CHAPTER 9

Narrativity in the Poetry of Ḥāfiẓ

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One could argue that narrative, in the lyric poem, plays a limited role. By its very definition, there must be something un-narrative about a lyric poem, something that focuses more on the speaker's particular view, state of mind, or surroundings, something either too immediate or too focused to entail a detailed story. Of course, there is a story behind the expression, celebration, or lamentation of the self in lyric. It is often implied and sometimes even directly told piecemeal. In the poetry of the famous Persian poet Khwāja Muḥammad Shams al-Dīn "Ḥāfiẓ" of Shiraz (d. 792/1390), however, there lies a sense of narrative more elusive than the implicit narrative mentioned above, and yet one that so differently affects the tone and success of the poem: what I will for the sake of discussion call *hidden* narrative, the general sensation that a particular poem extends from an unknown and immeasurable story. Proposing a sort of hidden "narrativity" assumes that narrative itself is, in Peter Brooks' words, "one of the large categories or systems of understanding that we use in our negotiations with reality, specifically, in the case of narrative, with the problem of temporality."[1] In this case, under consideration is a narrative that does not exist at all; hidden narrative is a phenomenon that exists entirely for the reader or listener, a sense of a powerful and vaguely remembered narrative, intimated through fragmented allusions, images, names, and places. This evoked narrative benefits from an interdependence of ambiguity and urgency, in other words, a lack of clarity as well as an emphasis on an epic or even sublime experience. It is perhaps this effect that is centrally responsible for the complementary disorientation and appeal Ḥāfiẓ's poetry instills in its audience, particularly in an audience with inclinations to encountering supersensory phenomena in the sensory domain.

1 In my youth, as an aspiring PhD student at the University of California, Berkeley, I found in Professor Hamid Algar the ideal advisor. My research proposals often drew from my imagination in ways not usually encouraged in humanities graduate studies, especially Near Eastern Studies. Not only did Dr. Algar listen to me and encourage me, but he also helped me discover ways to do more than just ground them in close readings of primary sources, in other words, to frame those ideas historically. Simply put, without him, I would not be who I am today.

Brooks, Peter, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992, xi.

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Theories about the crossing-over of narrative and lyric do exist, but in a different sense than what will be expounded here. Relevant discussions usually concern the intersection of dramatic monologue and "pure" lyric, since what separates them is an emphasis on the implied narrative; after all, if one were to know more concretely the story surrounding a lyric, be able to place the lyric in a context of specified characters and settings, then any first-person lyric could become a dramatic monologue. Especially useful here is Herbert F. Tucker's article "Dramatic Monologue and the Overhearing of Lyric," if simply for his understanding of degrees of dramatic monologue, from the highly dramatic (such as that of Robert Browning, d. 1889) to the more lyrical (such as that of Lord Alfred Tennyson, d. 1892). Tucker remarks that Tennyson strips his speakers of personality "in order to facilitate a lyric drive."[2] Clearly then, the lyricality of lyric demands a vaguer sense of character and, since a character is in part defined by her personal narrative—where she has been, what she has done, what she wants to do—demands a vaguer sense of narrative. If the poet intensifies personal narrative, highlighting the peculiarities of the speaker and the story that surrounds him, the result will be something like Browning's dramatic monologues where the poet pushes lyricality to the background, to "incorporate or 'overhear' lyric in the interests of character-formation."[3] Of course, there is something unquestionably lyrical about Browning's monologues, something that Robert Langbaum rightly specifies as the gratuitousness of dramatic monologue.[4] The pleading nature of Browning's monologues, the "superabundance of expression," using "more words, ingenuity and argument than seem necessary for the purpose," adds to the poem a sense of the unnecessary, a sense that the speaker pours his or her soul upon the reader.[5] Langbaum sees in such superfluity a likening to opera, where the singer seems to be waiting for the right opportunity to burst into song:

> Just as in opera … so in the dramatic monologue the dramatic situation is less the adequate motive than the occasion for a total outpouring of soul, the expression of the speaker's whole life until that moment.[6]

2 Tucker, Herbert F., "Dramatic Monologue and the Overhearing of Lyric," in Chaviva Hosek and Patricia Parker (eds.), *Lyric Poetry: Beyond New Criticism*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985, 226–243, here 229.

3 Tucker, *Lyric Poetry*.

4 Langbaum, Robert, *The Poetry of Experience: The Dramatic Monologue in Modern Literary Tradition*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1957, 182–209.

5 Langbaum, *The Poetry of Experience*, 182.

6 Langbaum, *The Poetry of Experience*, 183.

In such poems, the poet accomplishes this pouring forth of the speaker's entire life through superfluity, because excessive "self," an emphasis on the speaker's I-ness, drives the genre of dramatic monologue.[7]

But what if, instead of superfluity, the speaker tried to burst forth in song, the song of his or her own life, and only a few revealing but incomprehensible words came out? Just as gratuitousness of self characterizes dramatic monologue, glances behind the veil of self and at the self's life story characterize the poetry of Ḥāfiẓ. The life story, the personal narrative, is certainly present, but often given as flashes that may or may not be related to one another. While differing from the dramatic monologue in its expression of narrative, Ḥāfiẓ's hidden narrative also differs from the "pure" lyric mentioned above in that it does have something indefinably narrative about it. While pure lyric expressly avoids personal narrative and its drawn-out details of self, and while dramatic monologue overtly pushes a personal narrative onto the reader, Ḥāfiẓ's poetry convinces the reader that an intense first-person (but not always personal) narrative has been told and forgotten. As much as the narrative is hidden, the *sense* of a narrative is overwhelming.

Lyric, as will be seen below, explores narrative in ways that other genres, poetic or other, cannot; it uses narrative at its leisure and to whatever extent necessary to maintain the poetic purpose, without requirements on sense or cohesion. Story itself, in light of lyric poetry's use of it, can be redefined as essentially having two elements: outer-story and inner-story. The outer-story attempts to draw the listener into the inner-story, the sense of a world that it creates within the listener's mind. The end result of outer-story, what lingers in a listener's mind, is a sense of having been plunged into an imaginary universe; this is inner-story. The outer story includes all the basic elements of story—plot, setting, character—while the inner story is its effect: a glimpse into a temporary, but permanent-seeming world. In first-person lyric, dramatic monologue heightens outer-story, giving the reader a more concrete speaker, with more specified circumstances. Ḥāfiẓ's hidden narrative, on the other hand, might be said to heighten the inner-story.

If this seems esoteric, that is partly the point. One of the aims of this essay is to explore the theme of supersensory subtleties (*laṭā'if*) in Ḥāfiẓ not as a function of its author, but as a function of its audience.[8] The reception of Ḥāfiẓ

7 For a discussion of degrees of first-person presence in the classical Arabic poetic tradition, one similar to the classical Persian poetic tradition, see Jaroslav Stetkevych, "The Arabic Lyrical Phenomenon in Context," in *Journal of Arabic Literature* 6 (1975), 57–77.

8 The term *laṭā'if* has a long history of usage in Sufi psychology, though here it is used in its most general sense as that which points to matters beyond the senses. Such usage appears,

among Sufis and those whose tastes were shaped by Sufi poetry and practice must proceed from more than a shared wealth of terms.[9] A set of evaluative principles must be the impetus for Sufi ethical readings of Ḥāfiẓ's poetry, readings that have been proclaimed repeatedly and consistently. Regardless of Ḥāfiẓ's intent, the readership (or listenership) has spoken: Ḥāfiẓ's lyrical poetry epitomizes the functional aims of erotic Sufi verse. Such is expressed clearly by the poet and initiated Sufi ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (d. 898/1492), in his analysis of Ḥāfiẓ. Jāmī comments that although it is not known if Ḥāfiẓ was a formally initiated Sufi, nevertheless "his utterances accord with the disposition of this [Sufi] group to such a degree, that the like cannot be said of anyone else."[10] Clearly, then, one can find within Ḥāfiẓ's poetry a reason for this "accord," a quality in his poetry that occasions the receptions it has received. That reception, moreover, is based on an aesthetic evaluation—as verified by Jāmī's use of a word meaning "spiritual disposition" (*mashrab*), which can also be compared roughly to the word "taste." I will argue that hidden narrative might be an important part of this reception.

Here, even before discussing Ḥāfiẓ's poetry, a number of objections might arise. The poetry of Ḥāfiẓ, after all, does not exist in a literary vacuum. Rather, it proceeds naturally from a number of poetic traditions, traditions that include courtly and Sufi Persian verse, pre-and-post-Islamic Arabic literature, and the poetic-prosaic *sajʿ* of the Quran.[11] Each of these traditions prefers to allude to narrative, rather than relaying a story explicitly and chronologically. Per-

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for example, in a text attributed to Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), but probably by a later author. Here the author outlines six mountain ways that one must pass, with the highest involving "weaning the intellect from delusional imaginations." Passing the sixth mountain way yields a state of vision wherein "human subtleties (*al-laṭāʾif al-insīya*) withdraw completely from sensory viscosities (*al-kathāʾif al-ḥissīya*)." Subtleties are, in this case as in many others, forms of knowledge beyond the immediate and the external. See *Rawḍat al-ṭālibīn wa ʿumdat al-sālikīn*, ed. Muḥammad Bakhīt al-Muṭīʿī, Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍa al-Ḥadītha, [1966], 11–12.

9 Ḥāfiẓ's familiarity with Sufi terms and the tradition as a whole came not only from the Persian literary canon he had inherited, replete with such references, but also from the social climate of Shiraz, home to many committed ascetics and worshippers, including a sizable Sufi population with Shāfiʿī allegiances. See John Limbert, *Shiraz in the Age of Hafez: The Glory of a Medieval Persian City*, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2004, 112–115.

10 Jāmī, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, *Nafaḥāt al-uns min ḥaḍarāt al-quds*, ed. Mahdī Tawḥīdīpūr, Tehran: Kitābfurūshī-i Maḥmūdī, 1957 [1336 SH]), 614.

11 Moreover, the *ghazal*s themselves are replete with historical and political references, which shape the seeming narrative of the poem. For a detailed study of such references in one of Ḥāfiẓ's poems, see Ingenito, Domenico, "Hafez's 'Shirāzi Turk': A Geopoetical Approach," in *Iranian Studies* 51, no. 6 (2018), 851–887.

sian verse, both in the court and in Sufi circles, tends to exhibit rich displays of images that often allude to a story or multiple stories. Pre-Islamic Arabic *qaṣīda*s and their post-Islamic descendants also refer to commonly-known episodes, especially focusing on a longingly remembered account of what had once occurred in the nomadic desert. The Quran has only one chapter that focuses on a unified, chronologically-told story; it favors, instead, intertwining a number of narratives with descriptions of God and His names, or lessons for the believers on the hereafter and ethical living. Clearly and undoubtedly, Ḥāfiẓ has absorbed and rendered these traditions in a variety of ways. Still, however, something separates Ḥāfiẓ—and narrative in the poetry of Ḥāfiẓ—from these other traditions. In measurable terms, Ḥāfiẓ's use of narrative distinguishes itself for certain stylistic reasons that will be outlined below, but Persian-speaking critics almost unanimously agree that his poetry (and I will add here his poetic use of "narrative") differs from his predecessors mostly because of an indefinable effect. One contemporary critic, for example, remarks that Ḥāfiẓ differs from those before him in his having captured "the *subconscious* in verse."[12] According to another Iranian critic, Ḥāfiẓ not only perfected the ghazal genre in a manner unsurpassed by those before him and unsurpassable by those after him, but also "accomplished *magic* in meaning and form."[13] Such proclamations should not be dismissed as subjective or emotive responses. To the contrary, the frequency of such responses by native Persian speakers and the larger Persophone world indicates that they are as objective as any aesthetic evaluation can be.[14] They point to an acknowledgment of literary standards,

12 Islamī Nudūshan, Muḥammad ʿAlī, *Mājarā-yi pāyān-nāpadhīr-i Ḥāfiẓ*, Tehran: Yazdān, 1989 [1368SH], 26.

13 Shamīsā, Sīrūs, *Sayr-i ghazal dar shiʿr-i fārsī*, Tehran: Intishārāt-i Firdawsī, 1997 [1376 SH]), 132. Similarly, according to the German translator, Friedrich Rückert, the secret of Ḥāfiẓ's poetry is *unübersinnlich*, that is, "inextricable by thought." See J. Christoph Bürgel, "Ambiguity: A Study in the Use of Religious Terminology in the Poetry of Ḥāfiẓ," in *Intoxication: Earthly and Heavenly, Seven Studies on the Poet Ḥāfiẓ of Shiraz*, ed. Michael Glünz and J. Christoph Bürgel (Swiss Asian Studies, Research Studies, vol. 12), Bern, Berlin, Frankfurt, New York, Paris, and Wien: Peter Lang, 1991, 7–39, here 10. Julie Scott Meisami considers the matters of "meaning" and "form," mentioned here by Shamīsā, in careful and enlightening detail in *Structure and meaning in medieval Arabic and Persian poetry: Orient pearls*, London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003, 18 et al.

14 This must include, of course, South Asia as well where Ḥāfiẓ's significance led to multiple commentaries on his *dīwān*, such as that of the great Indian scholar Ashraf ʿAlī Thānavī (d. 1943), a commentary that embraces both the legal tradition and the Persianate language of love, while avoiding nationalist interpretations. See Ali Altaf Mian, "Surviving Desire: Reading Ḥāfiẓ in Colonial India," in *Journal of Urdu Studies* 2 (2021), 31–67.

to an existent if undefined canon of Persian literature.[15] Loosely basing this discussion on reception-theory, one can say that aesthetic evaluation emerges from a history of reception.[16] The canon of Persian literature, within the larger canon of Arab-Persian literature, had to set standards of ambiguity in narrative *before* Ḥāfiẓ could surpass those standards. Intimating a narrative quality in verse (and not a specific narrative), if it had become a valued trait, as I think it had in the three traditions mentioned above, achieved a profundity of effect and a mysteriousness that doubtless helped enable Ḥāfiẓ's famous title "Tongue of the Unseen" (*lisān al-ghayb*).[17]

Also, it should be noted that this paper does not argue for an over-arching and unifying "new" theory or reading of Ḥāfiẓ; it does not concern itself with what Ḥāfiẓ intended in composing these poems, nor does it propose that every poem in the poet's collected works (*dīwān*) has this quality. I only hope to suggest that many poems of Ḥāfiẓ—and possibly lyric poems by others—can display a powerful narrative quality with no specific unifying narrative, somewhat regardless of authorial intent. While many scholars of Ḥāfiẓ and classical Persian poetry might hope to recreate and relive the historical circumstances and literary evaluative system in which and for which his poems were written (and let us hope as well that that is possible), the objective here is much more modest. Rather than judge, evaluate, or make sense of disconnectedness, this paper aims to appreciate it and share that appreciation with others. My approach assumes that Ḥāfiẓ's poetic products surmount the exigencies of verse composition and rhetorical showmanship, if not in intent, then certainly in effect. Moreover, this approach, however imaginative it may be, yields two valuable results. First, by locating in Ḥāfiẓ's poems an aesthetic quality, a concept of hidden narrative guides the translator. My own translations have benefitted greatly from trying to capture an evocative narrative quality, rather than serving as a deceivingly "accurate" quid pro quo translation. In doing so, my central question has been: What would arouse a similar response in my audience? Second,

15 William L. Hanaway, Jr. offers a historically-grounded consideration of a canon of Persian poetry in "Is there a Canon of Persian Poetry?" in *Edebiyât* 4, no. 1 (1993), 3–12.

16 For ways in which the active reception of texts changes them and yields a new production, see Hans Robert Jauss, "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory," in *New Literary History* 2, no. 1, A Symposium on Literary History (Autumn 1970), 7–37.

17 See again Jāmī, who, in addition to using this title, also refers to him as the "translator of secrets" (*tarjumān al-asrār*), 614. Famously, in this regard, Ḥāfiẓ's *dīwān* has become canonized as the foremost book used among Persian speakers for the practice of bibliomancy. See Leonard Lewisohn, "Prolegomenon to the Study of Ḥāfiẓ 1—Socio-historical and Literary Contexts: Ḥāfiẓ in Shīrāz," in Leonard Lewisohn (ed.), *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010, 3–30, here 16.

since Ḥāfiẓ became the most valued ghazal poet in the Persian literary tradition, and since a mysterious "unseen" quality has been acknowledged in his poetry, some exploration of literature-as-mystery still lacks. The dominant discourse for mysteriousness in Ḥāfiẓ's audience (one that has, indeed, dominated readings of Ḥāfiẓ) was that of Sufism. Sufi readers not only appreciated Ḥāfiẓ's poetry *for* this mysterious quality, but also possess a suitable terminology to discuss it. Indeed, Sufi poetic hermeneutics possessed an organic and profound way to appreciate and study literature, one separate from the study of rhetoric, a topic I have discussed elsewhere.[18] Unlike some among those Sufi commentators, however, I do not intend for my reading of these poems to nullify or supersede other reader-response possibilities—but rather to offer one suggestion among many.

1 Ironic Image Abundance

More sensible than first considering something as tenuous as an *effect* on the reader, a description of narrative and poetic techniques somewhat unique to Ḥāfiẓ begins this discussion. It is not that Ḥāfiẓ is the only poet, Persian or otherwise, to make use of these techniques. Rather, he does so more frequently, more imaginatively, and more effectively, as will be seen. The first technique is the poet's use of an abundance of evocative imagery, particularly imagery pregnant with religious and amorous associations. Ḥāfiẓ often floods his poetry with pre-defined symbols, and such an effusion of meaningful images, linked together as a theme on the speaker's love, has its effect on the reader. This is the "ingenious network of allusive relations" to which J. Christoph Bürgel refers, one that produces "a rich intertextuality" and appeals to the reader-listener's "ability to discern his message through the oscillating veil of ambiguous metaphors, puns, allusions, double-entendres."[19] Thus, Ḥāfiẓ benefits from

18 See "The Poetics of Shuhūd: Ibn al-'Arabī's 'Intuitive, Enamored Heart' and the Composition of Erotic Poetry," in *The Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 54, no. 2 (2013), 13–36.

19 While offering an insightful depiction of ambiguity in the poems of Ḥāfiẓ, Bürgel might be said to overstate the uniqueness of Ḥāfiẓ's "religion of love" in this article, a topic that receives more treatment in the volume of that title (*Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*) edited by Leonard Lewisohn and cited in the bibliography. First, there is little recognition that the phrase "religion of love" is very common in the works of initiated Sufis before and after Ḥāfiẓ. Second, the disparaging use of the word "Sufi" is common in Sufi texts of the time—since the word "Sufi" would sometimes refer to simplistic wayfarers following formulaically and somewhat blindly a path of asceticism. One sees such

a tradition of poetry with its own established system of symbols and oft-alluded-to stories. When Ḥāfiẓ evokes the image of the rose and the nightingale, a series of associations erupts in his audience's minds. When he mentions the name "Yūsuf," he assumes his audience's familiarity with Yūsuf's famous Quranic story (one similar to that of Joseph in the Hebrew Bible), where the wife of a powerful Egyptian vizier falls in love with him for his matchless beauty.[20] Yet—perhaps what distinguishes this poet from others—Ḥāfiẓ tends to use these images ironically, not only in unexpected ways, but often in a context of subversion. Familiar images from love poetry are juxtaposed closely with profane, and even irreverent, uses of religious and sacred images. In the course of one poem, the reader faces these numerous symbols and allusions, each with its own independent story, woven together ironically and sometimes strangely to form a somewhat incomprehensible argument about the speaker's state of affairs:

> Last night I beheld angels—pounding on the door of the tavern,
> they were kneading Adam's clay to make a drinking cup for wine,
> and these dwellers of that veiled realm with all the self-restraint of spir-
> its,
> drank the brew that leaves you reeling there, with me, a useless vagrant.
> Though the heavens couldn't bear that weighty trust of the Almighty,
> some drew lots, my name came up, and then it fell on me, a lunatic.
> Now seventy-two religions are at war—you must excuse them;
> since they never saw the ultimate, they chose the path of fables.
> Thank the one, since there befell for me and him a peace successful,
> even Heaven's dancing girls are drinking thank-yous from their goblets.
> This is not the kind of fire whose flame makes the candle grin,
> it's the kind that's kindled aiming at a pile of moths incinerated.

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usage in the poems of Rūmī as well as the writings of Ibn ʿArabī. Third, wine imagery (and homoerotic imagery as well) devoid of any express recognition of spiritual or religious significance can be found in the works of explicitly Sufi poets, such as Fakhr al-Dīn ʿIrāqī. In the poetry of ʿIrāqī one also encounters sacrilegious use of Quranic images. See my *Sufi Aesthetics: Beauty, Love, and the Human Form in the Writings of Ibn ʿArabi and ʿIraqi*, Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2011, 60–62 and 85–91. See Bürgel, "Ambiguity: A Study in the Use of Religious Terminology in the Poetry of Ḥāfiẓ," 20.

20 For more on this, see Julie Scott Meisami, "Allusion in Hafiz: Joseph and His Brothers," Charles Melville (ed.), in *Persian and Islamic Studies in Honour of P.W. Avery*, Cambridge: University of Cambridge, Centre of Middle Eastern Studies, 1990, 141–158.

None like Ḥāfiẓ ever pulled the veil off Contemplation's face,
since the first of pens tried combing straight the tangled hair of language.[21]

This poem presents its listener with a number of ironic images: angels in the tavern and later drinking intoxicants, Adam's clay as a vessel for forbidden wine, God's trust given to a lunatic, and a presentation of the moth-candle relationship as one of sinister destruction, as opposed to inherent and uncontrollable lovability. Yet these are not simply images—they compose a narrative, however indeterminate that narrative may be. The speaker begins with an adverb of time: *dūsh*, meaning "last night."[22] The poem's introduction, then, occurs in a context of temporal specificity often found in personal recollection. Moreover, the image of wine-drinking angels results directly from the speaker's eyewitness account ("I beheld"), again emphasizing narrative.

Intertwined within this confession and proclamation are images from the Quranic-Islamic narrative of the soul. The idea of the "trust" (*amānat*) that humanity agreed to bear comes from the soul's pre-eternal life.[23] The story of God kneading Adam's clay comes from humanity's forgotten past. The idea that such kneading takes place in a tavern, to make Adam a vessel for the wine of love, probably has its origins in the Persian Sufi writings of Abū Bakr ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad Najm al-Dīn al-Rāzī, known as Dāya (d. 654/1256), a figure who will come up again.[24] The understanding that there will be seventy-two erring sects of Islam and one correct one comes from a prophetic prediction of the future, which is now the present. The maidens of Paradise (*ḥūrīyān*)

21 All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated. In this and the following translations, an attempt has been made for poetic worth and viability, as well as a highlighting of "hidden narrative," while maintaining as much of the original meaning possible. It is sometimes not a word-for-word translation. See Ḥāfiẓ, Khwāja Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad, *Dīwān-i Khwāja Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ḥāfiẓ* (henceforth *Dīwān*), vol. 1., ed. Parwīz Nātil Khānlurī, Tehran: Intishārāt-i Khwārazmī, 1980, 1983 [1359 SH, 1362 SH]), 374, ghazal no. 179. All references in this paper are to the first volume of the *Dīwān* (the ghazals).

22 Another poem that captures Ḥāfiẓ's powerful use of the word *dūsh* is ghazal no. 165, an excellent example of the hidden narrative effect: *Ḥafiẓ-i khalwat-nishīn dūsh bi maykhāna shud / az sar-i paymān biraft bā sar-i paymāna shud*. Ḥāfiẓ, *Dīwān*, 346.

23 See Paul Nwyia, *Exégèse Coranique et Langage Mystique: Nouvel essai sur le lexique technique des mystiques musulmans*, Beirut: Dar el-Machreq éditeurs, distributed by Librairie orientale, 1970, 46–49.

24 Ali Asghar Seyed-Gohrab cites Bahāʾ al-Dīn Khurramshāhī (b. 1945), a commentator on Ḥāfiẓ's poetry. See "The Erotic Spirit: Love, Man and Satan in Ḥāfiẓ's Poetry," in Leonard Lewisohn (ed.), *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010, 107–122, here 116.

come from Quranic references to the eternal hereafter. In other words, Ḥāfiẓ brings together not only a multiplicity of narrative within a seeming personal narrative, but does so while alluding to an eternal story of the soul, from pre-eternity to hereafter.[25] These infinite but intimate allusions to the soul's story never become didactic or homiletic, since they stay so close to home, so close to the ironies of life; they find their sweet bitterness and disorienting property in subverted imagery. Of course, the power of ironic sacred imagery is not exclusive to the Sufi-inclined. It is appreciated by an audience with various degrees of religiosity yet ultimately a common familiarity with the Islamic religious discourse. Yet a Sufi-inclined audience might have a more profound appreciation for references to a narrative of the soul, especially considering the emphasis on this theme in the Persian Sufi literature current in Ḥāfiẓ's age.[26] To various degrees, also, Ḥāfiẓ's allusion to familiar narratives within his personal narrative awakens sympathy in his audience, declaring a story the reader/listener seems expected to know, but could not possibly know. This final point will soon invite a discussion of another important quality in the hidden narrative of Ḥāfiẓ: the speaker's presumption that he makes sense, his constant reference to things commonly understood but never explained, such that the *reference* and not the *referent* is the poem's focus.

Often Ḥāfiẓ explores a theme with a wide array of metaphors, not an uncommon practice in classical Persian poetry. Yet, as seen here, the poet can use his prowess as a poet to bring together unlikely images via a masterful *qāfiya*-and-*radīf* rhyme scheme (the *qāfiya* is *-ayb* and the *radīf* is *kunad*):

> That busybody finds fault with me for zealous love and rakishness
> who complains about the secrets of the unseen that I know.
> Look at the perfect truthfulness of love—not at sin's deficiencies!
> For all who end up talentless fix their eyes on others' faults.
> A hint comes of the fragrance of Paradise's maiden the moment
> he rubs our tavern's dust on his collar as perfume.
> The cupbearer's lustful look so robbed Islam to destitution

25 Leili Anvar discusses the theme of pre-eternity in the poetry of Ḥāfiẓ, especially the way in which a "constellation of meanings and emotions" comes through in each of the poet's words to summon "echoes of a lost memory." See "The Radiance of Epiphany: The Vision of Beauty and Love in Ḥāfiẓ's Poem of Pre-Eternity," in Leonard Lewisohn (ed.), *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010, 123–142, here 125–126.

26 Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Balkhī-Rūmī's *Mathnawī-i Maʿnawī* and Najm al-Dīn Rāzī Dāya's *Mirṣād al-ʿibād min al-mabdaʾ ilā al-maʿād* both emphasize this theme, as will be discussed.

that no one, but Ṣuhayb, can abstain from reddest wine.[27]
The key to the hoard of happiness is the "yes" of Those of Heart:
Let no one ever doubt or mistrust this certain fact.
The shepherd of the right-side valley[28] attains that which is sought only
after having served Shuʿayb with all his soul for a few years.
Ḥāfiẓ's tale brings the eyes to shed droplets of blood
once he evokes those times in the days of youth and of gray hair.[29]

The rhyme links images that would not otherwise be tied together, such that the "*ayb kunad*" rhyme tends to surprise, especially with difficult-to-incorporate proper names ("Shuʿayb" and "Ṣuhayb") made doubly difficult by the following *radīf*. Indeed, contrary to more conventional poetic products, here there is no way for the listener to predict what might follow. The parallelism is further emphasized in that five of seven *bayt*s/distichs begin their second *misrāʿ*/hemistich with the word *ki* ("that" or "who"). Yet, ultimately, this is a rather simple confession. The speaker narrates a tale of love and beauty through this relentless series of images—which, again, can be irreverent (such as the sanctity of the tavern's dust or the naturalness of wine-drinking). The poem hints that it is in essence a *tale* or narrative most noticeably in its beginning and its end. The poem's opening hemistich establishes a setting, in which the speaker presents a personal conflict: a certain busybody (*ān fuḍūl*) has been maligning the speaker, and what follows is his defense. Indication of narrative is seen even more explicitly in the final distich, in which the speaker informs his audience that Ḥāfiẓ's "tale" (*fasāna*) induces great sadness. Here the audience is invited to look back at the poem as a narrative, despite its disconnectedness. The audience, in other words, having been taken through a series of disparate images, now becomes encouraged to see those images united *not* by common theme, but by the speaker's lived narrative.[30] This is not to say that the poem conveys *one* story, but rather that an ongoing story, one experienced by but not limited to the persona, inheres in the perennial vicissitudes of love.

27 The Prophet Muḥammad's companion Abū Yaḥyā Ṣuḥayb b. Sinān b. Mālik (who died 32 years after the Hijra) is known for his asceticism, perhaps because he famously relinquished all of his acquired wealth to undertake the migration to join the Prophet in Medina.

28 An allusion to the Quranic account of Moses, specifically in 28:30.

29 Ḥāfiẓ, Dīwān, 382, ghazal no. 183. To illustrate the *qāfiya*-and-*radīf*, the first *bayt* reads: *marā bi rindī u ʿishq ān fuḍūl ʿayb kunad / ki iʿtirāḍ bar asrār-i ʿilm-i ghayb kunad*.

30 One meaning of the word *ḥāfiẓ* is "minstrel" or "story-teller," and it seems that Ḥāfiẓ sometimes—although not often—engages this meaning of the word. See Hillmann,

2 Evocative Disconnectedness

The very gaps that Ḥāfiẓ leaves, the disconnected nature of his lines, calls the reader's mind to be active in its search for sense and even narrative. Michael Hillmann remarks that, in both a certain poem of Ḥāfiẓ's as well as the haiku genre, "the reader's impression of having experienced poetic effects—which are obviously symptoms of the success of the poems—depends, among other things, upon the economy, directness, specificity of focus, and integrity of the compositions and the integration of every separable element or aspect of them into a whole."[31] Even if unity is not present in the ghazal, each ghazal is experienced as one statement, connected not only through rhyme and meter, but through any common associations made to bind those images together. Much the way haiku poetry says so much by saying so little, Ḥāfiẓ's disconnected lines leave a world of meanings between them. This is not to say that the poem can be interpreted howsoever the reader wishes; many of the place-names, persons, and other references are specific in the works of Ḥāfiẓ. But since the overall story is in all actuality nonexistent, it becomes individualized for every reader to some extent—certain elements remain constant, but the overall received picture varies:

> O Lord, that fresh and laughing rose you trusted me to keep,
> I kindly will return to you, for I fear the garden's envy.
> And though she moved one-hundred blocks away from Faithful Street,
> I pray the zodiac's abuse far from her soul, her body;[32]

Michael C., *Unity in the Ghazals of Hafez*, Minneapolis and Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1976, 132. James Morris has traced the Quranic meanings of the poet's penname, including references to God and His attributes, the story of Yūsuf/Joseph, and spiritual individuality. See "Transfiguring Love: Perspective Shifts and the Contextualization of Experience in the *Ghazal*s of Ḥāfiẓ," in Leonard Lewisohn (ed.), *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010, 227–250, here 228–230.

31 Hillmann, *Unity in the Ghazals of Hafez*, 34.

32 From a literary historical perspective, the age of Persian poetry in which Ḥāfiẓ lived was that of the young male beloved, as Dominic Parviz Brookshaw has noted. For that reason I have used third person singular masculine pronouns for most translations. This poem, however, has mixed references, both to Salmā (a famous female beloved of Arabic poetry) and to the *khaṭṭ* (the "cheek-fuzz" or first growth of facial hair on the youthful male beloved). To avoid confusion, because of the appearance of a female name, I have used female pronouns in this translation. Still, as Fatemeh Keshavarz has noted, ambiguous personal pronouns in Persian have the effect of placing "less of an emphasis on the gender of the beloved." Partly, this can be "to keep the divine nature of the beloved as a strong possibility," but such ambiguity is also—both for the poet Sa'dī (d. ca. 690/1291) studied in

and you, East Wind, might come upon that door of Salmā's home,
so send a word, salaam, to her—I have hopes of this greeting.
Then gentlemanly open up that brunette braid perfumed,
but carefully, for in it dwell dear hearts of fragile seating,
and say, "My heart deserves from your mole and cheek-fuzz loyalty,
so keep it with respect and in those fragrant locks of splendor."
When minds think of her lips, and are drinking to their memory,
wretched is the drunkard who still on himself does ponder.
Neither wealth and neither honor at the tavern's door is garnered,
for the one who drinks this water throws his baggage to the sea.
Love's pain is unpermitted for one timid to be wearied,
so let my lip lie in her mouth or let my head lie by her feet.
These poems of Ḥāfiẓ are verse of profoundest understanding,
Applaud his breath, heart-swaying, and his eloquence, a blessing.[33]

Images fly past the reader—an endangered rose, a house often visited, a tavern filled with the heart-broken—but the connections are purposefully absent. Each couplet above brings a new unresolved idea, and any insight gleaned concerning the beloved or the narrative of love peeks out from behind the speaker's monologue, the presentation of his views on being a lover. Ḥāfiẓ is not telling a story, at least not in the traditional sense of the word; he is rather *failing* to tell a story, and yet here, as he so often does, Ḥāfiẓ celebrates his eloquence. Of course, in the Classical Persian lyric, as in much of lyric generally, eloquence and coherent narrative have nothing to do with one another. Is it possible instead, however, that eloquence is found in *in*coherent narrative? Certainly, the emphatic appreciation of Ḥāfiẓ's poetry would make it seem so. In comparing a ghazal of Ḥāfiẓ with a *qaṣīda* of a Syrian poet of the ʿAbbasid period, Abū Tammām Ḥabīb b. Aws (d. 231/845), Julie Scott Meisami highlights the compactness of meaning in the poetry of Ḥāfiẓ, one resulting in part from the terseness of the ghazal form, but also from a density and ambiguity that seems to inhere particularly in Ḥāfiẓ's style:

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her work and for his later admirer Ḥāfiẓ studied here—"a productive moment," when that gender remains unclear. In some poems, because of certain male or female image cues, the gender is in the foreground, while in others it is beyond ambiguous: it is mixed. Even when male, the beloved in Ḥāfiẓ's poetry is most often an androgynous youngster, that is, with both feminine and masculine traits. See Brookshaw, Dominic Parviz. *Hafiz and His Contemporaries: Poetry, Performance and Patronage in Fourteenth-Century Iran*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2019, 125–129. See also Keshavarz, *Lyrics of Life: Sa'di on Love, Cosmopolitanism and Care of the Self*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015, 145.

33 Ḥāfiẓ, *Dīwān*, 566, ghazal no. 275.

> So we cannot understand Ḥāfiẓ's line (as we can Abū Tammām's) on the basis of what it *says*, because if taken as a simple statement, it does not actually *say* very much. It *implies* very much, as of course does Abū Tammām's line; but while the implications of the latter are latent in the wording (and will be worked out explicitly in the course of the poem), with Ḥāfiẓ we must go through, or beyond, the words to discover the meaning of this lapidary line and its relation to the remainder of the ghazal. … [W]ith Arabic, one needs to get *into* the language, the *lafẓ*, in order to reach the *maʿnā* [meaning]; with Persian, one needs to go *beyond* it.[34]

This technique of leaving out connections seems to be one, according to Robert Penn Warren, that heightens the lyrical drive of a poem or, in Warren's terminology, is *more purely* poetic; he argues that "the pure poem tries to be pure by excluding, more or less rigidly, certain elements which might qualify or contradict its original impulse."[35] Warren sees the issue as one of pure versus impure poetry, while Frederick Pottle, a critic whom Warren mentions in order to contrast their understandings, sees the issue of gaps more in terms of prosaic poetry versus poetic poetry.[36] Both seem to agree, however, that the poetic voice thrives at times on exclusion, exclusion of the very connections that prose must usually include and elaborate on. In many of Ḥāfiẓ's poems, the hidden narrative voice excludes such connections even more than usual, employing meaningful images, making it a quintessentially poetic effect, but also one that heightens the contrast between comprehension and poetry. In this poem, not only are the images disconnected, but the beloved too is protean. In one instance (s)he is Salmā—a legendary female beloved of Arabic literature. In another, she (now he) attracts through "cheek-fuzz" (*khaṭṭ*), usually associated with beautiful young men. The lack of consistency indicates that Ḥāfiẓ's audience should appreciate an overall effect, rather than a specified or unified story, the beloved as archetype rather than as a definite or historically-bound person. Indeed, the poem itself is bound by topoi, archetypal figures and themes—discussed through scenes of action as opposed to stasis. The beloved can be imagined "moving," the wind "opening," the lover "throwing," all revolving around the emotional gravitational pull of the speaker. While pained, weak, and frustrated, the speaker and his experience are at the center of everything.

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34 Meisami, Julie Scott, *Structure and meaning in medieval Arabic and Persian poetry: Orient pearls*, London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003, 429. Emphases are the author's.

35 Warren, "Pure and Impure Poetry," in James L. Calderwood and Harold E. Toliver (eds.), *Perspectives on Poetry*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1968, 69–92, here 80.

36 Warren, "Pure and Impure Poetry," 82.

Disconnectedness is also a technique that mimics memory itself. Memory, as is commonly experienced, draws forth images in a manner lacking order or causality. Ḥāfiẓ's poetry uses disconnectedness such that the audience sometimes seems to experience—as closely as possible—the speaker's encounter with memory. Three poems from Ḥāfiẓ's *dīwān* revolve around the word *mapurs* ("do not ask"), a formula that allows for a dramatic scene hinting at narrative; indeed, words meaning "story" or "tale" are strikingly common in this set of poems.[37] Yet this poem, more than the other two, gives a sense of a storyline, but with the disconnected glances of perspective that are typical of memory:

> The pains of love I have so suffered that—do not ask!
> The dregs of disunion I have so tasted that—do not ask!
> Traveled I have throughout the world, and in the end
> a heart-taker I have chosen who—do not ask!
> Yearning for the dust before his doorstep
> the teardrops so flow from my eyes that—do not ask.
> In my own ear from his mouth last night I
> listened to words from him that—do not ask.
> Why do you bite your lip at me to say "do not tell"?
> A ruby lip I have bitten that—do not ask.
> Without you within this beggar's cabin of mine
> such tortures I have suffered that—do not ask.
> Like that Ḥāfiẓ, the poor stranger on the path of love,
> I have arrived at such a place that—do not ask.[38]

Here, by hinting at impassioned details while proclaiming "do not ask," the speaker explicitly restricts his audience's access to the narrative implied in the poem. Yet, ironically, he insists on revealing himself, despite his awareness that these things cannot be expressed ("do not ask" is a hyperbolic formula akin to "it cannot be explained in words"), and despite the reminder—from a listener the speaker addresses as though present—that these things *should* not be revealed, a reminder vividly depicted as the disapproving biting of the lip by the listener. The images Ḥāfiẓ presents here do form a vaguely discernable

37 In ghazal no. 264, we see: "Do not ask about the happening [or what occurred] (*mā jarā*)," as well as, "Ask the candle about the story (*qiṣṣa*)—do not ask the East Wind." In ghazal no. 266, we see: "Do not ask us of anything but the tale (*ḥikāyat*) of love and loyalty," as well as, "(S)he said / Ḥāfiẓ, this story (*qiṣṣa*) is long, for the Quran's good sake, please don't ask." See Ḥāfiẓ, *Dīwān*, 544 and 548.

38 Ḥāfiẓ, *Dīwān*, 546, ghazal no. 265.

narrative: the speaker has traveled, fallen in love, pined in an unrequited manner, and enjoyed intimacy. The poem also gives us some sense of time: last night (when he spoke to the beloved), now (as he confesses and longs), and the past (when he came to be a lover). Moreover, the poem begins in the now, using a present perfect tense (*kishīda am*, "I have suffered") throughout the poem. Therefore, the entirety of the poem is memory, and appears to its audience just as memories do: instantaneous scenes that arise and vary with the unpredictable movements of emotion. Within this implied narrative, interestingly, there is reference to the narrative of "Ḥāfiẓ," the poet himself. The speaker mentions the poet as if he were a famous or perhaps infamous character. This is a rarer use of the penname that appears in a ghazal's *takhalluṣ* (signature hemistich, ordinarily the last), which usually corresponds to the speaker himself and not a separate speaker.[39] Ultimately, in many of his poems, Ḥāfiẓ is indeed a storyteller, and if his method lacks chronology or logical sequence, it does so to tell a more experientially-accurate story, a story unfettered by the restrictions of one individual narrative, or—to use Ḥāfiẓ's words—a narrative that is the "story of love" itself.[40]

3 Bewildering Beginnings

One characteristic of Ḥāfiẓ's greatest poems, although (like all characteristics mentioned in this essay) not a necessary one, is the mysterious opening line, a technique seen in each of Ḥāfiẓ's poems cited thus far. Many poets take advantage of the first line, whether through shocking the reader, or beginning in the middle of their particular bind or story—but beginning abruptly or strangely, a practice that abounds in lyric poetry, differs from that found in Ḥāfiẓ. Ḥāfiẓ, in his opening lines, often strikes a perfect balance between subtlety and strangeness. There is a delicate but essential difference between confusing the reader and bewildering him or her, between shocking the reader and awakening the reader's curiosity. In English poetry, a fine example of this would be William Blake's "The Rose," where he begins with an address that combines words in a strange fashion, one that seems quite foreign to the reader:

39 See Hillmann, *Unity in the Ghazals of Hafez*, 135–137, for a discussion of these lines. For the many functions of the Persian *takhalluṣ*, see Paul E. Losensky, "Linguistic and Rhetorical Aspects of the Signature Verse (Takhalluṣ) in the Persian *Ghazal*," in *Edebiyât* 8 (1998), 239–271.

40 This phrase appears in the *dīwān* in various forms. Cited throughout this paper are two examples: *ḥadīth-i 'ishq* as well as *ḥikāyat-i mihr u wafā*.

O Rose, Thou art sick.

Sometimes, when the reader looks for the answer in the second line, or even in the third, or fourth, a more bewildering statement is presented. Blake's poem adds mystery to mystery with its next few succeeding lines:

O Rose, Thou art sick.
The invisible worm
That flies in the night
In the howling storm

The relationship between the speaker and the rose has some unknown history —he seems to be a sympathetic advisor to the rose; moreover, the images do not directly answer the question at first, and instead present an image intimating a story larger and more darkly magical than what is stated. Similarly, Ḥāfiẓ's use of the mysterious first distich, in one of his most famous poems, ably evokes narrative. Like Blake's poem, Ḥāfiẓ's ghazal begins with direct address, but to someone other than the audience—such disorientating apostrophe is common in Ḥāfiẓ's poetry. Less common is his use of Arabic (for the first hemistich) and Persian (for the second hemistich) in one poem, a technique not exclusive to Ḥāfiẓ, but for which Ḥāfiẓ—in this one distich—is more famous than any other Persian poet. Moreover, the second hemistich assumes that one has immediately understood the first; it begins with the word *ki* or "since":

O you, wine-server, pass that brimming cup and hand it down,
since love so easy seemed at first, but what trials have fallen now.[41]

It is as if the speaker presents a logical argument, the first half in one language, and the second half in another; if the reader has not understood completely the first, Arabic half (and most even educated Persian speakers I have questioned seem not to understand the first line, at least not word-for-word) then the second, Persian half is even more confusing, since it speaks to a listener presumed

41 Ḥāfiẓ, *Dīwān*, 18, ghazal no. 1. The first *bayt* in question reads: *A lā yā ayyuhā-l-sāqī adir ka'san wa nāwil-hā / ki 'ishq āsān nimūd awwal walī uftād mushkil-hā*. (Most translations miss the fact that *ka's*, unlike *qadaḥ*, usually refers to a filled cup.) The first *misrā'* of that *bayt*, in Arabic, according to legend, comes from the *dīwān* of the morally degenerate caliph Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya (d. 64/683), made infamous for murdering the righteous grandson of the Prophet, al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī (d. 61/680). Meisami traces this ascription and offers a sensitive commentary on this poem in *Structure and meaning in medieval Arabic and Persian poetry: Orient pearls*, 418–430.

to understand. Understanding of the second line, because of the logical conjunction "since," depends on the first. Of course, the two lines have the same meter and end-rhyme, despite their language dissimilarity, making the musical connection between them stronger and thus the lack of sense or immediate connection more evident. Ḥāfiẓ also ends the second hemistich on an Arabic loan word with a Persian, rather than naturally Arabic, plural form; this makes the two lines a strange, but powerful, linguistic-poetic feat, as if the speaker's desperation supersedes the boundaries of language. Even if a listener understood Arabic as effortlessly as Persian, as some in Ḥāfiẓ's original audience may have, the mere switching of languages brings confusion or at least mild puzzlement. Here the poet kindles a bewildered curiosity in the reader, then presents the body of the poem as the reader experiences curious sympathy instead of content comprehension. A perusal of the ghazals in Ḥāfiẓ's *dīwān* illustrates that the poet uses the bewildering first distich quite often.

4 The Universe Forgotten

Usually whatever "story" Ḥāfiẓ's speaker recounts in his poem has already happened; the audience must be reminded, but neither they nor the speaker are concerned with clarity. The effect of Ḥāfiẓ's hidden narrative is to provide precisely this sense of a lost story. Here the speaker continually refers to things we do not know, but should; as if the events, places, and people of the lyric are universally important and acknowledged, but the reader has simply forgotten them. For example, it is common for Ḥāfiẓ to use demonstrative adjectives or possessive pronouns that refer to unknown things; he will modify places, objects, and people with the word "that," as if we should already know who "that" Turkish boy is, or where "that" corner of the garden lies. Sometimes he refers to objects or emotions as belonging to a certain "him" or perhaps "her," but the actual him or her is missing from the poem entirely. Often, as in the poem above, he uses third-person plural verbs, referring to an undefined "they," which—of course—can correspond to a passive tense verb, but nevertheless leaves things mysteriously ill-defined. To a reader who demands sense, this can be very stressful—hence the debates surrounding Ḥāfiẓ and the unity (or lack thereof) in his ghazals.[42] But to a reader who desires to achieve a certain state

42 This is a key concern in Michael C. Hillmann's *Unity in the Ghazals of Hafez*, where the background of this debate is provided, especially 8–27. A review of the pertinent literature can be found in an article by Frances W. Pritchett, in which he further questions the notion that unity can be sought in the ghazal genre as a whole. See "Orient Pearls Unstrung: The

of otherworldliness, this can be very effective. Ḥāfiẓ often makes such allusions without specifying his listener, although the breeze at times serves the role of audience:

> Mild breeze of morning joy! To the betokened place you know
> pass the alley of So-and-so at that time, the time you know.
> You are the envoy of secrets' seclusions—my eyes lie in your wait:
> There's no command here. Just your humanity. Please glide the way you know.
> Tell him that my fragile soul has died. And that for dearest God
> he should, from those ruby lips life-giving, spare that which you know.[43]

The address (the "betokened" or signified place), the identity of the beloved, and the arranged time have universal significance, so much so that the breeze and the audience (which are one and the same here) are expected to know them. In fact, the audience is always expected to *know* in the poems of Ḥāfiẓ, often on the receiving end of a secret or confession. Here, in the poem's last line, Ḥāfiẓ calls that secret the "report of passionate love" (*ḥadīth-i ʿishq*), which underlines that the overall story has a yearning, one yearned for, and one who yearns, but the poet always maintains a sense of secrecy and mysteriousness, even in this evocative and weighty phrase. Ḥāfiẓ's poetry calls out to the forgetfulness of the reader—there is an evoked story that has somehow been wiped out. At times, even the speaker seems not to remember:

> Openly I state and I am overjoyed to say it:
> I am a slave to Love and unshackled by both worlds.
> A bird from the holy rose-garden I am—how to explain severance?
> How explain the way I fell into this net of accidents?
> I was once an angel, and for this the Garden was my place,
> It was Adam who moved my habitat to this ruined tavern-convent.
> The shade of Ṭūbā-tree, houri's allure, bank of purest pond,[44]

Quest for Unity in the Ghazal," *Edebiyât* 4 (1993), 119–135.

43 Ḥāfiẓ, *Dīwān*, 950, ghazal no. 467. The theme of the hopefulness of dawn appears here. As Franklin Lewis has discussed, this is a major theme in Ḥāfiẓ's poetry, referenced in around twenty percent of the poet's ghazals (90 ghazals), such that Lewis labels the dawn "a significant semiotic horizon." See Lewis, Franklin. "The Semiotic Horizons of Dawn in the Poetry of Ḥāfiẓ," in Leonard Lewisohn (ed.), *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, New York, I.B. Tauris, 2010, 251–278, here 266.

44 Ṭūbā appears in many Prophetic narrations as a tree in Paradise and is tied to a verse in the Quran (13:29).

all wiped out of my memory in my yearning to see your alleyway.
Inscribed on my heart's tablet is the *alif* of my lover's stature.
What can I do? For my teacher never taught me other letters.
The star that rules my life eludes every single astrologer.
Lord! Beneath what rising sign did this world give birth to me?
Once I fastened, at Love's tavern, the earring of the enslaved,
every breath brought newer sorrow to this blessed enterprise.
My eyes—filled with a broken heart's blood, which I deserve,
for why did I give my heart to one loved by everyone?
With the end-tips of your locks wipe the tears off Ḥāfiẓ's face,
Otherwise this constant flood will wash away my understructure.[45]

The speaker claims that his memories of his original abode—Paradise—have disappeared because of his intense and concentrated longing for the beloved. Yet the descriptions of this Paradise point to fragments of memory and a story of exile. Ironic tension exists in the speaker's statement that, because of his absorption in love-longing, he has little desire to return to his primordial, elevated state—he is free from the desire for this world and the next. While he claims happiness, he is also deeply grieved, as captured by the poem's concluding distich. Love-longing and separation, while the highest form of being known by the speaker, are also painful—pain is an inherent part of the path the speaker has chosen.

5 Subtle Elements of Hidden Narrative

Even for those reading erotic references literally, Ḥāfiẓ's poetry stimulates a sort of nostalgia, whether for something concretely in the past or for past remembrances vague and undefined. Indeed, a panoptic view of Arabic and Persian literary history indicates that devotionally-informed reactions to "profane" poetry

45 Ḥāfiẓ, *Dīwān*, 636, ghazal no. 310. As Muḥammad Isti'lāmī points out, the sorrows brought to Ḥāfiẓ's "blessed enterprise" are meant to be ironic, but also to indicate the felicity of enduring pains on the path of love, a key theme in Sufi theories of love. *Dars-i Ḥāfiẓ: naqd wa sharḥ-i ghazal-hā-yi Ḥāfiẓ*, second edition, two volumes, Tehran: Sukhan, 2004 [1383 SH], vol. 2, 817, *bayt* 6, ghazal no. 317 (since Isti'lāmī's numbering differs from that in the Khānlurī edition). Mohammed Rustom discusses the draws of the pains of love for God, within the context of the Persian Sufi figure 'Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī (d. 526/1131), in his "Theo-fānī: 'Ayn al-Quḍāt and the Fire of Love," in Bilal Orfali, Atif Khalil, and Mohammed Rustom (eds.), *Mysticism and Ethics in Islam*, Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 2022, 129–137.

gave birth to the genres of Sufi literature. In other words, the genres of Sufi poetic production and interpretation stem from literary experiences felt by all but given profound meaning by meditative insight and intuition.[46] In this manner, the poetry of ʿUmar b. ʿAlī b. al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1235), for example, looks back at the earthly *nasīb* tradition not to reinterpret the tradition but rather only to add spiritual complexity. The nostalgic effect of the *nasīb* brings blatantly Sufi, ambiguously Sufi, and non-Sufi poets to adopt its techniques, recalling forgotten names and places, such that Ibn al-Fāriḍ, according to Jaroslav Stetkevych, embellishes a certain poem with "evocative names that one would not expect to find except in a *nasīb*, names charged with unmistakable, warm nostalgic feeling that can lead only back into memories, names to which one *returns* in thought rather than journeys to in fact."[47]

The greatest Sufi thinkers, in fact, have often indicated that something akin to nostalgia plays an important part in the phenomenon known as *shuhūd*, the perceptive encounter with God's self-disclosures, an encounter that can be translated as "witnessing." Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d, 465/1072), ʿAyn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī, Rūzbihān b. Abī Naṣr al-Baqlī (d. 606/1209), Muḥyī al-Dīn b. ʿArabī (d. 638/1240), Fakhr al-Dīn Ibrāhīm b. Buzurjmihr ʿIrāqī (d. 688/1289), and others, have all indicated this common experience, with some variations among them.[48] First, the aspiring knower (or, more literally," recognizer," *ʿārif*) undergoes an unmentionable and incomprehensible unveiling, where God discloses Himself directly to the heart. This unbounded experience is often sudden and sometimes short-lived. What follows, however, is the aspiring recognizer's long-term interaction with that unveiling, wherein he or she enjoys seeing that unveiling in the surrounding world, often even through physical forms. Objects of vision, especially beautiful ones, remind the aspiring recognizer of that unbounded experience that has left its mark on the heart. Memory, since it is filtered through human senses and imagination, is comprehendible, unlike that original off-putting experience of unveiling. Thus, since

46 Ibn ʿArabī describes this aesthetic process in detail. See Zargar, "The Poetics of Shuhūd."

47 See Stetkevych, *The Zephyrs of Najd: The Poetics of Nostalgia in the Classical Arabic Nasīb*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1993, 88. Julie Scott Meisami, in reaction to Stetkevych's book, argues that readings of the *nasīb* must remain grounded in their original linguistic-historical context. Meisami also considers these nostalgic effects in classical Persian poetry. See "Places in the Past: The Poetics/Politics of Nostalgia," in *Edebiyât* 8 (1998), 63–106.

48 Memory and even nostalgia inform Sufi theories of beauty, as Kazuyo Murata discusses in the case Rūzbihān, who traces human admiration of beauty to a memory of God's beauty from the *Yawm Alast*, or Day of the Covenant (Quran 7:172). See *Beauty in Sufism: The Teachings of Rūzbihān Baqlī*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2017, 88.

it is comprehendible and brings the recognizer closer to the divine beloved, this vision of memory is sweet, enjoyable, and comparable only to what lovers undergo when remembering their beloveds in longing, separation, pain, and yet a pain that is sought and defines their existence. In this way, the memory of the beloved is far sweeter than the beloved's actual overwhelming presence. Awakening nostalgia for the beloved seems to be the most pleasurable element in Ḥāfiẓ's poetry and, moreover, corresponds to the pleasure found in the Sufi appreciation of erotic verse. While the poem quoted above might seem explicitly Sufi, clearly Ḥāfiẓ shows a subversive lack of interest in the sacred; his preoccupations with the beloved have turned him away from the Paradise sought by the pious. Of course, disinterest in the rewards of the afterlife is commonly expressed among pious Muslim writers. Yet it is not simply correspondence in theme that has aroused an unusual appreciation among the Sufi-inclined. Ḥāfiẓ is both quoted and revered among Sufi readers despite any real difference in terms of meaning separating him from other Persian poets. Valued for their sheer beauty, in part a result of perfected stylistic achievements, the poems of Ḥāfiẓ also receive praise, as we have seen, for a quality that cannot be measured or studied, neither the craft of verse, nor the art of rhetoric, but rather something wholly experienced. While, in reading Ḥāfiẓ, contemplative Sufism sometimes seems to reduce the complexity of a certain poetic image to an esoteric term, I would argue that this method of interpretation reflects something more complex: namely, a parallel between unspeakable visionary experience and the lover's sublime experience in Ḥāfiẓ's poetry. Seemingly allegorical readings actually point to an aesthetic appreciation colored by visionary experience, something the spiritually-initiated reader perceives in the poem that awakens what he or she has perceived in witnessing divine beauty. This might point to ways in which experiencing poetry (more generally) and experiencing visionary encounters with God converge: Both rely on memory, as has been discussed by Oludamini Ogunnaike. To make this point, Ogunnaike draws from the philosopher Abhinavagupta's (d. 1016) conception of *rasa*, or the blissful feeling provoked by encountering artistic beauty, which produces "an aesthetic experience that opens up onto universal consciousness of the divine Self."[49]

Yet narrative itself—again, the soul's narrative from its divine origin to its agonizing struggle for return—also plays an important part in Muslim devo-

49 Ogunnaike, Oludamini, "The Logic of the Birds: Poetry and Poetic Knowledge," in *Renovatio* (Spring 2022), https://renovatio.zaytuna.edu/article/the-logic-of-the-birds (last accessed 31 August 2022). He expands on this idea within the specific context of West African Sufi poetry in *Poetry in Praise of Prophetic Perfection: A Study of West African Arabic* Madīḥ *Poetry and its Precedents*, Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 2020.

tional appreciations of poetry.[50] The spirit constantly longs for its origin and strives to return, and those attuned to the spirit (namely the recognizers or *ʿurafāʾ*) are painfully aware of this. Examples of this abound not only in Sufi literature overall, but also more specifically in Persian Sufi poetry, particularly that of Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, the reed image that begins his *Mathnawī-i Maʿnawī* being perhaps the most well-known metaphor for such memory from his corpus. According to Rūmī's metaphor and a common interpretation of Quran 7:172, a verse alluded to by Ḥāfiẓ himself, the human soul has been imprinted with the knowledge of its pre-eternal divine origin and constantly and woefully longs for reunion.[51] Ali Hassan Abdel-Kader, writing in the context of the great Sufi forefather Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd b. Muḥammad al-Baghdādī (d. ca. 298/910), notes that memory for the recognizer's union with the divine awakens this sense of nostalgia, such that when the recognizer of God "sees something beautiful in this world, his longing will be awakened and he will feel both joy and sadness."[52] References to the recorded memory of the spirit—and a memory of its narrative of descent—can also be found in the writings of Najm al-Dīn al-Rāzī Dāya, whom, as mentioned before, Ḥāfiẓ seems to have read. Dāya comments that "as the spirit passed through the worlds of Kingship and Dominion on its way to join the bodily frame, it retained a memory of all that it beheld."[53]

In his discussion of beauty, Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Daylamī (fl. 363/974), a philosophically-inclined Sufi, presents the phenomenon of beauty as one of creational memory, in that all beautiful entities in the perceivable world have their source either in the beauty of Adam or that of Paradise.[54]

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50 Seyyed Hossein Nasr offers a detailed description of the "narrative of the soul" theme in Sufi poetry in two consecutive articles, "From Poem to Narrative in Sufism," *Sufi*: *A Journal of Sufism* 1, no. 2 (Spring 1989), 6–10 and no. 3 (Autumn 1989), 5–11.

51 See the poet's concluding hemistich *jāmī zi may-yi a-last gīrad* in ghazal no. 144: *yāram chū qadaḥ bi dast gīrad / bāzār-i butān shikast gīrad*. Ḥāfiẓ, *Dīwān*, 305.

52 Abdel-Kader reminds us that, according to al-Junayd, after achieving a certain state of unveiling on the path to knowing God, "the soul will seek for sights of beauty and aesthetic accomplishment in this world," a phenomenon that the author compares to "many of the most beautiful pages in classical Persian poetry" which spring from the "spiritual refinement of the soul," as well as "its longing for the beautiful." See Ali Hassan Abdel-Kader. *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd*, London: Luzac, E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Series, 1976, 92. For the quotation in question, see 113.

53 See Najm al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *The Path of God's Bondsmen from Origin to Return*, translated by Hamid Algar, North Haledon, New Jersey: Islamic Publications International, 1980, 269.

54 Both are described as *shāhid*s (testimony-places): Adam, who God created in His own image, and Paradise, which God adorned with His own beauty. The beauty of these two testimonies to divine perfection then descended on all things, resulting in two beauties:

Of course, nostalgic depictions of human and paradisal beauty play an important (if not primary) role in the poetry of Ḥāfiẓ, as has been seen.[55] The notion that these varieties of beauty are *recognized* as opposed to *seen* indicates that Muslim devotional appreciation of art, especially poetry, will favor the evocative over the intelligible. Considering the tendency that intensified among Sufis after Ibn ʿArabī to re-read all amorous poetry as esoteric in signification, it is not surprising that Ḥāfiẓ came to be claimed by Sufis as one of their own.

Even outside of the Sufi tradition or any particular mystical allegiance, the language exists to discuss the hidden narrative effect in profound terms. The notion of the "sublime," for example, blurs the lines drawn between language and being. Mats Malm's "On the Technique of the Sublime" focuses on the importance of the imaginative faculty and presents Longinus' definition of *phantasia* as a predecessor to the "fancy" or "imagination" that a pre-romantic or romantic poet must command. The ability to express great thoughts (or to conceive them) is certainly a prerequisite to expressing the sublime in hidden narrative, but this discussion concerns more centrally the inability to express great thoughts, not because of a lack of artistic or rhetorical ability, but because of the perceived magnitude of those thoughts. More fitting is A.C. Bradley's lecture on the sublime presented at Oxford in the early twentieth century. After defining the sublime numerous times, he explains the word, perhaps most appropriately for our subject, in its relationship to beauty:

> The sublime is the beautiful which has immeasurable, incomparable, or infinite greatness. … The greatness is only sometimes immeasurable, but it is *always* unmeasured.[56]

According to Bradley, the sublime "has been said to awake in us the consciousness of our own infinity."[57] The notion of awakening memory of a collective human forgotten past through language also exists outside of Islamic spiri-

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"one being animal, corporeal, and spiritual, and the other being inanimate and vegetable." Any lack of beauty seen in the world around us results from deterioration; that is, entities in this world lack beauty to the extent that they are removed from God's two original *shāhid*s. See ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Daylamī, *ʿAṭf al-alif al-maʾlūf ʿalā al-lām al-maʿṭūf*, ed. Joseph Norment Bell and Hassan Mahmood Abdul Latif Al Shafie, Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-Miṣrī, 2007, 20.

55 Human beauty and garden imagery interact and even often coincide in both the Arabic and Persian poetic traditions. See Julie Scott Meisami, "The Body as Garden: Nature and Sexuality in Persian Poetry," in *Edebiyât* 6, no. 2 (1995), 245–274.

56 Bradley, A.C., *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*, London: Macmillan, 1959, 59.

57 Bradley, *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*, 59.

tual psychologies. In his discussion on the interrelation between riddle and metaphor, Andrew Welsh alludes to an idea of man's having forgotten the original names for what surrounds him. Mankind, in the Hebrew Biblical tradition, once knew the correct names of all animals, but lives in a time disconnected to this original innate understanding. With, however, the right riddle, the right metaphor, the boundary between the then and the now can vanish:

> All our languages, post-Eden and post-Babel as they are, still seem to carry memories of that old dream, teasing us from time to time with hints of the lost clarity and unbroken connections of Adam's vision.[58]

The reader knows that what she encounters tells her of a love she had long ago, before she was born, or a place visited in a dream. It awakens the infinite in the reader's own life story.

6 Conclusions

Poetry does do more than simply communicate messages; the poet does indeed bring the reader a verbal message, but can also bring realization and a sense of something almost transcendent. Hidden narrative effects such a sense in the reader, and seems to intend in fact only to arouse a sense of something, not the something itself. It is proof that, even when it comes to narrative, more can be said than what is said, and, indeed, more can be said when less is said. Speculations that Ḥāfiẓ was a committed Sufi or renunciant knower-recognizer of God, someone whose poetry related ecstatic states of love for the divine, give a potential motivation for writing in a hidden narrative style, but one that need not be overemphasized for the sake of this discussion. Certainly, the divine story in Islamic thought, the story of God's creation of man, His purposeful separation from him, and His eventual reunion with him, is a story that anyone including Ḥāfiẓ would see as greater than humanity itself, one that could never be expressed in the human vocabulary. But, interestingly, even if Ḥāfiẓ's poems are taken as those of a libertine,[59] inklings of an infinitely grand story persist. Some of the techniques of this effect have been elaborated, but the real

58 Welsh, Andrew, *Roots of Lyric*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978, 25.

59 As an example, Jan Rypka is one of many who makes such an argument. See *The History of Iranian Literature*, Dorderecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1968, 269. The debate about Ḥāfiẓ's libertine-versus-mystical affiliations is covered in detail by Franklin Lewis, "Hafez viii., Hafez and Rendi," in *EIr*.

reasons for it have not and, at least for the sake of this discussion, cannot here, since they lie within the mind of the reader. (Perhaps the growing field of cognitive poetics is better equipped to search for the mechanisms behind what I have called "hidden narrative."[60])

It can be said, though, that hidden narrative highlights the human tendency to make associations and connections precisely where they are lacking. The gaps and disconnections in hidden narrative trigger readers to create human connections and even universal ones, so that, if images and lines are disconnected properly, no coherent story can say as much. Every story heard or read and every experience lived can be evoked and brought back to the reader; or, perhaps more accurately, the reader is brought back to it, to the entirety of "story" as he or she knows it. As memories once lost are enkindled, whether from the mysterious days of childhood, the dramatic ones of early adulthood, or the significant ones of later life, and as they are colored by the enchanting world of fiction, the reader enters the realm of the inexpressible. The poet becomes a strangely familiar courier, inviting the reader to the banquet of the infinite story.

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60 The narrative phenomenon I have referred to here has certainly made use of what Peter Stockwell calls "frame switches," that is, replacing one unit of action, time, and space with another. See Stockwell, *Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction*, London: Routledge, 2002, 156–158.

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