The Wine Song in Classical Arabic Poetry

Abū Nuwās and the Literary Tradition

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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 Khalīsa, a concubine, with the following effusion: “Because written on this door my poetry hath gathered blight (dā‘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 dā‘a; the verse acquired a new and inverse sense: “Because written on this door my poetry has gathered light (dā‘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 Al-mad ‘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 Jāhiliyya; 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
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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 ẓ to sh. The conventions are familiar enough, I feel, to require no explanation.

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

Aléria

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P.K.
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This monograph has emerged from a study of classical Arabic wine poetry, from the earliest material in the Jähiliyya (‘Amr ibn Qam‘a, ‘Adi ibn Zayd, et al.) to the early ‘Abbāsid period. Its aim is fourfold: (i) to give an idea of the development of khmār 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 khmār, 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. 813/14). Since he is deemed by most literary historians to be the finest wine poet of the Arabic tradition, the continuum which can be traced serves

1 Khamr, throughout this book, refers to dhikr al-khamr or al-qaud fi ‘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).

2 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 Weinrichter schlechthin”; see also Sa‘īd, Ḥāwi, Benchekkh, 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 Literatur, i (Weimar, 1898), 73–7 (p. 76: “Unter seinen Gedichten nehmen die Weinlieder die erste Stelle ein. Er hat auf diesem Gebiet allerdings schon Vorgänger gehabt, die er nachahmte; vor allem scheint Welid b. Jezd und indirekt dessen Vorbild ‘Adi b. Zaid ihn beeinflusst zu haben.”); I. Pirzzi, 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), 192–6 (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.”); C. 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
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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 qiṣṣās and fragments).

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 ḥaḍīṣ (love). This, however, is not the only subject treated; for within the make-up of


1 Harb, and to a certain extent Benchelk, consider that these fragments of bacchic poetry—those of the early Islamic period—constitute khamsīyāt (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 CHALAB. See below, n. 41.

1 Ḥikma is not considered one of the major themes, genres, “ahārād” 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 khamsīr is informed by fakhr); and (iii) biha’, one of the major categories of poetry; it is a mood which informs bacchism in every period. Though considering wine in terms of nasīb/ḥaḍīṣ, ḥikma, and biha’ (antagonism) does not exhaust the contextual possibilities of this poetry, it nevertheless uncovers some of the most important layers of significance. 1

A standard view of the relationship between genres can be gleaned from the discussions of the medieval Arab literary theoreticians. None recognizes khamsīr (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 Trabulusi, Bonebakker, Heinrichs, and Schoeler. 4 Trabulusi divides the genres of Arabic poetry into four categories: “Le genre laudatif”; “Le genre satirique”; “La poésie légère”; and “Le genre descriptive”. 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,

1 The examination of khamsīr under the influence of ḥikma, nasīb/ḥaḍīṣ, and biha’/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-century Germany, to name but two. Carl Ortolf’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 forutum”—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).

though Trabulsi himself does not discuss the relationship between ghzal and khamr and their parallel development. Bonebakker’s overview highlights the absence of the new genres from the early ‘Abbāsid period: “It would be possible to ignore completely such genres as the Tardiyāt, the Khamriyyāt, the ‘Itāb and the Zubdiyyāt, genres that nevertheless sometimes had their roots in ancient poetry, only if one made a distinction between these and the older genres.” 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 . . .” 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. 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 lāhw as a category of poetry in Iṣḥāq b. Ibrāhīm’s Kitāb al-burhān fi wujūd al-bayān as an attempt to embrace “the most prominent mudāthāh genres: ghzal, ṭarād, shīf al-khamr and muṭḌ. 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.”

Schoeler has shown that some of the early diwān collators also recognised the mudāthāh genres. Significantly, the earliest diwān to have been arranged according to subject matter was that of Abū Nuwās.8 al-Ṣūfī (d. 946) arranged the diwān in the following manner: (1) Khamriyyāt (Wine poems); (2) Tardiyāt (Hunting poems); (3) Madiḥ (Éloge); (4) Hijā (Lampoon); (5) Mudhakkār (love poetry celebrating a male); (6) Mu‘annath (love poetry celebrating a female); (7) Mijā‘ (Licentiousness); (8) MūṭḌāḥ (poems of reproach); (9) Marāṭḥ (Elegies); (10) Zub (Homiletic poetry). Ḥamza al-‘Isfahānī (d. after 961) added to this list the nāqāḍīd and, further, rearranged the order into: (1) Nāqāḍīd (Flying); (2) Madiḥ; (3) Marāṭḥ; (4) ‘Itāb; (5) Hijā; (6) Zubdiyyāt; (7) Ṭarād; (8) Khamriyyāt; (9) Mu‘annath; (10) Mudhakkārāt; (11) Mijā‘ (Licentious poems). According to Ḥamza (quoted from Diwān Abū 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 lāhw and hazī.

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:9


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‘ṣa (st. bald nach 629) und al-Akal (st. um 710)—und erlischt selbst in der ’Abbāsidenausphon 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 lähmt sich daher zum ersten Mal eine Gliederung nach inhaltlichen Gesichtspunkten.”

10 Here Schoeler has sensed the influence of the above-mentioned Iṣḥāq b. Ibrāhīm; see ibid., 36: “Ḥamza hat denn auch sowohl den von Iṣḥāq eingeführten Oberbegriff lāhw . . . als auch dessen Unterteilungen übernommen.—Die Anordnung der einzelnen lāhwa-Gattungen läßt kein bestimmtes Prinzip erkennen.”

11 A similar though substantially more extensive account is given by Wagner in Grundzüge der klassischen arabischen Dichtung, vol. iii: Die arabische Dichtung in islamischer Zeit (Darmstadt, 1988), 34 ff.


14 For a brief discussion of this tradition see C. A. Nallino, *La littérature arabe*, transl. 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.

15 "Die Einteilung.“ 37–8. Translation: "Descriptions of wine and festive scenes have always existed in Arabic poetry. In *fâhâri* poetry the theme was normally treated in the context of the *qasīda*, and as such constituted either an element of *fâhâr*—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 *qasīda* survived intact in early Islamic and Umayyad poetry—the most celebrated names are the two Christians al-A'sā (d. soon after 639) and al-Ahrār (d. 672)—and by no means died out in 'Abbāsid poetry.

However, from an early stage along the bacchic scene within the *qasīda* there were also independent descriptions of wine in the *qasīda* form. The Christian poet 'Adi b. Zayd (d. 600) from Êhirat is supposed to have been the first poet to compose a large number of such independent *khānmiyyāt*. In early Islamic times above all Abū Mihjān (d. after 658) 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-Âghânī*—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,
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A related issue—wine’s role in the nasīb—is mentioned briefly in the summary of ḫālibi features: inna-hā (al-khamr) kānāt muqarrasatān fi majāli‘i l-qasā‘īdi ka-l-talal.13 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,14 whilst of Mālik b. Asmā‘ (d. 715), Ḥāwi writes: Wa-laqad talaqqā l-mar‘ata mutawabbidatā fi nafs-hi ma‘a l-khamrati, bi-ḥaythu yamtsazātī l-ṣī‘ā l-khamrati wa-l-ghazalī fi qasā‘i‘di-hi fa-nakādū là numayyizū idhā kāna yatta‘arradū li-l-mar‘ati ⁴‘abra l-khamrati aw li-l-khamrati ⁴‘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).15 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 ḫālibiyya as the “inserted statement” makes apparent its dependence on the other themes of the qasida: “with the elegiac poet Murāqqī al-Asghar . . . 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”.16 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.” Further, in a poem by Abū al-Masīḥ b. ‘Asala, also referred to by Bencheikh, khamr is not

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13 Ḥāwi, fann al-Sī‘r al-Khamrī, 228.
14 CHALABI, 223.
15 See ch. 3.
16 Fann al-Sī‘r al-Khamrī, 75. 17 Ibid. 138. 18 Ibid. 150.
19 Mutaddaliyyūt, No. 9, vv. 28–30. 20 See Appendix A.
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simply an inserted statement, as he suggests; rather it is the very object of satire.  

On the question of “scattered and corollary statements” versus “themes properly so-called” existing in an “established framework”, ‘Alqama b. ‘Abada⁷⁴ and the later mukhaddam poet ‘Abda b. al-Tabib⁷⁵ are adduced to demonstrate the latter—a framework variously encompassing nasib, fakhr, and wasaf. From the period of ‘Abda the poetry of al-A’sā furnishes ample evidence for positing a framework and repertoire of bacchic verse which “remains dependent on the major framework” of the qaṣīda.⁷⁶

It is in the context of the “precursors of al-Ḥira” that Bencheikh discusses bacchic expression in terms of the “existential attitude” which Ḥāwi has spoken of. Here only Ṭarafa, al-Aswana 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.⁷⁷

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-Khairījī⁷⁸ and al-Walid b. Yazīd: “the Bacchic inspiration is here very close to the amorous inspiration which predominates”.⁷⁹ This relationship between ghazal and khamr (in terms of imagery, theme, and poetic techniques) has been alluded to by Heinrichs elsewhere: “[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 mubādhābīn, particularly Abū Nuwās.”

⁷¹ See below, Ch. 1, “The Ḥāfiziyah”. ⁷² Mufaddalīyyah, No. 120, Vv. 39–45. ⁷³ Mufaddalīyyah, No. 26, Vv. 66–81. See also ʿIrāqī, Abū b. al-Ṭabīb, the Lāmiyyah, pp. 57–83. ⁷⁴ See Appendix A. ⁷⁵ See Ch. 2 and Appendix A. ⁷⁶ “Khamriyya”, 1002. ⁷⁷ See Appendix A. ⁷⁸ “Literary Theory”, 24.

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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-Ahwās—a love poet in whose diwān there are no surviving traces of wine poetry.⁸⁰ 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.” Bencheikh farther discusses this particular aspect in a final section on “relations within frameworks”. The most significant suggestion—applicable only to the early ’Abbāsid 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.”⁸¹

About ʿIrāqī bacchism Bencheikh offers another issue for consideration—antagonism. Of Ḥārīthah 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 Mihjan al-Thaqafi (d. 639) whose “personality may be viewed as a means to illustrate the attitude that would characterise his successors”.⁸² It is reiterated in the overview of the “libertines of Kufa” in the Umayyad period: “Ḥammād Ṭarāj 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 transcended 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

continental theory here which requires that one clarify the themes being treated in any given case. Examine J. N. Marrack’s introductory remarks to his “Description and Genre in Abū Nuwās’s”, “I propose to deal exclusively with a relatively limited sub-division of the Khamriyyah 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 (khamriyyah) which contain essential elements of ghazal.

⁸² This is borne out in ch. 1, which deals with the seduction poem. ⁸³ See ch. 3.
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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.40
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 lat-
ter are also inserted the subheadings: “A great forerunner: al-Walid
b. Yazid”, “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-Â’ān, plus the thematic interdependence of that
early poetry; there is also the rebellion of Abū Miṭjaan 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-Walid b. Yazid.
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.41 With this in mind one can examine his poetry

41 This premiss in essence concurs with the view expressed by Schoeler: “A possible explanation for the frequency with which Abū Nuwās predates 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 qasida.” 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 panegyrical qasida” (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 en-
titled al-Tajdid fi uslūb al-khamra (Innovation in bacchic style), a
section is devoted to al-wāhda l-fāmiyya (Artistic unity), of which
abammu mumayyizātī l-tajdidī fi uslūbi-hi kānat mizāt . . . l-
wābdati l-fāmiyyah (The themes of his wine poetry have
antecedents in the ancient canon . . . [but] the most important ele-
ment of innovation in his style was that of artistic (or organic)
unity).42 The main feature which is understood to nurture this
artistic unity is wāḥadat al-mawdūʿ (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 qaṣāda buhā l-llati fi-hā l-badīthu ʿan
‘ababbi-hi wa-mughāmarātī-hi l-layliyyati hiya aṣādhu qaṣādi-hi
tarāḥfān wa-ʿamq-ḥā ṭawādat famiyyatān (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).43 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 under-
stand that structural cohesion is variously part of the thematic
(and generic) imprint of the poem, or feeds off the imagery of the
individual piece.44

42 Fann al-Šīr al-Khamr, 92.
43 Ibid. 276.
44 See below, esp. chs. 1 and 3.
Harb’s review of ‘Abbasid 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 exult [wine] I am like a Qa‘adī exalting the tabkīm,” writes Abū Nuwās: the tabkīm (lā bukma illa l-lāh, “judgment belongs to God alone”) was the battle-slogan of the Kharījis, 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 licentious obstinacy with which he frequently resists the Caliph’s call to abstinence.44

In outlining the most common descriptive imagery of the ‘Abbasid wine poem—“examples [which] give some idea of the interaction of old and new”—Harb 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 ‘Abbasid 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.”45 Unwittingly, Harb’s observation questions the validity of much of the analysis of al-Nuwayhī and al-Aqqādī, who impute to Abū Nuwās personal psychological traits based on the evidence of commonplace imagery.46 The sexual imagery of wine should also be viewed as part of the mischievous interplay between khamr and ghażal which reaches its literary apogee in the Hakamī’s verse and

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

The role of the sāqi is of great significance. More than merely casting a role in the narrative khamriyya, treatment of the sāqi—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 mughanmiyya, 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.” What can be salvaged from Harb’s observation, however, is the intimation of baths and burlesque.

Wagner touches on this aspect of the khamriyya in his monograph on Abū Nuwās:47 “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).48 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).49 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, I think, a mistake. This can be shown using a statement by Wagner himself as a starting-point: “Abū Nuwās even enjoys the

44 See ch. 4, pp. 214-17. 45 CHALABLI 228. 46 Ibid. 229. 47 A similar re-evaluation can be surmised from a comment by Mattick in re Abū Nuwās’ licentious confessions: “I do not propose here, or anywhere else, for that matter, to concern myself overmuch with Abū Nuwās’ 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.

48 See ch. 1. 49 Abū Nuwās, 300: “Der Handel um den Wein wird dann als Werbung eine Braut dargestellt. Das weibliche Genus des Wortes khamr macht diese Vorstellung möglich...”. 50 “Mit der Beschreibung des Schenken und der Schenkkin dringt ein Stück Liebesgedicht in die Weinlieder ein.” 51 “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.” 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-daw’i barqān of which Hamori has said “it would fly apart if it were not for a variety of echoes and symmetries”. Kharrār 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 nasib) offers a rare avowal of abstinence from wine. It is an exceptional poem: rather than the wine offering the sārg 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.” 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.” This is evincing by the love poems of Jamāl and the drinking songs of Abū Nuwās: “the molds for such poems were present in the pre-Islamic qaṣida: in the nasib, and in the often encountered drinking scene . . .”. 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

 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.”

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 Jahihiyā 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.” With this in mind Hamori senses the irony of Abū Nuwās’ tawwawad min šababīn laya yābuq (Store up provisions of youth which does not last), a verse drawing its inspiration from, for example, Qurʾān, 2:197 tawwawadī fa-inna khabra l-ziād l-taqūqā (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-Nuwaysī has noted elsewhere, Abū Nuwās’ bacchic art adopted a posture in antagonism to the zuhdiya 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.

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.” This ties in with another paragraph: “Imagery with transcendental associations creates in the khānmiyya 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

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53 Hamori, op. cit. 37.
54 In discussion of al-niswa l-dimiyā Abū Nuwaysī speaks of “inmā-nu l-amīn bi-l-tābīn, muḥāsinanbī l-jadīdam fi l-ḥuada dīn l-sa’dān l-tābīn bi-l-ma‘ūnī”. In this context he presents examples of verses where the poet reiterates the atheistic force of the ancient gnōμe of fleeting life; one is given to understand that such verses, plus the poet’s lack of stability in ta‘abū, were part of a literary discourse explained as a “mūnāfatassīn il-mu‘āshīn bi Abī l-‘Athāriyya il-ladā‘ī il-hāšī bi-l-mu‘āshī l-mu‘āshī” (see Naṣīfyyāt Abī Nuwās [Beirut, 1970], 93). See below, chs. 2–4.
55 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. 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 māruwwa that had informed the pre-Islamic qaṣīdā. 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 khamrīyya.

61 Hamori, op. cit. 67.

Introduction

Khamr, Nasīb, and Ghazal

The poems of al-ʿĀʾṣā (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 faḫr and nostalgia. This treatment of khamr—its dynamic containment within the polythematic qaṣīdā—survived in al-ʿĀkhṭal in the Umayyad period, and in poets such as Muslim b. al-Walīd and Abū Ḥaṣan in the early 'Abbāsid period. al-ʿĀkhṭal 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 bādī.

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-ʿĀʾṣā 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 baccich 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, is the tone in which wine is celebrated approximately 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 Thaqif are described circumambulating the beverage (ja-faṣa bi-hā abnū-`alī muʾattabi); here the verb jaṣa echo echo its use in the introductory section where the poet describes himself hovering around the beloved’s encampment.

Whilst the baʾnaʾya 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 Taṣawwur al-ghazal Shukri Faysal has spoken of the early Islamic period—before the ʿudhri poets and ʿUmar b. Abi Rabīʿa (d. 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 Mīḥān al-Thaqafī (d. 637) in conjunction with the love poetry of Ḫumayd b. Thawr al-Ḥilālī (d. 680). The two poets are seen to represent equivalent developments in the treatment of two distinct themes. Faysal’s examination is cursory, but occasional gleanings are valuable, especially where he posits the equivalence between the following two lines—the first by Ḫumayd and the second by Abū Mīḥān:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Will the echo [of Umm Afwā’s soul] speak to mine once I am but bones and a tomb?} \\
\text{If I should die, bury me by a vine whose roots after my death may slake the thirst of my bones.}
\end{align*}
\]

Essential to both examples is recognition of life after death. In this respect a possibly better analog outside of Abū Mīḥān’s line is the following fragment from ʿUmar b. Abi Rabīʿa:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{In the shade of my veins, an unquenchable thirst} \\
\text{In the shade of my veins, an unquenchable thirst}
\end{align*}
\]

\[\text{Abū Dhuʾayb’s baʾnaʾya is one of five poems which treat love and wine in a similar manner (see poems 5, 6, 9, and 18).}\]

\[\text{See Taṣawwur al-ghazal (Damascus, 1969).} \]

\[\text{See Diwān `Umar b. Abi Rabīʿa, 388. This fragment is discussed by Montgomery.}\]
Khamr, Nasib and Ghazal

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 ‘Abbásid period.38 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.39

The most significant developments in ghazal in the Umayyad period are represented by ʿUmar b. Abī Rabiʿa on the one hand and the ‘udbri poets on the other. To ʿUmar the ʿAbbásid khamriyyāt of Abū Nuwās appear to owe—possibly directly—features such as erotic narrative and dialogue. From the ‘udbri 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-Aʾṣā, he appears to owe as much to ʿUmar. For the narrative of certain seduction khamariyyāt is conspicuously similar in various ways to aspects of many of ʿUmar’s poems. The Meccan poet often creates a narrative feel around the broad subject of labw, which might signify both ghazal and khamr;8

38 See for example the poems of Hāritha b. Badr discussed in Ch. 3.
39 The incompatibility between love and religion is illustrated at an early stage in poetry in al-Aʾṣāʾs encomium on the Prophet; see poem 18, line 24: ʿa-tā [a] tālbaṭa jārātan inna sīra-kā lʾalay-ka ḥārāmun fa-nkhān au tāʾabbādā.
30 Diwān ʿUmar b. Abī Rabiʿa, 38.

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 rāʾiyya31 where we find the familiar phrase fa-yā ṭiba labwīn mā ḥunāka labawtu- bu (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 sāqqi, especially when the ghulām is commanded: iḍā ḫājatan 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 khamar: for example, dawāʾ (cure), malām (blame) and ṣarīʿ al-batea (“slain by love”—the equivalent phrase in wine poetry is ṣarīʿ al-mudām).32 Consider also the following excerpts:

... ʿašā ʿamīr ṣharāʾ ʿalā kārīf. ʿašā ʿamīr ṣharāʾ ʿalā kārīf.
... ʿašā ʿamīr ṣharāʾ ʿalā kārīf. ʿašā ʿamīr ṣharāʾ ʿalā kārīf.
... ʿašā ʿamīr ṣharāʾ ʿalā kārīf. ʿašā ʿamīr ṣharāʾ ʿalā kārīf.
... ʿašā ʿamīr ṣharāʾ ʿalā kārīf. ʿašā ʿamīr ṣharāʾ ʿalā kārīf.

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 gastro has been disturbed by intoxication...

... fi ṣarīʿ al-batea ʿāli ḥālib ʿāla ʿāli ḥālib.
... fi ṣarīʿ al-batea ʿāli ḥālib ʿāla ʿāli ḥālib.
... fi ṣarīʿ al-batea ʿāli ḥālib ʿāla ʿāli ḥālib.
... fi ṣarīʿ al-batea ʿāli ḥālib ʿāla ʿāli ḥālib.

31 See Diwān ʿUmar b. Abī Rabiʿa, 38.
32 See line 4: fa-ḥāṭi dawāʾ an il-ḥilā bi mina ljawā ʿwa-ilā fa-daʾ-ni min malām ṣarīʿ ṣarīʿ al-mudām. 33 Ibid. 138.
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. The sixth line quoted here, in confining its commentary to labw (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: hájí l-mudhakkiru... wa-dumū'ī l-'aynā tabadtiru: a similar welling of emotions often operates in Abū Nuwās's at the finale of the bacchic scene.

The other influence ʿUmar may have had on bacchic poetry is in the consolidation of some imagery, especially that of the ailments of love and its cure, and the imagery of fatal love and love which resurrects: amīttu idhā saḥaṭat dārū-hā l wa-ahbāy idhā anā

For similarities in the treatment of the censurer in both the khamriyya and ghazal compare the following two verses: ʿAlī b. Jabala (Tabaqāt al-Suʾrā, 184): wa-idhā takallāma ŏdhisān fi ʾabūmā hā sīgrā ʾla-ʾaynā bābittu bī hā wa-raqaq l-ʾādīl hā; Abū Nuwās: daʿiʾun ʿan-qurna šimāma l-lamāna ʾgrābārā. 

See esp. Abū Nuwās's bāʿyya (Divān, 110–1).

An excellent example of this motif exists in a verse from Tabaqāt al-Suʾrā attributed to ʿAbī b. Muḥallim al-Khazāʾī (p. 192): qattalī ni ʾihān wa-ʾihān dʾāṣiři l ʾafnaṣātum bi-l-imātāt wa-l-nāṣr.

The imagery this exerts the language of the two related phrases (already discussed briefly): ʿarīf al-khamr and ʿarīf al-hawā; either of these could summarize the state depicted in the following verse: sard ʾat-nī ʾaynā bi ʾsukran qabla tasṭī bi-rābatis bi l-ʾaṣārū (His eyes had already slain me [and left me] drunk before the attack of the wine [held] in his two palms). This imagery expresses the essence of the images of Al-Walid b. Yazid (d. 744) also meritorious, as most scholars share the view that Abū Nuwās developed the mold of Al-Walid—who certainly had an influence on the so-called libertinics of Kūfa, especially Muṭṭi b. ʿIyās (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. Muʿawiyah (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 Mihjān al-Thqaftī. Typical, therefore, of Al-Walid are the following lines which evince a preoccupation with wine and love in defiance of Islam:

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!


Ṣīr al-Walid b. Yazid, poem 15, p. 28.
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 noble 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;65 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: uḥbībū l-qinā'a wa-ṣūrba l-tillā'ī wa-unsā l-nisā'ī wa-rabba l-suwar (I love the song, the drinking of wine, the intimacy of women and the Lord of the Suaras). 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-ʿarūs, ummu l-ḥabr, uktūb l-masarrab, ibnāt l-ʿinab, al-ʿajūz, al-šamţā, ummu Laylā, ummu l-khābāth, 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. Yazid and Abū l-Hindi, then later Muslim b. al-Walid and Abū Nuwās (to name only a representative few) produced amorous and bacchic imagery that coalesced in femininity, sexuality, and the interchangeable roles of the sāqi (who was typi-


66 For further examples of this kind of imagery see Iṣāwī's commentaries on Mālik b. ʿAmr (d. 715) and Abū Jild al-Yaʿkūrī (d. c. 700) in isāwī al-ʿAr al-Khamrī. See also the poetry of al-Ḥusayn b. al-Dāḥijāk, esp. Aṣār al-khallāt, 62–3.

This verse clearly echoes Aya 2:255 of Sūrat al-ṣūrā (2) which offers a styled and certainly critical view of the poets in the pre-Islamic period: a-lam tara anna-lhum fi kallī wādān yahimmāna.

67 Diwān, poem 32, p. 51.

68 Diwān, poem 34, p. 53.
to the moon?). The imagery here is significant since divination also exists in the treatment of wine; whilst the earliest example can be traced back to Al’Aṣār, perhaps the most spirited and deliberately blasphemous example exists in the diwān of Yazid b. Mu’āwiya.\(^{11}\)

\section*{Abū l-Hindi}

\begin{quote}
\textbf{Kabhib al-‘alam fi-‘isna ra‘a\\
wa-kunt ‘anhu yahuma rumma\\nwa-film tibīd in ‘ulmār bīnaa\\nwa-Izāanī yahuma rīṣa\\ni‘dā bi-laylā ghyara-ra‘a fa-ka-an Namā\\nafa ‘a rīsa ‘aynā kāna fī ṣādī (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.)
\end{quote}

\emph{In Ŧabaqāt al-Šu’ārā’ Ibn al-Mu’tazz} transmits a 16-line poem by Abū l-Hindi, which is one of the finest examples of the erotic in baccic description:\(^{12}\) (lines 1–2)

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
\item See Dīcean, ed. Husayn, p. 85: \\
\noindent wa-Sababs’ā tāfīya yahudīyya-hā  wa-abraza-hā  wa-salā-ḥā kwitun || wa-sabīl-hā l-ribū fī dann-hā || wa-salā-‘ālrai dann-hā wa-
\noindent rtasam.
\item See Sir Yazid. Mu’āṣirat, 47: mā barran lāhur suha Ḳamār ‘an aṣbathun fī-nin-hu wa-laknun linnirrī min wa-ṣarīra-an fī-hā l-.sgāma ra‘ā l-nās aṣbaw musbrīma bi-hā l wa-kullu fāmīn bāṣān-hu min ma‘āni-hā l-ahh bi-tahrīmī-hā Ḳaw̄ajan ‘alay-hu bi-am yaddū l-lūl sujaqun min dām-hi thi‘ah.
\item See al-Jāhiz, Risālat al-Qiyān, ed. Beeston, p. 20 (of Arabic text).
\item See Ibn al-Mu’tazz, Ŧabaqāt al-Šu’ārā’, 140.
\end{itemize}}

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\item See K. Abu Deeb, Jadaliyyat al-Khāṣī wa-l-Tajdlī, 76–86. His introductory remarks about this poem are consonant with our observations: musnīlhu bidātay-hā tafūlu quddātun Abī l-Hindi bi-tahrīrī tāṣāfah bi-hā Ḳaw̄ajan ‘alay-hu bi-am yaddū l-lūl sujaqun min dām-hi thi‘ah.
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\end{itemize}}

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 samawut ilay-hā ba‘da ma‘nā ablu-bā, as Abu Deeb has pointed out elsewhere,\(^{13}\) alludes to imagery in the erotic adventures of Imru’u l-Qays and ‘Umar b. Abī Rabi‘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-Hindi will find a rich substitute for Sā‘īm’s milk-skins in favn-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)

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{Slalā‘at ‘aṭṭar bīnaa ‘arzaa\\nwa-kunt famāq̄q̄ ʕawma wa-ha yadi参保 (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.)
\item I kissed her on the bed; [she had the fragrance] of a perfumist’s stone-pounder\(^{14}\) ...} \item 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...
\end{itemize}

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

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\end{itemize}}
of wine as an amorous embrace. With respect to the entire poem it seems that intertextuality has a function: allusions to Imru’u l-Qays frame conventional bacchism with elements of ancient poetry (erotic adventure/masib) 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 nasib—is transmuted to the loss of control that accompanies a drunken stupor (it is the word där in the last line of the poem that suggests this interpretation—där being an alternative plural for dīyar).

Abū Nuwās

The highest incidence of feminine imagery in wine poetry exists in the diwān of Abū Nuwās. 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. 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 khātībi ḍādāh fa-gultu anā | 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.”) Other examples are more akin to a sexual fantasy in the imagery that is forged and thus complement the promiscuous attitude which characterizes many satirical narratives: zauwajtu-hā l-mā’a kay tadhilla la-bū | fa-mī’ta’ adat ħina massa-hā l-dhakaru ḫa-dhalla l-bikru ‘inda khalwati-hā | yawzaru min-hā l-baytā’ wa-l-khafaru (I married her...

One reason for this is simply that more extant wine poetry is attributed to him than to any other poet.

See for example ch. 1 of al-Nuwayhi’s Naṣīrīyyat 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, Diwān, pp. 33-43.

Aḥū 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.

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

30 Khamr, Nasib and Ghazal

31 Khamr, Nasib and Ghazal

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). 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: wa-bikrī sulaṣfatīn fi qi’ri dāmmi lā-hā dirānī min qārin wa-tīnī . . . sākaktu buzāla-hā wa-l-laytū dārin . . . (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; examples are numerous (all from Diwān):
by love) and ṣariʿ al-mudām (slain by wine). The shared repertory of images for both love and wine creates a single texture of labw (dalliance).

This khamriyya sets out the partnership between love (represented by the tuwil) and wine in the opening line: ghamnī-nā bi-l-tuwilī kaya balīnā l wa-sqī-nā muʾti-ka l-thanāʾa l-thamīnā.

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

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

The description of love in this seduction poem evokes the ʿudbrī notion of a liebestod:

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

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 nasib (line 1, furqatu l-aqrānī and indulgence: the poet drinks in order to fulfill his desires, lines 13–14: mā ziltu aṣrabu ka-su-hum . . . li-anāla min-hum . . . taḥriyyatan . . . bi-tarfi lisani.

The eroticism of these 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 nasib (line 1a) lā tabki Laylā wa-lā tatrab lāa Hind. The dominant role which the poet plays in most of this poetry is crystallized in the final hemistich.

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 lends the veil of one’s heart and causes one’s innermost secrets to be divulged.

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 Jamil and Majnūn, love for wine is divinely ordained (2a); this excuse meets the force of the censurer’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 ‘udhrā further fulfills 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.

The influence of ‘udhrī imagery is pervasive and varied. The inheritor of this imagery in the ‘Abbāsid period, al-‘Abbās b. al-Aḥnaf, may describe his beloved in a way that adumbrates the mystic poets: law barazat bi-l-layli mā ḍalla man yasīrī (When she comes out at night he who travels before dawn cannot go astray); similarly Abū Nuwās lauds an ancient wine: qa’alat fi l-bayti idh muziṣṭa mīthla fi[l]-ṣubḥī fi l-ṣulami (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: ina-ka in lam ṭasqīni mittu dāna-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 nilmūmā mā nilmū mā muziṣṭa illa 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). Hauwā (love) is frequently what the poet professes to feel for wine: buḥ hi-smi man tabwā wu-da’ni mina

l-kunā (Speak openly the name of the one you love and set aside allusion); a-ʿāchalā tala-m ni fi hawā-hā ʿāba-nā fi-hā yafaḥī (Censurer, do not blame me for loving her—reproof will endure [too] long); the poet’s attitude to wine may recall the attitude of a co-operative lover: layṣa min ṣiyām li-l-ʿusr (It is not in my character to cause distress). Consider also the following line: fa-sammartru athwābī wa-hawaltu masrīn wa-qalbiya min ʿawqīn yakād γ yabīmu (I sucked 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 (ṣawq) 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 aflāl: alasta tarā-ba-qad ta’affat rūṣīmu-hā ba ma-qad ta’affat li-l-diyār rūṣīmu (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): tilka lā a’dama-ni-hā lā bu unsi ’idlu rūḥa yīlma ṭaqaḥ l-qalū ibl-bā līfi l-hawā aya junūbī l-ta’affat nasī ṣalā-hā ba bi-hawān ṣalā-yi nasī (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:

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 aflāl topos (which may either be reworked or

43 Abū Nuwās reworks this image to describe the wine in Yā sābir al-ṭārif, which is discussed in detail below.
44 Diwān, 34.
45 Ibid. 41.
46 Ibid. 138.
47 Ibid. 182.
Khamr, Nasib and Ghazal

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

THE MANIPULATION OF THE ROLE OF NASIB

Abū Nuwās' treatment of the atlāl 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'ā'ī, and recently the same evidence has been re-examined to posit the participation of the poet in the diatribes of 'asabiyya. 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. Araqi's article "Abū Nuwās: Fut-il Šu'ūbithe?" notes that the majority of scholars interpret his disdain for the bedouin as being due to his Persian origins. Those

53 Though much continues to be written about Šu'ūbithe there is no more convenient summary of the subject than Goldziher's in Muslim Studies, vol. 1 (see also H. Norris's Šu'ā'īyab in CHALABL 31-45). The šu'ā'īyab ideology based itself on Qur'an, 4913, which speaks of the equality of the non-Arab šu'ā' (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 Abābādis 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'ūbithe 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.

54 Goldziher touched on this subject in his comments about the near-contemporary of Abū Nuwās, Dīk al-Jinn al-Ḥimṣī (d. 850-1). He was (op. cit. 144): "a representative of a particularly Syrian patriotism; he was a descendant of Tamim 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 Esna depose a preacher of Northern Arab descent." Thus, whilst he was akin to Abū Nuwās in mocking the atlāl motif at least twice in his poetry (see Dīwān Dīk al-Jinn al-Ḥimṣī, 1), he was distinct in his stance ēs-ā-ās-ā-ās-āš-ābīyaa.


56 Of the orientalists who share this view Gabrielis is perhaps the most notable

who have most noticeably challenged this view are Wagner and Araqi himself. In the Encyclopaedia of Islam (new edition) Wagner states: "Abū Nuwās can hardly be called a šu'ā'ī. He merely reflects the cultural ambience of his time in which Persian elements had a growing part to play." Further, by putting greater emphasis on Abū Nuwās' role in the diatribes of 'asabiyya Wagner has led Araqi to posit that the poet's defence of the southern Arabs provides a more plausible explanation for his apparent šu'ā'ī tendencies. Araqi'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'ā'īyya mais d'une quête de bonheur individuel. Amongst other topics Araqi discusses the evidence of the mention of Persian kings. Ksra Anuširwan 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. 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-bum fi 'isrāt-un na'dām. 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. Collectively, therefore, there is a certain ecumene 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 Ṣā'īd Ṣā'īd and 'Abbās Maḥmūd al-Aqqād have avoided attaching to Abū Nuwās the šu'ā'ī label. For the opinion of Ṣā'īd see al-ṣā'ī al-Abbasī al-Awadi (Cairo, n.d.), 431. For al-Aqqād see the summary of his views provided by Semah in Four Egyptian Literary Critics (Leiden, 1974), 54.

57 See "Abu Nuwas". For Persian elements in Abū Nuwās' poetry see Wagner's Abū Nuwās: Eine Studie, 74, 138-9, 193, 213.


59 The motif exists in the earliest extant examples of wine poetry, e.g. in 'Abd al-Zayd. See ch. 2.

60 Dīwān Abū Nuwās, 208.
he found himself. In one of several narrative khamriyya it he depicts a crusty Jewish wine merchant: “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 Abu ‘Amr, though no ‘Amr is my son; indeed no Arabic kunya can do me honour (wa-ma sarrafat-ni kunyatun ‘arabiyyatun) nor fill me with haughty pride.’” There is ambivalence in the phrase, wa-ma sarrafat-ni kunyatun ‘arabiyyatun, in which it 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 Mudar and the Bedouin were one and the same to Abu Nuwas; the poet himself was a mawil of the south Arabian tribe of Hakam and in the intertribal disputes of ashabiyya he could be a venomous satirist: “you have mentioned the abodes of Banu Asad—God curse you! Who are the Banu Asad? And who are Tamim and Qays and their brethren; the dar ib is nothing in God’s eyes.” Throughout Abu Nuwas’ diwan there are intermittent references to the ignomini (mathilib) of the various northern tribes: Quraysh, Tamim, Asad, Bakr b. Wail, 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 aflal sont voués aux gémonies.” Arazi is convincing—to a degree. However, there is an implication that every negative or humorous reference to the aflal 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, Abu Nuwas’ poetry is too varied in its treatment of subject matter to conform to such judgements. For example, a khawariyya which begins with a line of mild ashabiyya (“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 qasida with the aflal in the matla’: “O wind! what is it that you do with desert traces?”

Whilst Arazi’s interpretation is extremely valuable, the stress he lays in viewing Abu Nuwas’ 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 aflal and related motifs Abu Nuwas 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 diwan of Abu Nuwas the khawariyya had become, requires a discernible beginning and end. In considering an opening to a composition Abu Nuwas would inevitably have been drawn to the aflal and other corollary motifs of the nasib. 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 impulsively—providing the khawariyya with its own nasib.

There are several aspects of his use of the nasib 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 Abu Nuwas 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 nasib motifs gives the Nuwasian khawariyya 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 Aflal in the Panegyric Qasida

The following example is from a poem in praise of al-Amin:44 (lines 1, 3 and 4)

Long have I cried at the trace of the campsite, and long did I frequent it and suffer . . .

\[44\] Diwan, 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 at me,
and do not find my stay too lengthy...
The pattern of themes is conventional, namely nasib/atlāl → rabīl (as a token motif) → khamr. Wine provides solace.

The poet’s resolve leads to a nostalgic bacchanal. In another poem, "Li-man talatun", a deft and detailed nasib appears to have an ironic rhetorical function: it elicits an emotional response such as to induce an abstainer to drink.

Rejection of the Atlāl
The most common occurrence of the atlāl motif is where it is rejected in favour of wine. It may be rejected at the beginning of a qaṣida, at the end, or both. A further permutation is where the atlāl 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 atlāl in favour of the celebration of wine often affects a judgemental stance about what is an apt subject for poetry. Commonly Abū Nuwās

In harmony with a mannered recreation of the nasib 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.

For this meaning of dhāl nafrin see the rāyya of Ka'b b. Zuhayr (Diwān, p. 27, verse 37) where dhāl nafrin is said of a she-camel ghafalat ghafala-tan fa-lam tara illā la dhāl nafrin takassu'aqrān.

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.

The most frequent example is implicit in thought only: da’ anka yā sāhī l-fikara fi-man taghayyara aw hajara (My friend, stop thinking of one who has left me). The second hemistich does not mock the atlāl, but borrows another topic from the nasib (firāq)—the line anticipates the imperative with which the second line begins, iṣrab (Drink!). There are other examples where, instead of the atlāl, the poet treats the departure of the beloved to effect a contrast between failed love and wine: la-in hajarat-ka ba' da l-waslī Arwā fi-la'am tabhur-ka şafiyatun 'uqārīn (Though Arwā left you after your try the pure wine did not). The khamriyya also treats bukā (He who

refers to description (wasf or na't), thus indicating his perception of this poetry as a primarily descriptive art. In rejecting the atlāl 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 rabīl of sorts). Thus description, emotion, and what I will label sayr all variously effect the contrast between traditional nasib and the new bacchic context.

Description

ахмун нама би'ку станавли فشْ
رحّال تُبيّن ُأنا فأَذ
هَا نَبْعُا وَمَضَعُ
مَّKEN َأَنْعُمَاء

مَلاقَلاَكِهِمْ دَوْعَيْيَة

(i) 148

(p. 157)

(i) 192

All examples suggest, with an affectation of formality, that wine is the proper subject of poetry—imna fi-hā la-mawāli'ān li-l-maqlāl.

Emotional Contrast—Khulīqat li-l-hammi Qāhirat

In one weak example emotion is implicit in thought only: da’ an-

ka yā sāhī l-fikara fi-man taghayyara aw hajara (My friend, stop thinking of one who has left me). The second hemistich does not mock the atlāl, but borrows another topic from the nasib (firāq)—the line anticipates the imperative with which the second line begins, iṣrab (Drink!). There are other examples where, instead of the atlāl, the poet treats the departure of the beloved to effect a contrast between failed love and wine: la-in hajarat-ka ba' da l-

waslī Arwā fi-la'am tabhur-ka şafiyatun 'uqārīn (Though Arwā left you after your try the pure wine did not). The khamriyya also treats bukā (He who

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-

Aṣā (poem 20, line 17): fa'-mad li-naftin ghayrī-hā hā l-dīs māsīl al-ynthī la-nakārah.

(p. 97)

(i) 681.

(p. 180.)

(i) 679.
cries over an abode is insane); wine is a more apt object of lament: (line 4) 嵯-wā-lākin′na-ni ʻabdī ʻalā l-rāb. Though the poet affects this response (abbki) to ape the language of nasib, wine is not something he has abandoned, rather his attitude is defiantly that he will tipple in the future: (line 5) sa-āṣarba-hā ʻishfan. In a different vein the poet may adopt a more rational and considerably more wary approach—about the ʻdār he states: in kāna fi-hā ʻlladī abnāq aqamtu bi-hā (If the one I love were there I would stay there).”

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 bādi”.

[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-ʻAbbās b. al-ʻAṣnaf. A tension is sustained throughout between the youth’s enticing features and his recalcitrance: (1a) muwātā l-tarf contrasts ʻaffi l-lisān; (1b) mātnī l-ʻ_WRAPPER_ contrasts ʻāṣī l-ʻinān. The youth instils desire then denies its fulfilment. This continues: (2a) he fills the poet with both hope and despair: māziqin li min raqā-in wa-yā-sin; his words entice but his deeds reject: (2b) māziqin bi-l-filī wa-l-gawli dāmi. 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:

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:

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

“Dīwān, 674. A similarly rational approach is the following: ʻuḥbāl ʻalā l-dāri bi-taklimi ʻl fa-mā ʻladay-lā raqīu taslimi.”

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)

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-ītārāna muzzalā tā′mi fi-hā nazāq l-bikrī. 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 ḥālāl are treated can be gleaned from the final line which changes the linguistic register of the piece (from ghazal to nasib) but reiterates the disparity between wine and love:

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 nasib:

You who shed tears at the ḥālāl riding from it to a hope...

Console yourself... with wine (bi-banātī l-sans)...

Lines 3–9 ensure as wasf. The images are both feminine and sexual. Line 3 sets the tone of this feature where the wine is anything but coy: ma mana′ l-nafsā-hā min lamsi muḥtabishī (She did not refuse the touch of a shabby man). At line 7 the image employed to
describe the mixing of wine and water sustains the promise of fulfillment which informs the descriptive passage:

[Farsi text translated]

Whenever the water falls upon the wine (i.e. is mixed with it; wa'qa'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 atlāl—they are:

[Farsi text translated]

Pears 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)

[Farsi text translated]

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 nasib and a rahil equivalent to sayr is waqīf (i.e. stopping at the tavern rather than the abandoned traces). Movement is usually achieved through the use of the imperative 'i, and sometimes 'arrij. The following example shows movement towards wine (scient the tavern) to be preferable to a lingering at the atlāl:78 da'i l-waqīf ʿallā rasmin wa-atlāl . . . wa-i 'i bi-nā nāṣabih sāfriʿa wāqidatam. In an original and striking example waqīf and sayr/rahil are drawn humorously into the imagery of khamr: (lines 6–7 of a 12-line poem)79

[Farsi text translated]

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?79

77 Diwān, 680. 78 ibid. 52. 79 This hemistich echoes a line from Zuhayr b. Abi Sulmā's Muʿallaqa (line 13 of al-Tibrizī's recension): bakarna bukāran wa-staharna bi-ṣabratin | fa-humna wa-ṣādi l-rasī bi-bayādi fī famī.

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

Humour

Treatment of the atlāl constitutes from time to time no more than a joke:81

[Farsi text translated]

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

Consider also,82

[Farsi text translated]

The wretch went off wandering at the atlāl, 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, bā'.

Assimilation of Nasib

A handful of khamriyyāt assimilate and/or adapt the imagery or lexicon of nasib. These poems do not effect an overt judgment about the inappropriate nature of any particular register of poetry.83

[Farsi text translated]

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:84 yā ʿaqīqa l-nafsī

80 The rejection of the atlāl 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: abun three times and aladībih once (Diwān Abī Nuwās, 160). The contrast between wine and the atlāl is analogous in such cases to the less common contrast between wine and battle (ibid. 162): abun min maqṣūrin bi-muʿtarakin | wa-raḫbi khabīn alā kalā wa-hābi bī sayfītu šāmīn . . . . The role of mock-heroism in the khamriyyāt has been discussed by J. N. Mattick in “Description and Genre in Abū Nuwās”.

81 Diwān, 134. 82 ibid. 193. 83 ibid. 208. 84 ibid. 41.
min ḥakami l nimta 'an layli wa-lam anami (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 ara' (insomnia) which is common in the nasib and derivative love poetry.85

Perhaps the finest example of the assimilation of nasib comes in the khamriyya beginning,86 (1–3)

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-Ṣihān and al-ṣafā, Abodes where I spent my youth until this greyness appeared in
my side-whiskers . . .

The qasida 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 aṭṭāl 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 abstinance (ta’awwub).87 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-Muṣalla), represents eternity in contra-

85 See for example the first line of poem 46 of the Muṣaqātīyyāt by Abū Muṣāraquṣ Abūl-Akbar: sarā laylan khayyālun min Sudaymī l fa-ara'aq ni wa-sūs?hā bi-fidā l-ara'q bi ẓāt bāda min sahālālā l-falaqī (Dīwān, 53).
86 Ibid. 3–5, ed. Wagner, pp. 29–35.
87 This is analogous to a common feature of jāhilī poetry, where hedonism is superseded by sabāy and acquired biṭm. See ch. 4.

distinction to the ephemeral nature of life—a theme propagated by the suḥbāyyāt 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.88

Quotation89

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-Aʿṣā, Dhū l-Rumma, Jarīr and Abū Miḥjan al-Thaqāfī. 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. biḥa ṣawāqī) to the beauty of the song:90

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 aṭṭāl 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 12:91

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

88 The qasida is discussed in detail in ch. 2; the full text of the Arabic plus a translation is contained in Appendix B.
90 Dīwān, 138. The quoted hemistich is from Zuhayr b. Ābi Sulmā.
91 Ibid. 673.
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: 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 aquat bi-l-taffi mini jadidī.'" Irony is clear and is further understood by considering that whilst mocking the imagery and diction of the atlāl, the poem nevertheless devotes 8 of 12 lines to discussing them, thereby giving the language of nasib a significant and essential role. Furthermore, this is the poem in which basil "stands" in the ear (uwāṭīfu rayhānat in 'alā ʿudhun) and the cup "travels" to the mouth (uwā-sayru kaʿsin ʿalā famin). Even in forging his own images the poet has an eye to the language of nasib.

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:

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

Neither Zaynab nor Kaʿb 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)

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

(i) A fine poem which yields its relative complexity only upon a studied reading is the 7-line khamriyya beginning bādir šabūba-ka— it is one of two poems to incorporate a quotation of the opening hemistichs of al-Aʿsaʾs Muʿallaqa. The quotation itself signposts other more delicately embedded allusions contained in the brief narrative to aspects of al-Aʿsaʾs nasib. 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:

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 . . .

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52 Ibid. 52.
53 An unusual permutation of quotation occurs in a poem where we find it at both the beginning and the end; ibid. 159.
54 Ibid. 110-11.
order to augur for rain.99 The disjunction between the two very different poems is most deftly effectuated in Abū Nuwās' line 5, which describes the ma'lis of line 4; the players in the ma'lis experience a union of requited love; the first hemistich appears to pick up playfully on al-A'ṣā's description of "cross-wooing"100—a circle of frustrated love.101

I became infatuated with her by chance, and she with another man—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 nasib as expressed in the phrase al-rakbu mutarbil. Indeed, use of the 8th-form participles muntazimun and muttasīluh neatly effects the contrast with mutarbil (a topic of firāq).102

This section of course contrasts with the more conventional bacchic fakhr contained in another passage of the nasib (al-Tibrizī, lines 12-13; Dīwān, 34-42 with omissions from al-Tibrizī's text). The situation depicted by al-A'ṣā 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.)

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102 Al-A'ṣā's description of the Nasib line 5 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..."
Finally, the description of the singing-girl in the \textit{khamriyya} (line 7, 1st word) as \textit{hayfā'} calls to mind the description of Hurayra as \textit{gharrā'}, \textit{far'a} (bright of complexion and with thick hair) in line 2 of the \textit{Mu'allaga}. The root of \textit{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 \textit{hayfā'} in poem 9 of al-\textit{A}š'sā's \textit{dīwān}, a \textit{qaṣida} which treats an opening topos essentially similar to the one in the \textit{Mu'allaga}: (1a) Hurayyata waddī-hā wa-in lāma lā'imū. In line 3 she is described as \textit{meḥullatun hayfā'}. This cross-referencing to more than a single al-\textit{A}š'sā text suggests a delicate evocation of the latter's most renowned \textit{nasīb}.

The overall effect of Abū Nuwās' poem is to create an entertaining dissonance between \textit{nasīb} and \textit{khamar}. On one level this effects a literary parody of the older poetry which simultaneously articulates \textit{muṭjū}; 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 \textit{bā'īyya} beginning \textit{tu'ātibu-ni 'alā surbi ṣṭibāḥi},\textsuperscript{184} 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 \textit{badī'}—subtle \textit{badī'} which affects the poem as a whole. I therefore divide analysis into two parts:

\textit{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: \textit{tu'ātibu-ni 'alā surbi ṣṭibāḥi} 1 \textit{wa-waṣli l-layli min falāqi l-ṣabāḥi} (She berates me for drinking wine in the morning and seeing the night through until dawn)—thus the poem is circular in 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 Iblīs' intercession) in the final line: \textit{fa-raḍda-hu l-aykhu 'an sā'īlata-hi} 1 \textit{wa-gūra qawwādā-nā wa-lam yaḤal}.

\textit{Muṭjū} is fundamental to the spirit of the poem, as the text itself makes clear: (3b) \textit{wa-fāqa hu-l-tayyibār} l-mājmu l-ḥazāl.\textsuperscript{185} \textit{Dīwān}, 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 \textit{maṣla} of a \textit{qaṣida} by Jarir in praise of the Umayyad Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik\textsuperscript{186} and the first of two citations from this Umayyad poem): \textit{a-taṣḥū am fu'ādu-ka ghayru sāhin l 'ašiyyata hamma sāḥbu-ka bi-l-rwāḥi} (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 (\textit{labū}). The sentiments of the taverner’s question are not alien to the emotional intensity of the \textit{nasīb};\textsuperscript{187} 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 “delicate, built, fawn-like” \textit{sāqī}. He asks a question similar to that of the taverner (line 13a): \textit{a-tabrūshāna ghadan} (Will you be leaving tomorrow?). The carousers’ reply is equally significant (13b): \textit{wa-kayfa nafītqu bā'da-ka min rāwāḥi} (How can we bare to depart having been with you?). This emotive exchange also evokes the \textit{nasīb}, for the question treats \textit{fīrāq} whilst the answer treats \textit{wadā'} and calls to mind, I would suggest, al-\textit{A}š'sā's hemistic, \textit{wa-hal nafītqu wadā' an ayyūbā l-rājul} (the identical morphology of \textit{wadā'} and \textit{rāwāḥ} is significant—indeed \textit{wadā'} might well replace \textit{rāwāḥ} 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 \textit{nasīb}; by assimilating the language of martial \textit{fākhr} 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 asleee: (15–16)

\begin{quote}
\text{مضَنْتُ إلى أَهْلُ مُسْتَفَقَيْمَ}

\text{فَسَ أَنْ رَكَّزْتُ الرَّجُلُ بَيْنَهُمَا}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{185} See \textit{Dīwān Jarīr}, ed. al-Šāwi (Cairo, 1935), 96–9.

\textsuperscript{186} In the Umayyad period Jarir was one of the masters of composition in the \textit{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 ṣāqi concedes defeat (fa-gāla laqad ẓafīrta fa-nal hānī’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:

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 Jarir’s panegyric poem in praise of ‘Abd al-Malik.\(^1\) It is significant in this respect that the final bawdy allusion is introduced with reference to the formal function of the original line: tabaddā munṣidān ẓi’ra mtīdāh (He came forth singing a eulogy). Significant also is that madīb can be viewed as coming after rabīl if we understand the phrase “fa-lammā an waqā’tu raḥli” (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, rabīl and madīb.\(^2\)

\(^{b}\) 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:


\(^2\) The relationship between the khambiyiyya and Jarir’s qaṣida is corroborated by Abū Nuwās’ reworking of 8 of the original’s 22 rhyme-words.
both articulates the narrative and humorously calls into question the received view of the ancient bards.

(iii) Başsār b. Burd—who is perceived as the father of bādi’—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 ibhā registers. The ‘Abbāsid court circle would certainly have received his output and been aware of its literary thrust. Indeed, in his article “Le Cas de Başsār dans le développement de la poésie Arabe”, Blachère suggests the need to examine the influence the poet might have had on Abū Nuwās. 110 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 Ḥakimite.

Başsār 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 Aḡhnī, recounts how one Ja’far b. Sulaymān b. ‘All became inebriated at his own majlis: 111 (line 1)

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

‘Amidt al-qlb means “lovelorn”, hence the double entendre of

both are at ‘aẓīrāda l-sāḥaḥ ra‘wāhā (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, sāḥūḥ and safīḥ, it shares much of the lexicon of Abū Nuwās’s poems: ra‘wāḥ, nāḥā, barād, ḫunā (al-Husayn also has ḥunā), ṣu‘yā (also referring to the crowing of the cock at dawn) and, finally, ḥāṣ (Abū Nuwās has musṭābāh). As in Ta‘ādibu-ni the poem also ends with the poet disturbing a youth from his sleep, but the muṣnīn which ensues is less explicit: fa-nabatku sitra muṣnīni bi-tāfattuk-i lī ḵulī mulhayatin wa-bāyū ṣaḥāba. 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 Ḥakimite’s poem enhances its quality.

Either one, or both of the tavern poems, may be inspired by a line bā‘īyya of the earlier poet, Abū l-Hindī; here six of the rhyme words are shared by the other poems discussed (see Tābāqat al-Sul‘arā, 137).

110 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-‘ᾱnaf et surtout comme Abū Nuwās dont l'inspiration est parfois si voisine de la sienne.”

sakrān: besotted in love/drunken in wine. Line 2, which is taken from a nasib by Jarir, is the text of the girl’s song and may be self-referential:

إن العيون التي في طرفها حرَّور
فَطَنُنا نَم لم يَعيد قُتلاها

Her eyes with their hūrī 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 Jarir’s nasib; the singing-girl objects, suggesting that truer to the emotions of a man in love is the following:

والآن تتحسَّنُ قَبَل الْعَيْنِ أَحْمَانَا

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 diwān. To a degree the poet’s contention, by composing the poem in this way, is that sentiments and formulations that echo the nasib 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 uncoers his feelings:

فَاحْمِي مِنِّي مَلْتُ عَلَى هُجَا

Sing me a song in the hazaj mode which will increase
the passion of one who loves you.

There follows a charming conceit:

لاَ أَلْتُ مَتَّى مِنْ قُصْبِ الْرَّمَانِ رَمَاحًا
وَحَيْثُ هُجَا تَحْزِبُ مَلْتُ إِسْمَاحًا

Would that I were an apple, cut [hence emitting its fragrance] or a leaf of basil . . .

111 The double entendre is especially evident in a khamriyya by Abū Nuwās (p. 186): waw-khāt ta’ammā liyānī mutaṣarrīhan I ǧhānī’a ’amidī laqābī nasūkā nāblī; in Abū Nuwās’ verse nasūkā suggests intoxication with love as clearly as it does intoxication with wine.


113 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.
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.143 The ḥāmūya begins with the depiction of a man struggling against inebriation, and, as in poem (i) of this section (Bādīr ṣabūba-ka), sows the seed for the quotation of hemistich 1b of al-Aʿṣāʾa’s Muʿallaqa with the words ayyūba l-rajiʿ (lines 1–4)

[I often remember the man] who assaulted us with a choice [wine]-cups 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 (ayyūba l-rajiʿ)”.

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 ʿa (lākin taḥājja ʿan-ha an tuʾajjiza-hu) stands in direct contrast to the first hemistich of the penultimate line (18), fa-kharra muʿtaṣoṣan mimma tarāyasa-bu. 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 . . . arfaʾu-hu . . .) and, somewhat mischievously, to offer him more wine (9b, fa-qultu bal la-ka fi l-ṣabbaʿi taʾkhudhu-ba).

The third player in the poem is the singing-girl and it is her exchange with the ailing nadim that makes this poem both essentially similar to and distinct from Baṣṣār’s niʿmūya. Similarity lies in the nadim’s repeated requests for the mughammiya to sing; she obliges and is rapturously applauded (12, fa-ʾabsanat fihi . . . 15, ʾabsanat . . . 18, ʾabsanti yā Quṭal).144 There is thus an alternated exchange of quoted hemistichs/verses, through which the nadim 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 Baṣṣār’s poem, in which the final line quoted by the singing girl appears to accommodate the poet’s emotions: lā yaqtu-lu llāhu man ḏāmat mawaddatu-hu.

This analysis suggests that Abū Nuwās owed a literary debt to Baṣṣār 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 Baṣṣār and several khamriyyāt by Abū Nuwās.

**SEDUCTION AND MUSÝN**

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 nasib. In Imrūʾuʾ-ʾL-Qay’s Muʿallaqa, erotic adventure—the seduction of ʿUnayza—contrasts with the melancholy of the opening nine lines; even so, the end of the nasib recovers the mantle of a nostalgia more restrained in its exuberance. In al-Aʿṣāʾ 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:145

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143 For examples see Diwān Abū Nuwās, 109, 93, and 83.

144 Baṣṣār’s poem contains a similar series of laudatory phrases: l. 3, fa-qultu aṭrafba-nā yā zayna muḥlis-nā l fa-khāti inna-ka bi-l-iṣṣāni awlā-nā. For others see Diwān al-Aʿṣāʾ 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 
\textit{nasib} 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)

\begin{quote}
منْتَ الصَّيْنا على بَابِها \\
وجَدَتُ بِحَتْسِمٍ لَأَنْمَيْبَا \\
فَإِنْ نَكُونُ مَهَدَا لَنا
\end{quote}

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 bedecked 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 \textit{nasib}. An equally vivid but more 
detailed example of seduction in al-A\textsuperscript{'}s\textsuperscript{a} is quoted in el Tayeb's 
discussion of pre-Islamic poetry.\textsuperscript{143} Predictably this celebration is 
set after a conventionally rueful overture in which the poet rebukes 
himself about his love for Salm\textsuperscript{a}:	extsuperscript{144} “Go slow now! for too long 
you have been in awe of her” (\textit{aqṣīr fa-imma-ka ṭala-mā ī uḏī'ta fi 
\textit{i} ḥābi-hā).

The \textit{ba}’\textit{i}’\textit{yya} of Abū Dhu\textsuperscript{a}’yb al-Hudhali discussed at the 
beginning of this chapter (see “Developments in \textit{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

\textsuperscript{143} CHALUP 63–4. \textsuperscript{144} Diwān al-A’sā al-Kabīr, poem 39, line 3.
Khamr, Nasib and Ghazal

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

قَلْبَاهُ فَأَاخْذًا بِعَرُونَهَا
شُربَ الرُّمَيْفُ يَرَوْدُ مَاَالْخَضْرَ

I kissed her mouth whilst holding onto locks of her hair and [drank what seemed like the wine] of a drunken 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 muji‘in with regard to their literary structure.117 Her discussion of Abū Nuwās’ Ya 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 su‘ūbi 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 ... muji‘in is a counter-genre which plays a literary game by inverting the conventions of ‘normative’ ghazal and wasf 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 Bāṣṣār118 in which the poem begins by declaring his passion to a relentless censor—lawn 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 ḥabri tradition: love is fatal (4a, lā aktumun l-nāsā hubba qāṭilati; 5b, sāhibu-kum wa-l-jalilī muṭlaḍaru); love is divinely ordained (7b, wa-dhā hawan sāqa hāna-bu 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 content with no more than conversation and a glance: al-badīth wa-l-nazar. At line 12, however, the poem 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 gnar 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-Hindi’s diwān.119

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 Rabī‘a but simply attaches to this a bacchic envol.120

Abū Nuwās’ Ya Sāḥir al-Ṭarf

This khamriyya121 exhibits the consummation of balanced form and structure in the fusion of khamr and ghazal; it is also one of the

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120 See Dīwān, p. 75. Another poem by Muslim is discussed below (see “Conclusion: Muslim b. al-Walid and Abū Nuwās”).
121 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 definiteness of composition in terms of khamr and ghazal—are necessarily characterized by this narrative feature; see, for example, the bā‘iyya (Dīwān, 188) where the players in the poem simply have contrasting roles.
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 Saybān, but a land of the Banū Aḥrār,

A place where Khirā 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 inquisituous 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 Hamori has pointed this out. The context of this discussion is “Form and Logic in Some Medieval Poems”; he comments:

A charming and funny example of a . . . poem whose form is determined by a palinode is Yā Sābir al-Ṭarīf; it is cast in a familiar combination of ghazal and khamrīyya 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 provides a useful tool, though I have found it to be relevant only where one of the most conspicuous aspects of bādi‘ poetry is brought into play—antithesis. Tībāq underscores the structure of the poem. Our primary concern, therefore, should be to characterize the poem in terms of bādi‘—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.

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 bādi‘:

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

133 In Edebiyāt, 1 (1977).
134 This is set out in Form and Structure in the Poetry of al-Mu‘tamid ibn ‘Abbād (Leiden, 1974).
135 Ibid. 174.
136 Ibid. 175.

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.”

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

با ساحر الطرف أمَّ سُنْانٍ فِي الغَُفْرَاءِ لِئَلَّى عَبْنَكَ إِلَّا

First, it is apophasic, and, following the admonitions of al-‘Askari, it is not addressed at the audience; secondly, it contains tašfir—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 tašfir which, where it exists, emphasizes the independent entity of the hemistich. Thematically the line introduces the eye of the beloved as the focus of parallelism and rhetorical balancing in al-Mu‘tamid 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 Sābir al-Ṭarīf: (the first quote is from Ibn Rashiq)

“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” . . . ‘Askari, in his Kitāb al-Ṣinā‘atn, 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 ‘Askari 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-‘Askari: he is more specific (than Ibn Rashiq), 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 Abi al-Īṣba‘ comments [in Tahrīr al-Tahbīr] 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.”

117 Ibid. 16. 118 Ibid. 19. 119 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.\(^{40}\)

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-qlīb (1b) balances īlān (1b); line 2: muktataman (2a) balances tūbān (2b); line 4: jazza‘u-nī šiyā‘an (4a) contrasts wa-anta mimnā kāsā-nī l-‘abdu ṭaryān (4b). In line 3 the second hemistich explains and reinforces the first. Consider now lines 5 and 6:

\[\text{إِرَاحُ تَعَمُّلُ فِي قَرْنِي يَدَّرُ إِنَّكَ قَانُ مِنَ الْعَدُوِّ بِسُرْنَانَ \]

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 ghufrah), 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 ṣu‘ābiyya 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-Aṣhrāf) are a people free from the status quo represented by the

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 ṣu‘ābiyya 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 Kūsrā . . . 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:

\[\text{يَا لَٰتِينَةً طَلُونَتِ السَّعُودَ أَحْجَمُهَا قَبَانُتُ يَتَّفَقُّ الْسَّكَرَٰزُ سَكَرَٰزَ} \]

The first hemistich is a time topos—yā lawlatan; 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 (rubūbīn). 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‘ammatun contrasts zubmun wa-wa‘udwān; in line 21 the first hemistich describes emotion, whilst the second hemistich expands on zubmun wa-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.\(^{41}\)

The phrase ṣūرف lawli l-dahr comments specifically on lāyathun

\(^{40}\) This image also exists for wine, see Ḥāwī, Fann al-S̱īr al-Khamrī, 358 (quoted from Muslim b. al-Walid): wa-surfīn ruṣāfīyyatin qahwātin l tumītu l khmūnā wa-tubhāl l-sara‘ra.

\(^{41}\) See Labīd’s Mu‘allaga: innā l-manāyā lā tāṣiṣa shāmū-hā. The hemistich comments upon the death of an oryx calf slain by wolves (line 30b of al-Tibrizī’s recension).
ra'ā zabyan. 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-dabra waṣnūnu. 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 mimnā kasa-ni l-dabru ‘uryānu. In the last section, however, he is master of the situation—the lion whose attack upon the zaby prompts the gnomic envol.

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 a 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: habakta mimnī lādhi qad kāna wustānu.

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)\(^{144}\)
Religion/pseudo-religion ↔ Profanity

\(^{144}\) In line 4 the poet is passive to the surreal force of his enchanter: qad jaṣṣa’ta-ni šiyāna; in line 20, through the transforming passage of wine, he is active: habak-

Khamr, Nasib and Ghazal

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 sakhān—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 badi’: where anticipation-resolution (according to Scheindlin’s definition) is clear, the line is constructed around antithesis (tiḥaq)—one of the five main categories of badi’.\(^{44}\) In line 1 there is antithesis between sīr and i‘lām; there is also parallelism: yā sābira l-tarf = sirr l-qulūbi lādā ‘aynay-ka i‘lām, 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 muktataman and tībyān.

Line 3 sustains the eye motif and concentrates the essential antithesis which it governs into the phrase: tabāt l-sārā ‘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-li wa-mā-lā-ka introduces the contrasting depictions of the poet and the enchanter. Other elements of badi’ are fīnās (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 badi’ style; antithesis informs the poem and is resolved in the final and concluding metaphor.\(^{44}\)

\(^{44}\) The use of badi’ in Abū Nuwās is quite different from its use in the poetry of Muslim b. al-Walīd. In the latter’s diwan the artifices of badi’ 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 badi’ betraying or complementing the internal thematic and structural make-up of the poem. This process has already been seen to operate in his poem Twātāb-ni ‘alā šurbi ṣūḥābi (see “Intertextuality”) in which the delicate language complements the internal cross-references of the narrative. Badi’ is also evident in the antithetical pulse governing both the imagery and structure of Wa-muṣātī l-tarf (see “Emotional Contrast” under “Rejection of the Aftāl”).

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. 567) 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”.

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"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".144 Apposite to the ensuing commentary is a quotation from Hans Robert Jauss which outlines factors relevant to the expectations of an audience:145

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"146 has given a clear view of the motif's evolution from the Jāḥiliyya. Consistently it is used in the context of chastity, 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 'Abbāsid period and is frequently to be found in the amorous verse of al-'Abbās b. al-Āţrif, a line of whose poetry is quoted by Bürgel.147 The familiar norms of the motif are such that it is recognizable simply from its corollary features, that is the enchanting eyes.148 It is this corollary with which Abū Nuwās begins his poem and which is echoed by mention of the ṣāby in the closing hemistich. This elaborated use of the motif focuses the identity of the poet's paramour and sharpens the contrast between the poem's chaste overtone 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 dālīyya149 with the maṭla', rubba ghazālīm; it is a light-hearted piece which includes an amusing joke: in line 4 the gazelle (Abū Nuwās' young male companion) is assured:

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

The young "fawn" is described in the 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:

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):

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 Yaḥ sābir 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'khudhā-hā (come let us take [the wine])150 must be understood to follow the gazelle's defiant utterance; the poet invites the gazelle to wine,

146 JAL, 201/ (1989), 1-11.
147 Ibid. 5.
148 This is amply evinced by the corpus of Andalusian muwāṣṣašāhs. See my "Thematic Patternning in the Muwāṣṣašāhs: The Case of the Gazelle Motif", in Poesia Estrofica (Madrid, 1991), 201-16.
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:

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-ṭarf’ 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-ṭarf (possessed of a violent glance) which leaves traces on all that he sets his eyes on, even rock; 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:

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 (tārā la-bā l-sharārā) (6–7). Description of the wine in lines 8 and 9 echoes aspects of lines 1–5:

Based on the similarity of images the wine and the boy coalesce in the final line (13):

He gives us pure wine to drink and a face like the moon appearing through the clouds.

Another more complex qaṣīda, beginning saqā līlāhu zabyan, havers between a tone that approximates to that of the poetry of ‘Abbās b. al-Āḥaf, 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, on the other. It is a

144 Diwān, 188.
154 Other examples of the adaptation of the gazelle motif to the bacchic context are to be found in: the jinniya, Diwān, 163; the rā’iya, pp. 100–15; the simyia, p. 106; the rā’iya, p. 125. All in differing ways exploit the resonances of the motif.
156 Abū Nuwas himself gives us licence to do this elsewhere in his diwān; for he draws attention in one short (6-line) composition to the nature of his exploits in other poems: a-mā wa-lāhū [la’u] tasma ʾa ʿu ma qultu mina l-ʾa’ti (Diwān, 199). Further, it is the audience’s knowledge of his diwān as a whole that he relies on in such as the following closing line, which refers to the effects of wine: wa-lāḥū laya bi-lāqin ʾa ʾba nantagamin ʾi līlā ram-ḥu bi-tafriq wa-tṣaʿi (Diwān, 48).
poem held together in various ways by internal echoing: the imprecation saqā ẖābu occurs twice (at line 1 and 3); 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-saγy ẖa-li-aγma-n maγat. Each imprecation is offset by a desire for future fulfilment, thus infusing an 'udhrī quality into bacchism:

Line 1: Saqā ẖābu ẖābaγan; desire: (6b) La-ẖāda bi-ważlīn dā'-imn ẖāhira l-ḏabri.

Line 8: Saqā ẖābu ayuγan; desire: (22b) A-lā layta-bā' ẖāda wa-ḏamāt i-l-ẖašri.

The qaṣīda is essentially bipartite: part (i) comprises the description of the ẖābaγ (lines 1–7); the intensity of the poet’s love implicit in the motif itself leads to the exhaustion of his saγ (patience) in line 5; this foreshadows mention of the folly of love (junūn al-ḥubb) in the penultimate line (21).158 Part (ii) makes up the bacchic scene (lines 8–22); it is introduced as a separate section with the signature phrase saqā ẖābu. In line 12, echoing a feature of the ẖābaγ (bi-ẖaγay-bī siẖrjun ẖābirun), a singing-girl plays a lute that utters enchantment (or is made able to speak by magic): yaγtuγu bi-l-siẖr. 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 ẖābaγ’s teeth in line 4 are like the bubbles of wine (ka-aγma-bu ṣḥābun 'uqārīn); (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-ẖádan bāγaγ baγdan (fa-ẖādaγ dūmī-u-hu l-ẖāla l-ẖbaγdí ka-l-muγrāmān ẖālā l-ẖašri). Drawing on his own experience (‘ilman bi-mā yūrithe b-l-baγu) the poet concludes lucidly that the madness of love is a feverish passion. It is the word junūn, in the following hemistic, which summarizes the tension between two distinct types of love: ideal love, equal to the beloved’s enchantment (siẖr) (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: wa-yiẖafa ka-l-ghulāmī tǎshuḥu li-l-amayn . . . (p. 191).159

158 See the occurrence of both saγ and junūn in close association: fa-kiγā nima bālāwati laγ-bi n-nūmānu wa-lam nasṭī li-manṣg-bi ẖābaγ (Dīwān, p. 124, line 7; the verb nasṭī given in the Dīwān has been emended to nasṭī for metrical reasons).

159 The following quotation from al-Abbās b. al-ʿAbnāf 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-ʿAbnāf, ed. ʿĀṭīka l-Khazārajī, p. 98): wa-tuḥaddaḥaγ-tī yā saγtu laγbaγa fā-siẖr junūn fa-ṣaγtu fī maḥτun tuḥadduγ ka yā saγtu . . . baγu-baγu baγu-un l-wu l-qalbu bγyγaγ-hu b-layla l-baγu l-qalbu wa-yiḥaγaγ-hu b-layla l-baγu bγyγaγ-hu.
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-Aḥnāf’s poetry; 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 sābiḥa l-tarṣīt anta l-dāhara waslānu is analogous to al-‘Abbās’ ghazalūn gharirun fātiru l-tarṣīt sābiru-bu; whilst Abū Nuwās’ sirr al-ṣulūbi lādā ‘aynay-kā t-lānū has its equivalent (if only on a purely lexical level) in al-‘Abbās’ fa-thiqī fa-anti a-rafu mimnī l-bi-hifżān fī l-sirr wa-l-t-lānī. 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-Walid 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 Jīla al-Yaṣḵūrī (d. 837/702) in a relevant poem describes a sāqa in impassioned terms, but there is no reference to sexual requital. The mājūm of Kūfā, Ṭammār Dhū l-Khābār in a poem contained in the Aḥānī celebrates a number of young gazelles who have captivated him; in view of his shameless candour (mujān) elsewhere one might expect more than this conventionally frustrated depiction of love, typified by the final line of the poem: yumānima l-baṭṭīla wa-yajadna llaḥābi guṇa-bu (They instil hope for vain pleasures, then deny what they have promised).

More significantly, Muslim b. al-Walid’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

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164 See ibid. 31, 33, 120-1, 150.  165 See ibid. p. 150, poem 287.
ghazal, but the two are never interdependently fused into a single narrative.\textsuperscript{165} Muslim’s qaṣida lāmiyya, Adīra ‘alayya l-rābi,\textsuperscript{166} illustrates the point well. It is an independent khamriyya with substantive elements of ghazal. Ḥāwī has discussed the poem in detail in Fann al-Sīr al-Ḥāwī (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 qaṣida, 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 qaṣida in al-Daḥhān’s edition of the Dīwān states somewhat symptomatically, “wa-qāla ayyān yataghazzallu wa-yasīṣu l-khamr”. The first line is as follows:

\begin{align*}
\text{إِدِّرَا علىُ الزَّارِحِ لَا نَسْخُرُ قُبْلِيَّةً وَلاَ أَطْلَبُ مِنَ عِيدِ قَافِتَيْيَ دَجَّلُي}
\end{align*}

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

The poem begins as a khamriyya and in the standard posture of rejecting love (and 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 18–7 are ghazal (the poet has been slain by his beloved); lines 8–22 are wasf al-khamr (wine is personified consistently as a feminine agent); lines 23–27 are wasf 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:

\begin{align*}
\text{امَّاتَ دُخُوَّتُا مِنْ خَيْرَاءٍ قَرْبَيْنِ وَقَاتَتَ فَعَلُّتُ بَذَالٌ وَلَا دَحَّلُ}
\end{align*}

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

\textsuperscript{165} This conclusion is drawn from the independent khamriyyat that are extant in his dīwān. Much of his wine poetry survives in full panegyrical qaṣidas, such as those discussed in ch. 2.

\textsuperscript{166} Dīwān, 33; al-Raqīq al-Nadīm, Qub al-Surūr, 160.

The first hemistich of line 17 above and line 4:

\begin{align*}
\text{أَمَّاتَ وَأَحْيَتْ مُحْتَجِزٌ فِيهِ عَدَّلَتَا مُفَلَّتَةً بَيْنَ السَّوْافِيَ وَالْمَغْلُولٌ}
\end{align*}

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

Lines 5 and 10:

\begin{align*}
\text{مَا نَلَّتْ نَهَا نَعْلَا غَيْرَ أَنْيُ بِشَحْوِ المَخْيَبِ اذْكَرَنا سَلَفُوا قَلِي}
\end{align*}

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

\begin{align*}
\text{قَدْ نَفَسَ النَّورُ عَلَى مَعْنُوُهُ وَسَرَطَنَ الْمَمَوْفُوُهُ أَلْسَنَةَ الْبَحْلِ}
\end{align*}

She [the wine] distracts the soul of a man from that which troubles him, and makes miserly tongues speak generously.\textsuperscript{167}

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 qaṣida: 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 nasib of the earliest pieces we have examined (cf. al-A’ṣā). The pleasing figurative link between the images of 18 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 ‘udhri but they are not undercut; rather they are simply offset by the ensuing tone of the piece.

\textsuperscript{167} That bukhl is treated figuratively to characterize unreciprocated love is shown more clearly in an apparently anonymous verse contained in al-Daḥhān’s note to line 1: wa-nmi wa-in kānat ‘alayya bukhiṭaṭan ya'aẓu ‘alayya an tu‘adhiḥhobh mn qill (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 Tuʿāṭiḥu-ni ʿalā surbi šṭābāḥ (see pp. 52–7) and Yā sābīr al-tarf (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, ʿAjāʾi-ni wa-āblāʾi tadbakku-ru man abūā,176 divides broadly into description of the wine and the sāq; these are placed in a vivid setting (the tavern of a ḍīḥān (line 4)) and a patchwork of emotions (especially the beginning and end). The first three lines present a powerful emotional keynote:


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 wafq who is neither dead nor alive.

In the first line Abū Nuwās speaks of his own state; he is in love (abūā) and suffers affliction (balwā); it is clear, therefore, that in the following two lines he speaks of himself, reiterating his love (the root balwā is employed in each line) due to which he is in a state of limbo: ʿālamu wa-lā yahyā. The wine scene begins at line 4; at line 14 the sāq is described with qualities akin to those of the much-cited gazelle: wa-sāqin ghariri l-ṭarṣī wa-l-dalli ṣāfin. The poet observes the activities of the sāq and the indulgence of the mughānni 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 key terms of the poem’s emotional prelude: (18 and 21)

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” (iṣāra) 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 baḥwā. The poet is clearly sensitive to the constituent parts of the piece since an image of love (line 3) ṣāfīnu wa-lā yahyā is reiterated in the description of the effects of wine upon the carousers: (line 13) fa-anfusu-hum abyu wa-aṣādhu-hum maḥwā.

The poem is akin to those others analysed above in that the imagery of “courty” love (line 14: wa-sāqin ghariri l-ṭarṣī wa-l-dalli ṣāfin) 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 (baḥwā and balwā) whilst it conforms to a generality to the extent that it can be seen to present an emotional dichotomy.

Muslim’s lā taḥlubā min ḍinda qaṭlātī dhabīl is picked up in the bacchic section by (17b) fa-lam tuṭāb bi-tablin wa-lā dhabīl. Whilst this feature cements the figurative connection between love and wine, there is no specific narrative significance. Conversely, Abū Nuwās’ iṣāratu man tāḥwā ilā kullī mā tāḥwā suggests the negation of ʿajāʾi-ni wa-āblāʾi tadbakkurru man abūā in a specific context; that is, the connection between the images sharpens the narrative dimension of the bacchic tableau.

176 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). Ghaẓālī 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.

177 The above attempt to differentiate between Abū Nuwās and Muslim is to a certain extent corroborated by al-Buḫtuṣri, 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. 157.)
Islam and al-Dahr in the Khamriyya

THE QAṢĪḌA

The Jāhiliyya

Hikma—an important category of poetry—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 qaṣīḍa such as Zuhayr b. Abi Sulmā's Mu'allaqa is unusual in this respect. In many places hikma is implicit rather than explicit; Labid's hemistic: inna l-manāsī lā tāṣīṣu sabāmā-hā sums up the essential message of the extended simile of the oryx, yet the message would not be entirely lost if it were not uttered. This chapter focuses on existential hikma, underpinned by al-dahr, where the aphorisms and

ruminations of the poet express a pervasive heroic-cum-pessimistic resignation.

It is no novelty to speak of revelling in wine as an “existentialist” statement juxtaposed with some motif of pessimistic hikma; in A. M. Ḥūf's al-Hāyāt al-'Arabiyya fī l-Šī' ī 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 Ṭarafā 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:

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.

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

Wine today! Tomorrow affairs will be clear; 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

The existence of ḥikma as a substrate of a full poem is identified by Heinrichs in a poem by Abū Dhi'ayb al-Hudhali (Heinrichs, "Literary Theory", p. 44) "Abū Dhi'ayb greatly enhances the vigor of his poem by using a sort of refrain: wāl-dahrū lā ya'ṭu 'alā budāthām-hū ... nobody can withstand the vicissitudes of time, not an onager [v. 13] ... not a young bull [v. 36] ... not a mail-clad man [v. 49]." Heinrichs appears to identify the gnostic element as a nasb 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).

See above, p. 8.

al-Bayān wa-l-Tabyīn, v/187.

A similar notion is contained in one of the two bacchic pieces included in Abū Ṭammām's Ḥarrāsā (see Burj b. Mushir al-Ṭā'ī, pp. 76-8); curiously it is contained in the bāb al-nasib.

The celebrated utterance of Imrū'u l-Qays: al-yawma khamrun wa-ghadan amran.

1 Some of the following material has appeared in my "Khamr and Ḥikma in Jāḥili Poetry", JAI 20/2 (1989), 97-114.

2 J. E. Montgomery includes hikma in his list of the seven principal "movements" of pre-Islamic poetry; see "Dichotomy in Jāḥili Poetry", JAI 17 (1985), 1-20.

3 Also unusual is poem 116 of the Muṭaffalātīyyāt by 'Abd Qays b. Khufāf in which the poet seeks to educate his son and provides what approximates to a manifesto of murraca.

4 See Mu'allaqa, line 396 of al-Tībīrī's recension.

5 al-Maḥṣūr, al-Manūn, al-Zamān, al-Layāli, al-Huwaydīth, etc. are all corollaries of al-Dahr and share its significance. However, the varying semantics of some of these terms in certain contexts is discussed by Rosenthal in "Sweeter than Hope": Complaint and Hope in Medieval Islam (Leiden, 1983), 44ff; see also A. Arazi, 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 Abdesselem's Le Thème de la mort dans la poésie arabe des origines à la fin du IIIème/I Xème siècle (Tunis, 1977).
Fate is effectively forestalled. The second excerpt is attributed to Suhraym b. Warthil:"


Hadrā 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 Hadrā’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 'Adi 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 'ibādi who lived at Hira’), 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 af alāl to comment on the inexorable approach of death. In one piece, developing the af alāl motif he describes a scene by some graves—they are animated and speak, awakening man’s apathy:"

13 al-Bayān wāl-Tahiyin, 3/434.

See El, i. 1966: “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 (‘ibādi).”


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

Even harāc mountains cannot outlast Fate and its depredations (khaqāb 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 (dabrán), trusting restfully in their lot (min dabr Hil). 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 (amārā dabrān bi-‘ayyish ḥasanīn) then being the prime mover in its destruction (akhma‘a l-dabr 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.

The ubi sunt topos is akin to the sentiments of the poem above; ‘Adi b. Zayd provides one of the earliest examples of the figure of Kisorā as a proverbial reminder of ephemeral opulence:

Where is Kisorā Anūsilwān, king of kings, and Sābūr who came before him.”

4 The phrase ka-zhāka l-dahr (line 7a) may be alluded to in Abū Nuwās‘ Yā Sāhir al-Far by the phrase ka-zhāka sa‘afū l-dabr al-beṣām. “Dīwān, p. 87.

5 Kisorā Anūsilwān’s dates are AD 531–79 (see El, vi. 184), i.e. ‘Adi 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. 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-Atāhīya.

In Ṭarafa b. al-ʿAbd the only extensive element of khams survives in the Muʿallaqa.5 The wine section is introduced by three lines of fakhir (43–5). His self-vaulting (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 fakhir with a common motif of generosity:

\[
\text{مَثَّلَتْ نَفْسِي أُصِبْحِكَ كَأَسِهِ زَوْيةَ وَإِنْ كُنتَ عَنْهَا غَالِبًا فَاغْفِرُ وَارْدِ}
\]

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 fakhir 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-Nuʿmān III in about AD 600. For Sābūr see EI, iv. 312: “Shāqūr (P.), Arabic Sābūr (the form Shābahūr in a verse of al-Aṣ‘āf . . . is nearer the Pahlavi Shēbhūrē), the name of several members of the Sāsānḏ dynasty. The three Persian kings of this name have associations with Muslim tradition.” The last Sābūr died in AD 387.

5 For example Dīwān Abī Nuṣayr, 771: fa-ḥalli bīzul-hū fā qārī kāṣrī mubāḥātīrī il-ṭaṣāwīrī wādī-nashīrī il-muṣawwāratīrī bī-yūnī jundī kisrā il-ṣurūqī fī ṣurūqī il-ṭanḍarūnī il-jundī ṭaṣīrū ṣuṣārī bī-al-muʿānī wādī-ḥitiyatin ḍaqārī.

6 See for example Dīwān Abī Nuṣayr, 414: aṣmāl ḍuqārī bānū ḍuqārī il-ṭaṣāwīrī wādī-nashīrī il-muṣawwāratīrī bī-yūnī jundī kisrā il-ṣurūqī il-ṭanḍarūnī il-jundī ṭaṣīrū ṣuṣārī bī-al-muʿānī wādī-ḥitiyatin ḍaqārī.

7 See Sād al-Qaṣīd il-ʿĀṣ il-l-Tibrīzī, 5b–9b.

Islam and al-Dahr in the Khamriyya

Should I nor, 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:

\[
\text{إِنْ كُنتُ لَا تَطْمِعُ دُعَّةَ مَنْيَيْنَ فَحُميُّ لَدْنَا يَا مُكَتْ بَكَتُ يَدْ}
\]

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 ʿabādir-hā can refer either to the pleasures (al-ladhdhār) of the previous line (as is the case in our translation) or to “death” (manyyati). 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. In 61–2 comes a crystallization of Ṭarafa’s philosophy:

\[
\text{فَحْمَيْنَ فَاحْمَيْنَ فِي حَبَيْنَ هَوْيُ، مَحَافِظَةُ تُرَبُّ في حُبَيْنَةَ مُتَمَّدُ كَرِيمُ ّمُنْدُ نَمْفَهُ، نَفْسَهُ إِلَيْهَا ُمَا مُعَذَّبُ}
\]

Let me quench the owl’s 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 jāhili Weltanschauung. Whilst he offers the clearest and most direct expression of carpe diem in the jāhili corpus, other poets allow a similar notion to emerge from an essential contrast—between celebration (self-vaulting or nostalgic) and pessimism—that governs

8 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 Imruʾuʾ l-Qaysʾ discourse (see Dīwān Imruʾuʾ l-Qaysʾ, Beirut edition, pp. 132, 143, and 150); 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 qaṣīda from Ibn Maymūn’s Muntakhab l-Talab (see Qaṣāʾid Jāhiliyya Nādira, p. 12b, lines 25–29) where the lines come as a celebration of life after z despondent nāsīb.

9 For an explanation of this belief see Humérin’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-Talab*, Zuhayr b. Masʿūd 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*:

*فَقَرَّتْ هِمَتِي بِالْغَزَّةٍ الْمَسِيْرَةُ
والدَّهِرُ مَنْ تَنْفَعُ وَمَنْ يَعْسِبُ
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-Aʿṣā (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 *ghzal*: 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-Aʿṣā 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-vaultingly on how he has already enjoyed the company of beautiful women (5 and 6). al-Aʿṣā 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 imbied 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:

*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:

*Qaṣī’dā Jāḥiliyya Nādira, p. 90; Muntahā l-Talab, fac. edn. 3, 304.*
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 Sulma’s Mu’allaqa:

وَإِنَّ سَمَّىَ الْمَلَأُ لَا حَلَّمَ بُعْدَهُ وَإِنَّ الْقَمَّ مَا يَعْبُدُ السَّمَّاءَ يُحَلَّ

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 Jāhibiyya the ground plan of a tension that emerged— Influenced by a changing socio-religious ethic—in the early Islamic period between khāmr and defiance and khāmr and ḥilmal-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 nasib (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 khāmr and ḥikma al-dahr: (i) the survival of the type of treatment already shown to have existed in the Jāhibiyya, where bacchism is affected by the pessimistic subtext of the composite qaṣida; (ii) the adaptation of the gnōmē for the literary “games” of ’Abbāsid court poetry, from which emerge two conflicting and urgent views of Time (see below, “Two Orders”); (iii) the opposite impulse to that offered by the ancient gnōmē: the assumption of ḥilm and the expression of abstinance/al-tawba (see ch. 4). Below we are concerned initially with the first of these categories.

Two of the best representatives of the Jāhibi tradition in later periods are the Umayyad al-Akhtar, and the ’Abbāsid Muslim b. al-Walid. Both poets evince the existence of pessimism as an essential undercurrent of the composite ode.

Al-Akhtar (d. c. 710)

The quality of al-Akhtar’s poetry in general is best considered with an eye to his most illustrious predecessors. From such a perspective,  ḥikma, with its full role in the qaṣida, can be seen to function in the same way as it does in the earliest poetry.

A notable aspect of al-Akhtar’s poetic artistry is his development of some of the tableaux of jāhibi poetry. He built on and intensified the details of the ancient, repeating images and vivid 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 qaṣidas (a rā’iyya and a lāmiyya) treat the oryx in a manner highly reminiscent of its treatment in a rā’iyya by al-Nābiha and a lāmiyya by Labid, respectively. Indeed the treatment of the animal in the Umayyad poet’s rā’iyya must be viewed as a mu’āraḍa of the relevant section of al-Nābiha’s poem. One aspect of the rā’iyya of al-Akhtar that is worthy of note is that it follows, as a single composition, a certain thematic progression, absent from al-Nābiha’s poem, which is not dissimilar to that of Labid’s Mu’allaqa: at-tāl’ → waṣīf al-nāqa (in which the extended simile of the orxy is contained) → khāmr as part of fakhr → fakhr and mādîh al-qabil (praise of the tribe). Labid’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 qaṣida by Zuhayr b. Maṣūd 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.

ibid., 148–62.
See Dīwān Labīd, ed. Ḥamīd al-Qābāwī (Beirut, 1979), 377–477 (of Arabic text).
For a full discussion of al-Akhtar’s debt to the two jāhibi poets in the treatment of the orxy, see my ’Labīd, al-Nābiha, al-Akhtar 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)

\[ \text{أَمَّانَّآ مِّنَ الْحَرْبِ} \]

→ (Lines 20–1)

\[ \text{فِي نَفْشِهِ} \]

In al-Akḥṭal's rā'īyya 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-Akḥṭal 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)

\[ \text{كَأَلْتُ مُنْ تَنَأَّرُ الْقُرْصُ} \]

The view that al-Akḥṭal was familiar with and liked the juxtaposition is supported by the fact that he used it again in the aforesaid lāmīyya 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:

\[ \text{وَفَقَدْ أَسْبَعْتُ إِلَيْهَا الْدَّهْرَ أَعْصَرَةً} \]

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:

\[ \text{وَقَدْ أَكَوَّنِي عَمْيَةً} \]

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 akūmu 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

minni šabābī ba'da ladhādhāti-bi l ka-annamā kāna ḏayfān nāzīlan raḥalā. Didacticism is reiterated four lines after the bacchic vignette:

\[ \text{وَلَبِينَّا الْحَرْبَ مَعْمُوتَ بَنَّا} \]

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 persuasive sense of resignation. The bare sequence oryx → khamr is scarcely diminished. The same sequence, I would suggest, is discernible in Labi'd's lengthy, 92-line lāmīyya: nasīb, lines 1–4 → raḥil (wasf 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 hikma (resolution towards piety and abstinence) → 62–70 raḥil as resolution and consolation → 71–92 madd al-qabila.

If in al-Akḥṭal's lāmīyya the gnomic aspect of khamr emerges from the poem's subtext, as in the earlier qaṣīda by Zuhayr b. Mas'ūd, in other poems it is more direct. al-Akḥṭal's rā'īyya,11 in praise of Jīdhār b. 'Abbād al-Taghlibī, begins with five lines of khamr.12 He begins by addressing the 'ādhīl; 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:

\[ \text{أَعَادَلَتْ} \]

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

On the other 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 azārū'/ was-lā uzārū' 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.

12 In this respect the qaṣīda is similar to another qaṣīda by al-Akḥṭal, namely the rā'īyya in praise of 'Abbās b. Muḥammad b. 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās, which begins with 10 lines of khamr.
The present, as described in this line, contrasts with the past where Fate had a different role: (line 14)

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

The poem contains a short rabīl and thereafter proceeds to an extensive section of madīth. 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 qāṣida 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:

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-mانiyya and ka’s al-mu‘ām). The metaphor is continued in line 6 where the poet flirts with al-dahr:

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 enforced by its corollary, Time (al-zaman/al-layâl):

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 madīth of Hārūn al-Rashid.”
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 Divān to treat khamr and hikma jointly, is that the formality of this type of poetry in effect gave hikma 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 ‘Abbāsid 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 expository mood. Such is the case in a well-rounded fragment by Abū l-Hindi:40

اسب علیت فلائل من ندمتها
لیستربنا فی الیمن بنیوانا
لأصرفنا بالخرم بهدننا
ودره مبنیحا فولنوا مرن
وقد عهدت الناس إذ دهنمو

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. Yazid’s famous khamriyya:41

اعلم عيده الهوم بالطریب ولا علم عيده الدهر باينة العبة
وامتعفي العيش في عصارةهما لا تعفى منه أنار محتممle

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

40 Divān, 54.
41 Divān, poem 3, p. 17.

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.42

Much material could be added to demonstrate the spirit of mubādara and the commonplace treatment of al-dahr in the ‘Abbāsid period.43 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 anni ghayru bāqm44 (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 anni ghayru mab’ūthin li-l-nāri (I know for sure that I will not be sent to Hell-fire).45

Two orders46

In Chapter 1 (pp. 72–3) it was observed how the antithetical structure of Yā sābir al-tarf 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

40 The use of the imperative is a dominant feature of Abū Nuwās’ khamriyyāt, especially at the beginning of poems.
41 See the chapter on al-Mubādara ilā l-khamr in Qūṭ al-Surūr.
42 Divān, 337.
43 Divān, poem 43, p. 63, line 7.
44 Some of the material in this section has appeared in my article “Perspectives of a Hamriyya”, 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 Ābū 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 zuhdyyāt of Ābū l-ʿĀthārīya (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 gnomic spirit of the old world-view. 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 Ābū 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.

Like Marvell’s “To His Coy Mistress” Ābū Nuwās’ Yā sāḥīr al-ṭarf can be seen to be seeking out “a set of inter-discursive relations that the poem . . . cannot ignore—a collision between asceticism/religious accommodation and humanism”. The qaṣīda 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 Ābū l-ʿĀthārīya 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, Ābū 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 Ābū Nuwās and Ābū l-ʿĀthārīya 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 ʿAbbāsid period by such as the aforesaid poets.

In Yā sāḥīr al-ṭarf Ābū Nuwās contrives a ruse: wine is excused by appealing to ḡufrān (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-ʾĀkīl written an article in al-Ḥilāl comparing Ābū Nuwās to the profligate companion and confidant of Charles II, John Wilmore, the Earl of Rochester. He posits that the period in which Rochester lived was “very similar to ʿAbbāsid society in which [Ābū Nuwās lived]. The dominant mode of thought was doubt.” See “al-Ḥubb fi Ḥayāt Ābī Nuwās”, pp. 127–37. In the same volume Aḥmad Zaki Ābī Sādi’s “al-Dirāshṭ al-Ṣūraḥ fi Ṣūrāhi Ābī Nuwās” makes a similar point (pp. 167–73). Ingrams also discusses briefly the similarity between Rochester and Ābū Nuwās in Ābī Nuwās in Life and Legend (Mauritius, 1933) p. iii.

Belsey, op. cit., 111–19.

The language of his poetry is often reminiscent of the language of nasīb. See below, “ʿĀbū l-ʿĀthārīya and Traditional Imagery”. For an important discussion of the more political (and personal) aspects of his poetry see: M. A. A. el Kaffray and J. D. Latham, “Perspective of Ābī l-ʿĀthārīya”, Islamic Quarterly, 17 (1973), 160–76.
Jāthiya: wa-qālā mā hiya illā ḥayātu-nā l-dunyā nāmitu wa-nābyā wa-mā yuhfīkū-nā illā l-dahrū wa-mā l-a-n-bum bi-dhālikīn 'ilmin in bum illā yāsīnnana. (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.) The verse reports the speech of the Kāfīrīn 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 Qurʾān. Though Islam came to embrace al-dahr, 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 khamrīyya which begins 'Afā I-musalla. 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 superseded by the communal exigencies of Islam and its transcendental cosmology. As is the case even in the 'Abbāsid poet Abū l-ʿAṭāhīya, 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 raḥīyya by Abū Jildā al-ʿAskurī (d. 686), A-lā rukbā yaumīm lī bi-Bustīn wa-laylatīn. The poem offers a simple dichotomy between reminiscence of pleasures past and religious repentance (tawba). Broadly it is a division between fakhr and ĥikma→zuhd. Initial fakhr is pinned to the old order in its preoccupation with the glory of the tribe: (line 2)

I was once made rich by a choice wine, [I was] noble, one of the illustrious men of ʿAskur.

Line 4 rings the changes:

Fadhili ḥakīma lī ṣabīb ṭalalī

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 naʾīm is a word of important resonance in the Qurʾān, where it signifies the pleasures of the hereafter only, here it still signifies what it did in fākhī poetry, namely the pleasures of this life. In the following line the values expressed are subsumed by ḥilm—the most mature quality of the ancients: fa-rāja a-ni ḥilmī. In line 6 ḥilm is qualified by qāṣī. 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 naʾīm and tawāqqūr:

I will haste towards piety and knowledge, having hastened towards foolish errancy.

Whilst ancient ḥilm might subsume ḥilm and eschew ghawāya,

“Agbānī, 11/510.

See A. Jones’s comments on the use of this word in a poem by al-Aswād b. Yaʿīr (Early Arabic Poetry, ii. 145, line 14).

Qāṣ ṣal-sābil is a Qurʾānic term for moral rectitude; see Qurʾān, 16 (al-Nahl).
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."

al-Akhta’s Fi l-ḥayāt wa-l-maut evinces the survival of this ancient ethos well into the Umayyad period. It contains the gnomic catalyst to both ancient heroism and ’Abbāsīd zuhdītuqī” and yet, being free from the demands of decorum imposed by the panegyric, 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 qāṣīda was often arranged in such a way that ḥakār, ḥikma, and nasīḥīgazal mutually interacted to produce a patchwork of moods and themes (see, for example, al-A’sā, poem 4). Such is the thematic fabric of this qāṣīda.

The poet begins by addressing two censurers (line 1) and lauding his own generosity (line 2: dhara-ni tajud kaffi bi-māli). 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-Akhta depicts his grave after his death and the distress of the women that mourn him (abkaytu . . . kulla karimaṭin . . . qānmat musaaqaqaqtun ‘tālā). 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)

Let me be, for my wealth will not forestall my death—I see no living person with a lock [that can preserve] his soul.

49 Hamori, On the Art of Medieval Arabic Literature, 10. Sperl also sees this attitude as essential to the spirit of the Jāhiliyya (see Manners in Arabic Poetry, 76).

50 How piety is supported by ancient wisdom will be shown in a brief résumé of Abī l-‘Arabiyah’s “Lisan al-jalahin” below (p. 118).

51 Panegyrics of the Umayyad period tended to laud the mamlūk in terms of Islam; to give just two examples, in a dālīya in praise of Mu‘awiyah b. Hiṣam Jārī says (Du‘dat, ed. Ḥāwī, p. 183): ḍa Mu‘awyyat al-ranṣūrum naa la-hu i dinan waḥšiyan waqafan ḍayra ḍayyūk; in another qāṣīda in praise of As‘āb b. Sulaymān b. Abī al-Malik he says (ibid., 53): allahu faḍḍal-hu wa-lākhu waqaqa-lhu i tasfīla Yūsufa sib waṣṣā-hu Ya’qūb.
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 Baṣṣār b. Burd (d. 783) with which he responded when the 'Abbāsid Caliph al-Mahdī forbade him from composing and publicizing his love poetry:"

(1) Allah wula rasa Allāhi lama a‘a‘umub ma
By God, were it not for the Caliph's good pleasure, I would not have done violence to myself under any stress [sajan].

In line 3 the poet consoles himself with wine:

fa‘arub ‘alā bi ‘a‘um wa‘ma fa‘arub ‘alā bi ‘a‘um
So drink [wine], in spite of time's cross-grainedness (ubnati l-zamān), 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 Baṣṣār and allows one to detect the irony latent in the treatment of other motifs. Line 8 articulates the Caliph's stricture:

lam nā‘a‘um Allāhi fa‘aruba‘an
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: laṣya bi-bāqin say‘un ‘alā l-zamān) and the new order of Islamic dogma (in 9a): fa-l-hamdu li-llāhi l-sārika la-hu. Whilst the line is opposite in summing up the poet's plight, to which


(3) The meaning of the second hemistich appears to be, "[love] would not have caused me grief."

(4) For ubna Lane gives "A knot in wood, or in a branch; . . . A fault, defect, or blench 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-zaman) 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 ‘Abbāsid Period

More illustrative of altering perceptions is a qaṣīda by Abū l-‘Atāhiya in praise of the ‘Abbāsid Caliph al-Hādī." The poem begins with nostalgic celebration of erstwhile pleasures; the mode of depiction is traditional, with the occasional inclusion of Islamic language and imagery.3

The first line is borrowed almost word for word from the ancient corpus:

\[
\text{لَهَا عَلَى الْزَّلَٰلِ الْفَضْرَمِ وَالْسَّدِيرِ}
\]

Alas for the short time [we spent] between [the palaces] of al-Khawarnaq and al-Sadir.

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-Sadir4 were referred to in the same manner by the mukhādram poet al-Munakḥkhal al-Yaṣkūrī,5 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 madīb. These sections underscore an essential contrast discernible from a comparison of lines 3 and 18; in line 3 the poet describes himself amongst youths who malakū ‘ināna l-dabri (possessed the reins of Time);6 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:

\[
\text{وَإِلَى أَمِينِ الْقُلُوبِ مَهَّدِ}
\]

In Amin, 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 divān as a whole when seen in its historical and literary context. That is to say the qaṣīda illustrates the change in worldview 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 zubdiyyat evolved from a specific personal, literary, and socio-religious backdrop.

If we consider Abū Nuwās’ ‘Afā l-muṣallā in conjunction with another zubdiyya, Abū l-‘Atāhiya’s Li-man ṣalalun (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 din lead to indulgence in wine beyond the pale of society’s recognized ethical framework.7 Like a šūfṭ 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.

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6 See Arberry’s notes to lines 2, 10, and 14.
7 Al-Khawarnaq and al-Sadīr had been palaces of the Lakhmids outside al-Ḥira. Their abandonment was proverbial.
8 See Agbānī, 21/9. See also line 9 of poem 44 of the Mufāḍḍaliyya by al-Aswad b. Ya’far.
9 This line constitutes a topos and is reminiscent of line 8 of Abū Nuwās’ Da’ ar-ka laumi (Diwaḥ Abū Nuwās, p. 6): dār r alalī fīyatīn dāna l-zamāna la-hum fa-mā yuṣību-humā lā dī bi-mā iā’u. The situation is reminiscent to one described by Sperl in his discussion of Abū l-‘Atāhiya (see Sperl, Mannerum, pp. 76–7).


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 

**hikma** supersedes the authority of religion which is now as an eroded trace. The lines culminate in the poet’s exhaustion of patience: 

\[ ablattu sabran lam yubli-hi abadu \] (line 9a). 

**Sabr**, of course, is part of 

**hikma**, and hence of 

**muruwa**; it was also a quality lauded in the Qur’an 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 

\[ zuhdyyat. \]

The exhaustion of **sabr**, therefore, emphasizes the decline of 

**muruwa** and **din**; the lost significance of religion is reiterated obliquely in the following verse:

\[ kada bihi ana ruzhat anha \]

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 **hikma** 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 . . . 

**mimiya**), and the reconstituted validity of ancient **hikma** (araiba l-

**zamān**).

There is an analysis of this poem by Abu Deeb which concentrates on the duality of 

**atlāl-al-khamra**. 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:

The Bacchic world (al-kaun l-khamri) sets up an encompassing replacement (badlan kāndān) for the collapsed world (al-kaun al-mumhār); the

\[ Waqānū l-hijmi yaqra’u kulla jaḥiln | wa’azma l-sabri yahudu bi-l-jalī | (Diwān Abī l-‘Athin, 336). \]

The line celebrates **sabr** in a context which inherits the values of the 

**hikma** (hijmi); the following line, however, evinces a new pious sentiment: 

\[ ašbaḥa bāḥāl l-nasru qālan wa-qil | fa-ulustā’u ilāhu sabrun jaumal | (Diwān, 332). \]

The final phrase is borrowed from the Qur’ānic 

**ja-sabru jamāl** (see Qur’ān, 12/83).

\[ See Jadaliyyat al-Khayā’ wa-l-Tajallī (Beirut, 1984), 218–28. This poem is also discussed briefly in M. M. Budawi’s “From Primary to Secondary Qaṣida”, JAL 11 | (1980), 1–31. \]

\[ " Jadalīyyat, 222. \]
latter] ... has become effaced and disintegrated (‘afā wa-tafattata), as for the new world it is a world of cohesion, strength and unity ...

Abū 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 Injīla-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. 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):

قبيس أصحابي فلان الذي نسي وأفقي لغنصما وأفقي هميس
Come! give me a morning sip, for Fate is full of changes; it has destroyed Luqaym and destroyed Al Hirmās.

The celebration of wine in the putative present of Abū Nuwās’ poem (lines 10–25) is analogous to the phrase gāmiṭ šaḥṣi-nū; the initial assessment of Time’s despoiling role (lines 1–9) is equivalent to fa-inna l-dabra dhū ghiyarīn. Indeed, in the traditional manner, Abū Nuwās evokes the past by mention of bygone legendary and historical luminaries: arāba l-zamānu fa-qtasamī ayyī 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 al-A’ṣā. 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. ¹³

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:

وفَاقَ إِلَى الْيَوْمِ عَكْفَتْ عَلَيْهَا

He [fetched] the [wine] to which the Daughters of Fate and Father Time had given themselves assiduously.

فعَلَّتْ عَلَيْهَا مَنْافِقَةٌ الشَّمْسِ

He said, “You order me to do this (sic, let, ‘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-ṣamāl. The discernible hint that Fate is responsible for seduction is expressed more directly in Yā Sābir 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-sāḥibīn zāna kullā muštāhibīn, which builds up a momentum against

¹³ 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’ṣā’s line—as discussed earlier: (poem 10, line 13) la-amru-ka mna l-rāha in kuma sa’dan l-mukhtalafun ghadayyu-ba wa’-lsātu-ba.

¹⁴ Dinār, 135.
conservative decorum—it is a 10-line khamriyya given principally to praise of a boon companion: (p. 137)

I often remember [my] friend of Yemeni descent who was a [veritable] adornment to the company of morning tippers.

He was [truly] 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 share [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] razing 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-bi], "O wind! what is it that you do with desert traces?"

The poem alludes pointedly to the constituent parts of formal madih: lineage (1b: yumnā idhā ntaμā ilā l-Yamāni) and exaggerated generosity (2b: yabdhlū fi l-khamri afḍala l-thamani and 3a: giyāμtu muqābātān); 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 yuqib-nī illā bi-lajlaītān). Having been described as muḥḍdhabun mūjīdun akhīr karrāmin (line 4) the companion is now the very antithesis to al-futūl al-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 hemistic “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 lī-ḥadīthī l-zamānī). It is principally an accelerated thematic inversion of the standard madih progression, which in a formal ode might assume the following pattern:

Nasīb/Aṭlāl→[cure of ḥazān in takhallus]→Madih: (lineage, generosity, controller of Fate/Time—these qualities contrast with destruction at aṭlāl). 11

Whilst clearly it is an integral, lyrical khamriyya Abū Nuwās’ poem alludes to and inverts this pattern.

Madih: → Aspects of Ghazal → Aṭlāl
(lineage, generosity in khamr, 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 ta'wba is the old order qualified by the new (see Chapter 4). Though even

Isab and al-Dahr in the Khamriyya

here Abū Nuwās finds religion only in a manner that is palatable to his literary genius.

Like Abū Nuwās' 'Afā l-Mūşallā, Abū l-ʿAtāḥiya's Li-man ṭalalun\(^{12}\) 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 zubdiyya is essentially distinct from what we have already found in al-Akhtal's Fī ṭ-layyāt wa-l-mawṣūl. Sperl writes referring to the second half of Abū l-ʿAtāhiya'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”:\(^{34}\)

Let all who hope know that God will call them to account. 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/muhdath by virtue of the simplicity of the language and style”—particularly the parallel phraseology that commands whole sections and the extended use of anaphora\(^{35}\) 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)

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. 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-

\(^{12}\) Dīwān Abū l-ʿAtāhiya, 363-5.

\(^{34}\) Sperl, Mannerism in Arabic Poetry, 83.

\(^{35}\) Abū l-ʿAtāhiya was accused for this reason of having a “pedestrian” or “common” style.

\(^{34}\) This feature is typical of homiletic poetry.

\(^{34}\) 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)

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 manāzil, 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: baʿīdu ẓayūrūrī ʾl-jirānī (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:

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 acclimates the religious championing which concludes the poem, delivering a message after death’s vivid tableau.

Abū l-ʿAtāhiya and Traditional Imagery

The two poems of Abū l-ʿAtāhiya 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 ‘Afā 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 zuhdyya\textsuperscript{a} treats ancient motifs of the sort one can find in the poetry of ‘Adī ibn Zayd (d. c. 600). Abū l-‘Atāhiya beholds the graves of the dead and contemplates life’s finality (there is no expressly Islamic piety): (line 1)

\begin{quote}
إذا دعاء الهاد في الكريبت
ما للسقاف لا تجب
\end{quote}

Why will the graves not answer when beckoned by a broken-hearted wretch.

This is reminiscent of contemplation at the al-tālā, 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)

\begin{quote}
كم من حسبين لم تكن
فؤديه مُقربي تعليبه.
\end{quote}

Many are the loved ones [after] whose departure I have found no joy.

In line 6 the poet finds solace (salawtu ’an-bu) by looking forward to life after death:

\begin{quote}
عُهجي بُؤسِي قرب
سنوت عَنة وُلى.
\end{quote}

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\textsuperscript{b} Abū l-‘Atāhiya introduces cogitations about life’s finality with the diyār motif:

\begin{quote}
كُأنى بالبيادر فَد خُرَيت
وَبَوَالِمَوْعَ الْبَيَارَ فَدْ سَكَنَت.
\end{quote}

It is as if I have [suffered] with the destruction of a deserted encampment and the copious tears that have been shed.

\textsuperscript{a} See Dīwān Abī l-‘Atāhiya, 48.  
\textsuperscript{b} Ibid. 71.

In the singular dār often refers to the mortal world (synonymous with al-dūnīya). Abū l-‘Atāhiya questions the value of nostalgia which seeks (in the ancient poetry) to resurrect past pleasures and gain sustenance from them: (line 13)

\begin{quote}
وَأَيْنَ عَيْشَ وَعَفْعَ مُغْطَعٌ
وَأَيْنَ طَعْمَ لَذَاتٍ ذُهَبت.
\end{quote}

What life is there when life will only cease, and what flavour is there in pleasures that have passed.

Hence his critique: (14)

\begin{quote}
وَبِمَعْلَمَةٍ الْمَسْتَعِمِينَ يُدْمٍ إِلَى الْذِّئْبِ يُنْتَبِ
\end{quote}

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-‘Atāhiya ponders the message offered by the grave:

\begin{quote}
أخوَيْنَ مَرَّ الْقُسَرِ
وَسَلَّمَ فِي النَّسي.
\end{quote}

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.\textsuperscript{c} Also reminiscent of the dhikr al-aṭlāl is the salutation topos: salīmā qablā l-masīr. Sustaining the association between his own manner of contemplation and the distant language of nasīb/ghazal the poet states: aibu l-qubūr aḥibbatī. Whilst the cogitations of this poem are typical of Abū l-‘Atāhiya’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)

\begin{quote}
بَعْدَ السَّاءِدِينَ وَالْمُضْنِيَّينَ
اِسْتَمْحَّهُمْ نَحْتَ الدَّهْرِ.
\end{quote}

Having [once attended] battles, councils and palaces . . .
You now lie under earth, amongst tombstones and rocks.

\textsuperscript{a} Ibid. 169.
\textsuperscript{b} See the opening line of Imru’u l-Qays’ Mu’allaqa.
(iv) The 12-line dāliyya, Lā qarāra fi l-dunyā, 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:

إنّ داراً تَحْيّن فيها داراً
ليس فيها لِمَغْتَربьяً

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:

فَاستراحوا سَاءِهَا فَمَا سَاروا

They rest a while then move on.

Nasīb imagery continues in lines 4 and 5b:

وَهُمُ الأَحَبَابُ كَانُوا وَلَكِنَّ
قدْمُهَا مَهَأٌ وَطَطِّرْ الْمَرْأَا
ليَبَتْ شُريَّاً كَيْفَ هُمْ حَبَّانَا صَراً

They [were] loved ones [once], but this time has passed 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:

بَيْدَعَ السَّمَاءَ حَلْمُهُمَا وَحَلَّمْ الْبَيْتَ
وَكَانُوا الدُّنْيَا عَلَى ما رَأى

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 hilm (line 12):

فَآَسْمَنَ وَإِسْتَغْفِرُنَّ اللَّهُ لا
بَدَئُهُ يَوْمًا أَنْ يَزْوِجَ الْحَمَارِ

Know and be sure that one day [the time] you have borrowed must needs be returned.

(v) A 10-line poem" of admonishment (bādir bi-jiddī-ka qabla an

"Dīwān Abī l-Atāḥiya, 182.


taqṣīr") 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/pirovisions) will be needed:

قَمَّتْ هُمُ اللَّهُ لِيُجَلِّسُوا فِي النَّجَاحِ

You will surely arrive at a place where you will need the savings of your piety.

(vi) A variant of Abū l-Atāḥiya's murrā bi-l-qubūr is the 5-line poem beginning:"

سلامَ عَلَى أهلِ الْفَيْضِ الدَّارِ
كَانُوا كَأَنَّهُمْ لَمْ يَجَلِّسُوا فِي النَّجَاحِ

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 'Arabi's Salāman 'alā Salmā wa-man hāla brī-l-hānī (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‘ul-Qays, similar wording (ka-anna-hum/ka-anī lam etc.) in the depiction of erstwhile indulgence encouraged the consumption of ephemeral pleasures; Abū l-Atāḥiya concludes contrarily towards a new order of wisdom:

قَدْ عَقَّلَ الْسَّمَاءُ السَّمَاءُ فِي الْدُّنْيَا
تَرَكُّمَ مِنْ الدُّنْيَا إذن لا يَقَامُ

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" Abū l-Atāḥiya explains his use of the word dār by denying its normal significance: (line 5)

فَقَيَبَتْ الدَّارِ دَارًا لَا تُرَى أَحَدًا
مِنْ أَطْلُفٍ نَّاصِيًا مَّنْ بَعْدَهُ غَرَّشُ

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).

" Significantly, bādir is usually the imperative which invites indulgence.
" Dīwān, 225.
" Dīwān, 138.
Islam and al-Dahr in the Khamriyya

(viii) A further 7-line poem is introduced by four motifs common to the opening nasib: the greeting; the farewell; tearful eyes; the parting:

عَلَيْكَ سَلامُ اللهِ إِلَى مُمَتَّعٍ
وُقُعَتْ لِلنَّعُمِ أَسَعَنٍ وَأَسْعَنُ
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 ʿălā) signals the piety which underscores the whole poem. The depredations of Fate in line 3 (raybu l-dahr/maṇiyya) are subsumed by the message of line 6: tabārakā man lā yamliku l-mulka ghayru-hu. Just as Abū l-ʿAtāḥiya 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 uses images and vocabulary familiar to us from ghazal: ḥabīl (the ropes of union) and auṣāl, plus the verbs darasa and taḍarrqa; 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) wa-la lutfu l-ḥabibi yanālu-hu. A similar borrowing (the motif of insomnia/ʿaraq) is to be found in the first line of an extensive zuhdiyya:

أَلَّا أَرَفْتَ وَذَكَّرَ السَّوَى أَرَقَّٰ
Rememberance 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 diwān which normally preserves a distinctly Islamic language of piety, often

Drawing on the Qur’ānic lexicon. The elements observed may easily pass unnoticed given the diwān’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-ʿAtāḥiya was keenly aware of the tradition of poetry within which he was establishing another genre.

Mubādara in Abū l-ʿAtāḥiya

Before analysing the dynamics of pious expression (in which al-dahr plays a role) we should determine to what extent Abū l-ʿAtāḥiya endorsed the simple notion of mubādara. Examine the final two lines of a 5-line poem:

إِذَا أَنتُ طَلَّعَ عَمَّرَاءَ مَا عَمِّرَ
تُ فِي السَّاعَةِ أَيُّ أَنَّ فِي هَا
لَيْسَ فِي مَعْيَةِ وَلَا فِي الْأَلْدَى نَمَ
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)

عَلَيْكَ النَّفْسُ بَلاَكَفْفًا وَلَا
Give your soul a draught of abstinence or it will ask more from you than it needs.

There is a 7-line tāʾiyya 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:

لَمَّا لَا تُبَيِّنُ مَا تُبَيِّنُ
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

Dīwān, 70.
of Satan.” Abū l-ʿAtāhiyya goes on to direct his satire at the ʿulamāʾ—implying ironically those who claim ʿilm 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:106

Listen, my voice gives you licence, if you do not hasten (in lam tubdīr) [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-ʿAtāhiyya was able to develop his sentiments he displayed the anxiety of being caught between desires and a sense of propriety:107

Who will assist my soul which yearns for love. Though I claim that it has shunned ignorance (jahāl) [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 diwān as a whole thus sets itself against the old world-view:108

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.

106 Diwān, 94.
107 Ibid. 89.
108 Ibid. 417.

A Pious Dynamic: Al-Dahr → Zuḥd /Din/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 Qurʿānic criticism of the dahrīyyūn in Sūrat al-Jāhiyya is a criticism of those who believe only in this life (al-dunyā) and for whom death marks the end of a finite existence. There are a number of examples in Abū l-ʿAtāhiyya’s poetry which illustrate the distinct identities of God and Fate:109

أوَّلَ لِيِّبُ الذَّهَبُ إِنَّ ذَهِبًا يَنْتَ‏
فَغَدَّ بَيْنَتُ وَهَمُّ الْحَيْوَنَّ لِبَنَّ

I say to Fate’s affliction, if one hand goes thank God another hand remains.

أيَنفَسُ أَنْتُ الْذَّهَابُ في حَالِ غَفْلَة
وَلَبَسَتْ صُرُوفَ الذَّهَابَ عَابِثَةً عَنْك
أيَنفَسُ كَمْ لِيِّبُكَ مِنْ بَيْنِ صُرُوفِ
إِلَى الْحَمُّ عَبْسَتْ مَا أَعْلَـِهِ مِنك

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 سَيْبِيلِ اللَّهِ تَغْيِرْحُهُ
تَغْيِرْحُهُ طَوْرًا وَبُنْتِهِ

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 din, also delineate distinct levels of perception:111

مَنْ جَعَلَ الْذَّهَابَ عَلَى الْبَيِّنَةِ
فَقْرَةً فَأَرْجِعَ عَلَى أَحَدِهِ
فَقَدْ بَيْنَكَ الإِلَهَانِ فِي دِينِ

109 For a discussion of this important Islamic ethical concept see Leah Kinberg’s “What Is Meant by Zuḥd?” Studia Islamica 61 (1985), 27–44.
110 Diwān Abū l-ʿAtāhiyya, 156, 300, and 292.
111 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 ḍin, hence: "In awe of Fate Man may be beguiled through ignorance (jabl) [to the detriment of] his religion (din-hi)".

In discussion of the Zubdiyya scholars have not made clear the distinction between two separate categories of Abū l-ʿAtāḥiya's gnomic output, namely (i) those poems whose didacticism merely repeats ancient ʿikma (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 ḍin 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 Zubdiyya schematize the changing preoccupations that are concomitant with the progression from ʿabāb to ʿayb. Realization of ʿayb provides the impetus for the assumption of ḥilm, and contrasts the fulfillment of youthful passions. Hence the following two lines are consonant with ancient values:

الحاشة برآس بي فلم يَفْلَسَ لَعَبَ للآس وَسَبِيبَ وَمُرَحَّلَتْ الطَّمْوُ وَفُرَحتَ نَمَّ لَأَم

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-ḥubb could describe a man of ḥilm (a man who preserves his integrity through his mental faculties: ʿaql, ʿilm, etc.); it also introduces the Islamic tenor of the poem, for the phrase is simply the singular of the Qurʾānic ʿalī l-ʿalbāb, which describes the 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:

لا تَخْسَرْ لَدَيْنِ اللَّهِ أَنْ لا يَطَّرِح

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 ʿĀdam generally, not the members of any specific Arab tribe; they stress ḍin and are cast from vocabulary compatible with the language of the Qurʾān. The poem is said to be in praise of the son of Harūn al-Rašīd. However it also praises Islam since maḏhab is wholly dependent upon purely Islamic values: birr, taqūa, and khayr.

(ii) A 10-line Zubdiyya 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 mākr and jazr (treachery and butchery); those who trust in al-dahr (yaʿman—the same root as ʿImān) will not achieve immortality (yukhallad—from the root khudl, 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 ʿabr and tawakkul. Qurʾānic vocabulary is further used: (line 8)

لا تَحْتَبِسْ بِهَا مُسْتَرَابًا وَرَحِيمًا بِهَا يِسْرًا

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 ʿabr and tawakkul).

(iii) The progression of al-dahr towards Islam provides the pulse of a 6-line Zubdiyya in which the transition is played out twice:

(a) The pessimistic acknowledgement of death in line 1 (kullu

Dīwān Abī l-ʿAtāḥiya, 118.

Though it is to be found in pre-Islamic poetry the dichotomy of yusr and yusr is also important in the Qurʾān; see Qurʾān, 94/4-5.

Dīwān, 201.
Corollaries of an ancient topos (diyār) have thus provided the fabric of a pious eschatology.

(v) In another poem (of 13 lines) the material is not ordered in such a way that treatment of Islam as a conspicuous theme follows references to al-dār. Rather the very first hemistich is a brief fanfare of piety, al-hadū al-šalā kulli šallī. This attitude casts its shadow upon the gnomic cogitations which ensue, voicing a scornful pity for the dār barayyin (lines 2 and 5)

إذا الدنيا مَنْ اتهَى أوَّلُ الرُّكْبِ
من غذا يا مأمون صَرْفْ الْقَبْلَ

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-Ḥaq 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/halāl:

[am] amazed at one who desires prohibited things, dissatisfied with the variety of permissible things.

The poem ends with a warning of death:

احيال الورد ناقت عنوَن

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 Nuways’ kadāhā šurūta l-dārī al-wānī; thus, whilst the gnomic elements follow the piety of line 1, they do not provide the poem’s conclusive force.

(vi) A 9-line zuhdyya sets out in the first seven lines the reasons why a person beheld by the hopes of ephemeral life is miskin; in line 3 he is warned of al-dār’s depredations:

وَما لُزِّلَ مِنْ قَرْفِ الدُّهر نَحْلَيْهَا

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; ōmāl; maniyā; al-layali; al-ayyām; al-jahili al-maghrib; al-maawut; karb al-

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Hāyātīn fa-l ḍār bhā muddatun leads to praise of God in lines 2–3: subḥāna man alhama-ni ḍamda-hu. Life’s finality contrasts God’s eternity (line 3): man huwa l-dā’inni fi mulki-hi. (b) Lines 4–5 address a man, who perceiving himself free from the restraints of religious injunctions (4b, laya la-hu nāhīn wa-lā āmīru), counters Fate through pleasures: (4a) yā qāṭi’ al-dārī bi-ladhdhātt-hi. The “arrow of Death” will not fail to reach him (atā-ka yā maghrūrū sahum l-rādā). Against this brief vignette of the hedonist’s futile rebellion Abū l-ʿAtāḥiya declares his own pious servility (line 5):

قِدَّرْتُ عَبْدًا أَمِينًا شَامِكًا

O Lord! I am your hopeful and grateful servant in all that you decree.

He pleads for forgiveness (6a): fa-ghfīr dhunūbī inna-hā jammatun. (iv) The 6-line ʿayniyya, al-Diyār al-mabhāra, 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)

وَأَسْتَكْبَرْ عَلَى الْرَّجُوعِ

Make a detour to [old] traces and haunts and ask them about the Return.

In conventional fashion Abū l-ʿAtāḥiya 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 diwān 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-jumūʿ, i.e. al-ḥāṣr). Al-jumūʿ echoes al-rajīʿ and carries the same significance. Line 4 contrasts the abandonment of the spot with its erstwhile splendour (mangṣari-bā l-badīʿ). The final line moves away from the ancient topos (al-diyār) and articulates the significance of Judgement Day implied in lines 1 and 3:

هُمُّ الرَّسْبِ حَيَاةٌ

Only the man obedient [to God] will be saved tomorrow (i.e. on the Day of Judgement).

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119 Dīwān, 269.

120 Dīwān, 361.

121 ibid. 368–9.
mawt—ghawāši-bi wa-ahuwal-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 . . .” (istagḥni bi-llāh).

The discussion thus far has sought to show how al-dahr is treated consistently by Abū l-ʾAtāhiyya 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)—din/Islām (new order). To an extent, these two categories dovetail in the zuhdīyyā to produce a single Islamic ethos. However, they remain distinct enough for one to discern an effort to set the zuhdīyyā against its hedonistic adversary.

Abū Nuwās’ Treatment of Al-Dahr

The relationship between Fate and Islam in Abū l-ʾAtāhiyya is varied only inasmuch as Fate is sometimes a springboard to mubādara rather than tughā. In general, however, reflections about Fate/al-dahr invited pious homilies. This is true also in the zuhdīyyā of Abū Nuwās. The most deftly arranged of these begins with a plea for patience (ṣabr) against the “events” of Fate:

اصب إِنْمَأَ حَوَادِثَ الدَّهْر

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:

وَأَخْرَجُ نُفَلَا بَيْنَ يَديَّهَا

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 burial by his family. The use of anaphora in this section of the poem (lines 3–5 each begin fa-ka-anā/la-wa-ka-anā, 6–8 each begin ya layta saʾīra/fa-leyta saʾīra) 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:

وَفِي غَيْبَةِ الْحَيَاةِ مَهْرَةَ الْغَيْبَةِ

Would that I knew [my] lot when account is made of [my deeds] on the morning of [Judgement] Day.

Another zuhdīyyā of 9 lines produces a familiar contrast. Examine the distinct responses to God and Fate in the opening verse:

عَمَّهَا التَّصْرِيفُ الطْوَابِ

Great is the Krower 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 tauba (yā nasītī tābī, line 4), in the final four lines of the poem (al-ḥawādith→al-tughā): (lines 6 and 8)

فَاتِیلَكَ داَئِمَةُ الْحُوسُوب

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 mamālīk. A fine example exists in Abū Nuwās’encomium on Harūn al-Rašīd. The nasīb begins with the poet attempting to “hunt down” Time: (lines 1–3)

الدُّعُوَّةُ إِلَى الْأَوْلَمَانِ يَقْفُقُ وَتَخَلُّق

For other poems which lend themselves to similar analysis see, for example, the rāʾīyya (p. 194), the ḥāʾīyya (p. 292), and the 40-line lāmiyya (p. 346).

The quality of Abū Nuwās’ zuhdīyyā is in no way inferior to those of his contemporary. A comment in al-Jāḥiṣ’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-ʾIlmiyyā edition, vol. 1 (Beirut, 1983).

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Anaphora is a common feature of the zuhdīyyā.
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.
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 recollection 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:

**Fath al-Shaykh shahada:**

**[Read the following verse in the context of time]**

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 unbear froni 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 transcendent Islam.

Before surveying the treatment of al-dahr in Abū Nuwās’ khamriyyāt 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-Mansūr who made trouble for Abū Nuwās at the court of Harūn al-Rašīd by attributing the following verses to him:

**Fath al-Shaykh shahada:**

My opinion, there is no truth in all that is mentioned except death and the grave.

**[Believe in Fate. There is no resurrection after death—death is the fertile egg of a hen.**

---

The belief that there is no Hereafter is professed as a creed underpinned by the transcendence of al-dahr; aqīl bi-l-dahr is virtually a testament of kṣāf. 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. This is borne out in some of the material presented below, especially in the short but powerful khamriyya which begins “Ya bnata l-sayyabi sbaḥī-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 mūbadara. 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, Ya saqīqa l-nafsi min bakami. 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:

**Fath al-Shaykh shahada:**

Yā qūqū al-shāhsī bi l-rumām
Yāqtab allāh-mīni l-hurūm
Wāhī ʾalayh al-nafīsī bi l-qīlām
Līqī ʾalayh al-nafīsī bi l-qīlām
Līqī ʾalayh al-nafīsī bi l-qīlām

[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;

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];

The last two lines are quoted in the sixth Maqāma of Ibn Naqiyya as the culmination of the arguments of a libertine mutakallim (O. Rescher, p. 141); wadhdhara ma yaqūt-thi bāthi l-qauwī l-ṣawma lam yaqūd bi-l-khunayti wa-bi-l-shāsī bāthi ansada qaṣa Abī Nuwāsī bāḥa l-tamīnī. The pious narrator responds to these lines fa-rā’si-ma ana ṣaybī ṣaybī min madhdhāthi...
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 Diwan:

**بِسَنِينِ الدِّمَرِ وَالزَّمانِ الطَّوْفْلُ**

(p. 135)

**وَقَامَ إِلَّا أَنْ كَفَفَتْ عَلَيْهَا**

(p. 178)

Collectively these verses include the whole array of synonyms for Time/Fate: banātu l-dabrī; karru l-layāli; raybu l-mānān; al-layāli; raybu l-zamānī; ḥiṣbatu l-dabrī; ummu l-dabrī; ummu l-zamānī. All such terms, based on al-dabr and al-zamān, underscore the homiletic streak in early Arabic poetry. It is significant that in describing the age of the wine Abu Nuwas, and other poets, preserved the negative resonance of these motifs (raybu l-mānānī/karru l-layāli) and thus celebrated the survival of the wine, which acquires its very essence from the very degradations of Time ('adat ilā jawharin laffīn). Since al-dabr signifies mortality, indulgence in that which has "triumphed" over it adds an important figurative dimension to the spirit of masbāda.

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

It would be invidiously repetitive to translate the examples which ensue.
used in the incitement to wine without express reference to al-dahr: for example, bādir sābūka-ka wa-n'am ayyūhā l-rajilī. 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 (ṣayb);" "(line 1a and final line)

... بادر ضعفاً قبل الشيب والعار
لكننا نرى جل عناء عظيم

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 ṣayb 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:" "abdala-ni dabr ghurābi bi-l-nasr.

Related to mubādara is the notion that life ('ayīs) is nothing if not indulgence:" 

مَا العيش إلا في الريحان السماوي
لَو صحبنا من مقال العتم
مَا العيش إلا أن نبكي صمبوحاً

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 السَّعْدُ أَمَّنَّهَا
مَعْمَتَة تارَةٍ وصَبِيحًا

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:" "

لا حَمِسرَ بِها إِلَّا جَحَرً
فَاعْمَهُ بها قَبْل رلاعات

Indulge in it before [Fate's] affections after which there will be no
wine and no hangover.

لا حُمَسَ على أَفْدَار
فَاستثفِ الأفَدَارِ مِن أَهْبَالها

Demand justice [through wine] from the decreed events of Fate—
they have long treated you as a plaything.

""For this poem see Ch. 1 "Intertextuality".
""Ibid. 156.
""Ibid. 128, 97.
""Ibid. 73, 688, 692.

The treatment of al-dahr/mubādara can constitute an important thread in the fabric of entire wine poems:

(i) The 11-line ṫā‘īyya beginning Ghadaatu ‘alā l-ladbhabī" "sandwiches conventional description of the wine and the sāqī (lines 4–8) between expository attitudes in which death, expressed variously as al-dahr, al-marāyā, and al-nabr, is the dominant leitmotif. The introduction spans the first three lines:

غَدَدتْ عَلَى الْمَلَحِيَّةَ الْسَّيْر
وَأَفْصِنْتُ بِنَائِ السَّرْ مَتٌّ إِلَى الْجَهَر
وَهُنَّاء عَلَى النَّاسِ فَا وَيْدُهُ
فَادِرَة لْدَنَا وَارَيْدَةٌ الْدَّمَر

I made for pleasures in the morning “rendering 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 (ghadaatu ‘alā l-ladbhabī→fa-bādarta l-ladbhabī mubādara 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:

كَوْسَ عَنْداً بالفَتْحَةُ لِنَسْمَر

No good comes to people around whom the cups of Fate circulate
[threatening death] with tawny spears.

""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 departure
with the approach of dawn: [line 9] ḥattā idhā mā bādā sabilāt ʿalā-hānna min
layli-nā rīfādū.
""Ibid. 139–40.
Islam and al-Dahr in the Khamriyya

Ku‘āṣu l-manṣūrat, to the grave (al-muzārat li-l-qabr) through the weaponry of battle (swords and spears), 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—its dissonance in life (the root meaning of tābi‘a) which the poet may be seeking to contrast with the grave: (line 11)

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) ra’dītu mina l-dunyā bi-ka’sin wa-sādīn (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 ra’dītu bi-l-dunyā (I am content with this world)—dunyā exists implicitly in contrast to the other spheres of existence (al-akhira). The existential mode affected for bacchic indulgence is one where life and death are exclusively circumscribed by this world, hence the sāqi “slays and resuscitates with union and rejection” (yumītu wa-yuḥībī bi-l-wisālī wa-bi-l-hajrī). A similar contrast is more reconditely but deliberately contrived between lines 7 and 9 (which describe the sāqi and the preferability of wine to battle):

- 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.

- Fūḥsīn min rāsī bī ḥumra’ al-walīhī wa-humūn ēndī min ḥurūfī li’n al-walīhī.

[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 ḥa‘ā) within such a short space. Here, where nahr 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. In the celebrated Da’an-ka lawni the censurer’s claim to knowledge is thwarted. Censure is the opening topos (a-‘ādhihū), Abū Nuwās dismisses unnecessary discussion (3b, fa-‘ad-nī lā aqīlū wa-lā taqīlū), for both interlocutors make contrary claims to knowledge: (3a) kālānī yadda’t fi l-khamri ‘ūman.” In some poems of this kind Abū Nuwās counters the very religiosity of censure. For example:

| حَرْطَنِي اللَّهُ أَباكُمَا |}
|---|---|

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:

وسَحَّلَ أَنَامِي كَأَمَّا تَجَسَّمُ
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 كَانَ بِانَاتَ الْكَرْمِ شَرَى
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-dhāyini ’aṣībata l-hayālī are important. For aminta has the same root as the word for Faith (‘amāna, ‘Irān) and thus offers a hidden reading of the hemistich which articulates belief in Fate. Both levels of transcendence (Islam and al-Dahr) are

- See the Ṭamīṣiyya, Dīwān, p. 184.
- Cf. the famous verse from the barmiyya: qul li-man yadda’ fi l-‘ilmī falsafatān l-haṣṣa šuy’u an wa-ghābat ‘an-ka aṣīrā’u.”

Dīwān, 182.
woven into the texture of a brief vignette: the sāqi, as the poet's qibla, displaces Islam whilst security from Fate provides the emotional core of the piece and diminishes the force of any religious disapprobation (bāna 'alayya mā qāla l-'adhibīlū).

(iii) Another 11-line khamriyya works in a different way. It is a poem of conventional structure and imagery: the companions (fitiya) 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 fitiya is couched in a conversational exchange; a virgin wine is produced—it had been saved for Kisrā—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:

الدهر ليس بلا شعب مسئم

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 gnomic tradition whilst referring more locally in the text to the effects of intoxication upon the fitiya.

(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-sībā ṭaḥqā l-jumāhī we find the whole structure of the poem working towards its aphoristic conclusion in the manner of Yā sāhir al-tarīf. Lines 1–3 confess an indulgent past:

جربين مع الصبا طلق الحسم

وقت النغم باذى السعي صصبح

ووجدت أذى عارية المحايل

من كان الطيب على صمود

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: "Where were the tents at Dhū Ṭūlīh?"

The lyrics of this song evoke the passage of time and thus provide

iv A similar image exists in another poem (ibid. 676): sībā mā nittu min ayyī rakbān l wa-ṣūta mina l-naṣāʿibī fī amānī; the next line duly follows on an irreligious note: rakbīt bū kāyāyi l-ṭarākūt rūṣūd l wa-kaffu l-sulā ibn al-muṣlihatun 'inānī.

v Diwān 48.


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:

Enjoy this ephemeral youthfulness, and join your evening and morning drink into one long tipple.

Take a red wine mixed [with water] that milks the teat of a miser's [generosity].

—A wine selected by Kisrā'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:

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 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 reproval 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 afforced nature of his abstinence. The second hemistich, by casing 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,
by reminding the contrite man of his own previous rationale for indulgence—wa-nasita qa`ula-ka:

لا تحسَّنْ مَعَارِنة خُادِمٍ
وَالَّذِينَ يُبِينُونَ 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 Ya b mata l-saykh bi-`abbi-nā.16 This q-line khambriyya is an energetic incitemnt 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:

ما الذي تنظرين
فأخرجى الحمر فينا
فأجعل ذلك يرى
فأشرب الصلاحي
دن بالبركات دينا
فأترك الدار الغطس
فأجعل السلاني
فأجعل السلاني
فأجعل السلاني
فأجعل السلاني

Daughter of the saykh 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-lami dhaka yaqini)—
That which is contrary to the drink of the pious (zara`bu l-salihi`na).

Turn it away from a miser, who has found religion in parsimony;
Time has tarried too long for him (fawwala l-dabru `alayhi), so he thinks now the “Hour has come”.

16 Ibid. 313; ed. Wagner, 316–17; the latter’s version contains no major variants from Ghazal’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. Kulthum’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 sāqiya the daughter of a saykh—a man who has reached the age of decorum.17 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 yaqin is a phrase with Qur’anic overtones18—yaqin 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 khilafan li-`arabī l-ṣalīhīna. The irreligious tone of these opening lines is enhanced by the rhyme -ina, which together with -i`na, forms the dominant assonance of the Qur’ān. Lines 5–6 move on to mock one of the sālihīna, focusing upon a miserly man whose religion is stated to be parsimony: (5b) dāna bi-l-imsākī dinā. Piety is further undercut in line 6 where the effect of Time (fauwala l-dabru ‘alayhi)—the approach of death—provides the impetus for abstinence. al-Sā`a, meaning the Resurrection and Judgement Day, is Qur’anic; see Qur’ān 6/31, where those who have disbelieved the warnings of resurrection regret their neglect: qad khbras illahina kadhdbabu bi-l`aqi`i llahi ḥattā idhā jā`at-hum l-sā`atu baghtatan qālī yā ḥasara-na alā mā farraṭa fi-hā wa-hum yahmiluna avarā-hum alā `usūrī-him a-lā sā`a mā yazirīna (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!).19 Thus line 6 lampoons the sincerity of tawba, for it is in the first place the effects of al-dabhr that command the fear of the abstainer. Abū Nuwās appears to scorn the preoccupations evinced in those of Abū l-`Atāhiyya’s poems where cogitations about al-dabhr, or the passing of time, lead to pious expression.20

17 The saykh may be the taverner; however, the semantic (even moral) resonances of the word are such that a distinance accrues from the juxtaposition of sāqiya and saykh. It is also possible that al-saykh 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.
18 See esp. Qur’ān 122/5 (kallā la`a talamīna ilma l-yaqini).
20 Typical of Abū l-`Atāhiyya’s anxiety is the following line: (Dīwān, 236) kafa aqhtarru bi-l-`ayyāt 3a`ummi sā`tan ba`da sā`tan fi nīqāṣi.
The final butt of Abū Nuwās’ lampoon, in the last three lines, is the use of redundant literary imagery. 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 aṭla‘ towards an expression of piety. 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, goading him for concerns akin to the fears of line 6 (tawwala l-dahr ʿalay-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 aṭla‘ invite mechanical refuge in Islam. For the bacchic poet we have seen that both invite indulgence.

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. Kuhlam. There are several allusions in Abū Nuwās’ short nāmiyya to the opening eight verses of the latter “ode”. ‘Amr’s Mu‘allaqa is in the wāṣfī metre, whilst Abū Nuwās’ poem is in a form of ramal. However, the qaṭīya -nā is shared by the two poems and, furthermore, is introduced in both cases by the word isbabi-nā; compare ‘Amr’s a-lā habbi bi-ṣahmi-ki fa-ṣbabi-nā l wa-lā tubqi khumira l-andarinā (Be quick with your basin, give us a morning draught and leave none of the Andarine wine), with Abū Nuwās’ yā bnata l-ṣayki ṣbabi-nā l má l-idabi tantasiri-nā. The latter poet in total shares four lexical items (including isbabi-nā) with the opening eight lines of the Mu‘allaqa: mā (see Mu‘allaqa, line 2: muṣaʿsatan ka-ama l-husṣa fi-hā l idhā má l-māʾu khālaṭa-hā sakhānā (Wine of a saffron tincture which renders us prodigal when it is mixed with water)); yaqin and za‘in (see Mu‘allaqa, line 8: qiṣ qabla l-ṭafraruq yā za‘in l nukhabbir-ki l-yaqina wa-tukhbiri-nā (Halt a while before your 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-ḥālīza l-sabīha idhā marrat ʿalay-hi li-mālī-hi fi-hā mubahānā; in line 7 wine is consumed against a background of inexorable Fate: wa-innā saufa tudiri-nā l-manāyī l muqaddarat ʿan-nā wa-muqaddarinā (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 nasib; the respective first lines of each of these two sections of the poems is marked by taṣrīḥ, and, furthermore, the two internal rhyme words in both poems are the same (or virtually the same): where ‘Amr’s Mu‘allaqa has za‘inā, Abū Nuwās’ poem has al-zā’inā (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 ‘Abbāsid poem and allows a single message to emerge. Thus the composite statement of its three sections can be schematically viewed as: “We drink wine—You have stopped, for fear of Time—a miserly stance of ill-conceived piety; ask, then, the aṭla‘ (wherein Time is invested) where the dead are, so that you may justifiy your fears—We have asked, but have received no reply; therefore do we drink—ours is a more ancient wisdom.”

From a contextual, and essentially intertextual perspective, dependent upon a variety of literary or scriptural categories (the Qurān, pre-Islamic poetry, the khamriyya, and the zuhdiyya) the final line becomes an agnostic credo—obliquely equivalent to aqīlū bi-l-dabrī—which vindicates the bacchic spirit of muḥādara.

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136 I am grateful for this observation to Thomas Bauer of Erlangen University.
137 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. Sterkevich (ed.), Reorientations: Arabic and Persian Poetry, 165–79.
138 This short khamriyya has been discussed in detail by Abu Deeb in Jadaliyat al-Khafṣi wa-l-Tajallī, 1370 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 (qaṣāba) of a poem have no significance in isolation (wa-biya muṣūla); the qaṣāda only conveys meaning (innam ta‘ni l-qasida) via the relationships (al-ʿalāqāt) 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 khāmriyyāt together, and sets them cumulatively against religious conservatism.1 If in Abū l-Atāhīya 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 sābir al-ṭarf posed the question, poems such as 'Aṣā l-muṣallā and Yā bnata l-saykhi šhiba-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 'Abbāsid 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 khāmriyya and the zubdiyya introduces the subject of the next chapter.

tūrāt dīnī and turāt thaqāfī, 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 atṭāl. 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 (ṣencīt religious) man (al-babīl al-muṭāmin bi-l-bukhāl) 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 atṭāl section of the ancient ḍalīda 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. Kulthum's Mu'allaga and which encouraged heroic recklessness not pious fear).

1 The kind of treatment of material seen to exist in Abū Nuwās' khāmriyyāt survived after him. A good example is to be found in Thā'ālībi's Yattimat al-Dahr (Cairo, 1947), iv. 74 f. It is a poem attributed to Abū l-Ayyub al-Jāhiri which parodies the literary form of the zubdiyya, conforming to the ordering of gnomic motifs in libralional poetry; it can be schematized by the following three lines (1. 4, and 6): audā mulukī bānī sāāna wa-qaṣāla Ī wa-asbha l-mulku mā ymāka yantaṣqu�ū il il lāna maraquā-bu fa-l-dahrī mubādī-ru l-an-hū āfāsān la-hu min taṣīlīd qaṣāsqū il da-l-hām ilä saqārin wa-sbr 'ālī ūrābin il-fa-l-fajrī il-lufsī l-gharbīyyī mu-tarīqū.
... 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 khāmīr and hijā' (or dhambīn al-khāmīr). The same 'Amr b. Qamī'a also cursed wine for its excesses and his own; in a 6-line qīl'a of ambivalent attitude—where the true effects of wine are set alongside its finer qualities—he declares: "(line 6)

God curse thee for a drink! would that the resolute man could keep himself away from thee!

Another poet—'Abd al-Malīsh b. 'Asala—composed a qīl'a of eight lines (Mufaddalīyūt, 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):" (lines 1 and 6)

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-Malīsh threatens hijā': "I am a man of the house of Murra; if I wound you [with my satire] you will not stanch the wound."


2. For dhī mirām see A. Jones's comment on line 29 of Labīd's Mu'allaga in Early Arabic Poetry, vol. ii. Significantly Jones points to its use in the Qur'ān (65:3).

'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 mu'ra'wa 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 sāribtu fa-inna-ni mustahlikun 1 māli... 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 diwān:18

(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].

(22-23)
Satisfy me with its swift, dark horse
and give me of the cup, of its good

(90)
Or let it be for the pious and wondrous
then let it be as the sound of the drum.

(93)
If it be conveyed to the king's
and the king's time is

18 Of the 17 lines of 'Antara quoted below only one (tašā'aw... nājiyya) is found in
Ahlwardt's Diwāns (The Diwāns of the sixteenth century Arabic poets Emāhīq, 'Antara, Tarāfa, Zuhair, Alqama and Imam al-Qais). 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 Sarh Diwān

Furthermore, 'Antara consistently developed the imagery of the
“cup” (ka's) into heroic and often morbid utterances (p. 13):

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 khawār (ašbū, aḥimm, and aṣṭāq) 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):

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-
Uqayṣīr,19 in the Umayyad period, and al-Raqaṣī20 and Abū Nuwās
in the 'Abbāsid period.21

'Antara’s poetry, as we have glimpsed, treats of death copiously;
ḥikma therefore, with its essential warning against life’s finiteness,

19 See Aghāni, 11/27-8.

20 See the Mimiyya, TAbaqat al-Su'arā’, 227: anā lā aṭṭubu an yu’ l rafa fī l-barbi
maqāmi il wa-bi-baṣāl an tarā-ni l bayna fitayān kirāmi.

21 For mock-heroism in the khamriyya see especially the poem beginning idh
'abbā abū l-bayyā l-cī l-l-bayyā fursūnā (Diwān Abī Nuwās, 198). For a brief dis-
cussion of the subject see Mattrock, “Description and Genre in Abū Nuwās'.
Hijā' and the Bacchic Naqā'id

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:

أَرَى الْفَزْرُ أَنْ يَنْتَجُ مِنْ اللَّوْدُ نَاجِيًا
وَأَشَرَبَ مِنْ كَأْسِ الْيَدِ صَافًا

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 marzūwa demanded the eschewal of lahub/ladhdha, 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 inductive tone; most notable amongst these was Qays b. ‘Āṣim.' 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-Yaṣkūrisi (d. c. AD 700), Hārīthah b. Badr (d. 686), 'Abd al-

14 Šarb Dīwān 'Antara ism al-Saddād, 1924.
15 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.
16 See Ch. 4. See also the chapter Man ḥarrama l-khāmra fī l-Jāhiliyya, in Qutb al-Seerīr.
17 Šezgin (ii. 375-6) writes of him: “war Lob - und hijā’—Dichter in Kufa und ein

Rāḥmān b. Arṭāt—Ibn Sayḥān—(d. 682), and al-Uqayṣir (d. 699). Like the compositions of the mukhabāram poet Abū Miḥjān al-Thaqafi, their wine songs were largely monothematic pieces (qif' as), that is poems that stood outside the formal qasida 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 wasf.

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 jābl.

Of Ḥārīthah b. Badr’s seven poems in defence of wine contained in the Aghānī three are paired off against another antagonistic poem. In one composition Ḥārīthah depicts a censurer 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 Ḥārīthah 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:

With [contentious poetry] must be linked the works of Ḥārīthah b. Badr al-Ghudānī, comprising about 80 lines, which certify that numerous Abū Nuwās-like processes were already in use." A great drinker (khinnār), this noble Basran" 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.

For developments in wasf in this period we must look to the poetry of al-Akḥṭal.

See "Khamriyya" in EI', p. 1002.
18 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.

" Though he was from Bāṣra "he resided at al-Kūfah which set itself up as heir to al-Ḥira".
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 wasf 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 Nabidh

Religious tension was often schematized around the dichotomy of ḥārām and ḥalāk; indeed, in certain anecdotes of early Islamic poetry, polarized attitudes to wine were represented by these two terms, which while not necessarily articulating absolute prohibition 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 nabidh. Such is the background of the following anecdote and poem.

In the Aghānī we read: **“At the wedding of Ibn Misma’, Ḥāritha offered ’Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād b. Žabyān something to quaff — [it was] nabidh made from raisins and honey; after finishing a glassful Ḥāritha commented, ‘You seem happy to drink this [lit. you drink it well];’ Ibn Žabyān answered, ‘Indeed I drink it [and consider it] halāk; [I do this] openly, whereas [someone else] might hide what he considers to be ḥārām;’ Ḥāritha asked, ‘Who is this other person?’ He replied, ‘The very person who is questioning me now’; upon which Ḥāritha composed [the following poem]”:**

If you are my fellow-drinker, take it [and] give 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 nabidh 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 tajīr);

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** 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 Žabyān, 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 wasf, whilst line 6 delineates the standard schedule of bacchism. Line 7 depicts the “fatal” effects of wine—as in ’Amr b. Qami’a before him and Abû 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 imber is mourned by the paraphernalia of labuṣ, the wine vessel etc. and, continuing this anthropomorphization, description of

** The Arabic text nabāṭiyatān must surely here be emended to wa-bāṭiyatān.
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 kharr) but as an exposé of the companion’s hypocrisy. For he that uttered, “I am a man who does not drink kharr 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/tugam), 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 asba’ha 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 Sayhān

A poem which constructs itself around the arguments of harām versus balāl and, more specifically, kharr versus nabidh in a more consciously literary manner is the following mimiyya by Ibn Sayhān. It is possessed of a subtle coherence, which gives it a greater overall rhetorical quality in defence of the specific argument propounded. Ḥāwī comments with reference to the poem: “We see in [Ibn Sayhān] an element of disrespect and mockery of religion, though he does not go as far as in his obscenity as others...”; he quotes, however, only the last two lines of the mimiyya, overlooking the sustained artistry of the poem as a whole.

In the anecdote related as background to the composition Ibn Sayhān is reported to have said to his cousin, whom he found imbibing nabidh made from raisins: “If you drink it because you consider nabidh al-zābit to be balāl then you are a fool (abmaq); however if you drink it considering it to be harām 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. kharr), for the sin is equal”. He then recited:

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” (qurār) 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 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.

Who the Qurār were in this period is a matter of dispute; however, something like the modern notion of religious “fundamentalists” is not inappropriate.

The addressee’s father.
So they died and were resurrected while the wine (mudām) was in their midst, mixed, like the Seven Sisters—"it could be described only by one's fancy."

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 Sayḥan advises Ibn Sari' against drinking that which has died; he encourages rather the consumption of that which is alive. The phrase mā māta marratān may appear indeterminate in its significance; however, the phrase sulāfun bayyata, 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 marratān, the tone of expression is pejorative and negative in contrast to the positive attribute of wine contained in the epithet-synonym of wine, sulāfun, and the clearly positive attribute bayyata. 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 anecodal background of the poem, one may infer that mā māta in 1a refers to nabīd al-zabib, which was considered by the Hanafi madhab to be halāl. This nabīd 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 Qur'ānic injunction against the consumption of carrion. The inference of line 3 must therefore be that al-bayya, referring to the sulāf of 1, is, if not halāl, at least less harām than al-mayyit/nabīd al-zabib.

The phrase in line 3, fa-šattāna bayya l-bayyi wa-l-mayyiti, is semantically dependent on the dichotomy described in the first hemistic, and accordingly encourages the consumption of sulāf muzzata l-ta'm (line 1). Line 4 appeals to parental respect whilst reconciling religion by appealing to God's forgiveness: jāwāza 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-Uqayṣir, imbibing is discussed in conjunction with salāt, producing a manifest tension of values. The sun whose position announces the prayer time can be associated with the wine since it is termed ḥayya. 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 khmr. 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.

**Hāritha b. Badr versus al-Āḥnaf b. Qays**

"al-Āḥnaf b. Qays reprimanded Hāritha b. Badr for his addiction to [wine]: 'You have made yeself an object of scandal and lost your self-control'; vexed at this Hāritha answered: 'I will please you by abstaining', al-Āḥnaf departed, eager that [his friend] should

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13 al-Najm here is probably the constellation, i.e. al-Thurayya: see Paul Kunzisch, Untersuchungen zur Sternennamenkultur der Araber (Wiesbaden, 1961), 84.

14 This motif is reminiscent of Abū Nuwās: (Dhu'ān, 43) fa-ṣād-ka syyūnī lā tūdhūmu-li l-illā bi-ḥayyyati l-ṣālī; see below: "Kānā l-Sayḥain Māṭiyata l-lāhāl.

15 See Ibn Qutayba's Kitāb al-Ārība; see also Sa'id, Taṣawwur al-Khamriyyāt fi l-Sīr 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), 48-57; Joseph Sadan, "Vin—fait de civilisation", in Rosen-Ayalon (ed.), Studies in Memory of Gaston Wiet (Jerusalem, 1977), 129-60; "Khamr", EI', vol. iv.

16 Qur'ān, 5/3.

17 See the rā'yya, Aghānī, 11/252. Here al-Uqayṣir comes close to lampooning a noble companion of Muṣār whose inebriation he describes: he prays sitting down (qā'idan), combines the salāt al-zuhr with salāt al-asr and to lighten the burden of liturgy recites sirāf al-Kauṭalar—the shortest sūra in the Qur'ān.
Whom I shall delight, following my appetite, and spending bountifully all that I possess."

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."

Indeed, Benchekh'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 Háritha and al-Aḥnaf related above has a sequel in the Aghānī, attributed to the same source. Aware of the anger of al-Aḥnaf, who threatened to satirize Háritha were it not for the indulgencies the latter himself knew about al-Aḥnaf, Háritha 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 . . .”:

Abū Bakr criticizes aspects of the generous, noble [man] which he [admires] but disapproves of.

If you [wish to] reproach me, 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: Hári, 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.

The Arabic of this line (wa-alaḥdulu ’āfuan kullu mā malakat yadd) is strikingly similar to Ṭara’a’s in kuṭa la taṣṣu da’a maniyiyati da’ni ubād-hā bi-mā malakat yadd (Mu’addaḍa, line 55).

See “Time and Reality in Nasir and Ghazal”.

“Aghānī, 23/459.
indulgence increasingly jibed at traditional martial chivalry, the language and images of which were transformed into amusing allegories."

Qatada 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 taqwātuqā (and also ruḍ and ‘aqūl) 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 Qatada b. Mu‘rib:

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.

Although wine poets mocked heroism, they themselves could be mocked for lacking muraqqa‘a; indeed, the Aghānī (234/777) relates how on being defeated at Dūlāb by the Aṣāriṣa ‘Jahri b. Badr was chided by one Ghawth b. al-Hubāb; the latter’s principal medium of satire was khamr: line 1) “‘Jahri 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-ḥā ṣabā‘a ka-l-miski rīṣ-hā l-yāṣalla akhū-hā li-l-idā ghayra hā‘ībya.”

The deftness of Abū Nuwā’s poem lies in the fact that the defence of wine is
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 Babil.
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 jahi is bāti, which has religious significance, indeed the second hemistich is an allusion to the Qur’ānic wa-lā talbisā l-ḥaqqa bi-l-bāti (And cover not Truth with falsehood). The somewhat overworked paradox in line 5 stresses the dichotomy we have spoken of: Abū Jilda is both a’mā and baṣir; his knowledge is subdued in his ignorance. Line 2 provides a link between the essential hijā of the poem and ‘adbl. Qatāda claims that Abū Jilda: là yasma’u qawla l-nāsibi l-’adhibi (does not heed the good advice of the censurer). The ‘adhib is nāsib (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 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 ‘adhib. 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-siṣmu in āṣa la-hu manzilū.

In reply to Qatāda, Abū Jilda composed a qiṭ’a the first line of which is a mu’ārada of the former’s opening verse:

Qur’ān, 11/308.

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 (nabā),
resolution (hazm), courage (naḍr), and grace (nā’l).
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 Babil.
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 nabā and hazm (analogous to ‘ilm and ḥilm); in line 5 Qatāda’s insults (jahi) are implicitly contrasted with Abū Jilda’s ‘aql. The poet identifies Qatāda as an ‘adhib in the following line: ta’dhalu-ni fi qahwatun . . . Thus the censurer again steps out of the shadow of anonymity. In line 7 Abū Jilda creates an irreverent image highlighting the manipulation of bāti 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 šarīr Bakrin kull-hi maḥtida. 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 ‘irḍ (analogous to hazm in line 3) whilst
reiterating his lack of intellect—he is ahmaq (analogous to abat nafsu-ka fi’la l-nubā (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 gleaning is that the ‘ādbil is the object of hijā’—a point to bear in mind in analysis of the poems of Ābu Nuwās.

Jārīr’s Satire of Al-Akhtal

None of al-Akhtal’s bacchic tableau is specifically cast as a defence for wine,” though their eulogistic tone is in itself a positive stance. It is significant, therefore, that al-Akhtal’s main sparring partner in poetry, Jārīr, focused on wine as a subject of mockery to mock the Christianity of Taghibī. These elements of bacchic lampooning are distinct from the material already analysed since they are contained within the gharaq of polytheistic poems of hijā’.

One representative poem of Jārīr merits brief discussion: Ḥāwī gives the following thematic breakdown for the qasīda beginning A-lā ḥayyi Laylā idh ajadda jinābu-ka:"

1-12 Nasib
13-20 Hijā’ of al-Akhtal for the unavenged deaths of members of his tribe, plus indulgence in wine
21-32 Further satire of Taghibī and al-Akhtal

The first line of hijā’ (line 13) inverts the heroic qualities and sense of responsibility preserved in Imru’l-Qays’ famous utterance, al-yawma khamrun wa-ghadan amrun. Imru’l-Qays’ line expressed the obligation to eschew wine once the task of avenging his father’s death (Ḥaṣr) became incumbent upon him. Examine, in contrast, Jārīr’s lines 13-15:

Aba malak al-ma‘lāt bil-kashār nshūna
‘alayhim fi ṣamahā l-mu‘amalat lam ‘alayshā
‘alayhim fi ṣamahā l-mu‘amalat lam ‘alayshā

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 Taghibī), and also because he inserted khamrun into panegyric qasīdas.

Abū Malik! A stupor has made your head keel, whilst [the] slain lie at Bīrī 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 Taghibī is that they drink instead of seeking vengeance for the slain. Line 16 is scatological and leads naturally to verse 17 which depicts al-Akhtal vomiting his wine whilst the possessions of Taghibī were being looted:

You vomited wine a while, meantime Taghibī’s livestock was pillaged [on] the day of Bīrī.

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:

And in the whores 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 diyar motif of the nasib: in line 20 it is Qays, the poet’s tribe, who are the agents of the diyar’s destruction. The nasib 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 nasib:

We fear amongst our enemies an eavesdropper or a spy whose observation is to be dreaded.

In love poetry (ghazal or nasib) enmity may come from the censurer, the calumniator, or the envious watcher; these are possibly signified by the ‘ādā. Jārīr 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 censurer there is a strong sense that the
metonymy is not merely introductory but gives a forceful impetus
to the descriptive and eulogistic passages of description that ensue. As we
shall demonstrate subsequently, the la'ma of the first verse of Da' an-
ka laummi presages the figure of Ibrahim al-Nazzâm, who is
lampooned specifically in the last two lines of the poem.

THE 'ABBÂSID PERIOD

To my knowledge no antagonistic poems survive in opposition to
specific discursive khamriyya of Abû Nuwâs. There are, however,
examples of him lampooning a particular individual; as well as in
answer to Ibrahim al-Nazzâm he composed a khamriyya of bi'ja
against one Abû Ayyûb. The spirit of bi'ja, furthermore, informs his
frequently irreverent treatment of the aftâl tropes; indeed a
khamriyya in which eight out of twelve lines treat the aftâl wryly
is a poem of bi'ja almost to the same degree as it is a khamriyya.

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. Abû Nuwâs
went beyond his predecessors in the extent and quality of his dia-
lectic. This enhanced quality, in the field of rhetoric (not specifically
bâdi'), seems to coincide with features of both his poetry and his era
discussed by both Hamori in "Form and Logic in Some Medieval
Poems" and Stekcevich in "Towards a Redefinition of Bâdi' Poetry".
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 wasf 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 khamriyya, 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
Abû l-Atâbiyya.

Argument in Abû l-Atâbiyya

The material discussed below is akin to the poetry of Abû l-
-'Atâbiyya 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 follow-
ing lines from two different poems amply illustrate the point—
sukru l-šâbâbi jumâin:


"See Dîwân, 122. The poem mocks Abû Ayyûb for drinking nabîd as opposed
to "âlîb". It should be noted that none of the poems in the section entitled Naqqâl-
hu ma'a l-su'arâ (i.e. Abû Nuwâs' poetic contests with other poets in vol. 1 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'darâsas) of kham-
riyya by Abû Nuwâs.

"See Dîwân, 52.

"In 1936 Muhammad 'Arâfaah contributed "al-Munâqadâ fi si'îr Abû Nuwâs" to
a volume of al-Hilâl devoted solely to the 'Abbâsid wine poet (p. 1176). 'Arâfaah
makes an important observation about Abû Nuwâs' poetry: wa-qad nâqad Abû
Nuwâs su'arâ'a 'asrîhi li-mithil li-lilâl li-qaddamâ-nâhâ (al-munâqadât, al-khilâfat
... wa-kâma fi-hi mà yughri su'arâ'a 'asrî hi bi-an yuqadâ-hu wa-yughrihi bi-an
yûqadâ-hum. 'Arâfaah mentions a pair of antagonist poems: "wa-qad hâdâ
Khimdâ qad wa-adhâ-nâhâ li-mithil li-lilâl wa-qad hâdâ-i lâ-yâmâ
'âfâ-hu kullu ashâma dhi râtiqâs. Fâ rânâhâ-hu al-Mukâmâ al-
Qâdirâb al-qâdâ-nâhâ dî l-râdiqâs al-isha amâ al-âdâm il-âlîm il-
ââfâ-hu kullu ashâma dhi râtiqâs." Basing himself on these lines 'Arâfaah views one aspect of Abû Nuwâs' spirit of
munâqadâ as being due to su'ârâ'id sympathies. He does not, however, pursue this
notion in detail. Another relevant observation is the following: "wa-kâma mâyâm
mânârân mûtalâtân dâlîyân dâl al-tâbâbatâl wa-l-muqâmâ wa-kâma dhâka yughirî akhâ
l-jaddî bi-munâqadâtî-hu fa-men dâ'â-hi lâ l-tâbâbatâl qâdûl-lu-hu: da' 'an-kâ mà
jaddî bi-hi wa-tâbâbatâl." Though 'Arâfaah's article makes this important point it is
devoid of analysis; he neglects to clarify that a significant feature of Abû Nuwâs'
poetry is their existence in a general ambience of munâqadâ which Abû Nuwâs
engages in 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


νagâ'îd contained in the anthology of his poetry entitled al-Fuqâhâ wa-l-Innaâ fi
Munâ' Abû Nuwâs (Cairo, 1898).


"JAL 11 (1981); see with caution her comments (p. 5); "the bâdi' style is noth-
ing less than the expression in poetry of the entire scope of the metaphorical and
analytical process that characterized Mu'tazilite speculative theology (kalâm) and,
in a broader sense, the whole cultural and intellectual framework of the era of
Mu'tazilite hegemony..." Cf. esp. Da' an-ka laummi in which Abû Nuwâs pits
himself against a Mu'tazilite theologian. Another quotation is also relevant, where
Stekcevich defines aspects of bâdi' or proto-bâdi' poetry; they are: "1) the incor-
poration of the principles of logic and theological disputation; and 2) the free
metaphorical manipulation of traditional genre and motif elements to express
contemporary social ideas..."
Hijāʾ and the Bacchic Naqāʾīd

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!∗

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.∗

The impulse here is clear: Abū l-ʿAtābiya’s critique—through standard hikma—has clearly become a pious one.

The first five verses of a 14-line zubdiyya∗ can be interpreted from a certain perspective as an anti-khamriyya; they evoke some of the motifs of hedonistic poetry: (verse 1)

A jealous [desire for dalliance] is a malady which has adversely affected all but a few.

The description of al-birṣu (eagerness to indulge in pleasures) as dāʾ alludes quite plausibly to the confession of lyric poetry, crystallized most eloquently in the much-cited hemistic of Abū Nuwās: dāwi-ni bi-llati kānat birya l-dāʾu (Give me the cure that was the cause of my malady). Since the effects of inebriation are conventionally described figuratively as a “death” (in phrases such as šariʿ mudāmi) light is shed on the meaning of line 3:

Avoid [your] carnal appetite and be wary of being slain by it.

Line 5 may be seen to argue against forced seduction:

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 zinān (or its singular form zann) occurs variously in the zubdiyyat 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!∗ (lines 11, 16, and 18)

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’ qaṣīda, Li-man ṭalālan,∗† may be loosely interpreted as a counter-text to this poem: in Abū Nuwās’ qaṣīda there is a claim that opinions are valid in their diversity: al-zinān fi fawāmi. He thereby vindicates his championing of wine. In Abū l-ʿAtābiya’s poem it is only the vicissitudes of Fate that are various (line 13): wa-l-bādhīthāt fawāmi. Hence the refuge of certainty (al-yaqīn) in religion, which discourages speculation: mā yatṭiru l-humāmi illa l-zinān. Righteous opinion is singular (zann): wa-l-ghinā an tuḥassina l-zanna fī llāhi.

∗ Dīwān Abū l-ʿAtābiya, pp. 52–5.

† Dīwān Abū l-ʿAtābiya, pp. 422–3.

‡ Dīwān Abū Nuwās, pp. 68–9.
There is a *khamriyya* by the poet rhyming in *rāʾ* which Ghazālī has judiciously entitled *Fatwā Faqīhin* ("The Lawyer’s Judgement").¹² It comprises 19 lines and is like no other wine poem in the *diwān*. 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 *faraḍ* (the pillars of Faith). The poet asks a series of questions about *al-nabīd* (date wine), *al-ṣalāt* (prayer), *al-ṣiyām* (fasting), *al-taṣādduq* (alms), *al-hajj* (pilgrimage), *et al.*, and receives in each case an answer which sits comfortably with the spirit of a hedonistic individual: *nabīd* is not *ḥalāl* (permissible), instead one should drink a more powerful wine (*ʻuqār*) 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 *muyya* (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 encumbent (*waʻājib*) upon the poet.

Though the jurist is described as *ḥaburūn mina l-ʻābār* (line 2)—that is, a Jewish scholar—this may simply allude to the fact that the *ʻābār* 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-ʻAḥbār, one of the chief sources of *ḥadīth* literature).¹³ More significant is that the whole composition is addressed at the *ʻadḥīl* 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-Lāḥiḥ Lāḥā-Nī¹⁴

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 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:

It is significant for the purpose of this discussion that the word *khawfa*, in the second hemistic, is given byLane, alongside the more common meaning, as “argument/testimony”;¹⁵ thus the hemistic can be rendered: “By my life, that is an argument I cannot accept”. The apparent meaning of the phrase *kay yai‘a bi-bid’atīn* in the first hemistic 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: *tawawritu hu wizaran fādhān man yadāḥāq-ū-bā* [(wine] bequeaths a heavy burden of sin to whoever drinks it). By implication the meaning offered by the first hemistic is that Abū Nuwās’ acquiescence in censure and hence abstinence from wine would in itself constitute a strange “heresy”. This is borne out in hemistic 2a where we read *lāhā-nī* *kay lā aṣrabā l-rāhā* (He censured me so as not to drink wine). Effectively hemistic 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 yai‘a bi-bid’atīn* 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 *mukhdāram* Abū Milğan al-Thaqāfī:

If I die bury me by the vine so that its roots can slake [the thirst] of my bones after my death.

¹² *Diwān*, 200–1. The poem has been translated into French by Vincent Montheil in *Le Vin, le vent, la vie*, 75–6.
¹³ *Habr* is by no means employed exclusively for non-Muslim scholars.
¹⁴ *Diwān*, 91, ed. Wagner, pp. 222–3. The full Arabic text and translation of this poem is contained in Appendix B.
¹⁵ 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 khamriyyat 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-muzā (“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:

فنا فلا لن تسكن الخلود عاجلا

There is an adumbration here of death-in-wine 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 ḥayittu raṣīqu-hā (3b) with the analagous innī uwaqti l-mamāti saʿāqi-hā; that is, “I will drink until I die”. A logical sequent to this image, if one were to be sought, would be that of drinking after death; this Ābu 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.

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 nasib (and its attendant passages) in pre-Islamic poetry.

Kāna l-Sabābū Muṭiyyata l-Jahl

From time to time Ābu 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: “wa-qā’īlin bal turidū l-bajja (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 fāniyat lādhdhātu Baghdadī (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 (Qurābblū, al-Fīrūk, Kilwād, al-Sāliḥiyā, 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 Baghdad is rid of me, how can I then be rid of Ţizanābādi?”

A similar process operates in the more refined qaṣīda, Kāna l-sabābū. The poem begins by acquiescing in a moral judgement: kāna l-sabābū maṭiyyata l-jahlī. However, the hemistich is a “false friend” to a putative censure; 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-sabābū (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 ironic 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-sabābū as the “steed” of ignorance, 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)

Dīwān, 167.


Note the similarity of this image to Qatāda b. Mu’rib’s condemnation of Ābu Jīla: sadda rikāba l-ghayyi. It should be noted, however, that Ibn Qutayba prefers a variant of the opening hemistich in his Kitāb al-Shīr wa-l-Shu’ārā’ (ed. Mūfīd Qumayya, Beirut, 1981, p. 426): yaniibi l-nāsī maṭiyyata wa-lā arā-hu illa mażāmnata li-anma l-sätra li-l-Nābighati fa-akhdhāha hu min-hu wa-huwa qa’dhu-hu: fa-imma mażāmnata l-jahlī l-sabābū. Ibn Qutayba’s reading is plausible and does not affect our interpretation of the entire poem; however, in support of reading maṭiyyat as the metaphor in line 7.

Jahl is used in the broadest sense of untempered behaviour.
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:

Now my steps have shortened 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 hilm); for the celebration of wine that begins at line 8 sustains the poet's love for wine in the present (wa'ka'su ahwā-hā), despite its destruction of his livelihood and mature qualities. Examine the positive depiction of wine which follows:

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 its 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 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 conjunction 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:

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 matiyatu l-jablī and wine as perceptible only through the intellect (bi-bissi gharizati l-'aql). The wine is, indeed, of an almost numinous quality, preceding as it does the creation of Adam. Far from being associated with youth, wine contrasts it. Here the dichotomy of jāblī and 'aql (part of hilm) 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 timescale is a fleeting transition from youth to old age. There is a presumption in line 8 of abstinence but the ensuing description of wine relegates this to an irrelevance.

In structure the qasida involves the same kind of inversion as takes place in 'Afrā l-muqallata, in which the celebration of wine in

6 The image is reminiscent of another 5-line poem of wasf which expands on the image of the first line: (Dīwān, 47) daqqa ma'nā l-khamrī ḫattā li ḫawa fa rajmi l-munāni.

7 Dīwān, 3–5. See also above, pp. 112–14.
the present is offset against initial introductory lines about youth. 
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-muzul.

Kayfa l-Nuṣūf

In this qasīda[4] a question is asked in the first line:

كيفنَ اشتهر عن الملاكِ، Quản يَذْنَا بالله يقتِيس

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 (muzul) 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 ḥadīth 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 1—and as a trope which evokes a legal scenario and context for discussion. Qiyās is the one branch of the usūl 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 Ḥanafis drew their conclusions as to the permissibility of certain types of wine—notably nabil.

Lines 2 and 3 provide an answer, arguing against the necessity of abstinence. Abū Nuwās' argument is formulated in a simple logic:

ولا أجد في القلوب استغفاراً لما أ предназначен

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]!

Hiyā and the Baccbic Naqqāṣīd

Hoary locks are not perforce a signpost to old age and, more especially, incapacity;[5] 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.[6] One senses that only incapacity would contravene the demands of ḥilm.

Four lines of description follow. The wine is praised for its experience (makhbūru-ba)—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 imber's most refined eulogy (fa-la-ba l-muḥadḥabi min ṣanā'ī l-hāṣī)—a clue to the nature of baccbic description within the accepted generic framework of Arabic poetry; that is, wasf of khāmr functions as maddī of khāmr. 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 vanishing of a once recalcitrant beloved, both of which themes, when treated in detail, may lend a structural coherence to the khāmriyya. 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 (ṣibū bkalā'īqa iṣ-ṣullāsī).

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. Progresing from a logical but defensive argument at the outset of the qasīda, Abū Nuwās now attacks the censer, exposing his hypocrisy in abstaining from wine for the sake of appearance only.[7]

4 This motif is reminiscent of an anonymous fragment from the Greek Anthology; see Greek Lyric, II, p. 213: φιλοί γάρ χαρίσμαι τερεματά, ἵπποι νέων χαριτωμένα ἔμεθα τὸ γεράνθηκεν· τοὺς γεράνθηκεν ἐνωμένοι τόνος ἔλεγε καλέντες. (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).

5 In one khāmriyya (see Dīwān Abū Nuwās, 679) ṣayb lends urgency to the poet's desires: (line 1a) ḍārīka l-ṣaybu fi nāwābī l-salāmī → (line 2a) fa-qisi-ni sulāfītan binta 'asīn.

6 We have seen criticism of hypocrisy to have been a concern of earlier Umayyad wine poets, such as Īhlāth b. Badr.
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 sears the poem as madīḥ, altering its rhetorical focus in defence of wine:

ؤُدْدَ أَرَدَّتْ مَدْيَح فُورُمْ لَمْ تَنَّمَّ
فِي مَدْدِهِ فَامْحَالْتْ لَيْيَ عَشِيَّا

And if you wish to praise a people and be honest in your praise,
then praise Ban 'Abbās."

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 intimate 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-muṣū'a, Yusran wa-'usrun" 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 envoy. However, the poem has a delicate chiascure structure which eloquently bespeaks its epicurean stance. In the opening line the key-word is naẓa'ta:

فَأَوَامْ نَزَّةَتْ وَنُيَحْفَوْا وَمَقَى
قَالُواٌ قَالُواٌ نُزَّةَتْ وَنُيَحْفَوْا وَمَقَى

They have said, "You have forsaken [indulgence]", ignorant of my desire for every slender, swaggering youth with a gentle gaze.

"This line is missing from Wagner's edition; see pp. 186-7.
"This verse is reminiscent of Muḥ b. Iyās, wa-idhā aradā madīḥa-hu 1 lam yakhdu qaṣū-l-hu fi bina'ih-hi; see von Grunebaum, "Three Arabic Poets of the Early Abbasid Age (The Collected Fragments of Muḥ b. Iyās, al-Salim al-Khāṣīb and Abū S-Samāqnaqā)," Orientalia, 17 (1948); line 9 of fragment III in praise of Gharb b. Yazid. Line 3 of the same poem foreshadows another sentiment to be found in Abū Nuwās: da'l nasība wa-dhikra-hu."
Dīwān, 140; ed. Wagner, pp. 190-1.

The second line replies to the first and begins the poet's defence of both ghazāl and kī'amr:

كَيْفَ النَّزَّةَ وَقَلَّهُ قَدْ نُفْسَحْتُ
لِلْيَامَةِ وَلَوْنَ أَلْحَوَاقُ فِي الأَكْسَ

How to abstain, when my heart is sundered by [endearing] eyes and the colour of wine in its chalice?

Line 3 sustains treatment of muṣū'a. The religious ideal of abstinence leading towards mād is confronted directly: idhā naẓa'ta ilā ra'sum takanna-na ni ra'yānī; Abū Nuwās offers his opinion—ra'yī—couched in the final line in language derived from an essentially Islamic dichotomy: 'usr and yusr."
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 inmāmah ma'a l-usr wa yusr" 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)

فَالْعَسَرُ فِي القَسْفِ لِلَّيْلِ مَيْتَانًا
وَالْعَسَرُ فِي وَضَيْرِ مِنْ أُمَهِّي مِنْ 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'ta: (1) qāllu naza'ta; (2) kayfa l-muṣū'a; (3) idhā naza'ta), 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 chiascure structure of the poem resides in the fact that the fourth—the middle—line of the poem crystallizes the dichotomy of

"The use of ra'y here appears to allude to its technical sense in fiqh; see EI, i. 133: "opinion. As a technical term denoting the purely intellectual function it is used in the system of ilāma in opposition to such terms as 'ūbūn, 'umma, kītāb Allāh and hadith." Ra'y was eventually limited to qiyaṣ (see the previous poem).
"This dichotomy existed in the Ḥādīyya. However, its inclusion in the Qur'ān transformed its significance.

"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 abstinance) into an unequivocal opinion: (sa) là khayra fi l-ayyīl ilā bi-l-mudāmī (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 ḍaqṣidā convincing as a piece of argumentation in support of wine is the bi-partite Li-man ẓalal of fifteen lines.7 It contradicts the most familiar current of Abū Nuwās' khamriyyāt by treating the atlāl tradition conventionally in the initial six lines. Abū Nuwās abhorred imitation of ancient desert topos; he also, however, subverted the atlāl 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, perform setting aside the impossible task of establishing the ḍaqṣidā's position in the chronology of Abū Nuwās' diwān, we are led to one of two possible conclusions: that the initial six lines of dhikr al-atlāl are consonant with the poet's mood at the time of composition; or that they chime with the overall impulse of the ḍaqṣidā.

The initial six lines are evocative (in the tawwīl 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:

> ḍaqṣidā: ḍaqṣidā: ḍaqṣidā:

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;

> See Diwān, 68; ed. Wagner, pp. 305-8.

The abode of one whose saliva was sweet and whose touch was soft;8

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-amma waḥīn-hā fa-maṣūnū bring to mind the imagery of 'uddrī ghazal and set the poem firmly into the tradition that had developed after the more impersonal and self-rebukiing love poetry of the jähiliyya. In the earliest poetry the poets cut their amorous losses;9 in the 'uddrī tradition the abandoned traces are translated into the very epiphany of the beloved.10 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 ḍaqṣidā. Lines 5 and 6 complete the contemplative ingress:

> muntazamān wa-ghayru muntazamin.

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 muntazamān wa-ghayru muntazamin.11 In some measure this must constitute the signature of the poet, supporting the authenticity of the ḍaqṣidā 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

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8 Essentially the line creates an association between the diyār and the beloved.
9 See Jacobs, "Time and Reality in Nasib and Ghahal".
10 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...”.
11 See Diwān, 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 ṣuṭṣṭaqati lī ḫaṣṣiyyi muṣamāmīn lāŋra.
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 ghazalalâlîl and khamsr is not as clear as it is in Abu Nuwâs' Wa-muwâtî l-tarf, where wine as a consolation is expressed unequivocally: fa-ta’azzaytu bi-sîrîn i’aqâr. 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 هُلْفٍ الْمَرَّةُ فَلَنْتُ لَهُ اصِبْحَ
فَقَدْ حَلَّٖ الْعُمُّ نَّبَتُ

I said to one who has forswn wine: have a morning cup; one should not make religious oaths [in abstinence] of such things.

Abu Nuwâs 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 wasf; the first two of which depict the age of the wine in relation to both Fate itself (al-manîn) and generations of man. Lines 10–13 describe more physical aspects of the wine:

فَأَدْرَكُ مَنَّا الْغَلَبُونَ بَعْشَا
كَانَ سَطْرُودًا فَوْقَهَا فَارْسِيَّةً
إِذَا مَتَّسَحَ الْعِبَادُ عِيْبَعُ
مَكَانُ سَوَاءٌ وَلِياَضٌ جَمُّعُ

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;—

though differing in their shape—yellow in place of black, with white lids.

As he considered my description (na’tî) 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 dbû halîfîn. 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 wasf. Abu Nuwâs attaches himself to two ends of the spectrum of tradition—resolution at the âtâl 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 dbû halîfîn (the man forsworn) is exposed only to Abu Nuwâs’ encomium on wine: qu’tu la-hu šâhibî. 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 khāmriyyât, in which the age of wine enhances the urgency of mubâdara). 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: torâtuhu unásin wa-unásin. In two passages of description that lie outside the domain of religion, Abu Nuwâs 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 (na‘r) 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 ḥabīrīyya. The poet does not reject religion but pursues an idea by which he can be reconciled with it; he plays with the abstinence’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-ẓunūnī fannī.¹⁴

Da‘ an-ka Lawmī⁵⁸

In the opening hemistich of the famous hāmziyya the defiant stance of the wine poet received its finest slogan: da‘ an-ka lawmī fa-imma l-lauma ighrā‘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 a following line of Ḥārīth b. Bdr⁵⁶:

Fa-imma l-lauma . . . qad tughrī is apparently alluded to by Abū Nuwās fa-imma l-lauma ighrā‘u.⁵⁷ The second hemistich (dau‘-ni

A tentative suggestion about the wasf al-qṭlōl of this kharniyyya 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 qṭlōl 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’ dīwān: there are many images of wine as the remnant of a substance matured and reduced by Time: (p. 10) akala l-dahrī mā taqṣas-sama min-hā l wa-tabaqqā labībū-hā l-maknūn; in the following line wine is buried away—da‘fūn: (p. 127) fa-qarna-hī fī maghārī l-ar‘ arī fā-khtala‘fat l-‘al‘al daf‘fatin aznmun wa-azmanū; in the following line the remand of the remnants of wine are specifically compared to those of an abandoned abode: (p. 152) a-lasta tarā‘-hā qad ta‘affat rusum-hā l-kar-mā qad ta‘affat l-dhayrī rusumū. As to Time’s effect on the colour of the wine, consider the following verses: (p. 145) fa-lam tataq qa‘ibū l-bayānī tansqas-hā . . . ka-ann-mā sārihat min nasf-hā jara‘an l fa-zāda min lawnī-hī fī bātnī l-qāri. Another possibility is that the qṭlōl refer not to the usual traces that desert winds bring but to an urban scene, giving the poem an extra dimension of buq‘satār: the dā‘wrīyya was a street or alley, the camel a mule (there is a poem by al-Qaysīrī (Aghānī, 11/325–8) which sets a precedent for this). For this suggestion I am indebted to Dr Geert Jan van Gelder.

¹⁴ Diwān, 6–7; ed. Wagner, pp. 2–7. For the full Arabic text and translation of this poem see Appendix B.

¹⁵ See Aghānī, 23/486.

¹⁶ al-‘A‘z’s famous verse, wa-ka‘sin sirībatu ‘alā ladhīhā bi-nqirā‘ bi-na‘ayyatu min-hā bi-hī, is more traditionally put forward as providing the model for Abū Nuwās’ line.

bi-llatī kānāt hiya l-dā‘u) describes the “hair of the dog”, ⁶³ 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 wasf, which lend support to the opening statement of defiance.

One of the most common introductory topics of the wine poem is bahnī (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 bahnī as an opening topos, is suggested in line 2 where wine dispels sorrow: lā tanzīlū l-abzānū sābata-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.⁶⁴ To a degree the phrase signals the consummation of sexual desire implicit in all its forms in line 3: min ka‘fī dhâtī birin fī zayyi dhī dhakarīn 1 la-hā muḥībbānī lātīyyūn 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 wasf 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 sāqīyya and the wine respectively:

⁶³ 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 kharniyyyāt which describe the wine and finish by depicting the sordid consequences of inebriation. The majority of Abū Nuwās’ kharniyyyāt fit into a large contextual and composite tableau.

⁶⁴ See esp. Imru’l-Qays: fa-lammā ajzānā sāhata l-bayyī (Mū‘allaqa, recension of al-Tibrīzī, 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 dim; 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 abki ("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, 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) haftızTa say’an wa-ghabat ‘an-ka aṣyā’u’ (You have learnt something but much more escapes you). This hemistich expands a commonplace topic—jabh, 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-ma’n yadda’fi l-’ilm falsafatani (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.22 It

22 See, for example, Labid, Mu’allafa, lines 33–4 in the recension of al-Tibrizī fai-bi-tIlka (= al-nāga) . . . aṣālī l-ḥabībata. See EI (article on “Falsafa” by R. Arnauld): “[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’tazili 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 proferred background of the poem.23

The final line, in the context of a possible Mu’tazilite debate, sets up an argument against interpretation of the sin of khaimar as one of the kaba’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 istiḥfār and draws it into the most relevant forum: that of theological debate.24

The final two lines of this qaṣīda 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...
Hijā' and the Bacchic Naqā'īḍ

... là tahjar—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."

In conclusion to this discussion of Abū Nuwās’ poems I offer a quotation from Hamori’s “Form and Logic”.9

‘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-Builders”, 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.”10 Van Gelder opposes the application of such ideas to Arabic poetry; he decries the overworked theories that seek to prove organic unity in the qaṣida. 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'īḍ of wine. To the mood of hijā' and munāfara which has been amply attested from the Jāhilliya 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-

9 This poem is strikingly akin to the 9-line khamriyya hamzīyya beginning bayna l-mudāmmīn fīl-mā’ qālābāt (Dīwān, 69)—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 ẓīnūm l-fikrī fa-nqasamat l-ka-mā tāqassamati l-adyāna ārā'u.

10 p. 169.

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 Jâhiliyya. Islamic tawba was not unrelated, in a sense, to the fulfilment of muruwwa. Indeed, Abû Nuwâs’ phrase—al-masjidu l-jâmi’u l-muruwwata wa-l-dina’—suggests that an association between the ethical values of muruwwa and din 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 Jâhiliyya, 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.

1 Dieûn Abî Nawâs, 3.

ABSTINENCE IN THE JÀHILIYYA

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 censurer’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 Mufîdd al-îyât by ‘Abda b. al-Tabib). By rebuking the poet’s reckless spending the ‘âdhil attacked the very basis of fakhra, for generosity was one of the cardinal virtues of muruwwa—this attitude is perhaps best illustrated by ‘Antara’s claim, “When I drink I squander all my money, whilst my dignity remains undiminished.” Yet whilst generosity (karam) was an eminently laudable quality, it was taken, under the effects of alcohol, to irresponsible extremes; one anecdote from the Jâhiliyya 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:

"فَلاَ تَغْضِبِ عَلَيْنَ لَكَ نُهِيَةَ بِصُوْقٍ رَبَّنَا غَضِيبُ لَكُمْ يُغُرُّوتُ"

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 censurer; however, it was degrading to lose waqâra—the outward manifestation of hilm—in old age. Therefore, with the onset of šayb, 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.

1 See Bravmann’s definition of muruwwa in The Spiritual Background of Early Islam, 177.
3 al-Qâli, al-Amâli 1/150.
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 antagonist 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 *muraqqa*. This was not abrogated by *din*, as Goldziher has suggested. The positive features of *muraqqa*, which included *ḥilm*, were absorbed implicitly into the broad ethical fabric of the nascent Islamic community.1 Izutsu sums up the position neatly:2

In pre-Islamic times, *jāhil* (or *jahl*) was sharply opposed to a different concept, viz., *ḥilm* (or *ḥilm*). But . . . the problem is very delicate because this concept of *ḥilm*, although quite a different concept from *Islam*, 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 *Islam* itself. This is shown by the fact that when the new religion replaced the old concept of *ḥilm* by the new concept of *muslim* or *muʾmin*, 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 *jāhil*; *ḥilm* is the ability to smother one's feelings, to overcome blind passions and to remain tranquil and undisturbed despite provocation; *jāhil*, on the other hand, is a loss of control and an inability to discriminate. He quotes a charming verse to illustrate the dichotomy:3

1 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").


3 Ibid. 205.

Many the large (*jilla*) black cooking pots (*dulm* 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 *ḥilm* (i.e. calm down).

A quotation from the Qurʾān illustrates the way *jahl* was understood subsequently in an Islamic context—the significance is essentially unchanged:

> وَذَٰلِكَ الْيَوْمُ الْأَخِرُ لَا نَفَسٌ بِهِمْ مِنْ فَخْرٍ كَبِيدُهُمْ

> أَمَّمًا إِلَى الْيَوْمِ الْأَخِرِ أَمِينُ وَأَعِنَّكَ عَلَى كَيْدٍ هُمْ

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 (*qabh") for them and so become a *jāhil*.

Focus on the concept *ṣibā* is significant since it plays an important part in ghazal and *khamr* of both the Jāhilyya 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 *ṣāby* (or *ṣābkūhā*). The ethical laxity of *ṣibā* is equated with *jahl*. This indicates that the assumed ethical mantle of *ṣāby* 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 (*ʿaqīl*); only when coupled with *ḥilm*, is *ʿaqīl* capable of functioning normally . . . [*ʿaqīl* is a narrower concept than *ḥilm* . . . [which] is the very basis of "reason" and "intellect".]

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-sābāb*, Chapter 3, pp. 177-80) in terms of the intellect: *lā tuʿālūn bi-lātur bi-bissi ghariżati lʿaqīl* (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-sābābu maṭiyya lʿjahlī* (Youth was the steed of my ignorance).

1 Ibid. 206. Qurʾān 12:12.

2 Izutsu, God and Man, 210-14.
Several gāsidas 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 nasib of poem 1 occupies lines 1–17; lines 15–16 contain a wine simile celebrating Jubayra, whom the poet addresses in the following line:

قاذَّةِي ما إِلَّا أَمْرُكِي الجَلِّ

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 ḥikma" must replace sība (see line 8), whereas in youth it is the boast of generosity (jalgū l-yadaynut) which resists the censurers’ rebuke (see line 14).” 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)

كَذَّلِكَ تَفْصِيلُ فَضْلَاهَا

I have now come to obey a man of ḥilm and he has fitted me with a halter though I used to resist his reins.

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 nasib; khamr, which occupies briefly lines 25 and 26, is set into a section where the poet expresses resolve: (lines 21–6)

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];

The poems discussed are referred to according to their numbering in the diwān.

11 In this verse the significance of ḥikma must approximate to that of ḥilm.

12 Each of the two main stages of life has its own positive element—generosity in youth which overrides ḥilm, and ḥilm in old age which overrides reckless generosity.
Hilm and Tawba

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.

A similar sequencing of youthful passion and resolve occurs in
poem 22, where wine is set into a complex nasib 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 raḥil (lines
15–23) but is affected by line 6 of the nasib, “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 5–6) 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 sāyb 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 JĀHILI POETS

al-Aswad b. Ya’ār’s dāliyya (al-Mufaddalīyyāt, poem 44) further
illustrates the obligation of abstinence with old age:11 (lines 19–22)

إِنَّمَا تَرْبَيْتُ فُدْ هْبِيْتُ وَغَفَظَيْتُ مَا نَبْلَ مِنْ عَصَيْوٍ وَمِنْ أَجْلَالٍ
وَعَصِبَ أَصَابِحَ الْمَاشَيْةِ وَالْفَكْرَةَ وَأَطْغَيْتُ عَدَايْنِيَلَّوْنَ أَنَّمَا قَدْ
فَلَّقَ مَرَّةً عَلَى الْبَيْضَةِ مَرْحَلاً مَّالًا بِسَلْفَةِ نَيْبًا أَحْيَاءٌ
وَلَقَدْ نَهُوْتُ وَلْيَشْبَبُ لَنَادَا بَلْسَمَةً مُرْجُحَتُ بِسَلْفَةِ عَوْادٍ

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.

11 This excerpt contains ḥiffār, it is clear, however, that the voice is always that
of the poet.

Though, unusually, al-Aswad acquiesces in the advice of the
censurer (uwa-ṭa’tu ʿadhiliṭi), this must be viewed as a literary
posture that is subordinated to the motif of sāyb.

Yet repentance of greater personal force and conviction also
existed in the Jāhiliyya. Several examples survive in a chapter of
Qūb al-Surūr entitled man ḥarama l-khamra fī l-jāhiliyya.12

Most noticeable perhaps is a piece by Qays b. ʿĀşim, 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:13

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 eschew are that indulgence in wine constitutes
fadība in reducing to buffoonery the man of karam (al-raṣul al-
karīm) and hilm (al-raṣul al-ḥālim). Though the oath in the second
line is of an apparently impromptu nature—devoid of any mention
of sāyb—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 nasib—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:14

11 Use here of the root harama, which is not anachronistic, may illustrate why
medieval Arab commentators were able to perceive a connection between Islamic
tawba and pre-Islamic aṣurance.

12 Aghāni, 14/79.

13 Ibid. 14/80.
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 beneath which rivers flow.

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—ghafrān—which was often an attendant topic of tawba in both the khamriyyāt and the zahidiyyāt. 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 hālim. 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 sībā’ where the poet’s newly acquired waqār leads to a distinctly Islamic expression of piety. At the same time, as is well illustrated by the poems of Abū l-Sīs, 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 zahidiyyāt of Abū l-Atāhiyya. In one poem he beseeches God to grant him hilm, which moral quality offers a stepping-stone to taqwa:

త | فَى رَبِّي هُبِّي مَنْ لَجَأْ إِلَيْهِ حَالِمٌ

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.

TAWBA IN THE EARLY ISLAMIC PERIOD

With the birth of Islam tawba was introduced into the community as an act of faith:

See for example Qur’ān, 2/233.
In the Islamic period waqār was from time to time exclusively associated with Islam; this is apparent from the following line: mā l-nāsū illā rajulun fațikan ‘alā rajulun waqqara-hu dinā (Dīwān Abū Nu‘wās, 213).
Dīwān, 392.
Another reference to ḥilm appears to equate it with chastity in a broad sense: wa-la-hilmahu ḥaythu ya'ifah hilmahu-bu. This view ties in with the definition of hilm as the subjugation of strong desires/passions. In a more "secular" vein Abū l-ʿAtāhiya could merely schematize the dichotomy of hilm and safahā: kam min safthin ghāza-ni sanahān fa-ṣaffaytu nasī min-hu bi-l-hilmū (Many an idiot has vexed me with idiocy, but I warded myself from him with hilm).

Perhaps the earliest and clearest example of tawba as such is contained in a 4-line fragment of Abū Mīḥān al-Thaqqafī:

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 (atiḫu lā lāhī) and ghubrān (fa-inna hu ghaṭfarun li-dhanbī l-marī). Seemingly essential to tawba is that it should be a pledge of constancy. Indeed, that tawba is open to the abuse of inconsistence is a recurring topic in the defiance of the wine poets. The final line is a more straightforwardly literary stance against wine; dhāmm is an antonym of mādīḥ, both of which moods of poetry in turn command the treatment of wine—see Chapter 3.

Whilst Abū Mīḥān's abstention could be overtly Islamic, another fragment shows his change of heart to be underpinned by the ancient ethic of ḥilm:17

The use of the word ghanāʿīm in the first line is mock-heroic; for with it the poet confronts a certain perception of murūjva. Yet the ensuing two lines base their argument on a subtler and more essential murūjva: line 2 founds its condemnation on the ethics succinctly stated in the much-cited line of Zuhayr ibn Abū Sulmā: wa-inna safāha l-ṣayḥī lā ḥilmā ba’da-hu l wa-inna l-fāṭa ba’da l-safāhatu yabbūmu. The use of the word mar in the final hemistic alludes to the poet's preoccupation with murūjva.18

al-Uqayṣir al-ʿAsadī, who was inclined to muṭjīn in his more spirited poems, also gave voice to abstinance based in hilm: mà anā ba’da l-ṣayḥī wayba-ka wa-l-khaṃrū . . . kasīya l-taṣābī ba’da mà kala’a l-ʿumrū. His change of heart is consistent with the jābili ethic and cannot therefore be termed tawba.

Whilst we have stated that there is basically a distinction between abstinance (based in ṣayb-hilm) and tawba, the poets and society appear to have blurred it, though it must have existed if abstinance (expressed in some form or other) could exist in the Jābiliyya. Thus it was possible for poets to treat hilm/sayḥbaqār and add to these notions a religious dimension. We have already seen this to be the case in the 8-line rā’īyya of Abū Jīla al-Yaṣṣūrī (a-lā rubba yaʿumīn li bi-Bustīn wa-laylatīn) 19 which illustrates the ethical corner-stone rāṣqaʾa-ni hilmī leading to the distinctly Islamic sa-arҚādu fi l-taṣābī:20 indeed examination of tawba can further illustrate two orders being perceived as one. That the medieval Arab commentators perceived abstinance through hilm and tawba

This suggestion is based in part on an observation made by Bravmann in connection with murūjva: see The Spiritual Background of Early Islam, ch. 1, p. 1

[Diwān, 403.]
[ibid. 411.]
[Diwān Abū Mīḥān al-Thaqqafī, 35–6.]
[ibid. 34–5.]

17 Diwān Abū Mīḥān al-Thaqqafī, 35–6.
18 Diwān Abū Mīḥān al-Thaqqafī, 35–6.
19 Aghānī, 11/310.
After an interlude of nostalgia it becomes clear that 'Ali b. Jabala has now acquiesced in ḥilm which he once forsook for indulgence; (line 14) dhababat aṣyā'u kuntu la-bā hā sāriṭan ḥilmīa lā swarīh. Tawba is totally absent from the formulation of the poet’s newfound resolve. Similar preoccupations are expressed in the following two verses from a qaṣida by Muslim b. al-Walīd:11 ablan bi-wāṣfādatin li-l-ṣaybi wāridatin . . . lā aṣma’u l-ḥilmā wa-l-ṣabīhā’ qad sakāna i l-nafsi dā l-mā’i ‘an mā’i l-ṣanāqīdī. 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 qaṣida in praise of Hārūn al-Rašīd by Manṣūr al-Namārī.12 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:

Damn ka’llāh bismillāh

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 Manṣūr al-Namārī 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)

Wāla’ūwān wa-alṭasās
‘Āṣuchs ḍha’līl wa-l-dāmīs

Pleasure, youthful folly, pretty women and wine? Never again!

My jābl has been held back and ḥilm has returned, and grey locks have [put paid to] my impetuousity.

By convention abstinence paves the way for the mamlūk to be praised in terms of Islam: (line 8)

Wāba’r khārūn mīn i‘tām

Hārūn, the man protected [by God], has been blessed as an Imam with obedience to God.

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11 Ibn al-Mu’tazz, Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣa’rā’ī, 237.
12 Ibid. 247.
The poem schematizes two important developments:

(i) *al-Khiyām* (the old order) → ḥayyā-kumā llāhu (the new order);
(ii) *Jahltaṣābī* → ṣayyib/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*/(Badā)/Jahl→ ḥilm/Islam.

This schema shows how the term ḫāhiliyya 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 ĀBŪ L-ŠIṢ**

Ābū l-Šiṣ—a contemporary of Ābū Nuwās—composed at least four *qaṣidas*, which are cited in Ibn al-Muʾtazz’s *Ṭabaqāt al-Šuʿāʾraʾ*; they contain extensive elements of *khāmrah*. All of them set the celebration of wine into a basic framework of abstention, weaving together, sometimes deftly, conventional themes of the *qaṣida* to produce an allegory of a somewhat derivative view of life. They show how the abstention characteristic of Al-Aʾṣā survived as an essential feature of a certain type of bacchic composition well into the time of Ābū Nuwās; only occasionally is there an infusion of Islam into the overall declaration of abstention. There is no ṭawba and equally he does not stretch the agenda of abstention to confront Islam in the manner so artfully achieved by Ābū Nuwās (see below, *passim*).

The *niʿmiyya* (a panegyric poem of 40 lines) treats death and separation in a lugubrious nasīḥ. This leads to a question in line 7, fa-hal la-ka yāʾ ayīš min rajʿātim 1 bi-zayyāmi-kā l-mūʾiniqā l-hīsām (O life [of pleasure] that we had, will you not return with your days of sweet elegance?). Memories of ṭawwūb are detailed in lines 12–25, twelve of which treat *khāmrah*. Though line 26 concludes the bacchic section with an irreverent posture (usībū l-dhunībā wa-lā ātaqi l-uqūbātā mā yaktubtū l-kāribān), the poet’s atonement is conti-

**HILM IN THE KHAMRIYYA**

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 tasaqqi l-mudāma fātan laʾīman l-fa-lastu uhīlā ēddhī l-lāʾīmi. The general and essentially “secular” character flaw of *luʾm/lāʾāma* (which has both the sense of ignoble and avaricious) and is essentially the antonym of *karām* is

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-sīnaʾ Ayīšūn wa-arṭābūhā l-munawwī šayyāh wa-mallāt makānī l-ruʾat raṣūl wa-samārat-lu l-sināmā l-bi-rajhi l-maṣbī wa-rašīt l-kūdāmā l-saʾṣād wa-rašīt akhī sayyātī l-adīman a-lā bi-ṣāti l-bākūtāmī. That the poet was rejected not only for his advanced years but also for his poverty appears to have been a convention; Ābū l-Šiṣ treats the motif similarly in another *qaṣida* (*Ṭabaqāt al-Šuʿāʾraʾ*, 75): ṭabānā l-teṣṣā ḥusna l-šayyāhīa l-dhī sayyātīn wa-mubālīfla l-mūṣāfrīfla.

This feature reappears in a more complex manner in a ḥāʾiyā (*Ṭabaqāt al-Šuʿāʾraʾ*, 81) where abstention after bacchism is expressed as follows: fa-waraʾa-nī ba-da l-abhālatī wā-l-sībāʾ l-ʾam l-jahl ʾābdan bi-l-kāhibātī qad dabhābā. The esche-
ad of *jahl* extends over three lines but is followed by further description of the pleasures from which the poet has abstained: fa-shabhaq qad nakāhbi ṣam tarīqā l-sībāʾ l-wā-sanāṭu aṣ-ṣaṭātā l-ṣūqātī wa-l-ṣaṭābā . . . The result being to and froing in the thematic progression of the *qaṣida* illustrates the dynamics which governed the conjunction of a permissive past and present abstention. Each mood existed in contrast to the other, indeed invited the other. Regulated were these conventions that the cycle could occur more than once. Ambivalence is resolved only by the refril (lines 29–34) which leads resolutely to *mādīb* . It is the formal nature of the panegyric *qaṣida* which appears to impose itself upon the otherwise lyrical mood of the poet.

Material is culled from the *diwān* of Ābū Nuwās.

**Diwān Abū Nuwās, 144.**

See the discussion of *luʾm* in F. Malti-Douglas’s *Structures of Avarice* (Leiden, 1985), 139–40.
playfully made to be contingent upon religious permissibility (the category hālā‘ī)—here Abū Nuwās is very gently parodying religious discussion. As the piece continues it is clear that wine culture upholds the ethics of karam:

وَمَا الْكَرْمُ إِلَّا جَرَاحٌ وَجَدُورٌ
سُبْحَانُ الْعَفْلَ وَالنَّاسُ الأَصِيمُ
وَيُسْبَعُ الْمُسْلِمِ إِلَى الْمُقْدُمِ

... 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 tipple 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 nadim; faktir, 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 tashlabanna ākhu naskī wa-in nasaka (Do not seek the company of a pious man even if his piety is sincere!).

Furthermore, defiance can be expressed within a clearly religious linguistic framework: wa-alqayatu ‘annī thiyābā l-hudā l wa-khaddu buharān mina l-munkarī. The same poem goes on to contrive its own religious backdrop by assimilating religious language: ‘aqlītu saykhīna minā muṣirikān l-atāt-nā tadhārā mina l-Kawthari (The choice [wine] of an old heathen vintner came to us as a gift from the stream of Kawthar).

Hilm tends mostly to be treated in a positive manner and appears to command the erotic as well as the baccic element of these poems. The quality is attributed to most personages of the baccic scene, namely the poet, the sāqi, and the madāmū. With reference to the poet himself, we find the following examples: āthartu an lā yulāna hilmī ‘alā lađhdahtī qalbī ... (I preferred that my hilm

This motif is reworked elsewhere: (Dīwān, 1913 wa-l-qayatu wa-rāhu wadūtu sāqīn haya-n-lam nasabu l mina l-munawaddati ma yaradī la l-man nasabu.

Dīwān Abū Nuwās, 89.

Ibid. p. 682. Hudā (right-guidance, similar to wudū‘) and munkar are both Islamic concepts surviving from the Jahlīyya; see for example Qur’ān 3:104: wa-l-takum min-kum umma-tun yadīna ilā khayri wa-yá-murūra bi-l-ma‘rīfī wa-yamāna l-an l-munkarī; and 5:12: dhālika l-kitābu lā ra’ība fi-hi budan l-l-muttaqīna.

should not be exposed to blame due the passion in my heart ...);” fa-qāma yūst‘u-ni šatman wa-as‘u-bu l hilmīn wa-qad balaghat nafrī amānī-ba (He got up and swore at me whilst I responded to him with hilm after my soul had achieved its desires). In the next example the poet lauds his own qualities of ḥayā‘ and muḥāfaza (qualities derivative of hilm) to justify mu‘jin and excuse himself of musk—the latter being a characteristic of deportment which he consistently lampooned:

إِيَّا لَا تَحْلِلْ الْجِلْلِ فِي عَلَى الْجِلْلِ
لَعْلَوْنَ حَمَلَ الْرَّحَالِ بِالْعَالِ

Though I have been an uprooted 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 dawmasa l-mālu ‘irda dhi sarañīn fasūnna ‘irdi yusamā 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-bum hilmīn idhā mā suqū l qad fuṣṣāṣat bi-l-jūdi wa-l-zarīfī (They have crowns made of hilm when given wine which are inlaid with generosity and charm). 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 mu‘jin (infī l-waqāra ‘anī l-mu‘jīn); on the other hand the final two verses of the poem celebrate the excellent wine (Karkhiyya) in terms of hilm. The poet thus maximizes and fulfils various elements of the bacchic spirit, both mu‘jin and hilm:

قَانُونَ الْوَقَارِ عِنْدَ الْمُسْكِ يُقَرَّرُ
حَمْلُ مُدَابِعًا حَمَيْا وَوُقَدُ
قُرْطُبَةَ كَارَاسُ دَبْ بَشْرِهِ
جَلْلُ مُحْدِيْا بِخَبَأٍ هِامِّيْا

Put flight to respectability ... with a red wine ...

Karkhiyya: a famous wine...

مَحْمَدُ يُدْعَا، مُحْمَدُ يُدْعَا، وَقَدَمُ"
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 sāği: sāgha-hu rabbu-hu 'alā l-jūdi wa-l-nil-l mi wa-ma 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). Finally, elsewhere wine is lauded as: . . . 'ajūzān bintu Kisor qadimatu mī 'attāqatuq qad dabba fi ṭayyī-hā l-ḥilmu (The aged and matured daughter of Khusrau into whom ḥilm has stolen).

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 bilm, waqār, 'ird, ḥayā', mubahāfa, jīd, and karam; tuqā and ruṣd might fall by the wayside, so to speak.

If, however, the ethics of ḥilm are contravened, usually this fall 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-Ḍabbi’s, ‘āniyyatun tusbi l-halima idhā l-darāk akufū l-gaum bi-l-kā’si (A wine from ‘Āna which makes a man of forbearance incline to youthful conduct . . . ), with Abū Nuwās’s, battā turu-ka l-halima dhā ṭarabin / yahuzzu-hu fi makāni bi l-marāhu ([The effect of the tipple] is to show you a dignified man in rapture . . . ), and tughzīlū ‘āgha l-marī ṭaqabān tīsmi-hu / wa-takbh-dā-u-hu ‘an lubbi-hu wa-‘anī l-ḥilmu (It dallies with the mind of a

--Dīwān, 690.
--Ibid. 104.

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-ghauwa 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 signification see Durayd b. al-Simma, Rithā’ ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Simma, line 10: wa-hal ana illā min Ghaziyya in ghawar l ghawaty wa-in tarbūd Ghaziyyatu arsūd (in A. Jones, Early Arabic Poetry, vol. 1).

--Dīwān, 44.

The Ethics of Wine and the Poet’s Diminished Self-concept: An Ethical Reckoning

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--Dīwān, 44.
of the effects of wine, Abū Nuwās also salvaged respectability from within the framework of ethics and deportment derivative of muriwwa:

آري الحمر...

ِةُهُلُم أهل القسم فصل سفاحته

أُهلهم عقلا إذا اشتبا\\

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 ħilm and cannot therefore be viewed as tawba. This is apparent in a short 5-line declaration.⁶ The essential statement of abstinence comes in the first hemistich: a-‘ādhila bi’tu l-jabla baythu 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 sībā (nahā-ni amīru l-mu’mīnīna ‘ani l-sībā)—we have already seen that ħilm is the antonym of jahl and sībā.

The eschewal of wine in another 3-line fragment⁷ inverts one of the poet’s idiosyncrasies, for he is ordered by the Caliph to cease describing wine and to describe the ṣāğī instead. Thus, despite denigrating the ṣāğī elsewhere in his diwān as a bacchic stance, here he reaffirms the ṣāğī as a proper subject for poetry. In this way

⁶ Diwān, 12. ⁷ Ibid. 21.

the first line reworks but inverts the commonplace polarization of ṣāğī and khamr: d’ir š‘ra-ka l-ṣāğī wa-l-dimana l-qāfrā l fa-qad šāla mā azrā bi-hi nā’tu-ka l-khamrā. There is a ninitty⁸ 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 ṣāğī, description of the wine and the entourage, to the ṣāğī 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-Amin: dhāka ‘ayšun law dāma li ghayra anni l ‘iftu-hu mukrāhan wa-khiṣtu l-Aminā.

(iii) The final two lines contain two contradictions. First, in defiance of the Caliph the poet invites the circulation of wine: adiri l-ka’as hāna an tasqī-nā l wa-nqur i-ducka 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 ṣāğī motif with which the poem begins: wa-dā’i l-dhikra li-l-ṣāğī idhā mā l darati l-ka’as yasra’an wa-yaminā (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 diwān. However, Ghazālī justifies their inclusion in his edition with a simple but cogent argument:⁹ “the poet’s love of wine (‘īṣa-hu) overcomes him . . . so he is drawn to defiance, calling upon the ṣāğī to circulate the wine and forget the song of the ṣāğī.”

There is a 7-line bā‘tyya¹⁰ which accedes to abstinence but is substantively a khamriyya (since it treats the ‘ādhil→the ṣāğī→waṣf al-khamr→ṣāqī/erotic element) and therefore remains carefully ambivalent. The first line, as if in pique, upstages the censurer¹¹ by referring to a higher moral authority—the Imām (the Caliph): a-‘ādhila a-tabtu l-imāma wa-a-taba l wa-a-rabtu ‘amman fi l-ḍamiri wa-a-rabha. In line 2 the poet rejects the wine offered by the ṣāqī: wa-qulū l-ṣāqī-nā aṣṣi-ha. Though he sustains his resolve to

⁸ Ibid. 30. In Wagner’s edition (pp. 311–14) Ghazālī’s two final lines open the poem.
⁹ Diwān, 31; see n. 1. ¹⁰ Ibid. 22.
¹¹ Even in poems of abstinence Abū Nuwās seldom concedes the censurer’s victory over him.
abstain from wine in line 3 (fa-jauwaza-ba ‘anni ‘uqāran), he goes on to describe it with positive images of light (lines 3–5): it is as if 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 *enôi* (the final two lines of the piece) the sāqi gives wine not to the poet but to the *nudâmâ*—*sâqâ-hum*. However, in the poet the sāqi instils a hope for something yet more desirable than the wine: *sâqâ-hum wâmannâ ni bi‘laynay-bi munyatan l fa-kânat ilâ qalbi aladhinna wa-*ayaba (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 (*’afis*); he has not, therefore, even acceded to *hilm* in any real sense, and he remains a far cry from *tawba*.

In the 6-line *mi‘yiyya* with *mašla*, Ayyu-bâ l-rā‘îhâni bi-l-lauwi lîmâ, the Imâm’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)

... 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‘ādiyyun—a Khârijite 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 *qa‘fiyya* with *mašla*, A-*‘âdhila lâ amût bi-kaffî sâqi,* establish the specific backdrop of the poem—the Caliph’s injunction: (1b) wa-lâ ābâ ‘alâ maliki l-*Irâq* → (13b) wa-waqqara-ni l-khailifatu ‘an nizâqi. However, the initial solemnity of abstinence (2a, hajartu la-bu llii ‘an-bâ nanâni) is undercut in the following line (3) by a humorous image,

```plaintext
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Since an essential aspect of the *zubdiyya* is a call for piety in others through a simple dialectic that works against *labu*, 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 *bâ‘iyya* (of 6 lines) where the poet confesses a variety of sins (tatâba‘at dhunubi‘un ‘alâ aṭhâri-bâ dhunubi‘un) there is hope for God’s forgiveness and His acception of *tawba*: fa-yâ layta anna llâha yaqÎfûr mâ mašla l wâya‘hanu fi tawbati-nâ fa-natâbu* (I hope that God will forgive the sins of the past and allow us to repent . . . ).

In another poem of 13 lines* Abû l-‘Atâhiyya invites others to see the light: a-lâ li-lâhî anta matâ tâhubû l wa-qad sâbaghat dhawâ‘ibu-ka l-khatûhubu (When will you turn to God in repentance now that the events of Fate have coloured your forelocks). Though the lexicion in this verse is unusual it expresses the traditional concern with altered behaviour once *sâyab* has appeared in one’s hair.

**Dîwân**, 29.

**Dîwân Abû l-‘Atâhiyya**, 34.

I have taken this phrase (fi tawbati-nâ fa-nerâbû) from Fayzâl’s altogether superior edition of the *Dîwân* (see p. 21).

**Ibid.** 35. In Fayzâl’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-ʿAtāḥiya emerges quite clearly in the role of the censurer. Line 7 follows as a question analogous to Abū Nuwās' celebrated ʿul la man yaddāʾī fi l-ḥilmī falsafatān—in antagonistic poetry of this kind it is consistently the crown of wisdom and knowledge over which there is dispute: wa-kayfa turidu an tuḏāʾa hakimān | wa-anta li-kullī mā tabwā ṭakābu (How can you hope to be called wise when you indulge all your desires).

The self-appointed role of wise man, moral watchdog, and censurer71 is even clearer in a short composition held together by anaphora;72 each line begins with the phrase subḥāna rabbī-ka and ends with a censorious question; for example (line 1), subḥāna rabbī-ka mā arā-ka tatābu ʿa wa-l raʾsu min-ka bi-saybi-hi makkābil (Your Lord is Great! Yet I do not see you repent though your head has been tinted grey!). Again ʿayb 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 baṭū, specifically, and ladāḏū, more generally, are the source of rebuke: (5) subḥāna rabbī-ka kayfa yaldādāhu mruʿan ʿa bi-l-aṭyāʾi wawac bā-nafṣi-hi matlābu (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:73 a-yā man bawā baiṭayatin wa-dammin ʿuwa-ʿīdin fi yaday ghawān mughbān (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-labwā mina junūn).74 In the final two lines it emerges that the addressee has reached mature age, thus facilitating the call to taʿwba: (4 and 5)

What is more unattractive than to see a man of good sense at my age in a state of senseless merriment. It an old man will not repent once his hair has gone grey, then I think he will never repent.

71 This phrase is unmetrical; Faysal's edition has the metrically correct inna l-labwā waw-malāḥa junūn (p. 353).
72 See below, “Three Poems of Abū Nuwās.”
basic trend is thus of incitement to drink in the present as a catalyst for seduction. Where ta'uba and/or ghfrān 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:77

كُذِّبَتِ الْأَرْضِ ۚ وَلَمْ آَرِز
وَأَنْقَحَ عَنْ مَلَآمِعِ النَّجَاحُ

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 shay 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.78 Thus the twelfth line of a 14-line seduction poem reads: Fa-lam aqīl ba’dā-ma sa’īrū bi-hi lā ya laytā 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 la tālūbanna l-lahādhi bi muktatam I wa-ghbu ilay-hā ka-khāli’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 (qaṣf) discursively; for in the penultimate line there is discussion about the attitude which informs a sin (khaṭṭi‘a): laysat mina lāṭṭī yaqīlū la-

77 Dīwān Abū Nuwās, 62.
78 He could also be sensitive to the shame involved in his actions; though at times this could lead to ta’uba, more interesting are those poems in which he simply questions and reproves himself but remains essentially ambivalent. Such ambivalence manifests itself variety; see (Dīwān, 24) la talum-ni ’alā laṭṭa’i tānūtā-ni I wa-arāt-ni l-qādī ma ghayra qaidī. Examine also the final line of a 10-line qaṣida (ibid., 28): fa-binnā yarā-nā lāhū zarrā ’aqdābmī l-niṣrūnu adniyyā l-tawāṣī wālā fakkhu. The finest example of ambivalence, indeed a moral crisis, exists in the khamriyya beginning Wa-khaymati nāṭūrīn (see below, “Three Poems of Abū Nuwās”).

Dīwān, 134.
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 taubah 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-atlāla tasfī-hā l-janūbu" channels its themes away from Islam and excludes religion from its natural domain. For in the final five lines the poem rejects taubah, 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)

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 Kisrah’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 taubah a context that renders religion

\[Dīwān, 11–12. This poem has been discussed in detail in André Maclé’s “Sur un poème d’Abū Nuwās”, in C. E. Bosworth et al. (ed.) The Islamic World: From Classical to Modern Times; Essays in Honor of Bernard Lewis (Princeton, 1989).\]
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 ḫalīṣy dhī Ḫalīṣy to Islam. Seen in this light, the poem inverts the progression exhibited in the short panegyric poem of Manṣūr al-Namāri discussed above. Furthermore, as in the short qaṣīda Yā bnata l-ṣaybi bāḥi-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-muliḥbatun fi l-‘adabli dhī nāṣīḥātun,⁵⁷ 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: tarjī inābatu dhī mājīn mariq; the next three lines resist incitement to rasādirmd (šimātī 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 sāqi, who in the last five lines is depicted in terms of his Christiani-ty. 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: inni la-l’a’lam anna rabbi lam yakun li-yakhusuṣa-hu illa bi-dīnīn sādiqī (I know that my Lord could not but delegate to him a true religion).

A more conventional resistance to tawba comes in a poem begin-ning Bādir sabābi-ka qabla l-ṣaybi wa-l-‘ārī.⁵⁸ 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 hilm holds back. The last line appears to reiterate the first: fa-dhākka qabla māzūlī l-ṣaybi ʾadatu-nā | lakīnna-nā nartaqaj ghufrāna ghaftār (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.

²⁷ Dīwān, 218. ²⁸ Ibid. 149.

It is evident that Abū Nuwās continued to drink when he was already old enough to feel the obligation of abstinence (wa-ʿidhā ʾadatu sixiṣa lam ajid l-l-ṣaybi ʿudhran fi l-nuzūlī bi-rāsī). Such appears to be the background to this poem, suggesting that the word lakīnna-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 mufjūn. 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-hīna hānāt šalātu-nā li-ḏuḥān | qumna muṣallī bi-ghayri takbirī (And when it was time for our prayer in the forenoon we went off and prayed without saying the takbir).⁵⁹

An even better example of a religious topic alluding to decadent behaviour is the following:⁶⁰

Amongst us you will behold all the [sins] that anger God except for širk . . . !

⁵⁷ Dīwān, 218. ⁵⁸ Ibid. 146. The technique of ending a poem with a blasphemy, or an irrelevant image, is illustrated well by the earlier sceptic poet, al-Uqayṣir al-Asadi: he has a 6-line poem of description which begins by describing the transforming effects of wine (see Aṣhārī 2144 and Ḥāwi, Fann al-Ṣīr al-Khāmi, 141): wa-muq’adī qawmin qad mālā min šarābi-nā | wa-dāmī saqāyṇa-hu thallatān fa-absāra (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 raʾā-hā ba’dā inqātāš ghaššā-hā | tadīrā ‘alay-nā sīmawā l-qawmī affārā (When the fasting man of our district saw [the wine] being passed around amongst us after its purification he broke his fast).

⁵⁹ Dīwān, 208. This image is reworked elsewhere: tarā ‘inda-nā mā yuskhīitu llāhā kulla-hu l-mana l-amalī l-muṣrī l-fatā mā khdā l-sirka (Dīwān, 705).
three poems of abû nuwâs

ighrâ ḳiblîs

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 abû nuwâs’ most original pieces is entitled appropriately by ghazâlî ighrâ ḳiblîs; it depicts a conversation between sâtân and abû nuwâs, and is developed from an issue which preoccupied both society and the poets, namely the inconstancy of tawbâ amongst many who had given voice to their contrition. abû nuwâs also enhances a feature of his own poetry by expanding the role of iblis—who sometimes has a role as a sort of “pimp” in the endgame of seduction—into that of protagonist in the poem. another poem which is wholly concerned with iblis is an invocation; 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 the study of the Qur’ānic morning.

noon, and night (wa-lâ azâlu l-qur’âna adrusu-hu ʿaraḥu fi darsî bi ʿwa-ʾabatāri). this last verse is significant for it seems obliquely to represent an aspect of abû nuwâs’ 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 abtâkrih 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-mutanabbi’s sarcastic hemistich, a-mina l-ṣârâbi tatibu am min tarkihi (ls it of wine that you repent or of its abandonment). this echoes abû l-ʿatâhiyya’s more earnest attack: tatibu mina l-dhunûbi idbâ maridî l-wa-ṭarniʿu li-l-dhunûbi idbâ bâritâ (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 tawlâbu li-illadhina yaʿmalûna l-sayyâiyâti ḏattâ idbâ ṣādara ahbâh-hum l-mautu qâla tubtub l-ʿâna . . . (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 . . .”). a variety of clues indicates that having repented abû nuwâs recovered his epurecan convictions; principally, he repeatedly dismissed the presumptions amongst his detractors that he had become a pious abstainer. such is the background of ighrâ ḳiblîs:

"quṭ al-sûrâ, 212.
"Qur’ân, 4:18; trans. arberry, p. 75.
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 Abû 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’ānic 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: “wa-laqad tā‘alnā fī l-samā‘ī burūjā wa-sayyamā-hā li-l-nāzīrin l wa-ḥaṣfīnā-hā min kulli šayṭānā rajim l 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 every accursed satan excepting such as listens by stealth—and he is pursued by a manifest flame).”** Other allusions are more oblique but are signposted by the force of the dominant Qur’ānic image; thus hismitch 2b, thummā hawā yathā‘u-bu najmi, echoes the first verse of Sūrat al-Najmi: “wa-l-najmi idhā hawā (By the star when it plunges).”** The tenth-form verb in 2a, ra‘aytu-hu fī l-jauwhī mustā‘liyan, may allude to Qur’ān 20:64 which reports the speech of Pharaoh’s magicians before their contest with Moses: “wa-gad afibā l-yawma mani stālā (Whoever today gains the upper hand shall surely prosper);”* 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-ma yahdī ‘alay-hi ghaḍabi ‘aqād hawā (And on whomsoever My anger alights, that man is hurled to ruin).” Finally, in line 7 of the poem the Devil tempts the poet with a fātan anmarād (“a beardless youth”); the word anmarād is not unusual, but it is not so common as to be insignificant when we remember that in Sūrat al-Saffāt the lower heaven has been adorned with the stars “. . . to preserve against every rebel satan (min kulli šayṭānā 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 snatch a fragment, and he is pursued by a piercing flame”** The meanings of “mārid” and “anmarād” are quite different; the significance of anmarād, therefore, is simply that it sustains echoes of the Qur’ān.

The extent of Qur’ānic 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 yūthimā-nī in 1b may allude to the discussion of enforced sin in the Revelation, that is, fa-mān uḏfurra 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);”** here those who have been forced by circumstance to consume forbidden dietary items are exempted of responsibility.” 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.

**Abû Nuwās refers to “every rebel satan” as mūrādū l-‘afārī in the tā’yya beginning Wa-fiyātik ka-μaṣaḥātihī l-dīnā discussed in the next section.

** Sūra 15:16–18; see also Qur’ān, 37:6–10.

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* Sūra 33/1; Arberry, p. 550.
* Sūra 53/1; Arberry, p. 556.
* Ib. 316.
* Ib. 315.
* Arberry, p. 456.
* Abû Nuwās refers to “every rebel satan” as mūrādū l-‘afārī in the tā’yya beginning Wa-фиātik ka-μaṣaḥātihī l-dīnā discussed in the next section.

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Arberry, Koran, 254.
Ibid. 316.
Ibid. 315.
Sūra 37/6–10; Arberry, p. 456.
To a Muslim familiar with the Qur'an, the aya "wa-l-na'im iḥlībah bawū" would bring to mind the ensuing aya, "mā ḍalla sāḥibū-kum wa-mā ḍaa'ū" (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 Sūrat 15 it is precisely the "ghāwīna" whom Iblīs will lead astray. Equally significant may be allusions made by the entirety of Abū Nuwās’s poem to the make-up of both or either of Sūrat al-Najm and Sūrat al-Hijr; the former begins by depicting first Muḥammad’s vision on Mt. Hira 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." 

The sūra thus discusses the process of revelation and depicts Muḥammad’s vision of both Gabriel and the cosmos above the level of human existence; it would appear that Abū Nuwās’s 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 Miṣrīyya after the poet’s aerial vision there is a list of the “signs” of Temptation and the piece concludes with a sinister, menacing threat that acts as a call to sin. Similarly

Sūrat al-Hijr, 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 Iblīs’ 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 Iblīs: (vv. 32–42)

 Said He, “What ails thee, Iblīs, 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 respite 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 . . . ”

In the Miṣrīyya the poet depicts Iblīs 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 miṣrīyya of al-Farazdaq in which, having repented, the bard from Tamīm has a dialogue with the Devil. The latter is chided, amongst other things, for having caused the “dwellers in al-Hijr” (ablū l-hijr) to hamstring the camel which had been sent to them by God as a sign. They are the eponymous ablū l-hijr of sūra 15. 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 compositional and was thus able to produce what may constitute, effectively, an anti-sūra. I suggest this because whilst al-Farazdaq’s repeatance appears to be in earnest, Abū Nuwās’s 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.

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177 This notion is reiterated in Qur’an, 3/4.
178 Arberry, p. 350.
179 Vincent Monteil has translated this poem into French in Abū Nuwās: le vin, le vent, la vie (pp. 92–10, “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? I suggest may certainly be supported by another very delicate allusion, namely the use of the name “Abū Murra” to refer to the Devil in the devil line; for Abū Murra, of which the Devil’s kurna 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 Murra in a dramatic, humorous, but blasphemous reworking of the Revelation.

179 Arberry, p. 215.
180 See Dīwān al-Farazdaq, ed. al-Ṣāwi, p. 769.
If we consider the poem in literary terms against the backdrop of Abū Nuwās' khamríyya: we notice several things: (i) it is not overtly a khamríyya (it has no bacchic narrative, nor does it describe wine); however, the first line, with its reference to the morning and sins committed, evokes images of the conventional bacchic scene such that the poem emerges as the “epilogue” to a khamríyya; (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 (yabki lawnah bi l-karmus) 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 ghufrán, the poet vindicates indulgence within a religious framework of discourse. In the true spirit of the khamríyya, tawba is rejected, not accommodated.

Wa-Fityatin Ka-Maṣābiḥi l-Du'ā'115

Hamori has discussed this quest poem in the context of the “Assimilation of Religious Experience”, focusing particularly on the events of many narrative wine poems unfold toward 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. This poem may have exercised some influence (in both its mythology and its imagery) on two of the poems contained in al-Ma‘arrī’s Risālat al-Ghufra; see the siniyā (ed. Bint al-Saţî, 2nd ed., Cairo 1950), 290–6, and esp. the rā’iya, pp. 286–8 (e.g. line 12: wa-firta fi zamami l-tāfih mu’talāyin 1 fi i-lāsue ḥattā rā’iyā l-ma‘a ma‘ṣawrī).116

Dīwān Abī Nuwās, 78–40; ed. Wagner, pp. 61–41. Wagner’s lines 8 and 30 are not in Ghazāl’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 enwā. it is settled into a lively but essentially conventional narrative khamríyya. The originality of the poem can best be understood by comparison with a pre-existing khamríyya of which it is clearly a mu‘ārada, namely a poem by Ṭāhir ibn Ḫusayn al-Mu‘ṣaffa; in Hāfiẓ’s Šaḥṣāʻ al-Su’rāʾ (p. 339). The poems share a rare rhyme (sā‘ā) as well as certain rare words/phrase: sāḥib al-būt and al-maṣālī. 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’anic allusions in the text of the poem, i.e. allusions which are suggested by the more dominant scriptural references.

115 Hamori, On the Art of Medieval Arabic Literature, 61 ff.

The "use of istighfār". He shows an interesting connection between the final line (33) and line 6; the latter depicts: “the night journey to the wine seller’s house”:

قَلْطَمْ يَحَبْهُ مِنْ قُلْوِهِ النَّوَى
Encompassed in gloom that was like a rough sea with clashing waves in which the mariner is stunned by terror.

Line 33:

أَعُوَّدُكَ سَيَهُانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ فَاعْفَ كَمَا عَفَّوْتُ يَدْنَا الْغَمُّ عِن صَاحِبِ الْحَمُّرَت
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 khamríyya 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 khamríyya 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
conscious artistry involved in forging the khāmriyya into a clearly integrated poem.

Repentance in this tā'īyya 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 'Ifrīzs; the wine when poured is as a “network of pearls on ruby brocade”; the sāqi is like the moon and is accompanied in his tasks by a lute 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 abstinance reflections on the assault of ṣayb and religious anxiety leading to isṭighfār—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 affection of sexual prowess in the duwan, 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 nadantu ‘alā mā kāna min ḥaṭa’īn 1 wa-min ḫā’ati maktūbi l-mawāqqiti (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): nādaantu-hum qarqafa l-isfanṭī sāfiyatan l-masā’ilan subiyat min khamri takrit (I drank with them sharp Isfāṭi wine, imported from Takrit, clear and chilled). There appears to be a cross-linear pun (jināṣ) on the root, nām dāl mim—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 khāmriyyāt. We can identify the description of the companions in line 1 as a common opening topos (for example, another tavern narrative begins, wa-faṭīyawīn ṣīdīn ... ); 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 crane” is told to despoil the poet and his companions (i.e. to accept their money) “as David despoiled Goliath”;111 at line 14 the sparks of wine are the stars hurled at rebellious ‘Ifrīzs by patrolling Angels;112 at line 17 the amphora in which the wine is kept is said to date from the time of Saul (Ṭālūt),113 the King of Israel appointed by Samuel; in the following line the wine’s storage in a coffin (tābūṭ) possibly makes allusion to the Ark of the Covenant (also tābūṭ);114 in line 22 the sāqi is so bewitching as to be said to be the source of Hārūt’s magic.”

111 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, 249/247–252/251) in assonance with Ṭālūt ...

112 See Qur’ān, 15/16–18 and 37/6–10.

113 For Ṭālūt see EL, iv, 642: “Ṭālūt is the name of king Saul of the Bible in the Qur’ān (II, 247–251 ... ).” 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 ... .”

114 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 (tābūṭ) with the sakīna and with what remained of the people of Moses and Aaron ... .” The word tābūṭ also occurs in Qur’ān, 20/31, where Moses’ mother is told “by inspiration” “Throw the child into the stream and throw the child into the river ...” ( ... ippizhī ḥī fī l-tābūṭ fa-qāda-bi fī l-yāmm ... ); this is significant since the word yāmm also occurs in line 6 of the Tā’īyya.

111 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 (sāhib al-
ḥūt). Since rhyme (qāfiya) is part of the signature of any poem, the con secretiveness and intended significance of these references lie in the fact that they provide the rhyme word of five (arguably six) lines: jālib, murrād al-ʾašīlīt, tālib, hārib, and sāhib 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. In this manner the poem’s essential antithesis is con-trived 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-kāfirīn samātā, qad barizat fī zayyi mukbīsīn li-lhābi zimmītin (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 Maṣābihi l-
duqā, he mocks ṭuqā.

**Wa-Khymatī Nāṯūrīn**

This lāmiyya, which constitutes a powerful statement that hesitates between a laudatory view of indulgence and a disingenuous one, is not a qaṣīda in any strict sense but there is allusion to the polythetic sins of idolatry, fornication, murder and the drinking of wine, they almost immediately were captivated by a wondrously beautiful woman ...”.

134 See “Yūnūs” in EI, iv. 1174: “In the Qurʾān he is four times mentioned as Yūnūs, without his father’s name being given, once as Dhu l-Nūn (xxi.87), once (xxi.87–88) as sāhib al-ḥūt, “he of the fish.”

135 See Qurʾān, 21:87–8: “Remember Dhu 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.”

136 Divān, 16–17; ed. Wagner, pp. 228–53. There are various discrepancies

tradition in the presence of elements of ṭabīl, waṣf, fakhr, and ḥilmibikma. Fakhr is ambivalent as it moves towards ḥilm and ṭuqā; for Abū Nuwās is sensitive to his own shortcomings, but the nature of the poet’s musings about ṭuqā in the final two lines is essentially indeterminate. Indeed, as the poem ends we are left feeling that the ideas 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 ṭabīl 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 mījān—which provides a focus for the remainder of the poem; here wine too is introduced with a fanfare of epithets: (6b) bi-ṣafrah min māʾi l-kurūmi sāmūlī. 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 hemistic 8b, istajmarlu ḥayratu jamīlint (I found beauty in ugly things), is paralleled in the following three lines:” (9b) wa-
dhallallatu ṣabʾan kāna ḥayratu dhallilī→(10b) a-lā rubba-mā falābtu ḥayratu manīlī→(11b) wa-in kāna adnā sāḥibin wa-dakhbīlī. 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” ... having often sought some-

between the two texts: Gh9 = W11; Gh10 = W12; Gh11 = W9; Gh12 = W13; 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.

137 Though it is possible to translate this phrase, “I considered beautiful a youth who was clearly ugly”, Ibn al-Mutanazz 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-tadhīb mina l-suṣr. See Fuṣūl al-Tamāthīl, 104.

138 Dhāllāḍ, whilst containing the resonances of the meaning to humiliate, essentially means to render submissive, i.e. of an animal; see Lane, p. 973. Equally, dahlī,
thing [morally] unobtainable”. In 11b he berates the humiliation he could bring upon even his “guest” (dakhili, i.e. someone under his protection). 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 hinnm expressed in the following thought, a-lā rubba ıṣāmin ‘alay-ka thaqlain.

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 Muʿallaqa. 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 šu’luk. Whilst hinting at his own excess10 (in a manner which may allude to the šaʿalik 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 nadimu khaliṣatin (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 ynstaṭāru janānu-hu l idhā nauwabha l-zaḥfāmi 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 fata (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 šariʿu 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 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.11 Thus the qatil of this qasida may be the victim of such as the following depiction: “I rose up and made for him, swaggering and erect, having prepared my rain for butting. When I had fixed the lance in him, he awoke, like one prostrated by wounds.”12

In lines 15–16 a pious utterance appears to follow naturally from the exhibition of ḥilm 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-ʿabghī l qhīnā in line 13a—the poet seeks wealth to finance indulgence13 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 pandar. The reference to a miser in line 16 perhaps alludes to men who make a pretence of piety (Abū l-ʿArāhiya was a notorious miser; furthermore, in the nūnīyya, Ya bnta l-ṣaykhi šabīn-nā, it is said of a pious man, dāna bi-l-imāsāk dinā); 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.14

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 tuqāʾ in the final two lines is dependent upon the accelerated moral crisis of the middle section. Indeed, it is perhaps

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10 See Lane, p. 860: “anā dakhīli fuṭāmin [I am the guest of someone; generally meaning I am under his protection]."

11 See Lane, p. 860: "anā dakhīli fuṭāmin [I am the guest of someone; generally meaning I am under his protection]".

Bügel in “Love, Lust and Longing: Eroticism in Early Islam”, alludes to the fact that the excess passions of the ʿudhrī poets rendered them akin to the šaʿalik (i.e. alienated from their society), p. 96.

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12 See “Description and Genre in Abū Nuwās”, Quaderni di Studi Arabi, 5–6 (1987–8).

13 In the translator of Mattock (op. cit.).

14 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 fawning victims); see line 18b of the bāṭṣwā, Tuʾāṭbi-niʿ al ṣuriṣ ʿaṣbāṭī (Appendix B).

Charles Tuety, in the introduction to Classical Arabic Poetry (London, 1983), p. 18, 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.
Hilm and Tawba

to this poem in particular that one can best apply the comments of
Hamori in assessing Abū Nuwās’ mind-set:”’ 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 hilm. For his doubts after seduction are
certainly typical of a man of hilm, 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;11 the khamriyyāt, however, are
suffused with a spirit which resists any apology for wine and indul-
gence—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-ʾAʾšā): (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 encumbrance by hilm—common in the
qaṣīda, even in the time of Abū Nuwās (see Abū l-Šīš)—is avoided;
thus hilm, 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 accumu-
late, 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.

11 On the Art of Medieval Arabic Literature, 72.
12 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-ʾAʾšā (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
ʿAbbāsid 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/hasīb, ḥikmal-al-dahr, biṭāʿ, and hilm/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 suc-
cess”. It is the combination of quality and quantity (over 300
khamriyyāt) that established his identification with the genre in the
Arabic literary tradition. Clearly, however, one can observe ele-
ments of his poetry in earlier bards such as Abū Mihjān al-Thaqafi,
Ḥāritha b. Badr, al-Uqaysīr, Abū l-Hindi, al-Walid b. Yazid, 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/muṣʿīm, fine description, and apology. These impulses
simply find their most refined expression in Abū Nuwās, where the
material of treatment 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 loose-
ly; 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

1 According to Ḥamza al-ʾIṣfahānī’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 Jāḥliyya, 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-muwātī l-ṭarf (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 ʿāṭūl topos. Moreover, the poem reminds one (as do Tuʿāṭību-nī ʿalā ʿurbi ʿībāḥi (ch. 1, pp. 52–7) and Yā sāḥir al-ṭarf (ch. 1, pp. 65–73) that Abū Nuwās was a mubdath poet in whose compositions one can observe the inspiration of ʿabdī. In the case of these poems ʿabdī is complex, for antithesis in the single line underpins the antithesis that governs the whole poem. In Tuʿāṭību-nī the use of one feature of ʿabdī, 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.

Bādir sabūआ-ka wa-nˈam ayyubā 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 Qurʾān are the texts alluded to and transformed, are also discussed in Chapters 2 and 4 (see Yā bnata l-ṣayḥi ʿābaḥi-nā (pp. 144–7) and “Īghrāʾ lbaṣīs” (pp. 266–311).

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 (ṣālāl→ðḥaraḍ), the lexicon of theological debate, and a logical unfolding of images based on internal echoing (see esp. Wa-lahim lahā-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 funūt (in the manner of nāṣib, ḥikma, or biḥi). 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 Miṣjah al-Thaqafī.

Wa-fīyatān kā-maṣābībi l-dunā (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 nāṭurin contains an internal discourse that comments on the events of the brief bacchic narrative, and, as discussed, a sense of hilm 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 zuhdīyya, and the khamrīyya. 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 *khānrīyā* 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. Yazid 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-țanînū ḥumūn.* "I've said it thrice: what I tell you three times is true."¹


APPENDIX A

The *Qašidas* of Al-Aʿšā containing *Khamr*

The following are brief analytical synopses of the *qašidas* of Al-Aʿšā (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 *qašida*. These outlines can only be preliminary to analysis of the *khamr* of Al-Aʿšā as a study of *waṣf*. The elements of *khamr* in the poems emerge as relating primarily to *nasib*, *ḥikma*, or *fakhr* or all three. Whilst the treatment of *khamr* in jāḥili poetry has been seen in Chapters 1-2, 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. Bearing this in mind, therefore, we must not embark upon the study of any *qašida* with rigid preconceptions about the exact function of the identifiable "movements" it contains; in the analysis below each *qašida* may be seen to give different emphasis, however small, to the relationship between *khamr* on the one hand and *fakhr*, *nasib*, and *ḥikma* (and even *waṣf*) on the other.

¹ 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 *jāḥiliyya* to the time of Abū Nuwās. Bencherikh has already amply charted the descriptive topics in Abū Nuwās' *khāmrīyā* ("Poesies 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.

² This method is consonant with observations made by Renate Jacobi in "The Camel-Section of the ?angeographical Ode", *JAL* 13 (1982), 3: "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 . . . .".

³ I borrow this term from Montgomery; see "Dichotomy in Jāḥili Poetry", *JAL* 17 (1986).
The synopses present a basic insight into the earliest significant crystallization of the bacchic tradition in classical Arabic poetry from which Abū Nuwās’s khamārisyā were born. Furthermore, and more significantly, they highlight the thematic interplay which is one of this book’s principal concerns.

Poem 1 (Focus: Khamr and Nasib)

Al-A’sā’s lāmiyya breaks down as follows:

Lines 1–17: The nasib:

(1–2) “Why weep at the alṭāl to question them? Will they answer?”; line 2 describes the remnants affected 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 5–9 depict the distance which separates the lovers—this is expressed in a manner reminiscent of rahil: “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-vaulting in the manner of the rahil 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 (lṣafār) mixed with limpid water; [which mixture] flows between [her teeth that are white like] the thorns of the sayyāl”. The nasib 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 rahil:

Lines 27–32 include the extended simile of a wild ass; in 33–5 the camel complains of weariness, hardness, and emaciation; in 36–7 the poet

addresses his mount: “Withhold your complaint and seek rather the generosity of al-Aswad (the maddīb).”

Lines 37–75: The maddīb:

The maddīb 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 sāwhāt 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 maddīb, whereas 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 qaṣīda as a whole follows the most archetypal progression (nasib → rahil → maddīb); 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: namely, the formal panegyric ode with its momentum towards the goal of encomium. The quality of this qaṣīda lies in the powers of evocation and description which enhance its various movements. The nasib has a patchwork of moods; it is despondent, and finally lyrical. The following section, the rahil, 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 maddīb having felt defeated by the desert separating his beloved and himself—this enhances the gharaḍ of the poem. The maddīb combines conventional generalities of encomium with details about al-Aswad’s campaigns, thus producing a certain level of sincerity.

In the nasib 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 alṭāl 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 ghazaḥ; 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

1 One of the brothers of al-Nu’mān b. al-Mundhir, the King of Ḥira.

2 As a late pre-Islamic panegyric poet, who died in the time of the Prophet’s stay in Medina, al-A’sā 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.”

Poem 2. Al-A‘sā’s Nūnīyya: (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 rāḥil: “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 takhallus into khamr, for in 11 the poet desires the ladhīḥa 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 ṭala bi-l-rifi ma qad da‘a‘an).

And I found pleasure (aqṣaru ‘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 (sallīfīyya) 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: Rāḥil:

(23) The desert; (24) the crossing; (25–8) the camel. Line 29 begins the

" There are two other jāḥili poems, one by 'Abd b. al-Abraṣ and one by al-Nābigha al-Dhuhayli, which lend themselves to much the same analysis as that which has been attempted for al-A‘sā’s poem; see Thābiyān of 'Abd b. al-Abraṣ of Asad and 'Amir ibn at-Tufail of 'Amir ibn Ṣa‘dīq, ed. Lyall, poem 8, p. 29, and Divān al-Nābigha l-Dhuhayli, ed. Muḥammad Abū l- Faḍl Ibrāhīm, pp. 130–6 (poem 24)."
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: Rabîl:
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: Madiib:
Lines 20–4 list the difficulties that stood between the poet and Qays.
News of Qays’ attack on the Banû ‘Amir b. ‘Uqayl in the Hadramawt
has reached the poet, though he was still on the far side of al-Šafâ and
al-Rujum. Lines 25–9 describe Qays’ fearlessness against his enemy.
Line 34 depicts the mamlûb’s generosity; lines 40–5 describe the camels
and horses given by Qays; lines 46–8 praise his tribe, the Banû Mu’âwiya:
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 Hikma:
In lines 51–4 al-Âsâ’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 hikmat, treating
the demise of al-Âdâr (60–6) and Mârîb 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 nasib: (a) khâmîr 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 rabîl cures khamr (19) which exists
explicitly in the nasib only; (c) the madiib is necessarily positive and certain;
(d) (31) the daughter’s complaint, the first line of final fakhr/Hikma, 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 rabîl of lines 15–19 than the mood
of nasib. For, in the final line of nasib (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 Dhû Ḥusain?”. Thus the quest
for riches emerges as the object of life/journeying—not faithfulness to a
beloved. Fakhr is stronger than nasib; khâmîr is part of fakhr.

“This qasîda might well be adduced to show optimism transcending pessimism
according to the model offered by Montgomery in “Dichotomy in Jabîlî Poetry”.

The Qasîdas of al-Âsâ containing Khâmîr

Poem 20, Râ‘îya (Focus: Khâmîr and Nasib)

Lines 1–26: Nasib:
(1) “Ufâra, my neighbour, you used not to be one that would depart
and be left alone”; lines 2–20 are a recollection of ‘Ufâra: (4) “She
captured your heart when she smiled [from] behind her 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 misrule and rejection (i’sâr); (17) she departed with your mind,
leaving you no access to it, despite your patience and respectability
(‘âqâra); (18–19) the only thing which prevented her from requiring
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] hand-
someness 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-târijâbâr) (26) until it took its course
and dizziness overcame me”.

Khâmîr is limited to lines 25–6; it must be identified as part of the resolve
which ends the nasib: 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 never-
theless a tension between the poet’s respectability (‘âqâra) and his humili-
ation 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 fulfillment of desire in the past which allows sabîba and
dâ’ara to be eschewed towards the more formal “goal” of the qasîda.

The fact that the poet has had his fill of the good things of life—a stan-
ard posture—triggers off the gharaḍ of the poem, hence the phrase at line
27: “So turn to a description of something other than this, Mishâl (al-
Âsâ’s muse or familiar amongst the jinn), [he it is that] denounces repro-
bate deeds.” The poem’s social function of fakhr and hijâ’, 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 labih is often vivid (see other bacchic sections) it
functions nevertheless to affore the theme of the poet’s old age through
the concomitant motif of šayb. Through the respectability of old age the
poet becomes a worthy spokesman of fakhr and hijâ’; 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 Nasib)

Lines 1-8: Nasib:
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 nasib ends the poem 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 biya 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 (rab) was made good and its sediments were extracted.”

Lines 12-24: Rabīḥ:
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 mandīḥ—lyās—who is mentioned by name in line 24.

Lines 25-47: Madīḥ:
Lyās 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 (42-44). Line 45 invokes protection from censurers. Line 47 seals the poem conclusively: “Your tentropes are attached to the heights of Sinbis (a clan of Tayyil).”

The poem follows the most common archetype of the developing panegyric, moving from the uncertainty of nasib 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 biya 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 ‘Abbāsid wine poem.

Poem 22, Bā’iyya (Focus: Khamr and Nasib)

Lines 1-9: Nasib:
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.” Lines 2-5 treat grey locks: (2) the girl (beloved/censurer) scorcs them; (3) the poet blames al-fawādīth. Lines 4-9 celebrate ibāhī 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 ibāhī (where there is mufīn).

Lines 10-11: 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.

“ This is reminiscent of the conflict in the first line of al-A’sā’s Mu’allaqa; “say farewell to Hurayri . . . but can you suffer to say farewell”.

Husayn inserts these lines before 10-16 in his paraphrasis of the qaṣīda (see Dīwān al-A’sā al-Kābir, 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 ghīzā; 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 Ka’bat Najran, 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 Husayn’s arrangement.
So now I have said farewell to the pleasures of youth, and abandoned wine (al-khandaris) to other men. [During my youth] I love[d] Athāfīt 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: Ṛahīl:

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: Madīb:

Line 26 follows logically from 16 not 25; the poet addresses his mount: “Ka’bat Najrân is your goal until you are made to kneel at its gates . . . [27] . . . to visit Yazid, ‘Abd al-Masih 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 17–27 and ends with a takhallus into Ṛahīl at lines 10–11. Both sections of reminiscence (gharā’il and khamrī/lahuw) 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 qaṣida, tarah, sayb, al-huwaḏīth, and al-dahr sandwich and control lahuw, al-sabīb, laḏḏāma, and maṭa’a.

Poem 29, Mimiyya (Focus: Khamr as Fakhr following pessimism of Nasīb)

Lines 1–9: Nash:

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 groviness 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-ṯāqaq:

Line 10 introduces the function of the passage, namely to console the poet; this topic was a commonplace in early poetry. 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 ‘Ana 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];

[If it was] as it 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: Madīb:

The section begins without a takhallus and is a warning to the enemy of the mamlūd. Lines 24–9 list his martial virtues—lyās “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 qaṣida follows the Ṛahīl; 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 6–9 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 mamlūd in line 32: “He has two days: a day playing with young ladies and a day seeking after great dangers”.

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"See Mu‘allaqa of Ṭarafa, line 11 of al-Tibrizī’s recension: wa-inni la-umdī l-kammar ‘inda ḥṣḏārīḥi be-‘awṣā‘a miqāthin tarīḥū wa-taḡthādī."
Poem 33, Qâ'iyya (Focus: Khamr and Ḥikma)

Lines 1–4: Nasîb:
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’ṣā.13

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) Kirsâ Sâhinsâh and his aged wine, (7) ’Adî [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 Ḥûrîs 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’mân 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 ambulation of 18 and a reiterating 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 Kirsâ] at Sâbât.”

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 nadâmâ caress through gaps in her skirt.
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.

13 The poet alludes to himself with reference to the same ailment elsewhere (see poem 10, line 25).
Appendix A

Poem 36, Ḥā'īyya (Focus: Khamr and Ḥikma)

Lines 1–2: Nasib:
Line 1 describes the crow of separation. Line 2 despairs for the ailing mandūḥ

Lines 3–15: Ḥikma:
Lines 3–6: the glory of Ma’add is linked to the mandūḥ’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: Madīḥ:
Lines 16–18 introduce the mandūḥ: (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 mandūḥ drives disaster away from his people. In lines 24–5 the mandūḥ’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 rahūl. Lines 33–54 are lahuw/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 sāqi when he is commanded, “Hasten now!”

From the skins of merchants into a large and dark Hiran 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 is 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.

The Qaṣīdas of al-A’ṣā containing Khamr

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 25–61) follows an initial section of madīḥ (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 nasib: the crow of separation (ghurūb al-bayn). The pessimism of this motif is wholly in tune with the ensuing despair at the state of the mandūḥ: “As you sit amongst a group of people, friends of Quṣayl, despairing for a man who has spent a year in the prison [of malady].” There is no belied in the poem; the mandūḥ elicits the emotion normally associated with the habīb; this is echoed in lines 16–18, which introduce the madīḥ 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 madīḥ contains the nasib.

This explains the otherwise incongruous opening statement of rahūl (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 mandūḥ will receive him, preserves his self-esteem in the case of rejection (this may also explain the threat of biyā‘ in the final seven lines of the poem).
Appendix A

(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-dabr continues into and introduces madīb at line 16. The full implication of the line in the context of what both precedes and supersedes it, is that the māmdāb will transcend the sombre atmosphere that has been established. The wine section of lines 33–53, which is principally a lyrical interlude of wasf subordinated to fakhr, is itself sealed by implicit biqma: “That was a time [dabr] for people now departed—as [indeed] the time (dabr) 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 tranquility; (2) for it is empassioned with Hind, afflicted—sometimes requisite, other times left yearning”. Lines 3–5 are wasf. 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 shy-horse; (11) how [often] you [fern.] 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: Ladbāḥāt (which celebrate Hind):
Lines 13–15 follow on line 11, with 12 as a parenthetic 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;

The Qaṣīdas of al-Aʾṣā containing Khamr

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 (dīṣqan) of Yemen.

Lines 24–7: Madīb in praise of Abū l-Aṣ’āth 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 parenthetic 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` ātibū-nī `alā Su`rbi Șīhāḥī*

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 drinking 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 snugly 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.

*Yā Sāhir al-Ţarf*

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 Dhahl nor Saybān, but a land of the Banū Aḥṭār, 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 nostrils.
O night when the stars rose with good omen, when the drunkard assaulted the drunkard,
We passed the time obedient to Ībīs, believing in him, until the monks sounded the night’s death knell (i.e. sounded the monastery bell at dawn).
Appendix B

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 Liḥūb Zābyān

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 plucked one day, a finger strummed them and they resembled the groan of passion at the fire of abandonment.

Texts and Translations

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-Maṣālā

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-Ṣīḥān and al-Raḥāb.

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 Sabaean.

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.
Appendix B

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-Lāhīn Labā-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 take 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".

Texts and Translations

Kāna l-Šabābu Maṭīyyata 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 wavelling (i.e., they are unintelligible).
So excuse your brother, for he is a man whose ears have grown used to censure.

Da' 'an-ka Laumī

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 ills 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 Asmâ 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
learned 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.”

Ighrâ’ Iblis
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 [shoot-
ing]-Istar.
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 Abî Murra if you do not rescind; [to think you could choose] any
other manner of behaviour would be naïve.”

Wa-Fityatin ka-Maṣâbiḥi l-Dajâ
Splendid young blades, like lamps in the darkness, proud-nosed, stiff-
necked, keen—
Who assailed Fate with daintiness 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 Ḩafṣ wine, imported from Takrit, 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
archeoress,
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 Afits.”
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 care-
ful 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 Hárit could have sprung.
With a lutenist in our midst who moves as he sings “Abode of Hind in
Dhât al-Jâ’; Hai!”
Our gazes were constrained to turn towards him and if you saw us [look-
ing] at him, as if bedazzled.
He is from Hit, swaying gracefully, refined, and I say to him in fun, “Hit
it, Hitit!”
Appendix B

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 Nāfūrīn

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 we were] 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;

Texts and Translations

I conversed with my loved one, without affectation, and humiliated a recalcitrant boy who was not shameless [by nature];
He sang [entertainingly], 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 glutonomously 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

Tuʿātiba-niʿ ʿalā ʿSurbi Șṭibahi

وصل النمل من فائق الصباح
أحبب من اللؤلؤ ذا أرياح
نهليل غطاءه مصباح
وقف سدست آسالي بزجاج
نصحته في ثوب النحاس
معروشة معارضة النواح
ينسج بالفلاح وبالنحاس
بما لئي الكباج لا ساح
وأعنا مصدحًا يثير إقراض
عمله سحلك بالروح
غدا أو غدا رضي الله عنك
وغا لله كله لغدًا مزن
أصحح أم فؤادك غير صاح
فيستغفرون عزرًا ورام
وذر بكاسينا رشاً زخيمً
Appendix B

وجد طبقة يعيشون فيها راحٌ إلى أن أن بثٍ بثٍ بالمساحية،
وقد هُمَّت كفيفة الصلاحي،
ثمَّة كياتٌ قرب من النجوم،
وأدتُ وضعت عليه رحلٍ.

Saqā Lābiḥ Zābyan

ستقبل الله طبيبه يَبِيعُ مَبِيعِ العَجَمِ في الخطر بِضَرْعِ العَجَمِ،
فَيَنَسَرَ طبيبه بِفِتَاحَة المَعْرَض.

Ya Sābir al-Ṭarīf

يا ساحر الطوفان أنت الدُّهرُ وسُنَانُ،
إذَّ أُمْثِيَت بِطْوَر العَيْنِ مَكْتَطُبَا،
تبدو الماءِ إِنِّي يَبْنَتٌ،
ما كَيْ لَّكِ كَذَا يُقَلُّ عَلَى وَرَكْبَتِهِ.

Baṭat al-Samʻiyyah

فَتَبْنُ مَعِيزَ بَيْنَكَ بِخَيْرَان،
فَيَا شَاءَ الْمَعْنَى أُنْ لَا مَأْثُورٌ.

فَتَبْنُ مَعِيزَ بَيْنَكَ بِخَيْرَان،
فَيَا شَاءَ الْمَعْنَى أُنْ لَا مَأْثُورٌ.
Appendix B

"Aṣā l-Muṣallā

۳Wa-Lāḥin Labāni

Kāna I-Sāḥabu Matīyyata I-Jahl

أَنْبِهَا جَانَةَ وَمُشْكِبَةٌ،
صُوْرُ قُسمٍ وَقُثلِبٌ
سُمَّى مُسْلِمٌ وَأَمْشَأَهَا عَمْرُ وَبِفْعُهُم
بِيْسُلُونَ أَنكِهنَّهم وَهُمْ قُوضُهُم
كَانَتْ آوِلَهَا تَدْعُدهَا

هَمَا سَوَاءَ وَقُلُوْبُ بَيْنَهَا
مُسْلِمٌ وَأَمْشَأَهَا عَمْرُ وَبِفْعُهُم
بِيْسُلُونَ أَنكِهنَّهم وَهُمْ قُوضُهُم
كَانَتْ آوِلَهَا تَدْعُدهَا

وَلَاحُ لَحَانِقَ كَيْ بِحُزُورِ بَذَعُتِّهَا
لَحَانِقَ كَيْ لَمْ أَفْتَرَبَّ الرَّأْيِ إِلَّا
فَذَادَهُ الْحَلاَّنِ إِلَّا لَجَأَهَا
الرَّفْقُهَا وَاللَّهُ لَا يَرْقَعُ أَسْمَهَا
وَهَذَا أَمْرُ أَمْتِيْنِ صَدِيقٌ
وَقُوْهُهَا إِلَى كَلِمَ حَسِبَ تَفْوَهُهَا
فَهَامَهَا إِلَّا أنَّ الْخَلْقَ وَقَدْ
قَفَنِحْ وَإِنْ لَنَسَكَ الْخَلْقَ عَاجَلاً
فَإِنَّا لَا لَهُ أَمْثَلٌ إِلَّا تَثْقَبُ
إِذَا مِنْهَا فَدوْقُهَا إِلَى جِبَلٍ كَرَمٍ
Appendix B

Da‘ an-ka Laumii

لا يوجد صفحتها، نام النص في نسخة أخرى.

Texts and Translations

Wa-Fityatin ka-Maṣābiḥī l-Dujā

لا يوجد صفحتها، نام النص في نسخة أخرى.
Appendix B

Texts and Translations

سأكتب على الله ما كتب على الله من كل فاجر. 
أتم تمر أن الناس عوناً على الحق.

بقوم سواء أو منفخ سيل.
إذا تم الرفع بالنار فقيل.
وقد تطهيره للطيبات أطول.
ومن جوامع مغعم كفيج.

بقيتها حتى إذا ندمت خليفتماً.
بكلم في لا يمتنع جنانه.
لنحسين حال الله ما من كل فاجر.
فلم يسمح أن الناس عوناً على الحق.

Wah Khaymati Nāširīn

نهمهم بدأ من رامها برؤيل.
إذا عرضتهما الحسب فامتناع.
حتطما بها الألقام فلم يصر.
كتائب فلايا ثم جاءت بساقوت.
كأنما إنها بين طيبن تعم.
حتي الأصحام بها ذيه الصيا.
إذا ما أنت دون الهية من الفتي.
فما توفي الديك جنعاً من الذن.
وعطشين من أنهري الحديث كذا بدأ.
فظل وقد ركب شرائده دفعة.
فأثرت حاجات بهبئي مساعد.
وأصبحت الأعي السكر والسكر عسَّ.
GLOSSARY OF ARABIC TERMS

‘ādhil‘/‘āhila: the reprover or censurer. This anonymous figure is a common topos in early Arabic love and wine poetry, and is frequently an introductory topos.

‘ādil: blame, censure, reproof.

‘aqil: reason, intelligence, mind. It is a facet of ḥilm and is employed as a term in one of the khamriyyāt of Abī Nuwās to contrast with jaṭil (the antonym of ḥilm).

‘āṣābīyya: 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.

aṭāl (sing. ṭalū; alternative pl. ṭalūl): the abandoned traces of the beloved’s erstwhile campsite. It is the dominant topos of the nasib.

baḍi‘: the use of rhetorical devices in classical Arabic poetry. Badi‘ developed in the late Umayyad and early ’Abbasid period and thereafter dominated the expression of the most prominent Arab poets. The most common devices are antithesis (qibāq), parallelism (muqābalā), and paronomasia (jinās).

bā‘īyya: a qasida or qif‘a rhyming in the letter bā‘.

bīd‘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-dāb: fate—a dominant motif in early Arabic poetry.

dālīyya: a qasida or qif‘a rhyming in the letter dāl.

dār (pl. dāyr): house or abode. In the nasib, 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 aṭāl.

dīḥān: 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 often described as a dīḥān.

din: religion.

diwan: 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.

faṣīḥ: an expert in fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence).

fatan: a mature young man who is not yet 40.

fa‘ūla: a juridical opinion or decree.

fi‘rūq: 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 nasib.

gharād: lit. object or goal. The term is used to signify the main theme of a qasida, which as the poetry developed was normally madīḥ or bi‘ād.

ghazal: love poetry. Ghazal as an independent genre is generally conceived to have developed from the nasib of the polytheistic qasida. It is important to understand the distinction between ghazal and nasib. There are essentially two types of ghazal: ‘adhrī and ibāḥī.

ghufran: forgiveness. The term is employed in the khamriyyāt to refer to divine forgiveness and is often an attendant topic of ta‘abb (repentance).

ghulām: a youth or adolescent boy; the sāqī is sometimes referred to by this term.

bā’īyya: a poem rhyming in the letter bā‘.

hamm: worry, distress, preoccupation.

ḥauwādīth: the accidents/events [of Fate/Time]; an attendant topic of Fate (al-dāb).

ḥayā: shame.

haz: joking, jesting, fun. The term is used to describe a poetic mood or posture; it is the antonym of jiḍ (seriousness, earnestness).

ḥiṣā: 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-dāb).

ḥilm: forbearance. It is one of the principal facets of murūwa and governs most of the poet’s cerebral qualities. The notion of ḥilm was inherited by the Islamic community from the ḥalliyā.

ibāḥī: this is an adjective used to refer to candidly erotic love poetry (ghazal).

‘ilm: knowledge. In the system of virtue (murūwa) of early Arabic poetry it can be deemed an aspect of ḥilm.

‘ird: honour, good repute.

ir‘i‘ād: abstinence and repentance (the latter only by virtue of the former).

istighfār: seeking forgiveness (from God).

tā‘i: 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.
Glossary of Arabic Terms

jabl: 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 muwāwīya.

jimiyya: a qaṣīda or qiṭ'a rhyming in the letter jīm.

jīnās: paronomasia; it is one of the most common rhetorical devices of bādī.

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).

kufir: unbelief or blasphemy, specifically in the Islamic sphere.

kunīya: a byname, typically consisting of “Abū” in construct with another name, i.e. Abū Nuwās.

ladhība (pl. ladhībat): pleasure, enjoyment. A term frequently employed in the khamriyya, ghazal, and muḥtim poetry.

labūs: play, dalliance, entertainment.

lämā: a word essentially synonymous with ‘ābīl.

lämīyya: a qaṣīda or qiṭ'a rhyming in the letter lām.

madīb: eulogy or panegyric. It is one of the major categories or genres of classical Arabic poetry.

ma’īsa: life, livelihood, way of life.

ma’īm: a libertine (see muḥmin).

maṭlīq: The opening bayt (or verse) of a poem.

mauṣūla: a person of non-Arab origin who has become the client of one of the Arab tribes. Or, conversely, a master or lord.

mimīyya: a poem rhyming in the letter mīm.

mu’allaqa: one of the seven (in one recension ten) pre-Islamic odes collected by Hammād al-Rawīya (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’araqāt: 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.

muḫammiyya: a singer or songstress whose role in the narrative khamriyya is sometimes analogous with that of the sāqiya.

muḫafāza: reserve, conservative attitude.

muḫdath: this term is usually translated as “modern” and refers to the poetry which emerged in the late Umayyad and early ‘Abbāsid period characterized by the use of bādī.

muḫῑn: 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 muḫῑn.

mukhādram/mukḥādram: 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 Muṣākharat n. EL).

munāṣfa: contradiction or opposition (see Naqī’sd).

muwāwīya: this is often translated as virtus. It is the broad term that signifies all the cardinal virtues of pre-Islamic Arabian society that characterize a man. Muwāwīya was in large measure incorporated into the ethical fabric of the early Islamic community.

nabīd: this term is used in the khamriyyāt to refer to wine made from dates. A form of nabīd was considered to be a permissible beverage by members of the Ḥanafi school of law. Nabīd seems to have been disparaged by the majority of wine poets.

nādim (pl. nādāmāt/nādāmanāt): a drinking companion.

naqī’sd: poems of bijah written reciprocally between poetic adversaries. These became a significant phenomenon of Arabic poetry in the Umayyad period.

nasib: the erotic prelude of the polythematic qaṣīda. Three motifs dominate this section of the poem: the ajlāl motif, the fīrāq motif, and the jayf 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 uṣāf.

nisba: relationship or, in some contexts, lineage.

nusk: godliness, piety.

qaṣīya: rhyme, rhyme-word.

qaṣīyya: a qaṣīda or qiṭ'a rhyming in the letter qāf.

qaṣīda: a polythematic poem. In its most standard form by the late Islamic/early Umayyad period this might consist of the following sections or themes: nasib→rabī’lluwaṣf→madīb. The qaṣīda survived in this form well into the ‘Abbāsid period, though the style of language was transformed in this later period by bādī.

qiṭ’a: a short monotheistic poem of up to about twenty verses.

qiṭās: lit. comparison or analogy. It became one of the four so-called “roots” of Islamic jurisprudence.

raḥil: the journey section of the polythematic qaṣīda.

rā’īyya: a qaṣīda or qiṭ’a rhyming in the letter rā‘.
ra'iy: 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.
rudād: "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 tāqūd and taqūd.
sābūb: youth, youthfulness. It is the antonym of sāyib.
sābr: patience. It is a topos in homiletic poetry (the zubdiyya).
saḥiṣṣaḥiyya: 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.
sāhib: a noun normally found in this plural form (sing. sāhib) in the khamriyyāt meaning the drinkers or carousers.
sāib: grey hair or the state of having grey hair.
sāikib: A mature old man of 40 or more years.
sayr: a noun normally found in this plural form (sing. sāayr) in the khamriyya meaning the drinkers or carousers.
sayr: 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 nasib and the rahil of the qaṣīda.
sībū: youthful passion.
sīdā: hardship; it is the antonym of faraj, which means deliverance.
sīnūyya: a qīṣa or qaṣīda rhyming in the letter sīn.
sīr: the association of anything other than God with His divinity.
suʿūbiyya (suʿūbi 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.
tāvīyya: a qaṣīda or qīṣa rhyming in the letter tāʾ.
takhallūs: the transition in the qaṣīda from the rahil into the gharaṣ or maḍīb.
taqūd: piety.
tarib: 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.
tawākki: trust in God.
tawba: repentance.
tībī: antithesis. It one of the major features of bādiʿ.
tuqūd: piety, a variant spelling of taqūd.
ʿudhrī: 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 nasib, though the sentiments are quite different.
ʿusr: a Qurʾānic term meaning 'hardship, distress, or destitution'. It is the antonym of yusr.
wāqūf: dignity, forbearance.
waṣīf: 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.).
wāqūf: lit. standing; it is the verbal noun of waqūfa. It is used in ch. r 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 nasib) and parodies it.
ystr: a Qurʾānic term meaning 'ease or prosperity'. It is the antonym of ʿusr.
al-zaman/al-zamān: Time. In early Arabic poetry it is an attendant topos of Fate (al-dahr).
zhūd: asceticism.
zhubdiyya (pl. zubdiyyāt): 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-ʿAtāḥiya, a contemporary and associate of Abū Nuwās.
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CHALABL  The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: ‘Abbasid Belles-Lettres (see Ashtiany)
CHALUP  The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period (see Beeston)
EI  The Encyclopaedia of Islam, 1st edn., Leiden, 1913–34
GAL  Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur (see Brockelmann)
JAL  Journal of Arabic literature
JNES  Journal of Near Eastern Studies
ZDMG  Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft

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