be the contents of the song as much as the voice of the youth which arouse the emotions of his audience, the recapitulation of the *nasīb* topos is made obliquely relevant to the bacchic scene.

#### Intertextuality—A Fascination with Al-A'sā?

(i) A fine poem which yields its relative complexity only upon a studied reading is the 7-line *khamriyya* beginning *bādir ṣabūḥa-ka*<sup>96</sup>—it is one of two poems to incorporate a quotation of the opening hemistich of al-A'sā's *Mu'allaqa*. The quotation itself signposts other more delicately embedded allusions contained in the brief narrative to aspects of al-A'sā's *nasīb*. Abū Nuwās was highly attuned to both the generalities and details of ancient poetry whilst creating a new context for it. Here is the short *khamriyya* in full:

بَادِرْ صَبُوحَكَ وَانْعَمْ أَيُّهَا الرَّجُلُ وَاعْصِ الَّذِينَ يَجْهَلُ فِي الْهَوَى عَذَلُوا  
وَاخْلَعْ عَذَارَكَ أَضْحِكْ كُلَّ ذِي طَرْبٍ وَاعْدِلْ بِنَفْسِكَ فِيهِمْ أَيُّهَا عَدَلُوا  
نَالَ السُّرُورَ وَخَفَضَ الْعَيْشَ فِي دَعَا وَفَارَ بِالطَّيِّبَاتِ الْمَاجِنِ الْهَزَلُ  
سَقِيَا لِمَجْلِسِ فِتْيَانٍ أَنَادِمُهُمْ مَا فِي أَدْبِيهِمْ وَهَى وَلَا خَلَلُ  
هَذَا لَذَاكَ كَمَا هَذَاوَذَاكَ لَذَا فَالشَّمْلُ مُنْتَظَمٌ وَالْخَيْلُ مُتَّصِلُ  
أَكْرِمْ بِهِمْ وَبَنِّعْهُمْ مِنْ مَغْنَمَةٍ فِي الْغَنَاءِ بِنَعْمٍ يُضْرَبُ الْمَثَلُ  
هَيْفَاءُ تُسْمِعُنَا وَالْعَوْدُ يَطْرِبُنَا وَدَعِ هُرَيْرَةَ إِنَّ الرِّكْبَ مَرْتَلُ

Take your morning drink and enjoy yourself, man! And ignore those who through ignorance censure your passion.

Throw off all shame and amuse those [of us] that are sad and follow them around wherever they go.

May the light-hearted libertine experience joy and an easy life and obtain the good things . . .

May it rain upon a gathering of youths whom I drink with and amongst whom there is no foolishness . . .

<sup>95</sup> See CHALUP 48.

<sup>96</sup> *Dīwān Abī Nuwās*, 84; ed. Wagner, p. 256 (for *bādir* (1a) read *iṣṣab*).

This one is for that one just as this and that one are for that one!<sup>97</sup>

The gathering is in order and the rope of union is in one piece!  
How noble they are! And how noble is a tune when sung by a  
songstress—for in song a [verse] may become proverbial—  
A slender girl who sings to us accompanied by a moving lute,  
“Say farewell to Hurayra for the riders are about to depart.”

The phrase *ayyuhā l-rajul* (1a) calls to mind the second hemistich of the first line of “Waddi’ Hurayra”: *wa-hal tuṭīqu wadā’an ayyuhā l-rajul* (Can you stand to say farewell, man?). This in turn paves the way for the quotation in 7b. Thus 1a, *bādir ṣabūḥa-ka wa-n’am ayyuhā l-rajulu*, foreshadows 7b, *waddi’ Hurayrata inna l-rakba murtaḥilu*. This device provides a frame, neatly encasing the contents of the poem. One is led to ask how this affects the poem. There is, in fact, a contrast between the mood of *nasīb* that is evoked and the saturnalian spirit which is the opening keynote of the piece. Hence, *bādir ṣabūḥa-ka wa-n’am* contrasts the resonances of *ayyuhā l-rajul* (1a) and, more significantly, *waddi’ Hurayrata* . . . (7b). Furthermore, the energy and exuberance of Abū Nuwās’ poem (1a, *bādir ṣabūḥa-ka*; 2a, *wa-khla’ idhāra-ka aḍḥik kulla dhī ṭarabin*; 3a, *nāla l-surūr* and 4a, *saqyan li-majlis*) may form a deliberate counterpoint to the solemnity which infiltrates the bacchism of al-A‘šā’s *nasīb*.<sup>98</sup>

بَلْ هَلْ تَرَى عَارِضًا قَدْ بَتِ أَرْمَقُهُ      كَأَنَّا الْبَرْقُ فِي حَافَاتِهِ شُعْلُ...  
لَمْ يُلْهِني اللَّهُ عَنْهُ حِينَ أَرْقَبُهُ      وَلَا اللَّذَازَةُ مِنْ كَاسٍ وَلَا شُغْلُ  
فَقُلْتُ لِلشَّرْبِ فِي دُرْنِي وَقَدْ تَمَلُّوا      شَبِّمُوا وَكَيْفَ يَشْبِمُ الشَّارِبُ التَّمَلُّ

Can you see the cloud which I’ve been watching? The lightning  
is like firebrands around its edges . . .

Pleasure did not distract me from it as I watched it, nor the  
delights of the cup and other preoccupying matters.

I said to my drinking companions at Durnā after they had become  
drunk, “Augur for rain!” Yet how can a drunkard do so?

al-A‘šā restrains his exuberance and that of his companions in

<sup>97</sup> This is strikingly reminiscent of a line by Abū Nuwās’ tutor Wāliba b. Ḥubāb: *hādḥā qabbala hādḥā | wa-hādḥā dhāka yabūsu*. It is significant, furthermore, that Wāliba’s *siniyya* gives a role to Iblis and may in this way have had a further influence on Abū Nuwās. For the role of Iblis see Ch. 4, “*Ighrā’ Iblis*”.

<sup>98</sup> These are lines 36, 38, and 39 of al-Tibrizī’s recension; in other recensions the lines, which contain some internal linguistic variants, number 22–5. In another *khamriyya* (*Dīwān*, 178–9) Abū Nuwās appears to reproduce his own version of al-A‘šā’s cloud motif.

order to augur for rain.<sup>99</sup> The disjunction between the two very different poems is most deftly effected in Abū Nuwās’ line 5, which describes the *majlis* of line 4; the players in the *majlis* experience a union of requited love; the first hemistich appears to pick up playfully on al-A‘šā’s description of “cross-wooing”<sup>100</sup>—a circle of frustrated love.<sup>101</sup>

عَلِقْتُهَا عَرَضًا وَعَلِقْتَ رَجُلًا      غَيْرِي وَعَلِقَ أُخْرَى غَيْرَهَا الرَّجُلُ  
وَعَلِقْتَهُ فَتَاةٌ مَا يُحَاوِلُهَا      وَمَنْ بَنَى عَمِيهَا مَيْتٌ بِهَا وَهَلْ  
وَعَلِقْتَنِي أُخْرَى مَا تُلَايِمُنِي      فَاجْتَمَعَ الْحُبُّ حُبُّ كُلِّهِ تَبِلُ  
فَكَلَّمْنَا مُعَرِّمٌ يَهْدِي بِصَاحِبِهِ      نَاءٍ وَدَانٍ وَمَخْبُولٌ وَمُخْتَبِلُ

I became infatuated with her by chance, and she with another man;  
that man with another woman—not her!

A young girl was in love with him but he had no desire for her,  
whilst she had a cousin who was dying for love of her and in  
a weakened state.

Another young girl fell in love with me, but she was not right for  
me. Thus did love come together, all of it insane.

Each one of us is in love and raves about a [would-be] partner who  
is either far away or near by in a similar state of madness.

The second hemistich of Abū Nuwās’ line 5—an amusing summary of the vivid first hemistich—clearly sets itself against separation—a keynote of *nasīb* as expressed in the phrase *al-rakbu murtaḥil*. Indeed, use of the 8th-form participles *muntazimun* and *muttaṣilun* neatly effects the contrast with *murtaḥil* (a topic of *firāq*).<sup>102</sup>

<sup>99</sup> This section of course contrasts with the more conventional bacchic *fakhr* contained in another passage of the *nasīb* (al-Tibrizī, lines 22–33; *Dīwān*, 34–42 with omissions from al-Tibrizī’s text).

<sup>100</sup> The situation depicted by al-A‘šā is not dissimilar to one discussed in passing in the prologue to Ben Jonson’s *Every Man Out of His Humour*: “I travail with another objection, Signor, which I fear will be enforced against the author ere I can be delivered of it . . . that the argument of his comedy might have been of some other nature, as of a duke to be in love with a countess, and that countess to be in love with the duke’s son, and the son to love the lady’s waiting maid; some such cross-wooing, better than to be thus near and familiarly allied to the times.” (See *English Literature* by G. H. Mair (Oxford, 1944), 60.)

<sup>101</sup> al-Tibrizī, lines 15–19; *Dīwān*, lines 17–20.

<sup>102</sup> Abū Nuwās’ *khamriyyāt* consistently work against the frustrated union of lovers so typical of the *nasīb*. In one 11-line poem (*Dīwān*, 147) there is a sustained attempt to move beyond the traditional *nasīb*. First, the poet compares wine favourably against the *aṭlāl*: (line 1) *aḥsanu min waqfatin ‘alā ṭalāl | ka’su ‘uqārin tajri ‘alā thamili*. Though, in the penultimate line, the mood of *nasīb* appears to persist (*ḥablī wa-ḥablu lladhī kaliftu bi-hi | ‘alā tadānī-hi ghayru muttaṣili*) recalcitrance

Finally, the description of the singing-girl in the *khamriyya* (line 7, 1st word) as *hayfā* calls to mind the description of Hurayra as *gharrā*, *far'ā* (bright of complexion and with thick hair) in line 2 of the *Mu'allaqa*. The root of *hayfā* is, of course, distinct but the meaning is complementary and there is a shared morphology. It expands upon the original sequence, and highlights Abū Nuwās' sensitive adaptation of the older text. Moreover, Hurayra is described as *hayfā* in poem 9 of al-A'šā's *diwān*, a *qaṣida* which treats an opening topos essentially similar to the one in the *Mu'allaqa*: (1a) *Hurayrata waddi'-hā wa-in lāma lā'imū*. In line 3 she is described as *mubtallatun hayfā'u*. This cross-referencing to more than a single al-A'šā text suggests a delicate evocation of the latter's most renowned *nasībs*.

The overall effect of Abū Nuwās' poem is to create an entertaining dissonance between *nasīb* and *khamr*. On one level this effects a literary parody of the older poetry which simultaneously articulates *mujūn*;<sup>103</sup> on another, Abū Nuwās simply recognizes his own distinct cultural and historical context, and therefore toys with the ancient canon in order more realistically to reflect his own experience.

(ii) In the *ḥā'iyya* beginning *tu'ātibu-nī 'alā šurbi ṣṭibāḥī*,<sup>104</sup> two quotations enrich the texture of the poem and pass relevant comment on the events of the bacchic narrative. The artistry involved in this feature is complemented by internal linguistic resonances which constitute a masterful example of *badī'*—subtle *badī'* which affects the poem as a whole. I therefore divide analysis into two parts:

(a) *Thematic description*: The poem recounts the events of a bacchanal which lasted from evening until dawn. The licentious morning scene described at the end of the piece (lines 14–20) is foreshadowed in the first line: *tu'ātibu-nī 'alā šurbi ṣṭibāḥī* | *wa-waṣli l-layli min falaqi l-ṣabāḥī* (She berates me for drinking wine in the morning and seeing the night through until dawn)—thus the poem is circular to a degree and made structurally integral (this feature is enhanced by the logic of the narrative). Line 2 is a corollary of line 1. At line 3 the episode which constitutes the narrative is put paid to (through Iblis' intercession) in the final line: *fa-radda-hu l-šaykhu 'an šu'ūbati-hi* | *wa-šāra qawwāda-nā wa-lam yazali*.

<sup>103</sup> *Mujūn* is fundamental to the spirit of the poem, as the text itself makes clear: (3b) *wa-fāza bi-l-ṭayyibāti l-mājinu l-hazilu*.

<sup>104</sup> *Diwān*, 169–70; ed. Wagner, pp. 90–1. For the full Arabic text and translation of this poem see Appendix B.

frame of the poem is recounted: (I paraphrase the poet) “at midday when our shadows fell upon our sandals . . . we made our way to a tavern; the owner welcomed us and after a brief exchange he brought some wine whilst reciting the following verse (line 10—it is the *maṭla'* of a *qaṣida* by Jarīr in praise of the Umayyad Caliph 'Abd al-Malik<sup>105</sup> and the first of two citations from this Umayyad poem): *a-taṣḥū am fu'ādu-ka ghayru ṣāḥin* | *'ašīyyata hamma ṣaḥbu-ka bi-l-rawāḥī* (Will you wake up or will your heart remain in slumber on the evening when your friends prepare to leave?). The line humorously inverts the logic of the situation; for the poet and his companions have only recently arrived; moreover, one naturally assumes that they are still sober. The song therefore alludes to the very contrary of its semantic content—incipient indulgence (*lahw*). The sentiments of the taverner's question are not alien to the emotional intensity of the *nasīb*;<sup>106</sup> thus, by analogy with the line's inverted significance, quite different sentiments are solicited from Abū Nuwās and his friends; for the song introduces the carefree and licentious mood into which the poem descends.

Another player in the poem, predictably, is the “delicately built, fawn-like” *sāqī*. He asks a question similar to that of the taverner (line 13a): *a-tabraḥūna ghadan* (Will you be leaving tomorrow?). The carousers' reply is equally significant (13b): *wa-kayfa nuṭīqu ba'da-ka min rawāḥī* (How can we bare to depart having been with you?). This emotive exchange also evokes the *nasīb*, for the question treats *firāq* whilst the answer treats *wadā'* and calls to mind, I would suggest, al-A'šā's hemistich, *wa-hal tuṭīqu wadā'an ayyuhā l-rajul* (the identical morphology of *wadā'* and *rawāḥ* is significant—indeed *wadā'* might well replace *rawāḥ* were it not for the requirements of the rhyme and, more importantly, the extended paronomasia which is built into the poem). Yet the scene which ensues is a far cry from *nasīb*; by assimilating the language of martial *fakhr* Abū Nuwās only thinly disguises one of his most candidly bawdy episodes; it takes place in the early morning, after the cock has crowed, and whilst the poet's companions are asleep: (15–16)

وقد هيأتُ كبشي للطاح  
تنبّه كالتريق من الجراح

فُصِمْتُ إليه أَرْفُلُ مُسْتَقِيمًا  
فلما أن ركزتُ الرَّمَحَ فيه

<sup>105</sup> See *Diwān Jarīr*, ed. al-Sāwī (Cairo, 1935), 96–9.

<sup>106</sup> In the Umayyad period Jarīr was one of the masters of composition in the *nasīb* register.

When I got up and made for him, upright but trailing my  
garments, and prepared my ram for butting  
And when I had fixed my spear inside of him, he awoke as  
an injured man awakens from his wounds.

The *sāqī* concedes defeat (*fa-qāla laqad ẓafirta fa-nal hanī'an*) and proceeds, after asking for (and presumably receiving) financial recompense, to "praise" the poet by reciting a song of eulogy in the final verse:

أَلَسْتُمْ خَيْرَ مَنْ رَكَبَ الْمَطَايَا      وَأَنْدَى الْعَالَمِينَ بِطَوْنٍ رَاحٍ

Are you not the most generous man ever to have ridden  
a mount, and the most munificent of God's creatures  
[when under the influence of wine]?

This is line 15 of Jarīr's panegyric poem in praise of 'Abd al-Malik.<sup>107</sup> It is significant in this respect that the final bawdy allusion is introduced with reference to the formal function of the original line: *tabaddā munšidan šī'ra mtidāh* (He came forth singing a eulogy). Significant also is that *madīh* can be viewed as coming after *raḥīl* if we understand the phrase "*fa-lammā an waḍa'tu raḥlī*" (So after I had placed my saddle upon him) to allude to the manner of the old peripatetic panegyricists. Thus the most conspicuous elements of the poem, famous citations and quasi-citation, serve to parody the older canon of poetry from which they are drawn—there is, one may argue, parody of *nasīb*, *fakhr*, *raḥīl* and *madīh*.<sup>108</sup>

(b) *Linguistic description*: The oblique, and not so oblique, relevance of the quoted verses to the narrative suggests the delicate solipsism of the poem. This feature is echoed by the piece's linguistic impulse, namely the consistent phonetic or consonantal affinity of words. Though this obtains largely within individual lines, it also works to a certain extent across lines and suggests the single creative impulse that underlies the poem as a whole. Consider the following breakdown of the consonantal leitmotif of each line, where the overall effect is to enhance the most important lexical items of the narrative:

<sup>107</sup> In his edition of the poetry of Nuṣayb b. Rabāḥ, Dāwūd Sallūm writes (p. 25): "*wa-laḡad qāla l-aḡdamūna inna amdaha baytin qālat-hu l-'arabu mā qāla-hu Jarīrun: a-lastum khayra man rakiba l-maṭāyā* | *wa-andā l-'ālamīna buṭūna rāhī*". Unfortunately Sallūm gives no source.

<sup>108</sup> The relationship between the *khamriyya* and Jarīr's *qaṣīda* is corroborated by Abū Nuwās' reworking of 8 of the original's 22 rhyme-words.

Line 1: *Iṣṭibāh* → *al-ṣabāh*; this is *jinās*. Consider also the alliterative effect of the *bā's* in the first hemistich: *tu'ātibu-nī 'alā šurbi ṣṭibāh* and the *lāms* in the second hemistich: *wa-waṣli l-layli min falaqi l-ṣabāh*.

Line 2: (2a) *Aryaḥiyyun* → (2b) *irtiyāh*; *jinās* creates a link between the two focal words of the line.

Line 3: (3a) *ṣaḥābatin* → (3b) *ṣibāh*; this again is *jinās* and echoes the main linguistic and consonantal feature of the first line (line 10 resumes this signature). All words in this poem whose roots are *ṣād*, *bā'*, *ḥā'* are keynote words of the bacchic setting.

Line 4: (4a) *ḥayrā* → *riyāh* = *jinās*. The consonant-vowel harmony *alif*, *ḥā'* is sustained in the word *ṭilāḥan* (4a).

Line 5: (5a) *Wa-qāma* → (5b) *maqāma*. Note also the perceived phonetic affinity between *širāk* and *al-rīš*.

Line 6: The line ends with the same consonantal cluster as it begins: (6a) *ilā ḥānāt* → *mu'arrajaṭi l-nawāḥi*. Note also the identical morphology and similar phonetic make-up of *mu'arraša* and *mu'arraja*.

Line 9: The second hemistich displays an attractive internal euphony: *wa-anšada munšidan šī'ra qtirāh*. The alliterative effect of the *šin* in the hemistich draws attention to the meaning, namely the ensuing quotation (10).

Line 10: The line is dominated by *ṣād* and *ḥā'*: *a-taṣḥū am fu'ādu-ka ghayru ṣāḥin* | *'ašiyata hamma ṣaḥbu-ka bi-l-rawāḥi*. Note also the similar position and metrical patterning of phrases in each hemistich (10a) *am fu'ādu-ka* → (10b) *hamma ṣaḥbu-ka*. It is not insignificant that the first quotation of the poem chimes in with its consonantal signature (cf. lines 1–3).

Line 12: *Šin*: *raša'un* → *al-kaṣḥ* → *al-wiṣāh*. The first hemistich has a high incidence of *rā's*; the second is made up of parallel syntactic phrases: *laṭifu l-kaṣḥi mahdūmu l-wiṣaḥ*.

Line 13: *Rā'* and *ḥā'*: (13a): *a-tabraḥūna* → (13b) *rawāḥā*.

Line 14: This line resumes the *ṣād* and *ḥā'* of lines 1, 3, and 10, namely *diku l-ṣiyāḥi*, a topos itself suggestive of *ṣabāh*.

Line 15: Note the consonantal affinity between two phrases, one in each of the two hemistichs: *rakaztu l-rumḥa* → *ka-l-raḡīdi mina l-jarāḥi*.

Line 16: *Hā'*: *bi-ḥaqq* → *fa-lā tuḥwij* . . . *saḥi l-talāḥi*.

Line 17: Each hemistich has a separate phonetic signature; in the first there are two *fā's*, two *qāfs*, and two *nūns* (*fa-qāla laḡad*

*zafirta fa-nal hanī'an*), whilst in the second there are three *bā's* (*bi-is'āfin wa-badhlīn mustabāḥ*).

Line 18: The second hemistich is a *mu'araḍa* of 9b, which also introduces a quotation: compare (9b) *wa-anṣa'a munšidan šī'ra qtirāḥ* with (18b) *tabaddā munšidan šī'ra mtidāḥ*. Though *tabaddā* diminishes the alliterative effect of the *šin*, and *imtidāḥ* loses the alliterative effect of the *rā'*, nevertheless the *dāl* of *tabaddā* works well with the *dāl* of *munšidan* and *imtidāḥ*. Also, the *mīm* of *imtidāḥ* produces an alliterative effect with *munšidan*.

Line 19: One might expect the last line to resume the consonantal signature *šād, bā'*, and *ḥā'*. This does not happen. There is, however, a significant signing off with a pun on the word *rāḥ*, the last word of the poem. The ostensible meaning (in the context of generosity) is palm, yet the overall bacchic context gives a more than faint echo of its other meaning—wine. The word also reworks one of the two most important consonantal signatures of the poem, namely *rā'*, *alif*, *ḥā'*: (2) *Aryaḥiyyun* → *Irtiyāḥ*; (4) *Ḥayrā* → *al-riyāḥ*; (10) *bi-l-rawāḥ*; (11) *rāḥ*; (13) *rawāḥ*. The praise of generosity (*andā l-'ālamīna buṭūna rāḥ*) is a eulogy of the “good nature” of the seducer—good nature<sup>109</sup> induced by wine.<sup>110</sup>

To summarize, *nasīb*, *raḥīl*, *fakhr*, and *madīḥ* are all most effectively undercut in the course of a lively narrative. In this way a trivial, if ribald, bacchanal assumes the significance of the finest Arabic poetry; and intertextuality—the glimpses of an older text—

<sup>109</sup> We are reminded of attitudes to sexuality in the pre-Victorian period. In the time of Henry Fielding streetwalkers might solicit clients with the query, “Are you good-natured, dear?”; see *Joseph Andrews*, by Henry Fielding (London, 1988), intro., p. 14.

<sup>110</sup> The consonantal harmony which characterizes this poem is reminiscent of at least two other poems, one by Abū Nuwās and the other by al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḍaḥḥāk. The former is a fine descriptive poem (Ghazālī, pp. 1–2) of 15 lines which celebrates the *ṣabūḥ* (the morning drink). It produces a variety of images which revolve around the topic of the morning itself and that of light; the roots *šād, bā'* and *ḥā'*, together with combinations of these roots, dominate the poem; interestingly the imagery of the poem chimes with its internal phonetic harmony; examine as a sample the first line: *dhakara l-ṣabūḥa bi-suḥratin fa-rtāḥa* | *wa-amalla-hu diku l-ṣayāḥi ṣiyāḥa*. Though this line provides the phonetic signature of the poem (the roots *šād, bā'*, and *ḥā'* occur no less than 11 times), other lines contain their own related internal harmony, i.e. (6b) *wa-azaḥtu 'an-hu ḥuthātha-hu fa-nzāḥa*.

The poem by al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḍaḥḥāk is also a *ḥ'āyia* (see Ṣawqī Riyāḍ Aḥmad, *al-Husayn b. al-Ḍaḥḥāk*, pp. 237–8); it is a tavern poem (celebrating *Dayr Sirjis*), and in this sense is more akin to *Tu'atibu-ni 'alā šurbi ṣtibāḥi*. Again the first line serves as an ample sample of the poem: *akhawayya ḥayyā 'alā l-ṣabūḥi ṣabāḥa* |

both articulates the narrative and humorously calls into question the received view of the ancient bards.

(iii) Baššār b. Burd—who is perceived as the father of *badi'*—represents a watershed in the development of Arabic poetry. His most attractive love poems contain vibrant and deft new images that drift sometimes seamlessly between the *'udhrī* and *ibāḥī* registers. The 'Abbāsīd court circle would certainly have received his output and been aware of its literary thrust. Indeed, in his article “Le Cas de Baššār dans le développement de la poésie Arabe”, Blachère suggests the need to examine the influence the poet might have had on Abū Nuwās.<sup>111</sup> This influence, which may or may not exist to any significant degree, is obfuscated by the very personal and distinct characteristics of each of these two poets; it is beyond the scope of this chapter to delve in detail into this matter; however, the present discussion offers analysis of a single poem which may have provided the model for a *lāmiyya* by the Ḥakamite.

Baššār himself composed no *khamriyyāt*; the love poem described below simply has a bacchic setting. It consists of sixteen lines and, according to a tradition in the *Aghānī*, recounts how one Ja'far b. Sulaymān b. 'Alī became inebriated at his own *majlis*:<sup>112</sup> (line 1)

وَذَاتِ ذَلِّ كَأَنَّا الْبَدْرَ صَوْرَتُهَا      بَاتَتْ تُغْنِي عَمِيدَ الْقَلْبِ سَكْرَانَا

I often remember the coy girl, with a face like the moon, who  
sang all night for the drunkard with the ailing heart.

'*Amīd al-qalb* means “lovelorn”, hence the *double entendre* of

*hubbā wa-lā ta'uddā l-ṣabāḥa rawāḥa* (My two brothers, greet the morning drink in the morning; wake up, and do not consider that the morning means we shall depart). In addition to the two essential words, *ṣabūḥ* and *ṣabāḥ*, it shares much of the lexicon of Abū Nuwās' poem: *rawāḥ, najāḥ, barāḥ, jināḥ* (al-Ḥusayn also has *junāḥ*), *ṣiyāḥ* (also referring to the crowing of the cock at dawn) and, finally, *bāḥa* (Abū Nuwās has *mustabāḥ*). As in *Tu'atibu-ni* the poem also ends with the poet disturbing a youth from his sleep, but the *mujūn* which ensues is less explicit: *fa-hataktu sitra mujūni-hi bi-tahattuk-i* | *fi kulli mulḥiyatin wa-buḥtu wa-bāḥa*. We can have no idea about the dates of these various compositions; however, it is perhaps not too fanciful to suggest that Abū Nuwās was trying to outdo his contemporary—certainly the complex nature of intertextuality in the Ḥakamite's poem enhances its quality.

Either one, or both of the tavern poems, may be inspired by a 9-line *ḥā'yia* of the earlier poet, Abū l-Hindī; here six of the rhyme words are shared by the other poems discussed (see *Ṭabaqāt al-Šu'arā'*, 137).

<sup>111</sup> *Analecta*, 598: “Il serait tentant de mettre en évidence tout ce que lui doivent des poètes à peine plus jeunes comme al-'Abbās ibn al-Aḥnaf et surtout comme Abū Nuwās dont l'inspiration est parfois si voisine de la sienne.”

<sup>112</sup> See *Dīwān Baššār ibn Burd*, ed. Ibn 'Ašūr, iv. 216 n. 1.



*sakrān*: besotted in love/drunken in wine.<sup>113</sup> Line 2, which is taken from a *nasīb* by Jarīr,<sup>114</sup> is the text of the girl's song and may be self-referential:

إِنَّ الْعُيُونَ الَّتِي فِي طَرْفِهَا حَوْرٌ      قَتَلْتَنَا ثُمَّ لَمْ يُحْيِن قَتْلَانَا  
Her eyes with their *ḥurī* quality killed us but did not resurrect  
[their] victims.

As the poem unfolds Baššār and the singing-girl recite or sing a series of verses to each other. In line 4 the poet solicits the recitation of another line from Jarīr's *nasīb*; the singing-girl objects, suggesting that truer to the emotions of a man in love is the following:

يَا قَوْمِ أَدْنَى لِبَعْضِ الْحَيِّ عَاشِقَةٌ      وَالْأُذُنُ تَعُشِقُ قَبْلَ الْعَيْنِ أَحْيَانًا  
People! My ear has fallen for a girl from our tribe;  
the ear loves before the eye sometimes!

This is a famous verse from Baššār's *dīwān*.<sup>115</sup> To a degree the poet's contention, by composing the poem in this way, is that sentiments and formulations that echo the *nasīb* are no longer germane to the celebration of love. Thus line 6, like line 2, is on the level of authorship self-referential—the poet refers to himself; on the level of the events of the poem it intimates that the poet is in love with the singing-girl and thus forges a connection between the quotation and the narrative. This is borne out in line 8 where he uncovers his feelings:

فَأَسْمِعْنِي صَوْتًا مُطَرِّبًا هَزَجًا      يَزِيدُ صَبًا مُحِبًّا فَيْكَ أَشْجَانَا  
Sing me a song in the *hazaj* mode which will increase  
the passion of one who loves you.

There follows a charming conceit:

يَا لَيْتَنِي كُنْتُ ثِفًّا حَا مُفْلَجَةً      أَوْ كُنْتُ مِنْ قُصْبِ الرَّيْحَانِ رِيحَانَا  
حَتَّى إِذَا وَجَدْتُ رِيحِي فَأَعْجَبَهَا      وَنَحْنُ فِي خَلْوَةٍ مُثِلْتُ إِنْسَانَا  
Would that I were an apple, cut [hence emitting its  
fragrance] or a leaf of basil . . .

<sup>113</sup> The *double entendre* is especially evident in a *khamriyya* by Abū Nuwās (p. 186): *wa-ḥattā ta'annā lāhiyan mutaṭarriban | ghinā'a 'amidi l-qalbi našwāna nāḥili*; in Abū Nuwās' verse *našwān* suggests intoxication with love as clearly as it does intoxication with wine.

<sup>114</sup> See *Šarḥ Dīwān Jarīr*, ed. Ḥawī, pp. 699–704.

<sup>115</sup> See A. F. L. Beeston, *Selections from the Poetry of Baššār*, p. 1 of Arabic text; the verse is from a famous 3-line fragment.

So that when she encountered my fragrance and it pleased her, while we were in seclusion, I could [then] appear [to her] as a man [or: in my true person].<sup>116</sup>

At which the girl is moved to confess:

أَصْبَحْتُ أَطُوعَ خَلْقَ اللَّهِ كُلِّهِمْ      لِأَكْثَرِ الْخَلْقِ لِي فِي الْحُبِّ عَصِيَانَا  
I have become the most obedient of God's creatures  
to one whose love I have most rejected.

Line 15 brings us back to the bacchanal glimpsed at line 1: the singing-girl recites to *al-šarb* in what appears to be a conciliation of the poet's state:

لَا يَقْتُلُ اللَّهُ مَنْ دَامَتْ مَوَدَّتُهُ      وَاللَّهُ يَقْتُلُ أَهْلَ الْغَدْرِ أَحْيَانًا  
God does not kill one whose affection endures,  
though he sometimes kills treacherous people.

By means of persuasive and loaded quotations the poem enacts a vicarious dialogue of courtship. And we can gauge the success of this for the poet—the lover—from the following vague dissonance: *qatalna-nā thumma lam yuhyina qatlānā* (2) → *lā yaqtulu llāhu man dāmat mawaddatu-hu* (15).

Like Baššār's poem Abū Nuwās' *lāmiyya*<sup>117</sup> is essentially a dialogue of which three utterances are hemistich quotations from prominent earlier poets. More specifically both poems quote a hemistich by Jarīr:<sup>118</sup> *inna l-'uyūna llatī fī ṭarfi-hā ḥawarun* is adapted only slightly by Abū Nuwās to *inna l-'uyūna llatī fī ṭarfi-hā maraḍun*.<sup>119</sup> In addition to Jarīr the latter poet quotes al-A'šā and al-Quṭāmī.

As Abū Nuwās more commonly confined his quotations to the finale of his *khamriyyāt*, his *lāmiyya* can be viewed as an expansion

<sup>116</sup> This image is reminiscent of a line from Abū Nuwās; cf. his wish that he were the Evangel of a young Christian who holds the holy book to his cheek. See also a similar motif in *Greek Lyric*, "Anacreonta", 193: 'ἐγὼ δ' εὐοπτρον εἶην, ὅπως αἰὲ βλέψης με ἐγὼ χιτῶν γενοίμην, ὅπως αἰὲ φορῆς με ὕδωρ θέλω γενέσθαι, ὅπως σε χρώτα λούσω μύρον, γύναι, γενοίμην, ὅπως ἐγὼ σ' ἀλείψω καὶ ταινίη δὲ μασθῶ καὶ μάργαρον τραχήλῳ καὶ σάνδαλον γενοίμην μόνον ποσὶν πάτει με (If only I could be a mirror, so that you would always look at me; a robe, so that you would always wear me; water, that I might wash your skin; perfume, lady, that I might anoint you; a band for your breast, a pearl for your neck, a sandal—only you must trample me under-foot).

<sup>117</sup> *Dīwān Abi Nuwas*, 115–17; ed. Wagner, 254–5.

<sup>118</sup> See *Šarḥ Dīwān Jarīr*, ed. Ḥawī, p. 702, line 36.

<sup>119</sup> The chapter devoted to Jarīr in the *Aghānī* contains two separate anecdotes which cite this hemistich in these two variant forms (see *Aghānī*, 8/5–6 (which gives *ḥawarun*) and 8/38 (which gives *maraḍun*)).

of his own typical wine song denouement—that is to say wine song finales which end by focusing upon the effects of intoxication on a drinker.<sup>120</sup> The *lāmiyya* begins with the depiction of a man struggling against inebriation, and, as in poem (i) of this section (*Bādir ṣabūḥa-ka*), sows the seed for the quotation of hemistich 1b of al-A'šā's *Mu'allaqa* with the words *ayyuhā l-rajul*: (lines 1–4)

وَمُعْتَبِرٌ بِالذِي تَحْرِي أَنَامِلُهُ      مِنْ كَأْسٍ مُتَخَبِّ لَمْ يَشْنِهْ الْمَلَلُ  
لَكِنْ تَحَاجَّرَ عَنْهَا أَنْ تُعْجِزَهُ      بَيْنَ النَّدَامَى فَلَا عَذْرُ وَلَا عِلَلُ  
نَبْهَتْهُ بَعْدَ مَا حَلَّ الرَّقَادُ لَهُ      عَقْدًا مِنَ السَّكْرِ إِلَّا أَنَّهُ نَمِلُ  
فَقُلْتُ كَأْسَكَ خَذَهَا قَالَ مُحْتَجِرًا      حَسْبِيَ الَّذِي أَنَا فِيهِ أَيُّهَا الرَّجُلُ

[I often remember the man] who assaulted us with a choice [wine]-  
cup held between his fingers; no boredom distracted him.  
He restrained himself [from the wine] lest it should incapacitate  
him amongst his companions without any due cause  
[or: but that was no excuse or pretext].  
I woke him up after sleep had loosened the knot of his  
drunkenness—still he was drunk.  
I said, “Take hold of your cup”, at which he—on his guard—  
said, “I am in enough of a state my man (*ayyuhā l-rajul*)”.

The man depicted here is drunk in spite of himself. His vulnerability and self-restraint present the beginning of a transformation that is completed before the poem ends; for 2a (*lākin taḥājaza 'an-hā an tu'ajjiza-hu*) stands in direct contrast to the first hemistich of the penultimate line (18), *fa-kharra mu'tajizan mimma tarādafa-hu*. A sense of shame and self-exposure leads inexorably, due to the effects of wine and song, to a state of revelry and stupor. The poet's role throughout is to help this man—to prop him up physically (7a, *fa-lam azal . . . arfa'u-hu . . .*) and, somewhat mischievously, to offer him more wine (9b, *fa-qultu hal la-ka fī l-ṣabbā'i ta'khudhu-hā*).

The third player in the poem is the singing-girl and it is her exchange with the ailing *nadīm* that makes this poem both essentially similar to and distinct from Baššār's *nūniyya*. Similarity lies in the *nadīm*'s repeated requests for the *mughanniya* to sing; she obliges and is rapturously applauded (12, *fa-aḥsanat fihī . . .* 15, *aḥsanat . . .* 18, *aḥsanti yā Qubal*).<sup>121</sup> There is thus an alternated

<sup>120</sup> For examples see *Dīwān Abī Nuwās*, 109, 93, and 83.

<sup>121</sup> Baššār's poem contains a similar series of laudatory phrases: l. 3, *fa-qultu*

exchange of quoted hemistichs/verses, through which the *nadīm* attempts to seduce the girl or to find requital for his amorous longing. He clearly fails inasmuch as he is ultimately reduced to the ground incapacitated. It is this failure that may provide an ironic contrast with Baššār's poem, in which the final line quoted by the singing girl appears to accommodate the poet's emotions: *lā yaqtulu llāhu man dāmat mawaddatu-hu*.

This analysis suggests that Abū Nuwās owed a literary debt to Baššār at the very least in the case of a specific poem. Discussion, however, in the ensuing section will move on from this individual debt to uncover a matrix of composition in a variety of material, including a seduction poem by Baššār and several *khamriyyāt* by Abū Nuwās.

#### SEDUCTION AND MUJŪN

The matrix we speak of is essentially a progression—within an individual poem—from chaste love to candid eroticism. This progression, which appears to parody the decorum of formal love poetry, is played out in a large number of Abū Nuwās' wine songs and is, indeed, one of the most characteristic features of his bacchic art. We glimpse the same feature only to a limited extent in earlier poetry. Yet explicit eroticism is a feature of some of the early corpus where it contrasts with the more usual despondency of the *nasīb*. In Imru'ū l-Qays' *Mu'allaqa*, erotic adventure—the seduction of 'Unayza—contrasts with the melancholy of the opening nine lines; even so, the end of the *nasīb* recovers the mantle of a nostalgia more restrained in its exuberance. In al-A'šā there is much boasting of seduction which generally follows the articulation of a now failed love; hence we find the kind of patchwork illustrated in the following four lines:<sup>122</sup>

فَقَاضَتْ دُمُوعِي كَفَيْضِ الْغُرُو      بَ إِمَّا وَكِفًا وَإِمَّا أَنْجِدَارَا  
فَلَمَّا تَرَيْتَنِي عَلَى آلَةٍ      فَلَيْتُ الصَّبَى وَهَجَرْتُ التِّجَارَا  
فَقَدْ أَخْرَجُ الْكَاعِبَ الْمُسْتَرَا      هَ مِنْ خَيْدِهَا وَأَشْبَعُ الْقَهَارَا  
وَذَاتِ نَوَافٍ كَلَوْنِ الْفُصُو      صِي بَاكَرَتْهَا فَادَّمَجْتُ ابْتِكَارَا

*aḥsanti yā su'li . . .* l. 7, *fa-qultu aḥsanti anti l-šamsu ṭāli'atan . . .* l. 13, *fa-qultu aṭrabta-nā yā zayna majlisi-nā* | *fa-hāti inna-ka bi-l-iḥsāni awlā-nā*.

<sup>122</sup> *Dīwān al-A'šā al-Kabīr*, poem 5, lines 3, 10–12.

My eyes shed tears like the overflowing of capacious buckets,  
 whether it be a trickle or a copious downpour.  
 Though you may see me now disliking youthful passions and  
 having abandoned the merchants [of wine],  
 Yet I used to entice veiled maidens from their enclosure and  
 gamble far and wide.  
 And many a frothy, gem-like [wine] did I go to in the  
 morning and hastily deflower.

The clearest example of contrasting erotic passages comes in the *nasīb* of poem 22. After rejection, treated in the first three lines, the poet goes on to give graphic account of an amorous conquest: (see esp. lines 6–8)

وَمَدَّتْ إِلَى بَأْسَابِهَا      فَلَمَّا التَقِينَا عَلَى بَابِهَا  
 وَجَدْتُ بِحُكْمِي لَأَنَّهُى بَهَا      بَدَلْنَا لَهَا حُكْمَهَا عِنْدَنَا  
 وَطَوْرًا أَكُونُ فِعْلَى بَهَا      فَطَوْرًا تَكُونُ مِهَادًا لَنَا

When we met at her door and she beckoned me to join her  
 (lit. she extended her "ropes" to me),  
 I expressed what I felt for her and she responded kindly so  
 as to indulge me with [her company],  
 Sometimes she was as bedding for me and other times I was  
 the same for her, with her on top.

This candid reminiscence is no more than a brief interlude in the mood which dominates the *nasīb*. An equally vivid but more detailed example of seduction in al-A'sā is quoted in el Tayeb's discussion of pre-Islamic poetry.<sup>123</sup> Predictably this celebration is set after a conventionally rueful overture in which the poet rebukes himself about his love for Salmā:<sup>124</sup> "Go slow now! for too long you have been in awe of her" (*aqṣir fa-inna-ka ṭāla-mā l-ūḍi'ta fī i'jābi-hā*).

The *bā'iyya* of Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhālī discussed at the beginning of this chapter (see "Developments in *Ghazal*") contains an intriguing patchwork of erotic moods. The final four lines appear to undercut the idealized tone of the first 27 lines of the poem—from fantasy the poem moves to a more realistic depiction. Throughout the larger, initial part of the poem there exists the threat of separation and death through love; this mood is also suggested by the imagery of the extensive wine/honey simile. At line

<sup>123</sup> CHALUP 63–4.

<sup>124</sup> *Dīwān al-A'sā al-Kabīr*, poem 39, line 3.

27, where the simile ends, all is reduced to the celebration of a kiss and a night spent together; thus wine, which has been "sacred", is "not more fragrant than her mouth when I came to her as a night-traveller, and she wrapped her clothes around me" (*bi-aṭyaba min . . . fī-hā idh ji'tu ṭāriqan l-mina l-layli wa-ltaffat 'alayya thiyābu-hā*). The transition from a threatening pure love to the physical realities of embrace foreshadows the bacchic realism of the final three lines, the precise significance of which is unclear. What exists for the reader to behold is degeneration by design from love and wine of an almost 'udhrī quality to four lines that come close to *mujūn*.

In the *dīwān* of 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a distinct registers of eroticism normally constitute a contrast between the present and the past and are, therefore, symptomatic of the influence of the *nasīb* on his poetry. There is a *jīmiyya*<sup>125</sup> that is different in this respect; it is possible to read the text as the description of a single event in time. The *qaṣīda* begins with conventional motifs that dampen the mood:

نَعَقَ الْغُرَابُ بَيْنَ ذَاتِ الدُّمْلَجِ      لَيْتَ الْغُرَابُ بَيْنَهَا لَمْ يَزْعَجِ

The kawing of the crow signalled the departure of my braceleted love; would that the crow had not caused me this unease.

Line 6 perhaps best describes the state of the poet at the outset of the poem:

فَطَلَلْتُ فِي أَمْرِ الْهَوَى مُتَحَيِّرًا      مِنْ حَرِّ نَارٍ بِالْحَشَا مُتَوَهِّجًا

I remained driven to distraction by . . . the heat of a fire [of passion] that was burning inside me.

The advice he receives seeks to check these welling emotions: (line 8)

قَالُوا اصْطَبِرْ عَنْ حُبِّهَا مُتَعَمِّدًا      لَا تَهْلِكَنَّ صَبَابَةً أَوْ تَحْجَرِ

They said, "Be patient, make an effort to forswear your love for her; do not die of passion or cause yourself shame."

This verse introduces the social decorum which 'Umar rejects (9, *kayfa ṣṭibārī*) and against which he pits himself in lines 10–21: the poet is wary of the beloved's entourage in the manner of Imru'u l-Qays (line 15);<sup>126</sup> she also initially rejects him (18); he then turns to leave but is beckoned back. The physical consummation of desire

<sup>125</sup> See *Dīwān*, 82–3.

<sup>126</sup> See *Mu'allāqa*, line 5 (in the recension of al-Tibrizī).

is delayed tantalizingly until the the final line, which celebrates a loving embrace:

فَلَمِثْتُ فَاَهَا آخِذَا يَقْرُونَهَا      شَرِبَ التَّرِيفِ بِسَرِّ مَاءِ الْحَشْرِجِ

I kissed her mouth whilst holding onto locks of her hair and  
[drank what seemed like the wine] of a drunkard mixed  
with limpid water that collects in hollows [after rain].

The finale thus works against the keynote set by the powerful image of the “crow of separation” (*ghurāb al-bayn*).

This ground-plan of erotic contrasts is relevant to a significant number of the Ḥakamite’s wine songs and has been studied in an article by J. S. Meisami in which she examines poems of *muḡūn* with regard to their literary structure.<sup>127</sup> Her discussion of Abū Nuwās’ *Yā sāḥir al-ṭarf* (a *khamriyya* to be outlined in detail below) divides the poem into “idealism” and “reality”. Meisami’s perspective can be summarized thus: “far from being a piece of *šu‘ūbī* propaganda . . . this is a literary play designed to bring us back to the ‘real world’ and prepare the way for the poem’s conclusion . . . what I wish to emphasize is that it is a well-constructed literary game . . . *muḡūn* is a counter-genre which plays a literary game by inverting the conventions of ‘normative’ *ghazal* and *waṣf al-khamr*, one in which wine poetry and wine are the instruments of seduction.”

A plausible generic model for Abū Nuwās’ poem is a *rā’iyya* by Baššār<sup>128</sup> in which the poet begins by declaring his passion to a relentless censurer—*lawm* figures often in these lines (see lines 1, 5, and 10). The type of love with which the poet pits himself against his antagonist is apparently chaste and expressed via motifs akin to the ‘*udhrī*’ tradition: love is fatal (4a, *lā aktumu l-nāsa ḥubba qātilatī*; 5b, *ṣāḥibu-kum wa-l-jalīli muḥtaḍaru*); love is divinely ordained (7b, *wa-dhā hawan sāqa ḥīna-hu l-qadaru*; there is a sense of this also in line 10). The poet’s love is intense and appears to fit into a celebratory framework of chaste love. Hence in line 11 for the requital of love he is content with no more than conversation and a glance: *al-ḥadīth wa-l-naẓar*. At line 12, however, the poem

<sup>127</sup> See “Arabic *Muḡūn* Poetry: The Literary Dimension”, in *Verse and the Fair Sex: Studies in Arabic Poetry and in the Representation of Women in Arabic Literature* (Utrecht, 1993), 8–30.

<sup>128</sup> See A. F. L. Beeston, *Selections From the Poetry of Baššār*, p. 7 (of Arabic text), p. 38 (of English text).

descends abruptly into a series of increasingly more permissive images. All are dependent syntactically on the reserved statement of line 11: “For me and for her with whom I am in love it is enough to talk together and to gaze on each other . . .”; (12) “or to kiss meanwhile . . .”; (13) “or to feel with my hand below her dress . . .”; (14) “or a love-bite . . .”. The momentum builds up to the vivid scene of a forced kiss which results in a wound to the girl’s lip. With callous humour the poet rounds off the poem advising her how she should explain away the scar of indiscretion: “Tell them it was only a gnat with claws (if there are gnats with claws).”

The contrast between the two sections is marked and constitutes in part a parody of the register of chaste love. This can be substantiated even more clearly in the case of Abū Nuwās, from whom we gather that “degeneration” is a literary impulse in itself, especially susceptible of treatment in saturnalia which depict the effects of inebriation. This feature also existed to some degree among his predecessors—a most spirited example exists in Abū l-Hindī’s *diwān*.<sup>129</sup>

Though we have offered some samples, well-wrought seduction poems before Abū Nuwās are nevertheless few; and where they exist wine is not contrived so as to be the instrument of seduction. It is particularly striking that such poems are also rare in the poetry of his contemporaries; for example, Muslim b. al-Walid, whose lexicon and imagery is akin to that of Abū Nuwās, does not forge a specific narrative connection between *khamr* and *ghazal*. This is clear in a *rā’iyya* which has narrative elements highly reminiscent of ‘Umar b. Abī Rabi’a but simply attaches to this a bacchic *envoi*.<sup>130</sup>

#### Abū Nuwās’ *Yā Sāḥir al-Ṭarf*

This *khamriyya*<sup>131</sup> exhibits the consummation of balanced form and structure in the fusion of *khamr* and *ghazal*; it is also one of the

<sup>129</sup> See *Diwān Abī l-Hindī*, poem 3, pp. 17–19.

<sup>130</sup> See *Diwān*, 213. Another poem by Muslim is discussed below (see “Conclusion: Muslim b. al-Walid and Abū Nuwās”).

<sup>131</sup> Though the *khamriyya* as a seduction scene is one of Abū Nuwās’ most distinct literary achievements with regard to generic synthesis and parody, by no means all *khamriyyāt*—even where there is deftness of composition in terms of *khamr* and *ghazal*—are necessarily characterized by this narrative feature; see, for example, the *bā’iyya* (*Diwān*, 188) where the players in the poem simply have contrasting roles.

finest examples of the use of *badīʿ* in Abū Nuwās—*badīʿ* enhances the structure of the poem.<sup>132</sup>

يا ساحر الطرف أنت الدهر وسنان  
إذا أمتحت بطرف العين مكتنما  
تبدو السرائر إن عينك رنقتا  
ما لي وما لك قد جزأتني شيعة  
أراك تعمل في قتلي بلا يرة  
غاد المدام وإن كانت محرمة  
صفراء نبي حبابا كلما مزجت  
كانت على عهد نوح في سفينة  
روح فجئناها دن وملفعا  
فلم تزل تعجم الدنيا وتعجمها  
فصاتها في مغار الأرض فاختلفت  
بيلدة لم تصل كلب بها طئبا  
ليست لذهلي ولا شبانها وطئا  
أرض تبني بها كسرى دساكره  
وما بها من ميثم العرب عرجفة  
لكن بها جلنار قد تفرعه  
فإن تنسمت من أرواحها نسما  
يا ليلة طلعت بالسعد أنجمها  
بنتا ندين لإبليس بطاعته  
فقام بسحب أذيلا منعمة  
يقول يا أسنى والدمع يغليه  
فقلت ليث رأى ظبيا فوائبها

سير القلوب لدى عينيك إعلان  
ناجاك من طرفة بالسر تبيان  
كأنها لك في الأوهام سلطان  
وأنت مما كسانى الدهر عريان  
كأن قتلي عند الله قربان  
فلكبائر عند الله غفران  
كأنه لؤلؤ يتلوه عقيان  
من خر شحنتها والأرض طوفان  
قار ومعجرها ليف وكتان  
حتى تحيرها للخبء دهقان  
على الدفينة أزمان وأزمان  
إلى خباء ولا عبس وذبيان  
لكنها لبني الأحرار أوطان  
فما بها من بئى الرعاء إنسان  
ولا بها من غداء العرب خطبان  
أس وكله ورد وسوسان  
يؤما تنسم في الخيشوم ريحان  
فبات يفتك بالسكران سكران  
حتى نعى الليل بالناقوس رهبان  
قد مسها من يدي ظلم وعذوان  
هتكت مني الذي قد كان يصطان  
كذا صروف ليالي الدهر ألوان

<sup>132</sup> Analysis of this poem is based on the version contained in Wagner's edition of the *Khamriyyāt* of Abū Nuwās. See *Dīwān Abi Nuwās*, ed. Wagner, iii. 323–5. See also *Dīwān*, ed. Ghazālī, pp. 126–7. Wagner's line 9 is missing from Ghazālī's edition; however, this does not affect the ensuing interpretation of the poem.

Some of the material below has appeared in "Perspectives of a *Hamriyya*", in *Festschrift Ewald Wagner zum 65. Geburtstag* (Beirut, 1994) 258–76. In the same volume J. S. Meisami also devotes discussion to this *qaṣida*: see "Abū Nuwās and the Rhetoric of Parody", 247–57.

You with the magic gaze, eternally languid, secrets held close in  
the heart are drawn out by your eyes.  
When you examine a hidden feeling of mine with your look,  
candour whispers the secret.  
Your eyes stare and secrets come clean, as if you have power  
over fancies.  
Consider us both: You have rent me to pieces, though you  
yourself are bare of the garment that Fate has made me wear.  
I see you work to kill me unavenged, as if to kill me is an offering  
to God.  
[So] drink the wine, though it is forbidden for God forgives even  
grave sins.  
A white wine forging bubbles when mixed—pearls set in gold.  
She [the wine] was on the Ark in Noah's time—most noble of his  
shipment whilst the Earth was awash.  
A soul incarnate in the vat, cloaked in pitch, veiled in palm-fibres  
and linen.  
Experienced of and by the world, until a noble Persian chose to  
hide her away,  
Preserving her in the depths of a cave—age upon age visited her  
entombed.  
In a land to which Kalb had not been, with their ropes and their  
tents, nor 'Abs nor Dhubyān,  
Not a land of Dhuhl nor Šaybān, but a land of the Banū Aḥrār,  
A place where Kisrā built his palaces, free from uncouth  
bedouins—  
No thorny Arab foods there, no bitter acacia leaves!  
Rather there was pomegranate blossom, streaked with myrtle,  
garlanded with roses and lilies.  
If you breath of its spirit, [the fragrance] of basil breathes into  
your nostrils.  
O night when the stars rose with good omen, when the drunkard  
assaulted the drunkard,  
We passed the time obedient to Iblis, believing in him, until the  
monks sounded the night's death knell (i.e. sounded the  
monastery bell at dawn).  
And [a young adolescent] left, dragging his delightful robes which  
I had touched with my iniquitous behaviour,  
Saying, "O woe!" as tears overcame him, "You have torn away  
from [me the dignity] I had preserved."  
I replied, "A lion saw a gazelle and lunged at it; such is the variety  
of Fate's vicissitudes!"

At a first reading of the poem one is struck simply by the dissonance between the eroticism of the beginning and end of the poem. These distinct clusters of lines are separated by a hyperbole of bacchic description in lines 7–17. Thus one can perceive three apparently unrelated sections, juxtaposed due to the conventional but loose compatibility of *ghazal* and *dhikr al-khamr*. A brief discussion of the *qaṣīda* by Hamorī has pointed this out. The context of this discussion is “Form and Logic in Some Medieval Poems”;<sup>133</sup> he comments:

A charming and funny example of a . . . poem whose form is determined by a palinode is *Yā Sāḥir al-Ṭarf*; it is cast in a familiar combination of *ghazal* and *khamriyya* and the parts are held together by the fact that they flow from humorously contrary attitudes . . . Always an ironist Abu Nuwas brings the ethereal and the coarse into relation. It is a comic relation . . . of wit, not cynicism . . . Only this much is clear: in the poem the highest and lowest are inextricable, and perhaps feed on one another.

One can go further than this clear synopsis in uncovering the nature of the poem: we may examine if and how the details of the poem (individual lines) adumbrate and/or complement the whole. Scheindlin’s model<sup>134</sup> provides a useful tool, though I have found it to be relevant only where one of the most conspicuous aspects of *badīʿ* poetry is brought into play—antithesis. *Ṭibāq* underscores the structure of the poem. Our primary concern, therefore, should be to characterize the poem in terms of *badīʿ*—an accepted medieval model of which the poets of this period had become conscious. Scheindlin’s exposition of “anticipation-resolution” simply allows one to perceive antithesis as being largely enacted between the first and second hemistich of the verse:<sup>135</sup>

The predominance of the bi-partite verse shows that the auditor could normally expect the observation with which the verse begins to be complemented by a second observation; this paired structure is conducive to parallelism . . .

Importantly, Scheindlin himself points to the close affinity between his model and *badīʿ*:<sup>136</sup>

Perhaps it will turn out that the structuring of poems, as described in this work, is a result of the cultivation of the *badīʿ* style, which was certainly not the exclusive possession of the Andalusian poets. In view of the impor-

<sup>133</sup> In *Edebiyât*, 2 (1977).

<sup>134</sup> This is set out in *Form and Structure in the Poetry of al-Muʿtamid ibn ʿAbbād* (Leiden, 1974).

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. 174.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. 175.

tance of parallelism and rhetorical balancing in al-Muʿtamid and his fellows this seems to be a distinct possibility.

Scheindlin’s summary of the views of medieval critics on the nature of the beginnings and ends of poems is, perhaps coincidentally, very relevant to Abū Nuwās’ *Yā sāḥir al-ṭarf*:<sup>137</sup> (the first quote is from Ibn Rashīq)

“Poetry is a lock, and the beginning is its key; it behoves the poet to make the beginning of his poem good, for it is the first thing that strikes the ear” . . . ʿAskarī, in his *Kitāb al-Ṣināʿatayn*, provides the best guidelines with a brief list of the themes which are appropriate . . . these are: “apostrophe, weeping and description of abandoned homes and the scattering of friends and mourning over youth and blaming fate.” He then admonishes the poet to be careful not to formulate these unhappy themes in such a way as to allow the auditor to think they are addressed to him or to take them as a bad omen . . . thus ʿAskarī acknowledges in passing a point that seems to be basic to the form of Arabic poetry in general, namely that a poem often begins with an apostrophe, either to some imaginary companion or to the poet himself.

On the end of the poem Scheindlin again summarizes al-ʿAskarī:<sup>138</sup>

he is more specific (than Ibn Rashīq), although he begins with the rather vague observation that: rarely do we find anyone at all eloquent who does not end his speech with a striking idea or a pretty and elegant word . . . the last line of the poem should be: . . . the best verse in it, and the most appropriate to the idea which you had in mind in composing it. People are particularly fond of proverbs because they make use of them in literary discussions and assembly . . . Ibn Abī al-Iṣḥāq comments [in *Taḥrīr al-Taḥbīr*] that: “The fine conclusion in poetry is rare in the poems of the ancients, and it is the modern poets who have taken the most pains to achieve it.”<sup>139</sup>

We will examine the *qaṣīda* in the light of the observations laid out above: the first line offers a clear beginning to the poem:

يَا سَاحِرَ الطَّرْفِ أَنْتَ الدَّهْرُ وَسَنَانُ سِرِّ الْقُلُوبِ لَدَى عَيْنَيْكَ إِعْلَانُ

First, it is apostrophic, and, following the admonitions of al-ʿAskarī, it is not addressed at the audience; secondly, it contains *taṣrīʿ*—internal rhyming. The line contains the stamp which serves Scheindlin’s thesis, namely that “anticipation-resolution” is aided by the division of the *bayt* into two hemistichs, and by *taṣrīʿ* which, where it exists, emphasizes the independent entity of the hemistich. Thematically the line introduces the eye of the beloved as the focus

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. 16.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. 19.

<sup>139</sup> My italics.

of the initial three lines; the lover's glance governs: the magic which he wields, Time itself (*al-dahr*) and a languid-state (*wasnān*); thus the poem is, at the outset, suspended from reality—a suspension which is elaborated in the following lines where the effects of enchantment are described; they are the forced extraction of secrets.<sup>140</sup>

Anticipation-resolution: the first hemistich introduces the enchanting youth; the second hemistich echoes the first in subject matter whilst also introducing the antithetical pulse of the poem: in the next few lines each hemistich is part of a thematic balance: in line 1 *sirr al-qulūb* (1b) balances *i'lān* (1b); line 2: *muktataman* (2a) balances *tibyān* (2b); line 4: *jazza'ta-nī šiya'an* (4a) contrasts *wanta mimmā kasā-nī l-dahru 'uryānu* (4b). In line 3 the second hemistich explains and reinforces the first. Consider now lines 5 and 6:

أَرَأَيْكَ تَعْمَلُ فِي قَتْلِي بِلَا يَرَوُ      كَأَنَّ قَتْلِي عِنْدَ اللَّهِ قُرْبَانٌ  
عَادَ الْمُدَامَ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ مُحَرَّمَةً      فَلِلْكَبَائِرِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ غُفْرَانٌ

Both set up a precarious balance around two religious motifs; they are analogous statements which provide a deft introduction to the theme of wine: line 5 treats religion figuratively; through a contrast the poet justifies the murder performed by the enchanting youth as a sacrificial offering; similarly in the next line the religious prohibition of wine (1st hemistich) is contrasted with God's forgiveness (2nd hemistich); and here the basic tension between the 1st and 2nd hemistich is itself contained and accelerated in the 2nd hemistich (*kabā'ir* ↔ *ghufrān*), giving the contrast a sharper edge. Both lines share the paradox of sins vindicated within a manipulated religious framework.

Lines 7–17 describe the wine. Intra-linear antithesis and balance (anticipation-resolution) is a reduced feature, obtaining in lines 13 and 14 only. This fact gives the chronology/myth of wine a different linguistic texture from the introductory passage. Line 12 contains both a time and place topos which describe a time before the Arabs and a place far from the Arab lands. Viewing these as elements of *šu'ūbiyya* should be tempered by consideration of their other function, namely the contrast between man in the present (the Arabs) and a wine which transcends the present situation (the *Banū l-Aḥrār* are a people free from the status quo represented by the

<sup>140</sup> This image also exists for wine; see Ḥawī, *Fann al-Ši'r al-Khamrī*, 308 (quoted from Muslim b. al-Walid): *wa-širfin ruṣāfiyyatin qahwatīn l tumītu l humūma wa-tubdī l-sarā'ira*.

Arabs; wine, as part of its ideal, is associated with a “mythological” past). Similarly the quality of the wine is expressed with reference to its distant provenance. The poet's apparent *šu'ūbiyya* stems from a mood which playfully rejects convention and decorum, both poetic and social. This underscores the whole poem. The antithetical pulse of lines 13 (*laysat . . . lākinna-hā*) and 14 (*bi-hā Kisrā . . . fa-mā bi-hā*) serves the contrast between Persians and Arabs.

The last five lines all contain anticipation-resolution (each hemistich is syntactically complete), thus as a separate passage (the third and final section of the *qaṣīda*) it resumes the texture or pulse of lines 1–7. Consider line 18:

يَا لَيْلَةَ طَلَعَتْ بِالسَّعْدِ أَنْجُمُهَا      فَبَاتَ بَفَيْتِكَ بِالسَّكَرَانِ سَكْرَانٌ

The first hemistich is a time topos—*yā laylatan*; the second hemistich introduces action: the reality of the effects of wine which represent a plane of significance below the descriptive myth of wine. This line introduces the thematic and holistic contrast between section 1 and section 3 of the *qaṣīda*: if we compare lines 5 and 18 we can discern a progression from sin as a metaphor to the reality of two sins presented without mitigation: drunkenness and murder. Indeed line 19, in which the poem's brief narrative is shown to take place under the auspices of Iblis, moves still further away from the restraint of lines 5–6. Whilst vividly depicting action and time (the sounding of church bells *at dawn*) the line also creates an association between sin (Iblis) and Christianity (*ruhbān*). Thus both Islam and Christianity provide a backdrop for the poem.

The last three lines contain the anecdotal force of the *qaṣīda*; it is a rape/seduction scene where the action is specific; still antithesis underscores the dynamics of the lines: in line 20 *muna'amatun* contrasts *zulmun wa-'udwān*; in line 21 the first hemistich describes emotion, whilst the second hemistich expands on *zulmun wa-'udwān*; in line 22 the first hemistich contains a metaphor, which sustains the initial metaphor of *'udwān*; the second hemistich offers a gnomic conclusion which seals the poem on an ironic note. Further irony accrues from viewing the line within the broad inherited tradition of Arabic poetry, for *ḥikma* often crystallizes from depictions of the natural world—especially fauna.<sup>141</sup>

The phrase *šurūf layālī l-dahr* comments specifically on *laythun*

<sup>141</sup> See Labid's *Mu'allaqa*: *inna l-manāyā lā taṭīšu sihāmu-hā*. The hemistich comments upon the death of an oryx calf slain by wolves (line 39b of al-Tibrizī's recension).

*ra'ā ḡabyān*. It is also a relevant comment upon the vicissitudes of the entire *qaṣīda*. For the thematic and temporal spectrum of the *qaṣīda* as a whole presents a picture of *al-dahr* and the changing state for which it is responsible: *al-dahr* is mentioned in the first and last hemistich of the poem; in the first it articulates the eternally enchanting qualities of a youth: *anta l-dahra wasnānu*. In the last line a young boy has been afflicted by Fate's vicissitudes. The object of love is at first held up high and is then struck down by Fate; this altering plight is paralleled conversely by the plight of the poet: in the fourth line he is afflicted by Fate: addressing the beloved he states: *wa-anta mimmā kasā-ni l-dahru 'uryānu*. In the last section, however, he is master of the situation—the lion whose attack upon the *ḡaby* prompts the gnomic *envoi*.

Equal to this balanced shift is the contrast between the imagery of line 5 and the imagery of line 18: in the first case sacrifice is a figurative ritual which brings both the beloved and his victim closer to God; associated with this ideal, the wine itself is embraced by religion in the very next line—hence the description of wine itself starts on an ethereal level: wine as Gold, wine in the time of Noah. In the second case both ideals are reduced: the drunkard slays the drunkard without even figurative mitigation. Aiding the subjugation of the poem's events to the figure of *al-dahr* is the contrived notion of the passage of time: differing attitudes towards the beloved are separated by a depiction of wine that charts the ages diachronically from the time of Noah. As time emerges into the present there is corruption through association with the hardships of life among the bedouin Arab tribes. The corrupt present is then focused in the anecdote of 18–22; indeed, in line 21 time is finally telescoped into a moment's rash deed: *hatakta minnī lladhī qad kāna yuṣṣānu*.

Overall, intra-linear antithesis underpins the contrast that is built into the poem as the essential element in its structure, that is, the whole structure, suggested by the majority pulse of individual lines, is one of "anticipation-resolution". Thus one can offer the following schemata:

Fantasy ↔ Reality

Transcendence ↔ Worldliness

The inversion of roles (passive to active/active to passive)<sup>142</sup>

Religion/pseudo-religion ↔ Profanity

<sup>142</sup> In line 4 the poet is passive to the surreal force of his enchanter: *qad jazza'ta-ni ṣīya'an*; in line 20, through the transforming passage of wine, he is active: *hatak-*

*Khamr* exists on a plane or axis that is different from the elements and events of *ghazal*; it is a catalyst which recedes even from the strictures implicit in the word *sakrān*—the latter is a state of human weakness rather than a fault of the wine. Aiding this independence of the bacchic section is the fact that its linguistic texture is largely devoid of the intra-linear antithesis of the initial and final *ghazal* sections.

Recapitulation of *badī'*: where anticipation-resolution (according to Scheindlin's definition) is clear, the line is constructed around antithesis (*ṭibāq*)—one of the five main categories of *badī'*.<sup>143</sup> In line 1 there is antithesis between *sirr* and *i'lān*; there is also parallelism: *yā sāḥira l-ṭarf = sirru l-qulūbi ladā 'aynay-ka i'lāni*, where in both hemistichs the eye/glance is mentioned in conjunction with its enchanting effect. In line 2 again the eye governs each hemistich and thus governs the antithesis between *mukṭataman* and *tibyān*. Line 3 sustains the eye motif and concentrates the essential antithesis which it governs into the phrase: *tabdū l-sarā'ir*; the second hemistich is a simile (*mathal*) which concludes the extended motif of the three lines: "[thus] you have dominion over a world of fancy". Line 4 contains parallelism: *mā-lī wa-mā-la-ka* introduces the contrasting depictions of the poet and the enchanter. Other elements of *badī'* are *jinās* (line 5 and 16) and metaphor (9, 18, and 21). On the whole anticipation-resolution appears in the lines of the poem that owe their existence to the cultivation of *badī'* style; antithesis informs the poem and is resolved in the final and concluding metaphor.<sup>144</sup>

*ta minnī lladhī qad kāna yuṣṣānu* (the poet is the subject of the first verb).

<sup>143</sup> The use of *badī'* in Abū Nuwās is quite different from its use in the poetry of Muslim b. al-Walid. In the latter's *diwān* the artifices of *badī'* are clearly recognizable as those defined by Ibn al-Mu'tazz. They inform individual lines without apparent relationship to structure or meaningful internal resonances within the poem. In Abū Nuwās we find language both conforming to and reminiscent of the artifices of *badī'* betraying or complementing the internal thematic and structural make-up of the poem. This process has already been seen to operate in his poem *Tu'ātibu-ni 'alā ṣurbi ṣṭibāḥi* (see "Intertextuality") in which the delicate language complements the internal cross-references of the narrative. *Badī'* is also evident in the antithetical pulse governing both the imagery and structure of *Wa-muwāṭi l-ṭarf* (see "Emotional Contrast" under "Rejection of the *Aṭlāl*").

<sup>144</sup> The structure of this poem is akin to examples of English metaphysical poetry. See for example John Donne's "The Ecstasy" (Donne, ed. A. J. Smith, p. 367) and Marvell's "Dialogue between The Resolved Soul, and Created Pleasure" (*The Metaphysical Poets*, ed. Gardner, p. 237.); see also Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" (Ibid. 251–2). For a brief discussion of the latter poem see below, ch. 2, "Two Orders".



"The Lady Gazelle and her Murderous Glances"

Knowledge of literary conventions (genres and their language, images and symbols) is essential to an ultimate appreciation of the text. Meisami has written in "Unsquaring the Circle" that we must examine the poem "in terms of the horizon of expectations of its contemporary audience".<sup>145</sup> Apposite to the ensuing commentary is a quotation from Hans Robert Jauss which outlines factors relevant to the expectations of an audience:<sup>146</sup>

*The specific disposition toward a particular work that the author anticipates from the audience [depends on]: (the) familiar norms or the immanent poetics of the genre . . . Apart from examination of "specific semantic and structural components," there must be "identification of the generic and poetic norms which predispose the audience to receive and interpret the poem in a certain way . . ."*

With respect to Abū Nuwās' *qaṣīda* we can be both general and specific. Hamori has already stated very broadly: "it is cast in a familiar combination of *ghazal* and *khamriyya*". More specifically, however, understanding this poem is contingent upon familiarity with the treatment of the gazelle in ancient Arabic poetry. C. J. Bürgel's article "The Lady Gazelle and her Murderous Glances"<sup>147</sup> has given a clear review of the motif's evolution from the *Jāhiliyya*. Consistently it is used in the context of chaste, committed love to express the extent of the poet-lover's passion. The gazelle approaches that of a sacred symbol. The motif is a common one in poetry of the 'Abbāsīd period and is frequently to be found in the amorous verse of al-'Abbās b. al-Aḥnaf, a line of whose poetry is quoted by Bürgel.<sup>148</sup> The familiar norms of the motif are such that it is recognizable simply from its corollary features, that is the enchanting eyes.<sup>149</sup> It is this corollary with which Abū Nuwās begins his poem and which is echoed by mention of the *zaby* in the closing hemistich. This elaborated use of the motif focuses the identity of the poet's paramour and sharpens the contrast between the

<sup>145</sup> See J. S. Meisami, "Unsquaring the Circle: Rereading a Poem by al-Mu'tamid ibn 'Abbād", *Arabica*, 35 (1988), 296.

<sup>146</sup> Meisami quotes from *Towards an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (Brighton, 1982), 24. Italics indicate Meisami's own words.

<sup>147</sup> *JAL* 20/1 (1989), 1-11.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.* 5.

<sup>149</sup> This is amply evinced by the corpus of Andalusian *muwašṣahāt*. See my "Thematic Patterning in the *Muwašṣahāt*: The Case of the Gazelle Motif", in *Poesía Estrófica* (Madrid, 1991), 201-16.

poem's chaste overture and its bawdy ending. The authorial design in this reversal of fortunes is the literary parody of chaste love. Several poems support this claim, for example the 12-line *dāliyya*<sup>150</sup> with the *maṭla'*, *rubba ghazālīn*; it is a light-hearted piece which includes an amusing joke: in line 4 the gazelle (Abū Nuwās' young male companion) is assured:

كَمْ مِنْ أَخٍ جَادَ بِالْوَصَالِ فَمَا أَحْبَلَ مِنْ وَصَلِنَا وَلَمْ يَلِدْ

How often has a brother come to me most generously  
and yet avoided pregnancy or giving birth!

The young "fawn" is described in the first three verses in conventionally positive terms: he is like the moon (1a), who dispels darkness from the town (1b); in line 2 he is typically recalcitrant:

سَأَلْتُهُ الْوَصَلَ كَيْ يَجُودَ بِهِ فَضَنَّ عَنِّي بِهِ وَلَمْ يَجِدْ

I asked him to come to me and be generous but he  
shunned me in miserly fashion . . .

In response to Abū Nuwās' jesting assurance (line 4) the young "gazelle" states defiantly (line 5):

فَقَالَ هِبَاتَ دَا تُرْقُئَنِي وَلَنْ يَرْقَّ الْغَزَالُ لِلْأَسَدِ

. . . God forbid! You cajole me. No gazelle will ever  
give in to a lion's flattery.

The representation of lover and beloved as a lion and a gazelle is another commonplace which highlights the latter's timid and recalcitrant temperament. In the last line of *Yā sāḥir al-ṭarf* the norms of this poetry, in which the "gazelle" may even slay the leonine poet, are reversed thus articulating the parody which has been discussed. In this poem the "gazelle" attempts to reassert the more familiar order of roles but succeeds only in setting a challenge that is met—the challenge of seduction: the phrase in 6a, *qum li-na'khudha-hā* (come let us take [the wine])<sup>151</sup> must be understood to follow the gazelle's defiant utterance; the poet invites the gazelle to wine,

<sup>150</sup> *Dīwān*, 197.

<sup>151</sup> The function of this phrase is the same as *ghādi l-mudām* in *Yā sāḥir al-ṭarf*: the invitation to take wine initiates the process of seduction, whilst the wine itself (or intoxication) allows it to succeed. This is dependent on a quality of the wine which remains generally implicit but is from time to time expressed, e.g. (*Dīwān*, 128) *tulīnu qalba l-bāzikhī l-mutakhayyil*. This knowledge explains the following line where the *sāqī* is aware of the poet's decadent agenda: (*Dīwān*, p. 135, line 9) *fa-qāla l-āna ta'muru-nī bi-hādhā wa-qad 'aliqat mafāṣilī l-šamūlu*. It also allows one to perceive the humorous dissimulation in the following line: (*Dīwān*, 120) *wa-*

seemingly acceding to his claim in 5b (*lan yariqqa l-ghazālu li-l-asadi*), and thus changes the subject of discussion—*fa-qultu da'-nā* . . . (6a). The invitation to wine has in fact altered the role of the players in the poem and by line 9 the psychology of this short piece has been drastically transformed:

اوجرته القرقف العقار فما انتهت حتى ائكى على العضد  
I speared him [in the mouth] with enriched wine, not  
stopping until he fell down onto his forearms.

This leads to depiction of the boy's "capitulation" in lines 10–11. His cry of distress in line 12 concludes the poem and contrasts the self-confident tone of 5b.

The poem beginning *Yā 'ārim al-tarf*<sup>152</sup> is obsessed more with imagery itself than with a narrative; it can be divided in half: the first five lines are *ghazal* and the final seven lines depict a bacchic scene. No gazelle is mentioned specifically in the first section; the young object of desire is *'ārima l-tarf* (possessed of a violent glance) which leaves traces on all that he sets his eyes on, even rock;<sup>153</sup> his glance is fatal (2); he is a *qamar* born of the full moon (*badr*) and the sun—another corollary of the gazelle motif; lines 4–5:

فهل على من قتلت من حرج أم لست تدري فتخبر الخبر  
عليك أوزار من قتلت بلا شك فكن للجساب مستظرا  
Have you no shame about killing your victim or have  
you not been informed [that]  
You are doubtless laden with the burden of [killing]  
your victims? So be wary of Judgement day!

Each topic (the enchanting glance, the moon, and the death of the lover) puts a spotlight on the gazelle. Line 6 moves into a distinct section of the poem, introduced by *wāw rubba*. A companion awakes from sleep to be given a draught of "sparkling" wine (*tarā la-hā l-shararā*) (6–7). Description of the wine in lines 8 and 9 echoes aspects of lines 1–5:

مثل دم الشادين الذبيح إذا ما انسأب منه غلارض أو قطرا  
رقت عن اللمس فهي كالقمر ال طالع في الماء فات من نظرا  
*lastu bi-qā'ilin li-nadīmi šidqin | wa-qad akhadha l-nu'asu bi-muqlatay-hi || tanāwal-hā* . . .

<sup>152</sup> *Dīwān*, 190.

<sup>153</sup> A motif reminiscent of the second line of *Da' 'an-ka lawmī*, in which it is the wine that brings life to stones (see *Dīwān*, 6).

[A wine] like the blood of a slaughtered gazelle (*šādin*)  
which when spilt upon the ground,  
Is too fine to touch, like the moon rising over water—  
[and cannot be grasped by] one who gazes at it  
[although it looks within reach].

By assimilating the imagery of *ghazal* the treatment of wine offers an intimation of consummated desire in the final line:

حتى إذا ذقتها حررت لها بعد مجال الطنون منعفرا  
When I tasted it, having considered [its quality], I was  
laid down low.

A similar internal echoing of imagery exists in the *khamriyya* *Wa-maqrūrin*,<sup>154</sup> in which a young fawn (*wa-mukhtalisi l-qulūbi bi-tarfi rīmin* (line 8)) has the same blinding effect as wine; compare the Arabic of lines 7 and 10, which refer to the wine and the youth respectively:

فردد طرفه كيما يراها فكل الطرف من دوين الحجاب  
تقاصرت العيون له وأغفت عن اللحظات خاضعة الرقاب  
Based on the similarity of images the wine and the boy coalesce in the final line (13):<sup>155</sup>  
يعللنا بصافية ووجه كبدل لاح من خلل السحاب  
He gives us pure wine to drink and a face like the  
moon appearing through the clouds.

Another more complex *qaṣīda*, beginning *saqā llāhu zabyan*,<sup>156</sup> havers between a tone that approximates to that of the poetry of 'Abbās b. al-Aḥnaf, on the one hand, and glimpses of a saturnalian scene, for which we proffer interpretation based on accumulative knowledge of the poet's bacchic narratives,<sup>157</sup> on the other. It is a

<sup>154</sup> *Dīwān*, 188.

<sup>155</sup> Other examples of the adaptation of the gazelle motif to the bacchic context are to be found in: the *jimiyya*, *Dīwān*, 163; the *rā'iyya*, pp. 100–1; the *siniyya*, p. 106; the *rā'iyya*, p. 125. All in differing ways exploit the resonances of the motif.

<sup>156</sup> *Dīwān Abi Nuwās*, ed. al-Ghazālī, pp. 222–3. See Appendix B for the text and translation of this poem.

<sup>157</sup> Abū Nuwās himself gives us licence to do this elsewhere in his *dīwān*; for he draws attention in one short (6-line) composition to the nature of his exploits in other poems: *a-mā wa-llāhi [law] tasma | 'u mā qultu mina l-šī'ri* (*Dīwān*, 199). Further, it is the audience's knowledge of his *dīwān* as a whole that he relies on in such as the following closing line, which refers to the effects of wine: *wa-l-dahru laysa bi-lāqin ša'ba muntaẓamin | illā ramā-hu bi-tafrīqin wa-iz'āji* (*Dīwān*, 48). A

poem held together in various ways by internal echoing: the imprecation *saqā llāhu* occurs twice (at line 1 and 8); it introduces each of the two separate phases of the poem (love for a young fawn and the bacchic scene), and is re-cast in the final line as the phrase *fa-saqyan li-ayyāmin maḍat*. Each imprecation is offset by a desire for future fulfilment, thus infusing an 'udhrī quality into bacchism:

Line 1: *Saqā llāhu ḡabyan*; desire: (6b) *La-jāda bi-waṣlin dā'imīn ākhira l-dahri*.

Line 8: *Saqā llāhu ayyāman*; desire: (22b) *A-lā layta-hā 'ādat wa-dāmat ilā l-ḡašri*.

The *qaṣīda* is essentially bipartite: part (i) comprises the description of the *ḡaby* (lines 1–7); the intensity of the poet's love implicit in the motif itself leads to the exhaustion of his *ṣabr* (patience) in line 5; this foreshadows mention of the folly of love (*junūn al-ḡubb*) in the penultimate line (21).<sup>158</sup> Part (ii) makes up the bacchic scene (lines 8–22); it is introduced as a separate section with the signature phrase *saqā llāhu*. In line 12, echoing a feature of the *ḡaby* (*bi-'aynay-hi siḡrun ḡāhirun*), a singing-girl plays a lute that utters enchantment (or is made able to speak by magic): *yanṭuqu bi-l-siḡr*. There is an attempt to depict the bacchanal without dissipating the emotional intensity with which the poem begins. Hence the bacchic and erotic imprints of the poem overlap: (i) the *ḡaby*'s teeth in line 4 are like the bubbles of wine (*ka-anna-hu ḡubābu 'uqārin*); (ii) similarly in line 17 the singing-girl is intoxicated with wine that is like a mixture of tears and blood running down a cheek. These "tears of wine" reappear as genuine tears shed by some of the entourage in line 20: *wa-ba'ḡun bakā ba'ḡan fa-fāḡat dumū'u-hu* | *'alā l-khaddi ka-l-murjāni sāla ilā l-naḡri*. Drawing on his own experience (*'ilman bi-mā yūriṭhu l-hawā*) the poet concludes lucidly that the madness of love is a feverish passion. It is the word *junūn*, in the following hemistich, which summarizes the tension between two distinct types of love: ideal love, equal to the beloved's enchantment (*siḡr*) (it is not irrelevant here to perceive a semantic connection between *junūn* and the archetypal 'udhrī brief reference such as the following in the description of a serving-maid is also based on the events more candidly depicted in other poems: *wāṣifātun ka-l-ḡhulāmi taṣluḡu li-l- amrayni* . . . (p. 191).

<sup>158</sup> See the occurrence of both *ṣabr* and *junūn* in close association: *fa-kidnā jamī'an min ḡalāwati laḡzi-hi* | *nujanṇu wa-lam naṣī' li-maṭṭiqi-hi ṣabrā* (*Dīwān*, p. 124, line 7; the verb *nastaṭi'* given in the *Dīwān* has been emended to *naṣī'* for metrical reasons).

poet, Majnūn)<sup>159</sup> and degenerate gratification which is suggested suddenly with obscene burlesque by the last word of the penultimate line, *ḡirr*: *wa-junūnu l-ḡubbi yūla'u bi-l-ḡirr*.<sup>160</sup> Consider also lines 19a and 20a: *fa-ba'ḡu l-nadāmā fi surūrin wa-ḡhibtatīn* and *wa-ba'ḡun bakā ba'ḡan fa-fāḡat dumū'u-hu*. They conjure an orgiastic scene of mixed emotions and drunken revelry: *wa-ba'ḡu l-nadāmā li-l-mudāmāti fi asri* (19b). Yet the final line, where there is hope for love to last until the Resurrection, gives an 'udhrī quality to the parting image. Much of the imagery of the poem supports the emotional intensity which pervades the composition from the very outset; first, there is the recurring *leitmotif* of magic and madness: *Siḡrun ḡāhirun* (2) → *yanṭuqu bi-l-siḡri* (12) → *li-tubdī sirra l-'āṣiqīna* (13) → *junūn al-ḡubb* (21); furthermore, some descriptive details effect a delicate internal harmony with the amorous undescoring of the scene: the wine is as tears (17) and the sound of the 'ūd is like "the moan of passion caused by the fire of abandonment". Although there is a tension between discretion and open confession—two very different attitudes (in line 13 part of the magic of the lute is that it divulges the secrets [of love] *tujhiru bi-l-sirri*); whereas in line 18 the poet is still cautious: *ḡadhirtu mina l-wāṣīna an yaḡtika sirri*)—the suggestion in line 19a that moral restraint has broken down, plus the sudden descent into obscenity in line 21b, lead one to posit that the poem is delicately undercutting a more purely chaste manner of poetry. This becomes clear when the *qaṣīda* is compared with a paradigmatic poem from al-'Abbās b. al-Aḡnaf's *dīwān*; consider the following:<sup>161</sup>

شَيْبَ رَأْسِي قَبْلَ حَيْنِ الْمَشِيبِ	مَا أَنْكَأَ الْبَيْنَ لِقَرَّاحِ الْقُلُوبِ
لَذَعُ حَرَارَاتِ فِرَاقِ الْحَبِيبِ	أَنْحَلَ جَسْمِي وَبَرَى أَعْظَمِي
مَنْ لَيْسَ مِنْ جَهْدِ الْهَوَى ذَا نَصِيبِ	لَمْ يَذُقِ الْبُؤْسَ وَلَا طَعْمَهُ
يُرُّ بِي يَهْتَرُ مِثْلَ الْقَضِيبِ	أَشْكُو إِلَى اللَّهِ هَوَى شَادِنِ

<sup>159</sup> The following quotation from al-'Abbās b. al-Aḡnaf clearly evinces the association understood to exist between *junūn* and chaste, platonic love of the kind akin to the 'udhrī tradition (see *Dīwān al-'Abbās b. al-Aḡnaf*, ed. 'Ātika l-Khazraji, p. 98): *wa-ḡaddathta-nī yā sa'ḡu 'an-hā fa-zidta-nī* | *junūnan fa-zid-nī min ḡadithi-ka yā sa'ḡu* . . . *hawā-hā hawan lam yu'lini l-qalbu ḡhayra-hu* | *fa-laysa la-hu qablun wa-laysa la-hu ba'ḡu*.

<sup>160</sup> Wagner's edition of the poem has *ḡurr*, which destroys this interpretation. *ḡurr* is certainly the easier reading but I am inclined to resist it, if only for the sake of airing a plausible irony contained in the poem.

<sup>161</sup> See *Dīwān al-'Abbās b. al-Aḡnaf*, 18.

سَحَرُّهُ بِهَ يَجْنِي ثَمَارَ الْقُلُوبِ      مُنْعَمٌ كَالْبَدْرِ فِي طَرْفِهِ  
دَائِمَ عِيَاةٍ مَا لَهُ مِنْ طَبِيبٍ      أَوْثَرُ قَلْبِي مِنْ جَوَى حَبِّهِ

How wretched is separation for ailing hearts—it has made me grey before time.  
The burning pain of [my] beloved's departure has emaciated my body and weakened my bones;  
He who has no portion of the pains of love (*hawan*) cannot have tasted its bitter flavour;  
I complain to God of my love for a young fawn (*šādin*) who has passed me by, quivering [gently] like a branch;  
He is graceful like the full moon and has enchantment (*sihr*) in his eye with which he plucks the fruit of [our] hearts;  
The agony of my love for him has left my heart a legacy of incurable sickness.

Love is an affliction to which the poet is committed—an attitude which contrasts with that of the beloved herself. The motifs of this poem are by now familiar to us; notice the following examples of imagery shared with Abū Nuwās' *rā'iyya*:

al-'Abbās, line 2: *Anḥala jismī wa-barā a'zumī . . . firāqu l-ḥabīb*

Abū Nuwās, line 5: *Jafā-nī . . . wa-khallafa-nī niḍwan khaliyyan mina l-ṣabri*.

The third line of al-'Abbās' poem articulates clearly his own state (*bu's* and *juhd al-hawā*) and the fact that his love is unrequited—his paramour feels nothing (*laysa min juhdi l-hawā dhā naṣīb*). Abū Nuwās expresses the same notion obliquely by imagining—hypothetically—the *zaby* suffering the same pains of rejection. In lines 4–5 al-'Abbās describes his beloved as a gazelle by using the word *šādin* which is a stock epithet of *zaby* used by Abū Nuwās; furthermore, al-'Abbās' depiction: *yamurru bī yahtazzu mithla l-qaḍīb*, is analogous to Abū Nuwās' *yamīsu ka-ghuṣni l-bāni min riqqati l-khaṣri* (line 1). Compare also: *muna'amun ka-l-badr* (line 5) with Abū Nuwās' *huwa l-badru illā anna fī-hi malāḥatan l-bi-taftīri lahḥin laysa li-l-šamsi wa-l-badri*. Finally compare: *fī ṭarfi-hi siḥrun yujnā bi-hi thimāru l-qulūbi* with *bi-'aynay-hi siḥrun ḡāhirun*.

The final line of al-'Abbās' poem maximizes one kind of love—platonic, chaste love—which is said to be incurable. Abū Nuwās, however, expands his scenario into a familiar bacchic setting, thereby deliberately compounding the texture of emotions. In the last

analysis, the reader cannot be sure of the exact nature of Abū Nuwās' desires and passions; this ambiguity is contrived by the *qaṣīda*'s dichotomy which is reminiscent of the same common division in other poems where there is a clear transition from chastity towards carnal gratification.

Other examples of the gazelle motif can be culled from the collection of al-'Abbās b. al-Aḥnaf's poetry;<sup>162</sup> they are all at one in articulating the disconsolate sentiments of a courtly poet. Abū Nuwās had access to the same stock of imagery as al-'Abbās; hence, for example, his *yā sāḥira l-ṭarfi anta l-dahra wasnānu* is analogous to al-'Abbās' *ghazālun gharīrun fātiru l-ṭarfi sāḥiru-hu*;<sup>163</sup> whilst Abū Nuwās' *sirru l-qulūbi ladā 'aynay-ka i'lānu* has its equivalent (if only on a purely lexical level) in al-'Abbās' *fa-thiqī fa-anti a'rafu minnī l-bi-ḥifāzin fī l-sirri wa-l-i'lāni*.<sup>164</sup> It is important to emphasize, however, that al-'Abbās' use of the motif followed a more dominant convention and was in harmony with the largely homogenous tone of his poems; conversely Abū Nuwās stepped beyond the convention to produce a rich texture of eroticism.

#### Conclusion: Muslim b. al-Walīd and Abū Nuwās

Seduction is one clear feature of the wine poems of Abū Nuwās. The originality of the Basran in this respect can be gleaned by observing that seduction in bipartite or even chiasmic poems is not a common feature amongst the poets that preceded him, nor even amongst his contemporaries. For example, Abū Jilda al-Yaškuri (d. 83/702) in a relevant poem describes a *sāqī* in impassioned terms, but there is no reference to sexual requital.<sup>165</sup> The *mājin* of Kūfa, 'Ammār Dhū l-Kibār, in a poem contained in the *Aghānī* celebrates a number of young gazelles who have captivated him; in view of his shameless candour (*muḥūn*) elsewhere one might expect more than this conventionally frustrated depiction of love, typified by the final line of the poem:<sup>166</sup> *yumannīna l-abāṭila l-wa-yajḥadna lladhī qulna-hu* (They instil hope for vain pleasures, then deny what they have promised).

More significantly, Muslim b. al-Walīd's bacchic imagery is much akin to that of Abū Nuwās, though the cast of his poems is distinct: the use of imagery shows a deft fusion of *khamr* and

<sup>162</sup> See *ibid.* 31, 33, 120–1, 150.

<sup>163</sup> See *ibid.* p. 150, poem 287.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.* p. 205, poem 580, line 3.

<sup>165</sup> See Ḥāwī, *Fann al-Ši'r al-Khamrī*, 136.

<sup>166</sup> *Aghānī*, 23/382.

*ghazal*, but the two are never interdependently fused into a single narrative.<sup>167</sup> Muslim's *qaṣīda lāmiyya*, *Adirā 'alayya l-rāḥ*,<sup>168</sup> illustrates the point well. It is an independent *khamriyya* with substantive elements of *ghazal*. Ḥāwī has discussed the poem in detail in *Fann al-Ši'r al-Khamrī* (p. 320): "scarcely do we read verses and fragments from his *dīwān* without sensing the spirit of Abū Nuwās". He then quotes the opening line of the *lāmiyya*. He falls short, however, of revealing the poem's character, for though sensing therein the spirit of Abū Nuwās he fails to observe that in Muslim's *qaṣīda*, *khamr* and *ghazal* have a linear equivalence—this thematic imprint is shaped in the first verse and played out through the poem. There is contrast between the elements of the poem; there is, however, no narrative seduction. Indeed, the introduction to this *qaṣīda* in al-Dahhān's edition of the *Dīwān* states somewhat symptomatically, "*wa-qāla ayḍan yataghazzalu wa-yašifu l-khamr*". The first line is as follows:

أَدِيرَا عَلَيَّ الرَّاحَ لَا تَشْرَبَا قَلِيلِي      وَلَا تَطْلُبَا مِنِّي عِنْدَ قَاتِلَتِي دَحْلِي

Pass me the wine, do not drink before me, and do not  
seek blood vengeance from my murderess.

The poem begins as a *khamriyya* and in the standard posture of rejecting love (2nd hemistich) produces a strikingly original image which is echoed elsewhere in the poem. The mirroring of imagery is, indeed, the artistic signature of the piece and presents a manifesto for the relationship between love and wine: lines 1b–7 are *ghazal* (the poet has been slain by his beloved); lines 8–22 are *waṣf al-khamr* (wine is personified consistently as a feminine agent); lines 23–27 are *waṣf al-sāqiya* (the third feminine focus in the poem) and lines 28–35 summarize the hedonistic ethic which the poem seeks to celebrate. Within this framework of subject matter the *lāmiyya* is primarily a descriptive poem in which the mirroring and contrasting of imagery helps to articulate and enhance the idealized role of wine. Compare the following pairs of lines:

Lines 1 (see above) and 17:

أَمَاتَتْ نُفُوسًا مِنْ حَيَاةٍ قَرِيبَةٍ      وَقَاتَتْ فَلَمْ تُطْلَبَ بِبَلِيٍّ وَلَا دَحْلِي

It [the wine] caused souls to perish . . . then passed  
away without vengeance being sought.

<sup>167</sup> This conclusion is drawn from the independent *khamriyyāt* that are extant in his *dīwān*. Much of his wine poetry survives in full panegyric *qaṣīdas*, such as those discussed in ch. 2.

<sup>168</sup> *Dīwān*, 33; al-Raḡiq al-Nadīm, *Qaṭb al-Surūr*, 100.

The first hemistich of line 17 above and line 4:

أَمَاتَتْ وَأَحْيَتْ مُهَجَّتِي فَهِيَ عِنْدَهَا      مُعَلَّقَةٌ بَيْنَ الْمَوَاعِيدِ وَالْمَطْلِي

She slew then revived my heart which was suspended  
between promises and postponements.

Lines 5 and 10:

مَا نَلْتُ مِنْهَا نَائِلًا غَيْرَ أَنِّي      بِشَجْوِ الْحَيِّينَ الْأَلَى سَلَفُوا قَبْلِي

She has given me nothing other than the fact that I  
suffer the pains of lovers who came before me.

تَصُدُّ بِنَفْسِ الْمَرْءِ عَمَّا يَغْتُمُّ      وَتُنْطِقُ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ أَلْسِنَةَ الْبُخْلِ

She [the wine] distracts the soul of a man from that which  
troubles him, and makes miserly tongues speak generously.<sup>169</sup>

That the poem was conceived in its entirety as a *khamriyya* is indicated by the reference to wine in the opening hemistich; indeed, since the second hemistich adumbrates the use of an image in line 17, the first line sets the ground plan for the simple thematic "structure" of the whole *qaṣīda*: *ghazal* → *khamr*. Muslim is, to the extent that we have seen, sensitive to the internal consistency of the piece, thereby creating both a natural link and a contrast between the initial *ghazal* and the remainder of the piece. However, there is no focus of amorous requital. The link between initial *ghazal* and *khamr* is simply a deliberate contrast of moods. In this respect the poem evinces only a limited development from the extended *nasīb* of the earliest examples we have examined (cf. al-A'šā). The pleasing figurative link between the images of 1b and 17b—indeed, the very quality of the images—is convincing evidence of the inspiration of a *muḥdath* poet; however, the poem lacks Abū Nuwās' narrative focal point. Muslim's poem is linear: *ghazal* leads to *khamr* aided by a contrived equivalence in the use of imagery; there is also a standard contrast in the moods of the two sections; however, there is no sense of an individual cycle such that there might be specificity in the contrast between the two sections. Equally, there is no sense of parody—the initial *ghazal* is expressed in good spirit. The images are 'udhrī but they are not undercut; rather they are simply offset by the ensuing tone of the piece.

<sup>169</sup> That *bukhl* is treated figuratively to characterize unreciprocated love is shown more clearly in an apparently anonymous verse contained in al-Dahhān's note to line 1: *wa-inni wa-in kānat 'alayya bakhilatan* | *ya'izzu 'alayya an tu'adhdhaba min ajli* (Though she is miserly with me it pains me that she should suffer on my behalf).

Abū Nuwās was a subtle poet and his poems conform only tentatively to a discernible paradigm. Observation of one particular literary trait may colour our perception of his consistent originality. Thus one should not lose sight of the fact that his best poems are individual and made deft by some variable structural, thematic, or linguistic device. We have seen already that the thematic textures of *Tu'ātibu-nī 'alā šurbi štibāhī* (see pp. 52–7) and *Yā sāḥir al-ṭarf* (pp. 65–73), which involve some general device of composition (quotation and seduction respectively), are complemented in a highly individual fashion by a particular linguistic feature or impulse. Thus it is desirable to complete this chapter by establishing the originality of another sample within a set of observable conventions.

The 21-line *khamriyya* beginning, *Šajā-nī wa-ablā-nī tadhakkuru man ahwā*,<sup>170</sup> divides broadly into description of the wine and the *sāqī*; these are placed in a vivid setting (the tavern of a *dihqān* (line 4)) and a patchwork of emotions (especially the beginning and end). The first three lines present a powerful emotional keynote:

شَجَانِي وَأَبْلَانِي تَذَكُّرُ مَنْ أَهْوَى      وَأَلْبَسَنِي ثَوْبًا مِنَ الضَّرِّ وَالْبَلْوَى  
يَذُلُّ عَلَى مَا فِي الضَّمِيرِ مِنَ الْفَتَى      تَقْلُبُ عَيْنِيهِ إِلَى شَخْصٍ مِنْ يَهْوَى  
وَمَا كُلُّ مَنْ يَهْوَى هَوَى هُوَ صَادِقٌ      أَخُو الْحُبِّ نَفْسُ لَا يَمُوتُ وَلَا يَحْيَى

Remembrance of one I love has worn me out completely and dressed me up in the clothes of perdition.

The movement of the eyes of a youth towards his beloved gives away the feelings he stores in his innermost heart.

Not all those who claim to love are truthful; the true brother of love is an emaciated waif who is neither dead nor alive.

In the first line Abū Nuwās speaks of his own state: he is in love (*ahwā*) and suffers affliction (*balwā*); it is clear, therefore, that in the following two lines he speaks of himself, reiterating his love (the root *hawā* is employed in each line) due to which he is in a state of limbo: *lā yamūtu wa-lā yahyā*. The wine scene begins at line 4; at line 14 the *sāqī* is described with qualities akin to those of the much-cited gazelle: *wa-sāqin gharīri l-ṭarfi wa-l-dalli fātinin*. The poet observes the activities of the *sāqī* and the indulgence of the

<sup>170</sup> *Diwān*, 118–19. In Wagner's edition this *khamriyya* is received as two separate poems (lines 1–17, pp. 14–15, and lines 18–21, p. 25). Ghazālī does not indicate whether or not he has edited his version into one poem; however, the conflation into one composition is supported by the ensuing analysis which highlights the artistry typical of the poet.

*mughannī* until the last four lines, where he rounds off the poem by celebrating the propitious mood of the bacchic scene; of significance is that lines 18 and 21 resume the two keynote terms of the poem's emotional prelude: (18 and 21)

أَدِيرَا عَلَى الْكَاسِ تَنْكَشِفُ الْبَلْوَى      وَتَلْتَذُّ عَيْنِي طِيبَ رَائِحَةِ الدُّنْيَا  
فَتَزْدَادُ عِنْدَ الْمَزْجِ طَيِّبًا كَأَنَّهَا      إِشَارَةٌ مِنْ تَهْوَى إِلَى كُلِّ مَا تَهْوَى

Pass me the cup and my affliction will clear, and my eye will marvel at the world's sweet fragrance.

It [the wine] improves in the mixing, like the signal of a lover to [indulge] in all manner of desires.

Wine removes affliction and in the imaginary "signal" (*išāra*) that it makes upon being mixed promises the fulfilment of amorous desires. Thus the finale of the poem dispels the emotions of the prelude and clarifies this process by reworking the most essential lexical items: *balwā* and *hawā*. The poet is clearly sensitive to the constituent parts of the piece since an image of love (line 3) *lā yamūtu wa-lā yahyā* is reiterated in the description of the effects of wine upon the carousers: (line 13) *fa-anfusuhum ahyā wa-ajsādum mawtā*.

The poem is akin to those others analysed above in that the imagery of "courtly" love (line 14: *wa-sāqin gharīri l-ṭarfi wa-l-dalli fātinin*) introduces a phase which alludes to the physical requital of love. The latter is only a glimpse, thus the poem remains largely chaste, whilst the mood most definitely shifts. Herein is the delight of the piece; its individuality lies in its lexical signature (*hawā* and *balwā*) whilst it conforms to a generality to the extent that it can be seen to present an emotional dichotomy.

Muslim's *lā taṭlubā min 'inda qātilatī dhaḥlī* is picked up in the bacchic section by (17b) *fa-lam tuṭlab bi-tablin wa-lā dhaḥlī*. Whilst this feature cements the figurative connection between love and wine, there is no specific narrative significance. Conversely, Abū Nuwās' *išāratu man tahwā ilā kulli mā tahwā* suggests the negation of *šajā-nī wa-ablā-nī tadhakkuru man ahwā* in a specific context; that is, the connection between the images sharpens the narrative dimension of the bacchic tableau.<sup>171</sup>

<sup>171</sup> The above attempt to differentiate between Abū Nuwās and Muslim is to a certain extent corroborated by al-Buḥturī, who, whilst comparing Muslim and Abū Nuwās, gives preference to the latter, because "Abū Nuwās moves with ease in every direction, and shows his skill in every manner, being serious and joking at will." (See Bonebakker, op. cit. 107.)

## 2

Islam and *al-Dahr* in the *Khamriyya*THE QAṢĪDA<sup>1</sup>*The Jāhiliyya*

*Hikma*—an important category of poetry<sup>2</sup>—is the poet's wisdom and most commonly, though not exclusively, takes the form of an aphoristic statement about the fleeting nature of life and the unpredictable vagaries of Fate. *al-Dahr* is a prime mover in the *jāhili* vision of existence and has a dominant role in a limited but powerful philosophy. Preoccupation with death (represented largely by *al-dahr*) is an important aspect of the *jāhili* view of life, and *hikma*—certain knowledge of death—is an essential part of this. Line by line, however, *hikma* seldom comprises a substantial section of any poem—a *qaṣīda* such as Zuhayr b. Abī Sulmā's *Mu'allaqa* is unusual in this respect.<sup>3</sup> In many places *hikma* is implicit rather than explicit; Labīd's hemistich: *inna l-manāyā lā taṭīšu sihāmu-hā*<sup>4</sup> sums up the essential message of the extended simile of the oryx, yet the message would not be entirely lost were it not uttered. This chapter focuses on existential *hikma*, underpinned by *al-dahr*,<sup>5</sup> where the aphorisms and

ruminations of the poet express a pervasive heroic-cum-pessimistic resignation.<sup>6</sup>

It is no novelty to speak of revelling in wine as an "existentialist" statement juxtaposed with some motif of pessimistic *hikma*;<sup>7</sup> in A. M. Ḥūfī's *al-Ḥayāt al-'Arabiyya fī l-Ši'r al-Jāhili* (pp. 437–8) the subject of life/death and wine is dwelt on briefly with a comment on seven lines from the *Mu'allaqa* of Ṭarafa and two further excerpts quoted from al-Jāhiz's *al-Bayān wa-l-Tabyīn*. The first is apparently anonymous and contains an initial line of particular eloquence:<sup>8</sup>

قَوْمِي أَصْبَحْنِي فَمَا صَبَغَ الْفَتَى حَجْرًا      لَكِنْ رَهِيْنَةً أَحْجَارٍ وَأَرْمَاسٍ  
قَوْمِي أَصْبَحْنِي فَإِنَّ الدَّهْرَ ذُو غَيْرٍ      أَفْقَى لُقْيَا وَأَفْقَى آلِ هِرْمَاسٍ  
الْيَوْمَ خَمْرٌ وَيَبْدُو فِي غَدٍ خَبْرٌ      وَالْدَّهْرُ مِنْ بَيْنِ إِنْعَامٍ وَإِبَاسٍ  
فَأَشْرَبَ عَلَى حَدَثَانِ الدَّهْرِ مُرْتَفِقًا      لَا يَصْحَبُ أَلْهَمُ قَرْعَ السَّيْنِ بِالْكَاسِ

Come! give me a morning sip [of wine], for man has not been fashioned out of stone, [though] he is pledged to stones and the dust of a grave.<sup>9</sup>

Come! give me a morning sip, for Fate is full of changes; it has destroyed Luqaym and destroyed Āl Hirmās.

Wine today! Tomorrow affairs will be clear;<sup>10</sup> Fate [divides itself] between giving pleasure and hardship.

So drink [from] a full [vessel] despite Fate's eventfulness; worries cannot couple with the clanking of teeth against the [wine-]goblet.

Wine cannot propitiate Fate, but in the pleasure of the moment

<sup>1</sup> Some of the following material has appeared in my "Khamr and Hikma in Jāhili Poetry", *JAL* 20/2 (1989), 97–114.

<sup>2</sup> J. E. Montgomery includes *hikma* in his list of the seven principal "movements" of pre-Islamic poetry; see "Dichotomy in Jāhili Poetry", *JAL* 17 (1985), 1–20.

<sup>3</sup> Also unusual is poem 116 of the *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt* by 'Abd Qays b. Khufāf in which the poet seeks to educate his son and provides what approximates to a manifesto of *muruwwa*.

<sup>4</sup> See *Mu'allaqa*, line 39b of al-Tibrizī's recension.

<sup>5</sup> *al-Manāyā*, *al-Manūn*, *al-Zamān*, *al-Layālī*, *al-Hawādith*, etc. are all corollaries of *al-Dahr* and share its significance. However, the varying semantics of some of these items in certain contexts is discussed by Rosenthal in "Sweeter than Hope": *Complaint and Hope in Medieval Islam* (Leiden, 1983), 4 ff; see also A. Arazī, *La Réalité et la fiction dans la poésie Arabe ancienne* (Paris, 1989), pp. 49–103. For a general discussion of Fate in early Arabic poetry see Caskell's *Das Schicksal* (Leipzig, 1926) and Abdesslem's *Le Thème de la mort dans la poésie arabe des origines à la fin du IIIème/IXème siècle* (Tunis, 1977).

<sup>6</sup> The existence of *hikma* as a substrate of a full poem is identified by Heinrichs in a poem by Abū Dhū'ayb al-Hudhalī: (Heinrichs, "Literary Theory", p. 44) "Abū Dhū'ayb greatly enhances the vigor of his poem by using a sort of refrain: *wa-l-dahrū lā yabqā 'alā ḥadathāni-hi* . . . nobody can withstand the vicissitudes of time, not an onager (v. 15) . . . not a young bull (v. 36) . . . not a mail-clad man (v. 49)." Heinrichs appears to identify the gnomic element as a *nasīb* theme that reappears throughout the poem and informs several subordinate passages. For a translation and detailed discussion of this poem see Alan Jones's *Early Arabic Poetry*, vol. ii (forthcoming).

<sup>7</sup> See above, p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> *al-Bayān wa-l-Tabyīn*, 1/187.

<sup>9</sup> A similar notion is contained in one of the two bacchic pieces included in Abū Tammām's *Ḥarīṣa* (see Burj b. Mushir al-Ṭā'i, pp. 76–8); curiously it is contained in the *bāb al-nasīb*.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. the celebrated utterance of Imru'ū l-Qays: *al-yawma khamrun wa-ghadan amrun*.

Fate is effectively forestalled. The second excerpt is attributed to Suḥaym b. Wathīl:<sup>11</sup>

تَقُولُ حَدَرَاءُ لَيْسَ فَيْكَ سِوَى الْإِلَهِ  
فَقُلْتُ أَخْطَأْتُ بَلَّ مُعَاقَرَتِي الْإِلَهِ  
هُوَ الثَّنَاءُ الَّذِي سَمِعْتُ بِهِ  
وَيَحْكُ لَوْلَا الْخُمُورُ لَمْ أَهْجُلِ الْإِلَهِ  
هِيَ الْحَيَاةُ وَالْحَيَاةُ وَاللَّهُوُ لَا  
أَنْتِ وَلَا ثَرَوَةٌ وَلَا وَلَدٌ

Ḥadrā' says: "The only thing which anyone can blame you about is wine".

I replied: "You are wrong; my indulgence in wine, spending on it all the [money] I find, [constitutes] the praise you have heard [about]—no possessions can make me immortal. Woe to you! were it not for wines I would not have fulfilled my life even when embraced by the grave; It is my sense of shame, my life and my pleasure, not you nor riches nor a son."

In this second piece the poet's aphoristic vision transcends Ḥadrā's trivial rebuke and is infused with *fakhr*. Here *al-dahr* is not mentioned, but its agency is sensed in lines 3–4.

The meaning of both the above poems is clear and, though they are not well known, they are good examples of their kind. A more famous poet 'Adī b. Zayd (d. c.600) was given to a similar aphoristic strain of expression. This could either be pious and religious, drawing its inspiration from his Christian beliefs (he was an 'ibādī who lived at Hira<sup>12</sup>), or resigned, tending towards pessimism, in the manner common to much *jāhili* poetry. Preoccupied with Time and the fleeting nature of life, he extended his cogitations on the *aṭlāl* to comment on the inexorable approach of death. In one piece, developing the *aṭlāl* motif he describes a scene by some graves—they are animated and speak, awakening man's apathy:<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *al-Bayān wa-l-Tabayīn*, 3/343.

<sup>12</sup> See *EP*, i. 196: "Among [his] verses those describing Biblical episodes (the creation and man's first sin) are of interest for the history of religion and culture: they, together with other evidence, confirm that the poet was a Christian ('ibādī)."

<sup>13</sup> *Dīwān*, 82. The poem is introduced as follows in the *Aghānī*: "*al-Nu'mānu bnu Mundhirin kharaja wa-ma'a-hu 'Adī fa-marrā bi-maqābirā fa-qāla 'Adī . . . a-tadri mā taqūlu hādhihi l-maqābiru? Qāla lā. Qāla inna-hā taqūlu: man ra'a-nā . . .*".

مَنْ رَأَانَا فَلْيُحَدِّثْ نَفْسَهُ  
وَحُطُوبُ الدَّهْرِ لَا يَبْقَى لَهَا  
رُبَّ رَكَبٍ قَدْ أَنَاخُوا عِنْدَنَا  
الْأَبَارِيقُ عَلَيْهَا قُدُومُ  
عَمَرُوا دَهْرًا بِعَيْشٍ حَسَنٍ  
ثُمَّ أَصْحُوا أَتَحَعَ الدَّهْرُ بِهِمْ  
وَكَذَلِكَ الدَّهْرُ يَرْمِي بِالْفَتَى  
فِي طِلَابِ الْعَيْشِ حَالًا بَعْدَ حَالٍ

He that sees us should tell himself that he is about to be [impaled] on the horn of extinction.

Even hard mountains cannot outlast Fate and its depredations (*khuṭūb al-dahr*).

Many riders have made their camels kneel around us, drinking wine mixed with limpid water—

Their wine vessels had cloth strainers; their thoroughbred horses were dressed in fine blankets—

They lived a good life for a time (*dahrān*), trusting restfully in their lot (*min dahri-him*).

Then Fate turned against them in the manner it destroys mountains.

Thus Fate fires at the man in quest of livelihood circumstance after circumstance.

*al-Dahr* provides a striking litany for this vivid piece—with differing nuances the word is mentioned no less than six times. In its significance it is double-edged, lending expression to enjoyment of the good life ('*amarū dahrān bi-'ayšin ḥasanin*) then being the prime mover in its destruction (*akhna'a l-dahrū bi-him*). It is clear that *al-dahr* transcends man and leaves no room for the emotive pattern of a more monotheistic religiosity. Wine is described briefly and serves only to represent the pleasures of a fleeting, unpredictable life.<sup>14</sup>

The *ubi sunt* topos is akin to the sentiments of the poem above; 'Adī b. Zayd provides one of the earliest examples of the figure of Kisrā as a proverbial reminder of ephemeral opulence:<sup>15</sup>

أَيْنَ كِسْرَى كِسْرَى الْمُلُوكِ أُنُو  
شُرَوَانُ أُمِ أَيْنَ قَبْلَهُ سَابُورُ

Where is Kisrā Anūšīrwān, king of kings, and Sābūr who came before him.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> The phrase *ka-dhāka l-dahr* (line 7a) may be alluded to in Abū Nuwās' *Yā Sābir al-Ṭarf* by the phrase *ka-dhā šurūfu layālī l-dahrī alwānu*. <sup>15</sup> *Dīwān*, p. 87.

<sup>16</sup> Kisrā Anūšīrwān's dates are AD 531–79 (see *EP*, vi. 184), i.e. 'Adī b. Zayd



In later poetry these figures remained the proverbial symbols of bygone splendour. Typically they were the majestic figures represented on the wine goblets of bacchic verse—a reminder for the drinker of man's mortality in a poetic tradition that outlasts him.<sup>17</sup> Pondering the fate of kings and rulers remained a common motif of Arabic poetry, as evinced especially by the *zuhdiyyāt* of the 'Abbāsid poet Abū l-'Atāhiya.<sup>18</sup>

In Ṭarafa b. al-'Abd the only extensive element of *khamr* survives in the *Mu'allāqa*.<sup>19</sup> The wine section is introduced by three lines of *fakhr* (43–5). His self-vaunting (he claims for example in line 45a: "if the whole tribe meets you will find that I am the one sought after at the noble house") suffuses the atmosphere of what follows; the poet's pessimism is also manifest. In line 46 he colours his *fakhr* with a common motif of generosity:

مَتَى تَأْتِي أَصْحَكَ كَأْسًا رَوِيَّةً      وَإِنْ كُنْتَ عَنْهَا غَائِبًا فَاغْنِ وَازِدَ

Whenever you come to me in the morning, I give you a  
cup of wine that quenches your thirst; if you can do  
without it, then do without it and more!

Lines 51–2 paint a picture of Ṭarafa's excesses: he spends all his money, both acquired and inherited, on wine, thus forsaking the companionship of those who would ostracize him. This solitude introduces and enhances the pessimism of the passage which follows with cogitations on death and Fate.

Line 54 juxtaposes the themes of war and wine, both of which express the *fakhr* of the poet, who spites the rebuke of the fault finder. In Ṭarafa's line it is clearly the ephemeral nature of life which gives both "heroic" roles a sense of urgency:

composed the poem from which this verse is taken after 579 AD. Tradition has it that he composed it in prison where he was eventually put to death by al-Nu'mān III in about AD 600. For Sābūr see *ET*, iv. 312: "Shāpūr (P.), Arabic Sābūr (the form *Shāhafūr* in a verse of al-A'sā . . . is nearer the Pahlavi *Shāhpūhrē*), the name of several members of the Sāsānid dynasty. The three Persian kings of this name have associations with Muslim tradition." The last Sābūr died in AD 387.

<sup>17</sup> See for example *Dīwān Abi Nuwās*, 77: *fa-halla bizālu-hā fi qa'ri ka'sin | muḥaffaratī l-jawānibi wa-l-qarāri || muṣawwaratin bi-ṣūratī jundi kisrā | wa-kisrā fi qarāri l-ṭarjahāri || wa-jallu l-jundi taḥta rikābi kisrā | bi-a'midatin wa-aqbiyatin qīṣāri*.

<sup>18</sup> See for example a pious piece which begins: *ayna l-qurūnu banū l-qurūni | wa-dhawū l-madā'ini wa-l-ḥuṣūni* (*Dīwān Abi l-'Atāhiya*, 414).

<sup>19</sup> See *Sharḥ al-Qaṣā'id al-'Aṣr li-l-Tibrizī*, 56–98.

ألا أيُّ هذا اللامي أحضرُ الوغي      وإن أشهد اللذات هل أنت مُخلدي

Should I not, O my censurer witness battle or attend the  
pleasures [of life]! Will you preserve me for ever?

The verse that follows (55) captures and encapsulates in a most eloquent fashion the hedonist poet's attitude to mortality:

إِنْ كُنْتُ لَا تَسْطِيعُ دَفْعَ مَيِّتِي      فَدَعْنِي أَبَادِرَهَا بِمَا مَلَكَتْ يَدِي

If you cannot fend off my death, then let me hasten  
to pleasures [by spending] all I own.

There is an ambiguity in this verse by which it is enriched; for the pronominal suffix in *ubādir-hā* can refer either to the pleasures (*al-ladhdhāt*) of the previous line (as is the case in our translation) or to "death" (*maniyyatī*). The possibility of the latter is supported by the near-juxtaposition of the noun and verb. This would produce a translation: "If you cannot fend off my death, then [at least] let me hasten towards it." Ṭarafa goes on to say that he would feel no attachment to life were it not for the three pleasures of wine, women, and generosity listed in lines 57–9.<sup>20</sup> In 61–2 comes a crystallization of Ṭarafa's philosophy:

فَدَرْنِي أَرَوَى هَامَتِي فِي حَيَاتِهَا      مَخَافَةَ شَرِبٍ فِي الْحَيَاةِ مُصَرِّدٍ  
كَرِيمٌ يُرَوِّى نَفْسَهُ فِي حَيَاتِهِ      سَتَعْلَمُ إِنْ مُتْنَا غَدًا أَيُّنَا الصَّدِي

Let me quench the owl's<sup>21</sup> thirst whilst I live since I fear  
the drink of death which will leave me thirsty.  
A noble man satiates himself in life, for you will know  
if we die tomorrow which of us is thirsty.

In Ṭarafa wine and death effectively provided a touchstone for the *jāhilī Weltanschauung*. Whilst he offers the clearest and most direct expression of *carpe diem* in the *jāhilī* corpus, other poets allow a similar notion to emerge from an essential contrast—between celebration (self-vaunting or nostalgic) and pessimism—that governs

<sup>20</sup> This format whereby the poet lists his pleasures and values—pleasures that are themselves normally distributed between heroism and idle luxury, including wine—is not uncommon; there are at least three examples in Imru'ū l-Qays' *dīwān* (see *Dīwān Imru'ū l-Qays*, Beirut edition, pp. 129, 143, and 170); collectively they illustrate that living life to the full is a means of ensuring one's renown survives death. A further example is contained in a *qaṣida* from Ibn Maymūn's *Muntahā l-Ṭalab* (see *Qaṣā'id Jāhiliyya Nādira*, p. 128, lines 25–29) where the lines come as a celebration of life after a despondent *nasīb*.

<sup>21</sup> For an explanation of this belief see Homer's "Echoes of a Thirsty Owl: Death and Afterlife in Pre-Islamic Poetry", *JNES* 44 (1985), 165–84.

the entire poem. A little known poet who features in Ibn Maymūn's *Muntahā l-Ṭalab*, Zuhayr b. Mas'ūd al-Ḍabbī, provides perhaps the best example—the themes of the poem and an oscillation of moods are summarized in the abstract by an aphoristic *envoi*:<sup>22</sup>

فَفَرَجْتُ هَمِّي بِالْعَزِيمَةِ إِ      نَّ الْعَزَمَ يَفْرُجُ غَمَّةَ اللَّبْسِ  
وَلَقِيتُ مِنْ تَكَلُّ وَمَغْبَطَةٍ      وَالذَّهْرُ مِنْ طَلْقٍ وَمِنْ نَحْسٍ

I have cleared away my preoccupations with firm resolve; surely  
it is that resolve delivers one from an anxious grief.  
I have met with both bereavement and joy, for Fate is [a  
balanced division of] ease and affliction.

In Zuhayr's poem—a representative sample—bacchism is set into a dichotomy that governs the entire poem; that is, the dichotomy is external to the bacchic element of the poem. In a *qaṣīda* by al-A'šā (poem 10) the contrast is set into the bacchic framework through the imagery with which wine is treated. The poem opens with seven lines of *ghazal*: Tayyā has enchanted the poet's heart; in line 3 we find the usual barrier to mutual affection in the poet's age—the young girl considers al-A'šā to be of her mother's generation and so turns to the younger men of the tribe: "She considered my contemporaries to be old women—the same age as her mother; her contemporaries were the young men [of the tribe]." It is an aspect of hardship and an effect of time, which the poet endures, reflecting self-vauntingly on how he has already enjoyed the company of beautiful women (5 and 6). al-A'šā shrugs off the pain of rejection. Lines 8 and 9 are a heroic boast; thus the wine section which follows at line 11 assumes a similarly self-glorifying tone. The bacchic section itself, lines 10–18, is one of the poet's more pleasing vignettes. He boasts how often he has drunk in the early morning; he describes the wine's colour and fragrance and how he has imbibed by the banks of the Euphrates (10–12). Line 13 introduces an aspect of wine which chimes with the aphoristic tendency of much of this poetry:

لَعَمْرُكَ إِنَّ الرِّاحَ إِنْ كُنْتَ سَائِلًا      لَمْخْتَلِفٌ عَذِيبُهَا وَعَسَائِلُهَا

By your life—should you be asking—wine's [effect] in the  
morning is distinct from [its effect] in the evening.

Like Fate wine contains the seeds of contrary situations—line 14:

<sup>22</sup> *Qaṣā'id Jāhiliyya Nādira*, p. 90; *Muntahā l-Ṭalab*, fac. edn. 3, 304.

لِنَأْمَنِ ضَحَاهَا خُبْتُ نَفْسِي وَكَأَنِّي      وَذَكَرَى هُمُومٍ مَا تَغِيبُ أَذَاتُهَا

Be sure in the morning of a malignant grief and the memory  
of unceasing worries.

Wine in the morning is a source of anxiety and discomfort—an abstracted reference to a hang-over, perhaps. In line 15 the cycle of time continues: wine in the evening is the source of high spirits and pleasure:

وَعِنْدَ الْعَشِيِّ طَيْبُ نَفْسٍ وَلَذَّةٌ      وَمَالٌ كَثِيرٌ عُذْوَةٌ نَشَوَاتُهَا

Then in the evening [comes] a freshness of spirit, pleasure and  
much money; [to be followed in] the morning by inebriation.<sup>23</sup>

The cyclical experience of wine can be viewed as a microcosm of life and Fate, where the source of grief is equally that of joy. This reminds one of the transcendental balance between good and evil; if such a notion is too grandiose for the *jāhili* ethic we should at least remind ourselves that *ḥikma* was commonly expressed through certain polarities such as wealth and poverty and, more essentially, life and death. Line 16 ("I have drunk it in every condition of a young man; as both a rich man and a renegade scarcely able to eat") reiterates the message of life's vicissitudes and condenses the meaning and role of wine into the luxury of a rich man or the consolation of a hardened rogue (*ṣu'lūk*)—two states which present succinctly the full spectrum of an heroic plight.

The case presented thus far is to a degree self-conclusive.<sup>24</sup> Most examples are of a similar, though to some extent varied, nature in expressing an urgency to fulfil life through wine in the face of an ultimately predictable Fate. If indulgence in wine was encouraged through *ḥikma* (both in the *Jāhiliyya* and indeed in the Islamic period when *al-mubādara il l-khamr*<sup>25</sup> was a common aspect of anacreontics) it was nevertheless to be eschewed by *ḥilm*, as implicit in such phrases as *wadda'tu l-ṣibā*; this is where the

<sup>23</sup> Lines 13, 14, and 15 seem to be drawn, perhaps directly, from al-A'šā's distant kinsman, 'Amr b. Qamī'a. See lines 4–5, poem 12 of his *diwān* (*The Poems of 'Amr son of Qamī'ah*, ed. Lyall (Cambridge, 1919), 47): "Therein (the wine contains/*al-ziqq*) is the morning draught, which makes of me a lion of 'Ifrīn, with great wealth mine—! At the beginning of the night a glorious warrior, at the end of the night a male hyaena unable to keep his legs."

<sup>24</sup> There is, of course, further material of the kind offered above to be culled from the *jāhili* corpus. Perhaps the finest example exists in poem 44 of the *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, attributed to al-Aswad b. Ya'fur (see the translation and commentary of this poem in A. Jones's *Early Arabic Poetry*, vol. ii).

<sup>25</sup> I borrow this phrase from *Qaṭb al-Ṣurūr*, where it is a section heading.

encouragement to drink wine at the approach of death (essentially at any point in a man's life) came into conflict with such values held and expressed in, for example, the following line to be found in al-Zawzani's recension of Zuhayr ibn Abi Sulmā's *Mu'allaqa*:

وَأَنَّ سَفَاهَ الشَّيْخِ لَا حِلْمَ بَعْدَهُ      وَإِنَّ الْفَتَى بَعْدَ السَّفَاهَةِ يَحْلُمُ

There is [no chance] for forbearance after an old man's folly.

Yet a young man after folly may acquire forbearance.

We can discern in the *Jāhiliyya* the ground plan of a tension that emerged—influenced by a changing socio-religious ethic—in the early Islamic period between *khamr* and defiance and *khamr* and *ḥilm/tawba*. On the one hand, the urgency of bacchism set against the ancient *gnōmē* of fleeting life survived intact; on the other hand, bacchism was restrained by both: (i) the exigencies of *ḥilm* (part of the ancient ethical code) as expressed through the unfolding of the *nasīb* (see ch. 4), and (ii) the Islamic proscription of wine, which nurtured the expression of *tawba* by the bacchic poets. Thus, in consideration of the Islamic period, three strands of analysis are apparently germane to a general preoccupation with *khamr* and *ḥikma/al-dahr*: (i) the survival of the type of treatment already shown to have existed in the *Jāhiliyya*, where bacchism is affected by the pessimistic subtext of the composite *qaṣīda*; (ii) the adaptation of the *gnōmē* for the literary “games” of ‘Abbāsīd court poetry, from which emerge two conflicting and urgent views of Time (see below, “Two Orders”);<sup>26</sup> (iii) the opposite impulse to that offered by the ancient *gnōmē*: the assumption of *ḥilm* and the expression of abstinence/*tawba* (see ch. 4). Below we are concerned initially with the first of these categories.

Two of the best representatives of the *jāhili* tradition in later periods are the Umayyad al-Akhṭal, and the ‘Abbāsīd Muslim b. al-Walid. Both poets evince the existence of pessimism as an essential undercurrent of the composite ode.

#### Al-Akhṭal (d. c.710)

The quality of al-Akhṭal's poetry in general is best considered with an eye to his most illustrious predecessors. From such a perspective,

<sup>26</sup> The *gnōmē* was part of the repertoire of preoccupations which set the wine poem against the pious poem (*zuhdiyya*) of the same period. Thus both to define and highlight the literary characteristics of certain individual Nuwasian wine poems and

*ḥikma*, with its full role in the *qaṣīda*, can be seen to function in the same way as it does in the earliest poetry.

A notable aspect of al-Akhṭal's poetic artistry is his development of some of the tableaux of *jāhili* poetry. He built on and intensified the details of the ancients, repeating images and rich vignettes of desert life which must still have captivated the audiences of poetry in the Umayyad period. One such image was the depiction of the plight of the oryx. It is indeed one of the richest conventional tableaux of ancient poetry in its balanced assessment of the struggle between life and death; here there was both dramatic and didactic sustenance for the poet and his community in a vivid and vibrant scene. Two of his *qaṣīdas* (a *rā'iyya*<sup>27</sup> and a *lāmiyya*<sup>28</sup>) treat the oryx in a manner highly reminiscent of its treatment in a *rā'iyya* by al-Nābigha<sup>29</sup> and a *lāmiyya* by Labīd,<sup>30</sup> respectively.<sup>31</sup> Indeed the treatment of the animal in the Umayyad poet's *rā'iyya* must be viewed as a *mu'araḍa* of the relevant section of al-Nābigha's poem. One aspect of the *rā'iyya* of al-Akhṭal that is worthy of note is that it follows, as a single composition, a certain thematic progression, absent from al-Nābigha's poem, which is not dissimilar to that of Labīd's *Mu'allaqa*: *aṭlāl* → *waṣf al-nāqa* (in which the extended simile of the oryx is contained) → *khamr* as part of *fakhr* → *fakhr* and *madḥ al-qabīla* (praise of the tribe). Labīd's *Mu'allaqa* appears to be the first of several poems to place the boast of wine after the oryx tableau. Another well-judged example can be seen in the *qaṣīda* by Zuhayr b. Mas'ūd al-Ḍabbī already discussed (see above, p. 91). Zuhayr's poem is one of the most pleasing that I have come across in terms of its neat structure, whereby every section of the poem fits into the poet's view of life—a view that is resolved and summarized by the final two lines of *ḥikma*. Zuhayr's poem indicates that this particular thematic patterning was not wholly

also to place these poems in their wider literary milieu, the gnomic impulse will be discussed below despite its apparent conventionality as a feature of classical Arabic poetry.

<sup>27</sup> See *Diwān al-Akhṭal*, ed. Mahdī Muḥammad Nāsir (Beirut, 1986), 138–44; or *Ši'r al-Akhṭal, ṣan'at al-Sukkarī*, ed. Fakhr al-Dīn Qabāwa (Beirut, 1979), i. 162–72.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.* 261–7 and 148–60.

<sup>29</sup> See *al-Nābigha al-Dhubayānī*, ed. Jamil Sulṭān (Beirut, n.d.), 232–40.

<sup>30</sup> See *Diwān Labīd/Über die Gedichte des Labyd*, ed. Alfred von Kremer, pp. 17–27 (of Arabic text).

<sup>31</sup> For a full discussion of al-Akhṭal's debt to the two *jāhili* poets in the treatment of the oryx, see my ‘Labīd, al-Nābigha, al-Akhṭal and the Oryx’ in *Arabicus Felix* (Oxford, 1991) 74–89.

accidental or arbitrary within the developing conventions of the polythematic *qaṣīda*.

Zuhayr's transition from the oryx simile to bacchic *fakhr* is abrupt and facilitated by the use of *rubba*: (line 19)

وَانْصَاعَ عَرْضِيًّا كَأَنَّ بِهِ لَمَمًا مِنَ الْخِيَلَاءِ وَالْفُجْسِ

→ (Lines 20–1)

فَلَرُبَّ فِتْيَانٍ صَبَحَتْهُمْ مِنْ عَاتِقِ صَهْبَاءٍ فِي الْخَرَسِ  
عَانِيَةً تُصْبِي الْحَلِيمَ إِذَا دَارَتْ أَكْفُ الْقَوْمِ بِالْكَأْسِ

In al-Akhṭal's *rā'iyya* the transition is equally abrupt. One tableau ends and another begins; the juxtaposition may appear random, and it may have been so in the beginning. However, there is surely an attempt to depict life in its richest variety; al-Akhṭal seems simply to be following a precedent with which he was familiar. The transition, oryx → *khamr*, is as follows (again *wāw rubba* facilitates the transition): (lines 27–8)

كَأَنَّهُ مِنْ نَدَى الْقُرَاصِ مُغْتَبِلٌ بِالْوَرَسِ أَوْ خَارِجٌ مِنْ بَيْتِ عَطَّارٍ  
وَشَارِبٌ مُرِجٍ بِالْكَأْسِ نَادِمَنِي لَا بِالْحَصُورِ وَلَا فِيهَا بِسَوَّارٍ

The view that al-Akhṭal was familiar with and liked the juxtaposition is supported by the fact that he used it again in the aforesaid *lāmiyya* in praise of Maṣqala ibn Hubayra, though here the bacchic sequence is separated from the oryx scene by verses which state the poet's view of life—his preoccupations and mature experience:

وَقَدْ لَيْسْتُ لِهَذَا الدَّهْرِ أَعْصَرُهُ حَتَّى تَجَلَّلَ رَأْسِي الشَّيْبُ وَاشْتَغَلَا

I donned the many cloaks of Time (i.e. I have witnessed many things in life) until an incandescent whiteness appeared in my [hair].

Two lines later the brief interlude of reminiscence ensues:

وَقَدْ أَكُونُ عَمِيدَ الشَّرْبِ تُسْمِعُنَا بَحَاءُ تَسْمَعُ فِي تَرْجِيمِهَا الصَّحَلَا

I have been the pillar of my boon companions whilst a hoarse-voiced songstress sung to us—you could hear the huskiness in her trilling voice.

*Qad akūnu* should be read as a historic present, for two verses later it is clear that the poet's indulgence is a thing of the past: *fa-bāna*

*minnī šabābī ba'da ladhhati-hi | ka-annamā kāna ḡayfan nāzilan raḡalā*. Didacticism is reiterated four lines after the bacchic vignette:

وَيَبْسَمَا الْمَرْءَ مَغْبُوطٌ بِمَا مَنِيهِ إِذْ خَانَهُ الدَّهْرُ عَمَّا كَانَ فَانْتَفَلَا

While a man feels happy in his security, suddenly Fate betrays him [forcing him to change] and move on.

The lines provide an undertone of commentary, relating the scenes to a pervasive sense of resignation. The bare sequence oryx → *khamr* is scarcely diminished. The same sequence, I would suggest, is discernible in Labīd's lengthy, 92-line *lāmiyya*: *nasīb*, lines 1–4 → *raḡil* (*waṣf al-nāqa* 5–12; 13–25 wild ass; 26–35 oryx) → 36–59 *ghazal/khamr* (as an extended simile of delight in the company of indulgent women) → 60–1 *ḥikma* (resolution towards piety and abstinence) → 62–70 *raḡil* as resolution and consolation → 71–92 *madḥ al-qabila*.

If in al-Akhṭal's *lāmiyya* the gnomic aspect of *khamr* emerges from the poem's subtext, as in the earlier *qaṣīda* by Zuhayr b. Maṣ'ūd, in other poems it is more direct. al-Akhṭal's *rā'iyya*,<sup>32</sup> in praise of Jidār b. 'Abbād al-Taghlibī, begins with five lines of *khamr*.<sup>33</sup> He begins by addressing the *ādhib*; he then describes the wine, its effects and its value: it captures the attention of merchants and Arabs; it is a commodity of old age and distant provenance. Line 5, which again addresses the censurer, is of significant ambiguity:

أَعَادِلُ تُوشِكِينَ بِأَنْ تَرِنِي صَرِيْعًا لَا أُزُورُ وَلَا أَزَارُ

O censurer, you will soon see me dead, [unable] either to pay visits or be visited . . .

On the one hand the poet simply states that he will drink despite reproach—a typically trenchant stance; indeed the censurer will be made to witness the effects of the wine, the intoxication of the poet. The more likely intended meaning is, "I will soon die, therefore let me imbibe whilst I live." The phrase *lā azūru wa-lā uzāru* suggests death—a state in which the poet will neither visit nor be visited by boon companions. Death allows bacchism to stand firm against censure.

<sup>32</sup> *Diwān*, ed. Nāṣir, pp. 121–3; ed. Qabāwa, i. 277–83.

<sup>33</sup> In this respect the *qaṣīda* is similar to another *qaṣīda* by al-Akhṭal, namely the *bā'iyya* in praise of 'Abbās b. Muḥammad b. 'Abdullah b. 'Abbās, which begins with 10 lines of *khamr*.

## Muslim b. al-Walid (d. 823)

Muslim's *qaṣīda lāmiyya* in praise of Yazīd b. Mazyad al-Šaybānī<sup>34</sup> is one of several formal panegyrics which treat wine within a framework of restraint, informed essentially by the pessimism of an extended *nasīb*. A significant portion of his poems curbs the lyricism of *khamr* by setting it within the ethics of *ḥilm*—this normally requires the eschewal of pleasure before *madīḥ*.<sup>35</sup> *Hikma* in the formal panegyric of this period, like *ḥilm* (and often in conjunction with *ḥilm*), restrains the extent of lyricism, for although inexorable Fate (the domain of *al-dahr*) encourages urgent indulgence (in the manner of Ṭarafa) it also deprives the poet of indulgence and leaves him pondering (in the manner of Labīd's elegy on al-Nu'mān<sup>36</sup>). In the *lāmiyya* the poet begins by boasting of his reckless past:

أَجَرْتُ حَبْلَ خَلِيعٍ فِي الصَّبَا غَزَلٍ وَشَمَّرْتُ هِمَمَ الْعُدَالِ فِي الْعَدَلِ

In my youth I was a reprobate womaniser [at a time when]  
my censurers tucked up their garments<sup>37</sup> to rebuke me.

This opening prepares for the continuation of the poem (lines 2–8), which treats a failed love:

هَاجَ الْبُكَاءُ عَلَى الْعَيْنِ الطَّمُوحِ هَوَى مُفَرَّقٌ بَيْنَ تَوْدِيعٍ وَمُحْتَمَلٍ

Love—caught between bidding farewell and resignation—  
caused my straining eye to cry.

The poet's now thwarted love is blamed on Fate (*al-dahr*): (line 8)

مَاذَا عَلَى الدَّهْرِ لَوْلَا نَتَّ عَرِيكَتُهُ وَرَدَّ فِي الرَّأْسِ مَيِّ سُكْرَةَ الْعَزَلِ

What loss would Fate suffer from adopting a gentler nature,  
and giving back to my head the intoxication of love.

The wine episode which follows also has Fate (now *al-ḥawāḍith*) as its backdrop: (line 9)

جُرْمُ الْحَوَادِثِ عِنْدِي أَنَّهَا اخْتَلَسَتْ مَيِّ بَنَاتِ غَذَاءِ الْكَرَمِ وَالْكَلِّ

The crime Fate wrought on me is that it stole from me  
the veiled daughters of a nourishing vine.

<sup>34</sup> *Dīwān*, I.

<sup>35</sup> See Ch. 4.

<sup>36</sup> See *Šarḥ Dīwān Labīd*, 254.

<sup>37</sup> *Šammara* means to tuck up one's garment in preparation for exercise, i.e. battle. The verse translated here implies, therefore, that the censurers ready themselves to do battle against the poet.

The present, as described in this line, contrasts with the past where Fate had a different role: (line 14)

كَمْ قَدْ قَطَعْتُ وَعَيْنُ الدَّهْرِ رَاقِدَةٌ أَيْامَهُ بِالصَّبَا فِي النَّهْرِ وَالْجَدَلِ

How often I spent the days of my youth, whilst Fate's  
eye slept, [indulging] in pleasure and gaiety.

The poem contains a short *rahīl* and thereafter proceeds to an extensive section of *madīḥ*. There is no *ḥikma* as such in the above material; however, the dominant topic of an aphoristic convention (*al-dahr*) governs the passage into which bacchism is set.

Another *qaṣīda*<sup>38</sup> alludes initially to the bacchic philosophy through a metaphor. The first line appears to address a censurer with an accusation of *jahl*. Line 2 glosses nostalgically over the poet's amorous past; the mood is despondent. In line 3 responsibility for this is apportioned to Fate:

حَسْبِيَ بِمَا أَدَّتْ الْأَيَّامُ تَجَرِبَةٌ سَمَى عَلَى بِكَاسِهَا الْجَدِيدَانِ

The experiences which Time has given me are quite enough; the  
twin cycles of Time have caught me in their "two cups".

*al-Ayyām* ("the Days") have, in effect, dispensed the vagaries of life's experience (*tajriba*). In itself the image of the "cup" contains the contrary connotations of pleasure and death (*ka's al-maniyya* and *ka's al-mudām*). The metaphor is continued in line 6 where the poet flirts with *al-dahr*:

فَقَدْ أَرَوْحُ نَدِيمَ الدَّهْرِ يَمْزُجُ لِي كَأْسَ الْهَوَى وَيُحْيِيَنِي بِرِيحَانٍ

I was once the boon companion of Fate who would Himself  
mix for me the loving cup and revive me with basil.

Though here Fate is complicitous in the hedonism of the poet, in line 17 abstinence is afforded by its corollary, Time (*al-zamān/al-layālī*):

فَالآنَ أَقْصَرْتُ إِذْ رَدَّ الزَّمَانُ يَدِي وَتَأَفَّرَتْنِي اللَّيَالِي بَعْدَ إِذْعَانٍ

Now that Time has pushed back my hand and "the Nights"  
have shunned me, having once acknowledged me, I have  
abstained from this behaviour.

This plaintive mood provides a natural transition to the *madīḥ* of Hārūn al-Rashid.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> *Dīwān*, I 21.

<sup>39</sup> In the transition to this part of the poem there is a purposeful treatment of

In these two representative poems we witness the continuation of a pervasive view of Fate that had its origins in the *Jāhiliyya*. What may be concluded from Muslim's panegyrics, the only poems in his *diwān* to treat *khamr* and *ḥikma* jointly, is that the formality of this type of poetry in effect gave *ḥikma* the role of restraining bacchic celebration. This too had its clear precedents in the *Jāhiliyya*, as will become more apparent in Chapter 4.

## 2. THE KHAMRIYYA

In the late Umayyad and the early 'Abbāsīd periods a notion of fleeting life—continually represented by *al-dahr* and corollary motifs—provided the developing *khamriyya* with an unrestrained spirit of celebration. In the wine song as such, where bacchic celebration is the sole or principal concern of the poet, a gnomic impulse can provide the poem with an unrestrained expositional mood. Such is the case in a well-rounded fragment by Abū l-Hindī:<sup>40</sup>

اصْبِ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ مِنْ بَرْدِهَا      إِنِّي أَرَى النَّاسَ يَمُوتُونَ  
وَدَعِ أَنْاسًا كَرِهُوا شَرِبَهَا      لَيْسُوا بِمَا فِي الْخَمْرِ يَدْرُونَ  
لَوْ شَرِبُوهَا فَانْتَشَوْا مَرَّةً      لَأَصْبَحُوا بِالْخَمْرِ يَهْدُونَ  
وَقَدْ عَهِدْتُ النَّاسَ إِذْ دَهَرُهُمْ      دَهْرٌ يَلُوطُونَ وَيَزْنُونَ

Pour this cool balm over your [aching] heart, for I see  
that people die;  
Have nothing to do with those who will not drink it,  
for they are ignorant of what is in the wine;  
Were they to drink it and become intoxicated just once,  
then they would be besotted by this draught.  
Since people have this Time—and only this Time—I see  
them indulge in sodomy and fornication.

A similar exposition, enabled by the dominant imperatives of the first line, is to be found in the opening lines of al-Walid b. Yazīd's famous *khamriyya*:<sup>41</sup>

إِصْدَعْ نَجْوَى الْهُمُومِ بِالطَّرَبِ      وَأَنْعَمِ عَلَى الدَّهْرِ بِأَنْتَةِ الْعَيْبِ  
وَاسْتَقْبِلِ الْعَيْشَ فِي غَضَارَتِهَا      لَا تَقِفْ مِنْهُ أَثَارَ مُعْتَقِبِ

temporal motifs: a night ride leads towards respite as dawn breaks. This evokes a vanquishing of Fate which has been depicted in its darker aspects as "the Nights".

<sup>40</sup> *Dīwān*, 54.

<sup>41</sup> See *Dīwān*, poem 5, p. 17.

Sunder your innermost worry and feel pleasure  
despite Time with the daughter of the vine.  
Embrace life in the well-being of wine; do not follow  
the tracks of an abstemious man . . .

This mood gives the poem its signature; a similar self-confident exuberance, enhanced by the use of imperatives, is to be found in many of al-Walid's surviving poems.<sup>42</sup>

Much material could be adduced to demonstrate the spirit of *mubādara* and the commonplace treatment of *al-dahr* in the 'Abbāsīd period.<sup>43</sup> However, examination of the subject below will be circumscribed with a view to assessing both the careful artistry of Abū Nuwās in constructing certain poems in different ways around the motif, and also in order to sense how the motif—preserving a transcendence separate from Islam—was pitted against contemporaneous pious poetry. Thus it will emerge how Abū l-'Atāhiya's *laqad ayqantu annī ghayru bāqin*<sup>44</sup> (I know for sure that I am not immortal) (an invitation to piety) might be understood to set itself against al-Walid's earlier and strikingly similar defiant slogan: *laqad ayqantu annī ghayru mab'ūthin li-l-nāri* (I know for sure that I will not be sent to Hell-fire).<sup>45</sup>

## Two orders<sup>46</sup>

In Chapter 1 (pp. 72–3) it was observed how the antithetical structure of *Yā sāḥir al-ṭarf* has as its axis a reversal in the role of *al-dahr*. Fate, as a motif, effectively governs the poem in terms of relating it to the poet's affected or real view of life. When, therefore, we consider the separate treatment of Islam in lines 5–6 a tension may be seen to emerge between two orders of transcendence. With this added exegetical dimension of the text one must be cautious. For Abū Nuwās' poem is essentially a light-hearted piece, not an exposé of a rigid philosophical system. Furthermore, like any poem, it is mercurial in its relationship to external layers

<sup>42</sup> The use of the imperative is a dominant feature of Abū Nuwās' *khamriyyāt*, especially at the beginning of poems.

<sup>43</sup> See the chapter on *al-Mubādara ilā l-khamr* in *Quṭb al-Surūr*.

<sup>44</sup> *Dīwān*, 337.

<sup>45</sup> *Dīwān*, poem 43, p. 63, line 7.

<sup>46</sup> Some of the material in this section has appeared in my article "Perspectives of a *Khamriyya*", *Festschrift Ewald Wagner*, vol. ii: *Studien zur Arabischen Dichtung*, 258–76.

of significance other than those which have a direct bearing on the poetic craft (i.e. genre).

In the time Abū Nuwās was writing, at the turn of the ninth century AD, the attitude of the old pre-Islamic dispensation which had survived to a certain extent in the consciousness of the community, as evinced by much of the poetry of the Umayyad period, and in which the imposing force of *al-dahr* charged each life with a haste for personal fulfilment, both martial and hedonistic, was supplanted by the pious outlook of the kind expressed in the *zuhdiyyāt* of Abū l-ʿAtāhiya (d. 826). The sentiments of this poetry, which spoke of a need to eschew the pleasures of the world in preparation for the hereafter, were born of the very essence of ancient *ḥikma*—the gnostic spirit of the old world-view.<sup>47</sup> It was also influenced by Islam, which had given society what was perceived to be a new moral order. This same moral, religious order impinged on Abū Nuwās and demanded that he accommodate himself to it or at the very least show an awareness of it. Composing largely iconoclastic poems within a still somewhat conservative poetic tradition allowed him to hedge his bets; he, like others of his temperament, both challenged Islam and reconciled himself to it. At the same time he was able to sustain an “off-beat” socio-moral dimension in his poems by preserving the *ḥikma* of the ancient tradition in isolation from Islam.<sup>48</sup>

Like Marvell’s “To His Coy Mistress” Abū Nuwās’ *Yā sāḥir al-ṭarf* can be seen to be seeking out “a set of inter-discursive relations

<sup>47</sup> This is discernible in Muḥammad ʿAwīs’ *al-Ḥikma fī l-Šiʿr al-ʿArabī* (Asyūt, 1979). The progression is more clearly shown in Stefan Sperl’s chapter on Abū l-ʿAtāhiya in *Mannerism in Arabic Poetry* (Cambridge, 1989).

<sup>48</sup> My attention was drawn to this more complex aspect of the poem upon reading a stimulating article on Marvell’s “To His Coy Mistress” by Catherine Belsey (see “Love and Death in ‘To His Coy Mistress’”, in Machin and Norris (edd.) *Post-structuralist Readings of English Literature* (Cambridge, 1988), 105–21. This is a “post-structuralist” study which attempts to demonstrate that the poem’s dichotomy is consistent with its having been written at a watershed in English history. The poem is, in Belsey’s view, the expression of two “orders”, the Old and the New, at a time when England, during the Restoration, was experiencing a change from the medieval, spiritual *Weltanschauung* to the humanist outlook of the Renaissance (similar notions are expressed in the introduction to Jenny Newman’s *Seductions*). We should note that Belsey’s formulation is somewhat incorrect; late 17th-century ‘humanism’ was not fighting against any medieval *Weltanschauung* (which had disappeared a century earlier), but against Puritanism and the Puritan ethic of spirituality, which was utterly different from the medieval one.

The approach I take corroborates that of ʿAbdul-Raḥmān Šidqī, who in 1936

that the poem . . . cannot ignore—a collision between asceticism/religious accommodation and humanism”.<sup>49</sup> The *qaṣida* set itself against a trend towards ascetic expression which was inevitable in a period that constitutes a watershed in the literary history of the Islamic community. The apparent posture which the poet adopts is simply a manifestation of his sensitivity, conscious or otherwise, to the distinct ethical planes which could be forged for his compositions. Whilst Abū l-ʿAtāhiya took for granted and was apparently less aware of the development between the old and the new, whilst nevertheless producing an often syncretic collection of poems,<sup>50</sup> Abū Nuwās was forced to recognize the distinction as it presented itself in the Islamic proscription of wine. Indeed, it is the very existence of such poets as Abū Nuwās and Abū l-ʿAtāhiya which signals to us that a period of transition had finally matured into distinct and consciously antagonistic poetic poses. The birth of Islam changed the ethical framework of society; in poetry, however, the old world-view with its own preoccupations and prejudices was inherited and variously transformed in the early ʿAbbāsīd period by such as the aforesaid poets.

In *Yā sāḥir al-ṭarf* Abū Nuwās contrives a ruse: wine is excused by appealing to *ghufrān* (divine forgiveness). A note of religious tension is introduced and then diffused slightly by the presentation of an engaging myth. The religious context of poetic celebration is finally abandoned for the new imposing relevance of *al-dahr*, which commands the finale of the poem and vindicates the actions of the poet. Thus, wine is given more than one ethical context, each of which is manipulated in order to vindicate indulgence. My suggestion is that the dominance of *al-dahr* over the Islamic context harks back ironically to the old order as crystallized in *āya* 24 of *Sūrat al-*

wrote an article in *al-Hilāl* comparing Abū Nuwās to the profligate companion and confidant of Charles II, John Wilmot, the Earl of Rochester. He posits that the period in which Rochester lived was “very similar to ʿAbbāsīd society in which [Abū Nuwās lived]. The dominant mode of thought was doubt.” See “*al-Ḥubb fī Ḥayāt Abī Nuwās*”, pp. 1127–37. In the same volume Aḥmad Zakī Abū Šādī’s “*al-Daʿābatu fī Šiʿri Abī Nuwās*” makes a similar point (pp. 1167–73). Ingrams also discusses briefly the similarity between Rochester and Abū Nuwās in *Abū Nuwās in Life and Legend* (Mauritius, 1933) p. iii.

<sup>49</sup> Belsey, op. cit., 111–19.

<sup>50</sup> The language of his poetry is often reminiscent of the language of *nasīb*. See below, “Abū l-ʿAtāhiya and Traditional Imagery”. For an important discussion of the more political (and personal) aspects of his poetry see: M. A. A. el Kafrawy and J. D. Latham, “Perspective of Abū l-ʿAtāhiya”, *Islamic Quarterly*, 17 (1973), 160–76.

*Jāthiya: wa-qālū mā hiya illā ḥayātu-nā l-dunyā namūtu wa-nahyā wa-mā yuhliku-nā illā l-dahr wa-mā la-hum bi-dhālika min 'ilmin in hum illā yazunūna.* (They say, "There is nothing but our present life; we die, and we live, and nothing but Time destroys us." Of that they have no knowledge; they merely conjecture.)<sup>51</sup> The verse reports the speech of the *Kāfirūn* and therefore suggests that a certain conception of *al-dahr* was anti-Islamic. It is significant that this is one of only two references to *al-dahr* in the Qur'ān.<sup>52</sup> Though Islam came to embrace *al-dahr*,<sup>53</sup> producing a hierarchy of transcendence, in this poem the hierarchy is reversed, with *al-dahr* holding sway. In other poems the expression of differing ethical planes is more conspicuously born of pre-existing patterns of composition. Such is the case in the *khamriyya* which begins 'Afā l-muṣallā. It is a poem in which contrary perceptions of transcendence provide only one aspect of varied structural and literary dimensions. (See below, pp. 111–14.)

### The Umayyad Period

In the Umayyad period Islam was a theme which impinged in varying degrees on the poetry of the time; yet the old order survived in the expression of values which one might expect to have been

<sup>51</sup> See *The Koran*, trans. Arthur J. Arberry, p. 518.

<sup>52</sup> The significance of *al-dahr* in this verse is attested by the fact that al-Suyūṭī records *al-Dahr* as being one variant of the *sūra*'s name. See *Al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (4th edn. Cairo, 1978) i. 72–3: (*al-Jāthiya*) *tusammā l-sari'atu wa-sūratu l-dahri ḥakā-hu l-Kirmānī fī l-'Ajā'ibi* [cf. GAL S i. 732].

<sup>53</sup> For Islam embracing *al-Dahr* see the *ḥadīth qudsī*: 'an Abi Hurayrata . . . qāla Rasūlu llāhi . . . : 'qāla llāhu yasubbu banī ādama l-dahra wa-anā l-dahr bi-yadī l-laylu wa-l-nahāru'. Related by Bukhārī and Muslim (see *Forty Hadith Qudsi*, selected and translated by Ibrahim and Johnson-Davies, p. 49). The varied significance of *al-dahr* can be seen from two distinct lines of poetry; the first is from a lament by 'Amra l-Khath'amiyya (see Cheikho, *Sawā'ir al-'Arab*, p. 146): *bunayyā 'ajūzin ḥarrama l-dahrū ahla-hā | fa-laysa la-hā illā l-ilāhu siwā-humā*. *al-Dahr* is clearly more transcendent than *al-ilāh* (since this is a pre-Islamic poem the precise significance of *al-ilāh* is debatable—for a discussion of this poem see A. Jones, *Early Arabic Poetry*, i. 52). The second line is from al-A'sā's encomium on the Prophet: (poem 17, line 4) *wa-lākin arā l-dahra lladhi huwa khātirun | wa-li-llāhi hādihā l-dahrū kayfa taraddadā*. Here the tenor of expression is entirely consonant with Islam.

For a detailed discussion of the treatment of Fate in early Arabic poetry and changing perceptions of it see: H. Ringgren, *Studies in Arabian Fatalism* (Uppsala Universitets, 1955); see also (for analysis of the meaning of *al-dahr* and attendant topics): Franz Rosenthal, "Sweeter than Hope", 4–18 (see esp. pp. 10 ff for a full discussion of the above *ḥadīth* and how it was variously understood by medieval theologians).

superseded by the communal exigencies of Islam and its transcendental cosmology. As is the case even in the 'Abbāsid poet Abū l-'Atāhiya, there is often a thematic progression in individual poems which maps out the societal shift from an old to a new ethos; a good example exists in the 8-line *rā'iyya* by Abū Jilda al-Yaškuri (d. 686), *A-lā rubba yawmin lī bi-Bustīn wa-laylatin*.<sup>54</sup> The poem offers a simple dichotomy between reminiscence of pleasures past and religious repentance (*tauba*). Broadly it is a division between *fakhr* and *ḥikma* → *zuhd*. Initial *fakhr* is pinned to the old order in its preoccupation with the glory of the tribe: (line 2)

عُنَيْتُ بِهَا أَسْقَى سُلَافَ مُدَامَةٍ      كَرِيمَ الْمُحَيَّا مِنْ عَرَانِي يَشْكُرُ

I was once made rich by a choice wine, [I was] noble, one of the illustrious men of Yaškuri.

Line 4 rings the changes:

فَذلكَ دَهْرٌ قَدْ تَوَلَّى نَعِيمَهُ      فَأَصْبَحْتُ قَدْ بُدِّلْتُ طَوْلَ التَّوَلَّى

That [was] a Time whose pleasures have past—I have exchanged this now for a lasting respectability.

The language and content is still compatible with the old ethos; though *na'im* is a word of important resonance in the Qur'ān, where it signifies the pleasures of the hereafter only, here it still signifies what it did in *jāhili* poetry, namely the pleasures of this life.<sup>55</sup> In the following line the values expressed are subsumed by *ḥilm*—the maturest quality of the ancients: *fa-rāja'a-nī ḥilmī*. In line 6 *ḥilm* is qualified by *qaṣd*.<sup>56</sup> Resolve for abstinence is merged into a more straightforwardly religious declamation in the next line which echoes and qualifies with religious significance the dichotomy of *na'im* and *tawaqqur*:

سَأَرْكُضُ فِي التَّقْوَى وَفِي الْعِلْمِ بَعْدَمَا      رَكَضْتُ إِلَى أَمْرِ الْغَوَى الْمُتَهَوِّرِ

I will hasten towards piety and knowledge, having hastened towards foolish errancy.

Whilst ancient *ḥilm* might subsume 'ilm and eschew *ghawāya*,

<sup>54</sup> *Aghānī*, 11/310.

<sup>55</sup> See A. Jones's comments on the use of this word in a poem by al-Aswad b. Ya'fur (*Early Arabic Poetry*, ii. 145, line 14).

<sup>56</sup> *Qaṣd al-sabil* is a Qur'ānic term for moral rectitude; see Qur'ān, 16 (*al-Nahl*)/9.



*taqwā* is characteristic of the new order which concludes the poem in the final line with the distinctly Islamic:

وَبِاللَّهِ حَوْلِي وَاحْتِيَائِي وَقُوَّتِي      وَمِنْ عِنْدِهِ عُرْفِي الْكَثِيرُ وَمُنْكَرِي

In God is my strength and recourse, [for] from Him comes  
[both] my good and reprehensible behaviour.

A similar progression exists in one of Abū Miḥjan al-Thaqafī's poems of repentance. As background we should accept that *ṣayb* (hoariness) contrasts *ṣibā* (youthful passions); this contrast was essential to the poetry of the *Jāhiliyya*. For an illustration of this ethical corner-stone we can look to the frequency of phrases such as *wadda'tu l-ṣibā* in the poetry of al-A'ṣā, who understood the ethical principles of Islam<sup>57</sup> (principles inherited in part from the *Jāhiliyya*) but did not convert to the new religion. Abū Miḥjan's 6-line poem begins:<sup>58</sup>

أَلَمْ تَرَنِي وَدَّعْتُ مَا كُنْتُ أَشْرَبُ      مِنْ الْخَمْرِ إِذْ رَأَيْتُ لَكَ الْخَيْرَ أَشْيَبُ

Do you not see that I have said farewell to the wine I used to drink,  
for my head [of hair]—God give you grace—is now grey.

Abstinence from wine is triggered by propriety in old age. The last line expresses straightforwardly pious contrition:

سَأَتْرُكُهَا لِلَّهِ ثُمَّ أَذُمَّهَا      وَأَهْجُرُهَا فِي بَيْتِهَا حَيْثُ تُشْرَبُ

I will abandon [wine] for God's sake and vilify it, forsaking it in  
the house where it is consumed.

Semantic depths may be intended in the use of the word *ahjuru-hā* in its possible allusion to the *hijra*—the Prophet's emigration from Meccan iniquity.<sup>59</sup> This is supported by the use of the word *bayt*, which may allude to *al-bayt al-'atīq*, that is the Ka'ba.

We should consider in contrast to the above early Islamic and Umayyad poems examples of the survival of the *Jāhili* spirit to the exclusion of the new order. A good example is al-Akhṭal's *Fī l-ḥayāt wa-l-mawt*,<sup>60</sup> which is significant in that al-Akhṭal composed wine poetry. The attitude that emerges from the poem is similar to

<sup>57</sup> See his two poems in praise of the Prophet Muḥammad.

<sup>58</sup> See *Diwān*, 40–1.

<sup>59</sup> Beyond the ethical level of the line there is a literary significance in the phrase *adhummu-hā*; vilification of wine (tantamount to *hijā'*) contrasts with *waṣṣithanā'* *al-khamr* which is tantamount to *madīḥ*.

<sup>60</sup> Cheikho, *Majānī*, ii, 109–10.

that described by Hamori in a discussion of the *Jāhili* poets; for them:

to tempt death was the hero's destiny. The crucial thing for the heroic spirit is not so much to go down fighting, as to have a tincture of will in one's own death, to see it through and be its master . . . Posthumous fame means that the survivors do the reflecting instead of the hero . . . Anticipation of death or burial works by a similar trick.<sup>61</sup>

al-Akhṭal's *Fī l-ḥayāt wa-l-mawt* evinces the survival of this ancient ethos well into the Umayyad period. It contains the gnomic catalyst to both ancient heroism and 'Abbāsid *zuhd/tuqā'*<sup>62</sup> and yet, being free from the demands of decorum imposed by the panegyric,<sup>63</sup> still preserves the ancient heroic ideal. Though this poem contains no mention of wine, yet we glimpse how the bacchic theme would fit into the poet's view of life and death. In the earliest poetry the *qaṣīda* was often arranged in such a way that *fakhr*, *ḥikma*, and *nasīb/ghazal* mutually interacted to produce a patchwork of moods and themes (see, for example, al-A'ṣā, poem 4). Such is the thematic fabric of this *qaṣīda*.

The poet begins by addressing two censurers (line 1) and lauding his own generosity (line 2: *dharā-nī tajud kaffī bi-mālī*). In the next few lines a standard topic of poetry (that wealth cannot prevent death) emerges from a fanciful and powerful tableau (lines 3–9) in which al-Akhṭal depicts his grave after his death and the distress of the women that mourn him (*abkaytu . . . kulla karīmatin . . . qāmat muṣaqqaqatan 'uṭlā*). In line 10 mention of God—"the Caller of one's soul"—fails to lead to a pious, Islamic sentiment; the following verse merely crystallizes the essential message, that death cannot be "bought off" by the wealth of a miser: (line 11)

دَرْنِي فَلَا مَالِي يَرُدُّ مَيِّتِي      وَمَا إِن أَرَى حَيًّا عَلَى نَفْسِي قُفْلًا

Let me be, for my wealth will not forestall my death—I see no  
living person with a lock [that can preserve] his soul.

<sup>61</sup> Hamori, *On the Art of Medieval Arabic Literature*, 10. Sperl also sees this attitude as essential to the spirit of the *Jāhiliyya* (see *Mannersim in Arabic Poetry*, 76).

<sup>62</sup> How piety is supported by ancient wisdom will be shown in a brief résumé of Abū l-'Atāhiya's "*Li-man ṭalalun*" below (p. 118).

<sup>63</sup> Panegyrics of the Umayyad period tended to laud the *mamdūḥ* in terms of Islam; to give just two examples, in a *dāliyya* in praise of Mu'āwiya b. Ḥiṣām Jarir says (*Diwān*, ed. Ḥāwī, p. 183): *ilā Mu'āwīyyata l-Manṣūri inna la-hu l-dīnan wāthiqan wa-qalban ghayra ḥayyādī*. In another *qaṣīda* in praise of Ayyūb b. Sulayman b. 'Abd al-Malik he says (ibid. 53): *allāhu faḍḍala-hu wa-llāhu waffaqa-hu l-tawfiqa Yūsufu idh waṣṣa-hu Ya'qūbu*.

Distancing himself from any pious sentiment in lines 12–13 the poet depicts heroism blighted by Fate (*al-manāyā*). Lines 15–21 are *ghazal*; line 15, sensitive to the thematic tenor of the *qaṣīda*, suggests an equivalence between *al-dahr* and the beloved:

دَكَرْتَ انْقِلَابَ الدَّهْرِ ... فَادْكُرْ وَسِيمَةً ... حُبُّهَا قَاتِلِي قَتَلَا

You have mentioned the reversal of Fate so mention Wasīma . . .  
[my] love for whom is killing me.

There is an oblique suggestion here that the poet is still suffering at the hands of Fate. Indeed, line 18 where the beloved's arrow has not failed to hit its target—the poet—(*fa-tilka llati lam tukhi qalbi bi-sahmi-hā*) recalls Labīd's aphoristic hemistich: *inna l-manāyā lā taṭīšu sihāmu-hā*.<sup>64</sup>

Generosity in line 21 (*jūdī bi-mā yašfi l-saqīma*) effects a significant role reversal:

فَجُودِي بِمَا يَشْفِي السَّقِيمَ وَخَلِّصِي أَسِيرًا بَلَا جُرْمٍ أَطَلَّتْ لَهُ الْكَبَالَا

Give kindly that which will cure a sick man, set free a prisoner  
whom you have long kept in shackles, though he has  
committed no crime.

In line 2 it is generosity which the poet lauds in himself. As the poem progresses it is clear that *jūd* effectively challenges death. The dissipation of the poet's wealth is the only tangible trace of a circumscribed existence. There emerges an abstracted call to munificence in others which has a bearing on line 21 where the beloved is asked to reciprocate the poet's love/generosity. The *qaṣīda* becomes a composite celebration of a generous spirit against a transcendent backdrop of Fate.<sup>65</sup> Islam is absent from the poem.

<sup>64</sup> See The *Mu'allāqa*, line 39b of al-Tibrizī's recension.

<sup>65</sup> The final five lines attempt to channel the overriding pessimism of the poem into less equivocal statements of the poet's worth. It is the poet's association with his own tribe (Taghlib) which makes this possible. Whilst the poet has previously been passive and subject to fate, here he offers succour to those in need who have themselves been afflicted: *anā l-juṣamiyyu l-raḥbu fi l-ḥayyi manzilan | idhā ḥtalla maḍhūdun bi-mudniyatīn hazlā*. The *qaṣīda* is rounded off in a manner which to a degree recapitulates and has a bearing on the introductory motif of the poem—censure. al-Akḥṭal warns off any satirist who would direct his insults at Taghlib. This final admonition must add weight to the initial plea made against the censor. The poem is thus made integral by the poet's spirit of defence: (1) *A-ʿādhilatayya l-yawma wayḥa-kumā mahlā* → (26) *lā muṣliti ḥājīn ḥajā Taghliban buṭlā*. I am not saying that the *ʿādhil* and the *ḥājīn* are exact equivalents in the fabric of this poetry; they do, however, both act as a foil to the assertion of the poet's sense of worth within the collective ethos of society. Such thoughts are relevant to the next chapter.

Other poets were forced by circumstance to acknowledge Islam whilst resisting it in sentiment. Thus a delicate conflict emerges in their expression. Such is the case in a short piece by Baššār b. Burd (d. 783) with which he responded when the 'Abbāsid Caliph al-Mahdī forbade him from composing and publicizing his love poetry:<sup>66</sup> (line 1)

والله لولا رضا الخليفة ما أعطيت ضياء على في شجن

By God, were it not for the Caliph's good pleasure, I would not  
have done violence to myself under any stress [*šajan*].<sup>67</sup>

In line 3 the poet consoles himself with wine:

فاشرب على أئنة الزمان فما تلقى زمانا صفا من الأبن

So drink [wine], in spite of time's cross-grainedness (*ubnati l-zamān*),<sup>68</sup> for you will find no time free from cross-grained patches (*uban*).

The pains of love are thus equated with the affliction of *al-zamān* (*al-dahr*). In lines 5–7 the poet reminisces about his indulgent youth and basks in the renown which his poetry enjoys. In line 7 his poetry is as a shrine to young maidens; this image of near-blasphemy effects a tension between true religion (represented by the Caliph) and religious passion elicited by forbidden love poetry. The verse unmasks the true sentiments of Baššār and allows one to detect the irony latent in the treatment of other motifs. Line 8 articulates the Caliph's stricture:

ثم نهاني ألمهدي فأنصرفت نفسي صنيع ألوفق اللقن

But then al-Mahdī forbade me, and my soul turned away from  
love songs, as an honest prudent man would do.

That the poet's abstinence is coerced suggests the irony in the gnomic conclusion to the poem which combines the old order of *jāhili ḥikma* (9b: *laysa bi-bāqin šay'un 'alā l-zamāni*) and the new order of Islamic dogma (in 9a): *fa-l-ḥamdu li-llāhi lā šarīka la-hu*. Whilst the line is apposite in summing up the poet's plight, to which

<sup>66</sup> See A. F. L. Beeston's *Selections from the Poetry of Baššār*, 37 (and p. 7 of the Arabic text). In the ensuing discussion I quote Beeston's translation of the poem.

<sup>67</sup> The meaning of the second hemistich appears to be, "[love] would not have caused me grief".

<sup>68</sup> For *ubna* Lane gives "A knot in wood, or in a branch; . . . A fault, defect, or blemish in one's grounds of pretension to respect . . . Rancour, malevolence, malice, or spite . . ." (pp. 9–10).

he can only resign himself, the piety in the penultimate hemistich is sardonic. Further irony is detectable in the clash of ethos between lines 3 and 9: consolation in wine against Time (*al-zamān*) is part of the "old order"; line 9, however, is of the "new order". This juxtaposition of differing attitudes is indicative of a society which was mildly at odds with itself in terms of how to respond to Fate.

### The 'Abbāsīd Period

More illustrative of altering perceptions is a *qaṣīda* by Abū l-'Atāhiya in praise of the 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Hādī.<sup>69</sup> The poem begins with nostalgic celebration of erstwhile pleasures; the mode of depiction is traditional, with the occasional inclusion of Islamic language and imagery.<sup>70</sup> The first line is borrowed almost word for word from the ancient corpus:

لَهْفَى عَلَى الزَّمَنِ الْقَصِيرِ      بَيْنَ الْخَوَرَقِ وَالسَّادِرِ  
 Alas for the short time [we spent] between [the palaces] of  
 al-Khawarnaq and al-Sadīr.

Whilst evoking the old tradition and reworking it, the reference to these places as haunts of an erstwhile youth is somewhat specious. al-Khawarnaq and al-Sadīr<sup>71</sup> were referred to in the same manner by the *mukhaḍram* poet al-Munakhkhal al-Yaškūrī,<sup>72</sup> for whom the two palaces, despite their proverbial nature, might have had greater personal relevance. For Abū l-'Atāhiya these emblems of transience could only allude to the tradition from which they were drawn. Indeed, with the literary and historical context of the poet in mind, we can posit that the line mourns the passing of the era which spawned the whole tradition of poetry.

Broadly speaking, the *qaṣīda* divides into two sections: lines 1–17 comprise a *nasīb* of lyrical recollections; lines 18–23 comprise *madīḥ*. These two sections underscore an essential contrast discernible from a comparison of lines 3 and 18; in line 3 the poet

<sup>69</sup> See Arberry, *Arabic Poetry: A Primer for Students* (Cambridge, 1965), 46–51. For a discussion of this poem see J. Stetkevych, *The Zephyrs of Najd* (Chicago, 1993), 66 ff.

<sup>70</sup> See Arberry's notes to lines 2, 10, and 14.

<sup>71</sup> al-Khawarnaq and al-Sadīr had been palaces of the Lakhmids outside al-Hīra. Their abandonment was proverbial.

<sup>72</sup> See *Aghānī*, 21/9. See also line 9 of poem 44 of the *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt* by al-Aswad b. Ya'fur.

describes himself amongst youths who *malakū 'ināna l-dahrī* (possessed the reins of Time);<sup>73</sup> in their indulgent *joie de vivre* they could be subordinated to nothing. In line 18 the same companions take refuge from Time under the Caliph's wing:

وَإِلَى أَمِينٍ اللَّهُ مَهْ      رُبُّنَا مِنَ الدَّهْرِ الْعَثُورِ

In Amīn, God's [Caliph], is our refuge from Fate, which causes us to stumble.

The Caliph champions the new order, and the poem champions the Caliph. By reproducing the standard panegyric poem's thematic framework the poem charts a feature represented by Abū l-'Atāhiya's *dīwān* as a whole when seen in its historical and literary context. That is to say the *qaṣīda* illustrates the change in world-view which the community had recently experienced and which was still detectable in the dynamics of poetry, especially in the case of those genres most characteristic of the age—Abū l-'Atāhiya's *zuhdiyyāt* evolved from a specific personal, literary, and socio-religious backdrop.

If we consider Abū Nuwās' 'Aḫ l-*muṣallā* in conjunction with another *zuhdiyya*, Abū l-'Atāhiya's *Li-man ṭalalun* (p. 118), we see that they both have an aphoristic undertone based on the depiction of transient life. In Abū l-'Atāhiya the old order of heroic/resigned contemplation leads to the new order of religious piety; the Caliph is cast as the corporeal apotheosis of this new order. Abū Nuwās, whilst preserving the old order, steps beyond even Abū l-'Atāhiya's arrival at a new order of contemplation: the effacement of the *loci* of *muruwwa* and *dīn* lead to indulgence in wine beyond the pale of society's recognized ethical framework.<sup>74</sup> Like a *ṣu'lūk* Abū Nuwās rejected *muruwwa* at its most conservative to re-embrace the world-view of which it was born. We are left to determine the balance between an ironic literary game steeped in parody and genuine socio-religious anxieties. Emphasis should probably be placed on the former.

<sup>73</sup> This line constitutes a topos and is reminiscent of line 8 of Abū Nuwās' *Da' 'an-ka lawmī* (*Dīwān Abī Nuwās*, p. 6): *dārat 'alā fityatīn dāna l-zamānu la-hum l fa-mā yuṣību-humū illā bi-mā ṣā'ū*.

<sup>74</sup> The situation is reminiscent to one described by Sperl in his discussion of Abū l-'Atāhiya (see Sperl, *Mannerism*, pp. 76–7).

'*Afā l-muṣallā*'<sup>75</sup> reversed the feature of a God-fearing society in which repentance comes after indulgence. As a poem it works by finding a literary mould in which to cast this reversal, namely the adaptation of the *aṭlāl* motif. Broadly, '*Afā l-muṣallā*' describes a transition from a life of erstwhile, youthful piety to indulgence implicit in the detailed description of wine which makes up the second half of the poem.<sup>76</sup> The use of motifs borrowed from the *nasīb* tradition underpins a mockery of both religion, which fades like the traces of a desert sand-dune, and the various ethical values instilled by the ancient poetry. The new order of religion (Islam) is placed alongside the old order inherent in the desert motifs; both are superseded by the celebration, in the putative present, of indulgence in wine. Some irony thus lies in this curious association between *muruwwa* and *dīn*:<sup>77</sup> (lines 1–2)

عَفَا الْمُصَلَّى وَأَقْوَتِ الْكُتُبُ      مَيِّىَ فَالْمِرْبَادِ فَالْلَبِّ  
فَالْمَسْجِدُ الْجَامِعُ الْمَرْوَةُ وَالْ      دَيْنَ عَفَا فَالصِّحَّانَ فَالرَّحَبُ

The prayer-place is now effaced of me [as are my old haunts], the sand dunes of the two markets of Mirbad and Labab—  
Faded [too] is the mosque which [once] brought together<sup>78</sup> noble qualities and religion, faded too are al-Ṣiḥān and al-Raḥab.

Rather than *muruwwa* giving way to *dīn* as one might expect in this period, both defer to the “mythical” realm of wine; this realm comes after a transitional 3-line passage (5–7) of *ḥikma*:

ثُمَّ أَرَابَ الزَّمَانَ فَاقْتَصَمُوا      أَيْدِي سَبَا فِي الْبِلَادِ فَانْشَعَبُوا  
لَنْ يُخْلِفَ الدَّهْرُ مِثْلَهُمْ أَبَدًا      عَلَى هَيْهَاتَ شَأْنِهِمْ عَجَبُ  
لَا تَيَقَّنْتُ أَنْ رَوْحَتَهُمْ      لَيْسَ لَهَا مَا حَيْثُ مُنْقَلَبُ

Then Time brought its afflictions [upon my companions who] dispersed through the land as had the [former] might of the Sabaeans.

<sup>75</sup> *Dīwān Abi Nuwās*, 3–5; ed. Wagner, pp. 29–35.

<sup>76</sup> The full Arabic text and translation of this poem is contained in Appendix B.

<sup>77</sup> The standard view amongst scholars appears to be that *muruwwa* was superseded by *dīn*: see Scheindlin, *Wine, Women and Death*, 29; Sperl *mannerism*, 80; see also the relevant remarks in Goldziher's *Muslim Studies*, vol. i. Bravmann is, to my knowledge, the only scholar to call into question this standard view; see *The Spiritual Background of Early Islam* (Leiden, 1972), 1–7.

<sup>78</sup> There is a pun on the word *jāmi'*, which whilst meaning “bringing together” also means “mosque”.

Fate will produce for me no others like them. Never! They were [friends at whom I] marvelled.

When I was sure that they would not return as long as I lived . . .

In the allotted space of the poem ancient *ḥikma* supersedes the authority of religion which is now as an eroded trace. The lines culminate in the poet's exhaustion of patience: *ablaytu ṣabran lam yubli-hi aḥadu* (line 9a). *Ṣabr*, of course, is part of *ḥilm*, and hence of *muruwwa*; it was also a quality lauded in the Qur'ān and therefore absorbed into the values of the new order, as can be seen from its frequent inclusion in the collage of values celebrated in the *zuhdiyyāt*.<sup>79</sup> The exhaustion of *ṣabr*, therefore, emphasizes the decline of *muruwwa* and *dīn*; the lost significance of religion is reiterated obliquely in the following verse:

كَذَاكَ لِي إِذَا رَزَيْتُ أَخَا      فَلَيْسَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَهُ نَسَبُ

If I am bereaved [by the death of] a brother, there is no longer any relationship [at all] between us.

Death is perceived through the filter of the old order, devoid of belief in the Hereafter. The line corroborates the spirit of ancient *ḥikma* expressed in 5–7, which underscores the justification for wine as the poem continues. Wine is vindicated through the loss of religion, which the poet has abandoned ('*afā l-muṣallā* . . . *minniya*), and the reconstituted validity of ancient *ḥikma* (*arāba l-zamān*).

There is an analysis of this poem by Abu Deeb which concentrates on the duality of *aṭlāl/al-khamra*.<sup>80</sup> It is a typically structuralist concern with binary opposition. Abu Deeb's duality is a contrast between Arab culture and Abū Nuwās' own—between the Arab/Bedouin world-view and his own bacchic and urban world-view:<sup>81</sup>

The Bacchic world (*al-kawn l-khamrī*) sets up an all encompassing replacement (*badīlan kāmīlan*) for the collapsed world (*al-kawn al-munhār*); [the

<sup>79</sup> *Waqāru l-ḥilmi yaqrā'u kulla jahlin l-wa-azmu l-ṣabri yanhadu bi-l-jalīli* (*Dīwān Abi l-'Atāhiya*, 336). The line celebrates *ṣabr* in a context which inherits the values of the *Jāhiliyya* (*ḥilm*); the following line, however, evinces a new pious sentiment: *aṣḥaḥa ḥādhā l-nāsu qālan wa-qīl l-fa-l-musta'ānu llāhu ṣabrun jamīl* (*Dīwān*, 332). The final phrase is borrowed from the Qur'ānic *fa-ṣabrun jamīlun* (see Qur'ān, 12/83).

<sup>80</sup> See *Jadaliyyat al-Khaḍā' wa-l-Tajallī* (Beirut, 1984), 218–28. This poem is also discussed briefly in M. M. Badawi's “From Primary to Secondary *Qaṣīda*”, *JAL* 11 (1980), 1–31.

<sup>81</sup> *Jadaliyyat*, 222.

latter] . . . has become effaced and disintegrated ('*afā wa-tafattata*), as for the new world it is a world of cohesion, strength and unity . . .

Abu Deeb perhaps goes too far, however, in seeing this "new world" as standing in contradistinction to the entirety of the old world. The other world of wine with its powerful images (the mother, the maiden, liquid and solid gold, the Christian images engraved on the goblet, the sky and the stars of wine and the pearls of the maidens) is a world stripped of time, but a world nevertheless governed by the context of the entire poem, most significantly by the temporal context of lines 5–10—the annihilation caused by Time. The contrast between the faded religion of the opening line and Christianity depicted on the goblet is not a vindication of a new/non-Arab world and must certainly, therefore, be explained differently: Abū Nuwās doubtlessly intends some kind of tension of values, but more importantly he simply accepts Christianity to be one of the contexts within which wine is celebrated and for which he preserves a certain objectivity—hence the phrase *yatlū-nā Injila-hum* (reciting *their* New Testament). There is an essentially timeless quality about the image, since Christianity represents a previous age which the new order accommodated.<sup>82</sup> The bacchic context is a paradoxical timelessness of the present and indulgence. In the final analysis the poem as a whole develops the sentiments expressed in the following anonymous line from the *Jāhiliyya* (quoted above, p. 87):

قومي اصبحني فإن الدهر ذو غير  
أقنى لقيماً وافى آل هيرماس

Come! give me a morning sip, for Fate is full of changes; it has  
destroyed Luqaym and destroyed Āl Hirmās.

The celebration of wine in the putative present of Abū Nuwās' poem (lines 10–25) is analogous to the phrase *qūmī šbahī-nī*; the initial assessment of Time's despoiling role (lines 1–9) is equivalent to *fa-inna l-dahra dhū għiyarin*. Indeed, in the traditional manner, Abū Nuwās evokes the past by mention of bygone legendary and historical luminaries: *arāba l-zamānu fa-qtasamū aydī sabā fī l-bilād*. In this context we should review the notion that Abū Nuwās' present in celebrating wine contrasts with the past of poets such as

<sup>82</sup> In the bacchic context Christianity also implies indulgence and sexual laxity; see J. E. Montgomery's "For the Love of a Christian Boy: A Song by Abū Nuwās", *JAL* 27/2 (1996).

al-A'šā. The compositions of all these poets are, however, an admixture of reminiscence and hope, description and vainglory through which they hint at a world-view. Abū Nuwās' view is different inasmuch as he sometimes allows the wine to fail him—he is thus led towards another form of solace. He internalizes into the wine scene the showdown between good and evil—the tension of values which is normally external to wine in the earliest poetry.<sup>83</sup>

In the wine poem time is often telescoped into a single moment. Abū Nuwās' poems, however, often survive the moment of indulgence and force him to face the relentless continuity of Time and Fate. If wine fails to console, the poet, with irony in his expression, embraces Islam (see Chapter 4). Indulgence thus surrenders itself to the chance outcome of good or evil; here the new order—Islam—emerges. The poet need not necessarily suffer; yet a given poem may be characterized by a tension derived from the cumulative depiction of pure wine and its less pure effects. Compare lines 4 and 9 (the final line) of a conventional "seduction" *khamriyya*:<sup>84</sup>

وَقَامَ إِلَى الَّتِي عَكَفَتْ عَلَيْهَا      بَنَاتُ الدَّهْرِ وَالزَّمَانِ الطَّوِيلِ

He [fetched] the [wine] to which the Daughters of Fate and Father  
Time had given themselves assiduously.

فَقَالَ الْآنَ تَأْمُرُنِي بِهَذَا      وَقَدْ عَلَقَتْ مَفَاصِلُ الشُّمُولِ

He said, "You order me to do this (scilicet, 'to give in to your  
advances') only now that wine has taken possession of my  
limbs!"

*Banāt al-dahr* is obliquely but conventionally equivalent to *al-šamūl*. The discernible hint that Fate is responsible for seduction is expressed more directly in *Yā Sāhīr al-Ṭarf*; in one poem Fate works through the wine, in the other it works pervasively. The latter mode is also apparent in the poem beginning *Wa-šāhibin zāna kulla muštaḥibin*, which builds up a momentum against

<sup>83</sup> Having said this we should add that the seeds of Abū Nuwās' realistic depictions of sordid indulgence and the effects of wine are foreshadowed in al-A'šā's line—as discussed earlier: (poem 10, line 13) *la-'amru-ka inna l-rāḥa in kunta sā'ilan* | *la-mukhtalifun għadiyyu-hā wa-'išātu-hā*.

<sup>84</sup> *Dīwān*, 135.

conservative decorum—it is a 10-line *khamriyya* given principally to praise of a boon companion: (p. 137)

يُنَمَى إِذَا انْتَمَى إِلَى الْيَمَنِ	وصاحب زان كل مضطجيب
يُبْذَلُ فِي الْخَمْرِ أَفْضَلَ الثَّمَنِ	أزوع محمودة خلائقه
مَعْدِنُ بَذَلٍ يَهْتَرُ لِلْمَنِ	بدتر ظلام غياث مجديبة
قَرْمٌ يُرْجَى لِحَادِثِ الزَّمَنِ	مُهَذَّبٌ مَاجِدٌ أَنْحُو كَرَمِ
مُعْمِلُ كَأْسٍ بِالْخَلْعِ لِلرَّسَنِ	دَوْمًا تَرَاهُ قَتِيلَ غَايَةِ
وَعُرَّةُ الصُّبْحِ بَعْدَ لَمْ تَبِنِ	نَادِيَتُهُ وَالظَّلَامُ مُنْسَدِلِ
تَطَرَّدَ عَنَّا عَسَاكِرُ الْحَزَنِ	قُمْ يَا خَلِيلِي إِلَى الْمُدَامِ لَكِي
تَكَادُ تَحْفَى عَلَى الْفَتَى الْفَطَنِ	فَلَمْ يُجِنِّي إِلَّا بَلَجَلَجَةِ
حَتَّى انْجَلَى عَنْهُ عَارِضُ الْوَسَنِ	فَلَمْ أَزَلْ بِالرَّهَى أُعْلِلُهُ
يَا رِيحُ مَا تَصْنَعِينَ بِالْذِمَنِ	ثُمَّ تَعْنَى عَلَيْهِ مِنْ طَرَبِ

I often remember [my] friend of Yemeni descent who was a [veritable] adornment to the company of morning tipplers. [He was] terrific and had qualities to be lauded, [always] spending the most extravagant sum on wine. He was a full moon in the darkness, a succour of rain to arid land. [Truly he had in his make up] the very ore of generosity, for he would shake [with eagerness to indulge one] with favours. [He was] refined and noble, a man of virtue, a leader from whom much was expected against the [incessant] railing of Time. You would continuously see him slain by beautiful women, then wielding the cup [of wine] to loosen the reins [of decorum]. I called upon him [once], when darkness' veil had enveloped [us]—the bright spot of dawn had still to appear—Up! my friend, go to the wine that you might put flight to legions of sorrow. He replied [to this] only with a stammer [and was] almost unintelligible even to an intuitive man. So I continued to give him a second draught [whilst muttering] magic charms, until the cloud of his slumber cleared, Then he sang from emotion despite the wine [*'alay-hi*], "O wind! what is it that you do with desert traces?"

The poem alludes pointedly to the constituent parts of formal *madīḥ*: lineage (1b: *yunnā idhā ntamā ilā l-Yamani*) and

exaggerated generosity (2b: *yabdhulu fī l-khamri afḍala l-thamani* and 3a: *giyāthu mujdibatin*); in the fourth line the noble companion is praised as a guardian against Time and Fate. These create a backdrop for the poem. The sardonic sentiments of Abū Nuwās emerge in the following line; for the man who has been lauded as a shield from Time, is himself described as *qatīl ghāniyatin* (5a), then babbling and unintelligible (*lam yujib-nī illā bi-lajlajatin*). Having been described as *muhadhdhabun mājidun akhū karamin* (line 4) the companion is now the very antithesis to *al-fatā l-fatīn* (an intelligent young man, line 8). The behaviour of the companion is part of the reality of the situation—a sleepy man at dawn is scarcely in possession of his full mental and social faculties. But the evident contrast that emerges in the resulting tableau may point to a contrived literary irony which culminates in the final hemistich: "O wind! what is it that you do with desert traces?" Here treatment, though only in quotation, of the oldest identifiable topic of poetry gives voice to a bewildered naivety that has various layers of significance.

The poem effectively dedicates a celebration of the effects of Time to the very man who "is hoped for against the effects of Time" (*yurajjā li-ḥādithi l-zamani*). It is principally an accelerated thematic inversion of the standard *madīḥ* progression, which in a formal ode might assume the following pattern:

*Nasīb/Aṭlāl*→[cure of *ḥazan* in *takhalluṣ*]→*Madīḥ*: (lineage, generosity, controller of Fate/Time—these qualities contrast with destruction at *aṭlāl*).<sup>85</sup>

Whilst clearly it is an integral, lyrical *khamriyya* Abū Nuwās' poem alludes to and inverts this pattern.

<i>Madīḥ</i> : →	Aspects of <i>Ghazal</i> →	<i>Aṭlāl</i>
(lineage,	( <i>qatīl ghāniyatin</i> )	
generosity (in <i>khamr</i> ),		
fertility,		
controller of Time/Fate)		

This inversion is an amusing affirmation of the role of Fate which preserves the ancient gnomic backdrop of wine poetry. In other poems only when there is progression towards *istighfār* or *tauba* is the old order qualified by the new (see Chapter 4). Though even

<sup>85</sup> See Sperl, "Islamic Kingship and Arabic Poetry in the Early Ninth Century", *JAL* 8 (1977), 22.

here Abū Nuwās finds religion only in a manner that is palatable to his literary genius.

Like Abū Nuwās' *'Afā l-Muṣallā*, Abū l-'Atāhiya's *Li-man ṭalalun*<sup>86</sup> makes use of topics and motifs inherited from the *jāhili* corpus. However, *Li-man ṭalalun* is a pious poem. It is interesting also that the treatment of and attitude to death in this *zuhdiyya* is essentially distinct from what we have already found in al-Akhṭal's *Fi l-ḥayāt wa-l-mawt*. Sperl writes referring to the second half of Abū l-'Atāhiya's poem: "The poet starts with a vision of his own grave (21-4) . . . [this] description . . . leads him to remember all those who have already been interred . . . Lines 34 and 35 conclude with the contemplation of man's mortality . . . [paving] the way for the last three lines [which] disclose the only manner in which he lives: to be aware of the existence of God":<sup>87</sup>

لَيَعْلَمَ كُلُّ ذِي أَمَلٍ      بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ سَائِلُهُ  
فَأَسْرِعْ فَأْتِرًا بِالْخَيْرِ      بِرِ قَائِلُهُ وَقَائِلُهُ

Let all who hope know that God will call them to account.  
So make haste to goodness in both word and deed.

The poem is distinctly new/*muḥdath* by virtue of the simplicity of the language and style<sup>88</sup>—particularly the parallel phraseology that commands whole sections and the extended use of *anaphora*<sup>89</sup> in lines 26-33. Yet the poem draws on the ancient language in a conspicuous fashion, delaying the transmutation of the old order into the new until the final two lines. Consider how the poem begins: (line 1)

لَمَنْ طَلَّلَ أَسَائِلُهُ      مُعْطَلَةٌ مَنَازِلُهُ

Whose are these traces that [I sit and] question—barefaced  
encampments of [yesterday].

The phrase *li-man ṭalalun* is a cliché—Abū Nuwās himself begins one of his finest wine poems with these words.<sup>90</sup> For both poets the tradition of poetry represented by this phrase was a conservative one which they adapted to effect a conscious and mutual antago-

<sup>86</sup> *Dīwān Abī l-'Atāhiya*, 363-5.

<sup>87</sup> Sperl, *Mannerism in Arabic Poetry*, 83.

<sup>88</sup> Abū l-'Atāhiya was accused for this reason of having a "pedestrian" or "common" style.

<sup>89</sup> This feature is typical of homiletic poetry.

<sup>90</sup> This poem is discussed in detail in Ch. 3 (see "*Li-Man Ṭalalun*").

nism of attitudes. In the poem under scrutiny the articulation of a pious attitude is enacted in stages for at the outset there is nothing specifically religious about the depiction of Fate; indeed it is quite consonant with *jāhili* sentiments: (lines 4-5)

وَكُلُّ لَاعْتِسَافِ الدَّهْرِ      بِرِ مُعَرَّضَةٌ مَقَاتِلُهُ  
وَمَا مُمْتَلِكُ إِلَّا      وَرَيْبُ الدَّهْرِ شَامِلُهُ

The vulnerable spots of each one [of us] are exposed to Fate's  
uncaring assaults.

There is no man in possession of wealth who is not [himself]  
possessed by the uncertainty of Fate.

In the latter half of the poem certain images are adapted to express the new order: in line 22 the grave is described as *manzil*, echoing the opening line in which *manāzil* retain their conventional meaning. This transformed signification of the word correspondingly alters the meaning of another familiar image: *ba'īdu tajāwuri l-jirāni* (line 23). Here the poet bewails not the departure of a neighbouring tribe but the death of acquaintances. Line 34, where death is described as the "cutting of ropes", involves a similar process of altered significance; as the poem evolves, death sets up a filter that articulates the pious sentiments which first appear in line 21:

أَلَا فَانْظُرْ لِنَفْسِكَ أَيَّ      زَادَ أَنْتَ حَامِلُهُ

Look at yourself and [examine] what provisions of [pious deeds]  
you will carry [to Judgement Day].

In relation to the manner in which the poem begins, this line performs a qualitative leap, moving into a mode of introspective cogitation exclusive to religious experience. By signalling life after death the line adumbrates the religious championing which concludes the poem, delivering a message after death's vivid tableau.

#### *Abū l-'Atāhiya and Traditional Imagery*

The two poems of Abū l-'Atāhiya discussed thus far simply borrow the *qaṣīda* model in reproducing some of the imagery of ancient poetry. A detailed look at his *dīwān* will show that this process (the reworking of imagery) operates more pervasively; that is, it can also be found in shorter poems which only distantly echo the *qaṣīda* model.

The kind of imagery we are concerned with is also to be found in the bacchic verse of Abū Nuwās (e.g. in *ʿAfā l-muṣallā*), who effects a stance diametrically opposed to his pious counterpart. Understanding this common ground may help us in turn to understand the way in which the poetry had developed, and was still developing, in the light of poetic antecedents, and also to understand how, despite Islam, there was at this time a two-tiered view of transcendence which was given conflicting voices in the emerging canon of genres.

(i) A short 6-line *zuhdiyya*<sup>21</sup> treats ancient motifs of the sort one can find in the poetry of ʿAdī ibn Zayd (d. c. 600). Abū l-ʿAtāhiya beholds the graves of the dead and contemplates life's finality (there is no expressly Islamic piety): (line 1)

مَا لِلْمَقَابِرِ لَا تُجِيبُ      إِذَا دَعَاهُنَّ الْكَثِيبُ  
Why will the graves not answer when beckoned by a broken-  
hearted wretch.

This is reminiscent of contemplation at the *aṭlāl*, which never answer their soulful observer. The last three lines treat a corollary motif: separation (*furqa*), thus further alluding to the repertory of the *nasīb*: (line 4)

كَمْ مِنْ حَبِيبٍ لَمْ تَكُنْ      نَفْسِي بِفُرْقَتِهِ تَطِيبُ  
Many are the loved ones [after] whose departure I have found no  
joy.

In line 6 the poet finds solace (*salawtu ʿan-hu*) by looking forward to life after death:

سَلَوْتُ عَنْهُ وَإِنَّا      عَهْدِي بِرُؤْيَيْهِ قَرِيبُ  
I consoled myself [from thoughts about him], for the time when I  
will see him again is close at hand.

Separation is an ancient archetype, reunion in the afterlife constitutes a new pious outlook.

(ii) In another poem<sup>22</sup> Abū l-ʿAtāhiya introduces cogitations about life's finality with the *diyār* motif:

كَأَنِّي بِالْأَيَّامِ قَدْ خَرَبْتُ      وَبِالدُّمُوعِ الْغَرَارِ قَدْ سَكَبْتُ  
It is as if I have [suffered] with the destruction of a deserted  
encampment and the copious tears that have been shed.

<sup>21</sup> See *Dīwān Abī l-ʿAtāhiya*, 48.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 71.

In the singular *dār* often refers to the mortal world (synonymous with *al-dunyā*). Abū l-ʿAtāhiya questions the value of nostalgia which seeks (in the ancient poetry) to resurrect past pleasures and gain sustenance from them: (line 13)

وَأَيُّ عَيْشٍ وَالْعَيْشُ مُنْقَطِعٌ      وَأَيُّ طَعْمٍ لِلذَّاتِ ذَهَبَتْ  
What life is there when life will only cease, and what flavour is  
there in pleasures that have passed.

Hence his critique: (14)

وَيْحَ عُقُولِ الْمُسْتَعْصِمِينَ بِدِ      أَرِ الذِّلَّةَ فِي أَيِّ مَنْشَبٍ تَشَبَّتْ  
Woe to minds which hold fast to the abode of humiliation,  
clinging to any hook [they can find].

The desolation of the *diyār* (whose signification is transformed) invites not consolation, through pleasures and nostalgia, but the eschewal of pleasures.

(iii) As in example (i) Abū l-ʿAtāhiya ponders the message offered by the grave:<sup>23</sup>

أَخَوَيَّ مُرًّا بِالْقُبُورِ      وَسَلِّمَا قَبْلَ الْمَسِيرِ  
My two brothers, pass closely by these tombstones, and greet  
them before you go.

The poet is sensitive to the topos of visiting a deserted site and also of the convention in which two companions are invited to behold the scene and take stock.<sup>24</sup> Also reminiscent of the *dhikr al-aṭlāl* is the salutation topos: *sallimā qabla l-masīr*. Sustaining the association between his own manner of contemplation and the distant language of *nasīb/ghazal* the poet states: *ahlu l-qubūri aḥibbatī*. Whilst the cogitations of this poem are typical of Abū l-ʿAtāhiya's *dīwān*, they do not yet function in the poetry as a preface to *zuhd* or Islamic piety. The poem simply creates a contrast between the pleasures of life and death: (lines 9 and 12)

بَعْدَ الْمَشَاهِدِ وَالْمَجَا      لِسِ وَالْعَسَاكِرِ وَالْقُصُورِ  
أَصْبَحْتُمْ تَحْتَ التُّرَى      بَيْنَ الصَّفَائِحِ وَالصُّخُورِ

Having [once attended] battles, councils and palaces . . .  
You now lie under earth, amongst tombstones and rocks.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 169.

<sup>24</sup> See the opening line of Imru'ū l-Qays' *Mu'allaqa*.



(iv) The 12-line *dāliyya*, *Lā qarāra fī l-dunyā*,<sup>95</sup> preserves the old order of reflection, reworking the images of ancient poetry whilst simplifying the language and lexicon. The *diyār* motif is treated in the singular in the first line—as elsewhere *dār* signifies the mortal world:

إِنَّ دَارًا نَحْنُ فِيهَا لَدَارٌ      لَيْسَ فِيهَا لِمُقِيمٍ قَرَارٌ

The abode in which we [live] is one that has no stability for one who would [seek to] stay.

Those who have alighted there have been removed by diurnal Fate (*al-Jadīdān*). The provenance of the motif in the canon of poetry is preserved in the desert/bedouin imagery of line 3:

فَهُمُ الرِّكَبُ أَصَابُوا مَنَاخًا      فَاسْتَرَاخُوا سَاعَةً ثُمَّ سَارُوا

[The dead] are riders who [once] found [in this world] a kneeling spot [for their camels]—they rested a while then moved on.

*Nasīb* imagery continues in lines 4 and 5b:

وَهُمُ الْأَحْبَابُ كَانُوا وَلَكِنْ      قَدِمَ الْعَهْدُ وَشَطَّ الْمَزَارُ  
.... لَيْتَ شِعْرِي كَيْفَ هُمْ حَيْثُ صَارُوا

They [were] loved ones [once], but this time has past and now the place where [we can] visit them is a distant spot.  
... would that I knew what has become of them.

The transformed significance of the *diyār* motif is more clearly articulated in line 8:

وَكَذَا الدُّنْيَا عَلَى مَا رَأَيْنَا      يَذْهَبُ النَّاسُ وَتَخْلُو الدِّيَارُ

Such is the world as we have seen it, people move on and homes are abandoned.

Again in this poem there is no progression towards an overt attitude of piety—a purely Islamic sentiment is at the most only implicit. The poem resolves its message as knowledge and certainty—part of *ḥilm*: (line 12)

فَاعْلَمْ وَأَسْتَيْقِنَنَّ أَنَّهُ لَا      بُدَّ يَوْمًا أَنْ يُرَدُّ الْمُعَارُ

Know and be sure that one day [the time] you have borrowed must needs be returned.

(v) A 10-line poem<sup>96</sup> of admonishment (*bādir bi-jiddi-ka qabla an*

<sup>95</sup> *Dīwān Abi l-'Atāhiya*, 182.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.* 210.

*taqdī*)<sup>97</sup> consciously transforms an ancient motif in the final three lines: *na'y* (remoteness/separation) is not the *na'y* of the *nasīb* but the *na'y* of death—the remoteness of the living from the dead. The final line warns the addressee of the poem that he will alight at an abode where the treasures of this life (religious piety—sometimes termed figuratively *zād*/provisions) will be needed:

فَلْتَنْزِلَنَّ بِمَنْزِلٍ      نَحْتَاجُ فِيهِ إِلَى إِذْخَارِكِ

You will surely arrive at a place where you will need the savings of your piety.

(vi) A variant of Abū l-'Atāhiya's *murrā bi-l-qubūr* is the 5-line poem beginning:<sup>98</sup>

سَلَامٌ عَلَى أَهْلِ الْقُبُورِ الدَّوَارِسِ      كَأَنَّهُمْ لَمْ يَجْلِسُوا فِي الْمَجَالِسِ

Greetings to those that dwell in these effaced tombs, [it is hard to believe] they ever sat in the company of men.

The poet greets the tombs in a manner similar to, for the sake of example, Ibn 'Arabī's *Salāmun 'alā Salmā wa-man ḥalla bi-l-ḥimā*<sup>99</sup> (a line consciously born of the ancient tradition). Furthermore, the first three lines treat another ancient topos: "it is as if they had never indulged in their lives". In Imru'ū l-Qays, similar wording (*ka-anna-hum/ka-annī lam* etc.) in the depiction of erstwhile indulgence encouraged the consummation of ephemeral pleasures; Abū l-'Atāhiya concludes contrarily towards a new order of wisdom:

فَلَوْ عَقَلَ الْمَرْءُ الْمُتَنَفِّسُ فِي الدُّنْيَا      تَرَكَتُمْ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا إِذْنًا لَمْ يُنَافِسْ

If the man who strives to acquire the wealth you left behind in this world were to become wise he would cease this striving.

(vii) In another poem<sup>100</sup> Abū l-'Atāhiya explains his use of the word *dār* by denying its normal significance: (line 5)

فَلَيْسَتْ الدَّارُ دَارًا لَا تَرَى أَحَدًا      مِنْ أَهْلِهَا نَاصِحًا لَمْ يَعُدَّهُ غَرَضُ

The abode [I refer to] is not one whose inhabitants, heedless [of spirituality], insist on some [worldly] goal.

The same poem uses *raḥīl* to signify death (line 11).

<sup>97</sup> Significantly, *bādir* is usually the imperative which invites indulgence.

<sup>98</sup> *Dīwān*, 225.

<sup>99</sup> See *The Tarjumān al-Aṣwāq*, ed. Reynold A. Nicholson, p. 16, poem 4, line 1a.

<sup>100</sup> *Dīwān*, 238.

(viii) A further 7-line poem<sup>101</sup> is introduced by four motifs common to the opening *nasib*: the greeting; the farewell; tearful eyes; the parting:<sup>102</sup>

عَلَيْكُمْ سَلَامُ اللَّهِ إِنِّي مُودِّعٌ وَعَيْنَايَ مِنْ مَضَى التَّفَرُّقِ تَدْمَعُ  
 God's peace be upon you, I am saying farewell whilst my eyes  
 weep at the severity of departure.

The wording of the initial greeting (*salāmu llāhi*) signals the piety which underscores the whole poem. The depredations of Fate in line 3 (*raybu l-dahr/maniyya*) are subsumed by the message of line 6: *tabāraka man lā yamliku l-mulka ghayru-hu*. Just as Abū l-'Atāhiya transforms the ancient language in the first line, so the old order (*raybu l-dahr*) progresses towards a new order of religious contemplation—the dynamics of this thematic progression will be illustrated in greater detail in the ensuing section.

(ix) A short, four line poem,<sup>103</sup> uses images and vocabulary familiar to us from *ghazal*: *hibāl* (the ropes of union) and *awṣāl*, plus the verbs *darasa* and *tafarraqa*; that these are consciously borrowed from traditional love poetry is inferred from the description of the dead man as beyond the reach of his beloved: (2b) *walā lufu l-ḥabibi yanālu-hu*. A similar borrowing (the motif of insomnia/araq) is to be found in the first line of an extensive *zuhdiyya*:<sup>104</sup>

إِنِّي أَرَقْتُ وَذَكَرْتُ الْمَوْتَ أَرَقْتِي وَقُلْتُ لِلدَّمَعِ أَسْعِدْنِي وَأَسْعِدْنِي

Remembrance of death caused my insomnia but my tears  
 consoled me at my behest.

Whilst these examples demonstrate clearly a borrowing of traditional imagery they remain details in an extensive *dīwān* which normally preserves a distinctly Islamic language of piety, often

<sup>101</sup> *Dīwān*, 247.

<sup>102</sup> A similar example exists in an extensive *zuhdiyya* (p. 329): *sallim 'alā l-dunyā salāma muwaddi'in | wa-rḥal fa-qad nūḍita bi-l-tirḥālī*. The *raḥīl/tirḥāl* is itself another commonplace (see p. 333): *tazawwadan li-l-mawṭi zādan fa-qad | nādā munādi-hi l-raḥila l-raḥīl*. We can also substantiate the use of *dār* in conjunction with *firāq* and *raḥīl*: (p. 335) *la-'amru-ka mā l-dunyā bi-dārin li-ahli-hā | wa-law 'aqalū kānū jamī'an 'alā raḥli || wa-inmā la-fi dāri l-firāqi fa-lan tarā | bi-hā aḥadan mā 'āsa mujtami'a l-šamli*. In another example Abū l-'Atāhiya's warning of *raḥīl* progresses to an admonishment of a clearly Islamic tenor (*qaṣḍu l-sabīl*): *a-lā yā 'āṣiqa l-dunyā l-mu'annā | ka-anna-ka qad du'ita ilā l-raḥīli || a-mā tanfakku min šahawāti nafsin | taḥidu bi-hinna 'an qaṣḍi l-sabīli*.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. 369.  
<sup>104</sup> Ibid. 444. See also (Ibid. 483): *li-abkiyanna 'alā nafsī fa-tus'idu-nī | 'aymun mu'arraqtatun tabkī li-furqatīyah*.

drawing on the Qur'ānic lexicon. The elements observed may easily pass unnoticed given the *dīwān*'s emphatically pious tenor. However, it is important to bear in mind, especially in the progression from *ḥikma* to *zuhd* which the poems sometimes display, that Abū l-'Atāhiya was keenly aware of the tradition of poetry within which he was establishing another genre.

### Mubādara in Abū l-'Atāhiya

Before analysing the dynamics of pious expression (in which *al-dahr* plays a role) we should determine to what extent Abū l-'Atāhiya endorsed the simple notion of *mubādara*. Examine the final two lines of a 5-line poem:

إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ طَوَّلَ عُمْرِكَ مَا عُمِرَ تَ فِي السَّاعَةِ الَّتِي أَنْتَ فِيهَا  
 كَيْسَ فِيهَا مَضَى وَلَا فِي الْأَذَى لَمْ يَبَاتَ مِنْ لَذَّةٍ لِيُسْتَحْلَى

Throughout your life you exist solely at the hour of your  
 existence—

There is no pleasure—for those who find pleasure sweet—in what  
 has past and what has yet to come.

He understood the hedonist's attitude, but highlighted his own ambivalence by placing these lines after a sententious caution: (line 3)

عَلَّلِ النَّفْسَ بِالْكَفَافِ وَإِلَّا طَلَبْتَ مِنْكَ فَوْقَ مَا يَكْفِيهَا

Give your soul a draught of abstinence or it will ask more from  
 you than it needs.

There is a 7-line *tā'iyya* that also shows ambivalence. The first line sets out the view of the ancients as it was inherited by the hedonistic verse of his contemporaries:<sup>105</sup>

لِمَا لَا تُبَادِرُ مَا نَرَاهُ يَفُوتُ إِذْ نَحْنُ نَعْلَمُ أَنَّنَا سَنَمُوتُ

Why do we not hasten to indulge in that which [is soon] to perish,  
 for we know that we too will perish?

The poet does not, however, allow his audience to arrive at an excuse for indulgence, for the following verse answers the question by drawing in the Islamic context of his world view: "He who has not sought God's help and that of his Messengers . . . is the ward

<sup>105</sup> *Dīwān*, 70.

of Satan.” Abū l-‘Atāhiya goes on to direct his satire at the ‘*ulamā*’—implying ironically those who claim ‘*ilm*’ in the justification of their indulgence: (line 4) “They are all deceived [by the pleasures] of this world (*al-dunyā*).” In another fragment we find no Islamic filter:<sup>106</sup>

إِسْمَعْ فَقَدْ أَذْنُكَ الصَّوْتُ      إِنَّ لَمْ تُبَادِرْ فَهُوَ الْفَوْتُ  
خُذْ كُلَّ مَا شِئْتَ وَعِشْ آمِنًا      آخِرَ هَذَا كُلِّهِ الْمَوْتُ

Listen, my voice gives you licence, if you do not hasten (*in lam tubdir*) [to fulfil your desires] all will pass;  
Take what you will, and live securely; the end-result of all this is Death.

Where Abū l-‘Atāhiya was able to develop his sentiments he displayed the anxiety of being caught between desires and a sense of propriety:<sup>107</sup>

أَلَا مَنْ لَتَفْسَى بِالْهَوَى قَدْ تَادَتْ      إِذَا قُلْتُ قَدْ مَالَتْ عَنِ الْجَهْلِ عَادَتْ  
وَحَسْبُ امْرِئٍ شَرًّا بِإِهْوَائِهِ نَفْسِهِ      وَإِمَّا كَانَهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ أَرَادَتْ  
تَزَاهَدْتُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَإِنِّي لَرَاغِبٌ      أَرَى رَغْبَتِي مَمْزُوجَةً بِزَهَادَتِي

Who will assist my soul which yearns for love. Though I claim that it has shunned ignorance (*jahl*) [I find] it has [already] returned (i.e. relapsed).

There is enough evil for a man when he neglects his soul and fulfils its every desire.

[So] I have tried to eschew [the pleasures of this] world whilst desiring them—my desire is now mixed with my pious abstinence.

The tenor of the *dūwān* as a whole thus sets itself against the old world-view:<sup>108</sup>

عَجَبًا لِامْرِئٍ تَيَقَّنَ أَنَّ الـ      مَوْتَ حَقًّا فَقَرَّرَ بِالْعَيْشِ عَيْنًا

I marvel at a man who, when certain that death is an [inescapable] truth, is then happy with life [as opposed to the next life].

It is precisely this attitude that is a stepping-stone to a more overt piety.

<sup>106</sup> *Dūwān*, 94.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid. 89.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. 417.

### A Pious Dynamic: Al-Dahr→Zuhd<sup>109</sup>/Dīn/Islām

God and *al-dahr* both individually represent transcendence and for many it was easy to identify *al-dahr* with God. Broadly, however, the two represent a distinction between a positive spirituality, for which man is rewarded in the Hereafter, and the negative afflictions to which man is subjected in mortal life. Thus whilst *al-dahr* is transcendent its domain is restricted to mortal life. The Qur’ānic criticism of the *dahriyyūn* in *Sūrat al-Jāthiya* is a criticism of those who believe only in this life (*dunyā*) and for whom death marks the end of a finite existence. There are a number of examples in Abū l-‘Atāhiya’s poetry which illustrate the distinct identities of God and Fate:<sup>110</sup>

أَقُولُ لِرَبِّبِ الدَّهْرِ إِنْ ذَهَبَتْ يَدُ      فَقَدْ بَقِيَتْ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ لِي يَدُ

I say to Fate’s affliction, if one hand goes thank God another hand remains.

أَيَا نَفْسُ أَنْتَ الدَّهْرُ فِي حَالٍ غَفْلَةٍ      وَلَيْسَتْ صُرُوفُ الدَّهْرِ غَافِلَةً عَنْكَ  
أَيَا نَفْسُ كَمْ لِي عَنْكَ مِنْ يَوْمٍ صَرَعَةٍ      إِلَى اللَّهِ أَشْكُو مَا أَعْلَجَهُ مِنْكَ

My soul! You are in a constant state of negligence, [though] Fate’s vicissitudes do not neglect you.

My soul! You have caused me many deaths—I complain to God about what I must deal with from you.

خَيْرُ سَبِيلِ الْمَالِ تَفْرِيقُهُ      فِي طَاعَةِ اللَّهِ وَتَمْرِيقُهُ  
وَالدَّهْرُ لَا يُبْقِي عَلَى أَهْلِهِ      تَغْرِيبُهُ طَوْرًا وَتَشْرِيقُهُ

The best thing to do with money is to dissipate it and scatter it in obedience to God.

For Fate leaves no [wealthy man] alive . . . East or West.

The following three lines, which treat *al-dahr* in conjunction with *dīn*, also delineate distinct levels of perception:<sup>111</sup>

مَنْ جَعَلَ الدَّهْرَ عَلَى بَالِهِ      أَمْ بِهِ أَفْرَعَ أَهْوَالِهِ  
وَحَطَّ بَعْدَ سَمَوٍ بِهِ      قَصْرًا إِلَى أَخْبَثِ أَحْوَالِهِ  
قَدْ يُغْبِنُ الْإِنْسَانُ فِي دِينِهِ      جَهْلًا وَلَا يُغْبِنُ فِي مَالِهِ

<sup>109</sup> For a discussion of this important Islamic ethical concept see Leah Kinberg’s “What Is Meant by *Zuhd*?”, *Studia Islamica* 61 (1985), 27–44.

<sup>110</sup> *Dūwān Abi l-‘Atāhiya*, 158, 300, and 292.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid. 368.

The first hemistich is ambiguous: it can either be taken as an admonishment: "He who preoccupies himself with *al-dahr* [as he should], will indeed experience its terrors . . ."; it may also signify that preoccupation with *al-dahr* is distinct from religious piety: "He who considers no other thing [transcendent] but *al-dahr* will experience its depredations"; there is a sense that *al-dahr* stands apart from *dīn*, hence: "In awe of Fate Man may be beguiled through ignorance (*jahl*) [to the detriment of] his religion (*dīni-hi*)".

In discussion of the *zuhdiyyāt* scholars have not made clear the distinction between two separate categories of Abū l-'Atāhiya's gnomic output, namely: (i) those poems whose didacticism merely repeats ancient *ḥikma* (in these poems any admonishment towards religious piety or atonement remains at most implicit), and (ii) those poems which are manifestly Islamic in both language and message. Many poems, however, combine both categories. In these the material is often arranged as a progression from the old *gnōmē* to the new Islamic order. This can be highlighted by focusing upon the treatment of *al-dahr* on the one hand and *dīn* on the other. The most significant conclusion that can be drawn is that whilst *al-dahr* preserved a distinct resonance from Islamic motifs, it could be made to assist the articulation of a pious attitude.

(i) The first two lines of a 7-line *zuhdiyya*<sup>113</sup> schematize the changing preoccupations that are concomitant with the progression from *ṣabāb* to *ṣayb*. Realization of *ṣayb* provides the impetus for the assumption of *ḥilm*, and contrasts the fulfilment of youthful passions. Hence the following two lines are consonant with ancient values:

لَا حَ شَيْبُ الرِّاسِ مِنِّي فَاتَّضَحَ      بَعْدَ لَهْوٍ وَشَبَابٍ وَمَرَحَ  
فَلَهَوْنَا وَفَرِحْنَا ثُمَّ لَمْ      يَدْعِ الْمَوْتُ لِذِي اللَّبِّ فَرَحَ

Hoariness has appeared in my [hair] after pleasure, youth, and gaiety.

We used to play and be merry, [now] death gives no man of intellect licence for happiness.

The phrase *dhū l-lubb* could describe a man of *ḥilm* (a man who preserves his integrity through his mental faculties: 'aql, 'ilm, etc.); it also introduces the Islamic tenor of the poem, for the phrase is simply the singular of the Qur'ānic *ulū l-albāb*, which describes the

<sup>113</sup> *Dīwān Abi l-'Atāhiya*, 118.

intellect of those who hearken to religious guidance. Thus whilst the two lines are born of the ancient poetry, they serve to introduce the celebration of the Islamic order. Indeed the following two lines establish the liturgical quality of the poem:

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ صُونُوا دِينَكُمْ      يَنْبَغِي لِلدِّينِ أَنْ لَا يُطْرَحَ  
وَاحْمَدُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي أَكْرَمَكُمْ      بِنَذِيرٍ قَامَ فِيكُمْ فَتَضَحَ

O sons of Adam! Preserve your religion for religion should not be cast aside.

And praise God who has shown you generosity [by] sending you someone to warn you and give you advice.

The lines address *Banū Ādam* generally, not the members of any specific Arab tribe; they stress *dīn* and are cast from vocabulary compatible with the language of the Qur'ān. The poem is said to be in praise of the son of Harūn al-Rašīd. However it also praises Islam since *madh* is wholly dependent upon purely Islamic values: *birr*, *taqwā*, and *khayr*.

(ii) A 10-line *zuhdiyya*<sup>114</sup> (*rā'iyya*) is introduced by two lines which treat of the depredations of *al-dahr*. Man is foolish if he trusts in *al-dahr* which destroys even kings who would be immortal (line 2). *al-Dahr*'s negative force is expressed through the roots *makr* and *jazr* (treachery and butchery); those who trust in *al-dahr* (*ya'man*—the same root as *īmān*) will not achieve immortality (*yukhallad*—from the root *khuld*, which is promised by Islam). *al-Dahr* stands, therefore, through a linguistic subtlety, in contradistinction to Islam. In line 3 the poet takes refuge in *ṣabr* and *tawakkul*. Qur'ānic vocabulary is further used: (line 8)

أَرَى الْيَأْسَ مِنْ أَنْ تَسْأَلَ النَّاسَ رَاحَةً      ثُمِّتُ بِهَا عُسْرًا وَتُحْيِي بِهَا يُسْرًا  
I see it as an act of despair to ask people for pleasure that might kill off hardship and resurrect ease.

Whilst the line is a critique of false paths to *yusr* (indulgence in the face of *al-dahr*), it implies the true nature of *yusr* (reward through *ṣabr* and *tawakkul*).<sup>114</sup>

(iii) The progression of *al-dahr* towards Islam provides the pulse of a 6-line *zuhdiyya*<sup>115</sup> in which the transition is played out twice:

(a) The pessimistic acknowledgement of death in line 1a (*kullu*

<sup>114</sup> *Dīwān Abi l-'Atāhiya*, 185.

<sup>115</sup> Though it is to be found in pre-Islamic poetry the dichotomy of 'usr and yusr is also important in the Qur'ān; see Qur'ān, 94/4–5. <sup>115</sup> *Dīwān*, 201.

*ḥayātīn fa-la-hā muddatun*) leads to praise of God in lines 2–3: *subḥāna man alhama-nī ḥamda-hu*. Life's finality contrasts God's eternity (line 3): *man huwa l-dā'imu fī mulki-hi*.

(b) Lines 4–5 address a man, who perceiving himself free from the restraints of religious injunctions (4b, *laysa la-hu nāhin wa-lā āmirū*), counters Fate through pleasures: (4a) *yā qāṭi'a l-dahri bi-ladhdhātī-hi*. The "arrow of Death" will not fail to reach him (*atā-ka yā maghrūru saḥmu l-radā*). Against this brief vignette of the hedonist's futile rebellion Abū l-'Atāhiya declares his own pious servility (line 5):

يَا رَبِّ إِنِّي لَكَ فِي كُلِّ مَا قَدَرْتُ عَبْدٌ آمِلٌ شَاكِرٌ

O Lord! I am your hopeful and grateful servant in all that you decree.

He pleads for forgiveness (6a): *fa-ghfir dhunūbī inna-hā jammatun*.

(iv) The 6-line 'ayniyya,<sup>116</sup> *al-Diyār al-mahjūra*, is a good example of ancient imagery being filtered through a new message: the first four lines treat the *diyār* and lead to a pious conclusion: (line 1)

عُجَّ بِالْمَعَالِمِ وَالرُّبُوعِ وَاسْتَلَّ بِهِنَّ عَنِ الرَّجُوعِ

Make a detour to [old] traces and haunts and ask them about the Return.

In conventional fashion Abū l-'Atāhiya beckons his friend to a deserted spot but he asks a loaded question. Due to the resonances of *nasīb* it appears to enquire after a beloved's return to a former encampment; in the context of his pious *dīwān* this return alludes to the Resurrection. Though the traces do not reply (line 2), their desolate state appears to answer (line 3): "You will have to wait until the gathering [of souls]" (*al-jumū'*, i.e. *al-ḥaṣr*). *al-jumū'* echoes *al-rujū'* and carries the same significance. Line 4 contrasts the abandonment of the spot with its erstwhile splendour (*manẓari-hā l-badī'*). The final line moves away from the ancient topos (*al-diyār*) and articulates the significance of Judgement Day implied in lines 1 and 3:

هَيَاتَ أَنْ يَنْجُو غَدًا يَوْمَ الْحِسَابِ سِوَى الْمُطِيعِ

Only the man obedient [to God] will be saved tomorrow (i.e. on the Day of Judgement).

<sup>116</sup> *Dīwān*, 269.

Corollaries of an ancient topos (*diyār*) have thus provided the fabric of a pious eschatology.

(v) In another poem (of 13 lines)<sup>117</sup> the material is not ordered in such a way that treatment of Islam as a conspicuous theme follows references to *al-dahr*. Rather the very first hemistich is a brief fanfare of piety: *aḥmadu llāha 'alā kulli ḥālī*. This attitude casts its shadow upon the gnomic cogitations which ensue, voicing a scornful pity for the *dahriyyūn*: (lines 2 and 5)

إِنَّا الدُّنْيَا مُنَاخٌ لِرَكَبٍ يُسْرِعُ الْحَثُّ بِشَدِّ الرِّحَالِ  
إِنَّمَا الْمَسْكِينُ حَقًّا يَقِينًا مَن غَدَا يَأْمَنُ صَرَفَ اللَّيَالِ

The world is a [camel] stop for travellers who urge a speedy pace from [their mounts] by fastening [their] saddles tight.

Truly the wretch is he who feels safe from the vicissitudes of Fate.

*al-Ḥaqq al-yaqīn*, a phrase with religious overtones, contrasts with ill-placed faith in Fate. This virtual dichotomy is modified in line 12 with the Islamic schematization of *ḥarām/ḥalāl*:

عَجَبًا مِنْ رَاغِبٍ فِي حَرَامٍ لَمْ تَضِقْ عَنْهُ وَجْهَهُ الْحَلَالِ

[I am] amazed at one who desires prohibited things, dissatisfied with the variety of permissible things.

The poem ends with a warning of death:

احْتِيَالُ الْمَرَّةِ ثَانِي عَلَيْهِ سَاعَةٌ تَقْطَعُ كُلَّ احْتِيَالٍ

The trickery of man will meet an hour that cuts short all trickery.

This is not an acceptance of Fate in the same way as Abū Nuwās' *kadhā ṣurūfu layālī l-dahri alwānu*; thus, whilst the gnomic elements follow the piety of line 1, they do not provide the poem's conclusive force.

(vi) A 9-line *zuhdiyya*<sup>118</sup> sets out in the first seven lines the reasons why a person beguiled by the hopes of ephemeral life is *miskīn*; in line 3 he is warned of *al-dahr*'s depredations:

وَمَا تَزَالُ صُرُوفُ الدَّهْرِ تَخْشُلُهُ حَتَّى تُقْبِضَهُ مِنْ جَوْفِ سِرْبَالِهِ

The vicissitudes of Fate will constantly stalk him until they hunt him down in the very robes that he wears.

The words that set the tone of this section are: *al-dunyā*; *āmāl*; *maniyya*; *al-layālī*; *al-ayyām*; *al-jāhili al-maghrūr*; *al-mawt*; *karb al-*

<sup>117</sup> *Dīwān*, 361.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. 368–9.

*mawt—ghawāṣī-hi wa-ahwālu-hu*. The penultimate line signals the Islamic denouement: even the pious man, whose deeds should be emulated, dies. Hence line 9: "So seek sufficiency in God . . ." (*istaghni bi-llāh*).

The discussion thus far has sought to show how *al-dahr* is treated consistently by Abū l-'Atāhiya in such a way as to endorse his pious admonishments. There is often a dynamic of thematic treatment which can be schematized simply as: *al-dahr* (old order) → *dīn/Islām* (new order). To an extent, these two categories dovetail in the *zuhdiyya* to produce a single Islamic ethos.<sup>119</sup> However, they remain distinct enough for one to discern an effort to set the *zuhdiyya* against its hedonistic adversary.

#### Abū Nuwās' Treatment of Al-Dahr

The relationship between Fate and Islam in Abū l-'Atāhiya is varied only inasmuch as Fate is sometimes a springboard to *mubādara* rather than *tuqā*. In general, however, reflections about Fate/*al-dahr* invited pious homilies. This is true also in the *zuhdiyyāt* of Abū Nuwās.<sup>120</sup> The most deftly arranged of these poems begins with a plea for patience (*ṣabr*) against the "events" of Fate:<sup>121</sup>

اصبر لِمَرِّ حَوَادِثِ الدَّهْرِ      فَلتَحْمَدَنَّ مَغَبَّةَ الصَّبْرِ

Be patient at Fate's depredations and be grateful for the rewards of patience.

Mortal life (the poet's past) is set against the rewards of the Hereafter (the poet's future). Thus line 2 calls upon the reader to prepare for the Day of Judgement:

وامهد لِنَفْسِكَ قَبْلَ مَيِّتِهَا      واذخر لِيَوْمِ تَفَاضُلِ الذَّخْرِ

Prepare [a righteous path] for your soul [to follow] before its death, and gather a store [of pious deeds] for the Day when [our] deeds are assessed against each other.

Lines 3–7 picture the poet on his death-bed being prepared for

<sup>119</sup> For other poems which lend themselves to similar analysis see, for example, the *rā'iyya* (p. 194), the *hā'iyya* (p. 292), and the 40-line *lāmiyya* (p. 346).

<sup>120</sup> The quality of Abū Nuwās' *zuhdiyyāt* is in no way inferior to those of his contemporary. A comment in al-Jāhiz's introduction to *Kitāb al-Bukhālā'* decries the fact that poets were sometimes identified with only one particular genre, despite their varied talents; see pp. 31–2 of the Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya edition, vol. i (Beirut, 1983).

<sup>121</sup> *Diwān Abi Nuwās*, 609.

burial by his family. The use of anaphora<sup>122</sup> in this section of the poem (lines 3–5 each begin *fa-ka-anna/wa-ka-anna*, 6–8 each begin *yā layta šī'rīlfa-layta šī'rī*) produces the effect of a litany which adds poignancy to the poet's anxious recognition of his own demise. Indeed in the spell of artistry that lies in this short poem's simple structure and fanciful imagery rings a note of sincere contrition. The frailty of life invites the solipsistic eschatology of line 8:

أَو لَيْتَ شِعْرِي كَيْفَ إِذَا      وَضِعَ الْحِسَابُ صَبِيحَةَ الْحَشْرِ

Would that I knew [my] lot when account is made of [my deeds] on the morning of [Judgement] Day.

Another *zuhdiyya*<sup>123</sup> of 9 lines produces a familiar contrast. Examine the distinct responses to God and Fate in the opening verse:

سُبْحَانَ عَلَامِ الْغُيُوبِ      عَجَبًا لِتَصْرِيفِ الْخُطُوبِ

Great is the Knower of hidden things [yet] how strange are the vicissitudes of Fate.

The dual preoccupations which schematize the opening verse find direction, after a call to *tawba* (*yā nafsi tūbī*, line 4), in the final four lines of the poem (*al-ḥawādith* → *al-tuqā*): (lines 6 and 8)

إِنَّ الْحَوَادِثَ كَالرِّيَا      حَ عَلَيْكَ دَائِمَةُ الْهُبُوبِ

وَالسَّعْيُ فِي طَلَبِ الثَّنَى      مِنْ خَيْرِ مَكْسَبَةِ الْكُسُوبِ

Fate is like a wind beating down constantly upon you . . .

Striving in the cause of piety provides a man of gain with the greatest profit.

Fate invites a pious conclusion. The same thematic direction is to be found in Abū Nuwās' panegyrics in which there is a clear transition from the treatment of *zamān/dahr* in the *nasīb* towards a straightforward celebration of Islam in the person of the *mamdūh*. A fine example exists in Abū Nuwās' encomium on Harūn al-Rašid.<sup>124</sup> The *nasīb* begins with the poet attempting to "hunt down" Time: (lines 1–3)

خَلَقَ السَّيَّابُ وَشَرَّقَ لَمْ تَخْلُقْ      وَرَمَيْتُ فِي عَرَضِ الزَّمَانِ بِأَفْوَقِ

تَفَعُّ السِّهَامُ وَرَاءَهُ وَكَأَنَّهُ      أَثَرُ الْخَوَالِفِ طَالِبٌ لَمْ يَلْحَقْ

وَأَرَى قُوَايَ تَكَاءَدَتْهَا رَيْثَةٌ      فَلِذَا بَطَشْتُ بَطَشْتَ رَحْوُ الْعِرْفَقِ

<sup>122</sup> Anaphora is a common feature of the *zuhdiyyāt*.

<sup>123</sup> *Diwān Abi Nuwās*, 616.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid. 398.

Though my youth was ragged [with age] my energy was not.  
[Thus beguiled] I shot in quest of Time an arrow broken at  
the notch.

[My] arrows fell short of my prey like a suitor [chasing] after  
unattainable women.

Depressingly, my strength has been drained, so when I wax  
violent, you [Time] wax violent with great[-er] ease.

Time has made a victim of the hunter; this image invites the recollec-  
tion of real, more successful hunting days in the next nine lines. The  
poem then moves abruptly to panegyric in line 13; in line 27 (the  
third from last) the Caliph is lauded as a pious protector of Islam:

لقد اتقى الله حق تقاته      وجهدت نفسك فوق جهد المتى  
وأخفت أهل الشرك حتى إنه      لتخافك التطفؤ التي لم تُخْلَقْ

You have feared God as he ought to be feared and have shown  
more energy in piety than is due.

You have instilled fear in the pagans to the extent that even their  
unborn fear you.

In brief, the poet's failure in his battle against Time (at the very  
outset of the poem) contrasts with the Caliph's upholding of transc-  
endent Islam.

Before surveying the treatment of *al-dahr* in Abū Nuwās' *kham-  
riyyāt* we should review to what extent his perception of Fate may  
have been an issue. Ghazālī relates a possibly apocryphal but  
extremely relevant anecdote. It tells of one Sulaymān b. Ja'far b.  
Abī Ja'far al-Manṣūr<sup>125</sup> who made trouble for Abū Nuwās at the  
court of Harūn al-Rašīd by attributing the following verses to him:<sup>126</sup>

ما صَحَّ عِنْدِي مِنْ جَمِيعِ الَّذِي      يُذَكِّرُ إِلَّا الْمَوْتُ وَالْقَبْرُ

In my opinion, there is no truth in all that is mentioned except  
death and the grave.

وَذَاكَ أَنَّى أَقُولُ بِالذَّهْرِ      بَاحَ لِسَانِي بِمُضْمَرِ السِّرِّ  
وَلَيْسَ بَعْدَ الْمَوْتِ مُرْتَجِعُ      وَإِنَّا الْمَوْتُ بَيْضَةُ الْعَفْرِ

My tongue has divulged my innermost secret, which is that I  
[believe in] Fate.

There is no resurrection after death—death is the infertile egg of  
a hen.

<sup>125</sup> His *kunya* appears to have been Abū Ayyūb—probably the same Abū Ayyūb  
lampooned by Abū Nuwās in one of his *khamriyyāt* (see *Dīwān*, 122).

<sup>126</sup> *Dīwān*, 218. For a discussion of the exchange between the two men see also  
Wagner, *Abū Nuwās: Eine Studie*, 88.

The belief that there is no Hereafter is professed as a creed under-  
pinned by the transcendence of *al-dahr*; *aqūlu bi-l-dahri* is virtually  
a testament of *kufr*. We need not take these lines to represent their  
author's constant views; they are nevertheless symptomatic of the  
powerful resonance of the word *al-dahr* even in this late period.  
The spirit of the above lines may simply be one of defiance and  
antagonism.<sup>127</sup> This is borne out in some of the material presented  
below, especially in the short but powerful *khamriyya* which begins  
“*Yā bnata l-šaykhi šbahī-nā*”.

In the *khamriyyāt* of Abū Nuwās *al-dahr* performs two roles:

1. The age of the wine is repeatedly expressed through its  
association with *al-dahr/al-zamān* and related motifs. They have no  
real bearing on the events of the poem; i.e. they do not explicitly  
give voice to an attitude of *mubādara*. However, there is a sense  
that the bacchic temporal context (the incitement to drink in the  
present) is the focal point of a chronology charted by the very age  
of the wine. A good example exists in one of the finest poems of  
description, *Yā šaqīqa l-naḥsi min ḥakami*.<sup>128</sup> After a brief emotional  
ingress (the most fragmentary of *nasībs* to begin the poem), lines  
2–6 produce a tapestry of images depicting the investment of Time  
in the wine:

فَاسْقِنِي الْخَمَرَ الَّتِي اخْتَمَرَتْ      بِخُجَارِ الشَّيْبِ فِي الرَّحِمِ  
نُعَتَ انصَاتِ الشَّيْبُ لَهَا      بَعْدَ مَا جَازَتْ مَدَى الْهَرَمِ  
فَهِيَ لِلْيَوْمِ الَّذِي بُزِلَتْ      وَهِيَ تَرْبُ الدَّهْرِ فِي الْقَدَمِ  
عُيِّنَتْ حَتَّى لَوْ انْصَلَتْ      بِلِسَانٍ نَاطِقٍ وَقَمِ  
لَاخْتَبَتْ فِي الْقَوْمِ مَائِلَةً      ثُمَّ قَصَّتْ قِصَّةَ الْأُمَمِ

[I did not sleep last night] so give me to drink the maiden wine  
that has donned the grey locks of old age whilst still in the  
womb;<sup>129</sup>

Then [when it came to be poured] youth returned to [the wine]  
after it had passed beyond old age,

—A wine preserved for a day when it is pierced, though it is the  
contemporary of Time itself [in antiquity];

<sup>127</sup> The last two lines are quoted in the sixth *Maqāma* of Ibn Nāqiyā as the  
culmination of the arguments of a libertine *mutakallim* (O. Rescher, p. 141): *wa-  
dhakara mā yaqtaḍī-hi ḥādhā l-qawlu thumma lam yaqna' bi-l-kināyati wa-l-ilbāsi  
ḥattā anšada qawla Abi Nuwāsi: bāha lisāni. The pious narrator responds to these  
lines: fa-rā'a-ni mā ntaḥā ilay-hi min madhbabi-hi.* <sup>128</sup> *Dīwān*, 41.

<sup>129</sup> This conceit describes the age of the wine whilst it is still in the amphora  
and/or depicts a cobweb around its mouth.

It was aged, such that if it were possessed of an eloquent tongue,  
It would sit proudly amongst people and tell tales of ancient  
nations . . .

It is the third line which contrasts ancient wine with the single moment of indulgence. In other poems the survival of the moment of indulgence (or the aftermath of seduction) and notions of the future generate either doubt or vigorous defiance (see Chapter 4)—an element which is missing from the ethereal texture of this poem.

The incitement to drink is set, therefore, against the cumulative backdrop of such as the following lines from the *Diwān*:<sup>130</sup>

وَقَامَ إِلَى الَّتِي عَكَفَتْ عَلَيْهَا      بَنَاتُ الدَّهْرِ وَالزَّمَانِ الطَّوِيلِ  
(p. 135)

بَاكِرٌ صَبُوحَكَ يَبْنِي الكَرَمَ      كَرُّ اللَّيَالِي الْبَيْضِ وَالسُّحُمِ  
مَنْفِيَّةُ الْأَفْدَاءِ صَفَّقَهَا      حَتَّى اغْتَدَّتْ رَوْحًا بِلا جِسْمِ  
(p. 178)

تُخْبِرَتِ وَالْجُومُ وَقَفَتْ      لَمْ يَتَمَكَّنْ بِهَا الْمُدَارُ  
فَلَمْ تَزَلْ تَأْكُلُ اللَّيَالِي      جُمَانَهَا مَا بِهَا انْتِصَارُ  
حَتَّى إِذَا مَاتَ كُلُّ ذَامٍ      وَخُلِصَ السِّرُّ وَالنِّجَارُ  
عَادَتْ إِلَى جَوْهَرٍ لَطِيفٍ      عَيَانُ مَوْجُودِهَا دِمَارُ  
(p. 73)

كَانَ لَهَا الدَّهْرُ مِنْ أَبِي خَلْفًا      فِي حِجْرِ صَانِئِهَا وَرَبَّاهَا  
تَعْلُنَا بِمُدَامٍ قَدْ تَنَاوَلَهَا      رَبُّبُ الزَّمَانِ وَعَصْرُ بَعْدِ أَعْصَارِ  
(p. 145)

ظَلَّتْ مِنَ الدَّهْرِ أَزْمَانًا مُخَضَّرَةً      يَصُونُهَا كَنْفٌ مِنْ بَيْتِ حَمَارِ  
(p. 149)

حَتَّى إِذَا مَرَّ دَهْرٌ      لَهَا أَتَاهَا عِيَادِي  
اسْقَى مِنْ مُدَامٍ مُعْتَقٍ أَخْرَسَتْهُ      حَقَبَةُ الدَّهْرِ بَعْدَ طَوْلِ الْهَدِيدِ  
(p. 690)

فَقَالَ مُدَامٌ خَلَطُ مَاءٍ سَحَابَةٍ      قَرِينَةُ أُمِّ الدَّهْرِ تَرْبِيْنِ فِي الْمَهْدِ  
(p. 687)

<sup>130</sup> It would be invidiously repetitive to translate the examples which ensue.

قَهْوَةٌ صُهْبَاءُ بِكِرٍ      غُرِسَتْ أَزْمَانُ نَوْحِ  
(p. 695)

بِمُدَامَةٍ وَرَثَ الزَّمَانُ لُبَابَهَا      عَنْ ذِي الْأَوَائِلِ مِنْ أَكَابِرِ عَادِ  
(p. 697)

فَنَحْنُ وَإِنْ لَمْ نَسْكُنِ الْخُلْدَ عَاجِلًا      فَمَا خُلْدُنَا فِي الدَّهْرِ إِلَّا رَحِيقَهَا  
(p. 9)

فَنَعَزَّيْتُ بِصُرُوفِ عُقَارٍ      نَشَأَتْ فِي حِجْرِ أُمِّ الزَّمَانِ  
فَهِيَ سِينُ الدَّهْرِ إِنْ هِيَ فُرْتُ      نَشَأَ وَرُتَضَعَا مِنْ لَبَانِ  
(p. 18)

وَتَنَاسَاهَا الْجَدِيدَانِ حَتَّى      هِيَ أَنْصَافُ شَطُورِ الدَّنَانِ  
وَشَمَطَاءُ حَلِّ الدَّهْرِ عَنْهَا بَنُجُودٍ      دَلَفْتُ إِلَيْهَا فَاسْتَلْتُ جَنِينَهَا  
(p. 20)

أَكَلَ الدَّهْرُ مَا تَجَسَّمَتْ مِنْهَا      وَتَبَقَّى لُبَابُهَا الْمَكْنُونَا  
(p. 30)

مَاتَ أَرْبَابُهَا وَبَادَتْ قُرَاهَا      وَبَرَاهَا الزَّمَانُ بَرَى الْحَلَالِ  
(p. 97)

وَأَرْسَلْتُهَا فِي الْكَأْسِ رَاحًا كَرِيمَةً      تَعَطَّرَ بِالرِّيحَانِ أَحْكَمَهَا الدَّهْرُ  
(p. 100)

Collectively these verses include the whole array of synonyms for Time/Fate: *banātu l-dahri*; *karu l-layālī*; *raybu l-manūn*; *al-layālī*; *raybu l-zamāni*; *hiqbatu l-dahri*; *ummu l-dahri*; *ummu l-zamāni*. All such terms, based on *al-dahr* and *al-zamān*, underscore the homiletic streak in early Arabic poetry. It is significant that in describing the age of the wine Abū Nuwās, and other poets, preserved the negative resonance of these motifs (*raybu l-manūni/karru l-layālī*) and thus celebrated the survival of the wine, which acquires its very essence from the very depredations of Time ('*adat ilā jawharin laṭīfin*'). Since *al-dahr* signifies mortality, indulgence in that which has "triumphed"<sup>131</sup> over it adds an important figurative dimension to the spirit of *mubādara*.

2. *Mubādara*—a simple "philosophical" attitude underpinned by an awareness of Fate—is an archetype (not exclusive to Arabic culture) which is periodically reiterated—never does the poet pretend to reinvent it. The reiteration of this idea is mostly confined to a fleeting statement—a single line. Sometimes the verb *bādara* is

<sup>131</sup> The notion of triumph is used by Abu Nuwas himself; in one of the examples quoted above he depicts wine initially unable to triumph over Time (*mā bi-hā ntiṣāru*). Yet Time's triumph is only over the body of the wine not its essence ('*adat ilā jawharin laṭīfin*').



used in the incitement to wine without express reference to *al-dahr*: for example, *bādir šabūḥa-ka wa-n'am ayyuhā l-rajulu*.<sup>132</sup> In a variant of this verse the poet affects a specious moral stance: slaking one's thirst for indulgence in youth avoids the tincture of shame (*'ār*) caused by indulgence in old age (*šayb*):<sup>133</sup> (line 1a and final line)

بَادِرْ شَبَابَكَ قَبْلَ الشَّيْبِ وَالْعَارِ ...  
فَذَلِكَ قَبْلَ نُزُولِ الشَّيْبِ عَادَتَنَا لَكَيْتُنَا نَرْجِي غُفْرَانَ غَفَارِ

Hasten to fulfil your youth before [the shame of doing this in]  
hoary old age . . .

This was our custom before old age descended, but we hope for  
God's forgiveness.

The moral obligations of *šayb* invite the weak religiosity of the final hemistich. Elsewhere it is clear that *al-dahr* itself is responsible for the onset of old age; that is, it is *al-dahr* only which commands the anxieties of fading youth:<sup>134</sup> *abdala-nī dahrī ghurābī bi-l-nasr*.

Related to *mubādara* is the notion that life (*'ayš*) is nothing if not indulgence:<sup>135</sup>

نَزَهَ صَبُوحَكَ عَنْ مَقَالِ الْعُدْلِ مَا الْعَيْشُ إِلَّا فِي الرَّحِيقِ السَّلْسَلِ  
مَا الْعَيْشُ إِلَّا أَنْ تُبَاكَرَ شَرْبُهَا

Declare your morning draught to be superior to the censurers'  
claim—life consists only in a strong and limpid wine.

Life is the hasty consumption of [wine] . . . !

لَا عَيْشَ إِلَّا الْمُدَامُ أَشْرُوبُهَا مُغْتَبِقًا تَارَةً وَمُصَنَّبِحًا

There is no life except in my drinking of wine, sometimes in the  
evening sometimes in the morning.

More significant is when indulgence is set against some aspect of  
Fate:<sup>136</sup>

فَانْعَمَ بِهَا قَبْلَ رَائِعَاتٍ لَا خَمَرَ فِيهَا وَلَا خُجَارَ

Indulge in it before [Fate's] afflictions after which there will be no  
wine and no hangover.

فَاسْتَصِيفِ الْأَقْدَارَ مِنْ أَحْدَانِهَا فَلَطَأْنَا لَمَاعَتِ بِكَ الْأَقْدَارَ

Demand justice [through wine] from the decreed events of Fate—  
they have long treated you as a plaything.

<sup>132</sup> For this poem see Ch. 1 "Intertextuality".

<sup>133</sup> Ibid. 156.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. 128, 97.

<sup>135</sup> *Dīwān*, 149.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. 73, 688, 692.

لَا تَخْشَعَنَّ لِطَارِقِ الْجِدَارِ وَادْفَعْ هُمُومَكَ بِالشَّرَابِ الْقَانِ

Do not fear Fate's night-visit; put flight to your worries with the  
tawny red drink.

Other lines of the same ilk are more expressly didactic:<sup>137</sup>

فَقُلْتُ خُذْهَا فَذَتَكَ نَفْسِي فَكُلْ شَيْءَ لَهْ زَوَالِ

I said take it—let my soul be your ransom—for everything [is  
doomed to] extinction.

The treatment of *al-dahr/mubādara* can constitute an important  
thread in the fabric of entire wine poems:

(i) The 11-line *rā'iyya* beginning *Ghadawtu 'alā l-ladhdhāt*<sup>138</sup>  
sandwiches conventional description of the wine and the *sāqī* (lines  
4–8) between expository attitudes in which death, expressed  
variously as *al-dahr*, *al-manāyā*, and *al-naḥr*, is the dominant leit-  
motif. The introduction spans the first three lines:

غَدَوْتُ عَلَى اللَّذَاتِ مُنْهَنَكِ السَّيْرِ وَأَفْضَتُ بَنَاتِ السَّرِّ مَنَى إِلَى الْجَهْرِ  
وَهَانَ عَلَى النَّاسِ فِيهَا أُرِيدُهُ بَمَا جِئْتُ فَاسْتَعْنَيْتُ عَنْ طَلَبِ الْعَذْرِ  
رَأَيْتُ اللَّيَالِي مُرْصِدَاتٍ لِمُدَّتِي فَبَادَرْتُ لِدَائِي مُبَادَرَةَ الدَّهْرِ

I made for pleasures in the morning "rending the veil", bringing  
[my secrets] out into the open.

I thought little of what people said about my intention; I came not  
bothering [even] to find an excuse.

[For] I have seen the Nights of Time preparing my demise and  
thus have hastened to delights [in the manner that] Fate  
hastens [towards me].

There is an apparent lexical continuity between hemistichs 1a and  
3b (*ghadawtu 'alā l-ladhdhāt* → *fa-bādartu ladhdhātī mubādarata l-*  
*dahr*) which effects a single statement and thus forcefully articulates  
the spirit of the poem. The final three lines mock an Antaresque  
desire for battle; particularly significant is line 10, which echoes the  
imagery of bacchism:

فَلَا خَيْرَ فِي قَوْمٍ تَدُورُ عَلَيْهِمْ كُؤُوسُ الْمَنَايَا بِالْمُتَقَفِّ السُّمْرِ

No good comes to people around whom the cups of Fate circulate  
[threatening death] with tawny spears.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. 130. The urgency in this line (line 12 of a 15-line poem) may allude to  
the poet's intention to seduce—he feels threatened by the imminence of his depa-  
ture with the approach of dawn: (line 9) *hattā idhā mā badā sahilun l wa-ḥāna min*  
*layli-nā rtiḥālu*.  
<sup>138</sup> Ibid. 139–40.

*Ku'usu l-manāyā* lead, through the weaponry of battle (swords and spears), to the grave (*al-muziratu li-l-qabri* (line 11b)). Thus indulgence, which seeks to anticipate death, is contrasted favourably with the kind of heroism which simply hastens its inexorable approach. The logic of contrast is evident and is reworked in the mild semantic dissonance that exists between the first and last phrase of the final verse—it is the resonance of life (the root meaning of *taḥiyya*) which the poet may be seeking to contrast with the grave: (line 11)

تَحِيَّاتِهِمْ فِي كُلِّ يَوْمٍ وَلَيْلَةٍ      ظُلَى الْمَشْرِفَاتِ الْمُزِيرَةِ لِلْقَبْرِ

They (those who seek after battle) greet each other every day and every night with the blades of swords which lead one to the grave.

This thematic pulse (life/death) operates similarly in the central, descriptive section of the poem which begins: (4a) *raqītu mina l-dunyā bi-ka'sin wa-šādini* (I have cared for two [and only two] things in this world: a cup of wine and a youthful serving boy). Another formulation of the phrase is perhaps evoked from the context, namely *raqītu bi-l-dunyā* (I am content with this world)—*dunyā* exists implicitly in contrast to the other spheres of existence (*al-ākhirā*). The existential mode effected for bacchic indulgence is one where life and death are exclusively circumscribed by this world, hence the *sāqī* “slays and resuscitates with union and rejection” (*yumītu wa-yuḥyi bi-l-wiṣāli wa-bi-l-hajri*). A similar contrast is more reconditely but deliberately contrived between lines 7 and 9 (which describe the *sāqī* and the preferability of wine to battle):

كَأَنَّ ضِيَاءَ الشَّمْسِ يُنَظُّ بِوَجْهِهِ      وَبَدْرُ الدُّجَى بَيْنَ التَّرَائِبِ وَالنَّحْرِ

It is as if the light of the sun [emanated from (lit. were attached to)] his face, and the full moon on a dark night was between his breast and throat.

فَأَحْسَنُ مِنْ رَكَبٍ إِلَى حَوْمَةِ الْوَعَى      وَأَحْسَنُ عِنْدِي مِنْ خُرُوجٍ إِلَى النَّحْرِ

[These then] are better than riding into the chaos of battle and better, in my opinion, than setting off for slaughter.

It is unusual for a rhyme word to be repeated in a poem (the “defect” of *itā'*) within such a short space. Here, where *naḥr* means two very different things (the throat of the “life-giving youth” and

slaughter), there is cross-linear paronomasia which highlights the contrary emotional responses elicited by the two scenarios of the poem (love/wine and battle).

To conclude, Fate/death which the poet seeks to forestall, is the only level of transcendence with which the poem is preoccupied.

(ii) The next poem is more discursive.<sup>139</sup> As in the celebrated *Da'an-ka lawmī* the censurer's claim to knowledge is thwarted. Censure is the opening topos (*a-ādhilu*). Abū Nuwās dismisses unnecessary discussion (3b, *fa-da-nī lā aqūlu wa-lā taqūlu*), for both interlocutors make contrary claims to knowledge: (3a) *kilā-nā yadda'i fī l-khamri 'ilman*.<sup>140</sup> In some poems of this kind Abū Nuwās counters the very religiosity of censure. For example:<sup>141</sup>

خَوْفِيَّانِي اللَّهُ رَبُّكَأ...      إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَشْرَبَانِ مَعِيَ

خَوْفَ الْعِقَابِ شَرَبْتُهَا وَحْدِي      أَنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَشْرَبَانِ مَعِيَ

You have made me fear God, your Lord . . .

If you will not drink with me for fear of [God's] punishment then I will drink alone.

In this poem, however, the poet presents mock-heroic imagery which strikes an alternative, more flippant note of defiance:

أَلَيْسَ مَطْيَيْتِي حِقْوَى غُلَامٍ      وَرَحْلُ أُنَامِلِي كَأَسُّ شَمُولٍ

Is not my mount the twin loins of a youth, and my fingers' saddle a cup of fresh wine.

The most striking verses in this piece are 5 and 6:

إِذَا كَانَتْ بَنَاتُ الْكَزْمِ شُرَى      وَقَبْلَةُ وَجْهِهِ الْحَسَنُ الْجَمِيلُ  
أُمِنْتُ بِذَيْنِ عَاقِبَةِ اللَّيَالِي      وَهَانَ عَلَيَّ مَا قَالَ الْعَذُولُ

Since the daughters of the vine are my drink and the beautiful youth [who serves the wine] is my qibla,

[So] with these two I feel secure from the consequences of the Nights [of Fate] and the cautious words of the censurer mean little to me.

The semantics of *amintu bi-dhayni 'āqibata l-layālī* are important. For *amina* has the same root as the word for Faith (*āmana*, *īmān*) and thus offers a hidden reading of the hemistich which articulates belief in Fate. Both levels of transcendence (Islam and *al-Dahr*) are

<sup>139</sup> See the *lāmiyya*, *Dīwān*, p. 184.

<sup>140</sup> Cf. the famous verse from the *hamziyya*: *qul li-man yadda'i fī l-'ilmi falsafatan* | *ḥafizta šay'an wa-ghābat 'an-ka ašyā'u*.  
<sup>141</sup> *Dīwān*, 182.

woven into the texture of a brief vignette: the *sāqī*, as the poet's *qibla*, displaces Islam whilst security from Fate<sup>142</sup> provides the emotional core of the piece and diminishes the force of any religious disapprobation (*hāna 'alayya mā qāla l-'adhūlu*).

(iii) Another 11-line *khamriyya*<sup>143</sup> works in a different way. It is a poem of conventional structure and imagery: the companions (*fitya*) are introduced with *wāw rubba*—they expel sorrow; a nocturnal trip to the wine seller ensues; the vendor's initial fear and subsequent relief at the character of the *fitya* is couched in a conversational exchange; a virgin wine is produced—it had been saved for Kistrā—and is served by an effeminate, haughty youth. The abrupt, final line alludes to the denouement of the bacchic scene—a denouement governed by *al-dahr*:

وَالدَّهْرُ لَيْسَ بِلَاقٍ شَعْبًا مُنْتَظِمًا      إِلَّا رَمَاهُ بِتَفْرِيقٍ وَإِزْعَاجٍ

When Fate encounters an orderly people, it afflicts them  
dispersing them in chaos.

The rout of an orderly people echoes the force of a whole gnostic tradition whilst referring more locally in the text to the effects of intoxication upon the *fitya*.

(iv) If in the above poems events and attitudes are justified only briefly with reference to *al-dahr*, in the 8-line composition *Jaraytu ma'a l-šibā ṭaliqa l-jumūhi*<sup>144</sup> we find the whole structure of the poem working towards its aphoristic conclusion in the manner of *Yā sāhir al-ṭarf*. Lines 1–3 confess an indulgent past:

جَرَيْتُ مَعَ الصَّبَا طَلِقَ الْجُمُوحِ      وَهَانَ عَلَى مَاثُورِ الْقَيْحِ  
وَجَدْتُ أَلَدَّ عَارِيَةِ اللَّيَالِي      قِرَانَ النَّعْمِ بِالْوَكْرِ الْفَصِيحِ  
وَمُسْمِعَةً إِذَا مَا شَتَّتْ غَنَّتْ      مَتَى كَانَ الْخِيَامُ بَذَى طُلُوحِ

In my youth I indulged uncontrollably, thinking little of the most  
choice peccadillo.

I found the most pleasing loan granted by Fate (*al-layālī*) to be  
the coupling of sweet melodies with eloquent lute-strings,

Whilst a songstress sang at your behest: "When were the tents at  
Dhū Ṭulūḥ?"

The lyrics of this song evoke the passage of time and thus provide

<sup>142</sup> A similar image exists in another poem (ibid. 676): *idbā mā niltu min 'ayšī rakhā'an \ wa-širtu minā l-nawā'ibi fī amāni*; the next line duly follows on an irreli-  
gious note: *rakibtu ghawāyati wa-taraktu ruṣḍi \ wa-kaffu l-jahli muṭliqatun 'ināni*.

<sup>143</sup> *Dīwān* 48. <sup>144</sup> Ibid. 71; ed. Wagner, pp. 83–4.

an appropriate backdrop for the continuation of the poem which moves energetically into the present with the use of imperatives and leads ultimately to a stark vision of the future in the closing line:

وَصِلْ بِعُرَى الْعُبُوقِ عُرَى الصُّبُوحِ      تَمَتَّعْ مِنْ شَبَابٍ لَيْسَ يَبْقَى  
تُنَزِّلْ دِرَّةَ الرَّجُلِ الشَّحِيحِ      وَخُذْهَا مِنْ مُشْعَشَعَةٍ كُمَيْتٍ  
لَهَا حِطَّانٍ مِنْ لُونٍ وَرِيحٍ      تَحْيَرُهَا لِكُسْرَى رَائِدَاهُ  
وَعِضَّ مَرَاشِفَ الظُّبَى الْمَلِيحِ      أَلَمْ تَرَنِ أَجَعْتُ الرَّاحَ عَرِضَى  
مَسَافَةً بَيْنَ جُنَّائِي وَرُوحِي      لَا تَبْقَى عَالَمٌ أَنْ سَوْفَ تَنَائِي

Enjoy [this] ephemeral youthfulness, and join your evening and  
morning drink into one long tippie.

Take a red wine mixed [with water] that milks the teat of a  
miser's [generosity].

—A wine selected by Kistrā's foragers, [one] endowed with both  
colour and fragrance.

Do you not see that I have made wine and biting the lips of a  
pleasant gazelle permissible to my honour.

For I know that the distance separating my body from my soul  
will soon be great.

Time for indulgence (line 2) is a loan from Fate but death is inescapable.

(v) *al-Dahr* may be treated in the *khamriyyāt* more specifically to mock a pious attitude. Examine the following verse:

عَتَبْتَ عَلَيْكَ مَحَاسِنَ الْخَمْرِ      أَمْ غَيَّرَتْكَ نَوَائِبُ الدَّهْرِ

Has the wine's beauty grown angry with you, or have Fate's  
depredations brought about this change?

This is the first verse of a short *khamriyya*<sup>145</sup> which addresses an erstwhile boon companion who has now abstained from drinking wine. It constitutes a subtle lampoon by reversing the roles of censure: the reproof of a chiding lover is countered by the censure of wine itself. The companion can no longer take his drink—he has become old—and thus the rebuke which he has tacitly voiced is undercut by the afforded nature of his abstinence. The second hemistich, by casting Fate in the role of prime mover for the companion's change of heart, undermines the implicitly religious nature of his new avowal. The piece concludes, as mockingly as it begins,

<sup>145</sup> *Dīwān*, 99.

by reminding the contrite man of his own previous rationale for indulgence—*wa-nasīta qawla-ka*:

لَا تَحْسَبَنَّ عُقَارَ خَايَةٍ      وَالْهَمَّ يَجْتَمِعَانِ فِي صَدْرٍ

Do not consider it possible for wine and worry to unite in one's heart.

Lampoon is much clearer yet more complex in the poem beginning *Yā bnata l-šaykhi šbaḥī-nā*.<sup>146</sup> This 9-line *khamriyya* is an energetic incitement to bacchic indulgence; it is devoid of description, being devoted solely to the lampoon of a pious abstainer. The nine lines can be divided into three sections: 1–4; 5–6; 7–9. Each section is introduced by an imperative, emphasizing the forceful attitude of the poem whilst changing its focal images:

يا ابنة الشيخ اصْبَحِينَا	ما الذى تنتظرِينَا
قد جَرَى فى عودكِ الما	ء فأَجْرِى الخمر فىنَا
إنَّا نشربُ منها	فأَعْلِمِي ذاك يقِينَا
كلُّ ما كان خلافاً	لِشرابِ الصالحِينَا
واصْرِفِيهَا عن نجيلٍ	دان بالإمْسَاكِ دِينَا
طَوَّلَ الدهرُ عليه	فیری الساعَةَ حِينَا
قَفْ برنِعِ الطاعِنِينَا	وإِلكِ إن كُنْتَ حَزِينَا
واسْأَلِي الدَّارَ متى فا	رقتِ الدارِ القَطِينَا
قَدْ سألناها وتَأَي	أن نجيبَ السَّالِينَا

Daughter of the *šaykh* give us a morning drink! Why do you wait?

[You are now lithe and lissom by virtue of] the sap that runs through you, so make wine now flow through us.

We only drink—be sure of this (*fa-'lamī dhāka yaqīnā*)—That which is contrary to the drink of the pious (*šarābu l-šāliḥīnā*).

Turn it away from a miser, who has found religion in parsimony; Time has tarried too long for him (*ṭawwala l-dahrū 'alay-hi*), so he thinks now the "Hour has come".

<sup>146</sup> Ibid. 31; ed. Wagner, 316–17; the latter's version contains no major variants from Ghazālī's text. However, one recension to which Wagner refers places the final three lines at the beginning of the poem (see p. 317). I prefer the arrangement adopted below since in this manner the short poem better mirrors the opening lines of 'Amr b. Kulthūm's *Mu'allaqa* (see below).

Stop, then, at the abode of the departed, and cry if you are melancholy;

Ask the abode, "When did you separate from your inhabitants?"

We have asked and it refuses to reply.

Lines 1–4 spin a web of blasphemy: the poet makes of the *sāqiyya* the daughter of a *šaykh*—a man who has reached the age of decorum.<sup>147</sup> In line 3 the nature of the poet's drink—that it is wine—should be understood, in effect, as one might understand religious dogma, for *'ilm yaqīn* is a phrase with Qur'ānic overtones<sup>148</sup>—*yaqīn* refers mainly in the Qur'ān to "certain knowledge" of Islam's eschatology; this has a bearing on line 6b. Further, Abū Nuwās consciously chooses that which is the very antithesis to the drink of the pious: (line 4) *mā kāna khilāfan li-šarābi l-šāliḥīna*. The irreligious tone of these opening lines is enhanced by the rhyme *-īna*, which together with *-ūna*, forms the dominant assonance of the Qur'ān. Lines 5–6 move on to mock one of the *šāliḥīna*, focusing upon a miserly man whose religion is stated to be parsimony: (5b) *dāna bi-l-imsāki dīnā*. Piety is further undercut in line 6 where the effect of Time (*ṭawwala l-dahrū 'alay-hi*)—the approach of death—provides the impetus for abstinence. *al-Sā'a*, meaning the Resurrection and Judgement Day, is Qur'ānic; see Qur'ān 6/31, where those who have disbelieved the warnings of resurrection regret their neglect: *qad khasira lladhina kadhdhabū bi-liqā'i llāhi ḥattā idhā jā'at-humu l-sā'atu baghtatan qālū yā ḥasrata-nā 'alā mā farratnā fi-hā wa-hum yaḥmilūna awzāra-hum 'alā zuḥūri-him a-lā sā'a mā yazirūna* (Lost indeed are they that cried lies to the encounter with God, so that when the Hour comes to them suddenly they shall say, "Alas for us, that we neglected it!" On their backs they shall be bearing their loads; O how evil the loads they bear!).<sup>149</sup> Thus line 6 lampoons the sincerity of *tawba*, for it is in the first place the effects of *al-dahr* that command the fear of the abstainer. Abū Nuwās appears to scorn the preoccupations evinced in those of Abū l-'Atāhiya's poems where cogitations about *al-dahr*, or the passing of time, lead to pious expression.<sup>150</sup>

<sup>147</sup> The *šaykh* may be the taverner; however, the semantic (even moral) resonances of the word are such that a dissonance accrues from the juxtaposition of *sāqiyya* and *šaykh*. It is also possible that *al-šaykh* is the Devil who is referred to by this title in other poems (see Ch. 4, n. 94); in this case the "daughter" would be the wine itself.

<sup>148</sup> See esp. Qur'ān 102/5 (*kallā law ta'lamūna 'ilma l-yaqīni*).

<sup>149</sup> A. J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, 124.

<sup>150</sup> Typical of Abū l-'Atāhiya's anxiety is the following line: (*Dīwān*, 236) *kayfa aghtarru bi-l-ḥayāti wa-'umrī l-sā'tan ba'da sā'tin fi ntiqāsi*.

The final butt of Abū Nuwās' lampoon, in the last three lines, is the use of redundant literary imagery.<sup>151</sup> There is apparent incongruity in the abrupt transition to these lines; however, it may be that they are addressed at men who transformed the language of the *aṭlāl* towards an expression of piety.<sup>152</sup> In this way the final five lines can be taken as a single statement of mockery, directed at one representative individual. Having ordered the *sāqiya* to shun the miserly repentant, the poet then addresses the repentant man himself,<sup>153</sup> goading him for concerns akin to the fears of line 6 (*ṭawwala l-dahrū 'alay-hi*); the image of the tribe parting from the erstwhile abode is a representation of time past and follows up logically the reference to *al-dahr*. The inference is that for the pious man thoughts about *al-dahr* in conjunction with the *aṭlāl* invite mechanical refuge in Islam. For the bacchic poet we have seen that both invite indulgence.<sup>154</sup>

The connection between the final three lines and the rest of the poem is understood better when we compare this piece with an older text—the *Mu'allaqa* of 'Amr b. Kulthūm.<sup>155</sup> There are several allusions in Abū Nuwās' short *nūniyya* to the opening eight verses of the latter "ode". 'Amr's *Mu'allaqa* is in the *wāfir* metre, whilst Abū Nuwās' poem is in a form of *ramal*. However, the *qāfiya -inā* is shared by the two poems and, furthermore, is introduced in both cases by the word *iṣbaḥī-nā*; compare 'Amr's *a-lā hubbī bi-ṣaḥni-ki fa-ṣbaḥī-nā* | *wa-lā tubqī khumūra l-andarīnā* (Be quick with your basin, give us a morning draught and leave none of the Andarine wine), with Abū Nuwās' *yā bnata l-ṣaykhi ṣbaḥī-nā* | *mā lladhī tantazīrī-nā*. The latter poem in total shares four lexical items (including *iṣbaḥī-nā*) with the opening eight lines of the *Mu'allaqa*: *mā*' (see *Mu'allaqa*, line 2: *muṣa'ṣa'atan ka-anna l-ḥuṣṣa fī-hā* | *idhā mā l-mā'u khālaṭa-hā sakhīnā* (Wine of a saffron tincture which renders us prodigal when it is mixed with water)); *yaqīn* and *za'in* (see *Mu'allaqa*, line 8: *qifī qabla l-tafarruqi yā za'inā* | *nukhabbir-ki l-yaqīna wa-tukhbiri-nā* (Halt a while before your

<sup>151</sup> We have already stated that the censurer is associated with the two: both false piety and bedouin imagery; see esp. *Dīwān Abī Nuwās*, 679.

<sup>152</sup> See above pp. 120–5.

<sup>153</sup> Note the use here (line 7) of the masculine singular imperative instead of the feminine which is used in the first five lines.

<sup>154</sup> The word *al-sā'ilinā* in the last line of the poem sustains echoes of the Qur'ān; see Qur'ān 12/7.

<sup>155</sup> I am grateful to Reem Saad for first drawing my attention to this important facet of the poem.

litter's departure so that we can inform each other of things that are certain)). Furthermore, the same eight lines also treat the notions of Fate and miserliness (though here the connection between the two texts is perhaps tendentious): in line 4 wine makes an avaricious man think little of his wealth: *tarā l-laḥīza l-ṣaḥīḥa idhā murrat* | *'alay-hi li-māli-hi fī-hā muḥīnā*; in line 7 wine is consumed against a background of inexorable Fate: *wa-innā sawfa tudriku-nā l-manāyā* | *muqaddaratan la-nā wa-muqaddarīnā* (Death will catch up with us—we are fated to each other).

The most striking similarity between the two poems is that in both cases the bacchic theme precedes the *nasīb*; the respective first lines of each of these two sections of the poems is marked by *taṣrī'*, and, furthermore, the two internal rhyme words in both poems are the same (or virtually the same):<sup>156</sup> where 'Amr's *Mu'allaqa* has *za'inā*, Abū Nuwās' poem has *al-zā'inīnā* (a metrical necessity). This is the strongest pointer to the fact that Abū Nuwās was alluding to the older text, a fact which holds together the disparate parts of the 'Abbāsīd poem and allows a single message to emerge. Thus the composite statement of its three sections can be viewed schematically as: "We drink wine → You have stopped, for fear of Time—a miserly stance of ill-conceived piety; ask, then, the *aṭlāl* (wherein Time is invested) where the dead are, so that you may justify your fears → We have asked, but have received no reply; therefore do we drink—ours is a more ancient wisdom."<sup>157</sup>

From a contextual, and essentially intertextual perspective, dependent upon a variety of literary or scriptural categories (the Qur'ān, pre-Islamic poetry, the *khamriyya*, and the *zuhdiyya*) the final line becomes an agnostic credo—obliquely equivalent to *aqūlu bi-l-dahri*—which vindicates the bacchic spirit of *mubādara*.<sup>158</sup>

<sup>156</sup> I am grateful for this observation to Thomas Bauer of Erlangen University.

<sup>157</sup> We should note that if Hassan El-Banna Ezz El-Din's interpretation of 'Amr's *Mu'allaqa* can be accepted (where the *za'in* motif is an essential part of the battle ode), then an even more complex note of irony is struck in Abū Nuwās' poem; see "No Solace for the Heart": The Motif of the Departing Women in the Pre-Islamic Battle Ode" in S. P. Stetkevych (ed.), *Reorientations: Arabic and Persian Poetry*, 165–79.

<sup>158</sup> This short *khamriyya* has been discussed in detail by Abu Deeb in *Jadaliyyat al-Khafā' wa-l-Tajallī*, 170 ff. His is a structuralist preoccupation characterized by the following quotation (p. 170): "an important fundamental principle of the structuralist approach is that the elements (*zawābir*) [of a poem] have no significance in isolation (*wa-hiya ma'zūla*); the *qaṣīda* only conveys meaning (*innamā ta'nī l-qaṣīda*) via the relationships (*al-'alāqāt*) which arise between these elements . . .". He divides the poem into two: lines 1–6 and lines 7–9; this represents a division into

## CONCLUSION

In Abū Nuwās there is a forceful direction of attitude which holds some of his *khamriyyāt* together, and sets them cumulatively against religious conservatism.<sup>19</sup> If in Abū l'Atāhiya *al-dahr* is given a pious direction, in the wine poem this direction is reversed. To this extent one is justified in speaking of two tiers of transcendence—two orders. Abū Nuwās' *Yā sāḥir al-ṭarf* posed the question, poems such as '*Aḥā l-muṣallā* and *Yā bnata l-ṣaykhi ṣbaḥī-nā* bear the question out in different ways within the particular context of individual poems. The spirit of indulgence highlights the transcendence of *al-dahr*, suggesting that in the early 'Abbāsīd period, as indeed before, there were two contrary ways of responding to the transcendence of *al-dahr*. Furthermore, several poems have shown the artistry of the poet in constructing the whole poem around or towards this essential notion.

The literary antagonism in the poetic voices which emerges between the *khamriyya* and the *zuhdiyya* introduces the subject of the next chapter.

*turāth dīnī* and *turāth ṭhaqāfi*, both of which Abū Nuwās sets himself against. However, I would suggest, even this division isolates the parts of the poem too much; for there is mockery of religion implicit in the mockery of the *aṭlāl*. To understand this we need to appreciate the levels of time invested in the traditional image, and how the different significances of time might have affected variously the protagonists of the poem. "The miserly (*scilicet* religious) man (*al-bakhl al-mu'min bi-l-bukhl*) feels that worldly time is oppressive and slow. The drinker, on the other hand, sees in the present moment an incorporation of absolute time . . . intoxication draws all time into its presence" (ibid. 174). One should add that the fundamental spirit of indulgence is that time is forgotten—wine escapes awareness of *al-dahr*; the pious man, however, is only too aware of *al-dahr* hence his fear of death and judgement. "The *aṭlāl* section of the ancient *qaṣida* was of great importance for in it were crystallized the poet's views on time and death" (ibid. 175). We should add that wine always fitted into this system. In fact, Abū Nuwās is at once rejecting the old world-view (archaic literary attitudes) and accepting it (the old world-view of *al-dahr*, which is encapsulated by 'Amr b. Kulthūm's *Mu'allaqa* and which encouraged heroic recklessness not pious fear).

<sup>19</sup> The kind of treatment of material seen to exist in Abū Nuwās' *khamriyyāt* survived after him. A good example is to be found in Tha'ālibī's *Yatimat al-Dahr* (Cairo, 1947), iv. 71 f. It is a poem attributed to Abū l-Ayyūb al-Ṭāhirī which parodies the literary form of the *zuhdiyya*, conforming to the ordering of gnomic motifs in libational poetry; it can be schematized by the following three lines (1, 4, and 6): *awḍā mulūku banī sāsāna wa-nqaraḍū | wa-aṣbaḥa l-mulku mā yanfakku yantaqīdu || mān lāna marqadu-hu fa-l-dahrū mubdilu-hu | 'an-hu firāsan la-hu min taḥti-hu qaḍaḍu || da'-hum ilā saqarin wa-ṣrab 'alā ṭarabin | fa-l-fajru fī l-ufuqi l-gharbiyyi mu'tariḍu*.

## 3

## *Hijā'*, the Bacchic *Naqā'id*, and the Rhetorical Wine Poem

Within the broad possibilities of generic transformation already demonstrated in various ways in Chapter 1, it remains for us to examine a development of *hijā'*, from the *Jāhiliyya* to the early 'Abbāsīd period. Elements of lampoon, argument, and discourse in Abū Nuwās' wine poetry constitute, in part, a development from what may be termed the *naqā'id al-khamr* of the Umayyad period. The *naqā'id*, in general, stem directly from *hijā'*; they are by definition simply duelling dialogues of *hijā'*.<sup>1</sup> Since wine poetry became a medium of such "flytings" it is interesting that in the earliest poetry wine as a theme was subject to the mood of *hijā'* as much as it was to *fakhr* or any other movement, mood, or theme. In the Umayyad period reciprocal censure and *hijā'* came together in the *naqā'id* of wine; these may be seen to be part of the literary back-drop by which Abū Nuwās was influenced and to which he added a new quality of rhetoric or dialectic, aided by the deft structuring of his wine poems.

## THE JĀHILIYYA

In the *Jāhiliyya* it was through *fakhr* that the poet rebutted the censurer—the best known example existing in Ṭarafa's *Mu'allaqa*.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the type of *ḥikma* which was derived from contemplations on life and death also encouraged and supported *khamr* in defiance of the communal voice of caution. A particularly clear example survives in poem 9 of the *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt* usually attributed to Mutammim b. Nuwayra. In this ode three lines of *khamr* defy the censurer (line 28):<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed description of this genre see Aḥmad al-Šayib's *Ta'rikh al-Naqā'id*.

<sup>2</sup> See Ch. 2, pp. 90–1.

<sup>3</sup> See Lyall, *The Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, i. 20–3; ed. Šākir, p. 52. I quote Lyall's translation.

وَلَقَدْ سَبَقْتُ الْعَاذِلَاتِ بِشَرِّهِ  
رَبًّا وَرَاوِقِي عَائِمٍ مُتَرَعٍ

And oft-times have I been beforehand with the railing women by  
draining a deep draught of wine in the morning, while my  
wine-jug was large and brimming.

The depiction which follows of the poet in his final breath of life at the mercy of a long-maned hyaena ('arfā') is a vindication of his indulgence, hence he concludes (line 36):

ذَلِكَ الْضِيَاعُ فَإِنْ هَزَزْتُ بِمُدِيَةٍ  
كَفَى فَقَوْلٍ مُحْسِنٍ مَا يَصْنَعُ

This it is to perish [not the wasting of my goods]! Therefore, O  
railer, if I cut off my hand with a knife, say—What he does is  
well done!

Through the sheer force of imagination the poet gainsays the 'ādhila: "She (the hyaena) will spend the day tearing me to pieces and feeding her cubs with my flesh, in the midst of her covert—and no living soul will lift a hand to drive her off."

The essence of the argument in Mutammin's depiction is presented succinctly in a poem variously attributed to Aws b. Ḥajar and 'Abid b. al-Abras; the vindication of wine is directed at a censurer as a simple dialectic based in ancient *ḥikma*:<sup>4</sup> (lines 6 and 8; lines 1 and 4 of 'Abid's poem)

هَبَّتْ تَلُومٌ وَلَيْسَتْ سَاعَةَ الْأَلْحَى  
هَلَّا انْتَظَرْتُ بِهَذَا اللَّوْمِ إِصْبَاحِي  
إِنْ أَشْرَبِ الْخَمْرَ أَوْ أَرَزَا لَهَا ثَمَنًا  
فَلَا مَحَالَةَ يَوْمًا أَتْنِي صَاحِي

Night's rest she broke with her railing: no time that for her  
tongue! Why didst thou not wait for dawn to ply thy trade of  
reproach?

If I drink wine, if I buy the costly juice at its price, the day shall  
come, never fear, that makes me sober again.

In a poem by another early poet, 'Amr b. Qamī'a, self-rebuke about weeping at the erstwhile dwelling-place of "Hind" (line 4) works against the cautioning presence of sleeping "kill-joys" two lines later:<sup>5</sup>

وَكَانَ الْجَهْلُ لَوْ أَبْكَأَكَ رَسْمٌ  
وَلَسْتُ أَحِبُّ أَنْ أُدْعَى سَقِيًّا  
يُحَاذِرُ أَنْ تُبَاكَرَ عَاذِلَاتُ  
فَيُنْبَأُ أَنَّهُ أَضْحَى غَوِيًّا

<sup>4</sup> See *Dīwān Aws b. Ḥajar*, 14. See also *The Dīwāns of 'Abid ibn al-Abras of Asad and 'Amir ibn at-Tufail of 'Amir Sa'sa'ah*, 75 (of Arabic text), 59 (of English text).  
<sup>5</sup> See *Dīwān 'Amr b. Qamī'a*, ed. Lyall, p. 49. Trans. Lyall.

... it were but folly if a tent-trace should make thee weep; and I  
like not that folk should call me a fool.

He is careful to be beforehand with the waking in the morning of  
the railing women, lest they proclaim that he has become a  
wastrel.

However, this perceived apology for wine is much less significant, in the context of this study, than the relationship between *khamr* and *hijā'* (or *dhamm al-khamr*). The same 'Amr b. Qamī'a also cursed wine for its excesses and his own; in a 6-line *qit'a* of ambivalent attitude—where the true effects of wine are set alongside its finer qualities—he declares:<sup>6</sup> (line 6)

فَاتَّكَ اللَّهُ مِنْ مَشْرُوبَةٍ  
لَوْ أَنَّ ذَا مِرَّةٍ عَنْكَ صَبُورٌ

God curse thee for a drink! would that the resolute man could  
keep himself away from thee!

Another poet—'Abd al-Masīḥ b. 'Asala—composed a *qit'a* of eight lines (*Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, No. 72) in which he upbraided one Ka'b al-Namari for being a rowdy drinker; the latter made a nuisance of himself on a specific occasion and elicited a beating from the owner of a pestered singing girl (*qayna*):<sup>8</sup> (lines 1 and 6)<sup>9</sup>

يَا كَعْبُ إِنَّكَ لَوْ قَصَرْتَ عَلَى  
حُسْنِ الْإِدَامِ وَقَلَّةِ الْجُرْمِ  
وَالْخَمْرُ لَيْسَتْ مِنْ أَخِيكَ وَلَا  
كَيْنَ قَدْ تَخُونُ بِأَمِينِ الْجَلْمِ

Ka'b! would that thou wouldst restrain thyself to good wine-  
fellowship, and cease to give offence to thy company.

Nay the wine is not thy brother; sometimes it betrays him that  
trusts too much to his self-command (*ḥilm*).

At line 8 'Abd al-Masīḥ threatens *hijā'*: "I am a man of the house of Murra: if I wound you [with my satire] you will not stanch the wound."

<sup>6</sup> *Dīwān 'Amr b. Qamī'a*, 47.

<sup>7</sup> For *dhi mirratin* see A. Jones's comment on line 29 of Labid's *Mu'allāqa* in *Early Arabic Poetry*, vol. ii. Significantly Jones points to its use in the Qur'ān (6/53).

<sup>8</sup> See Šakir edn. of *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, p. 278, "Jawwu l-qaṣida . . .". Note that in poem 67 of the *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt* Mutammim b. Nuwayra praises his brother Mālik for avoiding scandal whilst drunk: (7a) *wa-in talqa-hu fi l-šarbi lā talqa fāḥišan*.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 279.

## THE INVECTIVE OF 'ANTARA AGAINST KHAMR

'Antara mostly treated wine in a manner compatible with his spartan and heroic spirit. He substituted the cup of wine (*ka's al-mudām*) for the cup of death (*ka's al-maniyya*); his exaggeratedly martial expression of *muruwwa* occasioned more disdain for wine drinking than appreciation; it was not a medium of hedonistic *fakhr* for him to such a degree as it was for other poets—his line in the *Mu'allaqa*, *fa-idhā šaribtu fa-inna-nī mustahlīkun* | *mālī* . . . is a boast specifically about generosity, expressed through the purchasing of wine. His more usual scorn for wine can be seen in the following scattered examples from his *dīwān*:<sup>10</sup>

نَدِي رَعَاكَ اللَّهُ فَقُمْ غَنِّ لِي عَلَى      كُنُوسِ الْمَنَائِي مِنْ دَمٍ حِينَ أُشْرِبُ  
وَلَا تَسْقِنِي كَأْسَ الْمُدَامِ فَإِنَّهَا      يَضِلُّ بِهَا عَقْلُ الشُّجَاعِ وَيَذْهَبُ

(p. 15)

God protect you my friend! get up and sing about the cup that I drink—the cup of death, filled with blood.

Spare me a draught of wine which sets the mind of a brave man on an errant [trail].

سَائِلِي يَا عُبَيْلَ عَيْتِي خَيْرًا      وَشُجَاعًا قَدْ شَيَّبَتْهُ الْحُرُوبُ  
فَدَعُونِي مِنْ شُرْبِ كَأْسِ مُدَامٍ      مِنْ جَوَارٍ لَهُنَّ ظَرْفٌ وَطِيبُ

(p. 22-3)

صَبَاحُ الطَّعْنِ فِي كَرٍّ وَفَرٍّ      وَلَا سَاقٍ يَطُوفُ بِكَأْسِ خَمِرٍ  
أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِنْ قَرَعِ الْمَلَاهِي      عَلَى كَأْسٍ وَلِبْرِيقِ وَزْهِرٍ

(p. 90)

إِذَا اشْتَغَلَتْ أَهْلُ الْبَطَالَةِ فِي الْكَأْسِ      أَوْ اغْتَبَقُوهَا بَيْنَ قَسِرٍ وَشَمَّاسٍ  
جَعَلْتُ مَنَامِي تَحْتَ ظِلِّ عَجَاجَةٍ      وَكَأْسٍ مُدَامِي تَحْتَ جُمُجُمَةِ الْأُرَاسِ  
وَصَوْتُ حُسَامِي مُطْرِئٌ وَبَرِيقُهُ      إِذَا أَسْوَدَ وَجْهُ الْأَفْقِ بِالنَّقَعِ مِقَاسٍ

(p. 93)

<sup>10</sup> Of the 17 lines of 'Antara quoted below only one (*ta'ālaw . . . nājiyā*) is found in Ahlwardt's *Diwans (The Diwans of the six ancient Arabic poets Ennābiga, 'Antara, Tarafa, Zuhair, 'Alqama and Imru'ulqais* (London, 1970)). Coupled with the easy language of these lines this makes their attribution suspect. However, in the way they present a single and exceptional view of a given theme there is perhaps a counter-argument to this suspect authenticity. In order to avoid repetition I translate only the first of the following five excerpts. The references are to *Sharḥ Dīwān 'Antara ibn al-Saddād*, ed. A.-R. Šalabī (Cairo, 1962).

لَا يَشْرِبُ الْخَمْرَ إِلَّا مَنْ لَهُ دِمَمٌ      وَلَا يَبِيتُ لَهُ جَارٌ عَلَى وَجَلٍ

(p. 134)

Furthermore, 'Antara consistently developed the imagery of the "cup" (*ka's*) into heroic and often morbid utterances (p. 15):

أَحِنُّ إِلَى ضَرْبِ السُّيُوفِ الْقَوَاضِبِ      وَأَصْبِرُ إِلَى طَعْنِ الرِّمَاحِ اللَّوَاعِبِ  
وَأَشْتَاقُ كَأْسَاتِ الْمَنُونِ إِذَا صَفَتْ      وَدَارَتْ عَلَى رَأْسِي سِهَامُ الْمَصَائِبِ

I long for the clash of sharp swords and I pine for the jabbing of spears.

I yearn for the cups of death when they are pure and the arrows of misfortune pass over my head.

In this way he may have transformed the emotional lexicon of *ghazal* and *khamr* (*aṣḥbū*, *aḥinnu*, and *aštāqu*) towards a quasi-lyrical heroism. In the following three lines we sense that wine poetry and its language have become an allegory for the spirit of the poet (p. 63):

نَدِيمِي إِمَّا غَيْبًا بَعْدَ سَكْرَةٍ      فَلَا تَذْكُرَا أَطْلَالَ سَلَمَى وَلَا هِنْدٍ  
وَلَا تَذْكُرَا لِي غَيْرَ خَلِيلٍ مُغِيرَةٍ      وَنَقَعَ غُبَارِ حَالِكِ اللَّوْنِ مُسَوِّدٍ

وَرِيحَاتِي رُحَى وَكَاسَاتِ مَجْلِسِي      جَمَّاجِمُ سَادَاتِ حِرَاصٍ عَلَى الْمَجْدِ

My two friends when you disappear after drunkenness, do not mention the abandoned traces of Salmā and Hind;

Mention only battle-hardened steeds and the dust of a blackened dark cloud . . .

The spear is my basil and the skulls of noble men who have striven for glory are the wine-cups of my *majlis*.

The lines display a mock-*khamriyya* quality which contrasts with the mock-heroism of some later *khamriyyāt*, especially those of al-Uqayšir,<sup>11</sup> in the Umayyad period, and al-Raqāšī<sup>12</sup> and Abū Nuwās in the 'Abbāsid period.<sup>13</sup>

'Antara's poetry, as we have glimpsed, treats of death copiously; *ḥikma* therefore, with its essential warning against life's finality,

<sup>11</sup> See Aghānī, 11/257-8.

<sup>12</sup> See the *Mimiyya*, *Ṭabaqāt al-Šu'arā'*, 227: *anā lā aṭlubu an yu' | rafa fī l-ḥarbi maqāmī || wa-bi-ḥasbī an tarā-nī | bayna fityānin kirāmī*.

<sup>13</sup> For mock-heroism in the *khamriyya* see especially the poem beginning *idh 'abbā abū l-hayjā* | -'i li-l-hayjā' (*Dīwān Abī Nuwās*, 198). For a brief discussion of the subject see Mattock, "Description and Genre in Abū Nuwās".



informed his verse. He found consolation in his own heroism, partaking victoriously in the very cause of a sometimes macabre worldview. Consider the following two verses:<sup>14</sup>

أرى الدهرَ لا ينجي من الموت ناجيا      تعالوا إلى ما تعلمون فإني  
وأشرب من كأسِ المنية صافيا      دعوني أوقى السيفَ بالحربِ حقّه

Go to what you know! I see that Time does not allow anyone to escape from death.

Let me give my sword its due in war, and quaff a pure drink from the cup of Death.

The first line invites participation in the certainties of life (*mā ta'lamūna*) as the only recourse given the inexorable approach of death. To many poets this would encourage the hedonistic pleasures of life—*al-mubādara ilā l-khamr* etc. However, the second line transmutes the hedonistic pleasure of the cup of wine to the noble pleasure of the “cup of death”; ‘Antara’s certainty in life comes from unyielding martial prowess.

To summarize, ‘Antara did not normally accept the nobility of *khamr*. His narrow interpretation of *murūwa* demanded the eschewal of *lahw/ladhdha*,<sup>15</sup> thus his treatment of *khamr* was essentially infused with the mood of *hijā*.

In the *Jāhiliyya* there were also poets who repented of their indulgence and declared as much in an invective tone; most notable amongst these was Qays b. ‘Āṣim.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, we will observe (Chapter 4) how al-A‘ṣā was consistently ambivalent in an attempt to preserve *ḥilm* and sustain his enhanced self-image.

#### THE Umayyad Period: From *HIJĀ'* TO THE BACCHIC POLEMIC

At least four poets of the Umayyad period were involved in wine polemics or duels to which we can give the label *naqā'id*: Abū Jilda al-Yaškuri<sup>17</sup> (d. c. AD 700), Ḥāritha b. Badr (d. 686), ‘Abd al-

<sup>14</sup> *Sharḥ Diwān ‘Antara ibn al-Ṣaddād*, 194.

<sup>15</sup> The necessity of some kind of thematic balance was fulfilled by the very characteristic treatment of his beloved, ‘Abla; she instilled some lyricism into his prowess.

<sup>16</sup> See Ch. 4. See also the chapter *Man ḥarrama l-khamra fī l-Jāhiliyya*, in *Qaṭb al-Surūr*.

<sup>17</sup> Sezgin (ii. 375–6) writes of him: “war Lob - und *hijā'*—Dichter in Kufa und ein

Raḥmān b. Arṭāt—Ibn Sayḥān—(d. 682), and al-Uqayṣir (d. 699). Like the compositions of the *mukhaḍḍam* poet Abū Miḥjan al-Thaqafi, their wine songs were largely monothematic pieces (*qif'as*), that is poems that stood outside the formal *qaṣida* tradition and its constraints. This aspect of their poetry is a clear signpost to the defiant and playful spirit of their bacchic muse, for they were not bound to the formal diction of the panegyric poets. Each of these poets had a high rank in society and was more concerned with making a normally antagonistic statement than producing lines of original *waṣf*.<sup>18</sup>

In their defence of wine they were at loggerheads with nascent Islam; yet the arguments for and against wine (even where they involved religion) were sometimes born of the ancient poetry in so far as they can be schematized around the dichotomy of *ḥilm* and *jahl*.

Of Ḥāritha b. Badr's seven poems in defence of wine contained in the *Aghānī* three are paired off against another antagonistic poem. In one composition Ḥāritha depicts a censorer being converted to the cause of wine by pleasing description (a technique expanded later by Abū Nuwās). In another poem he plays with the notion of *ḥilm* and inverts its usual significance, for, he states, “a man of *ḥilm* is not a man who abstains from wine, but a man who abstains from indulging in remonstrance and censure”.

Of all the Umayyad wine poets Ḥāritha most consistently contributes to our understanding of how the prohibition against wine (and the resulting pressures from religion and society) was a major, if paradoxical, impetus to the survival and development of the wine song. Bencheikh says of him:<sup>19</sup>

With [contentious poetry] must be linked the works of Ḥāritha b. Badr al-Ghudānī, comprising about 80 lines, which certify that numerous Abū Nuwās-like processes were already in use.<sup>20</sup> A great drinker (*khimmīr*), this noble Basran<sup>21</sup> of Tamim defied the prohibition on drinking where Bedouin bragging takes on quite significant tones of rebellion. But the poet is Freund des Alkohols”. As we shall observe, he sometimes combined in single compositions the spirit of *hijā'* with the celebration of wine.

<sup>18</sup> For developments in *waṣf* in this period we must look to the poetry of al-Akḥṭal.

<sup>19</sup> See “Khamriyya” in *EI*, p. 1002.

<sup>20</sup> Bencheikh does not clarify what he means by “Abū Nuwās-like processes”; the comment is, however, very apposite as will be borne out in the ensuing examination of Abū Nuwās' contentious poetry.

<sup>21</sup> Though he was from Baṣra “he resided at al-Kūfa which set itself up as heir to al-Ḥīra”.

mediocre and his Bacchism has few nuances, finding only inadequate expression.

The latter criticism is perhaps justified; but one should add that this inadequacy of expression is due to the fact that Ḥāritha was steered away from *waṣf* by the constantly defensive and sometimes pugilistic stance which he adopted *vis-à-vis* his own hedonism. There is little of the original imagery or the light humour of al-Uqayṣir, of whose poetry, unfortunately, far less survives.

*The Naqā'id of Ḥāritha ibn Badr (a Selection)*

*Khamr and Nabīdh*

Religious tension was often schematized around the dichotomy of *ḥarām* and *ḥalāl*; indeed, in certain anecdotes of early Islamic poetry, polarized attitudes to wine were represented by these two terms, which while not necessarily articulating absolute proscription were none the less expressive of genuine opinions about aspects of wine in its broadest sense. An important subject of discussion revolved around the uncertainties of distinction between *khamr* and *nabīdh*. Such is the background of the following anecdote and poem.

In the *Aghānī* we read:<sup>22</sup> "At the wedding of Ibn Misma', Ḥāritha offered 'Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād b. Ḍabyān something to quaff—[it was] *nabīdh* made from raisins and honey; after finishing a glassful Ḥāritha commented, 'You seem happy to drink this [lit. you drink it well]'; Ibn Ḍabyān answered, 'Indeed I drink it [and consider it] *ḥalāl*; [I do this] openly, whereas [someone else] might hide [what he considers to be] *ḥarām*'; Ḥāritha asked, 'Who is this other person?' He replied, 'The very person who is questioning me now'; upon which Ḥāritha composed [the following poem]":

وَإِذَا كُنْتَ نَدْمَانِي فَخُذْهَا وَأَسْقِنِي	وَإِذَا كُنْتَ نَدْمَانِي فَخُذْهَا وَأَسْقِنِي
فَلَمَّا نَاوَيْتُ أَنْ شَرِبَ الْخَمْرَ فِي الدَّجَا	فَلَمَّا نَاوَيْتُ أَنْ شَرِبَ الْخَمْرَ فِي الدَّجَا
حَيًّا وَتَقًا لِلَّهِ وَاللَّهِ عَالِمٌ	حَيًّا وَتَقًا لِلَّهِ وَاللَّهِ عَالِمٌ
وَمِثْلُكَ قَدْ جَرَّبْتَهُ وَخَبَّرْتَهُ	وَمِثْلُكَ قَدْ جَرَّبْتَهُ وَخَبَّرْتَهُ
إِذَا شُعْشِعَتِ بِالْمَاءِ طَيِّبَةُ النَّشْرِ	إِذَا شُعْشِعَتِ بِالْمَاءِ طَيِّبَةُ النَّشْرِ

<sup>22</sup> 23/456.

أَقَامَ عَلَيْهَا دَهْرَهُ كُلَّ لَيْلَةٍ	يُشَافِيهَا حَتَّى يَرَى وَضَحَ الْفَجْرِ
فَأَصْبَحَ مَيْتًا مَيْتَةَ الْكَلْبِ ضَحْكَةً	لَأَصْحَابِهِ حَتَّى يُدْهَدَّهُ فِي الْقَبْرِ
فَمَا إِنْ بَكَاهُ غَيْرُ دَنٍّْ وَمِزْهَرٍ	وِغَانِيَةِ كَالْبَدْرِ وَاضِحَةِ الْغَرِّ
وَبَاطِيَةٍ كَانَتْ لَهُ خَدَنَ رَبِيَّةٍ	يُعَاهَرُهَا وَاللَّيْلُ مُعْتَكِرُ السُّتْرِ

If you are my fellow-drinker, take it [and] give me some of it.

Leave aside him who would censure you [hypocritically]  
whilst sipping the wine [saying such as the following:]

"I am a man who does not drink *khamr* in the dark; but I drink *nabīdh* made from dates,

Out of humility and piety to God; for God knows everything we  
do both secretly and openly";

I have experienced it like you, Abū Maṭar; for the causes of death  
operate constantly (*wa-l-ḥaynu asbābu-hu tajrī*);

He drank it as someone who bleeds a gazelle—aged wine, of  
sweet fragrance when mixed with water;

Whilst he lived he came to it every night; speaking to it intimately  
until he saw the light of dawn.

So he died, as a dog dies, a laughing-stock to his friends [then  
was] lowered into the grave.

Only a wine-jug, a lute, and a pretty girl like the full-moon, with  
bright teeth wept for him,

And a container<sup>23</sup> who was his friend in time of doubt, whom he  
would fornicate with when the veil of night-time had descended.

The early part of the poem (1–3) mocks piety; either Ḥāritha deprecates the pious statement imputed to Ibn Ḍabyān, or he himself makes a pious utterance which is gainsaid in the continuation of the poem—the former seems a more credible interpretation. The final six lines deal with largely traditional motifs of *khamr*: in line 4 Death provides a background for indulgence and in some measure displaces the *tuqā* of line 3. This brief reflection on death adumbrates the amusing depiction of mourning in 7–9. Line 5 contains the sole element of *waṣf*, whilst line 6 delineates the standard schedule of bacchism. Line 7 depicts the "fatal" effects of wine—as in 'Amr b. Qamī'a before him and Abū Nuwās after him, Ḥāritha's forcefully real depiction of the effects of wine draws the whole poem close to ambivalence—one senses *hijā'*. In line 8 the death of the imbibor is mourned by the paraphernalia of *lahw*, the wine vessel etc. and, continuing this anthropomorphism, description of

<sup>23</sup> The Arabic text *nabāṭiyyatin* must surely here be emended to *wa-bāṭiyyatin*.

the wine-vat in line 9 is couched in the language of *ghazal*—it is as an evocation of the conventional erotic scenario of bacchism.

The derisory sentiment in line 7 requires that one consider who precisely is depicted in lines 5–6; either the poet speaks of himself in the third person, or he describes his companion's erstwhile indulgence. In the latter case language that approximates to the norm of bacchic celebration has been hijacked towards a form of satire. In the context of the poem satire is intended not as a reflection of the poet's attitude towards wine (specifically *khamr*) but as an exposé of the companion's hypocrisy. For he that uttered, "I am a man who does not drink *khamr* in the dark", is the same man who "came to it every night . . . until he saw the light of dawn . . . [who] died . . . a laughing stock to his friends . . .". Satire is honed by the irony that whilst "the causes of death operate constantly"—a standard invitation to the spirit of *carpe diem*—wine itself brings about an humiliating demise. The man who is satirized fails to live up to either the spirit of the "old order" (wine in the shadow of death) or the "new order" (piety/*tuqan*), whilst the poet himself obliquely vindicates his own opinion.

To summarize, the poem is introduced with censure and a pious statement, which is then undercut in the remainder of the poem. There is a temporal implication: in line 7 *aṣḥāḥa* implies that the object of satire died from his night-long bout; furthermore the simplicity of the poem's development is very fine: four lines of apostrophe → five lines of (satirical) narrative; this is somewhat similar to the harangues with prophetic narratives in the Qur'ān.

This simple arrangement (apostrophe → *matn*) recurs in some of the poems of this period analysed below; in certain cases apostrophe is resumed at the end of the piece, sandwiching the *matn* and suggesting that this type of poetry was susceptible to ring composition.

#### *Khamr and Nabidh continued—a poem by Ibn Sayḥān*

A poem which constructs itself around the arguments of *ḥarām* versus *ḥalāl* and, more specifically, *khamr* versus *nabīdh* in a more consciously literary manner is the following *mīmiyya* by Ibn Sayḥān.<sup>24</sup> It is possessed of a subtle coherence, which gives it a greater overall rhetorical quality in defence of the specific argument propounded. Ḥawī comments with reference to the poem:<sup>25</sup> "We

<sup>24</sup> *Aghānī*, 2/222.

<sup>25</sup> *Fann al-Šī'r al-Khamr*, 158.

see in [Ibn Sayḥān] an element of disrespect and mockery of religion, though he does not go as far in his obscenity as others . . ."; he quotes, however, only the last two lines of the *mīmiyya*, overlooking the sustained artistry of the poem as a whole.

In the anecdote related as background to the composition Ibn Sayḥān is reported to have said to his cousin, whom he found imbibing *nabīdh* made from raisins: "If you drink it because you consider *nabīdh al-zabīb* to be *ḥalāl* then you are a fool (*aḥmaq*); [however] if you drink it considering it to be *ḥarām* but [intending] to ask for God's forgiveness [from any sin that accrues] from it and intending [also] to repent then drink the best of it (i.e. *khamr*), for the sin is equal". He then recited:

دَعِ أَبْنَ سَرِيعٍ شَرِبَ مَا مَاتَ مَرَّةً	وَحَذَّاهَا سُلَاقًا حَيَّةً مَرَّةً أَلْطَعِمَ
تَدْعُكَ عَلَى مُلْكِ أَبْنِ سَاسَانَ قَادِرًا	إِذَا حَرَمْتَ قُرَاؤَنَا حَلَبَ الْكَزْمِ
فَشْتَانُ بَيْنِ الْحَيِّ وَالْمَيِّتِ فَأَعْتَرَمَ	عَلَى مُزَّةٍ صَفَرَاءَ رَاوَوْقَهَا يَهْمَى
فَإِنَّ سَرِيعًا كَانَ أَوْصَى بِحَبِّهَا	بَنِيهِ وَعَمَى جَاوَزَ اللَّهَ عَنْ عَمَى
وَيَا رَبَّ يَوْمٍ قَدْ شَهِدْتُ بَنِي أَبِي	عَلَيْهَا إِلَى أَنْ غَابَ تَالِيَةُ النَّجْمِ
حَسَنُوهَا صَلَاةَ الْعَصْرِ وَالشَّمْسُ حَيَّةٌ	تَدَارُ عَلَيْهِمُ بِالصَّغِيرِ وَالضَّخْمِ
فَاتَوَا وَعَاشُوا وَالْمُدَامَةُ بَيْنَهُمْ	مُشْتَعِشَةً كَالنَّجْمِ تَوْصَفُ بِالْوَهْمِ

Leave aside, Ibn Sari', the drinking of that which has died once.

Take it of the first juices, alive and of palatable taste!

It will leave you in possession of the kingdom of Persia—potent.

[Though] our "fundamentalists" (*qurrā*)<sup>26</sup> have forbidden "the milk of the vine",

There is a vast difference between the living and the dead; so

[hold] resolutely [to your opinion] about that palatable, yellow [wine] whose vessel overflows.

Sari'<sup>27</sup> enjoined love for it upon his children, as did my uncle—may God overlook the sin of my uncle.

How often of a day have I seen my father's children [indulging] in [wine] until the last star disappeared [from the sky].

They sipped it at the time of the afternoon prayer whilst the sun was alive—it was passed around amongst them in small and large measures.

<sup>26</sup> Who the *Qurrā'* were in this period is a matter of dispute; however, something like the modern notion of religious "fundamentalists" is not inappropriate.

<sup>27</sup> The addressee's father.

So they died and were resurrected while the wine (*mudām*) was in their midst, mixed, like the Seven Sisters<sup>28</sup>—it could be described only by one's fancy.<sup>29</sup>

The piece is introduced with the commonplace imperative of contentious wine poetry—*da'*. The seven lines as a whole move on naturally from the outset, since they develop the topic introduced in line 1, which articulates the simple argument put forward in support of wine. The topic is the dichotomy of life and death: in line 1 Ibn Sayhān advises Ibn Sarī' against drinking that which has died; he encourages rather the consumption of that which is alive. The phrase *mā māta marratan* may appear indeterminate in its signification; however, the phrase *sulāfun hayyatun*, where the signification of the noun is unequivocal, puts a spotlight on the drink being referred to—wine; *muzza*, a common descriptive epithet, further identifies the wine. Certainly with *mā māta marratan*, the tone of expression is pejorative and negative in contrast to the positive attribute of wine contained in the epithet-cum-synonym of wine, *sulāfun*, and the clearly positive attribute *hayyatun*. Line 2a describes the effects of the latter wine. In 2b the theme is religious proscription; the agents of prohibition are the *qurrā'*—religious fanatics whose mention is implicitly mocking in the use of the pronominal suffix (i.e. *our* ["good old"] religious fanatics). The notion of religious prohibition has a bearing on the way we should interpret 3a ("there is a vast difference between the living and the dead") for, given the anecdotal background of the poem, one may infer that *mā māta* in 1a refers to *nabīdh al-zabīb*, which was considered by the Hanafī *madhhab* to be *ḥalāl*.<sup>30</sup> This *nabīdh* is described as dead in line 1 and therefore should be associated with the *al-mayyit* of line 3. The introduction of the notion of *harām* in 2b affects our understanding of *al-mayyit*, for there is an allusion in the juxtaposition of 2b and 3a to the

<sup>28</sup> *al-Najm* here is probably the constellation, i.e. *al-Thurayyā*: see Paul Kunitzsch, *Untersuchungen zur Sternnomenklatur der Araber* (Wiesbaden, 1961), 84.

<sup>29</sup> This motif is reminiscent of Abū Nuwās': (*Diwān*, 43) *fa-atā-ka šay'un lā tulāmisu-hu l illā bi-ḥissi gharizati l-'aqli*; see below "Kāna l-Šabābu Maṭiyyata l-Jahl".

<sup>30</sup> See Ibn Qutayba's *Kitāb al-Ašriba*; see also Sa'id, *Ṭaṭawwur al-Khamriyyāt fi l-Ši'r al-'Arabī*, 98–104. For recent discussions of the various legal arguments about the proscription of wine, see Ralph S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffee Houses* (Univ. of Washington Press, 1988), 46–57; Joseph Sadan, "Vin—fait de civilisation", in Rosen-Ayalon (ed.), *Studies in Memory of Gaston Wiet* (Jerusalem, 1977), 129–60; "Khamr", *EP*, vol. iv.

Qur'ānic injunction against the consumption of carrion.<sup>31</sup> The inference of line 3 must therefore be that *al-ḥayya*, referring to the *sulāf* of 1, is, if not *ḥalāl*, at least less *harām* than *al-mayyit/nabīdh al-zabīb*.

The phrase in line 3, *fa-šattāna bayna l-ḥayyi wa-l-mayyiti*, is semantically dependent on the dichotomy described in the first hemistich, and accordingly encourages the consumption of *sulāf/muzzata l-ṭā'm* (line 1). Line 4 appeals to parental respect whilst reconciling religion by appealing to God's forgiveness: *jāwaza llāhu 'ammī*. The latter motif touches on the *tawba* mentioned in the introduction to the piece—*ghufrān* is an attendant topic of *tawba*; both are part of the background of this poem. Line 6 contains further religious defiance: as with al-Uqayšir, imbibing is discussed in conjunction with *ṣalāt*,<sup>32</sup> producing a manifest tension of values. The sun whose position announces the prayer time can be associated with the wine since it is termed *ḥayy*. Line 7 then ends the poem by reworking the balanced imagery of life and death: the depiction of drinkers dying and being resurrected within the allegorical realm of wine. The resurrection of the drinkers may be understood to be dependent on what, in the context of this short composition, is the most conspicuous attribute of wine—that it is "*ḥayya*". One senses that the unfolding of the life/death metaphor offers the poem an organic unity—one which defends wine, specifically as *khamr*. Few bacchic poems of this period share this delicate internal cohesion. We should also note briefly that this poem has a similar structure to the previous poem analysed: four lines of apostrophe are followed by three lines of narrative.

#### *Ḥāritha b. Badr versus al-Aḥnaf b. Qays*<sup>33</sup>

"al-Aḥnaf b. Qays reprimanded Ḥāritha b. Badr for his addiction to [wine]: 'You have made yourself an object of scandal and lost your self-control'; vexed at this Ḥāritha answered: 'I will please you by abstaining'. al-Aḥnaf departed, eager that [his friend] should

<sup>31</sup> Qur'an, 5/3.

<sup>32</sup> See the *rā'iyya*, *Aghānī*, 11/252. Here al-Uqayšir comes close to lampooning a noble companion of Muḍar whose inebriation he describes: he prays sitting down (*qā'idan*), combines the *ṣalāt al-zuhr* with *ṣalāt al-'aṣr* and to lighten the burden of liturgy recites *sūrat al-Kawthar*—the shortest *sūra* in the Qur'an.

<sup>33</sup> *Aghānī*, 23/457.

reform himself and returned in the evening. Hāritha then said [to him]: 'Listen, Abū Bakr, to my composition . . .':

يَذُمُّ أَبُو بَكْرٍ أُمُورًا يُرِيدُهَا      وَيَكْرَهُهَا لِلأَرْحَى الْمُسَوِّدِ  
فَإِنْ كُنْتَ عَيَّابًا فَقُلْ مَا تَرِيدُهُ      وَدَعْ عَنْكَ شُرْبِي لَسْتُ فِيهِ بِأَوْحَدٍ  
سَأَشْرِبُهَا صَهْبَاءَ كَالْمَسْكِ رِيحُهَا      وَأَشْرِبُهَا فِي كُلِّ نَادٍ وَمَشْهَدٍ  
فَنَفْسُكَ أَضْلَحُ يَا بَنَ قَيْسٍ وَخَلَّتِي      وَرَأَيْتُ فَا رَأَيْتُ بِرَأْيٍ مُقْتَدٍ  
وَقَائِلَةٌ يَا حَارِ هَلْ أَنْتَ مَمْسُوكٌ      عَلَيْكَ مِنَ التَّبْذِيرِ قُلْتُ لَهَا أَقْصَدِي  
وَلَا تَأْمُرْنِي بِالسُّدَادِ فَلَنْتِي      رَأَيْتُ الْكَثِيرَ الْمَالِ غَيْرَ مُحْلَدٍ  
وَلَا عَيْبَ لِي إِلَّا اصْطَبَاحِي قَهْوَةً      مَتَى يَمْتَرِجُهَا الْمَاءُ فِي الْكَأْسِ تُزِيدِ  
مَعْتَقَةً صَهْبَاءَ كَالْمَسْكِ رِيحُهَا      إِذَا هِيَ فَاحَتْ أَذْهَبَتْ غُلَّةَ الصَّدَى  
أَلَا إِنَّمَا الرُّشْدُ الْمُسِينُ طَرِيقُهُ      خِلَافُ الَّذِي قَدْ قُلْتُ إِذْ أَنْتَ مُرْشِدِي  
سَأَشْرِبُهَا مَا حَجَّ لِلَّهِ رَاكِبٌ      بِمَاهِرَةٍ وَحْدِي وَمَعَ كُلِّ مُسْعِدٍ  
وَأُسَعِدُ نَدْمَانِي وَأَتَبِعُ شَهْوَى      وَأَبْذِلُ عَفْوًا كُلَّ مَا مَلَكَتْ يَدِي  
كَذَا الْعَيْشُ لَا عَيْشُ ابْنِ قَيْسٍ وَصَحْبِهِ      مِنْ الشَّرْبِ لِلْمَاءِ الْقَرَّاحِ الْمُضَرِّدِ

Abū Bakr criticizes aspects of the generous, noble [man] which he [admires] but disapproves of.

If you [wish to] remonstrate, then say what you will, but leave out my drinking [habits]; I am, [after all], not alone [in this].

I will drink red wine, whose fragrance is as musk, at every club and venue.

Reform yourself, Ibn Qays, and leave me alone to my opinion, for it is not wholly wrong.

Many [a censuring lady] has said: Hāri, won't you desist from squandering; I replied: Go easy!

Do not order me to righteousness, for I have seen that no wealthy man is immortal.

My only fault is that I drink wine in the morning—wine which froths when water mixes with it in the cup,

Aged [wine], of reddish hue, its fragrance like Musk; when it wafts, it slakes the thirst of a man.

The clear path of piety is contrary to what you have said, since you are my guide to righteousness.

I will drink it as long as there are those that ride on the pilgrimage to God, openly, on my own or with any cheerful companion,

Whom I shall delight, following my appetite, and spending bountifully all that I possess.<sup>34</sup>

Such is life—not the life of Ibn Qays and his friends who drink pure water that cannot slake [a thirst].

The structure of this piece is: apostrophe (1–4) → dialogue (5–8) → apostrophe (9–12); dialogue has replaced the narrative of the two previous poems. Consistent with the growing tone of defiance in this period, the poet states that he will drink in the future (see esp. line 10) and throughout his life (indeed the putative events of the poem are all in the future); thus this type of bacchic poetry is distinct from that in which all events are set nostalgically in the past. This is part of the defiant mood, but may also be consonant with the altering perception of time and reality posited by Jacobi.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, Bencheikh's comment on "Bedouin bragging", for which we can presume that the ancient schedule of time and reality is preserved, fails to add the necessary qualification about the innovative use of the future tense in this period.

The "confrontation" between Hāritha and al-Aḥnaf related above has a sequel in the *Aghānī*,<sup>36</sup> attributed to the same source. Aware of the anger of al-Aḥnaf, who threatened to satirize Hāritha were it not for the indelicacies the latter himself knew about al-Aḥnaf, Hāritha reiterated his defiance: "can he [find] anything to upbraid me for other than my love for wine; it is something which I will apologize about to no one . . .":

وَكَمْ لَأَتِمُّ لِي فِي الشَّرَابِ زَجَرُهُ      وَقُلْتُ لَهُ دَعْنِي وَمَا أَنَا شَارِبُ  
فَلَسْتُ عَنْ الصَّهْبَاءِ مَا عَشْتُ مُقْصِرًا      وَإِنْ لَأَمْنِي فِيهَا اللَّثَامُ الْأَشَابِ  
أَتَرَكْتُ لَذَائِقِي وَأَتَى هَوَاكُمُ      أَلَا لَيْسَ مِثْلِي يَا بَنَ قَيْسٍ يُخَالِبُ  
أَنَا اللَّيْثُ مَعْدُوًّا عَلَيْهِ وَعَادِيًا      إِذَا سُلِّتَ الْبَيْضُ الرَّقَاقُ الْقَوَاضِبُ  
وَأَنْتَ حَلِيمٌ تَزْجُرُ النَّاسَ عَنْ هَوَى      نَفْسِهِمْ جَهْلًا وَحِلْمُكَ عَازِبُ  
فَحِلْمُكَ ضَنْهُ لَا تُذِلُّهُ وَخَلَّتِي      وَشَأْنِي وَارْكَبْ كُلَّ مَا أَنْتَ رَاكِبُ  
فَلَيْتُ أَمْرُو عَوْدَتُ نَفْسِي عَادَةً      وَكُلَّ أَمْرٍ مَا اعْتَادَ لَا شَكَّ طَالِبُ  
أَجُودُ بِمَالِي مَا حَبِيتَ سَبَاحَةً      وَأَنْتَ بِخَيْلٍ يَجْتَوِيكَ الْمَصَاحِبُ  
فَمَا أَنْتَ أَوْ مَا غَيُّ مَنْ كَانَ غَاوِيًا      إِذَا أَنْتَ لَمْ تُسَدِّدْ عَلَيْكَ الْمَذَاهِبُ

<sup>34</sup> The Arabic of this line (*wa-abdhulu 'afwan kulla mā malakat yadī*) is strikingly similar to Tārafa's *in kumta lā taṣī'u daf'a maniyyatī da'-nī ubādir-hā bi-mā malakat yadī* (*Mu'allāqa*, line 55).

<sup>35</sup> See "Time and Reality in *Nasīb* and *Ghazal*".

<sup>36</sup> *Aghānī*, 23/459.

Many a man who has censured me about wine have I myself  
upbraided saying: never you mind what I drink!  
I will never desist from red wine as long as I live, though vile,  
grey-haired people remonstrate with me about it.  
Am I to abandon my pleasures and come over to your passions?—  
[you should know], Ibn Qays, that one such as me cannot be  
despoiled.  
When sharp, slender swords are drawn I am a lion both in  
defence and attack.  
You are forbearing, yet ignorantly rebuke people about their  
soul's passion—your forbearance is that of a bachelor.  
Preserve your *ḥilm*, do not squander it; leave me to my business  
and "ride" what you will.  
For I am a man who has accustomed himself to something—  
doubtless every man seeks after that to which he is  
accustomed.  
I will be generous with my money as long as I live—you  
[however] are miserly, disliked by your companions.  
What business have you with the sins of a sinful person, if every  
manner of behaviour has not been forbidden to you (i.e. you  
yourself have sinned).

The first line focuses the very essence of the two men's exchange and explains its genesis: censure begets censure; line 2, as in the previous poem, emphasizes the poet's defiance by setting it in the future. That his censurers have gone grey explains their demands of *ḥilm*. Line 3 introduces heroic language, thus defence of wine is strengthened by *fakhr*; line 6 plays on the notion of *ḥilm* and inverts its usual associations, for a man of *ḥilm* is not a man who abstains from wine, but a man who abstains from indulging in remonstrance and censure. In the statement "ride what you will" there is mock heroism, where a hackneyed view of *muruwwa* is implicitly ridiculed—all the more so since what is actually described here is sexual intercourse. Allusion to "riding", and hence distantly to martial heroism, was common and could appear in the arguments of either censurer or censured (as above); thus in a poem to be discussed presently, Qatāda b. Mu'rib says rebukingly of Abū Jilda al-Yaškuri: *šadda rikāba l-ghayy*. By the 'Abbāsid period this type of mockery, self-mockery or mock-heroism, had become standard and could be found in phrases such as the following from the *dīwān* of Abū Nuwās: *kāna l-šabābu maṭiyyata l-jahli*.<sup>37</sup> Hedonistic

<sup>37</sup> The deftness of Abū Nuwās' poem lies in the fact that the defence of wine is

indulgence increasingly jibbed at traditional martial chivalry, the language and images of which were transformed into amusing allegories.<sup>38</sup>

#### Qatāda ibn Mu'rib versus Abū Jilda al-Yaškuri

Abū Jilda al-Yaškuri illustrates the dichotomy and antithesis which polemical poets wielded and which embraced religious elements—he writes, for example, in a poem of mock piety and repentance (again addressed to a specific adversary): "I will strive for piety (*taqwā*) and knowledge (*'ilm*)". In summary form: *'ilm* and *taqwā/tuqā* (and also *ruṣd* and *'aql*) are part of *ḥilm* and contrast *jahl*, to which no poet ever admits.

Below are a pair of duelling poems recorded together in the *Aghānī*; both are constructed around the aforesaid dichotomy. The first is by Qatāda b. Mu'rib:

لا يعرف الحق من الباطل	إن أباجلة من سكره
يسمع قول الناصح العاذل	يزداد غيباً وانهاكاً ولا
وكان في الذروة من وائل	أعيا أبوه وبنو عمه
فيسن خدن الرجل العاقل	فليت لم يك من يشكر
يعرفه كل فتى جاهل	أعمى عن الحق بصير بما
أصبح لا ألقى من الوابل	يصبغ سكران ويُمسى كما
إلى التي تجلب من بابل	شد ركاب الغي ثم أعتدى
والسجن دأر العاجز الخامل	فالسجن إن عاش له منزل

Abū Jilda in his drunkenness does not know falsehood from truth.

He increases persistently in error, not heeding the words of the  
admonisher, whose advice is sincere.

His father and cousins were incapable men though [having] been  
the pinnacle of [Bakr b.] Wā'il.

structured around this very phrase which, in the context of the *qaṣida*, represents one half of an essential dichotomy.

<sup>38</sup> Though wine poets mocked heroism, they themselves could be mocked for lacking *muruwwa*; indeed, the *Aghānī* (23/477) relates how on being defeated at Dūlāb by the *Azāriqa* Ḥāritha b. Badr was chided by one Ghawth b. al-Ḥubāb; the latter's principal medium of satire was *khamr*: (line 1) "Ḥāritha b. Badr, you hide behind the goblet; indeed you are more worthy of it than striking down the enemy"—wine only gives "Dutch courage": *'alay-ka bi-hā ṣabbā'a ka-l-miski riḥu-hā* | *yaḡallu akhū-hā li-l-'idā ghayra hā'ibi*.

So would that he were not of Yaškur—he is a bad companion for an intelligent man.

He is blind to truth, and sees [only] what every ignorant man knows.

He wakes up drunk, staying so until the evening; may I not be given anything to drink by this avaricious man.

He has fastened the saddle of error, setting off for [the drink] imported from Bābil.

Prison should be his residence as long as he lives; prison is the [rightful] abode of a reputeless and incapacitated man.

In the first line associated with *jahl* is *bāṭil*, which has religious significance, indeed the second hemistich is an allusion to the Qur'ānic *wa-lā talbisū l-ḥaqqā bi-l-bāṭil* (And cover not Truth with falsehood).<sup>39</sup> The somewhat overworked paradox in line 5 stresses the dichotomy we have spoken of: Abū Jilda is both *a'mā* and *bašīr*; his knowledge is subsumed in his ignorance. Line 2 provides a link between the essential *hijā'* of the poem and *'adhl*. Qatāda claims that Abū Jilda: *lā yasma'u qawla l-nāṣiḥi l-'ādhili* (does not heed the good advice of the censurer). The *'ādhil* is *nāṣiḥ* (a notion also to be found in the later poetry of Abū Nuwās) and is thus aligned with the poet. Since *hijā'* is normally directed at someone outside the tribe of the poet, it is significant that in line 4 Qatāda should begrudge Abū Jilda's lineage: *fa-layta-hu lam yakun min Yaškur*. In pre-Islamic poetry the antagonism of censure normally appears to come anonymously from within the tribe or the tribe of the poet's wife, whilst *hijā'* comes from outside; it is possible, therefore, that with the urbanization of society *hijā'* came increasingly from within and thus became less distinguishable from *'adhl*. The alternative to this suggestion is to argue that this poem is not *hijā'*, which is scarcely tenable.

The poem is concluded as a mildly litigious piece in that Qatāda condemns Abū Jilda to prison on the basis of his discourse. See line 8: *fa-l-sijnu in 'āša la-hu manzilu*.

In reply to Qatāda, Abū Jilda composed a *qit'a* the first line of which is a *mu'araḍa* of the former's opening verse:

فَبُحِثَ لَوْ كُنْتَ أَمْرًا صَالِحًا      تَعْرِفُ مَا الْحَقُّ مِنَ الْبَاطِلِ  
كَفَفْتَ عَنْ شَتْمِي بَلَا إِحْنَةٍ      وَلَمْ تَوَرِّطْ كَيْفَةَ الْحَابِلِ

<sup>39</sup> Qur'ān, 11/308.

لَكِنْ أَبْتُ نَفْسَكَ فَعَلَّ الشَّهَى      وَالْخِزْمِ وَالنَّجْدَةِ وَالنَّائِلِ  
فَتَحْتِ لِي بِالشَّتْمِ حَتَّى بَدَا      مَكْنُونٍ غَيْبٍ فِي الْحِشَا دَاخِلِ  
فَأَجْهَدُ وَقُلْ لَا تَتْرُكْ جَاهِدًا      شَتْمَ امْرِئٍ ذِي نَجْدَةٍ عَاقِلِ  
تَعْدِلْنِي فِي قَهْوَةٍ مُزَوَّةٍ      دِرْيَاقَةٍ تُجْلِبُ مِنْ بَابِلِ  
وَلَوْ رَأَاهَا خَرَّ مِنْ حُبِّهَا      يَسْجُدُ لِلشَّيْطَانِ بِالْبَاطِلِ  
يَا شَرَّ بَكْرِ كُلِّهَا مَحْتَدًا      وَنَهْرَةَ الْخَنْتَلِسِ الْآكِلِ  
عِرْصَكَ وَقَرُّهُ وَدَعْنِي وَمَا      أَهْوَاهُ يَا أَحْمَقَ مِنْ بَاقِلِ

How foul you have been! If you were a righteous man who knew how to distinguish truth from falsehood, You would cease insulting me [and hold no] rancour [against me]; and you would not have got yourself entangled in a hunter's net. However, your soul has refused to act with intelligence (*nuhā*), resolution (*ḥazm*), courage (*naйда*), and grace (*nā'il*). You have openly insulted me such that hidden deception has appeared from inside you. Strive and speak! Do not cease from striving to insult a courageous and intelligent man! You censure me about a palatable wine, a panacea imported from Bābil. Yet if [you, lit. he] were to see it [you] would fall to the ground with love for it, prostrating [yourself] to Satan—a false act. O you who are the worst of all Bakr in lineage—a man who indulges discreetly when he gets the chance, Preserve your honour; leave me to what I love, you who are more stupid than [the proverbial] Bāqil.

Abū Jilda turns Qatāda's "argument" around, criticizing his adversary in line 3 for lacking *nuhā* and *ḥazm* (analogous to *'ilm* and *hilm*); in line 5 Qatāda's insults (*jahl*) are implicitly contrasted with Abū Jilda's *'aql*. The poet identifies Qatāda as an *'ādhil* in the following line: *ta'dhalu-ni fi qahwatin* . . . Thus the censurer again steps out of the shadow of anonymity. In line 7 Abū Jilda creates an irreligious image highlighting the manipulation of *bāṭil* in the exchanges of the battling poets. Then, as in the first poem, Abū Jilda is conscious that *hijā'* is directed within the tribe (line 8): *yā šarra Bakrin kulli-hi maḥtidan*. Each poet questions the other's merit within Bakr b. Wā'il, and preserves, through his expressed reservations, the status of the tribe. The poem concludes defiantly: *da'-ni*—urging Qatāda to *'ird* (analogous to *ḥazm* in line 3) whilst

reiterating his lack of intellect—he is *aḥmaq* (analogous to *abat nafsū-ka fi'la l-nuhā* (also line 3)).

To conclude, both poems hold together as individual compositions, possessed of a single purpose—one is more distinctly aggressive, the other defensive; yet other than their forming two lines of discernible counterpoint the arguments presented do not depend on a careful structure which might serve a more consciously rhetorical exposition. The most valuable gleanings are that the *'ādhil* is the object of *hijā'*—a point to bear in mind in analysis of the poems of Abū Nuwās.

### Jarīr's Satire of Al-Akḥṭal

None of al-Akḥṭal's bacchic tableaux is specifically cast as a defence for wine,<sup>40</sup> though their eulogistic tone is in itself a positive stance. It is significant, therefore, that al-Akḥṭal's main sparring partner in poetry, Jarīr, focused on wine as a subject of mockery to mock the Christianity of Taghlib. These elements of bacchic lampooning are distinct from the material already analysed since they are contained within the *gharaḍ* of polythematic poems of *hijā'*.

One representative poem of Jarīr merits brief discussion: Ḥawī gives the following thematic breakdown for the *qaṣīda* beginning *A-lā ḥayyi Laylā idh ajadda jtinābu-ha*:<sup>41</sup>

1-12 *Nasīb*

13-20 *Hijā'* of al-Akḥṭal for the unavenged deaths of members of his tribe, plus indulgence in wine

21-32 Further satire of Taghlib and al-Akḥṭal

The first line of *hijā'* (line 13) inverts the heroic qualities and sense of responsibility preserved in Imru'ū l-Qays' famous utterance, *al-yawma khamrun wa-ghadan amrun*. Imru'ū l-Qays' line expressed the obligation to eschew wine once the task of avenging his father's death (Ḥujr) became incumbent upon him. Examine, in contrast, Jarīr's lines 13-15:

أَبَا مَالِكٍ مَالَتْ بِرَأْسِكَ نَشْوَةٌ      وَبِأَلْبَشِرٍ قَتَلَى لَمْ تُطَهَّرْ ثِيَابُهَا  
فَمِنْهُمْ مُسَجِّى فِي الْعَبَاءَةِ لَمْ يَمُتْ      شَهِيدًا وَدَاعَى دَعْوَةً لَا يُثَابُهَا  
فَإِنَّ نَدَامَاكَ الَّذِينَ خَذَلْتَهُمْ      تَلَاَقَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ خَيْلٌ قَيْسٍ وَغَابُهَا

<sup>40</sup> His bacchic expression is distinctly less rebellious than that of his contemporaries; this may be partly due to the fact that he was a Christian (of the Banū Taghlib), and also because he inserted *khamr* into panegyric *qaṣīdas*.

<sup>41</sup> *Sarḥ Diwān Jarīr*, ed. Ḥawī, pp. 75-7.

Abū Mālik! A stupor has made your head keel, whilst [the] slain lie at Bišr unavenged.

Amongst them [now], cloaked in a shroud, is a man that is no martyr—he preaches a creed that reaps no reward.

Boon companions whom you betrayed were attacked by the cavalry of Qays and their numerous spears.

The alleged ignominy of Taghlib is that they drink instead of seeking vengeance for the slain. Line 16 is scatological and leads naturally to verse 17 which depicts al-Akḥṭal vomiting his wine whilst the possessions of Taghlib were being looted:

ظَلِيلَتَ تَقِيٍّ الْخَنْدَرِيسَ وَتَغْلِبُ      مَغَانِمُ يَوْمِ الْبِشْرِ يُحَوِي نَهَايُهَا  
You vomited wine a while, meantime Taghlib's livestock was pillaged [on] the day of Bišr.

Line 18 satirizes the bacchic venue and the curative effects of wine; a tavern with singing-girls—a conventional image—becomes a brothel and normally medicinal wine instead afflicts even flies with illness:

وَأَلْهَاكَ فِي مَخَوِرِ حَزَّةٍ قَرَقَفَ      لَهَا نَشْوَةٌ يُمَسِي مَرِيضًا ذُبَابُهَا  
And in the whorehouse of Ḥazza you were entertained by a wine that sickens even the flies [that drink from it].

The final line of the initial section of *hijā'* (line 20) appears to invert the roles in the *diyār* motif of the *nasīb*: in line 20 it is Qays, the poet's tribe, who are the agents of the *diyār*'s destruction. The *nasīb* thus appears to adumbrate an aspect of *hijā'*; this provides thematic continuity between the two distinct phases of the poem. This suggestion is supported by line 5 of the *nasīb*:

وَنَخْشَى مِنْ الْأَعْدَاءِ أَذْنَا سَمِيعَةً      نَوْجَسُ أَوْ عَيْنًا يُخَافُ أَرْتَقَابُهَا  
We fear amongst our enemies an eavesdropper or a spy whose observation is to be dreaded.

In love poetry (*ghazal* or *nasīb*) enmity may come from the censurer, the calumniator, or the envious watcher; these are possibly signified by the *a'dā'*. Jarīr treated these inimical figures to foreshadow the antagonism which informs the remainder of the poem. This has a bearing on the treatment of the censurer in general in Arabic poetry; essentially the censurer is anonymous and fuels the antagonism which may pervade the thematic repertoire of *hijā'*. It is reasonable to posit that the censurer can represent anonymously a specific antagonist; thus in the poems of Abū Nuwās which begin



with the commonplace censorer there is a strong sense that the motif is not merely introductory but gives a forceful impulse to the descriptive and eulogistic passages of description that ensue. As we shall demonstrate subsequently, the *lā'im* of the first verse of *Da' 'an-ka lawmī* presages the figure of Ibrahīm al-Nazzām, who is lampooned specifically in the last two lines of the poem.

#### THE 'ABBĀSID PERIOD

To my knowledge no antagonistic poems survive in opposition to specific discursive *khamriyyāt* of Abū Nuwās. There are, however, examples of him lampooning a particular individual; as well as in answer to Ibrahīm al-Nazzām he composed a *khamriyya* of *hijā'* against one Abū Ayyūb.<sup>42</sup> The spirit of *hijā'*, furthermore, informs his frequently irreverent treatment of the *aṭlāl* topos; indeed a *khamriyya* in which eight out of twelve lines treat the *aṭlāl* wryly is a poem of *hijā'* almost to the same degree as it is a *khamriyya*.<sup>43</sup>

In view of the keen literary awareness he showed of poetry that pre-dated him, we have licence to consider certain poems in the light of the early material that has been discussed.<sup>44</sup> Abū Nuwās went beyond his predecessors in the extent and quality of his dia-

<sup>42</sup> See *Diwān*, 122. The poem mocks Abū Ayyūb for drinking *nabidh* as opposed to "*rāḥ*". It should be noted that none of the poems in the section entitled *Naqā'idu-hu mā'a l-šu'arā'* (i.e. Abū Nuwās' poetic contests with other poets) in vol. i of Wagner's edition (pp. 24-105) are pertinent to the ensuing discussion; those poems which catch our eye thematically are simply amplifications (or *mu'araḍas*) of *khamriyyāt* by Abū Nuwās.

<sup>43</sup> See *Diwān*, 52.

<sup>44</sup> In 1936 Muammad 'Arafah contributed "*al-Munāqaḍa fī šī'r Abī Nuwās*" to a volume of *al-Hilāl* devoted solely to the 'Abbāsid wine poet (p. 1170). 'Arafah makes an important observation about Abū Nuwās' poetry: *wa-qad nāqaḍa Abū Nuwās šu'arā'a 'ašri-hi li-miṭhli l-'ilali llati qaddamnā-hā (al-munāfasāt, al-khilāfāt . . .) wa-kāna fī-hi mā yughri šu'arā'a 'ašri-hi bi-an yunāqiḍu-hu wa-yughri-hi bi-an yunāqiḍa-hum*. 'Arafah mentions a pair of antagonistic poems: "*wa-qad haḍa Khindifa wa-Asadan bi-qaṣidati-hi llati awwalu-hā: a-lam tarba' 'alā l-ṭalāl l-ṭamsi l-'afā-hu kullu aṣḥama dhī rtiḡāsi. Fa-'araḍa-hu al-Hakamu b. Qanbar bi-qaṣidatin awwalu-hā: da'i l-aṭlāla 'an-ka Abū Nuwāsī l-'afā-hā kullu aṣḥama dhī rtiḡāsi*". Basing himself on these lines 'Arafah views one aspect of Abū Nuwās' spirit of *munāqaḍa* as being due to *šu'ūbī* sympathies. He does not, however, pursue this notion in detail. Another relevant observation is the following: "*wa-kāna mājinan khalī'an mutabaṭṭilan dā'iyan ilā l-tabattuli wa-l-mujūni wa-kāna dhāka yughri ahla l-jaddi bi-munāqaḍati-hi fa-min du'ā'i-hi ilā l-tabattuli qawlu-hu: da' 'an-ka mā jaddū bi-hi wa-tabattal*" Though 'Arafah's article makes this important point it is devoid of analysis; he neglects to clarify that a significant feature of Abū Nuwās' wine poems is their existence in a general ambience of *munāqaḍa* which Abū Nuwās engages by composing some of his finer wine poems as structured, rhetorical pieces.

The polemical aspect of wine poetry is commonly overlooked as illustrated by the

lectic. This enhanced quality, in the field of rhetoric (not specifically *badī'*) seems to coincide with features of both his poetry and his era discussed by both Hamori in "Form and Logic in Some Medieval Poems"<sup>45</sup> and Sterkevych in "Towards a Redefinition of *Badī'* Poetry".<sup>46</sup> Of particular interest, as will emerge, is the careful and varied use of contrast and antithesis (already observed in Chapter 1), and also the way he gives *waṣf* a function in the argument of individual poems, thereby allowing two elements of composition to coalesce in a unity of purpose.

Whilst no antagonistic poems survive in opposition to *specific* discursive *khamriyyāt*, there is none the less cause to examine the kind of material which may have existed in opposition to the wine poet's hedonistic rhetoric. Our attention will thus turn briefly to Abū l-'Atāhiya.

#### Argument in Abū l-'Atāhiya

The material discussed below is akin to the poetry of Abū l-'Atāhiya analysed in Chapter 2. The focus there, however, did not highlight that feature whereby the poet presents an anonymous interlocutor with what approximates to an argument. The following lines from two different poems amply illustrate the point—*sukru l-šabābi junūn*:

طالما طأعتُ جهلي وعقلي	طالما نازعتُ صبحي الشربا
أيها ألباني لهدمِ الكليالي	ابن ما شئت سوف تلقى خرابا
أأمنت الموتَ والموتُ يأتي	بك والأنيامُ إلا انقلابا
أيها المرءُ الذي قد أتى أن	يهجرَ اللهو بها والشبابا
ورأى كلَّ قبيحٍ جميلاً	وأبى للغي إلا ارتكابا

*naqā'id* contained in the anthology of his poetry entitled *al-Fukāha wa-l-Itinās fī Mujūn Abī Nuwās* (Cairo, 1898).

<sup>45</sup> See *Edebiyāt*, 2 (1977).

<sup>46</sup> *JAL* 12 (1981); see with caution her comments (p. 5): "the *badī'* style is nothing less than the expression in poetry of the entire scope of the metaphorical and analytical process that characterized Mu'tazilite speculative theology (*kalām*) and, in a broader sense, the whole cultural and intellectual framework of the era of Mu'tazilite hegemony . . .". Cf. esp. *Da' 'an-ka lawmī* in which Abū Nuwās pits himself against a Mu'tazilite theologian. Another quotation is also relevant, where Sterkevych defines aspects of *badī'* or proto-*badī'* poetry; they are: "1) the incorporation of the principles of logic and theological disputation; and 2) the free metaphorical manipulation of traditional genre and motival elements to express contemporary social ideas . . .".

For a long time I paid heed to my ignorance . . . and competed in drinking wine with my friends.  
 You who build [castles] to [compete with and] destroy Fate, build as you like—you will meet with perdition.  
 Do you feel secure from Death? Yet Death and Fate will grant nothing more than a great upheaval!  
 You Man who refuse to abandon the pleasures of youth,  
 And deem every foul deed a noble act—[who has a mind] only for sin!<sup>47</sup>

قَد طَالَ مِنْكَ الْمُجُونُ	يَا مَنْ تَمَجَّنَ مَهْلًا
هَوَّنْتَ مَا لَا يَهُونُ	هَوَّنْتَ عَسْفَ اللَّيَالِي
فَكُلُّهُنَّ خَوُونُ	لَا تَأْمَنَنَّ اللَّيَالِي
وَأِنْ كَرِهْنَا أَلَمُونُ	لَتُفْنِنَنَا جَمِيعًا
عَنَا وَنَحْنُ سُكُونُ	مَا لِلْمَنَايَا سُكُونُ

You! Libertine! Go slowly, for you have long been a libertine.  
 You have [tried to] humble the depredations of Time—you have humbled what cannot be humbled.  
 Do not trust [the vagaries] of the Nights; each one is treacherous.  
 Despite our loathing [for this end] Death annihilates us all.  
 Though we might be rested Fate [has us in mind] and takes no rest.<sup>48</sup>

The impulse here is clear: Abū l-'Atāhiya's critique—through standard *hikma*—has clearly become a pious one.

The first five verses of a 14-line *zuhdiyya*<sup>49</sup> can be interpreted from a certain perspective as an anti-*khamriyya*; they evoke some of the motifs of hedonistic poetry: (verse 1)

الحرصُ داءٌ قد أضُرَّ      بِمَنْ تَرَى إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

A zealous [desire for dalliance] is a malady which has adversely affected all but a few.

The description of *al-ḥirṣu* (eagerness to indulge in pleasures) as *dā'* alludes quite plausibly to the confession of lyric poetry, crystallized most eloquently in the much-cited hemistich of Abū Nuwās: *dāwi-nī bi-llatī kānat hiya l-dā'u* (Give me the cure that was the cause of

<sup>47</sup> *Diwān Abī l-'Atāhiya*, pp. 52–3.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* 417.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* 352.

my malady). Since the effects of inebriation are conventionally described figuratively as a "death" (in phrases such as *ṣarī' mudām*) light is shed on the meaning of line 3:

فَتَجَنَّبِ الشَّهَوَاتِ وَاحِدًا      لَذَرِ أَنْ تَكُونَ لَهَا قَتِيلًا

Avoid [your] carnal appetite and be wary of being slain by it.

Line 5 may be seen to argue against forced seduction:

مَنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَكَ مُنْصِيفًا      فِي الْوَدِّ فَابْتَغِ بِهِ بَدِيلًا

If someone behaves not justly in love (i.e. does not reciprocate your feelings) then seek another [lover].

If one is to read into the poem a pious message the verse may signify: do not seduce an unwilling victim, seek rather love of God.

The use of the word *zunūn* (or its singular form *ẓann*) occurs variously in the *zuhdiyyāt* and appears normally to identify the poet's opinion in antagonism to its antithesis. Examine the following three lines from a single 22-line composition:<sup>50</sup> (lines 11, 16, and 18)

وَالْتَصَارِيفُ جَمَّةٌ غَادِيَاتُ	رَائِحَاتُ وَالْحَادِثَاتُ فُنُونُ
وَالْيَقِينُ الشَّفَاءُ مِنْ كُلِّ هَمٍّ	مَا يُشِيرُ الْهَمُّومُ إِلَّا الظُّنُونُ
وَالْغِنَى أَنْ تُحْسِنَ الظَّنَّ فِي اللَّهِ	وَتَرْضَى بِكُلِّ أَمْرٍ يَكُونُ

The vagaries of Fate are legion, coming in the morning and going in the evening, and events are of different types.

[Only a single,] steadfast certainty [in the nature of Truth can] cure all worry—speculation brings only anguish.

[True] wealth entails righteous thoughts about God and resigned acceptance of any plight.

Abū Nuwās' *qaṣida*, *Li-man ṭalalun*,<sup>51</sup> may be loosely interpreted as a counter-text to this poem: in Abū Nuwās' *qaṣida* there is a claim that opinions are valid in their diversity: *al-ẓunūnu funūnu*. He thereby vindicates his championing of wine. In Abū l-'Atāhiya's poem it is only the vicissitudes of Fate that are various (line 15): *wa-l-ḥādithātu funūnu*. Hence the refuge of certainty (*al-yaqīn*) in religion, which discourages speculation: *mā yuthīru l-humūma illā l-ẓunūnu*. Righteous opinion is singular (*ẓann*): *wa-l-ghinā an tuḥassina l-ẓanna fī llāhi*.

<sup>50</sup> *Diwān Abī l-'Atāhiya*, 422–3.

<sup>51</sup> *Diwān Abī Nuwās*, 68–9.

## Abū Nuwās' Rhetorical Khamriyyāt

There is a *khamriyya* by the poet rhyming in *rā'* which Ghazālī has judiciously entitled *Fatwā Faqīhin* ("The Lawyer's Judgement").<sup>52</sup> It comprises 19 lines and is like no other wine poem in the *dīwān*. It is not a tavern poem, it contains no fanciful description of wine, nor does it depict seduction; it simply constitutes a tongue-in-cheek conversation with a learned man, steeped in the religious sciences, who gives the "soul-searching" poet advice on the most fundamental of Islam's *farā'id* (the pillars of Faith). The poet asks a series of questions about *al-nabīdh* (date wine), *al-ṣalāt* (prayer), *al-ṣiyām* (fasting), *al-taṣadduq* (alms), *al-ḥajj* (pilgrimage), *et al.*, and receives in each case an answer which sits comfortably with the spirit of a hedonistic individual: *nabīdh* is not *ḥalāl* (permissible), instead one should drink a more powerful wine (*'uqār*) that emits sparks; with regard to prayer one should make up for the lost evening prayers of a whole year during the daylight hours of a single day; one should never make the *niyya* (solemn intention) to fast; as for the pilgrimage it should not be performed even should Mecca be at one's doorstep . . . Thus unfolds a blasphemous counsel; it is this counsel only that is incumbent (*wājib*) upon the poet.

Though the jurist is described as *ḥabrun min al-aḥbār* (line 2)—that is, a Jewish scholar—this may simply allude to the fact that the *aḥbār* were, as converts to Islam, some of the finest jurists or most learned men of the early Islamic community (as in the case of Ka'b al-Aḥbār, one of the chief sources of *ḥadīth* literature).<sup>53</sup> More significant is that the whole composition is addressed at the *'adhūl* who resides at a tavern. The poem seeks, therefore, to justify indulgence in the face of opposition. In the case of this poem the defensive, even rhetorical, impulse is clear; but we find the same impulse, presented in a less dominant manner, in other poems.

Wa-Lāhin Laḥā-Ni'<sup>54</sup>

This poem unfolds logically towards a defiant quotation in the final line. It is a well-wrought piece of holistic discourse that sets itself against a putative argument—a rebuke. Of 8 lines the first three can

<sup>52</sup> *Dīwān*, 200–1. The poem has been translated into French by Vincent Monteil in *Le Vin, le vent, la vie*, 75–6.

<sup>53</sup> *Ḥabr* is by no means employed exclusively for non-Muslim scholars.

<sup>54</sup> *Dīwān*, 9; ed. Wagner, pp. 222–3. The full Arabic text and translation of this poem is contained in Appendix B.

be grouped together; line 4 is individual and contains the real substance of an argument; line 5 is the sole extent of *waṣf*; the last three lines also form a group. Censure provides the focus of the first three lines—the tone is, by design, emphatically antagonistic. Examine the Arabic of line 1:

وَلَا حَ لَحَانِي كَيْ يَجِيءُ بِيَدَعِي      وَتِلْكَ لَعَمْرِي خُطَّةٌ لَا أُطِيقُهَا

It is significant for the purpose of this discussion that the word *khuṭṭa*, in the second hemistich, is given by Lane, alongside the more common meaning, as "argument/testimony";<sup>55</sup> thus the hemistich can be rendered: "By my life, that is an argument I cannot accept". The apparent meaning of the phrase *kay yajī'a bi-bid'atin* in the first hemistich is: "A censurer censured me in order to bring about an innovation/heresy". *Bid'a* is a word of powerful resonance by virtue of its religious significance and is used here with some duplicity. It seems that Abū Nuwās intended a specious religious argument to counter a genuine religious disapprobation, hence there is a humorous discord between the censurer's *bid'a* and the pious advice that he gives in line 2b: *tuwarrithu wizran fādiḥan man yadhūqu-hā* ([wine] bequeaths a heavy burden of sin to whoever drinks it). By implication the meaning offered by the first hemistich is that Abū Nuwās' acquiescence in censure and hence abstinence from wine would in itself constitute a strange "heresy". This is borne out in hemistich 2a where we read *laḥā-nī kay lā aṣraba l-rāḥa* (He censured me so as not to drink wine). Effectively hemistich 2a explains 1a.

It is possible also to understand 1a and 2a in the following manner: "He has censured me in order to bring up the subject of heresy (i.e. to accuse me of heresy) . . . and thus to stop me drinking wine."

Finally, when we view the entire poem we find the phrase *kay yajī'a bi-bid'atin* to be even more nuanced, for it may also carry the sense: "He has censured me in order that I may answer him with a heresy". This the poet achieves by quoting at the end of his poem the famous and consummately hedonistic verse of the *mukhaḍḍam* Abū Miḥjan al-Thaqafi:

إِذَا مِتُّ فَادْفَنْنِي إِلَى جَنْبِ كَرْمَةٍ      تُرَوِّي عِظَامِي بَعْدَ مَوْتِي عُرْوَقَهَا

If I die bury me by the vine so that its roots can slake [the thirst] of my bones after my death.

<sup>55</sup> See Lane, p. 700.

In this way the poem is held together tightly, with the last line echoing the first (a common trait of the poet, and one which is variously achieved).

Real argument is confined to line 4: "Should I reject [wine] when God has not rejected the name of wine, and when the Caliph himself is its friend?" The logical premiss presented here is transparently facile; however, the force of the line lies in forging association between the wine and the highest authority in a manner that is striking, amusing, and, within its own compass, irrefutable. There are frequent attempts in the *khamriyyāt* to forge association, through a variety of contextual possibilities, with the Caliph in support of *khamr*; such, for example, is the case in the poem *Kayfa l-nuzū'* (see below).

The dialectic of the poem works in setting the first three lines off against the last three (6–8). The meaning of line 6 itself is somewhat opaque yet highly original:

فنحن وإن لم نسكن الخلد عاجلا فما خلدنا في الدهر إلا رحيقها

There is an adumbration here of death-in-wine<sup>56</sup> and therefore of the final line of the poem; I interpret the line thus: "Even though [in this world] we cannot live in Paradise for a brief moment, our Paradise [in this world/*dahr*] is its [i.e. Paradise's] wine." The second hemistich of line 7 again echoes *mā ḥayītu rafīqu-hā* (3b) with the analogous *innī ilā waqti l-mamāti šaḡīqu-hā*; that is, "I will drink until I die". A logical sequel to this image, if one were to be sought, would be that of drinking after death; this Abū Nuwās produces with a deftly appropriate quotation. In this way the meaning of line 6 unfolds in line 8. The poem does not present a real argument as such but there is a logical rhetoric of accumulating defiance which culminates in the final verse.<sup>57</sup>

The poem as a whole celebrates a fanciful future indulgence; to this end it is inspired by an earlier poem but it is a far cry from the predominantly nostalgic temporal framework of the *nasīb* (and its attendant passages) in pre-Islamic poetry.

<sup>56</sup> It is reminiscent of Ṭarafa's: *wa-in kunta lā taṣī'u da'fa maniyyati l fa-da'-ni ubādir-hā bi-mā malakat yadi*.

<sup>57</sup> In the context of mockery the phrase *fa-yā ayyuhā l-lāhi* (line 7b) should be noted; it may allude to the phrase *yā ayyuhā l-sāqī* and thus further identify the tone of *hijā'* which underscores defiance of the censurer.

### Kāna l-Šabābu Maṭiyyata l-Jahl

From time to time Abū Nuwās makes a show of acquiescing in a judgement in order to reject it later. This is clear from a short fragment which begins with a pious question:<sup>58</sup> *wa-qā'ilin hal turidu l-ḥajja* (Someone asked me, "Do you wish to go a pilgrimage?"); the poet answers positively: *qultu la-hu na'am* (Yes!); however, he qualifies this response with a reservation: *idhā faniyat ladhdhātu Baghdādhi* (When the pleasures of Baghdad are exhausted). He expands this condition in the next two lines, listing all the venues of indulgence in the vicinity of Baghdad (Qutrubul, al-Firk, Kilwādh, al-Šālihiyya, and al-Karkh)—these should first have been exhausted before performance of the Ḥajj. The last line confirms that the poet is ridiculing this solemn matter: "Suppose Baghdād is rid of me, how can I then be rid of Ṭizanābādh?"

A similar process operates in the more refined *qaṣīda*, *Kāna l-šabābu*.<sup>59</sup> The poem begins by acquiescing in a moral judgement: *kāna l-šabābu maṭiyyata l-jahli*.<sup>60</sup> However, the hemistich is a "false friend" to a putative censurer; for whilst it appears to adumbrate repentance and abstinence, the opposite emerges; indeed the poem ends with a sudden vindication of wine. Essentially the poem is bipartite, consisting of: (i) reflections on *al-šabāb* (1–6) and (ii) description of wine (8–15); line 7 provides a transition from the past to the present, whilst line 16 is the ironical and contrary conclusion which sets the whole *qaṣīda* against a background of censure.

Part (i) contains an ambivalence symptomatic of the *qaṣīda* as a whole; for, whilst the hemistich introduces *al-šabāb* as the "steed" of ignorance,<sup>61</sup> the following five and a half lines describe youth in a nostalgic and lyrical manner; the tone of confession is channelled into fond memories—a more positive attitude: (1–6)

<sup>58</sup> *Diwān*, 167.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* 42–3; ed. Wagner, pp. 233–6.

<sup>60</sup> Note the similarity of this image to Qatāda b. Mu'rib's condemnation of Abū Jilda: *šadda rikāba l-ghayyi*. It should be noted, however, that Ibn Qutayba prefers a variant of the opening hemistich in his *Kitāb al-Ši'r wa-l-Šu'arā'* (ed. Mufid Qumayḥa, Beirut, 1981, p. 426): *yarwī-hi l-nāsu maṭiyyata wa-lā arā-hu illā maḥinnata li-anna l-šāṭra li-l-Nābighati fa-akhdha-hu min-hu wa-huwa qawlu-hu: fa-inna maḥinnata l-jahli l-šabābu*. Ibn Qutayba's reading is plausible and does not affect our interpretation of the entire poem; however, in support of reading *maṭiyya* is the metaphor in line 7.

<sup>61</sup> *Jahl* is used in the broadest sense of untempered behaviour.

وَمُحَسِّنَ الصَّحَكَاتِ وَالْهَزْلِ  
وَمَشَيْتُ أُخْطِرُ صَبَّاتِ الثَّلْجِ  
وَأَصَاحَتِ الْآذَانُ لِلْمُحَلِّ  
عِنْدَ الْفَتَاةِ وَمُذْرِكِ الثَّلْبِ  
حَتَّى أَكُونَ خَلِيفَةَ الْبَعْلِ  
نَفْسِي أَعَانَ يَدِي بِالْفَعْلِ  
كَانَ الشَّبَابُ مَطِيَّةَ الْجَهْلِ  
كَانَ الْجَمِيلُ إِذَا ارْتَدَيْتُ بِهِ  
كَانَ الْفَصِيحُ إِذَا نَطَقْتُ بِهِ  
كَانَ الْمُشْفَعُ فِي مَآرِبِهِ  
وَالْبَاعِي وَالنَّاسُ قَدْ رَقَدُوا  
وَالْأَمْرِي حَتَّى إِذَا عَزَمْتُ

Youth was the steed of [my] ignorance [yet] adorned our laughter  
and our merriment.

It was my beauty if I donned it, walking in my resonant sandals.  
It was my eloquence as I spoke, and when ears listened to my  
discourse.

It interceded for my desires with the young girl, and achieved my  
revenge.

It urged me on, as people slept [appointing me] her husband's  
vicegerent.

It ordered me, that even when my soul determined [restraint] it  
helped my hands to a deed!

Line 7 brings the remainder of the poem into the present:

فَالآنَ صَرْتُ إِلَى مُقَارِبَةٍ وَحَطَطْتُ عَنْ ظَهْرِ الصَّبِيِّ رَحْلِي  
Now my steps have shortened [with age] and I have unloaded my  
saddle from the back of youthful passions.

The line is a false signpost to repentance and abstinence in old age  
(which would normally be associated, expressly or otherwise, with  
*ḥilm*); for the celebration of wine that begins at line 8 sustains the  
poet's love for wine in the present (*wa-l-ka'su ahwā-hā*), despite  
its destruction of his livelihood and mature qualities. Examine the  
positive depiction of wine which follows:

صَفَاءُ مَجْدَهَا مَرَازِبُهَا  
ذُخِرَتْ لِأَدَمَ قَبْلَ خَلْقِهِ  
فَأَتَاكَ شَيْءٌ لَا ثَلَامَ لَهُ  
فَتَرَوُدُ مِنْهَا الْعَيْنُ فِي بَشَرٍ  
فَإِذَا عَلَاهَا الْمَاءُ أَلْبَسَهَا  
حَتَّى إِذَا سَكَنْتَ جَوَانِحُهَا  
خَطَيْنِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَمَجْتَمِعِ  
جَلْتُ عَنِ النَّظَرِ وَالْمِثْلِ  
فَتَقَدَّمَتْهُ بِخَطْوَةِ الْقَبْلِ  
إِلَّا بِحَسْرِ غَرِيزَةِ الْعَقْلِ  
حَرِّ الصَّحِيفَةِ نَاصِعٍ سَهْلٍ  
حَبِّبًا كَمَثَلِ جَلَّالِ الْحَجْلِ  
كَتَبْتُ بِمَثَلِ أَكَارِعِ النَّمْلِ  
غُفِّلَ مِنَ الْإِعْجَامِ وَالشَّكْلِ

[It is a] golden wine, glorified by its Persian owners and which  
transcends any similarity to itself;  
It was saved for Adam before his creation, preceding him by a  
step [in Time];  
It came to you as a thing to be grasped only by the instinct and  
sensitivity of your intellect;  
Your eye circles around it[s] pure, smooth, gilded skin;  
If water is poured onto it, [its surface] is clothed in bubbles that  
are like the bells of an anklet,  
So that when it settles, the sides of the goblet produce writing  
which appears in the form of ants' feet,  
[They form] two lines of loose and joined letters, devoid of  
diacritical marks (i.e. they are unintelligible).

Line 16 concludes the poem ironically: the conjunctive particle *fā'*  
(with which it begins) forges a connection with the preceding  
passage; it is thus the qualities of the wine already outlined which  
effectively provide the poet's answer to censure:

فَاعْذِرْ أَخَاكَ فَإِنَّهُ رَجُلٌ مَرَّتْ مَسَامِعُهُ عَلَى الْعَذْلِ

So excuse your brother, for he is a man whose ears have grown used  
to censure.

The basic dichotomy of the poem is evident; we have still, however,  
to examine the imagery which enables the final statement: within  
the schema of the dichotomy there is a contrast between youth as  
*maṭiyyatu l-jahli* and wine as perceptible only through the intellect  
(*bi-ḥissi gharizati l-'aql*).<sup>62</sup> The wine is, indeed, of an almost numi-  
nous quality, preceding as it does the creation of Adam. Far from  
being associated with youth, wine contrasts it. Here the dichotomy  
of *jahl* and *'aql* (part of *ḥilm*) provides the very structure of the  
poem.

That the wine is older than Adam allows it to transcend time  
and thus, effectively, to transcend what within a cosmological time-  
scale is a fleeting transition from youth to old age. There is a pre-  
sumption in line 8 of abstinence but the ensuing description of wine  
relegates this to an irrelevance.

In structure the *qaṣida* involves the same kind of inversion as  
takes place in *'Afā l-muṣalla*,<sup>63</sup> in which the celebration of wine in

<sup>62</sup> The image is reminiscent of another 5-line poem of *waṣf* which expands on the  
image of the first line: (*Dīwān*, 47) *daqqa ma'nā l-khamri ḥattā huwa fī rajmi l-*  
*zunūni*.

<sup>63</sup> *Dīwān*, 3-5. See also above, pp. 112-114.

the present is offset against initial introductory lines about youth.<sup>64</sup> Abū Nuwās struggled against the social norm according to which old age necessitated restraint. This theme is amply clear in his short piece *Kayfa l-nuzū'*.<sup>65</sup>

#### Kayfa l-Nuzū'

In this *qaṣīda*<sup>66</sup> a question is asked in the first line:

كَيْفَ التَّزَوُّعُ عَنِ الْصَبَا وَالْكَأْسِ      قَسْ ذَا لَنَا يَا عَاذِلِي بِقِيَّاسٍ  
How can I give up [my] passions and the wine cup? Sir, consider  
this carefully!

The subject matter is familiar but the format is new. By asking a question about abstinence (*nuzū'*) Abū Nuwās allows himself to answer with an original and defiant statement that draws the whole debate into a quasi-legal forum. Defiance and antagonism, the essence of a spirited exchange, emerge in the second hemistich in both the use of the imperative, a frequent manner of address against censure, and the mention of the *'ādhil* himself. More significant are the words *qis* and *qiyās*, which are used both literally in the straightforward sense of compare/consider—logical after the initial question in 1a—and as a trope which evokes a legal scenario and context for discussion. *Qiyās* is the one branch of the *uṣūl al-fiqh* through which the drinking of wine could gain religious endorsement, and it was through *qiyās*, applied to the interpretation of some *ḥadīth*, that the Ḥanafīs drew their conclusions as to the permissibility of certain types of wine—notably *nabīdh*.<sup>67</sup>

Lines 2 and 3 provide an answer, arguing against the necessity of abstinence. Abū Nuwās' argument is founded in a simple logic:

وَإِذَا عَدَدْتُ سِنِيَّ كَمْ هِيَ لَمْ أَجِدْ      لِلشَّيْبِ عُذْرًا فِي التَّزَوُّلِ بِرَاسِي  
قَالُوا شَمِطْتَ فَقُلْتُ مَا شَمِطْتُ يَدِي      عَنْ أَنْ تَحُثَّ إِلَيَّ قَمِي بِالْكَأْسِ

If I count my years I find no excuse for greyness to descend upon  
my head [of hair].

They [may] say, 'You have become [old and] grey', yet my hand is  
not so [old] that I cannot hold a cup to my [lips]!

<sup>64</sup> In the case of *'Afā l-muṣallā* youth is a time of piety and religious worship which yields to a present of indulgence.

<sup>65</sup> Though the poem comprises 9 lines only it qualifies as a *qaṣīda*, in the strictest terms, due to the *taṣrī'* in the first line. More significant, however, is that the poem makes a vague allusion to the formal *qaṣīda* structure and thematic register in being cast, in the final line, as a somewhat accelerated poem of *madiḥ*.

<sup>67</sup> See Sa'id, *Taṭawwūr*, 98–104. For further reading see n. 30 above.

Hoary locks are not perforce a signpost to old age and, more especially, incapacity;<sup>68</sup> the logical inference of line 3 is "whilst I can drink I should and will". In the apparent logic of his conclusion Abū Nuwās has performed a sleight of hand; for abstinence from wine is drawn away from religious obligation, where faith holds sway over logic, and evaluated only rationally, through the invitation to *qiyās*, in the context of *ṣayb*. The latter is presented as a variable which may or may not signal the incapacity that demands abstinence.<sup>69</sup> One senses that only incapacity would contravene the demands of *ḥilm*.

Four lines of description follow. The wine is praised for its experience (*makhbūru-hā*)—an image analogous to the depiction of wine's old age (its origins in the time of Adam). It is worthy in line 4b of the imbibers' most refined eulogy (*fa-la-hā l-muhadhhabu min thanā'i l-ḥāsī*)—a clue to the nature of bacchic description within the accepted generic framework of Arabic poetry; that is, *waṣf* of *khamr* functions as *madiḥ* of *khamr*. Praise of wine in itself supports the imbibing of wine. In lines 5–6 wine is celebrated as a source of light and is more delightful than the vanquishing of a once recalcitrant beloved, both of which themes, when treated in detail, may lend a structural coherence to the *khamriyya*. In the allusions that he makes to favourite topics of celebration Abū Nuwās gives the whole corpus of his wine poetry a role in the persuasive function of this poem. The qualities of wine are then capped in line 7 by the good nature and character of its entourage (*ṭibu khalā'iqi l-jullāsī*).

The introduction of human qualities adumbrates the final two lines of satire and eulogy which recapitulate and round off the discursive aspect of the poem. Progressing from a logical but defensive argument at the outset of the *qaṣīda*, Abū Nuwās now attacks the censorer, exposing his hypocrisy in abstaining from wine for the sake of appearance only:<sup>70</sup>

<sup>68</sup> This motif is reminiscent of an anonymous fragment from the Greek Anthology; see *Greek Lyric*, II, p. 213: φιλω γέροντα τερπνόν, | φιλω νέον χορευτάν | ἂν δ' ὁ γέρον χορευῇ, | τριχῆς γέρον μὲν ἔστιν | τὰς δὲ φρένας νεάζει (I love a pleasant old man, I love a young dancer: and if the old man dances, then he is old as far as his hair is concerned, but young at heart).

<sup>69</sup> In one *khamriyya* (see *Dīwān Abū Nuwās*, 679) *ṣayb* lends urgency to the poet's desires: (line 1a) *ḍaḥika l-ṣaybu fī nawāḥi l-ḡalāmi* → (line 2a) *fa-sqi-ni sulāfatan binta 'asrin*.

<sup>70</sup> We have seen criticism of hypocrisy to have been a concern of earlier Umayyad wine poets, such as Ḥāritha b. Badr.

فَإِذَا نَزَعْتَ عَنِ الْعَوَابَةِ فَلْيَكُنْ لِلَّهِ ذَلِكَ التَّرَعُّ لَا لِلنَّاسِ

If you will abstain from folly, then let this abstinence be for God  
not for [other] people.

This attitude vindicates the poet's religious sensitivity on its own terms. The final line seals the poem as *madīh*, altering its rhetorical focus in defence of wine:<sup>71</sup>

وَإِذَا أَرَدْتَ مَدِيحَ قَوْمٍ لَمْ تَمِنْ فِي مَدْحِهِمْ فَمَدَحَ بَنِي عَبَّاسٍ

And if you wish to praise a people and be honest in your praise,  
then praise Ban 'Abbās.<sup>72</sup>

There is in fact a clever stepping-stone towards mention of the Banū 'Abbās in the preceding line, namely mention of God. An association is contrived between God and the protectors of religion—the 'Abbāsid Caliphate. Thus the redirecting of attention from the hypocritical outpourings of a pious society towards the poet's own intimated religious sincerity, despite indulgence, is achieved by association with the Banū 'Abbās. Abū Nuwās found a short cut towards defending his duplicitous position by invoking the name of the ruling dynasty.

Like *Kayfa l-nuzū'*, *Yusrun wa-'usrun*<sup>73</sup> is a poem which develops a rhetorical counter-riposte based on language with religious resonances. The ethical framework within which the poet is working is that of the new order—as opposed to the old order of ancient poetry. It is a 7-line poem which appears innocuous in content—fleeting statements of defiance and description are apparently devoid of any purposeful structure, and end with a commonplace quotational *envoi*. However, the poem has a delicate chiasmic structure which eloquently bespeaks its epicurean stance. In the opening line the key-word is *naza'a*:

قَالُوا نَزَعْتَ وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمُوا وَطَرَى فِي كُلِّ أُعْبِدَ سَاجِي الْأَطْرَفِ مِيَّاسٍ

They have said, "You have forsworn [indulgence]", ignorant of  
my desire for every slender, swaggering youth with a gentle  
gaze.

<sup>71</sup> This line is missing from Wagner's edition; see pp. 186–7.

<sup>72</sup> This verse is reminiscent of Muṭī' b. Iyās': *wa-idhā aradta madīha-hu l lam yakdu qawlu-hu fī binā'i-hi*; see von Grunebaum, "Three Arabic Poets of the Early Abbasid Age (The Collected Fragments of Muṭī' b. Iyās, Salm al-Khāsir and Abū 's-Šamaqmaq)", *Orientalia*, 17 (1948); line 9 of fragment III in praise of Ghāmī b. Yazid. Line 3 of the same poem foreshadows another sentiment to be found in Abū Nuwās: *da'i l-nasiba wa-dhikra-hu*. <sup>73</sup> *Dūwān*, 140; ed. Wagner, pp. 190–1.

The second line replies to the first and begins the poet's defence of both *ghazal* and *khamr*:

كَيْفَ التَّرَوُّعُ وَقَلْبِي قَدْ تَقَسَّمَهُ لَحْظُ الْعُيُونِ وَلَوْ أَنَّ الرَّاحَ فِي الْكَاسِ

How to abstain, when my heart is sundered by [endearing] eyes  
and the colour of wine in its chalice?

Line 3 sustains treatment of *nuzū'*. The religious ideal of abstinence leading towards *ruṣd* is confronted directly: *idh naza'tu ilā ruṣdin takannafa-nī ra'yānī*; Abū Nuwās offers his opinion—*ra'y*<sup>74</sup>—couched in the following line in language derived from an essentially Islamic dichotomy: '*usr* and *yusr*'.<sup>75</sup> Playfully the poet skirts the boundaries of serious religious debate; he disguises, within a conventional framework, words which would have deeper significance in the implicitly religious context against which he pits himself.

The Qur'ānic *innamā ma'a l-'usri yusr*<sup>76</sup> articulates an all-encompassing dichotomy, implicitly subsumed by *Imān* inasmuch as it is not restricted to any particular human context; thus Abū Nuwās experiences the Qur'ānic dichotomy as twin indulgence (women and wine): wine is the poet's consolatory ease (*yusr*) against painful love (*'usr*): (line 4)

فَالْيُسْرُ فِي الْقَصْفِ لِلْأَيَّامِ مَبْتَدَلٌ وَالْعُسْرُ فِي وَضَلٍ مِنْ أَهْوَى مِنَ النَّاسِ

*Yusr* comprises earnest days of revelling, whilst '*usr* is the  
[painful] company of the one I love.

Whilst the first three lines revolve around the disputed focal point of abstinence/restraint (*naza'a*: (1) *qālū naza'ta*; (2) *kayfa l-nuzū'u*; (3) *idhā naza'tu*), they also introduce the dichotomy of subject matter—wine and love—that is schematized in the fourth line. The final three lines produce a more unrestrained celebration of the poet's pleasure which, in the final verse, cushions the memory of a painful love. Together these three lines confirm that the Qur'ānic dichotomy has been transformed.

The chiasmic structure of the poem resides in the fact that the fourth—the middle—line of the poem crystallizes the dichotomy of

<sup>74</sup> The use of *ra'y* here appears to allude to its technical sense in *fiqh*; see EI<sup>7</sup>, iii. 1133: "opinion. As a technical term denoting the purely intellectual function it is used in the system of Islām in opposition to such terms as '*hilm*, *sunna*, *kitāb Allāh* and *ḥadīth*." *Ra'y* was eventually limited to *qiyās* (see the previous poem).

<sup>75</sup> This dichotomy existed in the *jāhiliyya*. However, its inclusion in the Qur'ān transformed its significance. <sup>76</sup> Qur'ān, 94/4.



subject matter and simultaneously transforms the initial demurral of the first three lines (the poet coming to terms with false expectations of his abstinence) into an unequivocal opinion: (5a) *lā khayra fī l-'ayši illā bi-l-mudāmi* (There is no goodness in life except with wine). It is significant, furthermore, that the prosodic pulse of line 4 is distinct from the other verses of the poem—the dichotomy being expressed neatly through the two hemistichs of the verse.

#### Li-Man Ṭalalun

A *qaṣīda* convincing as a piece of argumentation in support of wine is the bi-partite *Li-man ṭalal* of fifteen lines.<sup>77</sup> It contradicts the most familiar current of Abū Nuwās' *khamriyyāt* by treating the *aṭlāl* tradition conventionally in the initial six lines. Abū Nuwās abhorred imitation of ancient desert topoi; he also, however, subverted the *aṭlāl* motif to suit his own literary ends (as a device aiding the structural independence of his wine poetry, and as an element of irony, parody, and humour). Therefore, perforce setting aside the impossible task of establishing the *qaṣīda*'s position in the chronology of Abū Nuwās' *dīwān*, we are led to one of two possible conclusions: that the initial six lines of *dhikr al-aṭlāl* are consonant with the poet's mood at the time of composition; or that they chime with the overall impulse of the *qaṣīda*.

The initial six lines are evocative (in the *ṭawīl* metre so natural to such contemplative ingresses from the earliest examples of Arabic poetry) and reveal the poet's skill in wielding ancient motifs with an originality and simplicity of language not incongruous to the lyrical language of the bacchic section:

عَفَا آيَهُ إِلَّا خَوَالِدُ جُونُ	لَمَنْ طَلَّلَ عَارِي الْمَحَلِّ دَفِينُ
غَرِيَابُ مُمَسَّى مَا لَهْنٌ وَكُونُ	كَمَا اقْتَرَنْتُ عِنْدَ الْمَيِّتِ حَمَامُ
فِيحُلُوْ وَأَمَّا مَسْهَاهَا فَيَلِينُ	دِيَارُ الَّتِي أَمَّا جَنَى رَشَفَاتِهَا
بِوَجْهِ وَأَمَّا وَجْهَهَا فَحُصُونُ	وَمَا أَنْصَفَتْ أَمَّا الشُّحُوبُ فَبَيِّنُ

Whose are [these] remnants—this spot bare where [the riders] alight—buried away; their traces [now] effaced—all but the enduring [hearthstones] of a dark and sombre hue;  
As if doves have gathered at this dwelling, strangers one evening, without a nest;

<sup>77</sup> See *Dīwān*, 68; ed. Wagner, pp. 305–8.

The abode of one whose saliva was sweet and whose touch was soft;<sup>78</sup>

Yet she was not just—emaciation is visible on my face, whilst her face is preserved [from decay].

The poet's subjugation to love and the qualities of the beloved (*wa-ammā wajhu-hā fa-maṣūnu*) bring to mind the imagery of 'udhrī *ghazal* and set the poem firmly into the tradition that had developed after the more impersonal and self-rebuking love poetry of the *Jāhiliyya*. In the earliest poetry the poets cut their amorous losses;<sup>79</sup> in the 'udhrī tradition the abandoned traces are translated into the very epiphany of the beloved.<sup>80</sup> The very close association between the *diyār* and the beloved (insinuated by the feminine suffix *-hā*) supports this interpretation; furthermore the strength of the poet's emotions implies an effort of sincerity that has a bearing on (a) the very existence of the lines as an experiment in composition, and (b) their relationship to the second half of the *qaṣīda*. Lines 5 and 6 complete the contemplative ingress:

وَدَوَّيْنِ لِلرَّيْحِ بَيْنَ فُرُوجِهَا	فُنُونٌ لَعَاتٍ مُشْكِلٌ وَمُيِّنٌ
رَمَيْتُ بِهَا الْعَيْدَى حَتَّى تَحَجَّلَتْ	نَوَاطِرُ مِنْهَا وَانْطَوَيْنَ بَطُونُ

Into many a desert, wherein the wind through the contours of the land produces a variety of language—both obscure and clear,  
Have I urged my pedigree she-camel until her eyes were sunken and her belly emaciated.

The lines are scarcely innovative, yet two aspects draw attention: first, that the image of the wind in the desert producing obscure and clear sound is reminiscent of the image produced in line 11 in the bacchic section. The image is also similar to the description of bubbles, in another poem, as *muntaẓimātun wa-ghayru muntaẓimin*.<sup>81</sup> In some measure this must constitute the signature of the poet, supporting the authenticity of the *qaṣīda* in all its surviving parts. Secondly, we should accept the traditional "function" of the whole motif; the poet is to be associated with the long-suffering and

<sup>78</sup> Essentially the line creates an association between the *diyār* and the beloved.

<sup>79</sup> See Jacobi, "Time and Reality in *Nasib* and *Ghazal*".

<sup>80</sup> See Khairallah, *Love, Madness and Poetry* (Beirut, 1980). Commenting on Majnūn's attitude to Laylā, Khairallah comments (p. 77): "the alchemy of her obsessive presence transforms all nature into her image . . .".

<sup>81</sup> See *Dīwān*, p. 148, line 8. In yet another poem the noise of bubbles in the container is described as the unintelligible muttering of a *ṣaykh*: *ka-anna ibriqa-nā idhā ṣuffiqat | fī l-ka'si ṣaykhun muzamzimun ṣarqu*.



debilitation of his camel. The state of the poet, worn out by an undying love and treks through the desert, gives an added dimension to bacchic celebration. However, the meaning deduced from the juxtaposition of *ghazallatlāl* and *khamr* is not as clear as it is in Abū Nuwās' *Wa-muwātī l-ṭarf*, where wine as a consolation is expressed unequivocally: *fa-ta'azzaytu bi-ṣirfin 'uqār*.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, line 7 is arresting in that the poet's attention is drawn suddenly and apparently incongruously away from the exordium towards a man who has avowed abstinence from wine:

وَذِي حَلْفٍ بِالرَّاحِ قُلْتُ لَهُ اضْطَبِّحْ      فَلَيْسَ عَلَى أَمْثَالِ تِلْكَ يَمِينُ

I said to one who has forsworn wine: have a morning cup; one should not make religious oaths [in abstinence] of such things.

Abū Nuwās sets himself the task of convincing a man to abandon his oath and stands apparently in contradiction to Islam on two counts: (a) in the very celebration of wine which ensues, and (b) in undermining a religious oath.

Lines 8–13 are *waṣf*; the first two of which depict the age of the wine in relation to both Fate itself (*al-manūn*) and generations of man. Lines 10b–13 describe more physical aspects of the wine:

فَأَدْرِكُ مِنْهَا الْغَابِرُونَ حُشَاشَةً      لَهَا هَيَجَانٌ مَرَّةً وَسَكُونٌ  
كَأَنَّ سَطُورًا فَوْقَهَا فَارِسِيَّةً      تَكَادُ وَإِنْ طَالَ الزَّمَانُ تَبِينُ  
لَدَى نَرْجِسٍ غَضَّ الْقِطَافَ كَأَنَّهُ      إِذَا مَا مَسَّحْنَاهُ الْعَيُونَ عَيُونُ  
مُخَالَفَةً فِي شَكْلِهِنْ فَصْفَرَةً      مَكَانَ سَوَادٍ وَالْبَيَاضُ جُفُونُ

Those who have survived obtained a final spark of life from it.

It can be both frisky and quiet,

—As if lines of Persian appear on its surface, which despite a length of time in the waiting become almost intelligible,<sup>83</sup>—

Amid freshly picked narcissi which to our eyes are eyes themselves,

Though differing in their shape—yellow in place of black, with white lids.

<sup>82</sup> *Dīwān*, 18.

<sup>83</sup> Compare this line to the motif discussed in line 5. On a metaphysical level, if one is to indulge in such flights of fancy, the motif suggests that in their understanding (or in the understanding which they represent) both the desert and the wine have a transcendent power over man. Man *vis-à-vis* wine and the desert is equal to man *vis-à-vis* his existential world.

Here description ends. Line 15 allows one to draw an important conclusion from *waṣf* and picks up on the *dhū ḥalifin* of line 7:

فَلَمَّا رَأَى نَعْنَى ارْعَوَى وَاسْتَعَادَنِي      فَقُلْتُ خَلِيلٌ عَزَّ ثُمَّ يَهُونُ  
فَصَدَّقَ ظَنِّي صَدَقَ اللَّهُ ظَنَّهُ      إِذَا ظَنُّ خَيْرًا وَالظُّنُونُ فَنُونُ

As he considered my *description* (*na'tī*) he gave up [his original stance], calling me back, at which I said, "[He is] a friend who was difficult [at first] but is now easy[-going],

For he has believed my opinion [about wine], may God [now] believe his, for he has opined well—opinions [indeed] are various!"

It is the poet's power of description which wins over the companion—the *dhū ḥalifin*. The quality of the wine is perceived by virtue of poetry as a descriptive medium with its own contextual function. Fine description subjugates all else, including religious principle. Apart from line 7 and lines 14 and 15, the entire poem is given to *waṣf*; Abū Nuwās attaches himself to two ends of the spectrum of tradition—resolution at the *atlāl* and dissolution in wine—and demonstrates his poetic prowess by converting antagonistic opinion through this medium.

Both halves of the poem are relevant to the process of conversion. In the literal scenario which the poet depicts, the *dhū ḥalifin* (the man forsworn) is exposed only to Abū Nuwās' encomium on wine: *qultu la-hu ṣṭabiḥ*. We must, therefore, consider the function of lines 1–6: both the desert and wine transcend the man; there is indeed an equivalence between the desert and wine, suggested by the similarity of images in lines 5 and 11; both control man's understanding and both are associated with time; one represents the negative, despoiling effects of time, the other is itself enriched by time and attempts to transcend it (though in this statement we rely on our knowledge of the whole corpus of *khamriyyāt*, in which the age of wine enhances the urgency of *mubādara*). Yet through equivalence emerges a contrast between the poet's emaciated state and the comfort, implicit in wine, which is man's and his inheritance: *turāthu unāsin wa-unāsin*. In two passages of description that lie outside the domain of religion, Abū Nuwās presents a contrasting picture of man's plight. By virtue of this contrast the option of wine is vindicated, and the abstainer's resolution is dissolved. Furthermore, we can view the statement in line 14 concerning

description (*naʿt*) as embracing the whole poem and drawing attention to the qualities of Abū Nuwās as both a consummate poet and a man of rounded experience who, after his own fashion, shows familiarity with the balanced ethos of the *Jāhiliyya*. The poet does not reject religion but pursues an idea by which he can be reconciled with it; he plays with the abstainer's limited understanding by re-embracing Islam with irony once man's worldly experience has been seen to be fulfilled; in essence, therefore, Abū Nuwās fuses the "old order" with the "new order", presenting a more palatable appreciation of religion in the parting ecumenical statement: *wa-l-ḡunūnu funūnu*.<sup>84</sup>

Da' 'an-ka Lawmī<sup>85</sup>

In the opening hemistich of the famous *hamziyya* the defiant stance of the wine poet received its finest slogan: *da' 'an-ka lawmī fa-inna l-lawma iḡhrā'u* (Do not censure me for censure merely tempts me!). The line is derived from a well-attested topos and may have as its model the following line of Ḥāritha b. Badr:<sup>86</sup>

فَلَمْنِي فَإِنَّ أَلَمَ فِيهَا يَزِيدُنِي      غَرَامًا بِهَا إِنَّ أَلَمًا قَدْ تُغْرِي

*Fa-inna l-lawma . . . qad tughrī* is apparently alluded to by Abū Nuwās' *fa-inna l-lawma iḡhrā'u*.<sup>87</sup> The second hemistich (*dāwi-nī*

<sup>84</sup> A tentative suggestion about the *waṣf al-aṭlāl* of this *khamriyya* is that it very delicately evokes the wine itself. If this is the case the poem has even greater force in its design of vindicating wine; for the conservative man's attachment to the *aṭlāl* forces him to appreciate, by means of a descriptive subterfuge, the eulogy of wine. This suggestion is not susceptible of proof, but is based on the cumulative evidence of various images in Abū Nuwās' *diwān*: there are many images of wine as the remnants of a substance matured and reduced by Time: (p. 30) *akala l-dahru mā tajas-sama min-hā* | *wa-tabaqqā lubābu-hā l-maknūnā*; in the following line wine is buried away—*dafina*: (p. 127) *fa-ṣāna-hā fī maghāri l-arḍi fa-khtalafat* | *'alā l-dafinati azmānun wa-azmānu*; in the following line the remnants of wine are specifically compared to those of an abandoned abode: (p. 132) *a-lasta tarā-hā qad ta'affat rusūmu-hā* | *ka-mā qad ta'affat li-l-diyāri rusūmu*. As to Time's effect on the colour of the wine, consider the following verses: (p. 145) *fa-lam tazal ḥiqabu l-ayyāmi tunqisu-hā . . . ka-anna-mā šaribat min nafsi-hā jura'an* | *fa-zdāda min lawni-hā fī bāṭini l-qāri*. Another possibility is that the *aṭlāl* refer not to the usual kind of desert traces but to an urban scene, giving the poem an extra dimension of *hazl/satire*: the *dawwiyya* may be a street or alley, the camel a mule (there is a poem by al-Uqayšir (Aghānī, 11/257–8) which sets a precedent for this). For this suggestion I am indebted to Dr Geert Jan van Gelder.

<sup>85</sup> *Diwān*, 6–7; ed. Wagner, pp. 2–7. For the full Arabic text and translation of this poem see Appendix B.

<sup>86</sup> See Aghānī, 23/486.

<sup>87</sup> al-A'šā's famous verse, *wa-ka'sin šaribtu 'alā ladhḍhatin wa-ukhrā tadāwaytu min-hā bi-hā*, is more traditionally put forward as providing the model for Abū Nuwās' line.

*bi-llatī kānat hiya l-dā'u*) describes the "hair of the dog",<sup>88</sup> and expresses concisely what in the broad context of the sum of his wine songs is the ambivalence (even duplicity) of wine—the catalyst of licentious behaviour description of which is invariably couched in extremely eulogistic language. Such are the ensuing six lines of *waṣf*, which lend support to the opening statement of defiance.

One of the most common introductory topics of the wine poem is *hamm* (preoccupation, anxiety, even sorrow), for which the ensuing celebration of wine is a balm. That the second hemistich (where the poet speaks of *dā'*) is analogous to the treatment of *hamm* as an opening topos, is suggested in line 2 where wine dispels sorrow: *lā tanzilu l-aḥzānu sāḥata-hā* (A pale [wine], whose home is not visited by sorrow). This phrase hijacks the tradition of *ghazal* in which the quarters of the beloved's tribe are referred to in the course either of description or narrative.<sup>89</sup> To a degree the phrase signals the consummation of sexual desire implicit in all its forms in line 3: *min kaffi dhāti ḥirin fī zayyi dhī dhakarīn* | *la-hā muḥibbāni lūṭiyyun wa-zannū'* ([Wine] from the palm of a woman in the costume of a man who [therefore] has two lovers, a sodomite and a fornicator). Lines 2–7 are an accomplished example of *waṣf* that creates a fusion between the qualities of woman and wine. Together they constitute a life-giving ideal which animates stone and lights up the darkness; compare lines 4 and 7 which describe the *sāqiya* and the wine respectively:

قَامَتْ بِإِبْرِيْقِهَا وَاللَّيْلُ مُعْتَكِرٌ      فَلَاحَ مِنْ وَجْهِهَا فِي أَلْبَيْتٍ لَأَلَاءِ

As she stood with her wine-jug on a dark night her face emitted a pearly light.

لَوْ مَزَجْتَ بِهَا نُورًا لَمَزَجَهَا      حَتَّى تَوَلَّدَ أَنْوَارٌ وَأَصْوَاءُ

If you were to mix light into [the wine], it would be pliant in the mixing and become irradant.

By convention description may constitute a sort of *fantasia* that transcends reality: wine gives life; dispels sorrow; sheds light and is

<sup>88</sup> Those poems which treat this motif can be seen to form part of a cycle; that is to say *Da' 'an-ka lawmī* has as its backdrop those other *khamriyyāt* which describe the wine and finish by depicting the sordid consequences of inebriation. The majority of Abū Nuwās' *khamriyyāt* fit into a large contextual and composite tableau.

<sup>89</sup> See esp. Imru' u l-Qays: *fa-lammā ajaznā sāḥata l-ḥayyi* (*Mu'allaqa*, recension of al-Tibrizi, line 29).

more limpid than water. The weight of criticism and censure, implicit as the initial backdrop to the poem, fades into insignificance.

Line 8 moves away from description; the boon companions and their revelry are placed into a framework of time and fate of which they have control; the image adapts the ancient justification for wine in the light of life's fleeting nature—essentially it is the same motif, born of the old order, but with the greater strength that it has here it is more resistant to *dīn*; the latter is accommodated by a new quality of theological disputation in the final 2 lines of the poem. Line 8 highlights the poet's creative drive within an established literary tradition; this continues in the next line where the phrase *li-tilka abkī* ("I cry for wine . . . not Hind and Asmā'!") gives wine status within this literary tradition. Whilst mocking the ancient manner of poetry, the phrase enhances the role of wine as a player in the poem. It is a phrase reminiscent of the ancient method of recapitulation after long passages of description,<sup>90</sup> and thus sustains wine as the focus of the satirical passage that follows.

If a joke is intended in line 10 one senses that it is at the expense of the poet's adversary: "Perish the thought that the vine should have a tent set up for her and that camels and sheep should alight there." This verse is antagonistic, ridiculing urban poets who continued to compose in the manner of their bedouin predecessors, and thus provides a natural transition to the sharp critique contained in the final phase of the poem. Lines 11–12 are addressed indignantly at a conservative religious interlocutor: (11b) *ḥafizta šay'an wa-ghābat 'an-ka ašyā'u* (You have learnt something but much more escapes you). This hemistich expands a commonplace topic—*jahl*, which contrasts the adversary's claim to knowledge within what in the 'Abbāsid period was the new-found context of philosophical discussion: (11a) *qul li-man yadda'i fī l-'ilmi falsafatan* (Tell him who would claim philosophy as part of his knowledge . . .). *Falsafa* should normally be distinguished from earlier *kalām*, which discussed aspects of Islamic doctrine. *Falsafa* flourished later.<sup>91</sup> It

<sup>90</sup> See, for example, Labid, *Mu'allaqa*, lines 53–4 in the recension of al-Tibrizī: *fa-bi-tilka (= al-nāqa) . . . aqdī l-lubānata*.

<sup>91</sup> See EI<sup>2</sup> (article on "*Falsafa*") by R. Arnaldez: "[*Falsafa*] . . . takes shape in the East between 3/9 and 5/11 centuries with al-Kindī, al-Fārābī and Ibn Sina . . . The first *falsafa* is quite distinct from *kalām* which preceded it (*mu'tazilī kalām*) . . . [it] is presented as a method of research independent of dogma, without, however, rejecting the dogma or ignoring it in its sources. Nevertheless, its problems are not unrelated to those of theology . . .".

appears, however, that by *falsafa* here the poet is indeed speaking of a philosophical trend that can be identified with *kalām*, and uses it in a broad and essentially derogatory way. This supports the proffered background of the poem.<sup>92</sup>

The final line, in the context of a possible Mu'tazilite debate, sets up an argument against interpretation of the sin of *khamr* as one of the *kabā'ir*—namely that God's forgiveness is always accessible to the believer; to deny this is iniquitous and ungodly. The line expands the motif of *istighfār* and draws it into the most relevant forum: that of theological debate.<sup>93</sup>

The final two lines of this *qaṣida* are a powerful conclusion in defence of wine; they would be ill-suited to any other part of the poem, which must be viewed as being structured towards them. Structure aids the "function" of the poem: it is circular and thus integral; line 1 sets the tone of defiance which is expanded in the final two lines into confident disputation; we should observe that both beginning and end are marked by imperatives—*da'* . . . *fa-qul*

<sup>92</sup> Ghazālī writes (*Dīwān*, 6) that in his youth Abū Nuwās was a friend of Ibrāhīm al-Nazzām; they separated and al-Nazzām embraced the principles of the Mu'tazilites, becoming the leader of one of their groups; when the two men met in later life al-Nazzām invited Abū Nuwās to embrace Mu'tazilism, censured him about imbibing wine . . . and warned him against committing grave sins (*kabā'ir*) which would lead inevitably to the fire of Hell. (For a more detailed description of his thought see the entry on him by J. van Ess in EI<sup>2</sup>). The EI<sup>2</sup> (see "al-Mu'tazila", by H. S. Nyberg) tells us that "Among the pupils of Abu 'l-Hudhail . . . [was] Ibrāhīm al-Nazzām . . . these theologians gave *mu'tazila* its essential character. This theology is: 1) apologetic; 2) strictly Qur'anic; 3) polemical; 4) speculative; it has recourse to philosophical means to refute its adversaries and formulate dogmas; 5) intellectualist . . . Nothing could be less justifiable than to regard the *mu'tazila* as philosophers, free-thinkers or liberals. On the contrary they are theologians of the strictest school."

Of the five basic precepts which formed the dogma of the Mu'tazilites, the problems of this poem come in the third (*ahlu l-wa'd wa-l-wa'id*), which deals with what constitutes "belief and unbelief; belief consists in all acts of obedience, obligatory and supererogatory . . . sins are divided into grave (*kabā'ir*) and petty (*ṣaghā'ir*) . . . God of his grace may forgive *ṣaghā'ir* [only] . . . belief consists in avoiding *kabā'ir*." We should note that D. Gimaret, in his more recent article (Mu'tazila) in EI<sup>2</sup>, suggests that the two—not five—basic dogma of the Mu'tazilites were God's unity (*Tawḥīd*) and God's Justice (*'Adl*) "as illustrated by the generic term *ahl al-'adl wa l-tawḥīd* . . . It could even be considered that the third principle (the reality of the "promise" and the "threat") derives in fact from the second, the justice of God implying, on the one hand, that he rewards those who obey Him and punishes those who disobey Him, on the other and in parallel, that He accomplishes that which He has said He will do, since otherwise He would render Himself guilty of an untruth, which is an evil act."

<sup>93</sup> In *Yā sāḥir al-ṭarf* (see *Dīwān*, 126–7) Abū Nuwās makes clear that he does not share the Mu'tazilite view on sins and forgiveness: *li-l-kabā'iri 'inda llāhi ghufrānu*.

. . . *lā taḥṣar*—which establish the tone of the poem. Thus the outset and conclusion provide the signature of antagonism, which is supported subliminally by the hyperbole of description in lines 2–7.<sup>94</sup>

In conclusion to this discussion of Abū Nuwās' poems I offer a quotation from Hamori's "Form and Logic":<sup>95</sup>

'Abd al-Qādir al-Jurjānī wrote that a poet's skill is manifested in his ability to create astonishing combinations of disparate things . . . in some poems which pursue that aim, and delight in antithesis or antithetical themes, coherence is achieved because propositions or themes enter into a limited number of logical relations . . . some poems of this kind can easily result from rhetorical style; for rhetorical design with its predilection for symmetries and homologies of thought or syntax, often reduces variation in form among propositions and thus facilitates the making of formal correlations among propositions . . .

In "The Poet as Body-BUILDER", van Gelder quotes Plato's Phaedrus: "Every discourse must be organised, like a living being, with a body of its own, as it were, so as not to be hand-less or foot-less, but to have a middle and members, composed in fitting relation to each other and to the whole."<sup>96</sup> Van Gelder opposes the application of such ideas to Arabic poetry; he decries the overworked theories that seek to prove organic unity in the *qaṣīda*. It seems, however, from the cumulative experience of the poems of Abū Nuwās, that a corrective should be added to van Gelder's cautious stance: when a discourse *is* detectable in a poem there may indeed be organic unity.

If there is rhetoric and homology of thought and description towards a dialectic in the poems of Abū Nuwās, it is a qualitative addition to poems which owe their existence or are at least in part derived from the earliest *naqā'id* of wine. To the mood of *hijā'* and *munāfara* which has been amply attested from the *Jāhiliyya* to the Umayyad period, Abū Nuwās adds a rhetorical structure based on contrast and antithesis, and, to a lesser extent, on the use of the lan-

<sup>94</sup> This poem is strikingly akin to the 9-line *khamriyya hamziyya* beginning *bayna l-mudāmi wa-l-mā'i šaḥnā'ū* (*Diwān*, 696)—one poem may provide the blueprint for the other; after six lines which develop a kind of descriptive mythology of wine the poet endorses the case for a multiplicity of judgements: *taqassamat-hā zunūnu l-fikri fa-nqasamati l-ka-mā taqassamati l-adyāna āra'ū*.

<sup>95</sup> p. 169.

<sup>96</sup> From Phaedrus 264C, trans. H. N. Fowler, *Readings in Classical Rhetoric*, ed. Thomas W. Benson and Michael H. Prosser (Bloomington and London, 1972).

guage of legal and speculative theology. Structure helps to identify the significance of the material which the poems treat (the dichotomy of *ḥilm* and *jahl*; see esp. *Kāna l-šabābu*). The emotional contrast discussed in Chapter 1 also plays its part in offering a justification for *khamr*. All the poems discussed have a clear beginning, identified by an attitude and/or a common topos (censure), and many work variously towards a final and conclusive statement: *wa-l-zunūnu funūn*.

## 4

*Hilm and Tawba*

Whilst a tension existed in the rift between Islam and the hedonistic ethic of the *khamriyya*, this was consistently defused by either: (i) the contrived and literary or (ii) the apparently sincere abstinence/repentance (*tawba*) of the poet. The posturing of abstinence/repentance provided balance within the bacchic tableau. Thus whilst wine and indulgence were eulogized, they were equally subject to a formal and conventional restraint; sometimes they were even unequivocally abandoned. Chapter 3 has shown that wine could be vehemently criticized in poetry and that the roots of this criticism are to be found in the pre-Islamic canon. Similarly abstinence was affected as a specifically Islamic doctrine by the ethics absorbed into the new community—at least through its poetry—from the *Jāhiliyya*. Islamic *tawba* was not unrelated, in a sense, to the fulfilment of *muruwwa*. Indeed, Abū Nuwās' phrase—*al-masjidu l-jāmi'u l-muruwwata wa-l-dīna*<sup>1</sup>—suggests that an association between the ethical values of *muruwwa* and *dīn* had at last come to be recognized.

The ensuing discussion will initially illustrate a distinction between abstinence, formulated in a way which merely reiterated sentiments of the ancient canon, and repentance/*tawba* which was new and peculiarly Islamic. This entails a brief discussion of *hilm*, the quality of character which predicated pre-Islamic abstinence. Whilst *hilm* largely retained the ethical significance which it had had in the *Jāhiliyya*, it was also celebrated as an important value in the Islamic period and in certain cases it even facilitated the expression of specifically Islamic *tawba*. Thus already in the nascent Islamic period abstinence was formulated in two qualitatively distinct ways, though it was probably perceived by successive generations simply as *tawba*.

## ABSTINENCE IN THE JĀHILIYYA

In pre-Islamic Arabia there was no reason for the spirit of bacchism to be balanced by repentance. The poets habitually set their poetry against the background of a censor's rebuke which articulated the cautioning opinion of a sober community, and served to highlight the rebellious spirit of the poet and those like him; wine poetry was indeed a peacetime analogue of the poet's self-glorification in war (see poem 26 of the *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt* by 'Abda b. al-Ṭabīb). By rebuking the poet's reckless spending the 'ādhil attacked the very basis of *fakhr*, for generosity was one of the cardinal virtues of *muruwwa*<sup>2</sup>—this attitude is perhaps best illustrated by 'Antara's claim, "When I drink I squander all my money, whilst my dignity remains undiminished."<sup>3</sup> Yet whilst generosity (*karam*) was an eminently laudable quality, it was taken, under the effects of alcohol, to irresponsible extremes; one anecdote from the *Jāhiliyya* relates how a bedouin bought some wine with money he made by selling his woollen cloak. His wife chided him but he gave a defiant reply:<sup>4</sup>

غَضِبْتُ عَلَى لَأَن شَرِبْتُ بِصُوفِي      وَلَئِن غَضِبْتَ لِأَشْرَبَنْ بِخُرُوفِ  
She has grown angry with me because I [financed] my  
drinking [by selling] my woollen cloak; if [she]  
carries on I will drink by [selling] my sheep.

The ethos of indulgence was pitted against tedious domesticity. Yet the poet's resistance to this railing could weaken, for ultimately abstinence too was consistent with the basic framework of his moral values. It was demeaning due to imputations of miserliness for him to heed criticisms of financial recklessness, thus abstinence was seldom an acquiescence in the cautions of the censor; however, it was degrading to lose *waqāra*—the outward manifestation of *hilm*—in old age. Therefore, with the onset of *ṣayb*, to give up wine became an aspect of self-esteem and an enactment of *hilm*. Though drinking in youth was an aspect of *karam* (generosity/nobility), it was the fulfilment of a life-style that could be remembered with fondness. Paradoxically this means, of course, that in the putative present of composition abstinence has already been resolved.

<sup>1</sup> See Braymann's definition of *muruwwa* in *The Spiritual Background of Early Islam*, 1–7.

<sup>2</sup> Hāwī, *Fann al-Šī'r al-Khamrī*, 20.

<sup>4</sup> al-Qālī, *al-Amālī* 1/150.

<sup>1</sup> *Diwān Abī Nuwās*, 3.

## HILM

In Chapter 2 it was shown that whilst *al-dahr* was one of the most recurring topics in early Arabic poetry it was treated by Abū Nuwās in a manner that highlighted his antagonism to contemporary pious expression. This was possible because *al-dahr* represented a transcendence that could be perceived, despite the corrective teaching of *ḥadīth*, to be distinct from God and Islam. The varying resonances of *al-dahr* were true also to a degree of the ethical term *ḥilm*. Though Islam was flouted by the wine poet, bacchism was not an anarchy; for it consciously endeavoured to sustain the old value system embodied by *muruwwa*. This was not abrogated by *dīn*, as Goldziher has suggested. The positive features of *muruwwa*, which included *ḥilm*, were absorbed implicitly into the broad ethical fabric of the nascent Islamic community.<sup>5</sup> Izutsu sums up the position neatly:<sup>6</sup>

In pre-Islamic times, *jāhil* (or *jahl*) was sharply opposed to a different concept, viz., *ḥalīm* (or *ḥilm*). But . . . the problem is very delicate because this concept of *ḥilm*, although quite a different concept from *Islām*, is not so different as to have nothing in common with it. On the contrary, there is even a certain respect in which we might regard it as the pre-religious, pre-Islamic form of the concept *Islām* itself. This is shown by the fact that when the new religion replaced the old concept of *ḥalīm* by the new concept of *muslim* or *mu'min*, the replacement took place gradually and as a natural process, so to speak, without causing, in this respect, any abrupt break with the old Arabian ethics . . .

In arriving at a definition of *ḥilm*, Izutsu reiterates the accepted dichotomy of *ḥilm* and *jahl*; *ḥilm* is the ability to smother one's feelings, to overcome blind passions and to remain tranquil and undisturbed despite provocation; *jahl*, on the other hand, is a loss of control and an inability to discriminate. He quotes a charming verse to illustrate the dichotomy:<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Van Gelder also makes this point; see *The Bad and the Ugly*, (Leiden, 1988), 18: "*ḥilm* was a pre-Islamic virtue that lived on and was incorporated in Islamic ethics." Gibb's discussion about an "animistic substrate" in the early Islamic community should also be borne in mind when positing the survival of pre-Islamic notions into the Muslim period (see *Studies on the Civilization of Islam* (Princeton, 1982), ch. 11, "The Animistic Substrate").

<sup>6</sup> T. Izutsu, *God and Man in the Koran* (Tokyo, 1964), ch. 8, "Jāhiliyya and Islam", pp. 203-4.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 205.

وَدُهُمُ تُصَادِبُهَا الْوَلَائِدُ جَلَّةٌ  
إِذَا جَهَلَتْ أَجْوَأُهَا لَمْ تَحَلِّمْ

Many the large (*jilla*) black cooking pots (*duhm* lit. black ones) which our maid-servants take good care of (*tuṣādī-hā* lit.: flatter and cajole them); once their belly (i.e. the content of the pots) becomes *jāhil* (i.e. boils up), it will never become *ḥalīm* (i.e. calm down).

A quotation from the Qur'ān illustrates the way *jahl* was understood subsequently in an Islamic context—the significance is essentially unchanged:

رَبِّ السِّجْنِ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِمَّا يَدْعُونَنِي إِلَيْهِ وَإِلَّا تَصْرِفْ عَنِّي كِبَدهُنَّ  
أَصْبُ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَكُنْ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ

O my Lord! I would sooner be cast into prison than do that which these women urge me to do. Yet if Thou turnest not from me their temptation, I shall surrender myself to the surge of lust (*aṣbū*) for them and so become a *jāhil*.<sup>8</sup>

Focus on the concept *ṣibā* is significant since it plays an important part in *ghazal* and *khamr* of both the *Jāhiliyya* and the Islamic period. In poetry it is the emotions and ethics of *ṣibā* (when the poet is a young man) which contrast those of *ṣayb* (or *ṣaykhūkha*). The ethical laxity of *ṣibā* is equated with *jahl*. This indicates that the assumed ethical mantle of *ṣayb* can be equated with *ḥilm*—even though *ḥilm* may not always be explicitly mentioned. The more literal sense of ignorance signified by *jahl* is explained thus:

As a general rule, *jahl* causes the weakening, if not complete loss, of the function of reason (*'aql*); only when coupled with *ḥilm*, is *'aql* capable of functioning normally . . . [*'Aql*] is a narrower concept than *ḥilm* . . . [which] is the very basis of "reason" and "intellect".<sup>9</sup>

We will see below ("*Ḥilm* in the *Khamriyya*") that in an attempt to support *khamr* Abū Nuwās accommodates *ḥilm*; associated with this is the adroit description of wine (in the poem *Kāna l-ṣābāb*, Chapter 3, pp. 177-80) in terms of the intellect: *lā tulāmisu-hu illā bi-ḥissi gharizati l-'aqli* (A thing to be grasped only by the instinct and sensitivity of your intellect). This quality of wine is made to contrast *jahl*: *kāna l-ṣābābu maṭiyyata l-jahli* (Youth was the steed of my ignorance).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 206. Qur'ān 12/23.

<sup>9</sup> Izutsu, *God and Man*, 210-14.

## ABSTINENCE AND HILM IN AL-A'SĀ

Several *qaṣīdas* of al-A'sā illustrate the kind of eschewal of pleasure from which *tawba* is derived in Arabic poetry; none, however, contains what could strictly be termed *tawba*.

The *nasīb* of poem 1<sup>10</sup> occupies lines 1-17; lines 15-16 contain a wine simile celebrating Jubayra, whom the poet addresses in the following line:

فَاذْهَبِي مَا إِلَيْكَ أَدْرَكَنِي الْحِلْمُ      مُمْ عَدَانِي عَنْ ذِكْرِكُمْ أَشْغَالِي

Go! Off with you! *hilm* has overcome me and preoccupations  
have distracted me from you.

al-A'sā draws a close to the lyricism of the *nasīb* with preoccupations of *hilm*, reflecting the conventions of this phase of the *qaṣīda*.

Poem 2 begins with 13 lines of *hikma/nasīb*; the ensuing section of *khamr* (lines 14-22) is introduced ambivalently after the acquisition of *hilm*: (line 12)

وَقَدْ كُنْتُ أَمْنَعُ مِنْهُ الرِّسْنَ      وَطَاوَعْتُ ذَا الْحِلْمِ فَأَقَاتَدَنِي

I have now come to obey a man of *hilm* and he has fitted me  
with a halter though I used to resist his reins.

Line 14, which begins *fa-qad ašrabu l-rāḥa*, introduces a memory of indulgence which is necessarily, therefore, governed by *hilm*. To deny this is to suggest unconvincingly that the concatenation of themes is entirely without significance.

In poem 5, after the departure of Laylā the poet details his resolve, beginning at line 6: (lines 6, 8, 10-12, 14)

نَأْصَبْتُ لَا أَقْرَبُ الْغَايَا      تِ مُزْدَجِرًا عَنْ هَوَايَ أَرْدِجَارَا  
بَدَلًا بَعْدَ الصَّبَا حِكْمَةً      وَقَتَعَهُ الشَّيْبُ مِنْهُ خَارَا  
لَمَّا تَرَيْتُ عَلَى آلِهِ      قَلَيْتُ الصَّبَا وَهَجَرْتُ التِّجَارَا  
قَدْ أَخْرَجُ الْكَاعِبَةَ الْمُسْتَرَا      هَ مِنْ خَيْرِهَا وَأَشْبَعُ الْقَهَارَا  
ذَاتِ نَوَافٍ كَلَوْنَ الْفُصُوفِ      صِ بَاكَرْتُهَا فَادَّجَمْتُ ابْتِكَارَا  
عَاصِي الْعَوَازِلَ طَلَّقَ الْبِدَيْنِ      يُرَوِّى وَيُرْخَى الْإِزَارَا

I now no longer come near singing-girls; I scorn my [former] love  
[for them];

After youth he has exchanged [this erstwhile course] for wisdom;  
grey hair has drawn a veil over [the folly of yesteryear];

<sup>10</sup> The poems discussed are referred to according to their numbering in the *diwān*.

So though you once saw me [enjoying music] . . . I now despise  
this adolescent manner and have abandoned the wine  
merchants [I once knew].

I used to lead heavy breasted [women] out of seclusion and  
gamble openly.

And I often drank in the morning a frothy, jewel of a wine,  
[For a young] generous man is heedless of his censurers—he  
gives drink [to his companions] and loosens his belt [to  
enjoy the fun].

Here memories that constitute a sort of fantasy (lines 11 ff.) follow rather than precede the declaration of abstinence in old age (lines 6-10). At this time of life *hikma*<sup>11</sup> must replace *ṣibā* (see line 8), whereas in youth it is the boast of generosity (*ṭalqu l-yadayni*) which resists the censurers' rebuke (see line 14).<sup>12</sup> That it is old age not the censurer which ultimately dictates abstinence in al-A'sā is shown clearly in the following two lines from poem 22: (lines 23-4)

مَضَى لِي ثَمَانُونَ مِنْ مَوْلَدِي      كَذَلِكَ تَفْصِيلُ حُسَابِهَا  
فَأَصْبَحْتُ وَدَّعْتُ لَهْوَ الشَّبَا      بِرِ وَالْخَنْدَرِيسَ لِأَصْحَابِهَا

Eighty years have passed since my birth, that is the  
figure produced by those who have counted;

So now I have said farewell to the pleasures of youth,  
and left wine aside for its proper consorts.

Lines 1-26 of poem 20 constitute the *nasīb*; *khamr*, which occupies briefly lines 25 and 26, is set into a section where the poet expresses resolve: (lines 21-6)

فَأَصْبِرْ فَإِنَّكَ طَالَ مَا أَعْمَلْتَ نَفْسَكَ فِي الْخَسَارَةِ  
وَلَقَدْ أَتَى لَكَ أَنْ تُفَيِّقَ مِنَ الصَّبَابَةِ وَالذُّعَارَةِ  
وَلَقَدْ لَبِسْتُ الْعَيْشَ أَجْمَعَ وَارْتَدَيْتُ مِنَ الْإِبَارَةِ  
وَأَصْبْتُ لَذَاتِ الشَّبَابِ مُرَفَلًا وَنَعْمْتُ نَارَهُ  
وَلَقَدْ شَرِبْتُ أَرَاخَ أَسْقَى فِي إِيَاءِ الطَّرْجَهَارَةِ  
حَتَّى إِذَا أَخَذْتُ مَآخِذَهَا تَعَثَّنِي أَسْتِدَارَهُ

Be patient, you have long become inured to loss.  
You must now wake up from passion and jest,

<sup>11</sup> In this verse the significance of *hikma* must approximate to that of *hilm*.

<sup>12</sup> Each of the two main stages of life has its own positive element—generosity in youth which overrides *hilm*, and *hilm* in old age which overrides reckless generosity.

For I have enjoyed life in every way and have donned  
the cloak of luxury;  
I have had my fill of the pleasures of youth—haughtily  
enjoyed its flame;  
And I have drunk wine poured for me from the flask,  
Until when it took its course dizziness overcame me.<sup>13</sup>

A similar sequencing of youthful passion and resolve occurs in poem 22, where wine is set into a complex *nasīb* that ends with the question, “What then of a time that has *passed* into memory, filling your soul with wonder?” In poem 29 *khamr* follows the *rahīl* (lines 16–23) but is affected by line 6 of the *nasīb*, “I see you have grown old—your body has changed; you have said farewell to buxom women and *wine*.” Finally, in poem 76 *khamr* is a 2-line element (lines 25–6) within a movement of nostalgic *fakhr* (lines 5–28). The poet’s declaration of abstinence (in lines 5 and 28) sandwiches the movement: “So if *šayb* has appeared at my parting, O tribe of Bakr . . . (6) yet in my youth I used to . . . (27) that was a life I knew but it has passed . . . (28) the fate of every life is to end . . .”.

#### OTHER JĀHILĪ POETS

al-Aswad b. Ya‘fur’s *dāliyya* (*al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, poem 44) further illustrates the obligation of abstinence with old age:<sup>14</sup> (lines 19–22)

إِذَا تَرَيْنِي قَدْ بَلَيْتُ وَغَضَبْنِي مَا نِيلَ مِنْ بَصَرِي وَمِنْ أَجْلَادِي  
وَعَصَيْتُ أَصْحَابَ الْبَطَالَةِ وَالصِّبَا وَأَطَعْتُ عَاذِلَتِي وَلَانَ قِيَادِي  
فَلَقَدْ أَرَوْحُ عَلَى التِّجَارِ مُرَجَّلاً مَذْلاً بِمَالِي لَيْسَ أَجْيَادِي  
وَلَقَدْ لَهَوْتُ وَلِلشَّبَابِ لَذَاذَةً بِسُلَاقَةِ مُزَجَّتْ بِمَاءِ غَوَادِي

Though you see me now physically decrepit and with poor  
eyesight,  
Ignoring the commands of youthful companions, whilst  
surrendering my reins to a censurer’s instruction,  
Yet in the past I would seek [wine]-traders, sore-footed. I did not  
think to preserve my wealth and thus I spent money liberally.  
And I would play, for youth is delightful when coupled with  
wine mixed with the water of morning clouds.

<sup>13</sup> This excerpt contains *iltifāt*; it is clear, however, that the voice is always that of the poet.

<sup>14</sup> ed. Šākir, p. 218.

Though, unusually, al-Aswad acquiesces in the advice of the censurer (*wa-aṭa‘tu ‘ādhilātī*), this must be viewed as a literary posture that is subordinated to the motif of *šayb*.

Yet repentance of greater personal force and conviction also existed in the *Jāhiliyya*. Several examples survive in a chapter of *Quṭb al-Surūr* entitled *man ḥarrama l-khamra fī l-jāhiliyyati*.<sup>15</sup> Most noticeable perhaps is a piece by Qays b. ‘Aṣim, who is said to have flirted with his own daughter whilst in a state of inebriation; the following morning he composed an apology in verse:<sup>16</sup>

وَجَدْتُ الْخَمْرَ جَامِحَةً وَفِيهَا خِصَالٌ يَفْضَحُ الرَّجُلَ الْكَرِيمَا  
فَلَا وَاللَّهِ أَشْرَبُهَا حَيَاتِي وَلَا أَدْعُو لَهَا أَبَدًا نَدِيمَا  
وَلَا أَعْطَى بِهَا ثَمَنًا حَيَاتِي وَلَا أَشْنِي بِهَا أَبَدًا سَقِيمَا  
فَإِنَّ الْخَمْرَ تَفْضَحُ شَارِبِيهَا وَتُجَشِّمُهُمْ بِهَا أَبَدًا عَظِيمَا  
إِذَا دَارَتْ حُمَيَّاها تَعَلَّتْ طَوَالُغُ تُسْفِيهِ الرَّجُلَ الْحَلِيمَا

I have found that wine is stubborn and has qualities that  
scandalize a noble man,  
By God I shall not drink it as long as I live, nor shall I invite  
a boon companion to it,  
Nor shall I pay a price for it as long as I live, nor give it as  
medicine to a sick man,  
For wine is a scandal to those that drink it and loads them  
with a heavy burden  
When the strength of it is passed around, its “rising stars”  
(i.e. bubbles) will make a fool of the man of *hilm*.

Though there is mention of *Allāh*, the principal concerns which invite regret and eschewal are that indulgence in wine constitutes *faḍīḥa* in reducing to buffoonery the man of *karam* (*al-rajul al-karīm*) and *hilm* (*al-rajul al-ḥalīm*). Though the oath in the second line is of an apparently impromptu nature—devoid of any mention of *šayb*—and clearly representative of the transforming ill effects of wine, yet as an apology for a single incident rather than a theme born of a lifetime’s contemplation—implicit in the normal mode of the *nasīb*—the piece reflects unstable convictions; or so, at least, we are allowed to conclude from a further anecdote which relates a separate incident and a renewed apology:<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Use here of the root *ḥarama*, which is not anachronistic, may illustrate why medieval Arab commentators were able to perceive a connection between Islamic *tawba* and pre-Islamic abstinence.

<sup>16</sup> *Aghāni*, 14/79.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 14/80.



فَوَاللَّهِ لَا أَحْسُو يَدَ الدَّهْرِ خَمْرَةً وَلَا شَرِبَةً تُزْرِي بِذِي لُبٍّ وَالْفَخْرِ

By God as long as Time itself I shall not drink wine, nor any  
drink which makes a mockery of an intelligent, noble man.

Again the fragment from which this verse is excerpted has a measure of spontaneity; it qualifies as *hijā'*/*dhamm*—of the kind discussed in the previous chapter—and dwells on the detrimental, transforming effects of wine. As in the previous example, the poet was concerned to avoid *faḍīḥa* and thus to preserve his honour (*'ird*).

'Afif b. Ma'dikarib is another poet for whom lines of contrition are related:<sup>18</sup>

وَقَائِلَةٌ هَلُمُّ إِلَى التَّصَايِ  
فَقُلْتُ عَفَفْتُ عَمَّا تَعْلَمِينَ  
وَوَدَّعْتُ الْقِدَاحَ وَقَدْ أَرَانِي  
بِهَا فِي الدَّهْرِ مَشْغُوفًا رَهِينًا  
وَحَرَّمْتُ الْخُمُورَ عَلَىَّ حَتَّى  
أَكُونَ بِقَعْرِ مَلْحُودٍ دَفِينًا

Many a woman has said to me, "Indulge your youthful  
passion!" I have replied, "I have become abstemious  
[with regards to those things you speak of],  
I have bid farewell to gambling arrows, though once  
I was most passionately a hostage to them,  
And I have forbidden myself wines until the day I rest  
deep in my tomb."

This fragment is a mirror-image of others that celebrate *khamr*, where the formula *wa-ʿādhilatin* (identical in morphology to *wa-qā'ilatin*) is followed by the defiant eulogy or description of wine; or where an equivalent balance between censure and eulogy exists. In 'Afif's lines, conversely, an incitation to wine (*wa-qā'ilatin* *halumma ilā l-taṣābī*) is followed by contrition.

#### TAWBA IN THE EARLY ISLAMIC PERIOD

With the birth of Islam *tawba* was introduced into the community as an act of faith:<sup>19</sup>

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا تُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَوْبَةً نَصُوحًا عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَن يُكَفِّرَ  
عَنكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَيُدْخِلَكُم جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ...

<sup>18</sup> *Qaṭb al-Surūr*, 421.

<sup>19</sup> *Qur'ān*, 66/8.

Believers, turn to God in sincere repentance; it may be that  
your Lord will acquit you of your evil deeds, and will  
admit you into gardens underneath which rivers flow.<sup>20</sup>

Such Qur'ānic verses added a new religious dimension to pre-existing norms of abstinence; furthermore, as is implicit in the *āya*, *tawba* invited divine forgiveness—*ghufrān*—which was often an attendant topic of *tawba* in both the *khamriyyāt* and the *zuhdiyyāt*. In the Islamic period abstinence, contrition, and repentance could, therefore, either be expressed in this new-found religious mode, or hark back to the *Jāhiliyya*. Both were either implicitly or explicitly informed by an acquiescence in *hilm*. Whilst the term *hilm* does not occur in this form in the Qur'ān, it was subsumed into the Islamic ethos inasmuch as God is described as *ḥalīm*.<sup>21</sup> In no way does *hilm* contradict any explicitly Islamic precepts. Thus in a sense it remained a "secular" ethical quality—one which might nurture a sensitivity to the teachings of Islam. This can be seen to be the case in those expressions of abstinence from *ṣibā* where the poet's newly acquired *waqār* leads to a distinctly Islamic expression of piety.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, as is well illustrated by the poems of Abū l-Šiṣ, abstinence could remain "secular" and be expressed simply as the assumption of *hilm*, thereby harking back, by design or otherwise, to the poetry and ethics of the *Jāhiliyya*.

Nowhere is the absorption of *hilm* into the broad ethical register of the early Islamic community more clearly evinced than in some of the *zuhdiyyāt* of Abū l-ʿAtāhiya. In one poem he beseeches God to grant him *hilm*, which moral quality offers a stepping-stone to *taqwā*:<sup>23</sup>

فَيَا رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِنْكَ حِلْمًا فَإِنِّي  
أَرَى الْحِلْمَ لَمْ يَنْدَمْ عَلَيْهِ حَلِيمٌ  
أَلَا إِنَّ تَقْوَى اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ نِسْبَةً  
تَسَامَى بِهَا عِنْدَ الْفَخَارِ كَرِيمٌ

Lord! Grant me *hilm*, for I see that no man of *hilm*  
regrets this quality,  
Fear of God (i.e. piety) is the greatest *nisba* to which  
a noble man may proudly be traced.

<sup>20</sup> *The Koran*, trans. A. J. Arberry, p. 594.

<sup>21</sup> See for example *Qur'ān*, 2/235.

<sup>22</sup> In the Islamic period *waqār* was from time to time exclusively associated with Islam; this is apparent from the following line: *mā l-nāsu illā rajulun fātikun l aw rajulun waqqara-hu dinū* (*Dīwān Abi Nuwās*, 213).

<sup>23</sup> *Dīwān*, 392.

Another reference to *ḥilm* appears to equate it with chastity in a broad sense: *wa-l-ḥilmu haythu ya'iffu ḥālimu-hu*.<sup>24</sup> This view ties in with the definition of *ḥilm* as the subjugation of strong desires/passions. In a more "secular" vein Abū l-'Atāhiya could merely schematize the dichotomy of *ḥilm* and *saḥāha*:<sup>25</sup> *kam min safiḥin ghāḥa-nī saḥāhan* | *fa-ṣafaytu nafsī min-hu bi-l-ḥilmī* (Many an idiot has vexed me with idiocy, but I warded myself from him with *ḥilm*).

Perhaps the earliest and clearest example of *tawba* as such is contained in a 4-line fragment of Abū Miḥjan al-Thaqafi:<sup>26</sup>

أَتُوبُ إِلَى اللَّهِ الرَّحِيمِ فَإِنَّهُ      غَفُورٌ لِذَنْبِ الْمَرْءِ مَا لَمْ يُعَاوِدِ  
وَلَسْتُ إِلَى الصَّهْبَاءِ مَا عِشْتُ عَائِدًا      وَلَا تَابِعًا قَوْلَ السَّفِيهِ الْمُعَانِدِ  
وَكَيْفَ وَقَدْ أُعْطِيتُ رَبِّي مَوَاتِقًا      أَعُوذُ لَهَا وَاللَّهِ ذُو الْعَرْشِ شَاهِدِي  
سَأَتْرُكُهَا مَذْمُومَةً لَا أَذُوقُهَا      وَإِنْ رَغِمَتْ فِيهَا أَنْفُ حَوَاسِدِي

I turn to God in repentance for He forgives the sins of Man  
providing he does not return [to sin].

I will not return to wine as long as I live, nor will I follow the  
[temptations] of ignorant stubborn men.

How, when I have given firm pledges to my Lord, can I return  
to wine?—while God, the Lord of the Throne, beholds me.

I will leave it aside, an accursed thing, and not taste it—even  
should jealous men be humbled.

The fragment introduces into Islamic wine poetry two subjects which Abū Nuwas was later to toy with ambiguously, namely *tawba* (*atūbu ilā llāhi*) and *ghuḥrān* (*fa-inna-hu ghafūrun li-dhanbi l-mar'i*). Seemingly essential to *tawba* is that it should be a pledge of constancy. Indeed, that *tawba* is open to the abuse of inconstancy is a recurring topic in the defiance of the wine poets. The final line is a more straightforwardly literary stance against wine; *dhamm* is an antonym of *maḍīḥ*, both of which moods of poetry in turn command the treatment of wine—see Chapter 3.

Whilst Abū Miḥjan's abstinence could be overtly Islamic, another fragment shows his change of heart to be underpinned by the ancient ethic of *ḥilm*:<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *Dīwān*, 403.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* 411.

<sup>26</sup> *Dīwān Abī Miḥjan al-Thaqafi*, 35–6.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* 34–5.

يَقُولُ أَنَاسٌ اشْرَبِ الْخَمْرَ إِنَّهَا      إِذَا الْقَوْمُ نَالُوهَا أَصَابُوا الْقَنَاطِمَا  
فَقُلْتُ لَهُمْ جَهْلًا كَذَبْتُمْ أَلَمْ تَرَوْا      أَخَاهَا سَفِيهًا بَعْدَ مَا كَانَ حَالِيًا  
وَأَضْحَى وَأَمْسَى مُسْتَحْفًا مُهَيِّمًا      وَحَسْبُكَ عَارًا أَنْ تَرَى الْمَرْءَ هَانِمًا

People say, "Drink the wine! Those who have it gain much  
booty!"

[To which] I reply, "You have lied through ignorance, do you  
not see its companion to be a fool who once had *ḥilm*?

And now has become trivial and deluded—how shameful it is  
to see a man deluded . . .".

The use of the word *ghanā'im* in the first line is mock-heroic; for with it the poet confronts a certain perception of *muruwwa*. Yet the ensuing two lines base their argument on a subtler and more essential *muruwwa*: line 2 founds its condemnation on the ethics succinctly stated in the much-cited line of Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā: *wa-inna saḥāha l-ṣaykhi lā ḥilma ba'da-hu* | *wa-inna l-fatā ba'da l-safāhati yaḥlumi*. The use of the word *mar'* in the final hemistich alludes to the poet's preoccupation with *muruwwa*.<sup>28</sup>

al-Uqayṣir al-Asadī, who was inclined to *muḥūn* in his more spirited poems, also gave voice to abstinence based in *ḥilm*:<sup>29</sup> *mā anā ba'da l-ṣaybi wayba-ka wa-l-khamrū* . . . *kayfa l-taṣābī ba'da mā kala'a l-'umrū*. His change of heart is consistent with the *jāhili* ethic and cannot therefore be termed *tawba*.

Whilst we have stated that there is basically a distinction between abstinence (based in *ṣayb/ḥilm*) and *tawba*, the poets and society appear to have blurred it, though it must have existed if abstinence (expressed in some form or other) could exist in the *Jāhiliyya*. Thus it was possible for poets to treat *ḥilm/ṣayb/waqār* and add to these notions a religious dimension. We have already seen this to be the case in the 8-line *rā'iyya* of Abū Jilda al-Yaškuri (*a-lā rubba yawmin lī bi-Bustin wa-laylatin*)<sup>30</sup> which illustrates the ethical corner-stone *rāja'a-nī ḥilmī* leading to the distinctly Islamic *sa-arkaḍu fī l-taqwā*;<sup>31</sup> indeed examination of *tawba* can further illustrate two orders being perceived as one. That the medieval Arab commentators perceived abstinence through *ḥilm* and *tawba*

<sup>28</sup> This suggestion is based in part on an observation made by Bravmann in connection with *muruwwa*; see *The Spiritual Background of Early Islam*, ch. 1, p. 1 n. 1.

<sup>29</sup> Ibn Qutayba, *al-Ši'r wa-l-Šu'arā'*, 354.

<sup>30</sup> *Aghānī*, 11/310.

<sup>31</sup> See ch. 2, pp. 105–6.

to be the same is illustrated, for example, in *Quṭb al-Surūr*:<sup>32</sup> here al-Raḡīq al-Nadīm discusses two poems in conjunction with each other; the first poem treats *šayb* and gives voice to the following sentiments: *jalā'u mašibin nazal | wa-unsu šabābin raḥal || šabābun ka-an lam yakun | wa-šaybun ka-an lam yazal* (The incandescence of hoary old age has descended [upon me] and the intimacy of youth has departed; it is as if youth never was and hoariness has simply continued). The second poem is introduced as follows: *wa-qāla 'Abdu l-Ḥamīd al-Kātib fī naḥwi dhālika* ('Abd al-Ḥamīd said in the same manner); yet it can be seen to be essentially distinct: *tarahḥala mā laysa bi-l-qāfil | wa-a'qaba mā laysa bi-l-āfil . . . taqaḍḍat ghawāyātu sukri l-šibā | wa-radda l-tuqā 'unuqa l-bāṭil* (That which will not return has departed and left in exchange [a star] which will never set; the errors of youthful inebriation have ended and piety has pushed away all vanity). The commentator does not perceive the qualitative distinction between the respectability of *šayb* and the religiosity of *tuqā*; both contrast *šibā/šabāb* and are therefore understood in the same way. This is further illustrated in the following verse of Abū Dulāma, who was a courtier of the Caliph al-Manšūr:<sup>33</sup> *yukallifu-nī min ba'di mā šibtu tawbatan / yaḥuṭṭu bi-hā 'annī l-mathāqila min wizri* (He requires of me now that I have gone grey a repentance which will unburden me of the weight of my sins). Abū Dulāma, we are told as anecdotal background, was forced to pray alongside the Caliph; as a prerequisite to this he was made to repent. Repentance is made relevant via *šayb*. *Tawba* borrowed the ethics of *ḥilm/šayb* since they provided a recognizable and long-established framework within which religious respectability could be expressed and made incumbent upon the individuals of society.

Contrariwise *tawba* may be absent from the expression of abstinence. In a *qaṣīda* by 'Alī b. Jabala in praise of Abū Dulaf, *ir'iwā'* is declared in the opening line:<sup>34</sup> *dhāda wirda l-ghayyi 'an šadrih | fa-r'awā wa-l-lahwu min waṭarih* (He kept error at bay and changed his ways though dalliance was [still] his desire). The second line then states that *šayb* is responsible for the assumed mantle of *waqār*: *wa-abat illā l-waqāra la-hu | ḡaḥakātu l-šaybi fī ša'rih* (The "laughter" of grey in his hair has refused him all but dignity).

<sup>32</sup> p. 452.

<sup>33</sup> *Aghānī*, 10/260.

<sup>34</sup> Ibn al-Mu'tazz, *Ṭabaqāt al-Šu'arā'*, 173.

After an interlude of nostalgia it becomes clear that 'Alī b. Jabala has now acquiesced in *ḥilm* which he once forsook for indulgence: (line 14) *dhahabat ašyā'u kuntu la-hā | šārifan ḥilmī ilā šuwarih*. *Tawba* is totally absent from the formulation of the poet's new-found resolve. Similar preoccupations are expressed in the following two verses from a *qaṣīda* by Muslim b. al-Walīd:<sup>35</sup> *ahlan bi-wāfidatin li-l-šaybi wāridatin . . . lā aйма'u l-ḥilma wa-l-šabbā'a qad sakanat | naḥsī ilā l-mā'i 'an mā'i l-'anāqīdi*. A medieval Arab commentator might well term the poet's stance *tawba*; however, the sentiment expressed would not be alien to a *jāhili* poet.

An excellent example of the splicing together of the ethics of *ḥilm* and Islam is to be found in a *qaṣīda* in praise of Hārūn al-Rašīd by Manšūr al-Namarī.<sup>36</sup> There is a pleasing tension between the old, bedouin order of society (together with its ancient imagery) and the new order—the two are schematized in the opening line:

يا زائرنا من الخيام      حياكما الله بالسلام

You two who visit us from the tents—God preserve you!

That the two visitors are said to come from "the tents" (*khiyām*) appears to identify them with the old order; the second hemistich welcomes them to the new Islamic order. What is noteworthy is that Manšūr al-Namarī moves on to embrace the ethos of Islam via the ancient ethos—he himself does not seem to perceive a distinction, though he has already set one out in the opening verse: (lines 3-4)

هيات لله والتصاي      وللغواني وللمددام  
أقصر جهلي وثأب حلمي      ونهته الشيب من عرامي

Pleasure, youthful folly, pretty women and wine? Never again!  
My *jahl* has been held back and *ḥilm* has returned, and grey locks have [put paid] to my impetuosity.

By convention abstinence paves the way for the *mamdūḥ* to be praised in terms of Islam: (line 8)

بورك هارون من إمام      بطاعة الله ذو اعتصام

Hārūn, the man protected [by God], has been blessed as an Imam with obedience to God.

<sup>35</sup> Ibn al-Mu'tazz, *Ṭabaqāt al-Šu'arā'*, 237.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 247.

The poem schematizes two important developments:

- (i) *al-Khiyām* (the old order) → *ḥayyā-kumā llāhu* (the new order);
- (ii) *Jahl/taṣābī* → *ṣayb/ḥilm*.

The poet clearly understands the second effectively to reiterate the first, thus evincing *ḥilm*'s association with Islam. Both schemata can be spliced into one:

*Khiyām* (/Badū)/*Jahl* → *ḥilm*/Islam.

This schema shows how the term *Jāhiliyya* could be understood to refer comprehensively to the pagan culture of pre-Islamic Arabia, though *ḥilm* was one of the ethical corner-stones on which that society was built.

#### THE AMBIVALENCE OF ABŪ L-ŠIṢ

Abū l-Šiṣ—a contemporary of Abū Nuwās—composed at least four *qaṣidas*, which are cited in Ibn al-Mu'tazz's *Ṭabaqāt al-Šu'arā'*,<sup>37</sup> they contain extensive elements of *khamr*. All of them set the celebration of wine into a basic framework of abstinence, weaving together, sometimes deftly, conventional themes of the *qaṣida* to produce an allegory of a somewhat derivative view of life. They show how the abstinence characteristic of al-A'ṣā survived as an essential feature of a certain type of bacchic composition well into the time of Abū Nuwās; only occasionally is there an infusion of Islam into the overall declaration of abstinence. There is no *tawba* and equally he does not stretch the agenda of abstinence to confront Islam in the manner so artfully achieved by Abū Nuwās (see below, *passim*).

The *nūniyya*<sup>38</sup> (a panegyric poem of 40 lines) treats death and separation in a lugubrious *nasīb*. This leads to a question in line 7, *fa-hal la-ka yā 'ayšu min raj'atin* | *bi-ayyāmi-ka l-mu'niqāti l-ḥisāni* (O life [of pleasure] that we had, will you not return with your days of sweet elegance?). Memories of *lahw* are detailed in lines 12–25, twelve of which treat *khamr*. Though line 26 concludes the bacchic section with an irreligious posture (*uṣību l-dhunūba wa-lā attaqī* | *'uqūbata mā yaktubu l-kātibāni*), the poet's atonement is contin-

<sup>37</sup> The various sources of Abū l-Šiṣ' poetry are listed in detail in Ibrāhīm al-Najjār's *Šu'arā'* 'Abbāsīyyūn *Mansiyyūn*, vol. i.

<sup>38</sup> *Ṭabaqāt al-Šu'arā'*, 78.

gent apparently only upon old age, *fa-aqṣartu lammā nahā-nī l-mašību* | *wa-aqṣara 'an 'adhliya l-'ādhlāni*.<sup>39</sup>

The tone of the bacchic section itself is, in comparison with the dominant mood of the poem, exuberant and lyrical; indeed, were it to be extracted from this *qaṣida* it would quite plausibly constitute the kind of independent *khamriyya* typical of Abū Nuwās. Thus abstinence which ultimately holds sway over the poet in the present is made more poignant through the detailed depiction of a hedonistic past.<sup>40</sup> The shifting standards implicit in this convention of Arabic poetry are used to the full in a series of poems by Abū Nuwās in response to the prohibitions of the Caliph (see below, pp. 214–17).

#### ḤILM IN THE KHAMRIYYA<sup>41</sup>

The ethics of the bacchic scene approximated to the traditional ethics of society; this is clear in a poem which lauds the qualities of the *nadīm*—the poet pleads: *wa-lā tasqī l-mudāma fatan la'imān* | *fa-lastu uḥillu hādhi li-l-la'imi*.<sup>42</sup> The general and essentially “secular” character flaw of *lu'm/la'āma* (which has both the sense of ignoble and avaricious<sup>43</sup> and is essentially the antonym of *karam*) is

<sup>39</sup> The motif of old age (grey locks) is expanded in lines 29, 31, and 32 where the poet explains why he is now shunned by his beloved: *wa-'āfat 'Ayūfun wa-atrābu-hā* | *runuwū ilay-hā wa-mallat makāni* || *ra'at rajulan wasamat-hu l-sinūnu* | *bi-raybi l-mašibi wa-raybi l-zamāni* || *fa-saddat wa-qālat akhū ṣaybatin* | *'adimūn a-lā bi'sati l-hālatāni*. That the poet was rejected not only for his advanced years but also his poverty appears to have been a convention; Abū l-Šiṣ treats the motif similarly in another *qaṣida* (*Ṭabaqāt al-Šu'arā'*, 75): *ithnāni lā taṣbū l-nisā'u ilay-himā* | *dhū ṣaybatin wa-muḥālifu l-infāḍi*.

<sup>40</sup> This feature reappears in a more complex manner in a *bā'iyya* (*Ṭabaqāt al-Šu'arā'*, 81) where abstinence after bacchism is expressed as follows: *fa-warra'a-ni ba'da l-jahālāti wa-l-ṣibā* | *'ani l-jahli 'ahdun bi-l-ṣābibati qad dhahabā*. The eschewal of *jahl* extends over three lines but is followed by further description of the pleasures from which the poet has abstained: *fa-aṣbahtu qad nakkabtu 'an ṭuruqi l-ṣibā* | *wa-jānabtu aḥdātha l-zujājati wa-l-ṭarab* . . . The resulting toing and froing in the thematic progression of the *qaṣida* illustrates the dynamics which governed the conjunction of a permissive past and present abstinence. Each mood existed in contrast to the other, indeed invited the other. So regulated were these conventions that the cycle could occur more than once. Ambivalence is resolved only by the *raḥīl* (lines 29–34) which leads resolutely to *maḍih*. It is the formal nature of the panegyric *qaṣida* which appears to impose itself upon the otherwise lyrical mood of the poet.

<sup>41</sup> Material is culled from the *diwān* of Abū Nuwās.

<sup>42</sup> *Diwān Abi Nuwās*, 144.

<sup>43</sup> See the discussion of *lu'm* in F. Malti-Douglas's *Structures of Avarice* (Leiden, 1985), 139–40.

playfully made to be contingent upon religious permissibility (the category *ḥalāl*)—here Abū Nuwās is very gently parodying religious discussion. As the piece continues it is clear that wine culture upholds the ethics of *karam*:

لَأَنَّ الْكَرَمَ مِنْ كَرَمِ وَجُودِ      وَمَاءُ الْكَرَمِ لِلرَّجُلِ الْكَرِيمِ  
وَلَا تَجْعَلْ نَدِيمَكَ فِي شَرَابٍ      سَخِيفَ الْعَقْلِ أَوْ ذَنِسَ الْأَدِيمِ  
وَأَنَّ الْمَرْءَ يَصْحَبُ كُلَّ جِيلٍ      وَيُنْسَبُ فِي الْمُدَامِ إِلَى التَّدِيمِ  
... the vine is the very root of munificence and nobility, thus the  
juice of the vine is meant for a nobleman.  
Do not share your tipples with a silly, worthless creature ...  
... [for] through wine a man becomes related to his drinking  
companion.

In the final line the poet plays on the importance of genealogy (*nasab*) and contrives that a man's *nisba* is to his *nadīm*;<sup>44</sup> *fakhr*, with which each man imbues his *nisba*, is made possible by the quality of *karam*. Elsewhere when Abū Nuwās transgresses a social code, it is normally one of religious piety; his attitude is straightforwardly expressed in the hemistich, *lā taṣḥabanna akhā nuskīn wa-in nasakā* (Do not seek the company of a pious man even if his piety is sincere!).<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, defiance can be expressed within a clearly religious linguistic framework: *wa-alqaytu 'annī thiyāba l-hudā* | *wa-khudtu buḥūran mina l-munkari*.<sup>46</sup> The same poem goes on to contrive its own religious backdrop by assimilating religious language: *'aqīlatu šaykhīn mina l-mušrikīna* | *atat-nā tahādā mina l-Kawthari* (The choice [wine] of an old heathen vintner came to us as a gift from the stream of Kawthar).

*Ḥilm* tends mostly to be treated in a positive manner and appears to command the erotic as well as the bacchic element of these poems. The quality is attributed to most personages of the bacchic scene, namely the poet, the *sāqī*, and the *nudamā'*. With reference to the poet himself, we find the following examples: *āthartu an lā yulāma ḥilmī 'alā ladhdhati qalbī* . . . (I preferred that my *ḥilm*

<sup>44</sup> This motif is reworked elsewhere: (Dīwān, 192) *wa-l-qawmu ikhwānu šidqin bayna-hum nasabu* | *mina l-mawaddati mā yarqā la-hu nasabu*.

<sup>45</sup> Dīwān Abī Nuwās, 89.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. p. 682. *Hudā* (right-guidance, similar to *ruṣd*) and *munkar* are both Islamic concepts surviving from the *Jāhiliyya*; see for example Qur'ān 3/104: *wa-l-takun min-kum ummatun yad'ūna ilā l-khayri wa-ya'murūna bi-l-ma'rūfi wa-yanhawna 'ani l-munkari*; and 5/2: *dhālika l-kitābu lā rayba fi-hi budan li-l-muttaqina*.

should not be exposed to blame due the passion in my heart . . .);<sup>47</sup> *fa-qāma yūsī'u-nī šatman wa-ūsī'u-hu* | *ḥilmān wa-qad balaghat nafsī amānī-hā* (He got up and swore at me whilst I responded to him with *ḥilm* after my soul had achieved its desires!).<sup>48</sup> In the next example the poet lauds his own qualities of *ḥayā'* and *muḥāfaẓa* (qualities derivative of *ḥilm*) to justify *mujūn* and excuse himself of *nusk*—the latter being a characteristic of deportment which he consistently lampooned:<sup>49</sup>

إِنِّي وَإِنْ كُنْتُ مَاجِنًا عَرَفًا      لَا يَخْطُرُ النَّسْكَ لِي عَلَى بَالٍ  
لَذُو حَيَاءٍ وَذُو عَافِيَةٍ      مُتَنَاعُ حَمْدِ الرِّجَالِ بِالْعَالِي  
Though I have been an uproarious libertine [and]  
piety has never even entered into my mind,  
I am a man of shame and refined deportment who  
“purchases” the praise of men at a high price.

As the poem continues Abū Nuwās celebrates his honour (*'ird*—a concept absent from the Qur'ān), which is sustained by his generosity: *fa-in dannasa l-mālu 'irda dhī šarafīn* | *fa-inna 'irdī yuṣānu bi-l-māli* (Though money stains the honour of a man of nobility, my honour is preserved through the money [I spend]).

In other examples the boon companions share the qualities of the poet: *tijānu-hum ḥilmun idhā mā suqū* | *qad fuṣṣiṣat bi-l-jūdi wa-l-ẓarfi* (They have crowns made of *ḥilm* when given wine which are inlaid with generosity and charm).<sup>50</sup> The next example presents a typically playful contradiction in the attitude of the poet; on the one hand he preserves the *joie de vivre* of the bacchic scene by vindicating the eschewal of *waqār* in favour of *mujūn* (*infi l-waqāra 'ani l-mujūn*); on the other hand the final two verses of the poem celebrate the excellent wine (*Karkhiyya*) in terms of *ḥilm*. The poet thus maximizes and fulfils various elements of the bacchic spirit, both *mujūn* and *ḥilm*:<sup>51</sup>

فَانْفِ الْوَقَارَ عَنِ الْمُجُونِ بِقَهْوَةٍ      حَمْرَاءَ خَالَطَ لَوْنُهَا إِفَارُ  
Put flight to respectability . . . with a red wine . . .  
كَرْخِيَّةٌ كَالرُّوحِ دَبَّ بِشَرِيهِ      حِلْمٌ يُدَاخِلُهُ حَيَاً وَوَقَارُ  
فِي فِتْنَةٍ فَطَمُوا الْحَيَا فَيَلْبَسُهُمْ      حِلْمٌ وَلَيْسَ لِجَهْلِهِمْ آثَارُ

<sup>47</sup> Dīwān, 51.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 675.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 142.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. 691.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. 688.

A wine from al-Karkh like the breeze, whose drinkers  
are [characterized] by *ḥilm* infused with shame and  
respectability,

Amongst a group of carousers who were weaned on  
shame and whose very clothes are of *ḥilm*—there  
are no traces of coarse ignorance [in them].

Similarly in another poem it is said of a young *sāqī*: *ṣāgha-hu rabbu-hu 'alā l-jūdi wa-l-ḥil-l mi wa-mā šī'ta min ḥayā'in wa-khīri* (His Lord fashioned him to be generous and forbearing and to have all the shame and nobility you could wish for).<sup>52</sup> Finally, elsewhere wine is lauded as: . . . *'ajūzun bintu Kisrā qadīmatun l mu'attaqatun qad dabba fī ṭayyi-hā l-ḥilmu* (The aged and matured daughter of Khosrau into whom *ḥilm* has stolen).<sup>53</sup>

In general we can conclude that the bacchic scene attempted to uphold the overlapping ethics of deportment and character defined loosely but comprehensively by the terms *ḥilm*, *waqār*, *'ird*, *ḥayā'*, *muḥāfaẓa*, *jūd*, and *karam*; *tuqā* and *ruṣd*<sup>54</sup> might fall by the way-side, so to speak.

If, however, the ethics of *ḥilm* are contravened, usually this is an illustration of the overpowering effects of the wine, not a decadent posture of the kind that was certainly effected by design in other ways; that is, *ḥilm* always plays a positive role in the poem. This was the case even in the *Jāhiliyya*; compare, in this respect, Zuhayr b. Mas'ūd al-Ḍabbī's, *'aniyyatun tuṣbī l-ḥalīma idhā l dārat akuffu l-qawmi bi-l-ka'si* (A wine from 'Āna which makes a man of forbearance incline to youthful conduct . . .), with Abū Nuwās', *ḥattā turī-ka l-ḥalīma dhā ṭarabin l yahuzzu-hu fī makāni-hi l-marāḥu* ([The effect of the tippie] is to show you a dignified man in rapture . . .),<sup>55</sup> and *tughzilu 'aqila l-mar'i qabla btismi-hi l wa-takh-da'u-hu 'an lubbi-hi wa-'ani l-ḥilmi* (It dallies with the mind of a

<sup>52</sup> *Dīwān*, 690.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* 104.

<sup>54</sup> Though in the Islamic period *ruṣd* came to be understood as an aspect of piety, the word was more nuanced than *tuqā*; for in the *Jāhiliyya* the dichotomy *ruṣd-ghawāya* was still closely in tune with the original semantics of both roots, namely the quintessentially important notion of being either on the right or wrong path in the context of desert travel. However, the roots were also to a certain extent imbued with the ethical significance which was later adopted and appropriated by the ethics of Islam; for their original significance see Durayd b. al-Ṣimma, *Rithā' 'Abd Allāh b. al-Ṣimma*, line 10: *wa-hal ana illā min Ghaziyyata in ghawat l ghawaytu wa-in tarṣud Ghaziyyatu arṣudi* (in A. Jones, *Early Arabic Poetry*, vol. i).

<sup>55</sup> *Dīwān*, 44.

man before he can even smile and treacherously rids him of his reason and forbearance).<sup>56</sup> These brief characterizations of wine go some way to explain the apparent contradiction enacted by the narrative of many *khamriyyāt*; for example, a 12-line poem which attempts to sustain respectability at the outset (line 2) degenerates in the closing line:<sup>57</sup> *lā tansa lī yawma l-'arūbati waq'atan l tūdi bi-ṣāhibi-hā bi-ghayri fasādi* → *lam yarḍa Iblisu l-ṣarīfu fī 'āla-nā l ḥattā a'āna fasāda-nā bi-fasādi* (Do not forget the incident of that Friday which destroyed its master without depravity → charming Iblis, not content with our actions, aided our depravity with corruption).

An amusing dissonance in the poet's ethical posturing is further contained in a 7-line poem which depicts a *nadīm*'s ill-judged descent into a drunken stupor: (lines 4 and 7) *wa-qāla a-lasta mutbi'a-hā bi-ukhrā l tuwaqqiru-nī fa-inna biya zdiyādā* → *ilā an kharra mā yadrī a-arḍan l tawassada 'inda dhālika am wisādā* (Will you not follow the first cup with another that will give me [back] my dignity, for I feel the need for more → [He drank] until he collapsed [to the floor] not knowing the ground from a pillow).<sup>58</sup>

Perhaps the finest example of distinct ethical dimensions (already manifest in some of the contradictions outlined above) exists in the poem at the outset of which Abū Nuwās describes himself as *dhū muḥāfaẓa* and *dhū ḥayā'*—qualities through which he remains resolute against *nusk*; the piece rounds off with an invocation of Iblis, and illustrates what elsewhere has been described by Bencheikh as a Satanic pact: *da'awtu Iblisa thumma qultu la-hu l lā tasqī hādhā l-ṣarāba 'udhdhālī ll fa-bittu usqā wa-man kaliftu bi-hi l mudāmatan ṣuffiqat bi-salsālī* (I called upon Iblis and said to him, 'Do not give this wine to my censurers'; and I spent the night with the one I love being given to drink an aged wine mixed with sweet water).<sup>59</sup>

Whilst in many cases he acceded to honest, mimetic depictions

<sup>56</sup> *Dīwān*, 202.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* 78.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* 81. In a panegyric poem in praise of 'Abbās b. 'Ubayd Allāh (*Dīwān*, 435) this progression (*waqār* → *mujūn*) is reversed; in a rebellious line contained in the *nasīb* of this poem the poet states: *yaqūlūna fī l-ṣaybi l-waqāru li-ahli-hi l wa-ṣaybi bi-ḥamdi llāhi ghayru waqāri*; yet after a lyrical interlude there is an ethical *takhalluṣ* into *madiḥ*: *ḥalaftu yamīnan barratan lā yašūbu-hu l fajārun wa-mā dahri yamīnu fajāri ll la-qad qawwama l-'Abbāsu li-l-nāsi ḥajja-hum l wa-sāsa bi-ruhbāniyyatin wa-waqāri*.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* 142.

of the effects of wine, Abū Nuwās also salvaged respectability from within the framework of ethics and deportment derivative of *muruwwa*:

أرى الخمر...

تَزِيدُ الْقَوْمَ فَضْلَ سَفَاهَةٍ      وَتَنْزِعُ أَخْلَاقَ الْكَرِيمِ كَمَا هِيَ  
وَجَدْتُ أَقْلَ النَّاسِ عَقْلًا إِذَا اشْتَبَى      أَقْلَهُمْ عَقْلًا إِذَا كَانَ صَاحِبًا

I see that wine . . .  
Enhances the folly of people but leaves the  
character of noble men intact.  
And I have found that those with the least  
intelligence when they are drunk are the ones  
with the least intelligence when they are sober.

Thus *karam* is upheld by a sleight of hand.

#### ABŪ NUWĀS AND THE CALIPH'S PROHIBITION(S)

Several wine poems of Abū Nuwās are centred paradoxically around the notion of abstinence imposed by the Caliph. Most are ironically ambivalent—for they affect abstinence yet proceed to depict bacchic scenes that are often as vivid as the most free-spirited wine poems. In this way the poet indulges his own proclivity for contrast and contradictions in the structure of his poems—a structure which normally cultivates a growing momentum of defiance.

Where abstinence is genuine it is underpinned by *ḥilm* and cannot therefore be viewed as *tawba*. This is apparent in a short 5-line declaration.<sup>60</sup> The essential statement of abstinence comes in the first hemistich: *a-‘ādhila bi’tu l-jahla ḥaythu yubā’u* (. . . I have sold coarse ignorance in the proper place). The poet attributes erstwhile indulgence to *jahl*; in the following line he describes it as *ṣibā* (*nahā-nī amīru l-mu’minīna ‘ani l-ṣibā*)—we have already seen that *ḥilm* is the antonym of *jahl* and *ṣibā*.

The eschewal of wine in another 3-line fragment<sup>61</sup> inverts one of the poet's idiosyncrasies; for he is ordered by the Caliph to cease describing wine and to describe the *aṭlāl* instead. Thus, despite denigrating the *aṭlāl* elsewhere in his *dīwān* as a bacchic stance, here he reaffirms the *aṭlāl* as a proper subject for poetry. In this way

<sup>60</sup> *Dīwān*, 12.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* 21.

the first line reworks but inverts the commonplace polarization of *aṭlāl* and *khamr*: *a‘ir šī‘ra-ka l-aṭlāla wa-l-dimāna l-qafrā | fa-qad ṭāla mā azrā bi-hi na’tu-ka l-khamrā*. There is a *nūniyya*<sup>62</sup> which begins in this way but is far more complex; it has three phases of unequal length:

(i) The first ten lines comprise a *khamriyya* which moves from the *aṭlāl*, description of the wine and the entourage, to the *sāqī* and the erotic finale.

(ii) Line 11 alters the tone; the opening bacchic episode (1–10) is set implicitly into the past—becoming a nostalgic tableau—and the poet declares his grudging abstinence for fear of the Caliph, al-Amīn: *dhāka ‘ayṣun law dāma lī ghayra annī | ‘iftu-hu mukrahan wa-khifitu l-Amīnā*.

(iii) The final two lines contain two contradictions. First, in defiance of the Caliph the poet invites the circulation of wine: *adiri l-ka’sa ḥāna an tasqī-nā | wa-nquri l-duffa inna-hu yulhī-nā* (Pass around the cup, it is time to let us drink, and beat the tambourine which entertains us). Secondly, the final line reaffirms indulgence by dismissing the *aṭlāl* motif with which the poem begins: *wa-da‘i l-dhikra li-l-ṭulūli idhā mā | dārati l-ka’su yasratan wa-yamīnā* (Do not mention the abandoned traces when the cup is circling to the left and to the right). These two lines are transmitted only in Ḥamza’s recension of the *dīwān*. However, Ghazālī justifies their inclusion in his edition with a simple but cogent argument:<sup>63</sup> “the poet’s love of wine (*‘išqu-hu*) overcomes him . . . so he is drawn to defiance, calling upon the *sāqī* to circulate the wine and forget the song of the *aṭlāl*.”

There is a 7-line *bā’iyya*<sup>64</sup> which accedes to abstinence but is substantively a *khamriyya* (since it treats the *‘ādhil*→the *sāqī*→*waṣf al-khamr*→*sāqī*/erotic element) and therefore remains carefully ambivalent. The first line, as if in pique, upstages the censurer<sup>65</sup> by referring to a higher moral authority—the *Imām* (the Caliph): *a-‘ādhila a’tabtu l-imāma wa-a’tabā | wa-a’rabtu ‘ammā fī l-ḍamīri wa-a’rabā*. In line 2 the poet rejects the wine offered by the *sāqī*: *wa-qultu li-sāqī-nā ajzi-hā*. Though he sustains his resolve to

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* 30. In Wagner’s edition (pp. 311–14) Ghazālī’s two final lines open the poem.

<sup>63</sup> *Dīwān*, 31; see n. 1.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* 22.

<sup>65</sup> Even in poems of abstinence Abū Nuwās seldom concedes the censurer’s victory over him.

abstain from wine in line 3 (*fa-jawwaza-hā 'annī 'uqāran*), he goes on to describe it with positive images of light (lines 3–5): it is as a glowing [fire] set up [like a tent] on high ground; he that drinks it makes as if to kiss a star; it evokes visions of sunrise and sunset as it moves around the house. In the erotic *envoi* (the final two lines of the piece) the *sāqī* gives wine not to the poet but to the *nudamā'*—*saqā-hum*. However, in the poet the *sāqī* instils a hope for something yet more desirable than the wine: *saqā-hum wa-mannā-nī bi-'aynay-hi munyatan* | *fa-kānat ilā qalbī aladhdha wa-aṭyaba* (He gave drink to them and with his eyes inspired in me a hope which, in my heart, was yet more delightful [than wine]). Though the poet has been forced to abstain from wine, he shows no inclination to be chaste (*'afīf*); he has not, therefore, even acceded to *ḥilm* in any real sense, and he remains a far cry from *tawba*.

In the 6-line *mīmiyya*<sup>66</sup> with *maṭla'*, *Ayyu-hā l-rā'ihānī bi-l-lawmi lūmā*, the Imām's injunction provokes a charming conceit—the poet's part in the bacchic scene is simply to smell and behold the wine: (1b, 3b, and 4)

لا أذوق المدامَ إلّا شمّاً.....  
لستُ إلّا على الحديثِ نديماً.....  
كُبرُ حظّي منها إذا هي دارت أن أراها وأن أشمَّ النسيماً

... My taste of wine is limited to smelling it  
... And my companionship is in conversation only  
My greatest share of wine when it is passed around  
is to see it and take a breath of its fragrance.

He goes on (5–6) to compare himself ironically with a *qa'adiyyun*—a Khārijite who has abstained from fighting whilst sharing the opinions of the sect. The poem is thus characterized more by abstention than abstinence.

The first and last line of the 13-line *qāfiyya* with *maṭla'*, *A-'ādhila lā amūtu bi-kaffi sāqī*,<sup>67</sup> establish the specific backdrop of the poem—the Caliph's injunction: (1b) *wa-lā ābā 'alā maliki l-'Irāqī* → (13b) *wa-waqqara-nī l-khalīfatu 'an nizāqī*. However, the initial solemnity of abstinence (2a, *hajartu la-hu llatī 'an-hā nahā-nī*) is undercut in the following line (3) by a humorous image,

<sup>66</sup> *Dīwān*, 29.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* 56.

namely, the poet's wineskin setting off to the tavern without him. It sets the tone for lines 5–8 (description of the wine) and 10–12 (the erotic finale). The fullness of this section betrays the true sentiments that lie behind the professed acquiescence in *ṣayb* (13a, *fa-aṣbaḥtu 'tajartu 'alā maṣībīn*) and *waqār*.

Another 13-line poem<sup>68</sup> degenerates from a formal and puristic tone to *mujūn*. Lines 1–4 are concerned with the Caliph's prohibition: *aṭī'i l-khalīfata wa-'ṣi dhā 'azfi*. However, the seed of degeneration is sown in the first hemistich of the third line in which the poet claims that he has never been able to hide his feelings: *ṣaḥḥat 'alāniyyatī la-hu*—there is anxiety here that should he fall short of observing the Caliph's prohibition he will be discovered. Thus in line 4 we read: *fa-la-in wa'adtu-ka tarka-hā 'idatan* | *innī 'alay-ka la-khā'ifun khulfī* (Though I have promised to abandon [wine] I fear for you lest I should break my promise).

#### TAWBA IN ABŪ L-'ATĀHIYA

Since an essential aspect of the *zuhdiyya* is a call for piety in others through a simple dialectic that works against *lahw*, a common topos of the pious poem is either the celebration of or, more specifically, the invitation to *tawba*. Treatment of the latter allows one to perceive further the antagonism existing between indulgent poetry and its pious opposite. Thus in a *bā'iyya*<sup>69</sup> (of 6 lines) where the poet confesses a variety of sins (*tatāba'at dhunūbun 'alā āthāri-hā dhunūbū*) there is hope for God's forgiveness and His acceptance of *tawba*: *fa-yā layta anna llāha yaghfiru mā maḍā* | *wa-ya'dhanu fī tawbatī-nā fa-natūbu*<sup>70</sup> (I hope that God will forgive the sins of the past and allow us to repent . . .).

In another poem of 13 lines<sup>71</sup> Abū l-'Atāhiya invites others to see the light: *a-lā li-llāhi anta matā tatūbu* | *wa-qad ṣabaghat dhawā'iba-ka l-khuṭūbu* (When will you turn to God in repentance now that the events of Fate have coloured your forelocks). Though the lexicon in this verse is unusual it expresses the traditional concern with altered behaviour once *ṣayb* has appeared in one's hair.

<sup>68</sup> *Dīwān*, 66.

<sup>69</sup> *Dīwān Abi l-'Atāhiya*, 34.

<sup>70</sup> I have taken this phrase (*fī tawbatī-nā fa-natūbu*) from Fayṣal's altogether superior edition of the *Dīwān* (see p. 21).

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.* 35. In Fayṣal's edition this poem has 16 lines.



Normally the poet makes mention of these preoccupations with reference to himself, pitted against the rebuke of the fault-finder; here, however, Abū l-ʿAtāhiya emerges quite clearly in the role of the censurer. Line 7 follows as a question analogous to Abū Nuwās' celebrated *qul li-man yaddaʿī fī l-ḥilmi falsafatan*—in antagonistic poetry of this kind it is consistently the crown of wisdom and knowledge over which there is dispute: *wa-kayfa turidu an tudʿā ḥakīman* | *wa-anta li-kulli mā tahwā rakūbu* (How can you hope to be called wise when you indulge all your desires).

The self-appointed role of wise man, moral watchdog, and censurer<sup>72</sup> is even clearer in a short composition held together by *anaphora*;<sup>73</sup> each line begins with the phrase *subḥāna rabbi-ka* and ends with a censorious question; for example (line 1), *subḥāna rabbi-ka mā arā-ka tatūbu* | *wa-l-raʿsu min-ka bi-ṣaybi-hi makhḍūbu* (Your Lord is Great! Yet I do not see you repent though your head has been tinted grey!). Again *ṣayb* invites censure and repentance. Line 2 turns the epicurean ethic against the indulger, offering counsel based on the vicissitudes of Fate. In lines 3 and 5 it is clear that *hawā*, specifically, and *ladhdha*, more generally, are the source of rebuke: (5) *subḥāna rabbi-ka kayfa yaltadhdhu mruʿun* | *bi-l-ʿayši wahwa bi-naḥsi-hi maṭlūbu* (How can a man enjoy his life when his soul is sought [elsewhere]). Caution sets itself against the hedonistic ethic.

Perhaps the most relevant poem of this kind is one which challenges bacchic pleasures specifically:<sup>74</sup> *a-yā man bayna bāṭiyatin wa-dannin* | *wa-ʿūdīn fī yaday ghāwin mughannī* (You who indulge amongst wineskins, pitchers, and a lute . . . [in the arms of] of a [youthful] singer). This is a state of madness (*inna l-lahwa mina junūni*).<sup>75</sup> In the final two lines it emerges that the addressee has reached mature age, thus facilitating the call to *tawba*: (4 and 5)

وَأَيُّ قَيْحٍ أَقْبَحُ مِنْ لَيْسِبٍ      بُرَى مُتَطَرِّبًا فِي مِثْلِ سِنِي  
إِذَا مَا لَمْ يَنْبُ كَهْلٌ لَشَيْبٍ      فَلَيْسَ بِتَائِبٍ مَا عَاشَ ظَنِي

What is more unattractive than to see a man of good  
sense at my age in a state of senseless merriment.  
If an old man will not repent once his hair has gone grey,  
then I think he will never repent.

<sup>72</sup> *Dīwān*, 44.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* 44.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* 414.

# TAWBA IN THE KHAMRIYYĀT OF ABŪ NUWĀS

We have observed above that *ḥilm* underpinned the code of deportment in the bacchic scene. Piety and *tawba*, inasmuch as they demand abstinence, were treated only with great irony—indeed *tawba* is expressed positively only in separate *zuhdiyyāt* where the poet rarely lists the sins (*dhunūb*) which he has chosen to abandon. In general the obligations of *ṣayb* intercede between *lahw* and *tawba*. Thus the possible constituent parts of a *khamriyya* that emerge are illustrated in the following linear schema:

*Khamr/Lahw* ↔ *Ḥilm/Hayāʿ* ↔ *Ṣayb/Irʿiwāʿ* ↔ *Tawba/Ghufrān*

These categories overlap, such that we find *khamr* treated within a framework that spans some or all categories:

- (1) *Khamr/Lahw*
- (2) [*Khamr/Lahw* ↔ *Ḥilm/Hayāʿ*]
- (3) [*Khamr/Lahw* ↔ *Ḥilm/Hayāʿ* ↔ *Ṣayb/Irʿiwāʿ*]
- (4) [*Khamr/Lahw* ↔ *Ḥilm/Hayāʿ* ↔ *Ṣayb/Irʿiwāʿ* ↔ *Tawba/Ghufrān*]

Abū Nuwās was fully aware of all thematic and structural possibilities. He could treat abstinence via the motif of *ṣayb*, or some corollary motif—this was mostly restricted to formal panegyrics and the *zuhdiyyāt*. Alternatively he could address the religious kernel of the matter, or distract his audience away from it, without setting bacchism implicitly into the past. On the whole his poems cultivate a progression that inverts the normal movement towards abstinence. Indeed, those seduction poems that have vivid and feckless denouements typify this thematic development.

Where there is *tawba*, it provides an amusing contradiction. In this respect it is significant that the topic is treated in terms of both the structure and internal psychology of the individual piece; thus, as an element of composition, it may contribute to the distinct and superior literary quality of his most adroit wine poems which defy characterization and demand detailed analysis.<sup>76</sup>

Abū Nuwās must be seen to reverse the basic tenor of abstinence characteristic of the *dīwān* of al-Aʿšā—representative of the classical tradition—who places his libations in the past. *Ḥilm*, where it is treated as a relevant matter, is internalized into the *khamriyya*; the

<sup>75</sup> This phrase is unmetrical; Fayṣal's edition has the metrically correct *inna l-lahwa wa-l-malhā junūnun* (p. 363).

<sup>76</sup> See below, "Three Poems of Abū Nuwās".

basic trend is thus of incitation to drink in the present as a catalyst for seduction. Where *tawba* and/or *ghufrān* are treated they retain their religious significance; yet in the particular way they are dealt with they may add to the poet's defiance.

#### POEMS WHICH GROW INCREASINGLY IRRELIGIOUS

Often the most defiant and anti-religious sentiments of a *khamriyya* occupy the final line or section; for example, a conventional trip to the wine-seller's tavern ends in the following manner:<sup>77</sup>

كَذَلِكَ لَا أَزَالُ وَلَمْ أَزَلْ      ذَرِيعَ الْبَاعِ فِي دِينِي وَمَالِي  
يُلَانِمُنِي الْحَرَامُ إِذَا اجْتَمَعْنَا      وَأَجْفُو عَنْ مُلَاعَمَةِ الْحَلَالِ

And so I continued and will continue speedily to dissipate  
my religion and my wealth.

When we get together I find pleasure in what is prohibited  
by religion and I shy away from what is permissible.

In several poems Abū Nuwās remains resolute and unrepentant after seduction; he steadies his nerve and attempts to meet the psychological challenge which his confessions force upon him.<sup>78</sup> Thus the twelfth line of a 14-line seduction poem reads:<sup>79</sup> *fa-lam aqul ba'da-mā zafirtu bi-hi | yā layta mā kāna min-hu lam yakuni* (I did not say after seducing him, 'I wish I had not had my way with him'). The poet resists contrition and adds force to his stance by reiterating the indulgent spirit in which the poem is cast: (line 14) *lā taṭlubanna l-ladhdhāti muktataman | wa-ghdu ilay-hā ka-khālī'i l-rasani* (Do not seek pleasures discretely, rather make for them with a free rein).

Another 5-line poem treats the sins of indulgence (*qasf*) discursively; for in the penultimate line there is discussion about the attitude which informs a sin (*khaṭī'a*): *laysat mina llātī yaqūlu la-*

<sup>77</sup> *Dīwān Abī Nuwās*, 62.

<sup>78</sup> He could also be sensitive to the shame involved in his actions; though at times this could lead to *tawba*, more interesting are those poems in which he simply questions and reproves himself but remains essentially ambivalent. Such ambivalence manifests itself variedly; see (*Dīwān*, 24) *lā talum-ni 'alā llātī fatanat-ni | wa-arat-ni l-qabiḥa ghayra qabiḥi*. Examine also the final line of a 10-line *qasida* (ibid., 28): *fa-bitnā yarā-nā llāhu šarra 'aṣābatin | nuḡarriru adhyāla l-fuṣūqī wa-lā fakhrū*. The finest example of ambivalence, indeed a moral crisis, exists in the *khamriyya* beginning *Wa-khaymati nāṭūrin* (see below, "Three Poems of Abū Nuwās").

<sup>79</sup> *Dīwān*, 134.

*hā l-fatā | 'inda l-tanaddumi layta-ni lam af'ali* ([The deed that I have done] is not one of those things about which a youth will say in regret, "Would that I had not done it"). The final line clarifies the Islamic context of the peccadilloes mentioned and shamelessly champions the defiance involved in the poet's lack of regret: *ḥallal-tu lā ḥarajan 'alayya ḥarāma-hā | wa-la-rubba-mā wassa'tu ghayra muḥallali* (I have judged to be *ḥalāl* that which is *ḥarām*; I have often stretched the boundaries of that which is forbidden).<sup>80</sup>

The *khamriyya* beginning '*afā l-muṣallā*, discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, is certainly the finest example of a poem which inverts the requisite progression towards *tawba*; this is clear even from the perspective of analysis adopted above and, therefore, no further comment is necessary. Other less artfully constructed poems rework this device, which is based on the fact that a life of piety will lead to a life of sin. It is clear, in the context of the poet's professed life, in the opening lines of a poem which ends with the "mortal" intoxication of a young Christian (*fa-asqī-hi ilā an māta sukrān*):<sup>81</sup>

شَرَيْتُ الْفَتَا بِالْثَمَنِ الرَّبِيحِ      وَبَيْتُ النُّسْكَ بِالْقَصْفِ النَّجِيحِ  
وَأَمَكُنْتُ الْمَجَانَةَ مِنْ قِيَادِي      وَلَكْتُ مِنَ الْمُجُونِ بِمُسْتَرَحِ

I bought depravity at a high price and sold  
piety in return for a nice crop of pleasures.  
And I have allowed a libertine spirit to guide  
me—I shall never give up *mujūn*!

A further example introduces a poem in which the words *ṭā'a* and '*aṣy*<sup>82</sup>, which have resonances of piety and impiety, are inverted in significance and worked into a sinful context that is governed by Iblis:<sup>83</sup>

فَتَكَنَّنِي طَيْرَنَا      ذَ وَقَدْ كُنْتُ نَقِيًّا  
إِذْ تَرَكْتُ الْمَاءَ فِيهَا      وَشَرَيْتُ الْخُسْرَوِيَّا

Ṭīzanābādh has made me depraved though once I was pious.  
For it was there that I abandoned water and began to drink wine.

Iblis commands the domination of a recalcitrant youth (*qāda-hu Iblisu ṭaw'an | ba'da mā kana 'aṣiyyā*) whose humiliation is then candidly depicted: *fa-rakibnā-hu bi-lā sar | -jin rukūban marwaziyy || wa-ḥamidnā l-sayra lammā | an ra'aynā-hu waṭiyyā*

<sup>80</sup> *Dīwān*, 199.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. 164.

<sup>82</sup> Both roots describe religious attitudes and have a high incidence in the Qur'ān.

<sup>83</sup> *Dīwān*, 141.

(We rode him bareback in the style of Merv and praised this ride when we saw him to be humbled).

Abū Nuwās' *Qālū tanassaka ba'da l-ḥajji*<sup>84</sup> does not treat wine specifically but articulates a struggle between indulgence and piety (*nusk*):

أرجو الإله وأخشى طيرنا إذا  
فصل الخطام وإن أسرعت إغذاذا  
من السلامة لم أسلم بيغذاذا  
لكن فيه قبيلات وأفخاذا  
فطربل ففري بئى فكلا إذا  
تقول ذا شرهم بل ذاك بل هذا  
أنفذت بالترك والازكان إنفاذا  
ولا ترى قائلا من ذا ولا ماذا  
قالوا تنسك بعد الحج قلت لهم  
أخشى قضيب كرم أن ينزعنى  
فإن سلمت وما قلبى على ثقة  
ما شئت من بلد تدنو منازلها  
ما أبعد النسك من قلب تقسمه  
قوم تواصوا بترك البر بينهم  
ليسوا كقوم إذا حاذبت مجلسهم  
هناك لا تخطئ الأذن لائمة

They said, "He has become pious after the Hajj." I replied,

"Indeed, I hope for God and fear Ṭīzanābādh."

I fear that the vineyard stalks may drag me away from the bounty  
[to which] my camel's reins [lead me] (i.e. the *ḥajji*), even  
though I might gallop by.

If I attain salvation (*idhā salimtu*)—of which my heart is not  
confident—it will not be in Baghdad.

I want nothing from a city whose gardens are close [to each other  
and plentiful], yet which is full of [feuding] clans and  
sub-clans.

A heart divided between Qurṭrubbul, Qurā Bannā and Kilwādh  
stands a far cry from piety.

They are a people who have enjoined upon each other the  
eschewal of piety—of whom you can say this one is the most  
evil, no this one, no that one.

... They do not preach to you and make you abstain.

There no censurer meets your ear, nor is there anyone to say,

"Who is this [you are with] or what [is this that you do]?"<sup>85</sup>

Ambivalence *vis-à-vis nusk* is the force behind the poem, where *nusk* is acknowledged as part of the poet's temperament and from which he is otherwise distracted by the iniquities of Baghdad. He affects annoyance at his friends' derision of his pious mood and

<sup>84</sup> *Dīwān*, 26.

<sup>85</sup> In *Nafsiyyat Abī Nuwās* (p. 16) al-Nuwayhī takes the psychology of the piece seriously, perceiving therein an earnest account of the poet's anxieties.

attacks them as responsible for his former waywardness, for they have been part of a ghastly atmosphere in the capital—the bickering of feuding clans and sub-clans. Yet the delight for Abū Nuwās of the society which he proceeds to describe, one devoid of censure (as depicted in the final line of the poem) must implicitly negate, or at the very least, highlight the ambivalence of the testament to his own piety in the second hemistich of line 1.

#### TAWBA?

In all the material discussed above there is a growing momentum of defiance. This can also be seen to be the case in poems where *tawba* is treated; for it is treated either negatively or ironically and, therefore, rather than defusing the tension of the poem can be seen to add to it.

The *khamriyya* beginning *da'i l-aṭlāla tasfī-hā l-ḥanūbu*<sup>86</sup> channels its themes away from Islam and excludes religion from its natural domain. For in the final five lines the poem rejects *tawba*, the relevance of which is not seen in the context of Muslim piety; rather it is set into a contrast, which underpins the whole poem, between a rugged bedouin lifestyle and the more sophisticated, urbane pleasures of wine: (lines 17 and 19–21)

أعاذلنى أقصرى عن بعض لومى  
فهذا العيش لا خيم البوادي  
فأين البدو من إيوان كسرى  
غررت بتوبى ولججت فيها  
فراجى توبى عندي يخيب  
وهذا العيش لا اللبن الحليب  
وأين من الميادين الزروب  
فشقى اليوم جيبك لا أتوب

Censurer, will you not relent awhile? Whoever hopes for  
my repentance will be let down.

For this life [of pleasure I have described is the one for me]  
not desert tents; this is the life, not [camels'] milk!

How can one compare the bedu with Kisrā's palace and its  
surrounding expanses?

You are beguiled if you insist on this repentance; tear your  
garment [for all I care]! I will not repent!

Abū Nuwās fashions for *tawba* a context that renders religion

<sup>86</sup> *Dīwān*, 11–12. This poem has been discussed in detail in André Miquel's "Sur un poème d'Abū Nuwās", in C. E. Bosworth *et al.* (edd.) *The Islamic World: From Classical to Modern Times; Essays in Honor of Bernard Lewis* (Princeton, 1989).

almost irrelevant, implying that poetry has its own ethical framework—one which is partly contingent upon the themes treated in the individual poem. Here the poet's attitude is facilitated by the structure of the poem which exhibits a typically linear development from bedouin/desert to urban life and ignores the more significant historical development of *Jābiliyya* to Islam. Seen in this light, the poem inverts the progression exhibited in the short panegyric poem of Maṣṣūr al-Namārī discussed above. Furthermore, as in the short *qaṣīda* *Yā bnata l-ṣaykhi ṣbahī-nā* (see Chapter 2), Abū Nuwās mocks *tawba*, in part, by associating the repentant man with obsolete desert imagery.

The 13-line *khamriyya* beginning *wa-muliḥḥatin fī l-'adhli dhāti naṣiḥatin*,<sup>87</sup> expands a normally cursory opposition to censure into the first four lines. In the second hemistich of the opening line the fault-finder seeks the contrition of a wanton libertine: *tarjū inābata dhī mujūnin māriqī*; the next three lines resist incitement to *raṣād/ruṣd* (*ṣīmatī ghayru l-raṣād* (It is not in my temperament to be orthodox)) and confront society's religious backdrop. This attitude is consolidated in the descriptive celebration of wine that ensues (lines 5–7) and leads, quite conventionally, to the description of the *sāqī*, who in the last five lines is depicted in terms of his Christianity. There is thus a logical progression from the initial eschewal of Islam (as a stance) towards the eulogy and acceptance of a religious scenario which accommodates bacchic indulgence: *innī la-a'lamu anna rabbī lam yakun lī-yakhuṣṣa-hu illā bi-dīnin ṣādiqī* (I know that my Lord could not but delegate to him a true religion).

A more conventional resistance to *tawba* comes in a poem beginning *Bādir ṣabāba-ka qabla l-ṣaybi wa-l-'ārī*.<sup>88</sup> Here a varied and vibrant descriptive tableau of wine (lines 2–25) is sandwiched between two lines (1 and 26) which provide urgency and an ethical context. The first line is the conventional incitement to consummate youth via indulgence before the obligation of abstinence with old age—it is *'ār* (shame) which the acquisition of *ḥilm* holds back. The last line appears to reiterate the first: *fa-dhāka qabla muzūli l-ṣaybi 'ādatu-nā lākinna-nā nartajī ghufrāna ghaffārī* (That is our custom before our whiskers turn grey, but we hope for God's forgiveness). Clearly, however, the second hemistich adds a new dimension to abstinence by subordinating it to religion, and at the same time quite cunningly vindicating indulgence.

<sup>87</sup> *Dīwān*, 218.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* 149.

It is evident that Abū Nuwās continued to drink when he was already old enough to feel the obligation of abstinence (*wa-idhā 'adattu sinīya lam ajid lī-l-ṣaybi 'udhran fī l-nuzūli bi-rāsi*). Such appears to be the background to this poem, suggesting that the word *lakinna-nā* in the final verse effects a deliberate contrast between the ethics of *ṣayb* and the doctrine of God's forgiveness. This interpretation suggests the poet's sensitivity to a distinction between pre-Islamic and Islamic abstinence. The irony of this parting statement is that an essentially Islamic topic provides refuge from a traditional ethical obligation.

Abū Nuwās' treatment of religious motifs at the end of his wine poems is consistently ironical. False contrition enhances the defiance which pervades his verse. Furthermore, religious motifs are subject to the structural proclivities which command both (a) the logical progression of sin to repentance; and (b) its opposite—the accumulation of *mujūn*. He virtually fuses these two progressions together resulting in statements of evident and amusing duplicity. This feature operates in a poem the final line of which summarizes, with an admixture of religiosity and sexual innuendo, a night of gay abandon: *wa-ḥīna ḥānat ṣalātu-nā li-ḍuḥan qumna nuṣallī bi-ghayri takbīri* (And when it was time for our prayer in the forenoon we went off and prayed without saying the *takbīr*).<sup>89</sup>

An even better example of a religious topic alluding to decadent behaviour is the following:<sup>90</sup>

نرى عندنا ما يكره الله كله      سوى الشريك بالرحمان ربّ المشاعر

Amongst us you will behold all the [sins] that  
anger God except for *ṣirk* . . . !

With clever obliqueness this final verse evokes the most vivid images of debauched behaviour. It is also born of a genuine

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.* 146. The technique of ending a poem with a blasphemy, or an irreligious image, is illustrated well by the earlier sceptic poet, al-Uqayṣir al-Asadī; he has a 6-line poem of description which begins by describing the transforming effects of wine (see *Aghānī* 11/244 and *Hāwī*, *Fann al-Ṣi'r al-Khamrī*, 141): *wa-muq'adi qawmin qad maṣā min ṣarābi-nā lī-wa-a'mā saqaynā-hu thalāthan fa-abṣarā* (I often remember the cripple of our district who walked from the effects of our wine, and the blind man to whom we gave three sips and [who then] recovered his sight); the final line echoes these transforming effects: *idhā mā ra'ā-hā ba'da inqā'i ghasli-hā l-tadūru 'alay-nā ṣā'imū l-qawmī aftarā* (When the fasting man of our district saw [the wine] being passed around amongst us after its purification he broke his fast).

<sup>90</sup> *Dīwān*, 208. This image is reworked elsewhere: *tarā 'inda-nā mā yuskhiṭu llāha kulla-hu lī-mina l-'amali l-murdī l-fatā mā khalā l-ṣirka* (*Dīwān*, 705).

theological issue which was first discussed in the Qur'ān—the nature of *ghufrān*; indeed, the verse simply reworks the language and content of a Qur'ānic *āya*: *inna l-lāha lā yaghfiru an yuṣṛaka bi-hi wa-yaghfiru mā dūna dhālika li-man yaṣā'u* (God forgives not that aught should be with Him associated; less than that He forgives to whomsoever He will).<sup>91</sup> Thus there is a paradox, for an indirect plea for divine forgiveness conjures a picture of varied sin.<sup>92</sup>

### THREE POEMS OF ABŪ NUWĀS

#### *Ighrā' Iblīs*

Whilst being built upon a structural or thematic paradigm, a poem may exhibit originality in the individual images it contains, or in the exact nature of the relationship between the various themes treated. In this way a poem's originality may be born from the seeds of convention. One of Abū Nuwās' most original pieces is entitled appropriately by Ghazālī *Ighrā' Iblīs*,<sup>93</sup> it depicts a conversation between Satan and Abū Nuwās, and is developed from an issue which preoccupied both society and the poets, namely the inconsistency of *tawba* amongst many who had given voice to their contrition. Abū Nuwās also enhances a feature of his own poetry by expanding the role of Iblīs—who sometimes has a role as a sort of “pimp” in the endgame of seduction<sup>94</sup>—into that of protagonist in the poem. Another poem which is wholly concerned with Iblīs is an invocation;<sup>95</sup> the poet pleads with the Devil to “cast love” into his recalcitrant lover's heart, otherwise he will no longer write poetry nor get drunk but devote himself to study of the Qur'ān morning,

<sup>91</sup> Qur'ān, 4/48; trans. Arberry, p. 80.

<sup>92</sup> al-Nuwayhī discusses this verse in *Nafsiyyat Abi Nuwās*, 106 ff.

<sup>93</sup> *Dīwān*, 224.

<sup>94</sup> See the final three lines of a 22-line *tā'iyya* (*Dīwān*, 315): *dabba la-hu iblisu fa-qtāda-hu | wa-l-ṣaykhu naffā'un 'alā la'natih || 'ajibtu min iblisu fi tihī-hi | wa-khubthi mā aḡhara min niyyatih || tāha 'alā ādama fi sajdatih | wa-ṣāra qawwādan li-dhurriyyatih*. See also the final three lines of the 11-line *lāmiyya* (Ghazālī, p. 147): *da'awtu iblisu thumma qultu la-hu | 'qad a'jazat-ni madhāhibu l-ḥiyālī || ḥabli wa-ḥablu lladhi kaliftu bi-hi | 'alā tadāni-hi ghayru mutṭaṣilī || fa-radda-hu l-ṣaykhu 'an ṣu'ūbatih | wa-ṣāra qawwāda-nā wa-lam yazālī*. This role of Iblīs in the saturnalia is prefigured in a 10-line *sinīyya* by Wālība b. Ḥubāb, under whom Abū Nuwās served an apprenticeship in his youth (Hāwī, *Fann al-Ši'r al-Khamri*, p. 183, line 8): *ḥattā idhā mā ntaṣaynā | wa-hazza-nā iblisū* (Until, when we were drunk and Iblīs had aroused [in] us [desire] . . .). This is a poem which appears also to have had a more specific influence on Abū Nuwās; see Ch. 1, n. 97.

noon, and night (*wa-lā azālu l-qur'āna adrusu-hu | arūhu fi darsihī wa-abtakiru*). This last verse is significant for it seems obliquely to represent an aspect of Abū Nuwās' life, namely that he had studied the Qur'ān in detail and was therefore amply capable of giving the text of the Revelation a role in his own literature. Moreover, although the verb *abtakiru* has the meaning of “to do something early in the morning”, it also means “to be original and inventive”; is the poet laying open a clue to what he has done elsewhere?

There are many examples in medieval sources of poets who jibbed at false repentance; they are perhaps best summarized by al-Mutanabbī's sarcastic hemistich, *a-mina l-ṣarābi tatūbu am min tarki-hi* (Is it of wine that you repent or of its abandonment).<sup>96</sup> This echoes Abū l-'Atāhiya's more earnest attack:<sup>97</sup> *tatūbu mina l-dhunūbi idhā mariḍtā | wa-tarji'u li-l-dhunūbi idhā barītā* (You repent of your sins when you are ill but return to them upon recovery). It is a criticism that has its most forceful precedent in the Qur'ānic: *wa-laysati l-tawbatu li-lladhina ya'malūna l-sayyi'ati ḥattā idhā ḥaḍara aḥada-hum l-mawtu qāla tubtu l-āna . . .* (God shall not turn towards those who do evil deeds until, when one of them is visited by death, he says, “Indeed now I repent . . .”).<sup>98</sup> A variety of clues indicates that having repented Abū Nuwās recovered his epicurean convictions; principally, he repeatedly dismissed the presumption amongst his detractors that he had become a pious abstainer. Such is the background of *Ighrā' Iblīs*:

فِي كُلِّ مَا يُؤْتِنِي خَصْمٌ	نَمْتُ إِلَى الصُّبْحِ وَإِبْلِيسُ لِي
ثُمَّ هَوَى يَشْعُهُ نَجْمٌ	رَأَيْتُهُ فِي الْجَوْ مُسْتَعْلَبًا
عَتَمَ أَنْ أَهْبَطَ الرَّجْمُ	أَرَادُ لِلسَّمْعِ اسْتِرَاقًا فَا
بَنَائِبِ تَوْبَتِهِ وَهُمْ	فَقَالَ لِي لِمَا هَوَى مُرْجَبًا
يَزِينُهَا صَدْرُهَا فَحَمٌ	هَلْ لَكَ فِي عَذَاءِ مَمْكُورَةٍ
أَسْوَدَ بِحِكْمِي لَوْنَهُ الْكُرْمُ	وَوَارِدَ جَنَلٍ عَلَى مَنَهِا
يَرْتَجُّ مِنْهُ كَقُلِّ فَعَمٌ	فَقُلْتُ لَا قَالَ قَتَى أَمْرَدُ
وَلَيْسَ فِي لَبَّتِهِ نَظَمٌ	كَأَنَّهُ عَذَاءٌ فِي خِذْرِهَا

<sup>95</sup> *Dīwān*, 313.

<sup>96</sup> *Dīwān Abi l-'Atāhiya*, 96.

<sup>97</sup> *Quṭb al-Surūr*, 212.

<sup>98</sup> Qur'ān, 4/18; trans. Arberry, p. 75.

فقلت لا قال قتي مُسْمِعٌ  
يَحْسُنُ مِنْهُ النُّقْرُ وَالنَّعْمُ  
فقلت لا قال قتي كل ما  
شابه ما قلت لك الحزمُ  
ما أنا بالآيس من عودِ  
منك على رجمك يا قَدَمُ  
لست أباً مُرَّةً إن لم تعد  
فغير ذا من فعلك الغشمُ

I slept until dawn, which time Iblis was my adversary, [tempting] me with sundry sins.

I saw him climb high into the stratosphere, then fall, chased by a [shooting-] star.

He wanted to "listen by stealth" [to the High Assembly], but was soon cast down by a pelting of stones.

He said to me as he fell: "Welcome to a man beguiled by his penitence!"

What say you to a well-rounded virgin, adorned by heavy breasts—

Whose thick, black hair flows sumptuously upon her shoulders, like a cluster of grapes?"

"No!", I answered. "What then of a beardless youth with quivering, full buttocks—

One like a virgin behind a silk-screen, but with a chest unadorned by jewels?"

"No!" "Then a boy who sings and plays music delightfully?"

"No!" "Then you deem yourself to be resolute against all such things as I have spoken of?"

[Yet] I have not lost hope of your return, despite yourself, you fool!

I am not Abū Murra if you do not rescind; [to think you could choose] any other manner of behaviour would be naïve."

This is a vivid and complex poem which draws its most conspicuous images (lines 2–3) from the Qur'ān; it hints at a speculative bent of mind, examining the role of Iblis as the Great Tempter whilst alluding to the articulation of determinism in the Qur'anic text. The complexity of the piece lies in the fact that allusions to Islamic revelation exist on various levels. First, there is direct allusion: lines 2 and 3, which show Iblis being forced from Heaven by a pelting of stones, clearly rework verses 16–18 of *Sūratu l-Ḥijr*:<sup>99</sup> *wa-laqaḍ ja'alnā fī l-samā'i burūjan wa-zayyanā-hā li-l-nāẓirīn | wa-ḥaḍḥnā-hā min kulli šayṭānin rajīm | illā mani staraqa l-sam'a fa-atba'a-hu šihābun mubīn* (We have set in heaven constellations and decked them out fair to the beholders, and guarded them from

<sup>99</sup> *Sūra*, 15/16–18; see also Qur'ān, 37/6–10.

every accursed satan excepting such as listens by stealth—and he is pursued by a manifest flame).<sup>100</sup> Other allusions are more oblique but are signposted by the force of the dominant Qur'anic image; thus hemistich 2b, *thumma hawā yatba'u-hu najmū*, echoes the first verse of *Sūrat al-Najm*: *wa-l-najmi idhā hawā* (By the star when it plunges).<sup>101</sup> The tenth-form verb in 2a, *ra'aytu-hu fī l-jawwi musta'liyan*, may allude to Qur'ān 20/64 which reports the speech of Pharaoh's magicians before their contest with Moses: *wa-qad aflaha l-yawma mani sta'lā* (Whoever today gains the upper hand shall surely prosper);<sup>102</sup> this possibility is supported by the use of the word *hawā* in the continuation of the Moses narrative of this *sūra* where God warns the people of Israel (verse 81): *wa-man yaḥlil 'alay-hi ghaḍabī faqad hawā* (And on whomsoever My anger alights, that man is hurled to ruin).<sup>103</sup> Finally, in line 7 of the poem the Devil tempts the poet with a *fatan amradu* ("a beardless youth"); the word *amrad* is not unusual, but it is not so common as to be insignificant when we remember that in *Sūrat al-Ṣaffāt* the lower heaven has been adorned with the stars ". . . to preserve against every rebel satan (*min kulli šayṭānin māridin*); they listen not to the High Council, for they are pelted from every side, rejected, and theirs is an everlasting chastisement, except such as snatches a fragment, and he is pursued by a piercing flame".<sup>104</sup> The meanings of "*mārid*" and "*amrad*" are quite different; the significance of *amrad*, therefore, is simply that it sustains echoes of the Qur'ān.<sup>105</sup>

The extent of Qur'anic influence suggests an allegory with its own encoded meaning and significance. This may work on a variety of levels. The notion of determinism introduced by the word *yu'thimu-nī* in 1b may allude to the discussion of enforced sin in the Revelation, that is, *fa-man uḍṭurra ghayru bāghin wa-lā 'ādin fa-lā ithma 'alay-hi* (You whoso is constrained, not desiring nor transgressing, no sin shall be on him; God is All-forgiving, All-compassionate);<sup>106</sup> here those who have been forced by circumstance to consume forbidden dietary items are exempted of responsibility.<sup>107</sup> This, of course, may have a bearing on the poet's attitude to the consumption of wine and his belief in the forgiving nature of the Godhead.

<sup>100</sup> Arberry, *Koran*, 254.

<sup>101</sup> *Sūra* 53/1; Arberry, p. 550.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. 315.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. 316.

<sup>104</sup> *Sūra* 37/6–10; Arberry, p. 456.

<sup>105</sup> Abū Nuwās refers to "every rebel satan" as *murrādu l-'afārit* in the *tā'iyya* beginning *Wa-fityatin ka-maṣābilī l-dujā* discussed in the next section.

<sup>106</sup> *Sūra* 2/173; Arberry, p. 22.

To a Muslim familiar with the Qur'ān, the āya "*wa-l-najmi idhā hawā*" would bring to mind the ensuing āya, "*mā ḍalla ṣāhibu-kum wa-mā ghawā*" (Your comrade is not astray, neither errs). The unequivocal semantics of this verse are powerful in the putatively sinful backdrop that this poem has; it is noteworthy that in *Sūra* 15 it is precisely the "*ghāwīna*" whom Iblis will lead astray. Equally significant may be allusions made by the entirety of Abū Nuwās' poem to the make-up of both or either of *Sūrat al-Najm* and *Sūrat al-Ḥijr*; the former begins by depicting first Muḥammad's vision on Mt. Ḥira and then his ascent through the seven heavens to "the Lote-Tree and the Garden of the Refuge": (vv. 1–18)

By the star when it plunges, your comrade is not astray, neither errs, nor speaks he out of caprice. This is naught but a revelation revealed, taught him by one terrible in power, very strong; he stood poised, being on the higher horizon, then drew near and suspended hung, two bows'-length away, or nearer, then he revealed that he revealed. His heart lies not of what he saw; what, will you dispute with him what he sees? Indeed, he saw him another time by the Lote-Tree of the Boundary nigh which is the Garden of Refuge, when there covered the Lote-Tree that which covered; his eye swerved not, nor swept astray. Indeed, he saw one of the greatest signs of his Lord.<sup>107</sup>

The *sūra* thus discusses the process of revelation and depicts Muḥammad's vision of both Gabriel<sup>109</sup> and the cosmos above the level of human existence; it would appear that Abū Nuwās' vision of the Devil draws a picture analogous to the Qur'ānic tableau, though whilst the Prophet experiences an ascent into Heaven the poet witnesses Satan's fugitive descent. The *sūra* continues by listing the signs of God's omnipotence and concludes quite naturally with admonishment: "So bow yourselves to your God, and serve Him!" Analogously in the *Mīmiyya* after the poet's aerial vision there is a list of the "signs" of Temptation and the piece concludes with a sinister, if amusing, threat that acts as a call to sin. Similarly

<sup>107</sup> This notion is reiterated in Qur'ān, 5/4.

<sup>108</sup> Arberry, p. 550.

<sup>109</sup> Vincent Monteil has translated this poem into French in *Abū Nuwās; le vin, la vie* (pp. 92–30, "La tentation diabolique"); in his note on verse 2 (ibid. 177) he writes: "vers 2: suspendu, comme l'ange Gabriel?" Is he suggesting an allusion to *Sūrat al-Najm*? This suggestion may certainly be supported by another very delicate allusion, namely the use of the name "Abū Murra" to refer to the Devil in the final line; for *Dhū Mirra*, of which the Devil's *kunya* is phonologically (not semantically) reminiscent, and which means "possessed of sagacity", describes the angel Gabriel in verse 6 of this *sūra*. Abū Nuwās may be setting up Abū Murra to replace *Dhū Mirra* in a dramatic, humorous, but blasphemous reworking of the Revelation.

*Sūrat al-Ḥijr*, after presenting the image of "accursed satan . . . pursued by a manifest flame", lists the "signs" of Divinity and Creation—"And the Earth, We stretched it forth, and cast on it firm mountains . . ."; the continuation of the *sūra* treats the Creation of man out of clay and Iblis' refusal to prostrate himself before Adam. The fallen angel is cast from the heavens but is given respite till Judgement Day to lead man astray; here is the vivid dialogue between God and Iblis: (vv. 32–42)

Said He, "What ails thee, Iblis, that thou art not among those bowing?" Said he, "I would never bow myself before a mortal whom Thou hast created of a clay of mud moulded." Said He, "Then go forth hence; thou art accursed. Upon thee shall rest the curse, till the Day of Doom." Said he, "My Lord, respite me till the day they shall be raised." Said He, "Thou art among the ones that are respited unto the day of a known time." Said he, "My Lord, for Thy perverting me I shall deck all fair to them in the earth, and I shall pervert them all together, excepting those Thy servants among them that are devoted." Said He, "This is for Me a straight path: over My servants thou shalt have no authority, except those that follow thee, being perverse . . .".<sup>110</sup>

In the *Mīmiyya* the poet depicts Iblis in the act of trying to pervert one of the "sons of Adam", whilst also mirroring the essential discourse of *sūra* 15. This is supported in a very significant way by a *mīmiyya* of al-Farazdaq in which, having repented, the bard from Tamīm has a dialogue with the Devil.<sup>111</sup> The latter is chided, amongst other things, for having caused the "dwellers in al-Ḥijr" (*ahlu l-ḥijr*) to hamstring the camel which had been sent to them by God as a sign. They are the eponymous *ahlu l-ḥijr* of *sūra* 15.<sup>112</sup> Clearly, Abū Nuwās must have been inspired in large measure by al-Farazdaq's poem; however, having possibly been led to that *sūra* by the Umayyad poet, he was then more sensitive to its compositeness and was thus able to produce what may constitute, effectively, an anti-*sūra*. I suggest this because whilst al-Farazdaq's repentance appears to be in earnest, Abū Nuwās' poem is essentially duplicitous and strives blasphemously for a place on the level of revelation. Moreover, by articulating aspects of the debate about the nature of sin and the role of the Devil in leading man astray, there is a strong inference that the poet's *tawba* is indeed *wahm*—this is, after all, a dream.

<sup>110</sup> Arberry, p. 255.

<sup>111</sup> See *Dīwān al-Farazdaq*, éd. al-Ṣāwī, p. 769.

<sup>112</sup> See Qur'ān 15/80: *wa-laḡad kadhdhaba aṣḥābu l-ḥijri l-mursalina*.

If we consider the poem in literary terms against the backdrop of Abū Nuwās' *khamriyyāt* we notice several things: (i) it is not overtly a *khamriyya* (it has no bacchic narrative, nor does it describe wine); however, the first line, with its reference to the morning<sup>113</sup> and sins committed, evokes images of the conventional bacchic scene such that the poem emerges as the "epilogue" to a *khamriyya*; (ii) the objects with which the poet is tempted unfold in a manner reminiscent of the contents of a compound wine-poem; indeed, though wine itself is not presented for the poet to consider, the comparison between the virgin's hair and the vine (*yaḥkī lawna-hu l-karmu*) is, for those sensitive to the imagery of this literature, enough to evoke a bacchic setting; (iii) the poem is ambivalent *vis-à-vis tawba*, leaning more conspicuously towards its abandonment. As with the treatment of *ghufrān*, the poet vindicates indulgence within a religious framework of discourse. In the true spirit of the *khamriyya*, *tawba* is rejected, not accommodated.<sup>114</sup>

*Wa-Fityatin Ka-Maṣābiḥi l-Dujā'*<sup>115</sup>

Hamori has discussed this quest poem in the context of the "Assimilation of Religious Experience",<sup>116</sup> focusing particularly on

<sup>113</sup> The events of many narrative wine poems unfold towards the morning. The events of this poem must be presumed to take place at first light, when the stars and shooting stars are still visible.

<sup>114</sup> This poem may have exercised some influence (in both its mythology and its imagery) on two of the poems contained in al-Ma'arri's *Risālat al-Ghufrān*; see the *sinīyya* (ed. Bint al-Ṣāṭi', 2nd ed., Cairo 1950), 290–6, and esp. the *rā'iyya*, pp. 286–8 (e.g. line 12: *wa-ṭirtu fī zamāni l-ṭūfāni mu'taliyan* | *fī l-jawwi ḥattā ra'aytu l-mā'a maḥsūrā*).

<sup>115</sup> *Dīwān Abī Nuwās*, 38–40; ed. Wagner, pp. 61–4; Wagner's lines 8 and 30 are not in Ghazālī's edition. The discussion which ensues is based on Wagner's edition and attempts to highlight the quality of the poem, primarily inasmuch as a sequence of references, which adumbrates the pious *envoi*, is set into a lively but essentially conventional narrative *khamriyya*. The originality of the poem can best be understood by comparison with a pre-existing *khamriyya* of which it is clearly a *mu'araḍa*, namely a poem by Ismā'il b. Yūsuf al-Baṣrī contained in Ibn al-Mu'tazz's *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣu'arā'* (p. 339). The poems share a rare rhyme (*-i/ūti*) as well as certain rare words/phrases: *ṣāhib al-ḥūt* and *al-maṣālīt*. However, Abū Nuwās' poem is lengthier and considerably more complex.

For the full Arabic text and translation of this poem see Appendix B. I am grateful to the editors of the *Journal of Arabic Literature* for permission to quote the translation of this poem which appears, with excellent explanatory notes, in JAL 25/1 (1994). Particularly noteworthy in this offering is the investigation undertaken by James E. Montgomery of embedded Qur'ānic allusions in the text of the poem, i.e. allusions which are suggested by the more dominant scriptural references.

<sup>116</sup> Hamori, *On the Art of Medieval Arabic Literature*, 61 ff.

the "use of *istighfār*". He shows an interesting connection between the final line (35) and line 6; the latter depicts: "the night journey to the wine seller's house":

فِي فَيْلَقٍ لِلدُّجَى كَالَيْمٍ مُلْتَطِمٍ طَامٍ يَحَارُ بِهِ مِنْ هَوْلِهِ النُّوَى

Encompassed in gloom that was like a rough sea with clashing waves in which the mariner is stunned by terror.

Line 35:<sup>117</sup>

أَدْعُوكَ سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ فَاعْفُ كَمَا عَفَوْتَ يَا ذَا الْعُلَى عَنْ صَاحِبِ الْخُوتِ

I call upon you, my God, glory be to you; forgive us as you, most High, forgave the man of the Whale.

Jonah takes us back to the first tempest at sea in the poem: the metaphor in line six, which gave the quest its weather. Through this short circuit, the begging for mercy in the last line is pitched against the quest myth itself.

(p. 70)

The contradiction between the wine quest and repentance is symptomatic of another dimension of antithesis:

The *khamriyya* pretends that time can be reduced to the precarious span in which obsession has its fling; . . . that the libertine subdues time is spelled out in some of the poems . . . here is the beginning of the piece that ends with the whale: Young men, brilliant as lamps in the dark, all haughty, stiff-necked and keen, I who overpowered Time with the pleasures they embraced, so that the ties between them and their pleasures remained unsundered (the negation of *firāq*) . . . Time passes and old age arrives; the triumph over time is put most explicitly where in the end it is acknowledged as a delusion. This need not surprise us; we have seen that the *khamriyya* is a genre of contradictions. (p. 73)

Sometimes—as we have seen in our study of *ghazal*/seduction—the narrative of a wine poem includes the aftermath of indulgence and thus makes contradiction possible as one of the designs of this literature. Abū Nuwās had a choice as to the manner in which he concluded his compositions: either the natural unfolding of bacchism and debauchery, often with a shift from the description of a pure wine to the depiction of events inspired by a mischievous libido, or repentance. We must view the latter not only as part of the pervasive ambivalence of the poet, born of a complex character, but also as part of the mechanics of composition and the

<sup>117</sup> Hamori based his commentary on Ghazālī's edition, where the final line is 33 not 35.



conscious artistry involved in forging the *khamriyya* into a clearly integrated poem.

Repentance in this *tā'iyya* is introduced, like musical modulation, by a single note—a doubt—which emerges from the dominant key; for Abū Nuwās walked a tightrope between moods (a variety of which are evident in his poetry); the losing of his balance could lead to either repentance or sexual fulfilment; in each case the thematic texture of the poem is enriched. Here the first 29 lines form a sustained descriptive tableau with some particularly striking images: wine is the weapon of angels—sparks of light hurled at rebellious *'Ifrīts*; the wine when poured is as a “network of pearls on ruby brocade”; the *sāqī* is like the moon and is accompanied in his tasks by a lutist who sings of the proverbial “Hind”; the audience is captivated in a garden idyll where birds “warble in antiphonal strains”. In the final four lines (32–5) the poet is shaken from his narcotic trance by rejection; he hurriedly takes stock of himself and fuses into his parting statement of enforced abstinence reflections on the assault of *šayb* and religious anxiety leading to *istighfār*—in a sense the anxieties of the “old order” are merged with those of the “new order”.

The manner of reflection in these four lines effects a sudden transition—Abū Nuwās himself says: “lo! grey hair *surprised me* by its appearance”. The shock of line 33, where “beautiful women . . . announce . . . separation from love”, comes as a result of the reality of the poet's age, which frustrates the fulfilment of both his own expectations and possibly, in view of the amusing affectation of sexual prowess in the *diwān*, those of his audience. However, without wasting time in rueful consideration, he gains sustenance from rejection by acquiring an active role in his contrition: *fa-qad nadamtu 'alā mā kāna min khaṭa'in | wa-min iḏā'ati maktūbi l-mawāqīti* (Therefore I regretted the mistakes I had made and the misuse of the times prescribed for prayer). The use of the first person in this statement contrasts with the only other declaration he makes in the first person (line 4): *nādamtu-hum qarqafa l-isfanṭi šāfiyatan | mašmūlatan subiyat min khamri takrīti* (I drank with them sharp *Isfanṭ* wine, imported from Takrīt, clear and chilled). There appears to be a cross-linear pun (*jinās*) on the root, *nūn dāl mīm*—the only verbal root to describe the actions of the poet in the first person and one which highlights the contrast in the poet's attitudes.

This brings us to the point of the poem's contrived integrity: as a quest poem it has the natural progression of a narrative, as evinced by a number of similar *khamriyyāt*. We can identify the description of the companions in line 1 as a common opening topos (for example, another tavern narrative begins, *wa-fityāni šidqin* . . .); the repentance topos, though not as common, is identifiable as a seal. Thus the poem has a conscious beginning and end—the minimum prerequisite frame for structural integration. Hamori's suggestion that the final line alludes to line 6 is a further pointer to structural coherence; indeed the contradiction which these two lines articulate encapsulates the poem's essential thematic contrast. Hamori also points to the Qur'ānic allusion contained in the depiction of the tempest at line 6—an allusion which leads naturally to the reference to Jonah in the final line. He omits to mention, however, that this scriptural link is enhanced by a handful of similar references interspersed throughout the poem: at line 11 the “heathen crone” is told to despoil the poet and his companions (i.e. to accept their money) “as David despoiled Goliath”;<sup>118</sup> at line 14 the sparks of wine are the stars hurled at rebellious *'Ifrīts* by patrolling Angels;<sup>119</sup> at line 17 the amphora in which the wine is kept is said to date from the time of Saul (Ṭālūt),<sup>120</sup> the King of Israel appointed by Samuel; in the following line the wine's storage in a coffin (*tābūt*) possibly makes allusion to the Ark of the Covenant (also *tābūt*);<sup>121</sup> in line 22 the *sāqī* is so bewitching as to be said to be the source of Hārūt's magic.<sup>122</sup> This

<sup>118</sup> For Goliath in the Qur'ān see “Djālūt” in *El'*, ii, p. 406: “The Goliath of the Bible appears as Djālūt in the Qur'ān (II, 248/247–252/251) in assonance with Ṭālūt . . .”.

<sup>119</sup> See Qur'ān, 15/16–18 and 37/6–10.

<sup>120</sup> For Ṭālūt see *El'*, iv, 642: “Ṭālūt is the name of king Saul of the Bible in the Qur'ān (II, 247–250) . . .”. Jālūt (mentioned in line 11) suggests Ṭālūt because they occur in the same section of Qur'ānic narrative and because they form “an assonance of pairs of names, like Hārūt-Mārūt . . .”.

<sup>121</sup> In the article on Ṭālūt in the *El'*, vol. iv, Heller writes: “Ṭālūt was distinguished for the greatness of his knowledge and for his great physique also; it was a sign of his fitness to rule that angels brought back the ark (*tābūt*) with the *sakīna* and with what remained of the people of Moses and Aaron . . .”. The word *tābūt* also occurs in Qur'ān, 20/39, where Moses' mother is told “by inspiration” “Throw the child into the chest and throw the chest into the river . . .” ( . . . *iqdhafi-hi fi l-tābūti fa-qdhafi-hi fi l-yammi* . . .); this is significant since the word *yamm* also occurs in line 6 of the *Tā'iyya*.

<sup>122</sup> For the somewhat involved tradition about the two angels Hārūt and Mārūt, masters of sorcery, see “Hārūt wa-Mārūt”, *El'*, iii, 236–7; an interesting part of the tradition is that “having come down to earth with instructions to avoid the grave

chain of references is sealed with the aforesaid Jonah (*ṣāhib al-ḥūt*).<sup>123</sup> Since rhyme (*qāfiya*) is part of the signature of any poem, the conspicuousness and intended significance of these references lie in the fact that they provide the rhyme word of five (arguably six) lines: *jālūt*, *murrād al-ʿafārūt*, *ṭālūt*, *hārūt*, and *ṣāhib al-ḥūt*. Each reference, less the final one, is part of an allegorical sequence that enhances the status of the wine. Yet the aura of sanctified bacchism thus affected is destroyed as a contradictory moral is derived from the allusion to Jonah, who—we should remind ourselves—having obdurately resisted his divine calling was forced to recognize the will of God.<sup>124</sup> In this manner the poem's essential antithesis is contrived through a redemption story that lies latent in the imagery—to the same degree as the events—of the narrative.

A related point of interest exists in line 7, which introduces the hostess: *idhā bi-kāfiratin šamṭā'a qad barizat l fi zayyi mukhtašif in li-llāhi zimmīti* (Lo! a heathen crone who appeared dressed as an austere devout). The dissimulation in the old woman's garb may be a reflection of reality; it is also symptomatic of the poem's ambivalence. Indeed, the candour with which this deceit is depicted gives the lie to the final affectation of penitence.

In the next poem Abū Nuwās is disturbed by a sensitivity characteristic of *ḥilm* but, even more clearly than in *Maṣābiḥi l-dujā*, he mocks *tuqā*.

#### *Wa-Khaymati Nāṭūrin*<sup>125</sup>

This *lāmiyya*, which constitutes a powerful statement that hesitates between a laudatory view of indulgence and a derisory one, is not a *qaṣida* in any strict sense but there is allusion to the polythematic

sins of idolatry, fornication, murder and the drinking of wine, they almost immediately were captivated by a wondrously beautiful woman . . .”.

<sup>123</sup> See “Yūnus” in *EP*, iv. 1174: “In the Qurʾān he is four times mentioned as Yūnus, without his father's name being given, once as Dhū l-Nūn (xxi.87), once (xxi.87–88) as *ṣāhib al-ḥūt*, “he of the fish”.

<sup>124</sup> See Qurʾān, 21/87–8: “Remember Dhū l-Nūn, how he departed in wrath and thought We could exercise no power over him; then he called out of the darkness: There is no God but Thee, I was one of the sinners. Then we heard him and rescued him.” See also 68/48–9: “Await patiently the judgement of thy Lord; be not like him of the fish, who cried out when he was in distress; had not the grace of his God not been granted to him, he would have been shamefully cast upon the barren shore but the Lord heard him and he became one of the righteous.”

<sup>125</sup> *Dīwān*, 16–17; ed. Wagner, pp. 228–33. There are various discrepancies

tradition in the presence of elements of *raḥīl*, *wasf*, *fakhr*, and *ḥilm/hikma*. *Fakhr* is ambivalent as it moves towards *ḥilm* and *tuqā*; for Abū Nuwās is sensitive to his own shortcomings, but the nature of the poet's musings about *tuqā* in the final two lines is essentially indeterminate. Indeed, as the poem ends we are left feeling that the ideals of bacchism have been reaffirmed.

The tripartite division of the poem is: (i) setting the scene; (ii) wine and indulgence; (iii) contrition and penance. This division maps out a psychological progression which consists in: a stage of hardship moving towards comfort (which invites indulgence in wine); doubts and self-analysis; self-affirmation and mockery of repentance disguised as repentance. The first two sections unfold as a temporal cycle (day→night), giving the impression that the poem relates the events of a single occasion; the third section moves into the present and the future, thus becoming more of a manifesto.

The first section comprises lines 1–5; of these lines 1–3 are a *raḥīl* of sorts. Moreover, mention of the ostrich in line 5 harmonizes with the evocation of the desert in lines 1–3. Line 6 introduces the ego of the poet—the ego of *fakhr* and *mujūn* which provides a focus for the remainder of the poem; here wine too is introduced with a fanfare of epithets: (6b) *bi-ṣafrā'a min mā'i l-kurūmi šamūli*. The poem moves away from the hardships of a scorching heat to the balm that consists in wine. Lines 8–11, panning away from focus on the drink itself, describe the seduction of a youth; of particular interest here is the manner in which the judgemental utterance of hemistich 8b, *istajmaltu ghayra jamīlin* (I found beauty in ugly things), is paralleled in the following three lines:<sup>126</sup> (9b) *wa-dhallaltu ṣa'ban kāna ghayra dhalīli*→(10b) *a-lā rubba-mā ṭalabtu ghayra munīli*→(11b) *wa-in kāna adnā ṣāhibin wa-dakhīli*. In 9b and 10b Abū Nuwās appears to be aware that he has transgressed some code of conduct and has acted immorally: “I humiliated one who was no contemptible person”<sup>127</sup> . . . having often sought some-

between the two texts: Gh9=W11; Gh10=W12; Gh11=W9; Gh12=W10; Gh13=W14. Further, Wagner's line 13 is missing from Ghazālī's text. Ghazālī's version is adopted for the ensuing commentary. For the full Arabic text and a translation see Appendix B.

<sup>126</sup> Though it is possible to translate this phrase, “I considered beautiful a youth who was clearly ugly”, Ibn al-Mu'tazz accepts the sense of moral regret contained in this and the following line (8–9); he lists each of them separately under a category of *al-i'tidhār mina l-sukr*. See *Fuṣūl al-Tamāthil*, 104.

<sup>127</sup> *Dhallala*, whilst containing the resonances of the meaning to humiliate, essentially means to render submissive, i.e. of an animal; see Lane, p. 973. Equally, *dhalīl*,

thing [morally] unobtainable". In 11b he berates the humiliation he could bring upon even his "guest" (*dakhil*/i.e. someone under his protection).<sup>128</sup> Lines 8–11 can therefore be seen to be evenly divided between the bare outline of a narrative and a retrospective moral commentary. This culminates in line 12 in the crisis of doubt which seals the single temporal cycle begun at the outset of the poem: daytime (2–7) → night-time (8–12) → morning (12) → the future. Line 12 also sees the unequivocal return of *hamm* expressed in the following thought, *a-lā rubba ihsānin 'alay-ka thaqilun*.

Line 13, "[so] I will search for wealth, either as the companion of a Caliph who stands as my equal, or as the terror of a [country] road", introduces a new phase of *fakhr* and reflects an attitude reminiscent of Ṭarafa in the *Mu'allaqa*. The poet reasserts his own worth and seeks either to fulfil it within society, which is represented at its pinnacle by the Caliph, or outside as a would-be *ṣu'lūk*. Whilst hinting at his own excess<sup>129</sup> (in a manner which may allude to the *ṣa'ālik* tradition and especially Ṭarafa's own particular excess in wine) Abū Nuwās is keen also to articulate his own worth. The idea that he should be *nadīmu khalīfatin* (a caliph's commensal) implies furthermore the continuation of a bacchic context. Thus the line appears to affect the rehabilitation of the poet on his own terms.

Line 14 is enigmatic: *bi-kulli fatan lā yustaṭāru janānu-hu l idhā nauwaha l-zahfāni bi-smi qatili* ([I will search for wealth] with any youth whose heart does not flutter whenever the two armies call out in the name of someone killed). The line is apparently heroic and, in giving a role to a *fatā* (probably best translated as "hero" or "brave"), eschews the sobriety of line 12. Ostensibly line 14 follows the *fakhr* of line 13; the word *qatil* evokes a suitably heroic image. Yet it may be that *qatil* refers to a man "slain" by wine (i.e. a *ṣarī'u mudāmin*) who, if one extrapolates upon the possibilities of the genre as a whole, has been deflowered in a situation such as the one depicted in lines 9–11. This chimes with

which means "low, base, vile, abject, mean paltry, contemptible, despicable", etc., can also mean "made easy to . . . ride upon (also of an animal)". Thus hemistich 9b, together with 8b, exists on two semantic levels.

<sup>128</sup> See Lane, p. 860: "*anā dakhilu fulānin* [I am the guest of someone; generally meaning I am under his protection]".

<sup>129</sup> Bürgel in "Love, Lust and Longing: Eroticism in Early Islam", alludes to the fact that the excess passions of the *'udhri* poets rendered them akin to the *ṣa'ālik* (i.e. alienated from their society), p. 96.

Mattock's suggestion that the kind of liberal sexual "adventure" so often a part of the *khamriyyāt* of Abū Nuwās is identifiable within an extended category of *fakhr*.<sup>130</sup> Thus the *qatil* of this *qaṣida* may be the victim of such as the following depiction: "I rose up and made for him, swaggering and erect, having prepared my ram for butting. When I had fixed the lance in him, he awoke, like one prostrated by wounds."<sup>131</sup>

In lines 15–16 a pious utterance appears to follow naturally from the exhibition of *hilm* implicit in line 12. However, both the identity of the voice and the significance of the statement are unclear. The voice is probably that of Abū Nuwās, though it may also be that of a pious "watch-dog" who has grown rich behind a veil of false piety. The meaning, in so far as there is an intimation of the spoils of battle being collected, appears to follow from the phrase *sa-abghī l-ghinā* in line 13a—the poet seeks wealth to finance indulgence<sup>132</sup> by collecting what is tantamount to a religious tax; thus he affects a scandalous moral pose—he may also, conceivably, be alluding to his role as a pimp or panderer. The reference to a miser in line 16 perhaps alludes to men who make a pretence of piety (Abū l-'Atāhiya was a notorious miser; furthermore, in the *nūniyya*, *Yā bnata l-ṣaykhi ṣbaḥī-nā*, it is said of a pious man, *dāna bi-l-imsāki dīnā*); dissipation of their wealth, to the benefit of the poet's revelry (masked as his "piety"), might encourage in them—as well as the poet—a more earnest religious sensitivity.<sup>133</sup>

The line by line unfolding of Arabic poetry in general can give each verse the effect of a single, self-subsistent statement; seen in this light lines 15 and 16 are two genuine pious utterances; but when we understand that they are part of a composite exposition we observe a caustic denigration of unsightly piety. These comments point to the poem's structural and thematic coherence, for the treatment of *tuqā* in the final two lines is dependent upon the accelerated moral crisis of the middle section. Indeed, it is perhaps

<sup>130</sup> See "Description and Genre in Abū Nuwās", *Quaderni di Studi Arabi*, 5–6 (1987–8).

<sup>131</sup> In the translation of Mattock (op. cit.).

<sup>132</sup> In another poem it is clear that, as well as paying for wine, from time to time the poet paid for sexual favours (though he made a pretence of seducing his fawn-like victims); see line 18b of the *ḥā'iyya*, *Tu'ātibu-ni 'al ṣurbi ṣtibāḥi* (Appendix B).

<sup>133</sup> Charles Tuetey, in the introduction to *Classical Arabic Poetry* (London, 1985), 58, takes another view of the poem which ignores the sexual fulfilment quite clearly alluded to in line 11 and which engenders the moral dilemma posited in our interpretation.

to this poem in particular that one can best apply the comments of Hamori in assessing Abū Nuwās' mind-set:<sup>134</sup> "the obsessed man both wills and is trapped by his compulsion . . .". Here there is "feverish agitation", with the poet struggling to come to terms with the nature of his loss of *ḥilm*. For his doubts after seduction are certainly typical of a man of *ḥilm*, whilst his mockery is for *tuqā*.

#### CONCLUSION

It is only in the *zuhdiyyāt* of Abū Nuwās that the treatment of *tawba* may be deemed to be sincere;<sup>135</sup> the *khamriyyāt*, however, are suffused with a spirit which resists any apology for wine and indulgence—this is especially apparent in those duplicitous poems which respond to the Caliph's prohibition. Furthermore, the nature of abstinence and restraint is distinct in two essential ways from the earliest material we have examined (namely al-A'šā): (i) it is largely restricted to an Islamic context (though the poet defies Islam); (ii) wine is never unequivocally abandoned. The "secular" eschewal of wine and revelry made encumbent by *ḥilm*—common in the *qaṣīda*, even in the time of Abū Nuwās (see Abū l-Šiṣ)—is avoided; thus *ḥilm*, where it is treated, is generally internalized into the imagery of the bacchic scene.

With respect to Abū Nuwās specifically, *tawba* and attendant religious motifs highlight two things: (i) his poems tend to accumulate, within their individual narratives, both in their indulgent spirit and their vindication of wine—here there is a simple imprint of paradox that has spawned a variety of poems; (ii) in his finest *khamriyyāt* the language, images, and themes feed off each other. In this respect the final three poems analysed demonstrate the artistic merit and originality of the poet—qualities born of his own conventions and those of the traditional canon of poetry.

<sup>134</sup> *On the Art of Medieval Arabic Literature*, 72.

<sup>135</sup> One should observe also that some of his *zuhdiyyāt* may have been a "generic exercise" written to order or commissioned by pious Muslims.

## Conclusion

The span between al-A'šā (d. c.629) and Abū Nuwās (d. 813/815) saw the development of Arabic wine poetry over a period of approximately two centuries, from the late *Jāhiliyya* to the early 'Abbāsid period. Both ends of this development have, in varying degrees, been examined with regard to the interaction between wine and other dominant themes in the canon of poetry. Each of Chapters 1 to 4 therefore has as its focus a chosen thematic influence: *ghazal/nasīb*, *ḥikma/al-dahr*, *hijā'*, and *ḥilm/tawba*.

That Abū Nuwās emerged as the apogee and perfecter of the *khamriyya* is due not only to his talent but also to the fact that he produced far more than any other poet and therefore in some poems struck, as Bencheikh has put it, "a resounding note of success". It is the combination of quality and quantity (over 300 *khamriyyāt*)<sup>1</sup> that established his identification with the genre in the Arabic literary tradition. Clearly, however, one can observe elements of his poetry in earlier bards such as Abū Mihjan al-Thaqafī, Ḥāritha b. Badr, al-Uqayšir, Abū l-Hindī, al-Walid b. Yazīd, as well as some of his contemporaries. They share in various ways many of the thematic features of Abū Nuwās' wine poems, namely rebellion, eroticism/*mujūn*, fine description, and apology. These impulses simply find their most refined expression in Abū Nuwās, where the treatment of material is at its best both eloquent and, to a degree, complex in its structure.

This structure—in which he holds together varied material in purposeful juxtaposition—is affected by the thematic influences that we have elected to concentrate on. It must be discussed loosely; otherwise one imposes on the poems paradigms that are not absolute. Rather the delicate arrangement of material emerges from each individual poem. Abū Nuwās simply appears to be more aware than other poets of the possibilities of effecting a contrived

<sup>1</sup> According to Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī's recension.

or natural affinity between the various motifs and themes of the poem, and thus allowing them to unfold according to a self-imposed design of meanings and moods.

In the case of each of the thematic influences which have been shown to inform the wine poem from the earliest examples in the *Jābiliyya*, Abū Nuwās provides the most felicitous poems. Here one must stress that it is his finer poems that indicate a literary temperament most clearly, and this is why I have felt it legitimate to concentrate on a selection of them.

*Wa-muwāṭī l-ṭarfī* (ch. 1, pp. 42–3) is one of the most deft examples of emotional contrast and supports the suggestion that it was such contrast that Abū Nuwās was trying to achieve by adapting the *aṭlāl* topos. Moreover, the poem reminds one (as do *Tu'ātibu-nī 'alā šurbi štibāhī* (ch. 1, pp. 52–7) and *Yā sāḥir al-ṭarf* (ch. 1, pp. 65–73) that Abū Nuwās was a *muḥdath* poet in whose compositions one can observe the inspiration of *badī'*. In the case of these poems *badī'* is complex, for antithesis in the single line underpins the antithesis that governs the whole poem. In *Tu'ātibu-nī* the use of one feature of *badī'*, *jinās*, carries the solipsism of the text—the fact that the internal elements of the piece, especially the quotations, comment obliquely on the events and the mood of the narrative.

*Bādīr šabūḥa-ka wa-n'am ayyuhā l-rajulu* (ch. 1, pp. 49–52) is a poem that illustrates the intertextual feature of his poetry, for which he borrows and evokes the mood of more ancient texts and allows a hedonistic ethic to emerge from a cultivated backdrop. The game he plays is a literary one, which could be recognized by any man well-versed in the ancient poetry. Other examples of intertextuality, where both earlier poetry and the Qur'ān are the texts alluded to and transformed, are also discussed in Chapters 2 and 4 (see *Yā bnata l-šaykhi šbaḥī-nā* (pp. 144–7) and “*Ighrā' Iblīs*” (pp. 266–31)).

*Yā sāḥir al-ṭarf* (ch. 1, pp. 65–73) uncovers the literary blueprint of seduction, where contrasting passages of description produce a single depiction of stolen physical love through the instrument of wine.

From Chapter 2 *'Afā l-muṣallā* (ch. 2, pp. 112–15) shows the poet attempting to approximate to a formal *qaṣīda*; this he achieved masterfully and with irony, preserving the spirit of the wine poem whilst crafting it into a literary entity with a beginning, an end, and

an ironic inversion of the more normal progression within the Muslim community of debauchery to repentance—*al-zamān*, not Islam, is the poem's transcendent backdrop. The transparency of the mechanics of composition in the poem invites one to consider similar elements in other texts.

The material in Chapter 3 illustrates the rebellious and defensive attitude of wine poetry. This existed before Abū Nuwās; the enhanced quality of the latter's poems lies in the way they are arranged; the various elements of the poem are part of a simple dialectic that is often given a conclusion in the final line of the individual piece. For these poems Abū Nuwās uses antithesis, the *qaṣīda* format (*aṭlāl*→*gharaḍ*), the lexicon of theological debate, and a logical unfolding of images based on internal echoing (see esp. *Wa-lāḥin laḥā-nī*, pp. 174–6).

Wine poetry as a corpus in general is caught between the exposition of a carefree mood and restraint/apology. By the norms of Arab literary criticism this notion does not constitute one of the poetic *funūn* (in the manner of *nasīb*, *ḥikma*, or *hijā'*). However, it is relevant in that it may affect the themes of an entire poem. It is for this reason that Chapter 4 has been included. Apology/*tawba* is a significant and recurring element in Arabic wine poetry and exists in parallel with the defiance of Islam that begins so conspicuously with Abū Miḥjan al-Thaqafi.

*Wa-fityatin ka-maṣābiḥi l-dujā* (pp. 232–6) prepares for repentance through the scriptural references which eulogize the wine; there is an arched unfolding of imagery which leads to the most duplicitous of contradictions. *Wa-khaymati nāṭūrin* contains an internal discourse that comments on the events of the brief bacchic narrative, and, as discussed, a sense of *ḥilm* not piety is the ethical norm that dominates the poem—the poet emerges imbued with *fakhr* and concludes by mocking piety more than acquiescing in it. This is the dominant tone in Abū Nuwās' treatment of *tawba*.

The literary circle in which Abū Nuwās was composing was part of a long, living, and still developing poetic tradition. Various poets adapted the ancient poetry in differing ways; to a large extent they were conscious of each other. It is this reciprocal awareness that seems to have influenced the adaptation of the generic framework of Arabic poetry for the new genres; namely, courtly love poetry, the *zuhdiyya*, and the *khamriyya*. The background that emerges of a circle of court poets suggests the more enhanced literary efforts of

these poets, and highlights the special effort that Abū Nuwās made in crafting the *khamriyya* into an integrated poem.

The material in this book has not been discussed as a social mirror. However, the poems cannot be divorced from social issues, and these are discussed where they serve to emphasize literary features. This has been the case in Chapters 2 and 4 especially. A sense of the antagonism between man's experience of *al-dahr* and Islam (the two transcendent levels that generate the aphoristic aspect of poetry) gives a sense of both the context in which the wine poem was set and the poet's attempt to lend his own opinion to a social discourse. Abū Nuwās was not new in expressing the bacchic spirit in terms of *al-dahr*; however, several poems exhibit both a sense of literary antagonism, and more importantly that the whole poem is generated by the impulse. Indeed, the poems discussed in Chapter 2 (pp. 139–47) are too well wrought to have been composed by an earlier bacchic poet; his contemporaries (from the evidence of the poetry that survives) were not so capable of arranging the themes of the bacchic repertory. This is especially apparent from an examination of Muslim b. al-Walid, of whom it is said that the inspiration is similar to Abū Nuwās. This judgement is tenable with regard to the use of imagery within the individual line. However, Muslim creates no narrative focal point for the various themes of the repertory. This is also true of al-Walid b. Yazīd and Abū l-Hindī, whose poetry would not yield many results from the type of analysis carried out on Abū Nuwās (here we must bear in mind that relatively few of Abū l-Hindī's poems survive and therefore one must reserve judgement—it is mostly in his use of imagery that one senses his influence on Abū Nuwās, for example in the description of the bubbles of wine as locusts' eyes).

After essaying a rigorous method one is tempted to assume that a value judgement may be susceptible of proof. Such a judgement might be that Abū Nuwās was a better Arab wine poet than those that lived before him, with him, and after him. Since, however, one is speaking of poetry, much necessarily depends on a personal aesthetic response to the material and one can only depart from the subject with what in its original context appeared to be a conclusive statement: *wa-l-ẓunūnu funūn*. "I've said it thrice: what I tell you three times is true."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Lewis Carroll, *The Hunting of the Snark* (London, 1911), 3.

## APPENDIX A

### The *Qaṣīdas* of Al-A'šā containing *Khamr*

The following are brief analytical synopses of the *qaṣīdas* of al-A'šā (d. c.629) that contain passages of wine poetry. The purpose is to present a detailed picture of how such passages are contained by and interact with the other major themes of the *qaṣīda*. These outlines can only be preliminary to analysis of the *khamr* of al-A'šā as a study of *waṣf*.<sup>1</sup> The elements of *khamr* in the poems emerge as relating primarily to *nasīb*, *ḥikma*, or *fakhr* or all three. Whilst the treatment of *khamr* in *jāhili* poetry has been seen in Chapters 1–4 to be part of some manner of subordination to these three themes, we have in those chapters concentrated on each individually in its relationship with *khamr*. This method provides a holistic view of composition, but it falls short of showing how *khamr* may gain its fullest meaning from the contextual influence of a particular composition, where emphases can vary enormously. That is to say, nuances or shades of meaning give individual character to individual compositions, despite the fact that the themes from which these compositions are constructed are easily identifiable within a traditional framework.<sup>2</sup> Bearing this in mind, therefore, we must not embark upon the study of any *qaṣīda* with rigid preconceptions about the exact function of the identifiable "movements"<sup>3</sup> it contains; in the analysis below each *qaṣīda* may be seen to give different emphasis, however small, to the relationship between *khamr* on the one hand and *fakhr*, *nasīb*, and *ḥikma* (and even *waṣf*) on the other.

<sup>1</sup> The synopses presented here are all that can be fitted in at this stage to the overall theme of the book. However, there is a clear need for a separate study entailing a succinct catalogue of the development of bacchic descriptive topics from the *Jāhiliyya* to the time of Abū Nuwās. Bencheikh has already amply charted the descriptive topics in Abū Nuwās' *khamriyyāt* ("Poésies bachiques d'Abū Nuwās: Thèmes et personnages", *BEO* 18 (1963–4)); the object should be to present a clear inventory of earlier topics, thus facilitating a broader appreciation of Abū Nuwās' descriptive repertoire.

<sup>2</sup> This method is consonant with observations made by Renate Jacobi in "The Camel-Section of the Panegyric Ode", *JAL* 13 (1982), 4: "As is well known, a theme or motif may acquire a special function in one particular poem, or it may function differently at different semantic levels . . .".

<sup>3</sup> I borrow this term from Montgomery; see "Dichotomy in *Jāhili* Poetry", *JAL* 17 (1986).

The synopses present a basic insight into the earliest significant crystallization of the bacchic tradition in classical Arabic poetry<sup>4</sup> from which Abū Nuwās' *khamriyyāt* were born. Furthermore, and more significantly, they highlight the thematic interplay which is one of this book's principal concerns.

Poem 1<sup>5</sup> (Focus: *Khamr* and *Nasīb*)<sup>6</sup>

Al-A'šā's *lāmiyya*<sup>7</sup> breaks down as follows:

Lines 1–17: The *nasīb*:

(1–2) "Why weep at the *aṭlāl* to question them? Will they answer?"; line 2 describes the remnants effaced by the wind; in line 3 the poet attempts to eschew nostalgia, continuing the chiding of 1–2; line 4 lists the different locations of the tribes; lines 6–9 depict the distance which separates the lovers—this is expressed in a manner reminiscent of *raḥīl*: "many deserts of hardship . . . full water-skins yet small rations . . . day and night riding . . . stagnant wells [stand between us]"; this topic evokes distance, but is not self-vaunting in the manner of the *raḥīl* section *per se*. Line 10 concludes the opening mood of the poem; this triggers off nostalgia: "Once I had few worries and a rested mind . . ."; line 11 treats erstwhile defiance of lovers in their tryst; lines 12–16 describe the beloved: "Her teeth in the morning whilst she sleeps are as if soaked in aged wine (*Isfanṭ*) mixed with limpid water, [which mixture] flows between [her teeth that are white like] the thorns of the *sayyāl*". The *nasīb* as a whole is concluded in the following line (17), which dispels all sentimentality: "Go! Off with you! *Ḥilm* has overcome me and preoccupations have distracted me from you."

Lines 18–36: The *raḥīl*:

Lines 27–32 include the extended simile of a wild ass; in 33–5 the camel complains of weariness, hardship, and emaciation; in 36–7 the poet

<sup>4</sup> See Bencheikh's comment in *re jāhili khamr* (in "*Khamriyya*", *El*): "One must be content with the observation that general elements of the Bacchic framework are set there and that there is an evolution towards a specific kind of writing and the characteristics of a genre . . .".

<sup>5</sup> This represents the number given to the *qaṣida* in both Geyer's and Ḥusayn's editions of the *diwān*. I shall refer to all poems by these numbers.

<sup>6</sup> From the commentary following the synopsis of each *qaṣida* a focus of thematic interplay emerges.

<sup>7</sup> Ḥusayn notes that some commentators reckon this *qaṣida* to be al-A'šā's *Mu'allaqa*: (p. 52) *wa-qadi khtalafa l-ruwātu fi-hā wa-fi qaṣidati-hi (waddi' Hurayrata inna l-rakba murtaḥilu) ayyu-humā hiya l-muṭawwalatu*. The force of tradition, however, clearly favours Waddi' Hurayra (poem 6). The latter *qaṣida*, which also contains bacchic elements, has been adduced in Ch. 1 (pp. 49–52) and is, therefore, not set out below. Similarly, poem 10 has been discussed in Ch. 2 (pp. 92–3) and is therefore omitted.

addresses his mount: "Withhold your complaint and seek rather the generosity of al-Aswad<sup>8</sup> (the *mamdūh*)."

Lines 37–75: The *madīh*:

The *mamdūh* is generous and astute (38); cautious and shows integrity (39); "he is good to his family and frees prisoners of war" (40); he is fearless in battle and munificent when solicited (42); he commands attention (44). Lines 46–9 list the gifts he offers: camels of pedigree, maiden-servants clad in silk, steeds upright like the *ṣawḥaṭ* tree, *wine cups* and *silver vessels* and well-trained camels. In line 50 there is *ḥikma*: "*al-dahr* afflicts with both punishment/misery and luxury/pleasures." This motif introduces war and the achievements of the *mamdūh*, where-in there is a natural balance between the affliction of defeat and the spoils of victory. The concluding line of the poem (75) attempts, effectively, to override *al-dahr*: "may you be for your tribe as eternal as the mountains".

The *qaṣida* as a whole follows the most archetypal progression (*nasīb* → *raḥīl* → *madīh*); and as a poem held by some commentators to be the poet's *Mu'allaqa* (see n. 7) one must examine it with an eye to its literary merit within the developing tradition of which it was a part:<sup>9</sup> namely, the formal panegyric ode with its momentum towards the goal of encomium. The quality of this *qaṣida* lies in the powers of evocation and description which enhance its various movements. The *nasīb* has a patchwork of moods; it is despondent, and finally lyrical. The following section, the *raḥīl*, is adumbrated in lines 6–9 which depict the distance separating the poet from Jubayra; it seems significant that the poet should cross the desert towards the *mamdūh* having felt defeated by the desert separating his beloved and himself—this enhances the *gharaḍ* of the poem. The *madīh* combines conventional generalities of encomium with details about al-Aswad's campaigns, thus producing a certain level of sincerity.

In the *nasīb* there is an emotional conflict which leads to the final statement of resolve in line 17. The first two lines of the movement attempt to dismiss the *aṭlāl* and what they represent by appealing to reason; in line 3 the poet eschews nostalgia and supports this rationally in 6–9 by depicting vividly the distance that stands between himself and the fulfilment of love. Despite this nostalgia is not suppressed; hence line 10: "Once I had few worries and a rested mind . . .". Reflections on the erstwhile defiance of the lover (11) and the description of Jubayra (12–16) comprise an interlude of *ghazal*; they are a celebration of the beloved who is described with graphic images—her saliva is like wine. This simile is both a celebration of

<sup>8</sup> One of the brothers of al-Nu'mān b. al-Mundhir, the King of Ḥira.

<sup>9</sup> As a late pre-Islamic panegyric poet, who died in the time of the Prophet's stay in Medina, al-A'šā was working within an increasingly more consistent framework that was emerging for the panegyric poem.



love and pleasure and provides a glimpse of rapture in a despondent passage.<sup>10</sup>

Poem 2, Al-A'šā's *Nūniyya*: (Focus: *Khamr* and *Ḥikma*)

Lines 1–13: *Ḥikma*:

Line 1: "By your life, this length of Time is nothing but a terrible hardship." Line 2: illness and sorrow are part of the "pelting" of Fate's vicissitudes. Line 3: "Those that are yet to die live in the grave waiting to be buried". Death affects both young and old (4). Line 5 provides an insight into the psychology of the *raḥīl*: "will my passage through the land prevent me [from being assailed] by awareness of death". In line 6 death is a certainty—there is only otherwise procrastination. Lines 8–10 treat the Ozymandian theme. Lines 11–13 comprise an ambivalent *takhalluṣ* into *khamr*, for in 11 the poet desires the *ladhdha* of youth whilst in 12–13 he sets them aside through *ḥilm*: "I disobeyed my heart after passion, now I feel no sorrow." There is an attempt to overcome sorrow, yet contrarily the line introduces the nostalgia which begins at line 14.

Lines 14–22: *Khamr*:

I used to drink wine, as you may know, both on the day of encampment and the day of departure.  
I would drink in a fertile land where one would say it has rained continually (*qad ṭāla bi-l-rīfi mā qad dajan*).  
And I found pleasure (*aqrartu 'aynī*) with modest women both as a husband and lover.  
Each one was fair, nicely plump, with skin as white as milk.  
With thick buttocks when she turned her back to you, but slim at the waist and where you embrace her.  
When these women took the field against their companions, they would fight over the contents of a perfume receptacle.  
[Each one] would give her bed-fellow when she approached shortly after sleep and in a sleepy state  
An aged wine (*salīfiyya*) with a sweet bouquet, that froths [when poured] from vats into cups.  
Two pourers would, at midnight, mix it with water from a worn skin.

Lines 23–32: *Raḥīl*:

(23) The desert; (24) the crossing; (25–8) the camel. Line 29 begins the

<sup>10</sup> There are two other *jāhili* poems, one by 'Abid b. al-Abrāṣ and one by al-Nābiga al-Dhubayānī, which lend themselves to much the same analysis as that which has been attempted for al-A'šā's poem; see *The Diwāns of 'Abid ibn al-Abrāṣ of Asad and 'Amir ibn al-Ṭufail of 'Amir ibn Ṣa'sa'ah*, ed. Lyall, poem 8, p. 29, and *Dīwān al-Nābiga al-Dhubayānī*, ed. Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, pp. 130–6 (poem 24).

*takhalluṣ* into *madīḥ*: "I made for Qays, yet how many harsh deserts there lay this side of him." In line 32 the poet describes how he camped in the company of a wolf in winter.

Lines 33–83: *Madīḥ*:

Lines 34–40 laud the *mamdūḥ*'s generosity; lines 41–6 describe his horse and lead to a brief hunting interlude (46–9). The luxuries of Qays' house are listed (50–2); in lines 53–4 he is shown to offer succour; yet war is his "gluttony" (55). This conceit begins a section celebrating the *mamdūḥ*'s *ghazwas*. After a detailed section listing his achievements, his weapons, and his battle skills the poem ends with a clear warning from the poet (line 84): "Do not deprive me of your generosity; for I am a man who has never before suffered humiliation."

The *ḥikma* movement of 1–13 contains an emotion essential to *nasīb*—for the theme of love is brought to mind in the phrase of resolve (13) '*āsaytu qalbī*—thus the poem as a whole displays a pattern we will encounter in other poems: *nasīb/ḥikma* → *khamr/ladhdha* → *raḥīl* → *madīḥ*/(*fakhr*). The first line of the wine section (14) may also allude to *nasīb* and thus performs a delicate transition: "I used to drink, as you may know, on the day of encampment and the day of departure". Wine is described as part of the erstwhile pleasure of the beloved's proximity and equally as a consolation at her parting. More clearly, however, the pessimism of *ḥikma* triggers off the celebration of a bacchic and amorous past, despite the posture of acquired *ḥilm* in lines 12–13. The phrase *yawm al-muqām wa-yawm al-za'n* contains the imprint of both *nasīb* and *ḥikma*, and to this extent identifies the "function" of wine in the *qaṣīda*'s thematic structure.

Poem 4, *Mimiyya* (Focus: *Khamr* as *Fakhr* set against initial *Nasīb*)

Lines 1–9: *Nasīb*:

(1) "Is the rope [of union] cut or uncut?" Line 2 lauds patience and knowledge/wisdom ('*ilm*); lines 3–4 describe two kinds of men: those that are righteous and those that choose to ignore the advice of the righteous; (5) the love of the latter is an occupation of youth [caused by (6–7)]: a brief glance at the beloved and a smile from her teeth; lines 8–9 attempt the resolve begun at line 2: "She has left . . . why seek her when the nearest spot she may be at is *Dhū Ḥusum*"; in line 8 the image of the heart as a broken bottle that cannot be mended describes a love that has failed absolutely.

Lines 10–14: *Khamr*:

"[Let me therefore recall] that [I have sipped] the red wine that a Jew brought round, and showed us with its seal [still intact].  
A wine caressed by the wind in its vat, worshipped [by its master] therein.



I sipped it, never turning away from my [fellow] drinkers or denying what they [already] knew [of it].

Many a nobleman fair like a sword and generous, who goes on a raid in time of need,

Have I been a guest of at his fire, respectful of his property.

Lines 15–19: *Rahīl*:

Line 15 describes the desert; 16–18 compare the poet's camel to a steed angered by the whip. Line 19 creates a link with the previous section: "This [journey] relieves a man of his worries, curing his saddened heart."

Lines 20–50: *Madīḥ*:

Lines 20–4 list the difficulties that stood between the poet and Qays. News of Qays' attack on the Banū 'Āmir b. 'Uqayl in the Ḥaḍramawt has reached the poet, though he was still on the far side of al-Ṣafā and al-Rujum. Lines 25–9 describe Qays' fearlessness against his enemy. Line 34 depicts the *mamdūḥ*'s generosity; lines 40–5 describe the camels and horses given by Qays; lines 46–8 praise his tribe, the Banū Mu'āwiya: they are quick to join battle on horseback [in time of war] but generous hosts during the evenings in peacetime.

Lines 51–72: *Fakhr* and *Ḥikma*:

In lines 51–4 al-A'ṣā's daughter complains about her father's perpetual travels; in lines 55–9 the poet justifies his travels; in 56 he refers to his quest for riches ("I have roamed the horizons of wealth"), alluding to the general goal of encomium. Lines 60–72 are *ḥikma*, treating the demise of *al-Ḥaḍr* (60–6) and Ma'rib of the Himyarites. In line 60 the poet is still addressing his daughter, thus the whole section implicitly justifies the poet's travels.

Each movement of the poem is set against the despondent introductory lines of the *nasīb*: (a) *khamr* depicts the poet enjoying an aspect of life which he describes in ideal terms. It is part of the spirit of line 56: "I wandered in search of wealth"—a quest justified by the cycle of life described in lines 60–72; (b) the *rahīl* cures *hamm* (19) which exists explicitly in the *nasīb* only; (c) the *madīḥ* is necessarily positive and certain; (d) (51) the daughter's complaint, the first line of final *fakhr/ḥikma*, picks up topically on the uncertainty of the opening line: (1) "Will you abandon a girl or stay; is your rope strong or cut?" The tone of lines 51–7 however, is decisive, picking up more on the the *rahīl* of lines 15–19 than the mood of *nasīb*. For, in the final line of *nasīb* (9) the poet questions the point of travel (where the beloved is the goal): "Why therefore seek her, when she herself departed and whose nearest spot is *Dhū Ḥusum*?" Thus the quest for riches emerges as the object of life/journeying—not faithfulness to a beloved. *Fakhr* is stronger than *nasīb*; *khamr* is part of *fakhr*.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> This *qaṣīda* might well be adduced to show optimism transcending pessimism according to the model offered by Montgomery in "Dichotomy in *Jāhili* Poetry".

Poem 20, *Rā'iyya* (Focus: *Khamr* and *Nasīb*)

Lines 1–26: *Nasīb*:

(1) "Ufāra, my neighbour, you used not to be one that would depart and sadden us"; lines 2–20 are a recollection of 'Ufāra: (4) "She captured your heart when she smiled [from] behind her bed and veils . . . (14) if she made you speak, she would turn away coquettishly, (15) abandoning love for you, nor wishing any fruits [to be reaped] for the passion in your heart; (16) then she might resume a gentle and kindly manner, resurrecting hope in you, [only then] to return again to her usual miserliness and rejection (*i'sār*); (17) she departed with your mind, leaving you no access to it, despite your patience and respectability [*waqāra*]; (18–19) the only thing which prevented her from requiting you was [to see] you humiliated when a door and house stood between you; (20) she saw that greyness had possessed you, and that [your] handsomeness and gaiety had gone." In lines 21–6 the poet finds resolve, but is simultaneously nostalgic: "Be patient you have got used to loss; you must now wake up from passion and jest, having enjoyed life in every way and having donned the cloak of luxury; you have had your fill of the pleasures of youth and enjoyed its flame; (25) having drunk wine poured for me from the flask (*al-ṭarjahār*) (26) until it took its course and dizziness overcame me".

Lines 27–70: *Hijā'* and *Fakhr*: details of Ṣaybān b. Ṣihāb.

*Khamr* is limited to lines 25–6; it must be identified as part of the resolve which ends the *nasīb*: lines 1–20 begin the movement with a detailed description of the poet's unrequited/frustrated love—the tone is negative the poet's qualities as a man are not cast into doubt, but there is nevertheless a tension between the poet's respectability (*waqāra*) and his humiliation at the hands of his beloved; before entering into the *gharaḍ* of the poem the failure of love is transcended with recollections of life's other pleasures. It is the fulfilment of desire in the past which allows *ṣabāba* and *da'āra* to be eschewed towards the more formal "goal" of the *qaṣīda*.

The fact that the poet has had his fill of the good things of life—a standard posture—triggers off the *gharaḍ* of the poem, hence the phrase at line 27: "So turn to a description of something other than this, Miṣḥal (al-A'ṣā's muse or familiar amongst the *jinn*), [he it is that] denounces reprobate deeds." The poem's social function of *fakhr* and *hijā'*, wherein the poet represents his own tribe and denigrates others, is dependent to a certain extent on the poet having, in a sense, consummated his own life. Whilst the celebration of *lahw* is often vivid (see other bacchic sections) it functions nevertheless to afforce the theme of the poet's old age through the concomitant motif of *ṣayb*. Through the respectability of old age the poet becomes a worthy spokesman of *fakhr* and *hijā'*; ironically the vivid

ness of *khamr* may be seen to support this posturing by hinting at the required strength of will necessary to sustain abstinence.

Poem 21, *Lāmiyya* (Focus: *Khamr* as *Fakhr* consoling *Nasīb*)

Lines 1–8: *Nasīb*:

In line 1 there is uncertainty: “are the camels of her tribe loaded to depart, (2) or is it for the sake of coquettishness? For it is indeed right that an old man should suffer this attitude in her”. Lines 3–4 describe the passing of youth and lead to resolve: “if youth has passed and therefore [a time] when you [could] seek out and ask after Tayyā, (4) how then can you have your locks restored and how can you have one such as her?” Lines 5–7 describe Tayyā: (8) “She is my preoccupation though she alights in a far-off land”. As the *nasīb* ends the poet has clearly not yet emotionally “cut his bond”; the emotions which linger must therefore affect our understanding of the following section(s).

Lines 9–11: *Khamr*:

These lines effectively follow the phrase *hiya l-hammu* in line 8: “Many a red wine, clear like the pupil of the eye, quick to render the drinkers slothful; (10) showing up any speck of impurity within it . . . when mixed; (11) . . . have I drunk after dusk when the wine (*rāḥ*) was made good and its sediments were extracted.”

Lines 12–24: *Raḥīl*:

Lines 12–13 tell of the many deserts the poet has traversed. Line 14 describes his camel, which is compared in 15–20 to a male wild ass driving the herd on (15); the ass pays no *mahr* for his many wives (16); it controls the wanderings and recalcitrance of his mates (20). Lines 21–4 describe perilous lengthy journeys to the *mamdūḥ*—Iyās—who is mentioned by name in line 24.

Lines 25–47: *Madīḥ*:

Iyās has no equal (25). Lines 27–36 describe the refuge, protection, and generosity which he administers. He is a fine warrior in battle (37–41) and generous with the booty he collects (42–4). Line 45 invokes protection from censors. Line 47 seals the poem conclusively: “Your tent-ropes are attached to the heights of Sinbis (a clan of Ṭayyī).”

The poem follows the most common archetype of the developing panegyric, moving from the uncertainty of *nasīb* to the certainty of *madīḥ*. The wine element (9–11) is the first transition into *fakhr* and ultimately *madīḥ*. Since the bacchic section follows closely the phrase *hiya l-hammu* (9) it must also be viewed as (a) a further aspect of idealized nostalgia set in the past (as in 5–6) and, most importantly, (b) as an interval of consolation and distraction moving towards the present. In the latter case the implicit

meaning is: “just as I have drunk in the past [to console myself] so I will again”. To take line 8 together with lines 9–11 is important for appreciation of the treatment of *hamm* as a common introductory motif in the ‘Abbāsīd wine poem.

Poem 22, *Bāʿiyya* (Focus: *Khamr* and *Nasīb*)

Lines 1–9: *Nasīb*:

Line 1: “Have you not abstained [from love]? Nay! the passion [of love] has returned.” The poet attempts to control his welling emotions but submits passively. There is thus conflict between a self-imposed awareness of the behaviour/abstinence incumbent upon an aged poet and forced awareness.<sup>12</sup> Lines 2–3 treat grey locks: (2) the girl (beloved/censurer) scorns them; (3) the poet blames *al-ḥawādith*. Lines 4–9 celebrate *ibāḥī ghazal* with reminiscence (though these thoughts are set in the past, like Eliot’s description of April in *The Waste Land* they mix memory with desire). Line 8 is especially *ibāḥī* (where there is *mujūn*).

Lines 17–25 and 10–11:<sup>13</sup> *Khamr*:

I have drunk many a cup of wine, indulging in pleasure, and then another to cure the effects of the first.

So that people might know that I am a man who has entered through the front door of life.

A [pure] red wine that shows up specks of dust in the bottom of the flask.

We were watched by roses, jasmine and songstresses with their reed pipes.

Our large drum was constantly played; which of these three [delights] am I then blamed for.

You see [at the scene of our entertainment] the cymbals answering the [beat of] the drum, sharing in its distress, fearful that it should be censured.

Eighty years have passed since my birth, such is the figure of those that have counted.

<sup>12</sup> This is reminiscent of the conflict in the first line of al-Aʿšā’s *Muʿallaqa*; “say farewell to Hurayra . . . but can you suffer to say farewell”.

<sup>13</sup> Ḥusayn inserts these lines before 10–16 in his paraphrase of the *qaṣīda* (see *Diwān al-Aʿšā l-Kabīr*, 222); this plausible suggestion for an original order of themes is validated by line 21 which describes three pleasures: these must be identified, according to the cumulative evidence of Arabic poetry in this period, as *ghazal*, *khamr*, and *ghināʾ*; the wine section in which this line occurs conforms to this convention better if it is placed immediately after the *ghazal* of the opening lines. Furthermore, line 26, which addresses the poet’s camel as it alights at Kaʿbat Najrān, follows logically after the description of the animal in lines 12–16. For the purpose of the present discussion of the *qaṣīda* I have accepted Ḥusayn’s arrangement.

So now I have said farewell to the pleasures of youth, and abandoned wine (*al-khandarīs*) to other men.

[During my youth] I love[d] *Athāfit* at the time of the harvest and when the grapes [were] pressed.

What [then] of a time that has passed into memory, filling your soul with wonder?

[A time] when my locks were black like the wings of a crow, which the wenches beheld in amazement."

Lines 12–16: *Raḥīl*:

Line 12 describes the camel(s) and the desert. Lines 13–16 depict the energetic sound of the camel's teeth; its wasted hump; its halters and reins; journeys through the night on mounts with long necks, deep-set eyes, and bellies emaciated at the belt-line.

Lines 26–9: *Madīḥ*:

Line 26 follows logically from 16 not 25; the poet addresses his mount: "Ka'bat *Najrān* is your goal until you are made to kneel at its gates . . . (27) . . . to visit Yazīd, 'Abd al-Masīḥ and Qays; (28) . . . [who trail] their luxurious robes; (29) . . . [and] have splendid quarters that are held in wonder."

*Khamr* is subsumed in an extended *nasīb*, which comprises lines 1–3, 4–9, and 17–25 and ends with a *takhalluṣ* into *raḥīl* at lines 10–11. Both sections of reminiscence (*ghazal* and *khamr/lahw*) are juxtaposed to the notion of time past: lines 1–3 introduce abstinence and reminiscence, lines 22–4 and 10–11 reiterate these sentiments. In the overall scheme of the *qaṣīda*, *ṭarab*, *ṣayb*, *al-ḥawādith*, and *al-dahr* sandwich and control *lahw*, *al-ṣabāb*, *ladhdha*, and *ma'īṣa*.

Poem 29, *Mīmiyya* (Focus: *Khamr* as *Fakhr* following pessimism of *Nasīb*)

Lines 1–9: *Nasb*:

Lines 1–4 describe the poet's despondency at the deserted remnants. Lines 5–9 contain resolve which leads towards *ḥikma* in line 9. Line 4 begins this transition thus: "should someone like you be smitten by passion at [some] remnants that have become effaced of [all but] some grass and scattered plants?" There follows a dialogue with Qutayla who plays the roles of both beloved and censurer: (6) "I see you have grown old—your body has changed—you have said farewell to buxom women and wine." The poet's greyness and consequent awakening from the intoxication of bacchic pleasures is caused by Fate (9): "The perpetual cycle of days destroys the blade of masculinity". Since to abjure masculinity goes against the grain of the pre-Islamic ethos, the poet's loss of masculinity (as represented by *al-dhakar al-ḥusām*) must be

viewed as an affliction accepted passively rather than an active choice made by the poet; in lines 6–8 there is an attempt to imply that the poet has made an active choice—this betrays the poet's dilemma and his subsequent resignation, which allows *ḥikma* and *ḥilm* to seal the *nasīb*.

Lines 10–15: *Raḥīl/Waṣf al-nāqa*:

Line 10 introduces the function of the passage, namely to console the poet; this topic was a commonplace in early poetry.<sup>14</sup> Line 10b introduces *waṣf*.

Lines 16–23: *Khamr*:

[In the past] I have given an early morning drink of wine to noble companions from an ancient dark vat, of great proportions.

[A wine] that was transported on pack animals; [one] that delivers one from catarrh like musk mixed with water,

[It is] as if pieces of gossamer shine brightly on its surface.

It was set aside by the brother of 'Āna for a month, who then hoped [to reap its profit] year after year; [a man] hoping to gain wealth [from it], thus locking it away or bargaining highly.

We paid the full amount, thinking little of expensive bargaining [where it was concerned];

[For it was] as if it contained the rays of the sun, whenever he pierced the seal from the mouth [of the vat];

[O, remember] that white-wristed woman, a companion in pleasure, whose company and union I enjoyed in privacy.

Lines 24–37: *Madīḥ*:

The section begins without a *takhalluṣ* and is a warning to the enemy of the *mamdūḥ*. Lines 24–9 list his martial virtues—Iyās "leads" and controls death. He is generous, a man of integrity (30); and he balances heroism with indulgence in pleasures.

The *Khamr* "movement" of this *qaṣīda* follows the *raḥīl*; however, one can identify the unity of purpose behind both sections in line (10a): "I might console myself from preoccupations whenever they afflicted me with . . .". Of the *khamr* movement specifically we must ask ourselves whether it represents the poet's present or past; if the former, which is not denied, then how can it be reconciled with professed abstinence in lines 6–8 of the *nasīb*. The poet's desires are fundamentally ambivalent. He goes on to intimate that ideally life should balance hardship and pleasure, for this very aspect is attributed to the *mamdūḥ* in line 31: "He has two days: a day playing with young ladies and a day seeking after great dangers".

<sup>14</sup> See *Mu'allafa* of Ṭarafa, line 11 of al-Tibrīzī's recension: *wa-innī la-umḍī l-ḥamma 'inda ḥtiḍāri-hi | bi-'awjā'a mirqālin tarūḥu wa-taghtadī*.

Poem 33, *Qāfiyya* (Focus: *Khamr* and *Ḥikma*)Lines 1–4: *Nasīb*:

Line 1: “I have remained awake; yet why this insomnia when I am neither ill nor in love?” In line 2 the poet describes himself being afflicted progressively [from morning to night] by Misfortune; line 3: “if *šayb*, *hamm* and night-blindness beset me, yet rocks [themselves] are smashed asunder”; line 4: “[vicissitudes have afflicted] the most steadfast bearer of *al-dahr*’s judgement; still I fear any of Fate’s deeds.” The first four lines are personal, especially in the mention of night-blindness—a clear reference to the poet’s name, *al-A‘šā*.<sup>15</sup>

Lines 5–18: *Ḥikma*:

These lines are of a didacticism that follows naturally from the motif of lines 1–4 but are less personal. Line 5: “You are not immortal/eternal, however, [do you not see that even] *Sāsān* and *Mawraq* did not last for ever”. The latter motif (the *ubi sunt* topos) is extended thereafter to mention: (6) *Kisrā Šāhinšāh* and his aged wine, (7) ‘*Adī* [the father of *Samaw’al*] and his palace *Ablaq*, and (8) *Solomon*, who built the palace; the latter is described in lines 8–10. Lines 10–11 list the pleasures that were indulged in within the palace: “it has white refined floors in the highest rooms and balconies; therein musk, basil, and purified wine [were to be found]; and *Ḥūrīs* like statues and servants; cooks, pots, cups, and trays”; line 12 restates the didactic force of the passage introduced at line 5: “All this did not make its master immune from death”; line 13 resumes the motif of kings, whilst line 14 describes the wealth of *al-Nu‘mān* taxed from lands controlled by the *Lakhmids*. Line 15: “He controls matters of people day and night; they are silent but death speaks”; in the last image there is an adumbration of 18 and a reiteration of 5 and 12. Line 18 contains the final crystallization of *ḥikma*: “All this did not rescue its master from death, [for] he died imprisoned [by *Kisrā*] at *Sābāt*.”

Lines 19–24: *Khamr*:

I spend the long day with generous young men whose wine is poured in shaded tents.  
With a servant-girl decked in musk and pale-skinned, whom the *nadāmā* caress through gaps in her shirt.  
If ever I say “sing for the companions”, she would stand with her lute, whereupon her palm, “turning” over the [strings], would [almost seem] to speak.  
An energetic servant might grill for us over a fire, with red wine [in attendance] that frothed up upon mixing.

<sup>15</sup> The poet alludes to himself with reference to the same ailment elsewhere (see poem 10, line 25).

[A wine] revealing any contaminating speck; he who drinks it smacks his lips.

An old water-skin full of water would remain with us, along with a black skin replete with wine.

Lines 25–7: The *Raḥīl*.Lines 29–40; 44–5: *Fakhr* informed by *hijā’* and *ḥikma*:

Line 29 addresses *Šarāḥīl* b. *Ṭawd*: “[this] ignorant miscreant who addresses me reprehensibly, wherefore I am emaciated and perspire”. The meaning is unclear due to a lacuna at line 28. Line 30 continues: “though I know what you know, I preserve my self-restraint; (31) by day *Šarāḥīl* fills me with doubt and by night *Abū Laylā* is more bitter . . . ; (32) I am not educated but I speak well if ever *Mišḥal* (the poet’s familiar) inspires me; (33) for we are as two companions sharing kindness . . . a man and a *jinnī* in accord; (34) he speaks and then I too am able to speak”. Line 35, in curious parenthesis, praises *ruṣd* and *tuqā* thus beginning a section of *ḥikma*: (36) “If a need overwhelms you and you are not equal to it, fulfil another need as you are able [to do so]; (37) thereby you will attain the greatest [reward]; moderation will sustain you and bring you to your goal”. Line 38 describes the arrogance of *Šarāḥīl* and is followed in line 39 with a warning: “Should you be praised about raiding camels when [your actions] will catch up [with you]?” Line 40 is *ḥikma*: “And they will afflict a rich man with his wealth, enriching a poor man to the same extent.” [Lines 41–3 should be placed with the *madīḥ*, i.e. before 50]. In lines 44–5 the poet summarizes his counsel and warning.

Lines 46–49: A movement that combines *Fakhr*, *Raḥīl*, and *Ghazal*:

Line 46 introduces the poet’s beloved *Laylā* (there is no mention of the beloved in the initial *nasīb/ḥikma*) who is separated by enemy lands and deserts. Line 48: “He who would cross during lengthy nights these deserts towards you . . . (49) merits that you requite [his quest].”

Lines 41–3/50–62: *Madīḥ*:

A general encomium of *Abū Misma’al-Muḥallaq* outlining his generosity and heroism.

*Khamr* is placed after and echoes a section of *ḥikma*; it also introduces the poet’s *fakhr*. The *qaṣīda* as a whole is built upon a tension between *ḥikma* and *fakhr*: initial *ḥikma* (5–18) is pessimistic and dominated by the topic of death. *Fakhr* celebrates life. There is a connection, for the gnomic passage is studded with personages whose names and renown have survived their death; the poet himself strives towards this—*khamr*, his pleasure in life, is to be part of his renown.

Poem 36, *Ḥā'iyya* (Focus: *Khamr* and *Ḥikma*)

Lines 1–2: *Nasīb*:

Line 1 describes the crow of separation. Line 2 despairs for the ailing *mamdūh*.

Lines 3–15: *Ḥikma*:

Lines 3–6: the glory of Ma'add is linked to the *mamdūh*'s recovery.

Lines 8–15 treat the fates of 'Amr b. Hind and Hercules; there is didacticism in the narrative of the latter's Persian campaign.

Lines 16–28: *Madīh*:

Lines 16–18 introduce the *mamdūh*: (16) "Would that I knew what ails my friend on a day when *al-dahr* afflicts him mercilessly." (18) "... will he keep his promise ...?" Line 21: the *mamdūh* drives disaster away from his people. In lines 24–5 the *mamdūh*'s recovery is again linked with the glory of Ma'add; (28) he kindles the fire of war.

Lines 29–61: *Fakhr* made up principally of *Khamr*:

Lines 29–32 are a brief *raḥīl*. Lines 33–54 are *lahw/khamr*:

Many a chilled wine, which when mixed is considered by the eye to be rosey like the blood of a slaughtered animal [have I shared in].

Its fragrance is like musk, and it is poured by the *sāqī* when he is commanded, "Hasten now!"

From the skins of merchants into a large and dark Hīran container, [Which] is so deep that it does not register the continual ladling of drinks into pouring vessels and cups.

Whenever the wine becomes frothy, [this froth] soon dries up and is absorbed into [the container],

Whenever a drinking cup clanks against its sides [the cup] would then remain afloat.

Drinkers would then continually take what they had desire of in glass cups.

If the wine ran out we pulled up another skin and poured it in, [it poured forth] like blood from the jugular veins of a slaughtered beast.

We poured it forth in large measure ...

You would consider the skin to be an Ethiopian propped up [against the container] who had fallen asleep and collapsed to the ground.

I would go to my fellow carouser in the morning or he would come to me and take a morning drink.

And a singer when asked would sing to the carousers plaintively.

He would bend his palm over [the strings of a] lute and combine the sound of high and low notes.

Amongst youths who were like lamps in the darkness, whose pleasure and joy showed on their faces.

They behaved with forbearance when a dog of a man would make as if to bark in their company.

They are not miserly with their money, nor are they in the custom of binding their camels' teats (so as not to share their milk with strangers).

You see all the carousers drunk [and prostrate] as if they were snares put out for hunting monkeys.

One would lie prostrate on his face, another would drag his leg without being crippled.

And [we were attended by] portly, tender ladies, not exhausted by [the toils of a servant's chores],

Like statues dressed in fine clothes which do not hide their stomachs.

They almost burst at the seams due to their weight, whereas a wasted emaciated man would fall down from fatigue.

That was the time of a people who have now departed; for these people it was an auspicious time [while it lasted].

The *qaṣīda* has an unusual order of themes in that the section of *fakhr* (broadly lines 29–61) follows an initial section of *madīh* (1–28). There is no substantial reason to doubt the poem's authenticity in its received state. Certainly the oddity of thematic order is singular and interesting, but there are (a) clues of an awareness of more "orthodox" patterns of composition; plus (b) a recurrence in the transition from movement to movement of connecting leitmotifs that argue for a conception of holistic rather than arbitrary composition:

(a) The "orthodoxy" of composition is affected by the initial use of a motif of *nasīb*: the crow of separation (*ghurāb al-bayn*). The pessimism of this motif is wholly in tune with the ensuing despair at the state of the *mamdūh*: "As you sit amongst a group of people, friends of Quzah, despairing for a man who has spent a year in the prison [of malady]." There is no beloved in the poem; the *mamdūh* elicits the emotion normally associated with the *ḥabīb*; this is echoed in lines 16–18, which introduce the *madīh* proper: "Would that I knew what ails my friend on a day when *al-dahr* afflicts him mercilessly; (17) do they say when I am as an echo, he has shunned you; forgotten [you] and cast [you] aside; (18) or will he keep his promise, for I know that he tended his camels the best of all, letting them graze and leading them back home." The *madīh* contains the *nasīb*. This explains the otherwise incongruous opening statement of *raḥīl* (29): "I am one who can deliberately cut the rope [of friendship] on a well-built camel when the mirage disappears." Cutting the rope of friendship is most commonly associated with the beloved; here the poet, uncertain of how the *mamdūh* will receive him, preserves his self-esteem in the case of rejection (this may also explain the threat of *hijā'* in the final seven lines of the poem).

(b) Aphoristic cogitations provide a leitmotif such that the separate movements of the poem are somehow made to be interconnected within a single world-view. More specifically, the didacticism of lines 5–15 (characterized by line 5: “if we are like people that have perished, then [let us accept], my people, that no tribe ever survives”) is echoed at intervals throughout the poem. Preoccupation with *al-dahr* continues into and introduces *madīḥ* at line 16. The full implication of the line in the context of what both precedes and supersedes it, is that the *mamdūḥ* will transcend the sombre atmosphere that has been established. The wine section of lines 33–53, which is principally a lyrical interlude of *waṣf* subordinated to *fakhr*, is itself sealed by implicit *ḥikma*: “That was a time [*dahr*] for people now departed—as [indeed] the time (*dahr*) of these people has [itself] departed.”

Poem 78, *Nūniyya* (Focus: *Khamr* and *Nasīb*)

Lines 1–12: *Nasīb*:

The extent to which the poet devotes himself exclusively to love in this section allows one to think of it as a passage of *ghazal*; love does not function solely to set an opening mood. Line 1: “My heart has been mixed with preoccupations, sorrow, and recollections, after people had said that it had found tranquillity; (2) for it is empassioned with Hind, afflicted—sometimes requited, other times left yearning”. Lines 3–5 are *waṣf*. Line 6: “Hind was created as a temptation for my heart; thus do temptations afflict men; I have never met with her in an open space—she has never been accused of that [on account of] her sense of propriety; (8) [so] I have sent messages to her presenting my excuse [for love]—answer as you will; (9) [when we met] I spoke to greet her, announcing my readiness to ransom [myself for her] and wishing her [God’s] blessing; (10) I hoped for her [though] fearing her if startled, as one does a shying horse; (11) how [often] you (fem.) have been generous to us with gifts that have not been spoiled by reproach; (12) you are my peace, the concern of my soul, so remember . . . the soul has no price.”

Lines 13–23: *Ladhdhāt* (which celebrate Hind):

Lines 13–15 follow on line 11, with 12 as a parenthetical statement.

[Your gifts are like] high rooms and cool shade, the fragrance of musk and basil;

And the *khusruwānī* wine which when tasted by an old man makes him sing and shake;

And a lute whose melody is beautiful upon strumming, whenever it is touched it has a pleasant timbre;

Whenever the player lowers its volume, the cymbal would sound out and call;

And if ever their timbre diminished and with them their melodies, then a singer would sing to us;

And if we drank the pure wine from the earthen wine-jar, they called upon ‘Amr asking for another;

Amongst reckless spenders who think little of their money in the cause of hearing music and their own amusement;

You see their pitcher over-flowing with wine mixed with water;

[They drink] from morning until they incline [their heads] at dusk just as weary men do;

At sunset they go after short-paced creatures (i.e. women) who have no sorrows.

Move on from this to write poetry about other things; mention in your verse the lord (*dihqān*) of Yemen.

Lines 24–7: *Madīḥ* in praise of Abū l-Ašʿath b. Qays:

Line 24: “He earns the gratitude [he is recipient of] at a dear price”.

Lines 25–7: Qays has given the poet a steed, eighty young camels, a servant, and a mount.

The various topics of *khamr* contained in lines 14 and 18–21 constitute a series of pleasures that are typical inasmuch as they can be summarized as wine, women, and music. Of significance is that the pleasures of this *qaṣīda* appear to replace and distract attention from the frustrated love of *nasīb*: in the initial *ghazal* of lines 1–12 there is an oscillation between requital and longing. In line 1 sorrow returns to the poet after emotional stability; in line 2 the poet describes a division between satisfaction and longing; in line 10 he desires Hind though remaining cautious lest she should shy like a temperamental horse. There is a possible allusion to sexual requital in line 11; thus, despite the parenthetical caution in line 12, the continuation of the poem may be an expansive and fanciful celebration of this allusion.

APPENDIX B

# Texts and Translations

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

*Tu'ātibu-ni 'alā Šurbi Štibāhī*

She berates me for taking a morning drink, and extending a nocturnal bout  
until the crack of dawn,  
Not knowing as yet that I am munificent and love those amongst my drink-  
ing companions that are like myself.  
I often recall the fair, noble friends—cheerful and elegant chieftains—  
Whose wary and emaciated mounts I have led at a time when the winds  
were still,  
When our shadows fell upon the straps of our sandals as a feather fits snug-  
ly into the fold of a wing—  
Towards the taverns of wine amongst vineyards with over-arching trellises  
that inclined to one side.  
Its master came hurriedly towards us, congratulating us on our safe and  
felicitous [arrival].  
I said [to him], “Wine!” “Of course,” he said, “I give it generously to those  
of noble lineage.”  
So he fetched it, whilst it moved like rain-water, and he sang a suggestive  
song:  
“Will you recover or can your heart not recover on the evening when your  
companions are ready to depart?”  
So I spent the night amongst his taverns like a groom with two virgins: one  
water, the other wine,  
Whilst a gentle fawn passed around the cup; he had delightful flanks and a  
delicate waist.  
He enquired, “Will you set off in the morning”; to which our reply: “How  
can we bear to leave [having come to know you]?”  
He then moved [amongst us] with stealth and made us drunk; then we slept  
until morning’s cockerel was about to crow  
When I got up and made for him, upright but trailing my garments, and  
prepared my ram for butting  
And when I had fixed my spear inside of him, he awoke as an injured man  
awakens from his wounds.

I said to him, “By your Father, you’re an easy [kill], so there is no cause for  
recriminations.”  
He replied, “You have won, so take what you will in peace; but give me a  
lawful recompense!”  
So after I had placed my saddle upon him [and given him the money he  
demanded], he came forth singing a eulogy:  
“Are you not the most generous man to have ever ridden a mount, and the  
most munificent of God’s creatures?”

*Yā Sāḥir al-Ṭarf*

You with the magic gaze, eternally languid, secrets held close in the heart  
are drawn out by your eyes.  
When you examine a hidden feeling of mine with your look, candour whis-  
pers the secret.  
Your eyes stare and secrets come clean, as if you have power over fancies.  
Consider us both: You have rent me to pieces, though you yourself are bare  
of the garment that Fate has made me wear.  
I see you work to kill me unavenged, as if to kill me is an offering to God.  
[So] drink the wine, though it is forbidden for God forgives even grave sins.

A white wine forging bubbles when mixed—pearls set in gold.  
She [the wine] was on the Ark in Noah’s time—most noble of his shipment  
whilst the Earth was awash.  
A soul incarnate in the vat, cloaked in pitch, veiled in palm-fibres and linen.  
Experienced of and by the world, until a noble Persian chose to hide her  
away,  
Preserving her in the depths of a cave—age upon age visited her entombed.  
In a land to which Kalb had not been, with their ropes and their tents, nor  
‘Abs nor Dhubyān,  
Not a land of Dhuhl nor Šaybān, but a land of the Banū Aḥrār,  
A place where Kisrā built his palaces, free from uncouth bedouins—  
No thorny Arab foods there, no bitter acacia leaves!  
Rather there was pomegranate blossom, streaked with myrtle, garlanded  
with roses and lilies.  
If you breathe of its spirit, [the fragrance] of basil breathes into your nos-  
trils.  
O night when the stars rose with good omen, when the drunkard assault-  
ed the drunkard,  
We passed the time obedient to Iblis, believing in him, until the monks  
sounded the night’s death knell (i.e. sounded the monastery bell at  
dawn).

And [a young adolescent] left, dragging his delightful robes which I had touched with my iniquitous behaviour,  
Saying, "O woe!" as tears overcame him, "You have torn away from [me the dignity] I had preserved."  
I replied, "A lion saw a gazelle and lunged at it; such is the variety of Fate's vicissitudes!"

*Saqā Llāhu Ṣabyan*

May God rain [blessings] upon a fawn who shows coquetry in his quivering gait—who swaggers like the branch of a Ben tree due to his delicate waist,  
In whose eyes there is obvious magic, and in whose fragrance is a sweet smell like the diffusion of perfume.  
He is the full moon, though there is a beauty in his languid glance that excels the sun and the moon.  
He laughs to uncover a pretty set of teeth—they are like bubbles of wine or choice pearls.  
He has treated me harshly though I have committed no crime against him, and he has left me emaciated, exhausted of patience.  
Yet if he were to spend a night with rejection breaking his heart, he would generously requite [my] love forever,  
For fear of being worn out by rejection and separation, and experience, because of [all this], hot coals [of anxiety].  
May God rain [blessings] upon days when love was fulfilled amongst us and when the frame of youth quivered with lush leaves.  
Nawrūz came to us early in the darkness of night, with a glow on the tree tops that shone like the stars,  
Shining like figures on a silk gown whose brocade was embroidered with yellow [fabric] upon white, green, and red.  
When met by the wind [the fawn-like youth] nodded his head in assent—beckoning the carousers to enjoy themselves whilst inclined in gait by inebriation.  
[There was] a songstress who appeared with a mute instrument of eloquence—a tongueless [lute] that could articulate magic—  
To uncover the secrets of impassioned men with its "voice"—just as pens speak candidly of secrets.  
. . . the "thighs" of [the lute's wooden] body were as if attached [by strings] to a foot that "tapped" in response to the flute;  
The fingers [of the songstress] were dyed—five of them moving over the strings with difficult and easy movements.  
When they (i.e. the strings) were fitted one day, a finger strummed them and they resembled the groan of passion at the fire of abandonment.

She said—when the wine passed through her, as if blood and tears were running over her cheek:  
"Greetings to a person who, if ever I mention his name, I fear that the calumniators will rend my veil of secrecy."  
So some of the carousers were in a state of ecstasy whilst others were prisoners to the wine,  
Some cried over others with tears flowing on their cheeks—they (i.e. the tears) were like pearls or coral pouring onto the breast.  
So I helped them knowing full well what causes passion, and that the madness of love is kindled by a [woman's] sex.  
So may [blessing] rain upon tender days gone by—would they would return and last till the Day of Gathering.

*‘Afā l-Muṣallā*

The prayer-place is now effaced of me [as are my old haunts], the sand dunes of the two markets of Mirbad and Labab—  
Faded is the mosque which [once] brought together noble qualities and religion, faded too are al-Ṣiḥān and al-Raḥab.  
Abodes where I spent my youth until greyness appeared in my side-whiskers,  
Amongst young men like swords, shaken by the bloom of youth, and adorned with good manners.  
Then Time brought its afflictions—they dispersed through the land as had the former might of the Sabaeans.  
Fate will produce for me no others like them. Never! They were [friends at whom I] marvelled.  
When I was sure that they would not return as long as I lived,  
I expended all my patience as has no other person and was torn apart by sundry doubts.  
For when I am bereaved of a brother, there is no longer any relationship [at all] between us.  
Quṭrubbul is now my spring residence, and in the villages of al-Karkh I spend my summer—my mother is the grape vine.  
She feeds me milk from her breast, and wraps me in her shade in the heat of the day.  
As the branches [of the vine] arch over, I am as clothed in fine robes that have no cracks in their surface [to spoil the shade].  
The doves [of this trellis] pass the night [as if] at a funeral survice, singing with the strains of women who are bereft.  
My love is aroused, and theirs also, it is as if we are all made light-headed by emotion.



So I rose, crawling to be suckled, as a child struggles to its feet, touched by hunger,  
 And chose the choice daughter of a tavern, one that had experienced the ages.  
 I tore from her, when the night was dark, a fine robe of light texture, one without fringes—  
 The fabric of a skilled seamstress (i.e. a spider) who needs [no loom to be set up] with stakes in the ground and ropes attached.  
 I stabbed her waist with the point of an awl, and she poured forth like flames,  
 So that drinking became possible for the carousers—vessels of silver and gold passed it around to us;  
 Because of the similarity I asked myself which of the two was [real] gold.  
 They were the same, but the difference between them was that one was solid, the other liquid.  
 [Some vessels] were smooth and sleek, others like them [in shape] were engraved with depictions of priests and crucifixes,  
 Reciting their Evangel, whilst above them lay a heaven of wine, its stars the bubbles of wine,  
 Like pearls, scattered by the hands of virgins taken by a playful mood.

*Wa-Lāḥin Laḥā-nī*

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

*Kāna l-Ṣabābu Maṭiyyata l-Jahl*

Youth was the steed of [my] ignorance [yet] adorned our laughter and our merriment.  
 It was my beauty when I donned it, walking in my resonant sandals.  
 It was my eloquence as I spoke, and when ears listened to my discourse.  
 It interceded for my desire of a young girl, and achieved my revenge.  
 It urged me on, as people slept, to be her husband's vicar.  
 It ordered me, that even when my soul determined [restraint] it helped my hands to a deed!  
 Now my steps have shortened [with age] and I have untied my saddle from the back of youthful passions.  
 I love the cup even though it strips [me] of the means of living and diminishes my abundance.  
 [It is] golden wine, glorified by its Persian owners, transcending any similarity or equals.  
 It was saved for Adam before his creation, preceding him by a step [in Time].  
 It came to you as a thing to be grasped only by the instinct and sensitivity of your intellect.  
 Your eye circles around it[s] pure, smooth, gilded skin.  
 When water is poured into it, it clothes it in bubbles that are like the bells of an anklet,  
 Until when its sides settle, they are inscribed [with bubbles] like ants' feet.  
 [They form] two lines of loose and joined letters, devoid of pointing and vowelling (i.e. they are unintelligible).  
 So excuse your brother, for he is a man whose ears have grown used to censure.

*Da' 'an-ka Lawmī*

Censure me not, for censure but tempts me; cure me rather with the cause of my ill—  
 A pale wine, whose house is not visited by sorrows, imparting joy even to the rock that touches it;  
 Received from the palm of a woman clad as a man, whose lovers are two: the fornicator and the sodomite.  
 As she stood with her wine-jug on a dark night her face emitted a pearly light,  
 Casting pure [wine] from the lip of the grail—a sedative for the eye to behold;  
 More gentle than water, which ill suits her delicate [nature]. How coarse water is!

If you were to mix light into [the wine] it would be pliant in the mixing, and become irradiant.  
 She circled amongst men to whom Time was indebted—men afflicted by Time only as they pleased.  
 For her do I cry, not the spot at which Asmā' and Hind once alighted—  
 No tent is set up for the wine to be visited by camels and sheep!  
 Tell him who would claim philosophy as part of his knowledge: "You have learnt some things, but much more escapes you;  
 Do not deprive [me] of God's forgiveness, if you are a man who would shame me; to deprive me of this is a blasphemy."

### *Ighrā' Iblīs*

I slept until dawn, which time Iblīs was my adversary, [tempting] me with sundry sins.  
 I saw him climb high into the stratosphere, then fall, chased by a [shooting]-star.  
 He wanted to "listen by stealth" [to the High Assembly], but was soon cast down by a pelting of stones.  
 He said to me as he fell: "Welcome to a man beguiled by his penitence!  
 What say you to a well-rounded virgin, adorned by heavy breasts—  
 Whose thick, black hair flows sumptuously upon her shoulders, like a cluster of grapes?"  
 "No!" I answered. "What then of a beardless youth with quivering, full buttocks—  
 One like a virgin behind a silk-screen, but with a chest unadorned by jewels?"  
 "No!" "Then a boy who sings and plays music delightfully?"  
 "No!" "Then you deem yourself to be resolute against all such things as I have spoken of?"  
 [Yet] I have not lost hope of your return, despite yourself, you fool!  
 I am not Abū Murra if you do not rescind; [to think you could choose] any other manner of behaviour would be naïve."

### *Wa-Fityatin ka-Maṣābihi l-Dujā*

Splendid young blades, like lamps in the darkness, proud-nosed, stiff-necked, keen—  
 Who assaulted Fate with dalliance to which they clung assiduously, so that their attachment to it could not be severed,  
 For whom Time brought round its felicitous spheres and halted, bending its tender neck over them—

I drank with them sharp *Isfanṭ* wine, imported from Takrīt, clear and chilled;  
 One of those whose hands we asked for in haste, when we roused the owners of the wine-shops  
 In a night-cohort, turbulent and swollen, like the sea which dazes the sailor with fear.  
 Suddenly at that moment there appeared an infidel crone, like a solemn anchoress,  
 Tracing her lineage back through infidel stock, monastic idol-worshippers,  
 Said, "Who are you?" We replied, "People you know, every one open-handed, noted for his prodigality,  
 Who, along the way, have stopped at your house: so seize the liberality of the generous and name your price,  
 For you have won a life of ease, providing you seize from us what David seized from Goliath.  
 Be lively in making a profit from them, doing—at the same time—a noble deed until they have left your house. Then you can sleep like the dead!"  
 She said, "I have what you want. Wait until morning." We replied, "No, bring it now!  
 It is itself the morning; its clear radiance dispels the night when it shoots out sparks like rubies  
 As the patrolling angels do, when, at night, they stone with the stars the rebellious Afrits."  
 It advanced in the cup as bright as the sun at day-break, poured from an amphora upturned, bleeding at the waist.  
 We said to her, "How long has it been in the amphora, since it was hidden away?" She replied, "It was made in the time of Saul.  
 It was concealed in the amphora and has grown to be an old spinster buried inside a coffin in the earth.  
 It has been brought to you from the depths of its resting-place, so be careful not to take it in the cup with food."  
 The odour that wafts from it to the drinkers was like the scent of crushed musk from a newly slit vesicle;  
 When mixed with clear rain-water it was like a network of pearls on a ruby brocade  
 Carried round by [a youth] like the moon with large black eyes from which the magic of Hārūt could have sprung.  
 With a lutenist in our midst who moves as he sings "Abode of Hind in Dhāt al-Jiz, Hail!"  
 Our gazes were constrained to turn towards him and if you saw us [looking] at him, as if bedazzled.  
 He is from Hit, swaying gracefully, refined, and I say to him in fun, "Hit it, Hiti!"

So he begins with accurate diction [to sing] polished and well-articulated songs, keeping the time,  
 Until when the sphere of the strings, together with the drums, spins us round, we are left as if in a trance.  
 We glorify in it in gardens thick with myrtle, acacia, pomegranate and mulberry,  
 Where the birds distract you from every other pleasure when they warble in antiphonal strains.  
 Blessing be upon that time which slipped away too quickly—a lovely time which was not hateful to me then.  
 Dalliance did not turn me from coming to drink it and I did not fail to answer its urges [Or, frivolity could not divert me from plunging into the midst of [wine's] fray and I did not fail to respond to its rallying cries]  
 Until, lo! grey hair surprised me by its appearance—How hateful is the appearance of cursed grey hair  
 In the eyes of beautiful women; when they see its appearance, they announce severance and separation from love.  
 Now I regret the mistakes I have made and the misuse of the times prescribed for prayer.  
 I pray to you, God, praised be Your name!, to forgive me just as You, Almighty One, forgave Him of the Fish (Jonah)!

*Wa-Khaymati Nāṭūrīn*

Many [is the] tent of a vine-guardian, on the summit of a high peak—the hands of those who climb up to it fear slipping—  
 When the sun meets it sideways [in the morning] it casts a shadow and if it meets it face on [from above at noon] it invites [the people] to enter—  
 At [which] we have unloaded our baggage, put to rout by the heat of a dog-day kindled without a wick;  
 [The sun] tarried shortly, then provided a piece of shade [under a canopy of] shabby reeds;  
 [Thus were we] as if [snuggled] between the two flanks of an ostrich, whose breast is too rough to be the place for an afternoon nap;  
 There I milked the “best milk” of youthful passion for my friends, consisting of a white, chilled wine, the juice of the vines;  
 As soon as it is sipped by a young man his preoccupations sound a retreat from his heart;  
 And once night-time had taken over a portion of the darkness, I gave in to youthful passion, and found beauty and delight in ugly things;

I conversed with my loved one, without affectation, and humiliated a recalcitrant boy who was not shameless [by nature];  
 He sang [enticingly], whilst my right arm was a pillow to his cheek, “How often have I sought after that which is unobtainable!”  
 So I unloaded my desires between the two loins of a “helpful boy”, even though he was my closest friend and [honoured] guest.  
 I woke in the morning to curse [my] drunkenness, though drunkenness had been “generous” to me—how often has “generosity” been a burden to you.  
 [So] I will search for wealth, either as the companion of the Caliph who stands [as] an equal, or as the terror of a country road,  
 With any young man whose heart does not flutter when two armies call out in the name of someone killed:  
 Let us take God's fifth [of the spoil] from every reprobate, who has a paunch and eats gluttonously the goods [of the Earth];  
 Do you not see that the money [I collect in this way] thus aids my piety, and that a “generous man” left penniless is no [longer] a miserly [pious hypocrite]!

ARABIC TEXTS

*Tu'atibu-ni 'alā Šurbi Štibāḥi*

وَوَضِلَ اللَّيْلُ مِنْ فَلَقِ الصَّبَاحِ	تُعَاتِبُنِي عَلَى شُرْبِ اضْطِباحِ
أَحَبُّ مِنَ الدَّامِىِ ذَا الرِّيحِ	وَمَا عَلِمْتُ بِأَنِّى أَرْيَحُ
بِهَالِيلِ عَطَارَةِ صِبَاحِ	فَرَبُّ صَحَابَةٍ يَبِضُّ كِرَامِ
وَقَدْ سُدَّتْ أَسَالِيبُ الرِّيحِ	صَرَفْتُ مَطْيَهُمْ حَبْرَى طِلَاحًا
مَقَامَ الرِّيشِ فِي ثَنَى الْجَنَاحِ	وَقَامَ الظِّلُّ فَوْقَ شِرَاكِ نَعْلِي
مُعَرَّشَةً مُعَرَّجَةً النَوَاحِ	إِلَى حَانَاتِ خَمَرٍ فِي كَرُومِ
يُهَيِّئُ بِالْفَلَاحِ وَالْبَنَاجِ	فَأَقْبَلَ رَبِّهَا يَسْعَى إِلَيْنَا
بِهَ لَبْنِي الْكَرَامِ لَدَوِ سَمَاحِ	فَقُلْتُ الْخَمَرُ قَالَ نَعَمْ وَإِنِّى
وَأَنْشَأُ مُنْشِدًا شِعْرَ اقْتِرَاحِ	فَجَاءَ بِهَا تَحَبُّ كَمَا مُزْنِ
عَشِيَّةَ هَمِّ صَحْبِكَ بِالرُّوَّاحِ	أَتَصْحُو أَمْ فَوَادِكَ غَيْرِ صَاحِ
بَعْدَرَاوِينَ مِنْ مَاءِ وَرَاحِ	فَبِتَ لَدَى دَسَاكِرِهِ عَرُوسًا
لَطِيفَ الْكَشْحِ مَهْضُومِ الْوَشَاحِ	وَدَارَ بِكَأْسِنَا رَشًّا رَخِيمِ

وكيف نُطِيقُ بَعْدَكَ مِنْ رَواحٍ  
إِلَى أَنْ هَمَّ دَيْكُ بِالصَّبَاحِ  
وَقَدْ هَيَّأتُ كِبَشِي لِلنَّطَاحِ  
تَنْبَهَ كَالرَّقِيدِ مِنَ الْجَرَّاحِ  
فَلَا تُخَوِّجْ إِلَى سَفْحِ التَّلَاحِ  
بِاسْعَافٍ وَبَذَلٍ مُسْتَبَاحِ  
تَبْدَى مُثْبِتًا شِعْرَ امْتِدَاحِ  
وَأَنْدَى الْعَالَمِينَ يُطَوِّنُ رَاحِ

## Yā Sāḥir al-Ṭarf

سِرُّ الْقُلُوبِ لَدَى عَيْنَيْكَ إِعْلَانُ  
نَاجَاكَ مِنْ طَرَفِهِ بِالسَّرِّ تَبْيَانُ  
كَأَنَّا لَكَ فِي الْأَوْهَامِ سُلْطَانُ  
وَأَنْتَ مِمَّا كَسَانِي الدَّهْرُ عَرِيَانُ  
كَأَنَّ قَتْلِي عِنْدَ اللَّهِ قُرْبَانُ  
فَلِلْكَبَائِرِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ غُفْرَانُ  
كَأَنَّهُ لَوْلُو يَتْلُوهُ عَقِيَانُ  
مِنْ حُرِّ شَحْنَتِهَا وَالْأَرْضُ طُوفَانُ  
قَارٌ وَمِعْجَرُهَا لَيْفٌ وَكَتَانُ  
حَتَّى تَحْيِيَهَا لِلْخَيْبَةِ دِهْقَانُ  
عَلَى الدَّفِينَةِ أَزْمَانُ وَأَزْمَانُ  
إِلَى خِيَاءٍ وَلَا عَيْسٍ وَذُبْيَانُ  
لَكُنْهَا لَبَنِي الْأَحْرَارِ أَوْطَانُ  
فَمَا بَهَا مِنْ بَنَى الرِّعْنَاءِ إِنْسَانُ  
وَلَا بَهَا مِنْ غِذَاءِ الْعُرْبِ خُطْبَانُ  
أَسٌّ وَكَلَلُهُ وَرَدٌّ وَسَوْسَانُ  
يَوْمًا تَنْسَمُ فِي الْخَيْشُومِ رِيحَانُ

وَقَالَ أَتَبَرَّحُونَ غَدًا فَقُلْنَا  
فَخَاتَلْنَا فَأَسْكَرْنَا فَنَمْنَا  
فَقُصِمْتُ إِلَيْهِ أَرْفَلُ مُسْتَقِيمًا  
فَلَمَّا أَنْ رَكَزْتُ الرُّومَ فِيهِ  
فَقُلْتُ لَهُ بِحَقِّ أَيْكَ سَهْلُ  
فَقَالَ لَقَدْ ظَفِرْتَ فَكُلْ هَنِيئًا  
فَلَمَّا أَنْ وَضَعْتُ عَلَيْهِ رَحْلِي  
أَلَسْتُ خَيْرَ مَنْ رَكِبَ الْمَطَايَا

يَا سَاحِرَ الطَّرْفِ أَنْتَ الدَّهْرُ وَسَنَانُ  
إِذَا أَمْتَحَنْتَ بِطَرَفِ الْعَيْنِ مَكْتَمًا  
تَبْدُو السَّرَائِرَ إِنْ عَيْنَاكَ رَتَقْنَا  
مَا لِي وَمَا لَكَ قَدْ جَزَأْتَنِي شَيْعًا  
أَرَاكَ تَعْمَلُ فِي قَتْلِي بِلا يَرَقَ  
غَادِرُ الْمُدَامِ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ مُحَرَّمَةً  
صَفَرَاءُ تَبْنِي حَيَابًا كُلَّمَا مُزِجَتْ  
كَانَتْ عَلَى عَهْدِ نُوْحٍ فِي سَفِينَتِهِ  
رُوحٌ فَجْأَتْهَا دَنْ وَمُلْفَعُهَا  
فَلَمْ تَزَلْ تَعْجُمُ الدُّنْيَا وَتَعْجُمُهَا  
فَصَانَهَا فِي مَغَارِ الْأَرْضِ فَاتَّخَلَفَتْ  
بِئَلَدَةٍ لَمْ تَصِلْ كَلْبُهَا طُنْبًا  
لَيْسَتْ لِلذَّهْلِ وَلَا شَيْبَانِيهَا وَطُنًا  
أَرْضُ تَبْنِي بَهَا كِسْرَى دَسَاكِرُهُ  
وَمَا بَهَا مِنْ مِشَمِّ الْعُرْبِ عَرْجَفَةٌ  
لَكِنْ بَهَا جُلْنَارٌ قَدْ تَفَرَّعَ  
فَإِنْ تَنْسَمَتْ مِنْ أَرْوَاحِهَا نَسَمًا

يَا لَيْلَةَ طَلَعْتُ بِالسَّعْدِ أَنْجُمُهَا  
بَشْنَا نَدِينَ لِإِبْلِيسِ بَطَاعَتِهِ  
فَقَامَ يَسْحَبُ أَذْيَالًا مَنَعْمَةً  
يَقُولُ يَا أَسْنَى وَالِدَمْعِ يَغْلِيهِ  
فَقُلْتُ لَيْتَ رَأَى ظَنَبِيَا فَوَائِبَهَا  
فَبَاتَ يَفْتِكُ بِالسَّكْرَانِ سَكْرَانُ  
حَتَّى نَعَى اللَّيْلَ بِالنَّاقُوسِ رُهْبَانُ  
قَدْ مَسَّهَا مِنْ يَدَيِ ظُلْمٍ وَعُدُونُ  
هَتَكَتْ مَنَى الذِّى قَدْ كَانَ يُصْطَانُ  
كَذَا صُرُوفُ لَيْلَى الدَّهْرِ أَلْوَانُ

## Saqā Llāhu Zābyan

سَقَى اللَّهُ ظَنَبِيَا مُبْدِيَا الْغُنْجِ فِي الْخَطَرِ يَمِيسُ كَغَضَنِ الْبَانِ مِنْ رَقَّةِ الْخَضِرِ  
بَعِينِهِ سَحَرٌ ظَاهِرٌ فِي جَفُونِهِ  
هُوَ الْبَدْرُ إِلَّا أَنْ فِيهِ مَلَاخَةٌ  
وَيَضْحَكُ عَنْ ثَغْرِ مَلِيحٍ كَأَنَّهُ  
جَفَانِي بِلا جُرْمٍ إِلَيْهِ اجْتَرَمْتَهُ  
وَلَوْ بَاتَ وَالْمَهْجَرَانُ يَصُدُّ قَلْبَهُ  
مَخَافَةً أَنْ يُبْلَى بِهِجْرٍ وَفَرْقَةٍ  
سَقَى اللَّهُ أَيَّامًا وَلَا هَجَرَ بَيْنَنَا  
يَبَاكِرُنَا النُّورُوزُ فِي غَلَسِ الدُّجَى  
يَلُوحُ كَأَعْلَامِ الْمَطَارِفِ وَشَيْئِهِ  
إِذَا قَابَلْتَهُ الرِّيحُ أَوْ مَا بِرَأْسِهِ  
وَمُسْمَعَةٍ جَاءَتْ بِأَخْرَسٍ نَاطِقٍ  
لَتَبْدَى سَرَّ الْعَاشِقِينَ بِصَوْتِهِ  
تَرَى فَخْذَ الْأَلْوَابِ فِيهَا كَأَنَّهُ  
أَصَابِعُهَا مَخْضُوبَةٌ وَهِيَ خَمْسَةٌ  
إِذَا لَحَقْتَ يَوْمًا لُوى أَصْبَعٌ لَهَا  
تَقُولُ وَقَدْ دَبَّتْ عَقَارُ كَأَنَّهُ  
سَلَامٌ عَلَى شَخْصٍ إِذَا مَا ذَكَرْتَهُ

هما سواءَ وَفَرَّقَ بينهما  
مُلْسٌ وَأَمَثَلَهَا مَحْفَرَةٌ  
يَنْتَلُونَ إِنْجِيلَهُمْ وَفَوْقَهُمْ  
كَأَنهَا لَوْلُو تَبَدَّه

أَنهَا جَامِدٌ وَمُنْسَكَبٌ  
صُورٌ فِيهَا الْقِسُوسُ وَالصُّلْبُ  
سَمَاءٌ خَمِيرٌ نَجْوَمُهَا الْحَبِيبُ  
أَيْدِي عَذَارَى أَفْضَى بِهَا اللَّعِبُ

## Wa-Lāḥin Lahā-nī

ولاحٍ لَحَانِي كَيْ يَبْدَعِي  
لَحَانِي كَيْ لَا أَشْرِبَ الرَّاحَ إِنِّهَا  
فَمَا زَادَنِي اللّاحُونَ إِلَّا لِحَاجَةً  
أَأَرْفُضُهَا وَاللّهُ لَمْ يَرْفُضْ أَسْمَهَا  
هِيَ الشَّمْسُ إِلَّا أَنَّ لِلشَّمْسِ وَقْدَةً  
فَنَحْنُ وَإِنْ لَمْ نَسْكُنِ الْخُلْدَ عَاجِلًا  
فِيَا أَيُّهَا اللّاحِي اسْقِنِي ثُمَّ عَنِّي  
إِذَا مِتُّ فَأَدْفِنِي إِلَى جَنْبِ كَرَمَةٍ

وَتِلْكَ لَعَمْرِي خُطَّةٌ لَا أَطِيقُهَا  
ثَوْرَتْ وَزَرًا مِنْ يَدِ وَقْهَافِهَا  
عَلَيْهَا لَا تَنِي مَا حَيَّتُ رَفِيقُهَا  
وَهَذَا أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ صَدِيقُهَا  
وَقَهْوَتُنَا فِي كُلِّ حَسَنِ تَفَوَّقُهَا  
فَمَا خُلِدْنَا فِي الدَّهْرِ إِلَّا رَحِيقُهَا  
فَلَوْنِي إِلَى وَقْتِ الْمَاتِ شَقِيقُهَا  
ثُرْوَى عِظَامِي بَعْدَ مَوْتِي عُرُوقُهَا

## Kāna l-Šabābu Maṭīyyata l-Jahl

كَانَ الشَّبَابُ مَطِيَّةَ الْجَهْلِ  
كَانَ الْجَمِيلُ إِذَا ارْتَدَيْتُ بِهِ  
كَانَ الْفَصِيحُ إِذَا نَطَقْتُ بِهِ  
كَانَ الْمُشْفَعُ فِي مَارِيهِ  
وَالْبَاعِثُ وَالنَّاسُ قَدْ رَقَدُوا  
وَالْأَمِيرُ حَتَّى إِذَا عَزَمْتُ  
فَالآنَ صُرْتُ إِلَى مُقَارَبَةٍ  
وَالْكَاسُ أَهْوَاهَا وَإِنْ رَزَأَتْ  
صَفَرَاءَ مَجْدِهَا مَرَاذِبُهَا  
ذُخِرَتْ لَادَمَ قَبْلَ خِلْفَتِهِ  
فَأَنَّاكَ شَيْءٌ لَا تُلَامِسُهُ

وَمُحْسِنَ الصَّحَكَاتِ وَالْمُزَلِّ  
وَمُشَبِّهَ الْأَخْطَرِ صَبِيَّةِ التَّعَلُّ  
وَأَصَاحَتِ الْأَذَانِ لِلْمُثَلِّ  
عِنْدَ الْفَتَاةِ وَمُدْرِكَ التَّيْلِ  
حَتَّى أَكُونَ خَلِيفَةَ الْبُعْلِ  
نَفْسِي أَعَانَ يَدِي بِالْفِعْلِ  
وَحَطَّطْتُ عَنْ ظَهْرِ الصَّبِيِّ رَحْلِي  
بُلَغَ الْمَعَاشِ وَقَلَّتْ فَضْلِي  
جَلْتُ عَنْ النُّظَرَاءِ وَالْمِثْلِ  
فَتَقَدَّمَتهُ بِخَطْوَةِ الْقَبْلِ  
إِلَّا بِحَسْرِ غَرِيزَةِ الْعَقْلِ

فَبَعْضُ التَّدَامِي فِي سُرُورٍ وَغِبْطَةٍ  
وَبَعْضُ التَّدَامِي لِلْمُدَامَةِ فِي أَسْرِ  
عَلَى الْخَذِّ كَالْمَرْجَانِ سَالَ إِلَى النَّحْرِ  
وَأَنَّ جَنُونَ الْحَبِّ يُوَلِّعُ بِالْحَرِّ  
أَلَا لَيْتَهَا عَادَتْ وَدَامَتْ إِلَى الْحَشْرِ

فَبَعْضُ التَّدَامِي فِي سُرُورٍ وَغِبْطَةٍ  
وَبَعْضُ بَكِي بَعْضًا فَفَاضَتْ دُمُوعُهُ  
فَسَاعَدَتْهُمْ عِلْمًا بِمَا يَوْرَثُ الْهَوَى  
فَسَقِيَا لِأَيَّامٍ مَضَتْ وَهِيَ غَضَّةٌ

## 'Afā l-Muṣallā

مَتَى فَالْعَرِيدَانِ فَالْلَبِيبُ  
دَيْنٌ عَفَا فَالْصِّحَّانُ فَالْرَّحِبُ  
حَتَّى بَدَأَ فِي عَذَارَى الشَّهْبِ  
شَرَحُ شَبَابٍ وَزَانِهِمْ أَدَبُ  
أَيْدِي سَبَا فِي الْبِلَادِ فَانْشَعَبُوا  
عَلَى، هِيَاةَ شَأْنُهُمْ عَجَبُ  
لَيْسَ لَهَا مَا حَيَّتُ مُنْقَلَبُ  
وَأَقْتَسَمْتُ مَارِبَ شَعْبُ  
فَلَيْسَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَهُ نَسَبُ  
كَرَّخٍ مَصِيفُ وَأُمِّي الْعَنْبُ  
بِظِلِّهَا وَالْهَجِيرُ يَلْتَهَبُ  
قَيْنَانُ مَا فِي أَدِيمِهِ جُوبُ  
كَأَنَّ تَرْتِي الْفَوَاقِدُ السُّلْبُ  
كَأَنَّمَا يَسْتَحْفَنُ طَرِبُ  
تَحَامِلُ الطُّفْلُ مَسَّهُ سَعَبُ  
قَدْ عَجَمَتْهَا السَّنُونُ وَالْحَجَبُ  
مُهْلَهْلُ النَّسَجِ مَا لَهُ هُدُبُ  
آخِيَّةٌ فِي الثَّرَى وَلَا طُنْبُ  
لَا شَفَى فَجَاءَتْ كَأَنهَا لَهْبُ  
رَاهَا عَلَيْنَا اللَّحِينُ وَالْعَرَبُ  
أَيْهَا لِلتَّشَابُهِ الذَّهَبُ

عَفَا الْمُصَلَّى وَأَقْوَتِ الْكُتُبُ  
فَالْمَسْجِدُ الْجَامِعُ الْمَرْوَةُ وَالْ  
مَنَازِلُ قَدْ عَمَرَتْهَا يَفْعَا  
فِي فِتْنَةٍ كَالسِّيُوفِ هَزَّهْمُ  
ثُمَّ أَرَابَ الزَّمَانُ فَاقْتَسَمُوا  
لَنْ يُخْلِفَ الدَّهْرُ مِثْلَهُمْ أَبَدًا  
لَمَّا تَبَيَّنَتْ أَنَّ رَوْحَهُمْ  
أَبْلِيْتُ صَبْرًا لَمْ يُبْلِهِ أَحَدُ  
كَذَلِكَ إِنِّي إِذَا رَزَيْتُ أَخَا  
قَطْرُئِلَ مَرْبَعِي وَلِي بَقَرَى الْ  
تُرْضِعُنِي دَرَّهَا وَتَلَحَّفُنِي  
إِذَا نَشَأَ الْغُصُونُ جَلَّلَنِي  
تَبَيَّنْتُ فِي مَأْتَمٍ حَائِئُهُ  
يَهْبُ شَوْقِي وَشَوْقُهُنَّ مَعَا  
فَقَمْتُ أَحْبَبُوا إِلَى الرِّضَاعِ كَمَا  
حَتَّى تَحَيَّرْتُ بَنَتْ دَسَكْرَةُ  
هَتَكْتُ عَنْهَا وَالْبَلْبُلُ مُعْتَكِرُ  
مَنْ نَسَجَ خَرَقَاءَ لَا تُشَدُّ لَهَا  
ثُمَّ تَوَجَّاهْتُ خَصْرَهَا بِشَبَا  
فَاسْتَوَسَّقَ الشُّرْبَ لِلتَّدَامِي وَأَجْ  
أَقُولُ لَمَّا تَحَاكِيَا شَبَّهَا

فترودُ منها العينُ في بشرٍ  
حَبَابُ كمثلِ جَلَّاجِلِ الحِجْلِ  
حتى إذا سَكَتَتْ جَوَانِحُهَا  
خَطَّيْنِ من شَتَّى ومَجْتَمِعِ  
فَاعْزِرْ أَخَاكَ فَإِنَّهُ رَجُلٌ  
حَرَّ الصَّحِيفَةِ نَاصِعِ سَهْلٍ  
حَبَابُ كمثلِ جَلَّاجِلِ الحِجْلِ  
كُتِبَتْ بِمِثْلِ أَكَارِعِ النَّمْلِ  
غُفِّلِي مِنَ الإِعْجَامِ والشَّكْلِ  
مَرَنْتُ مَسَامِعُهُ عَلَى الْعَذْلِ

## Da' 'an-ka Lawmī

دَعْ عَنْكَ لَوْمِي فَإِنَّ اللَّوْمَ إِغْرَاءُ  
صَفْرَاءُ لَا تَنْزِلُ الْأَحْزَانُ سَاحَتَهَا  
مَنْ كَفَّ ذَاتَ حِرٍّ فِي زِيٍّ ذِي ذِكْرٍ  
قَامَتْ بِإِبْرِيْقِهَا وَاللَّيْلُ مُعْتَكِرٌ  
فَارْسَلَتْ مِنْ فَمِ الْإِبْرِيْقِ صَافِيَةً  
رَقَّتْ عَنِ الْمَاءِ حَتَّى مَا يَلَأُمُهَا  
فَلَوْ مَزَجَتْ بِهَا نُورًا لَمَازَجِهَا  
دَارَتْ عَلَى فُتَيْبَةٍ دَانَ الزَّمَانُ لَهُمْ  
لِنَلِّكَ أَبْكِي وَلَا أَبْكِي لِمَنْزِلَةٍ  
حَاشَا لِدَرَةٍ أَنْ تُبْنَى الْحَيَامُ لَهَا  
فَقُلْ لِمَنْ يَدْعَى فِي الْعِلْمِ فِلَسْفَةً  
لَا تَحْطُرُ الْعَفْوُ إِنْ كُنْتَ أَمْرًا حَرَجًا  
وَدَاوِنِي بِالتِّي كَانَتْ هِيَ الدَّاءُ  
لَوْ مَسَّهَا حَجَرٌ مَسَّتْهُ سَرَاءُ  
لَهَا مُجِبَانٌ لَوْطِيٌّ وَزَنَاءُ  
فَلَا حَ مِنْ وَجْهَهَا فِي الْبَيْتِ لِأَلَاءِ  
كَأَنَّمَا أَخَذَهَا بِالْعَيْنِ إِغْفَاءُ  
لَطَافَةٌ وَجْهًا عَنْ شَكْلِهَا الْمَاءِ  
حَتَّى تَوَلَّدَ أَنْوَارٌ وَأَضْوَاءُ  
فَمَا يُصَيِّبُهُمْ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاوُوا  
كَانَتْ تَحُلُّ بِهَا هُنْدٌ وَأَسْمَاءُ  
وَأَنْ تَرُوحَ عَلَيْهَا الْإِبِلُ وَالشَّاءُ  
حَفِظْتَ شَيْئًا وَغَابَتْ عَنْكَ أَشْيَاءُ  
فَإِنَّ حَظْرَكَهُ فِي الدِّينِ إِزْرَاءُ

## Ighrā' Iblīs

نَمْتُ إِلَى الصُّبْحِ وَإِبْلِيسُ لِي  
رَأَيْتُهُ فِي الْجَوْ مُسْتَعْلِيًا  
أَرَادَ لِلسَّمْعِ اسْتِرَاقًا فَمَا  
فَقَالَ لِي لِمَا هَوَى مُرْجَا  
هَلْ لَكَ فِي عِذْرَاءِ مَمْكُورَةٍ  
وَوَارِدِ جَنَلٍ عَلَى مَتْنِهَا  
فَقُلْتُ لَا قَالَ قَتَى أَمْرَدُ  
فِي كُلِّ مَا يُؤْتِمُنِي خَصْمُ  
ثُمَّ هَوَى يَتَّبِعُهُ نَجْمُ  
عَتَمَ أَنْ أَهْبَطَهُ الرَّجْمُ  
بِتَائِبٍ تَوْبَتُهُ وَهُمْ  
يَزِينُهَا صَدْرٌ لَهَا فَحْمُ  
أَسْوَدَ يَحْكِي لَوْنَهُ الْكُرْمُ  
يَرْتَجُ مِنْهُ كَفَلُ فَعْمُ

كَأَنَّهُ عَذْرَاءُ فِي خِيَرِهَا  
فَقُلْتُ لَا قَالَ قَتَى مُسْمِعُ  
فَقُلْتُ لَا قَالَ قَتَى كُلِّ مَا  
مَا أَنَا بِالْأَيْسِ مِنْ عَوْدَةٍ  
لَسْتُ أَبَا مُرَّةٍ إِنْ لَمْ تَعُدْ  
وَلَيْسَ فِي لَبَّتِهِ نَظْمُ  
يَحْسُنُ مِنَ النُّقْرِ وَالنَّعْمِ  
شَابَهُ مَا قُلْتُ لَكَ الْحَزْمُ  
مَنْكَ عَلَى رِغْمِكَ يَا فَدْمُ  
فَغَيْرَ ذَا مِنْ فَعْلِكَ الْغَنَمُ

## Wa-Fityatin ka-Maṣābiḥi l-Dujā

وَفُتَيْبَةٌ كَمَصَابِيحِ الدُّجَى غُرِرَ  
صَالُوا عَلَى الدَّهْرِ بِاللَّهْوِ الَّذِي وَصَلُوا  
دَارَ الزَّمَانِ بِأَفْلَاكِ السُّعُودِ لَهُمْ  
نَادِمُهُمْ قَرَقَتِ الْإِسْفَنْطُ صَافِيَةً  
مِنَ الْلَوَانِي خَطْبُنَاهَا عَلَى عَجَلٍ  
فِي قَيْلَقٍ لِلدُّجَى كَالْيَمِّ مُلْتَظِمٍ  
إِذَا بِكَافِرَةٍ شَمَطَاءٍ قَدْ بَرَزَتْ  
تَنَمَّى إِلَى مَحْجِدِ الْكُفَّارِ فِي نَسَبِ  
قَالَتْ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ قُلْنَا مَنْ عَرَفَهُمْ  
حَلَّوْا بِدَارِكَ مَجْتَازِينَ فَأَعْتَمَنِي  
فَقَدْ ظَفِرَتْ بِصَفْوِ الْعَيْشِ غَانِمَةً  
فَأَحْسَى بِرِنَحْمِهِمْ فِي ظِلِّ مَكْرُمَةٍ  
قَالَتْ فَعِنْدِي الَّذِي تَبْغُونَ فَانْتَظِرُوا  
هِيَ الصَّبَاحُ يُجَلِّي اللَّيْلُ صَفْوَتَهَا  
رَمَى الْمَلَأَكَةَ الرِّصَادَ إِذْ رَجَمَتْ  
فَأَقْبَلَتْ كَضِيَاءَ الشَّمْسِ بَارِغَةً  
قُلْنَا لَهَا كَمْ لَهَا فِي الدَّنِّ إِذْ حُجِبَتْ  
كَانَتْ حُجْبَاءً فِي الدَّنِّ قَدْ عَنَسَتْ  
فَقَدْ أُتِيَتْ بِهَا مِنْ كُنْهٍ مَعْدِنِهَا  
تُهْدَى إِلَى الشَّرْبِ طَيِّبًا عِنْدَ نَكْهَتِهَا  
كَأَنَّمَا بُزَالُ الْمُزْنِ إِذْ مُزِجَتْ  
شَمُّ الْأَنْوْفِ مِنَ الصَّيْدِ الْمَصَالِيحِ  
فَلَيْسَ حَبْلُهُمْ مِنْهُ بِمَبْتُوتٍ  
وَعَاجَ يَخْنُو عَلَيْهِمْ عَاطِفُ اللَّيْلِ  
مَشْمُولَةٌ سُبَيْتٍ مِنْ خَمَرٍ تَكْرِيحِ  
لَمَّا عَجَجْنَا بِرَبَاتِ الْحَوَانِيحِ  
طَافَ بِحَارِ بِهِ مِنْ هَوْلِهِ النَّوْقِ  
فِي زِيٍّ مَخْتَبِعٍ لِلَّهِ زَمِيحِ  
أَهْلِي الصَّوَامِعِ عُبَادِ الطَّوَاغِيحِ  
مِنْ كُلِّ سَمْعٍ بِفَرْطِ الْجُودِ مَنُوعِ  
بَذَلَ الْكِرَامِ وَقَوْلِي كَيْفَ مَا شِيعِ  
كُتْنُكُمْ دَاوُودَ مِنْ أَسْلَابِ جَالُوتِ  
حَتَّى إِذَا أَرْتَحَلُوا عَنْ دَارِكُمْ مَوْتِ  
عِنْدَ الصَّبَاحِ فَقُلْنَا بَلْ بِهَا لَمِي  
إِذَا أَرَمَتْ بِشَرَارِ كَالْيَوَاقِيحِ  
فِي اللَّيْلِ بِالنَّجْمِ مُرَادَ الْعَفَاقِيحِ  
فِي الْكَأَسِ مِنْ بَيْنِ دَامِي الْخَضِرِ مَنُوكِ  
قَالَتْ قَدْ أَتَّخَذْتُ مِنْ عَهْدِ طَالُوتِ  
فِي الْأَرْضِ مَدْفُونَةً فِي جَوْفِ تَابُوتِ  
فَحَازِرُوا أَخَذَهَا فِي الْكَأَسِ بِالْقُوتِ  
كَتَفَّحَ مِسْكِ فَنَيْقِ الْفَارِ مَفْتُوتِ  
شِيَاكُ دَرٍّ عَلَى دِيْبَاجِ يَاقُوتِ

سَأْبَغِي الْعَيْنَ إِذَا نَدِيمَ خَلِيفَةٍ  
بِكَلِّ فَتَى لَا يُسْتَطَارُ جَنَانُهُ  
لِنَحْمُسَ مَالِ اللَّهِ مِنْ كُلِّ فَاجِرٍ  
أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ الْمَالَ عَوْنٌ عَلَى التَّقَى

يَقُومُ سِوَاهُ أَوْ مُخِيفَ سَبِيلٍ  
إِذَا نَوَّهَ الرَّخْفَانُ بِاسْمِ قَتِيلٍ  
وَذَى بَطْنَةٍ لِلطَّيِّبَاتِ أَكُولٍ  
وَلَيْسَ جَوَادُ مُعْدِمٍ كَبَخِيلٍ

يُدِيرهَا قَمَرٌ فِي طَرْفِهِ حَوَرٌ  
وَعِنْدَنَا ضَارِبٌ يَشْدُو فَيُطْرِبُنَا  
إِلَيْهِ الْخَاطِنُ ثَنَى أَعْنَتُهَا  
مَنْ أَهْلُ هَيْتَ سَخَى الْجُرْمِ ذِي أَدَبٍ  
فَيَتَدَى بِصَحِيحِ اللَّفْظِ عَنْ نَعَمٍ  
حَتَّى إِذَا فَلَكُ الْأَوْتَارِ دَارَ بِنَا  
نُزْهِى بِهَا فِي حَدِيقَاتِ مَلْفَضَةٍ  
تُهْلِكُ أَطْيَارُهَا عَنْ كُلِّ مُلْهِيةٍ  
سُقْيَا لِذَلِكَ دَهْرًا بَانَ مَفْرَطًا  
لَمْ يَثْنِي اللَّهْوُ عَنْ غَشِيَانِ مُورِدِهَا  
حَتَّى إِذَا الشَّيْبُ فَاجَانِي بَطْلَعَتْهُ  
عِنْدَ الْعَوَانِي إِذَا أَبْصُرُنْ طَلَعَتْهُ  
فَقَدْ تَدِمْتُ عَلَى مَا كَانَ مِنْ خَطَلٍ  
أَدْعُوكَ سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ فَأَعْفُ كَمَا

كَأَنَّا أَشْتَقُّ مِنْهُ سِحْرُ هَارُوتٍ  
يَا دَارَ هِنْدَ بَذَاتِ الْجَزَعِ خُبَيْتٍ  
فَلَوْ تَرَانَا إِلَيْهِ كَالْمَبَاهِيتِ  
لَهْ أَقُولُ مِزَاحًا هَاتِ يَا هَيْتِ  
مُتَقَفَاتٍ فَصِيحَاتٍ بِثَبِيتٍ  
مَعَ الطُّبُولِ ظِلَلْنَا كَالْمَسَايِيتِ  
بِالرَّزْدِ وَالطَّلَحِ وَالرَّمَانِ وَالتُّوتِ  
إِذَا تَرْنَمُ فِي تَرْجِيْعِ تَصْوِيتٍ  
مُحِبِّبًا لَمْ يَكُنْ عِنْدِي بِمَقُوتٍ  
وَلَمْ أَكُنْ عَنْ دَوَاعِيهَا بِصَمِيتٍ  
أَقْبَحُ بِطَلْعَةِ شَيْبٍ غَيْرِ مَبْخُوتٍ  
أَذُنْ بِالصَّرْمِ مِنْ وَدٍّ وَتَشَبِيتٍ  
وَمِنْ إِضَاعَةِ مَكْتُوبِ الْمَوَاقِيتِ  
عَفُوتَ يَا ذَا الْعُلَى عَنْ صَاحِبِ الْحُوتِ

#### Wa-Khaymati Nātūrin

وَخَيْمَةٍ نَاطُورٍ بِرَأْسِ مُنِيفَةٍ  
إِذَا عَارَضَتْهَا الشَّمْسُ فَاءَتْ ظِلَالُهَا  
حَاطَطْنَا بِهَا الْأَنْفَالَ فَلَّ هَجِيرَةٍ  
تَأَيَّتْ قَلِيلًا ثُمَّ جَاءَتْ بِمَذْقَةٍ  
كَأَنَّا لَدَيْهَا بَيْنَ عِطْفَى نَعَامَةٍ  
حَلَبْتُ لِأَصْحَابِي بِهَا دِرَّةَ الصَّبَا  
إِذَا مَا أَنْتَ دُونَ اللَّهِاقَةِ مِنَ الْفَتَى  
فَلَا تَوَفَّى اللَّيْلُ جُنْحًا مِنَ الدَّجَى  
وَعَاطَيْتُ مِنْ أَهْوَى الْحَدِيثِ كَمَا بَدَا  
فَعَنَى وَقَدْ وَسَدْتُ يُسْرَاى خَدَّهْ  
فَانْزَلْتُ حَاجَاتِي بِحَقِيقَى مُسَاعِدٍ  
وَأَصْبَحْتُ أَلْحَى السُّكَّرِ وَالسُّكَّرِ مُحْسِنُ

تَهْمُ يَدَا مَنْ رَامَهَا بِزَلِيلٍ  
وَأِنْ وَاجَهَتْهَا آذَنْتُ بِدُخُولٍ  
عَبُورِيَّةٌ تُذَكِّي بِغَيْرِ فَتِيلٍ  
مِنَ الظِّلِّ فِي رَثِّ الْأَبَاءِ ضَنِيلٍ  
جَفَا زَوْرُهَا عَنْ مَبْرَكٍ وَمَقِيلٍ  
بَصْفَرَاءَ مِنْ مَاءِ الْكُرُومِ شَمُولٍ  
دَعَا هُمُّهُ مِنْ صَدْرِهِ بِرَحِيلٍ  
تَصَابِيْتُ وَاسْتَجَمَلْتُ غَيْرَ جَمِيلٍ  
وَذَلَّلْتُ صَعْبًا كَانَ غَيْرَ ذَلِيلٍ  
أَلَا رَبِّمَا طَالَبْتُ غَيْرَ مُنِيلٍ  
وَإِنْ كَانَ أَدْنَى صَاحِبٍ وَدَخِيلٍ  
أَلَا رَبِّ إِحْسَانٍ عَلَيْكَ ثَقِيلٍ

## GLOSSARY OF ARABIC TERMS

- ‘ādhil/‘ādhila:** the reprover or censurer. This anonymous figure is a common topos in early Arabic love and wine poetry, and is frequently an introductory topos.
- ‘adhl:** blame, censure, reproof.
- ‘aql:** reason, intelligence, mind. It is a facet of *ḥilm* and is employed as a term in one of the *khamriyyāt* of Abū Nuwās to contrast with *jahl* (the antonym of *ḥilm*).
- ‘aṣabiyya:** party-spirit, or a zealous allegiance to the tribe. The term refers to the feuds which arose between some of the Arab tribes in the early Islamic period.
- aṭlāl** (sing. *ṭalal*; alternative pl. *ṭulūl*): the abandoned traces of the beloved’s erstwhile campsite. It is the dominant topos of the *nasīb*.
- badī’:** the use of rhetorical devices in classical Arabic poetry. *Badī’* developed in the late Umayyad and early ‘Abbāsid period and thereafter dominated the expression of the most prominent Arab poets. The most common devices are antithesis (*ṭibāq*), parallelism (*muqābala*), and paronomasia (*jinās*).
- bā’iyya:** a *qaṣīda* or *qit‘a* rhyming in the letter *bā’*.
- bid‘a:** innovation; in a religious context it has the sense of heresy.
- bikr:** a maiden or virgin; the noun is sometimes used figuratively to refer to a wine that is still sealed in its container.
- birr:** righteousness, godliness, piety.
- al-dahr:** fate—a dominant motif in early Arabic poetry.
- dāliyya:** a *qaṣīda* or *qit‘a* rhyming in the letter *dāl*.
- dār** (pl. *diyār*): house or abode. In the *nasīb*, and Arabic lyrical poetry in general, it is used to refer to the abode of the beloved. In some cases it clearly has the same significance as the *aṭlāl*.
- dihqān:** a member of the lesser feudal nobility in Sāsānian Persia; the title was applied more loosely in Islamic times. In the *khamriyyāt* the vintner is oftentimes described as a *dihqān*.
- dīn:** religion.
- diwān:** the collected poems of an individual poet.
- fakhr:** one of the major categories of poetry. It is essentially any poetry where the poet vaunts himself.
- fann** (pl. *funūn*): art. The term is also used in Arabic with the meaning of genre.
- faqīh:** an expert in *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence).

**fatān:** a mature young man who is not yet 40.

**fatwā:** a juridical opinion or decree.

**firāq:** departure or separation. This refers to the departure of the beloved (and her tribe) from an encampment formerly shared with the poet-lover (and his tribe). It is one of the three focal motifs or topics of the *nasīb*.

**gharaḍ:** lit. object or goal. The term is used to signify the main theme of a *qaṣīda*, which as the poetry developed was normally *madīḥ* or *hijā’*.

**ghazal:** love poetry. *Ghazal* as an independent genre is generally conceived to have developed from the *nasīb* of the polythematic *qaṣīda*. It is important to understand the distinction between *ghazal* and *nasīb*. There are essentially two types of *ghazal*: *‘udhrī* and *ibāḥī*.

**ghufrān:** forgiveness. The term is employed in the *khamriyyāt* to refer to divine forgiveness and is often an attendant topic of *tawba* (repentance).

**ghulām:** a youth or adolescent boy; the *sāqī* is sometimes referred to by this term.

**ḥā’iyya:** a poem rhyming in the letter *ḥā’*.

**hamm:** worry, distress, preoccupation.

**ḥawādith:** the accidents/events [of Fate/Time]; an attendant topic of Fate (*al-dahr*).

**ḥayā’:** shame.

**hazl:** joking, jesting, fun. The term is used to describe a poetic mood or posture; it is the antonym of *jidd* (seriousness, earnestness).

**hijā’:** insulting poetry, usually translated into English as satire. It is one of the major genres or categories of poetry.

**ḥikma:** lit. wisdom. It is an important category of poetry, though it was not generally recognized as such by the medieval Arab literary critics. Normally it comprises an aphoristic statement about the ephemeral nature of life in which the prime mover is Fate (*al-dahr*).

**ḥilm:** forbearance. It is one of the principal facets of *muruwwa* and governs most of the poet’s cerebral qualities. The notion of *ḥilm* was inherited by the Islamic community from the *Jāhiliyya*.

**ibāḥī:** this is an adjective used to refer to candidly erotic love poetry (*ghazal*).

**‘ilm:** knowledge. In the system of virtue (*muruwwa*) of early Arabic poetry it can be deemed an aspect of *ḥilm*.

**‘ird:** honour, good repute.

**ir’iwwā’:** abstinence and repentance (the latter only by virtue of the former).

**istighfār:** seeking forgiveness (from God).

**itā’:** the repetition of a rhyme word within an individual poem, considered a shortcoming unless the words have different meanings.

**jāhili:** pre-Islamic.

**Jāhiliyya:** pre-Islamic Arabia, more specifically the hundred years or so before the emergence of Islam.



**jahl**: lit. ignorance. More broadly it is the antonym of *ḥilm*, i.e. a lack of forbearance and therefore an inability to act or behave in accordance with the precepts of *muruwwa*.

**jāmiyya**: a *qaṣīda* or *qit'a* rhyming in the letter *jīm*.

**jinās**: paronomasia; it is one of the most common rhetorical devices of *badī'*.

**karam**: generosity, magnanimity, noble-mindedness.

**khamr**: the Arabic for wine in its broadest sense. It is used in this monograph also to refer to the treatment of wine in the *qaṣīda* and the *khamriyya*.

**khamriyya** (pl. *khamriyyāt*): the independent wine poem.

**khayr**: good, goodness (both generally and in a moral and religious sense).

**kufr**: unbelief or blasphemy, specifically in the Islamic sphere.

**kunya**: a byname, typically consisting of "Abū" in construct with another name, i.e. Abū Nuwās.

**ladhdha** (pl. *ladhdhāt*): pleasure, enjoyment. A term frequently employed in the *khamriyya*, *ghazal*, and *mujūn* poetry.

**lahw**: play, dalliance, entertainment.

**lā'im**: a word essentially synonymous with *'ādhil*.

**lāmiyya**: a *qaṣīda* or *qit'a* rhyming in the letter *lām*.

**madīḥ**: eulogy or panegyric. It is one of the major categories or genres of classical Arabic poetry.

**ma'īsa**: life, livelihood, way of life.

**mājin**: a libertine (see *mujūn*).

**maṭla'**: The opening *bayt* (or verse) of a poem.

**mawlā**: a person of non-Arab origin who has become the client of one of the Arab tribes. Or, conversely, a master or lord.

**mīmiyya**: a poem rhyming in the letter *mīm*.

**mu'allaqa**: one of the seven (in one recension ten) pre-Islamic odes collected by Ḥammād al-Rāwīya (d. c.777). Legend has it that they were suspended on the walls of the Ka'ba as paragons of the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda*; this is almost certainly untrue.

**mu'āraḍa**: lit. opposition (verbal noun); in poetry it refers to imitation, pastiche, or allusion: the deliberate allusion of a poem to another through the reworking of the original's metre, rhyme, and content.

**mubādara**: hastening. It is used in the *khamriyya* to refer to the hastening of an individual to indulge his hedonistic appetite. There is usually an implied sense of a hastening to indulge before Fate (*al-dahr*) despoils the individual of his life and pleasures.

**mughanniya**: a singer or songstress whose role in the narrative *khamriyya* is sometimes analogous with that of the *sāqiya*.

**muḥāfaẓa**: reserve, conservative attitude.

**muḥdath**: this term is usually translated as "modern" and refers to the

poetry which emerged in the late Umayyad and early 'Abbāsīd period characterized by the use of *badī'*.

**mujūn**: shamelessness or wantonness. It is a minor category of poetry into which the *khamriyya* sometimes roams by virtue of its wanton (irreligious, sexual or scatological) subject matter. Abū Nuwās frequently employs the term, or some form of the root, in his *khamriyyāt*; some of his *khamriyyāt* and poems of *ghazal* are clearly poems of *mujūn*.

**mukhaḍram/mukhaḍrim**: a poet who spans two epochs, usually the pre-Islamic and early Islamic.

**munāfara**: conflict; it is used in a literary context to refer to poetic duelling (see *Mufaḥkara* in *El'*).

**munāqaḍa**: contradiction or opposition (see *Naqā'id*).

**muruwwa**: this is often translated as *virtus*. It is the broad term that signifies all the cardinal virtues of pre-Islamic Arabian society that should characterize a man. *Muruwwa* was in large measure incorporated into the ethical fabric of the early Islamic community.

**nabīdh**: this term is used in the *khamriyyāt* to refer to wine made from dates. A form of *nabīdh* was considered to be a permissible beverage by members of the Ḥanafī school of law. *Nabīdh* seems to have been disparaged by the majority of wine poets.

**nadīm** (pl. *nadāmā/nudamā'*): a drinking companion.

**naqā'id**: poems of *hijā'* written reciprocally between poetic adversaries.

These became a significant phenomenon of Arabic poetry in the Umayyad period.

**nasīb**: the erotic prelude of the polythematic *qaṣīda*. Three motifs dominate this section of the poem: the *aṭlāl* motif, the *firāq* motif, and the *ṭayf al-khayāl* or the visitation of the beloved upon the poet at night.

**na't**: description. This is distinct from the term used for description as a genre of poetry; for this see *waṣf*.

**nisba**: relationship or, in some contexts, lineage.

**nusk**: godliness, piety.

**qāfiya**: rhyme, rhyme-word.

**qāfiyya**: a *qaṣīda* or *qit'a* rhyming in the letter *qāf*.

**qaṣīda**: a polythematic poem. In its most standard form by the late pre-Islamic/early Umayyad period this might consist of the following sections or themes: *nasīb*→*raḥīl/waṣf*→*madīḥ*. The *qaṣīda* survived in this form well into the 'Abbāsīd period, though the style of language was transformed in this later period by *badī'*.

**qit'a**: a short monothematic poem of up to about twenty verses.

**qiyās**: lit. comparison or analogy. It became one of the four so-called "roots" of Islamic jurisprudence.

**raḥīl**: the journey section of the polythematic *qaṣīda*.

**rā'iyya**: a *qaṣīda* or *qit'a* rhyming in the letter *rā'*.

- ra'y**: opinion. The term is used in a technical sense in Islamic jurisprudence as opinion that leads to a legal judgement.
- rubba**: a word which when followed by a noun in the genitive case means "many a . . .". It generally begins descriptive passages of nostalgia in polythematic poems, and is very frequently also a particle of transition from one subject to another. See also *wāw rubba*.
- ruṣd**: "being on the right path". Originally in pre-Islamic Arabia this meaning was understood literally. It soon came to assume a metaphorical significance and was thus absorbed into the broad fabric of Islamic ethics, with a meaning close to that of *tuqā* and *taqwā*.
- ṣabāb**: youth, youthfulness. It is the antonym of *ṣayb*.
- ṣabr**: patience. It is a topos in homiletic poetry (the *zuhdiyya*).
- sāqī/sāqiya**: the wine pourer. This was either an adolescent boy or girl and played a significant role in wine poetry, particularly the *khamriyyāt* of Abū Nuwās.
- ṣarb**: a noun normally found in this plural form (sing. *ṣārib*) in the *khamriyyāt* meaning the drinkers or carousers.
- ṣayb**: grey hair or the state of having grey hair.
- ṣaykh**: A mature old man of 40 years or more.
- ṣayr**: walking, going, movement. It is often with this root that Abū Nuwās alludes in his *khamriyyāt* to the notion of movement contained in both the *nasīb* and the *raḥīl* of the *qaṣīda*.
- ṣībā**: youthful passion.
- ṣidda**: hardship; it is the antonym of *faraj*, which means deliverance.
- ṣiniyya**: a *qit'a* or *qaṣīda* rhyming in the letter *ṣīn*.
- ṣirk**: the association of anything other than God with His divinity.
- ṣu'ūbiyya** (*ṣu'ūbī* in adjectival form): the polemics and polemical phenomenon which arose between Arabs and Persians as to the superiority of one race over the other in the late Umayyad period.
- tā'iyya**: a *qaṣīda* or *qit'a* rhyming in the letter *tā'*.
- takhalluṣ**: the transition in the *qaṣīda* from the *raḥīl* into the *gharaḍ* or *maḍīḥ*.
- taqwā**: piety.
- ṭarab**: pleasure, joy, rapture.
- taṣrī'**: internal rhyming in the first verse of a *qaṣīda*. By the late pre-Islamic period this had become a formal aspect of the *qaṣīda*.
- tawakkul**: trust in God.
- tawba**: repentance.
- ṭibāq**: antithesis. It one of the major features of *badī'*.
- tuqā**: piety, a variant spelling of *taqwā*.
- 'udhrī**: a form of chaste love which developed amongst a group of Ḥijāzī poets in the early Islamic period. It is characterized, amongst other features, by the devotion of the poet to one beloved. The lexicon and

- imagery of this poetry is derived largely from the *nasīb*, though the sentiments are quite different.
- 'usr**: a Qur'ānic term meaning 'hardship, distress, or destitution'. It is the antonym of *yusr*.
- waqār**: dignity, forbearance.
- waṣf**: description. It is one of the main categories or genres of early Arabic poetry.
- wāw rubba**: this is the use of *wāw* with the following genitive to serve the same function as *rubba* (q.v.).
- wuqūf**: lit. standing; it is the verbal noun of *waqafa*. It is used in ch. 1 to refer to the notion of standing at the abandoned traces of the beloved. Abū Nuwās alludes to the traditional poetry of lost love (the *nasīb*) and parodies it.
- yusr**: a Qur'ānic term meaning 'ease or prosperity'. It is the antonym of *'usr*.
- al-zaman/al-zamān**: Time. In early Arabic poetry it is an attendant topos of Fate (*al-dahr*).
- zuhd**: asceticism.
- zuhdiyya** (pl. *zuhdiyyāt*): ascetic or pious poetry. Whilst there is some ascetic poetry from the early Islamic and Umayyad periods, the genre was established by the 'Abbāsid poet Abū l-'Atāhiya, a contemporary and associate of Abū Nuwās.

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## Abbreviations

BÉO	<i>Bulletin d'Études Orientales</i>
CHALABL	<i>The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: 'Abbasid Belles-Lettres</i> (see Ashtiany)
CHALUP	<i>The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period</i> (see Beeston)
EI'	<i>The Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> , 1st edn., Leiden, 1913-34
EI'	<i>The Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> , 2nd edn., Leiden, 1960-
GAL	<i>Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur</i> (see Brockelmann)
JAL	<i>Journal of Arabic literature</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
ZDMG	<i>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>

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