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WORLDS OF THE IMAGINATION:

BĪDEL OF DELHI (d.1720) AND EARLY MODERN PERSIAN LYRIC STYLE

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For S. and A.

Ideas seem as embodied, in the world of ideas, with its views and obstructions and vastness, as we do in our material world. They seem tangible, with specific savors, aesthetic properties, emotional tones, curves, surfaces, insides, hidden places, structure, geometry, dark passages, shining corners, auras, force fields, and combinatorial chemistry. This is one great reason why “travelling, whether in the mental or the physical world, is a joy,” as Bertrand Russell said, and why “it is good to know that, in the mental world at least, there are vast countries still very imperfectly explored.”

– Galen Strawson, *Things That Bother Me* (2018)¹

در یک مژه برهم زدن آن نقاب مرتفع است و آن خیال واقع.

In one closing of the eyes, that veil is lifted, and that which is imaginary – is real.

– Attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad by a brahmin in *The Four Elements: An Autobiography* by Bīdel of Delhi (d.1720)²

¹ Galen Strawson, *Things that Bother Me: Death, Freedom, the Self, Etc.* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2018), 20-21.

² “*Dar yek mozhe-bar-ham-zadan ān neqāb mortafe‘ ast va ān khayāl vāqe‘.*” Mīrzā ‘Abd al-Qāder Bīdel Dehlavī, *Kolleyyāt-e Abū l-Ma‘ānī Mīrzā ‘Abd al-Qāder Bīdel Dehlavī*, ed. Khalīlollāh Khalīlī (Tehran: Enteshārāt-e Ṭalāye, 1389SH [2010/2011CE]), IV:39.

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Abstract

In 1670, Bīdel of Delhi was travelling through northern India. One night in Agra he had a visionary dream that would reframe and reconsolidate his entire life: he experienced the unfolding of the cosmos, in all its spatial and temporal totality, as it emanated from God through the planetary spheres down to the smallest atoms of the earth. The prophet Muḥammad appeared before Bīdel and interpreted this dream for him. At that moment, Bīdel understood the meaning of everything, perfectly. But as he emerged from the dream into waking consciousness, Muḥammad’s words faded away, eluding memory, and the dream’s interpretation – through which Bīdel had attained certain knowledge of true reality – “remained hidden in the manuscript of the imagination.”¹ Bīdel would spend the rest of his life attempting to recapture that momentous insight into the innermost workings of the universe with systematic precision, by experimenting – through lyric – with that which is imaginary (*khayāl*).

This dissertation, *Worlds of the Imagination: Bīdel of Delhi (d.1720) and Early Modern Persian Lyric Style*, studies the entanglements between imagination, Persian lyric poetry, and Islamic thought in early modern India and Iran. What is the role of lyric in relation to systematic discourse? How do lyric poems *work*? Do early modern poets have a theory of the lyric, and how might such theories be reconstructed? What kind of commerce do imagination and reason have with each other, and why is lyric considered to be uniquely suited for uniting them? Can lyric be logical, and if so, how? And what does lyric style have to do with systematic thought?

Taking as a case study the Indian Persian poet, Sufi, and philosopher Bīdel of Delhi (d.1720) in conversation with premodern critics, poets, and philosophers, this study investigates how

¹ “*Ma ‘nī-ye ta ‘bīr-ī...možmar-e noskhe-ye khayāl mānd.*” Mīrzā ‘Abd al-Qāder Bīdel Dehlavī, *Kolleyyāt-e Abū l-Ma ‘ānī Mīrzā ‘Abd al-Qāder Bīdel Dehlavī*, ed. Khalīlollāh Khalīlī (Tehran: Enteshārāt-e Ṭalāye, 1389SH [2010/2011CE]), IV:303.

intellectuals in early modern South Asia and the Near East articulate ideas on complex subjects by turning to lyric. It is argued that this genre more than any other allows them to reflect on both the propositional content and the felt experience of Islamic thought. In other words, the doctrinal commitments of a poet like Bīdel can *only* be understood by examining the features, mechanisms, and ends of his lyric style. The dissertation undertakes to locate, define, and analyze what is called here Bīdel’s lyric style of steadfast imagining by taking two approaches. The first approach is that of historical and philological reconstruction: in Part I (Chapters 1-3), Bīdel is placed in direct conversation with poets, critics, and literary historians from his own time. Part II (Chapters 4-6) is more experimental. It brings to light certain ideas, shapes of thought, and modes of discourse that may have been *ambiently* available to Bīdel, by placing him in indirect dialogue with premodern systematic thinkers.

Together, these two approaches to the recovery and analysis of style reveal how Bīdel’s lyric style of steadfast imagining traces a distinctive, phenomenologically inflected path to certainty that is just as methodical and robust as the logic-driven procedures of systematic thought. By experimenting in lyric with that which is imaginary (*khayāl*), and by thus training his imagination through such practices as attentive slow reflection (*ta’ammol*), Bīdel’s lyric aim – his ambitious lifelong endeavor – is to recover the embodied, subjectively experienced knowledge of true reality that was disclosed to him in the dream that night in Agra, while also recording and conceptually accommodating what it is like when this endeavor ends in failure.

By taking lyric to be a vital source of evidence for both doctrine and experience, this dissertation shows how early modern Persian lyric poetry can be no less than philosophy conducted in metaphor.

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It has been the blessing of a lifetime to have been a student at the University of Chicago during these specific years. If it is true that we are what we think (and *how* we think), then I could not ask to be inducted into the life of the mind by more luminous exemplars. Through guidance and by example, my teachers have given me knowledge, formed my habits, shaped my mind: what I am, I owe to them. As for all the gaps in knowledge, bad habits, and misshapen ideas that remain – they are entirely my own.

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I can affirm that, in its practical aspects, the experiences of a twenty-first-century graduate student form a depressing continuity with times past: truly, “and to this day is

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I dedicate this dissertation to A. and S., with infinite love and gratitude for all the beautiful experiences, joys, and dilations of time. I am so fortunate to share their world.

Note on Conventions

Transliteration

Studies of premodern Persian literary cultures face almost insuperable difficulties and aggravations when it comes to transliterating the many languages of the premodern Islamicate world. Not only do Persian, Arabic, and Urdu share a single script (with some alterations and additions), but pronunciation varies widely across languages, and within each language there are variations across regions. Furthermore, the seemingly innocent question of how early modern Indo-Persian may be best represented through the Latin letters of the English alphabet can carry significant scholarly and political implications. The pronunciation of certain Persian vowels in premodern South Asia was often slightly different from that of premodern and modern Iranian Persian, a fact that has been noted since at least the time of Amīr Khosrow of Delhi (d.1273). Indeed, the question of “correct” Persian pronunciation is a major topic of debate in the premodern Persianate world. Striving to reflect historical South Asian Persian pronunciation, then, seems reasonable. However, since many Persian-language authors who lived and wrote in South Asia were originally from Iran, perhaps it ought to follow that transliteration should be determined by each author’s place of origin? This leads to further thorny questions: how many years need an author have lived in the Subcontinent in order to qualify as “Indo-Persian”? And if strict differentiation between Iranian and Indian Persian systems of transliteration ought to be upheld, should regularity of transliteration in works that treat of Persian literature produced both in Iran and in India be abandoned altogether?

The situation is further complicated by modern circumstances. Persian is no longer a widely used living language in South Asia, unlike modern Persian (Farsi), which is a living language in Iran, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, and is linguistically nearly identical to premodern Persian. As then, so now: every position on this issue comes with risks of erasure and invites suspicions of bias. Bīdel’s very name hints at these controversies. “Bīdel” follows the modern Iranian Persian pronunciation, which I have opted to use instead of other possibilities, which include “Bīdil,” “Bedil,” and “Bēdil,” all of which are attested in scholarship. In this dissertation, I draw upon established systems of transliteration with minor modifications, a method that is determined – I wish to stress – by an entirely non-dogmatic and frankly idiosyncratic set of preferences having to do with ease of readerly comprehension, orthographic and grammatical fidelity, personal habit, modern scholarly convention, and a desire to maintain uniform orthographic order.

Urdu and Hindi transliteration follows the system given in John T. Platts, *A Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindi and English* (1884). Demonstrative pronouns are transliterated according to common pronunciation, not orthography: यह is *yeh*, not *yah*; वह is *voh*, not *vah*. Aspirated Hindi-Urdu consonants are represented with *h̄* in order to distinguish them from Urdu letters such as غ (gh) and ک (kh): e.g., घ is *gh̄* and ख is *kh̄*.

European languages remain unmodified, including Russian, which is given in Cyrillic (it is, however, transliterated in the bibliography following the Library of Congress system).

For Arabic, I follow the transliteration system of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (IJMES). The definite article *al-* does not change to reflect the difference between solar and lunar letters: e.g., *al-qamar* and *al-shams*, not *ash-shams*.

Vowel changes in enclitic pronouns following prepositions are duly reflected: e.g., *min-hu*; *fī-hi*, *‘alay-him*. Single words in isolation are given in pausal form (*al-ḥamd*, not *al-ḥamdu*), but in phrases and sentences, end-voweling does reflect grammatical cases (*al-ḥamdu lil-lāhi l-raḥmāni l-raḥīm*). The regular “long alif” (*alif tawīla*) in the initial position is not transcribed with a *hamza* (*alif*, not *’alif*), nor is the silent inflectional *alif tawīla* transliterated; the “dagger alif” (*alif qaṣīra*) and the “shortened alif” (*alif maqṣūra*) are given as *á* (e.g., *ḥádhā*, *Mūsá*, *Muṣṭafá*, etc., with the exception of *Allāh*, which retains the long-vowel macron in conformity with overwhelming precedent in current transliteration practice).

For Persian consonants and long vowels, I also follow the *IJMES* system. Minor modifications have been introduced in several areas: short vowels (*o* instead of *u*, *e* instead of *i*); *eżāfes* (*-e* and *-ye* instead of *-i* and *-yi*); the silent Middle Persian *vāv*, which is preserved in some words in superscript (e.g., *kh^vāhesh* and *ostokh^vān*) but not in others (e.g., *khod* and *khosh*; one doesn’t wish to be *too* pedantic); diphthongs (*ow*, not *aw*); and the final *he* in Persian words (*-e* instead of *-ah* or *-a*, although the *h* is retained in *he*-final words where this letter is an integral part of the root: e.g., “*īzad gonah bebakhshad...bāde bedeh*”). Prefixes, compounds, contractions, and suffixes are occasionally distinguished with hyphens.

When personal names contain a locative onomastic component, this is sometimes translated into English in order to make the person’s geographic affiliation more legible: thus, Bīdel-e Dehlavī is Bīdel of Delhi; Maḥmūd-e Ghaznavī is Maḥmūd of Ghazni, Ṣā’eb-e Tabrīzī is Ṣā’eb of Tabriz. Some historical names admit many possible transliterations, and my choices for each are, again, founded on purely personal

preferences arising from some intersection of habit and convention: thus, Prince Dārā Shikōh (not Shekūh, Shokūh, Shukoh, Shikoh, or Shikūh), Emperor Awrangzēb (not Aurangzīb, Aurangzeb, Owrangzīb, or Aureng-zebe), and the Prophet Muḥammad (not Mohamad, Muhammad, or Moḥammad).

Place names with commonly accepted modern English-language spellings are given in that form, unless they occur within a primary-source citation: e.g., Delhi, not Dehlī; Tabriz, not Tabrīz; Esfahan, not Eṣfahān; Mecca, not Makka. Some names of historical cities, regions, and countries retain transliteration outside of primary-source citations in order to differentiate them from their modern quasi-counterparts: e.g., ‘Erāq (historical western Īrān, not modern Iraq), Shāhjahānābād (the Mughal capital), Hendūstān (not modern India), premodern Īrān (not modern Iran).

Dates

All years that are given according to the Islamic (*hijrī*) lunar calendar are marked by H, with their Common Era equivalent(s) immediately following in brackets: e.g., 1054H (1644/1645CE), and 1 Muḥarram 1054H (10 March 1644CE). The modern Iranian (*shamsī/jalālī*) solar calendar dates that are given in the bibliography for twentieth- and twenty-first-century works are similarly accompanied by Common Era equivalent(s): e.g., 1374SH (1995/1996CE), and 1 Farvardīn 1374SH (21 March 1995CE).

Introduction

But can philosophy become literature and still know itself?

– Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason* (1979)¹

طلب تو بس بود اینقدر که ز معنی ببری اثر
به خودت اگر نرسد نظر به خیال پیچ و خدا طلب

چه خوش آن که ترک سبب کنی بیقین رسی و طرب کنی
ز حقیقت آنچه طلب کنی به طریق بیدل ما طلب

You search.

To catch even a trace of meaning
is enough.

And if your gaze

does not extend into your self – swerve
into imagination.

Search there for God.

Blessed are they

who abandon analytical reasoning,
attain certain knowledge,
arrive at happiness.

If true reality is what you seek,

search for it
along the path
of Bīdel's style.

– Bīdel of Delhi (d.1720), Ghazal N^o350²

Our file bewrayes us, & as hunters find their game by the trace, fo
is a mans *genius* defcried by his works.

– Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621)³

¹ Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 496.

² Ghazal N^o350, Lines 10 and 11. Mīrzā 'Abd al-Qāder Bīdel Dehlavī, *Kolleyyāt-e Abū l-Ma'ānī Mīrzā 'Abd al-Qāder Bīdel Dehlavī*, ed. Khalīlollāh Khalīlī (Tehran: Enteshārāt-e Talāye, 1389SH [2010/2011CE]), I:159-160.

³ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Oxford: Henry Cripps, 1638), 9.

In 1670, Bīdel of Delhi was travelling through northern India. One night in Agra, he had a visionary dream, which would reframe and reconsolidate his entire life: he experienced the unfolding of the cosmos, in all its spatial and temporal totality, as it emanated from God through the planetary spheres down to the smallest atoms of earth. The prophet Muḥammad appeared before Bīdel and interpreted this dream for him. At that moment, Bīdel understood the meaning of everything, perfectly. But as he emerged from the dream into waking consciousness, Muḥammad’s words faded away, eluding memory, and the dream’s interpretation – through which Bīdel had attained certain knowledge of true reality – “remained hidden in the manuscript of the imagination.”⁴ Bīdel would spend the rest of his life attempting to recapture that momentous insight into the innermost workings of the universe with systematic precision, by experimenting – through lyric – with “that which is imaginary” (*khayāl*).

This dissertation, *Worlds of the Imagination: Bīdel of Delhi (d.1720) and Early Modern Persian Lyric Style*, studies the entanglements between imagination, Persian lyric poetry, and Islamic thought in early modern India and Iran. What is the role of lyric in relation to systematic prose discourse? How do lyric poems *work*? Do early modern poets have a theory of the lyric, and how might such theories be reconstructed? What kind of commerce do imagination and philosophy have with each other, and why is lyric considered to be uniquely suited for uniting them? Can lyric be logical, and if so, how? And above all: what does lyric style have to do with systematic thought?

In order to address these questions, the approach taken here is to show how lyric poetry in the early modern Persianate world is a premier genre for rigorous thought on

⁴ “*Ma ‘nī-ye ta ‘bīr-ī...možmar-e noskhe-ye khayāl mānd.*” Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, IV:303.

complex subjects typically seen as properly belonging to disciplines like philosophy and theology: the soul, the nature of time, epistemology, practices of the self. Taking as a case study the Indian Persian poet, Sufi, and philosopher Bīdel of Delhi (d.1720),⁵ in conversation with premodern critics, poets, and philosophers, this dissertation investigates how intellectuals in early modern South Asia and the Near East articulate ideas on complex topics by turning to lyric. It is argued that this genre more than any other allows them to reflect on both the propositional content and the felt experience of Islamic thought. In other words, doctrine and lyric style are inseparable: one can't be understood without the other.

Bīdel's vast corpus contains nearly three thousand lyric poems, through which he advances sophisticated claims about time and self, knowledge and imagination, and practices of meditation, attention, and composure. Two main ideas guide this dissertation. The first is that Bīdel's doctrinal commitments and specific positions on complex subjects *can only be understood* by examining the features, mechanisms, and aims of his lyric style. The second idea concerns style in general. What are the procedures, orientations, and terms for analysis of style? Is there a standard template for arriving at an understanding of a poet's individual lyric style? This dissertation suggests that the

⁵ Bīdel was born in Patna, northern India, in 1644; he had a classical education, studying Persian, Arabic, the Islamic sciences, and Sufism. He composed poetry from a very young age (ten), but was not a court poet. Travelling extensively throughout northern and central India, he served in the army, and also relied on the patronage of nobles for subsistence. He lived through Awrangzēb's entire reign, and died in late 1720. Details of his biography can be found in, for instance, Abdul Ghani, *Life and Works of Abdul Qadir Bedil* (Lahore: Publishers United Ltd., 1960) and Mohammed Moazzam Siddiqi, *An Examination of the Indo-Persian Mystical Poet Mirza 'Abdul Qadir Bedil with Particular Reference to His Chief Work 'Irfān'* (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1975). In this dissertation, I am concerned less with the historical facts of Bīdel's biography than with Bīdel's own presentation of his life, as given in his autobiography directly and in other works indirectly.

investigation of style ought to proceed simultaneously along two methodologically distinct paths of inquiry.

The first path is reconstructive. How are matters of style handled in a poet's own time? What terms are used to theorize style, and can they be made to harmonize with modern scholarly (Western) terms and concepts? These questions are best answered by turning to primary sources, analyzing them with as much historical and philological precision as possible. This is the approach that governs Part I (Chapters 1-3), where Bīdel is placed in direct conversation with poets, critics, and literary historians from his own time. The second path of approach to style is more experimental. What further critical strategies can most effectively bring to light the ideas, shapes of thought, and modes of discourse that may have been *ambiently available* to the poet? Part II of the dissertation (Chapters 4-6) suggests that another way of tracing the contours of Bīdel's style of thought is by placing him in *indirect* conversation with systematic thinkers. These include: Ibn 'Arabī (d.1240) on time and imagination, in Chapter 4; Avicenna (d.1037) on the status of that which is imaginary and the aims of systematic inquiry, in Chapter 5; and Prince Dārā Shikōh (d.1658) on practices of meditation, in Chapter 6. The argument is that *both* approaches are necessary: neither path of inquiry on its own is sufficient for arriving at a thorough understanding of a poet's style. Style is a demanding subject. It requires philology, and also experimentation.

Chapter 1 introduces Bīdel of Delhi (d.1720) by situating him within a lyric colloquium with two Iranian Persian poets – Ṣā'eb of Tabriz (d.1676) and Ḥazīn of Esfahan (d.1766) – on the very idea of India. Reading their poems leads to a broader discussion of the entwined issues of geography, style, and lyric unity – subjects of intense

debate throughout the early modern Persianate world. All three poets evoke, challenge, subvert, and inhabit ideas of geography and exile in distinct ways, and the conversation in lyric between them raises questions about how to analyze complex metaphors of place; how to conceptualize their shared early modern lyric landscape; how to evaluate individual lyric style in light of broader issues of literary value; and how to examine the creative entanglements between real-historical worlds and the world of the imagination.

Chapter 2 undertakes to recover emic literary-critical vocabularies and approaches to lyric style by analyzing Persian biographical compendia (*tazkeres*), prose prefaces penned by poets to their own collections of verse, and other genres in which poets and critics allow themselves candid moments of critical reflection. The aim is to see how early modern critics and poets themselves handle issues of style, geography, canonicity, terminology, and periodization. These sources reveal the centrality of specific figurations in the early modern period: metaphor (*este 'āre*), ambiguity (*īhām*), and *khayāl* (“that which is imaginary”) – a pivotal concept that informs early modern Persian lyric theory and practice particularly in India, where that which is imaginary comes to be theorized through a specific shared vocabulary of imagination’s “color” (*rang*) as it unfolds within the lyric interim. Taken together, these works’ approaches to periodization, lyric practice, and literary history reveal a robust sense of an Indo-Persian canon spanning more than seven hundred years (13th-19th centuries). They also highlight the existence – formulated in premodern terms – of an “Indian style” of Persian lyric. Having identified some of the terms, categories, and sensibilities that are salient in the early modern Persian critical tradition itself, subsequent chapters make use of these critical vocabularies in order to identify and analyze what this dissertation calls Bīdel’s lyric style of steadfast imagining.

Chapter 3 begins to examine Bīdel’s distinctive approach to time by situating him within a second lyric conversation, with Ḥazīn of Esfahan (d.1766) and Ḥāfeẓ of Shiraz (d.1390), on the idea of haste and delay. Reading these poems against each other brings to light each poet’s way of conceptualizing the flexibility or immutability of objective and subjective forms of time, a comparison that serves to highlight what precisely is different and remarkable about Bīdel’s style of time management.

Chapter 4 focuses more specifically on the unit of time that forms a cornerstone of Bīdel’s lyric style of steadfast imagining: the moment. By placing Bīdel’s concept of that which is imaginary (*khayāl*) in conversation with Ibn ‘Arabī’s concept of the *barzakh* – the intermediate realm of imagination between the human world and God’s true reality – this chapter reads a poem by Bīdel that meticulously documents the fleeting near-transcendent experience (and the ultimate failure) of an attempt to capture the moment through a practice of training the imagination through lyric attention.

Chapter 5 places Bīdel in conversation with Avicenna by analyzing the afterlife of Avicenna’s famous phoenix example in Bīdel’s lyric thought, building a case for the phoenix being one of the most expressive, elastic, and intertextually resonant metaphors in Bīdel’s oeuvre. The phoenix is at once a creature that is imagined (indeed, it is *only* imagined) and is also an imagining agent. As such, in Bīdel’s thought, the phoenix becomes a key figuration, or master metaphor, that perfectly suits both Bīdel’s articulation of rigorous, impersonal systematic ideas as well as his presentation of his individual first-personal experiences of those ideas. It is argued that Bīdel exploits the singularity, ontological murkiness, and conceptual evocativeness of Avicenna’s phoenix

example, and fashions it into one of the governing metaphors through which he articulates his own arguments about mind, self, and the status of the imagination.

The dissertation concludes by concentrating in Chapter 6 on a distinctive aspect of Bīdel’s lyric style of steadfast imagining: his incorporation of Indic (Hindu) concepts and practices into his lyric poetry. It is shown how the Indic doctrine of the endlessness of times, as well as yogic techniques of breath control and meditation, are used by Bīdel in order to experiment with his own Islamic ideas about time, self, and salvation. The chapter explores how the idea of breath control informs Bīdel’s theory of the lyric, leading to the question of how a physical practice can become translated into the text (and theory) of lyric poetry. It is suggested that Bīdel’s theory of the lyric relies on an established way of conceptualizing poetry in the classical Persian canon, where lyric is thought of as a theologically significant act of extended translation. An important lyric poem by Bīdel (“This Gathering”), which both describes and enacts practices of breath control and meditation in terms that are uncannily similar to Dārā Shikōh’s account of these practices, is read alongside two other works by Bīdel in non-lyric genres. The first is his long narrative poem *Telesm-e hayrat* [*The Enchanted World of Wonder*], in which he maps the faculties of the mind, explores the relationship between the body and the mind in Sufi spiritual practice, and showcases his key idea of training the imagination through attentive slow reflection (*ta’ammol*) by concentrating on each part of the body. The second intertext for this poem is the remarkable dream narrative given by Bīdel at the end of his autobiography (mentioned above), in which he recounts his visionary experience of truth and the subsequent loss *in imagination* of its interpretation. It is

argued that this narrative, taken together with the poem in this chapter, supplies crucial evidence about the underlying motivations behind Bīdel’s lyric theory and lyric practice.

In the chapters themselves, it is often not feasible to cite entire poems and long passages from narrative poems and prose. Since one of the arguments this dissertation advances concerns matters of unity, it seems important to have larger units of text available in their unbroken entirety. Part III comprises original translations from Bīdel’s corpus, including extended passages from two long narrative poems, selected lyric poems, sections of his autobiography, and selections from other genres (letters, quatrains, and *nekāt*, or “subtle points”). This part of the dissertation is intended to be a supplementary point of reference.

Reading Bīdel’s lyric poetry in various contexts from a variety of perspectives reveals how his lyric style of steadfast imagining traces a distinctive, phenomenologically inflected path to certainty that is just as methodical and robust as the logic-driven procedures of systematic thought. By exploring and experimenting with that which is imaginary (*khayāl*) in lyric, and training the imagination through such practices as attentive slow reflection (*ta’ammol*), Bīdel’s lyric style aims to achieve an embodied, subjectively experienced knowledge of true reality. His lyric style also records and conceptually accommodates what it is like when that aim ends in failure.

By taking lyric to be a vital source of evidence for both doctrine and experience, this dissertation shows how lyric can be no less than philosophy conducted in metaphor. This study of lyric style aims to contribute to exciting interdisciplinary conversations emerging today in the fields of religion and literature, literature and philosophy, comparative poetics, and the history of ideas in the early modern world.

Part I | Bīdel and Persian Lyric Style

Chapter 1

Persian Lyric and the Place of Exile: Introducing Bīdel of Delhi

الشعرا امرا الكلام.

Poets are the amirs of discourse.

– Khalīl (d.791), cited by Ṭāher Naṣrābādī
in *Tazkere-ye Naṣrābādī* (1670s)¹

In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs – of things silently gone out of mind and things violently destroyed, the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society.

– Wordsworth (d.1850), cited by Geoffrey Hartman
in *Criticism in the Wilderness* (1980)²

Taking as an introductory case study the very idea of India, this chapter is concerned with exploring how the analysis of early modern Persian lyric demands an especially careful parsing of the entanglement between reality and imagination. It is argued here that this entanglement must be handled delicately, with a creatively motley

¹ “*Al-shu ‘arā’ umarā’ u l-kalām:*” An Arabic aphorism attributed to the philologist Khalīl (d.791), quoted by the Persian poet Neẓamī Ganjavī in his long narrative poem *Makhzan al-Asrār* (*Treasury of Mysteries*, late 12th c.). See Neẓamī Ganjavī, *Makhzan ul asrar*, ed. Nathaniel Bland (London: Society for the Publication of Oriental Texts, 1844), 25 (line 455). This, in turn, is cited by Ṭāher Naṣrābādī in the preface to his literary-critical biographical compendium *Tazkere-ye Naṣrābādī* (1670s). See Mīrzā Moḥammad Ṭāher Naṣrābādī Eṣfahānī, *Tazkere-ye Naṣrābādī*, ed. Vaḥīd Dastgerdī (Tehrān: Chāpkhāne-ye Armaghān, 1317SH [1938CE]), 4. For a discussion of Ṭāher Naṣrābādī’s literary critical work, see Chapter 2. On the attribution of this aphorism to Khalīl, see Ramzi Baalbaki, *The Legacy of the Kitāb: Sībawayhi’s Analytical Methods within the Context of the Arabic Grammatical Theory* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 45.

² Geoffrey H. Hartman, *Criticism in the Wilderness: The Study of Literature Today* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007, 1980), xxiv and William Wordsworth, *The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, Together with a Description of the Country of the Lakes in the North of England*, ed. Henry Reed (Pittsburgh: John I. Kay & Co., 1837), 502.

set of historical, critical, and interpretive gloves. By examining a valuably illustrative conversation in lyric between three poets in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries on the subject of Iran, India, and the place of exile, this chapter shows how lyric poetry can vividly bring to light the entwined issues of geography, style, and lyric unity – all of which are subjects of intense debate throughout the early modern Persianate world. At the same time, this chapter serves as an introduction to the poet, Sufi, and philosopher Bīdel of Delhi (d.1720), whose lifetime falls between the two other early modern Persian poets treated here: Ḥazīn of Esfahan (d.1766) and Ṣā’eb of Tabriz (d.1676). All three poets evoke, challenge, subvert, and inhabit ideas of geography and exile in distinct ways, and the lyric conversation between them reveals much about their individual styles, their shared lyric world, and about how real historical worlds and the world of the imagination come to be creatively entangled.

Section 1.1 sets the scene of early modern India and Iran within the wider Persianate world to which Bīdel and his interlocutors belong, addressing the historical realities of travel, exile, patriotism, tolerance and intolerance, and geographical belonging during this period in the Islamic world. Section 1.2 sets the scene of the lyric genre itself (the ghazal), offering a survey of modern scholarship on the thorny issue of the ghazal’s unity. With these backdrops in place, the most distinctive features of content, style, and unity in Bīdel’s lyric poetry can become strikingly apparent. Section 1.3 offers a close reading of Bīdel’s response-poem (*javāb*) to an earlier *ghazal* by Ṣā’eb of Esfahan, as well as the later poet Ḥazīn’s response-poem to Bīdel’s response.³ By introducing Bīdel

³ I take the approach in this chapter of contextualizing individual Persian lyric poets through the analysis of response-poems from Paul E. Losensky’s *Welcoming Fighānī: Imitation and Poetic Individuality in the Safavid-Mughal Ghazal* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1998). See especially *ibid*, 93 for an overview of the formal requirements of the *javāb* (response poem). See

through this early modern lyric conversation, several important and interconnected of features of Bīdel’s lyric style come to light, which, taken together, can be described as an inward turn. These include his distinctive “circular” mode of lyric unity; emphasis on abstraction at the expense of the concrete; the tendency to privilege that which is imaginary; and his first-personal approach to systematic thought. Never content with articulating the objective (third-personal) literal meaning of Islamic thought, later chapters will show that Bīdel strives to *experience* doctrine through lyric practice. As Dan Zahavi puts it, “Experiences are not something that one simply has, like coins in the pocket. On the contrary, experiences have a subjective ‘feel’ to them, that is, a certain (phenomenal) quality of “what it is like” or what it “feels” like to have them.”⁴ As will be argued in Chapter 5, lyric poetry for Bīdel is the medium through which he can simultaneously articulate doctrines and ideas (the objective content of philosophy), “feel” them (examining ideas as first-personal experiences), and also reflect on this very process. These incredibly complex layers of increasingly higher-order reflection that characterize Bīdel’s phenomenologically charged uses of lyric are discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, with an emphasis on the kinds of experimentation (with both doctrine and

also: Franklin D. Lewis, “The Rise and Fall of a Refrain: The Radīf *Ātash u Āb*,” in *Reorientations: Arabic and Persian Poetry*, ed. Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, 199-226 (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1994); Franklin D. Lewis, “To Round and Rondeau the Canon: Jāmī and Fānī’s Reception of the Persian Lyrical Tradition,” in *Jāmī in Regional Contexts*, ed.s Thibaut d’Hubert and Alexandre Papas (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 463-567; Walter Feldman, “Imitatio in Ottoman Poetry: Three Ghazals of the Mid-Seventeenth Century,” *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin* 21.2 (1997), 41-58; Prashant Keshavmurthy, “Climbing with Ṣā’eb, Sinking with Ghanī: A Comparison of Two Ghazals on Poetry,” *International Journal of Persian Literature* 2 (2017), 42-56; and Riccardo Zipoli, *The Technique of the Ġawāb: Replies of Nawā’ī to Ḥāfiẓ and Ġāmī* (Venice: Cafoscarina, 1993).

⁴ Dan Zahavi, *Subjectivity and Selfhood: Investigating the First-Person Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass.: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2005), 116.

experience) that Bīdel’s lyric style makes possible.⁵ Together, these rhetorical and doctrinal features constitute what this dissertation refers to as Bīdel’s style of steadfast imagining.

But first, the study of Bīdel’s lyric style must begin with a preliminary mapping of the early modern terrain, against which the specific arc of Bīdel’s swerve can be best traced. The present chapter undertakes to contextualize Bīdel by examining how early modern Persian poets before and after him reflect upon the intertwined geographical, literary-traditional, and lyric realities of the vast Persianate *imaginaire* – in dialogue with each other, through the medium of lyric poetry itself. From this conversation between Šā’eb, Bīdel, and Ḥazīn, several important questions emerge about how to analyze complex metaphors of place, and how to evaluate individual lyric style in light of broader issues of literary value. In these ghazals, all three poets venture into a shared wilderness of metaphor, where each poet maps new meanings for geography and exile, homeland and strangeness, state of mind and sense of place. An intentionally dynamic collocation of reality and abstraction is shown to be a pivotal feature of all three poems, although the resulting lyric landscapes are quite different in each case. Section 1.3 shows how, for Bīdel, geography, exile, imagination, and lyric style are importantly interconnected, and Section 1.4 tests the preliminary conclusions of Section 1.3 against examples from three lesser known non-lyric genres in Bīdel’s oeuvre in which he allows himself to speak with uncharacteristic directness: his quatrains, letters, and “subtle points” (*nekāt*). The

⁵ Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 analyze Bīdel’s style of steadfast imagining: what it consists in, how it works, to what ends it is directed, and why it is remarkable. For a groundbreaking new study of the intertwined ideas of experience and experimentation in the context of newly emerging senses of the concept of consciousness in seventeenth-century England, see Timothy M. Harrison, *Coming To: Consciousness and Natality in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, forthcoming), especially 27-31 and 103-109.

metaliterary reflections and candid moments gathered here from these genres further serve as an introduction to Bīdel’s own ideas about his lyric craft.

The chapter concludes by suggesting that close analysis of lyric poetry, in addition to the rich range of meanings, values, and attitudes it brings to light, can also open up new avenues for approaching more general questions of style and geography. Chapter 1 thus sets the scene for the thorny question of the “Indian style” of lyric in the early modern Persianate world, the subject of Chapter 2. These two contextualizing chapters then pave the way towards a more granular examination of Bīdel’s lyric style of steadfast imagining, undertaken in Chapters 3-6.

1.1 “We Move from Garden to Garden, Like Flowing Water:” Travel and Exile in the Early Modern Islamicate World

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the early modern Persianate world spanned the regions of modern-day Iran, Central Asia, and South Asia. Given the frequent historical reality of travel, emigration, and exile in this period,⁶ it is hardly

⁶ There is extensive scholarship on the subject of mobility across the Persianate world in the early modern era. See, for instance, Masashi Haneda’s study of Iranian immigration into the Subcontinent in the Mughal period based on comprehensive analysis of the biographical dictionary *Ma’āṣir al-umarā’*: Haneda Masashi, “Emigration of Iranian Elites to India During the 16-18th Centuries,” in “L’héritage timouride: Iran – Asie centrale – Inde, XV^e–XVIII^e siècles,” ed. Maria Szuppe (special issue, *Cahiers d’Asie centrale* 3-4 [1997], 129-143). Haneda highlights the problematic application of the modern sense of the term “Iranian” as toponym and ethnonym to the many different immigrant groups leaving their homelands for a variety of reasons. See also Masashi Haneda, “India xxviii. Iranian Immigrants in India,” in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, XIII/1, 82-83 (2004). Available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/india-xxviii-iranian-immigrants-in-india> (accessed on 5 April 2019). Muzaffar Alam discusses early interactions between the Mughal and Safavid courts in “The Pursuit of Persian: Language in Mughal Politics,” *Modern Asian Studies* 32:2 (1998), 317-349 (see especially 319-322). And see also Muzaffar Alam’s and Sanjay Subrahmanyam’s study of travel and cross-cultural encounters in the early modern Persianate world: *Indo-Persian Travels in the Age of Discoveries, 1400-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), which brings to light a wide range of perspectives and worldviews through close reading of texts belonging to the *safar-nāme*, the genre of the travel narrative.

surprising that the very idea of place should loom large in the works of poets.⁷ One of the main arguments in this chapter is that the three poets considered here – Šā'eb, Bīdel, and Ḥazīn – were themselves distinctly aware of the degree to which debates surrounding style were informed by various metaphors of geography and place, metaphors that were often articulated decisively in these poets' own lyric poetry. A further claim is that close analysis of how these poets reflected imaginatively upon geography and style can also disclose what we might call a geography of their imagination.

In order to think with these poets about geography, exile, and style, and about what it could mean to recover such concepts from lyric poetry, several historical circumstances ought to be borne in mind, especially regarding travel, mobility, and exile in the early modern Persianate world. By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Persianate world of the “gunpowder empires” came under an entirely new matrix of pressures, which, in turn, generated new patterns of mobility. Finding the political and cultural climate of Mughal India to be more seasonable than Šafavid Iran, Iranian émigrés began to flock there in hope of warmer reception at courts ranging from Lahore to the Deccan. The result was the continued and deepening flow of creative minds from Šafavid territories into Mughal South Asia, the latest chapter in a long narrative of Iranian, Central Asian, and other foreign peoples migrating to the Subcontinent.⁸

⁷ The idea that exile, with its origins in historical realities, lends itself to creative refiguration, is by no means unique to the early modern Islamic world. For instance, on the figurative enrichment of the Babylonian exile during the Second Temple period, see Martien Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile: The Metaphorization of Exile in the Hebrew Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

⁸ See, for example, Aḥmad Golchīn-e Ma'ānī, *Kārvān-e Hind: dar aḥvāl va āšār-e shā'erān-e 'ašr-e Šafavī ke be Hendūstān raft-and* (Mashhad: Qods-e Ražavī, 1369SH [1990-1991CE]), “*panj*” [v] et passim, where he enumerates the various reasons motivating Iranians to emigrate to India.

This circulation of minds and ideas was not without tension. One of the principal topics of contention was the Persian lyric itself: to whom does the canon belong? Is there something distinctive about Persian poets from India? This debate finds some of its most significant expressions in early modern poetry. Drawing on the shared avian vocabulary for the comparative evaluation of lyric merit, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d.1273), himself no stranger to exile,⁹ opens a quatrain with the following line: “*Bolbol āmad be bāgh o rastīm ze zāgh*” (“The nightingale entered the garden, and we were saved from the crows”), invoking the conventional contrast between the crow, *zāgh*, the archetypal gloomy, cacophonous tenant of vacant and withered autumnal gardens, and the nightingale, *bolbul*, that famously melodious lead singer of the Persian *ghazal* whose song brings the garden back to life and marks the return of verdant spring and creative flourishing.¹⁰ The concluding line of the quatrain, “*Chūn āb-e ravān ravīm az bāgh be bāgh*” (“We move from garden to garden, like flowing water”)¹¹, touches upon a less

⁹ Rūmī’s family left their homeland of Khorāsān and resettled in Anatolia around the beginning of the thirteenth century. For a detailed account of their westward movements and a critical reappraisal of the role played by the Mongol invasions in Rūmī’s father’s decision to leave Balkh, see Franklin D. Lewis, *Rumi Past and Present, East and West: The Life, Teachings, and Poetry of Jalāl al-Dīn Rumi* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2008, 2000), 55-82.

¹⁰ On the nightingale in Persian literature, see, for example, Hūšang A‘lam and Jerome Clinton “*Bolbol*, nightingale,” in the *Encyclopædia Iranica*, IV/3-4, 336-338 (1989). It is noted here that the *bolbol* is a migratory bird (*mohājer*) whose homeland is Iran, and that it returns “to its Iranian habitat, mating, and nesting between late April and June, which coincides with the blooming of roses” – the rose being the nightingale’s beloved about whom it sings its plaintive, beautiful song. The topos of the melancholy crow is found in the Arabic tradition as well: the cry of the *ghurāb al-bayn*, “raven of separation,” signals the departure of the beloved’s tribe from their campsite. On the migration of this topos from Arabic poetry into the Persian tradition, see Ali-Ashghar Seyed-Gohrab, “Manūchihīr’s The Raven of Separation: Arabic Poetic Topoi and the Persian Courtly Tradition,” *Iran Namaq* 2.3 (2017), xiv-xxxvi.

¹¹ Jalāl al-Dīn Moḥammad Balkhī Rūmī. *Kolleyyāt-e Shams*, ed. Badī‘ al-Zamān Forūzānfar (Tehrān: Mo’assase-ye Maṭbū‘ātī Amīr Kabīr, 1336SH [1957-1966CE]), 1407. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

frequently emphasized feature of these avian stock characters of the Persian lyric: namely, that nightingales are migratory birds, and move from place to place according to exigencies of seasonal change.¹² As poets moved throughout the Persianate world of the Near East and South Asia, debates about which poets were parrots and which were crows continued to grow throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The political climate of the early modern period similarly ensured the continuous circulation of intellectual elites between Šafavid Iran and Mughal India, a circumstance that contributed to the atmosphere of intense debate that characterized this period. Arguments revolved, among other things, around the problem of what could constitute acceptable innovation – in poetry, politics, religion, and language alike. A letter composed by the Mughal Emperor Awrangzēb (1618-1707) is a fascinating example of one kind of seventeenth-century attitude toward innovation in religion and politics. He chastises his son, Shāh ‘Ālam, whose celebration of the Iranian New Year, Nowrūz, has offended Awrangzēb’s sense of what is properly Islamic (although his Mughal predecessors themselves had celebrated Nourūz and borrowed much from the non-Islamic Iranian tradition). Note especially Awrangzēb’s excoriation of Iranians in

¹² The garden has long been a site of “permanent culture” in the Persian lyric, home to the melodic nightingale in love with the rose. For the significance and context of references to birds and gardens in early Persian poetry, see Charles-Henri de Fouchécour, *La Description de la Nature dans la Poésie Lyrique Persane du XI^e Siècle: Inventaire et analyse des thèmes* (Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1969). On gardens, see *ibid*, 37 et passim; for various species of birds, see *ibid*, 138 et passim. Other studies of the garden in Persian poetry include, *inter multa alia*, William H. Hanaway Jr., “Paradise on Earth: The Terrestrial Garden in Persian Literature,” in *The Islamic Garden*, ed. Elisabeth B. MacDougall and Richard Ettinghausen (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, 1976); Alessandro Bausani, “La Rappresentazione della Natura nel Poeta Persiano Ḥāfīz,” in *Oriente Moderno* 23:1 (1943), 28-39; and Julie Scott Meisami, “Allegorical Gardens in the Persian Poetic Tradition: Nezami, Rumi, Hafez,” *IJMES* 17.2 (1985), 229-260.

general, for the unwelcome innovations (*bed'at*) they have (re-)introduced into religion – an interesting conviction, given the fact that Awrangzēb cites a verse from *Conference of the Birds* (*Manteq al-ṭayr*) by Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār (d.1221) of Nīshāpūr (in Iran) in the same letter to support his reprimands, and generally throughout his letters has frequent recourse to the classical Persian literary tradition:¹³

ظاهر شد که جشن نوروز امسال که مردم ایرانی غول بیابانی می‌کنند به تکلف کرده بودند.
عقائد خود به فضل الهی درست دارند و این بدعت تازه از که آموخته‌اند؟

It has been brought to [my] attention that this year's Nourūz [Iranian New Year] celebration – which is observed by those demons of the desert, the [commoners among the] Iranian people – took place [under Shāh 'Ālam's orders] with great ceremony. He [Shāh 'Ālam] has [usually] kept his beliefs strong through divine bounty; from whom, therefore, has he learned to practice this innovation [*bed'at*] anew [*tāze*]?

Awrangzēb's pairing of “innovation” (*bed'at*) with the adverb “anew” (*tāze*) is by no means idiosyncratic. Indeed, the notion that novelty and “freshness” (*tāzegī*, from *tāze*, “fresh”) could characterize innovations in politics, religion, and literature alike is, arguably, one of the most defining ideas of the era. If Awrangzēb's views are representative of a conservative position within this debate, a very different view of innovation in the eighteenth century is held, for example, by the philologist and literary critic Serāj al-Dīn Khān-e Ārzū (1688-1756), who vigorously defends the “fresh” style of poetry (*tāze-gū'ī*) and linguistic innovations (*taṣarrofāt*, another meaning of which term is “possession, seizure, occupation”) that can characterize Indian Persian usage

¹³“*Zāher shod ke jashn-e Nowrūz-e emsāl ke mardom-e Īrānī ghūl-e beyābānī mī-konand be takallof karde būdand. 'Aqā'ed-e khod be faẓl-e elāhī dorost dārand va īn bed'at[-e] tāze az ke āmūkhte-and?*” See Awrangzēb, Emperor of Hindustan, *Raqā'em-e karā'em* (*Letters*), ed. S. Azizuddin Husain (Delhi: Edāre-ye Adabiyāt-e Dellī, 1990), 59-60.

generally.¹⁴ These debates were necessarily connected with a variety of critical perspectives on newness, cultural difference, and aesthetic sensibility, and while such concerns are certainly present prior to the early modern period, it is in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that these disputations found their pivot around a central point: the matter of “*sabk-e Hendī*,” or the “Indian style” of Persian poetry (discussed in depth in Chapter 2), an issue that has fueled a cottage industry of scholarship in the modern period as well. But long before modern scholarship became concerned with the validity and efficacy of terminology like *sabk-e Hendī*, these questions were being heatedly debated in the Persianate world of the eighteenth century, when two poets in particular, Ḥazīn and Bīdel, came to be held up as a binary of opposing points, a polarity of style and sensibility. Bīdel represents the apex (or, for some, the nadir) of the Indian style, while Ḥazīn, the mordant expatriate forced into a life of exile in India, is ever the voice of defiant disapproval. Behind this binary of style is another seemingly obvious but in fact just as slippery geographical binary: “Iranian” and “Indian.” Both Iran and Hendūstān (South Asia) were part of the Persianate world, the *‘ajam*, and yet on both sides differences were felt and vocally articulated. The marking of territory in these debates over style, then, is inextricably linked to notions of geographically bounded canons (who

¹⁴ For a thorough analysis of Ārzū’s views, see Prashant Keshavmurthy, “Kān-e Ārezu, Serāj-al-din ‘Ali” in the *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition (New York, 1996-). Available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kan-e-arezu> (accessed on 6 April 2019). For Ārzū in his late early modern intellectual context, see especially Prashant Keshavmurthy, *Persian Authorship and Canonicity in Late Mughal Delhi: Building an Ark* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 127-150; Muzaffar Alam, “The Culture and Politics of Persian in Pre-Colonial Hindustan,” in *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, ed. Sheldon Pollock, 131-198 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); and Arthur Dudley, “Khān-e Ārzū’s Middle Way for Poetic Authority in Eighteenth-Century Indo-Persian,” *Journal of Persianate Studies* 9.1 (2016), 60-82.

gets to use them, and how),¹⁵ to real geography, and – just as, if not more importantly – to imagined geographies. This chapter’s point of entry into understanding these territorial disputes over style is metaphor: specifically, metaphor in lyric poetry.

In treating of these interconnected matters of style, geography, literary criticism, and poetics, the overarching aim is to let the poets speak for themselves – a task that can only be accomplished through close reading. This approach is guided first and foremost by the desire to see how, for these poets in their time, metaphor could illuminate geography, rather than the other way around.

1.2 The Matter of Unity in the Persian *Ghazal*

One of the looming issues that casts a shadow across the study of early modern Persian lyric poetry is the ineradicable “unity problem.” Since the unit of analysis in this chapter’s presentation of three poets in conversation is the poem as a whole, a discursus on the matter of the unity in the ghazal is required. The point of the following survey is not to stake out and defend a general position in this overcrowded and hotly contested sub-field; rather, the following (by no means complete) overview of various positions is rehearsed here in order clarify the critical assumption of this dissertation that lyric unity, like lyric style, can be at once indebted to tradition, and highly variable among individual poets. Ultimately, the aim is to situate Bīdel’s distinctive strategies for achieving lyric unity within his early modern context, in order to best appreciate how his specific kind of

¹⁵ On this, see Prashant Keshavmurthy’s innovative study of canonicity and poetic authority in the later Mughal period, *Persian Authorship and Canonicity in Late Mughal Delhi: Building an Ark*, especially the discussion of the philologist and literary critic Serāj al-Dīn ‘Alī Khān-e Ārzū (d.1756) and his historicization of literary language in the context of eighteenth-century debates surrounding the Persian canon (ibid, 127-144).

unity informs his individual lyric style.

There are, roughly speaking, two basic polarities of scholarly opinion. On one side, there are those who hold that the ghazal has no unity *sensu stricto*, and take the maximal unit of analyzable poetic meaning to be the single couplet.¹⁶ Others disagree, maintaining that the ghazal in fact *can* possess unity in one form or another (often with “unity” taken to be a form of coherence that requires further elucidation).¹⁷ The lyric poetry of Ḥāfeẓ has borne the brunt of much academic dispute on this subject – in particular, his famous poem, “If That Turk From Shiraz Should Steal My Heart” (“*Agar ān tork-e Shīrāzī be-dast ārad del-e mā rā*”).¹⁸ The basic question, which is often posed

¹⁶ Regarding the Persian *ghazal*, a typical view of this kind is that held by Alessandro Bausani: “In classical *ghazal* each verse forms a closed unit, only slightly interconnected with the others. Some modern scholars, to explain this, have invoked the “psychology of depth” to show that there is unity, but an *unconscious* one, in the *ghazal*. However this may be, external incongruity would seem to be a real rule in classic Persian poetry. We are in the presence of a bunch of motifs only lightly tied together.” Alessandro Bausani, “*Ghazal*. ii: In Persian Poetry,” in the *Encyclopædia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Available online at http://dx.doi.org.proxy.uchicago.edu/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0232 (accessed on 6 April 2019).

¹⁷ For instance, according to Ehsan Yarshater, “In earlier *ghazals*, thematic unity is often observed throughout the poem. Even in Sa‘dī’s and Rumi’s *ghazals* (13th century) this unity of subject, or at least the unity of mood, is often preserved. With Hafez (circa 1320-1389), however, multiplicity of themes becomes prevalent (cf. Arberry, pp. 31-32). In the post-Hafezian era, this tendency became even more prevalent and many *ghazals* were composed with a number of separate poetic strokes, each containing a different idea.” See Ehsan Yarshater, “*Ghazal* ii: Characteristics and Conventions,” in the *Encyclopædia Iranica* (2006). the *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2016. Available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ghazal-2> (accessed 15 March 2019). And Julie Scott Meisami further cautions against the tendency to generalize: “We must derive our notions of “unity” from the poems themselves, and not from either the critics’ uninterpreted statements or from external, Western criteria.” *Structure and Meaning in Arabic and Persian Poetry: Orient Pearls* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 59-60.

¹⁸ See, for instance, Arberry’s critique of William Jones’s translation of this poem and its metapoetic implications, which concludes that “Hafez’s technique is fundamentally thematic.... The lyric must be appreciated as a mosaic of sounds and symbols. It is in this mosaic that artistry and unity may be found.” A.J. Arberry, “Orient Pearls at Random Strung,” in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 11:4 (1946), 704-705. Gernot Windfuhr’s interpretation finds hidden riddles and chronograms throughout Ḥāfeẓ’s *Tork-e shīrāzī* poem, reading it as a coded satire on political instability in fourteenth-century Shiraz. Windfuhr asserts that what

simultaneously of this specific poem and somehow also of the premodern Persian ghazal more generally and even the “Oriental” lyric globally, usually runs thus: in what way can a sequence of couplets cohere, if at all, into a lyric-sized unit of poetic meaning?

Two central metaphors that have shaped critical thought on this matter have enjoyed a remarkably long half-life: “pearls,” updated in the early twentieth century to “atoms,”¹⁹ have influenced (perhaps even over-influenced) various arguments for the existence of *minima naturalia* in the lyric (couplets) and their potential (or lack thereof) for being strung together or molecularly fused. This polarizing question of unity seems to come with great pressure to arrive at conclusions that claim to be either final and

matters is “true coherence...rather than the fashionable unity searched for and superimposed more often than not by external criteria.” Gernot Windfuhr, “Spelling the Mystery of Time,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 110:3 (1990), 415. G.M. Wickens begins his reading of the Ḥāfez poem with an acknowledgement of Arberry’s thematic analysis, but concludes that while some sense of unity can be determined in this way, “the Western student...cannot but continue to be conscious of a vital lack of some quality to which he is instinctively accustomed in his own literature.” G.M. Wickens, “The Persian Conception of Artistic Unity in Poetry and Its Implications in Other Fields,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 14:2 (1952), 239. In another study, Wickens finds each word of the poem to be full of double and triple meanings and allusions, although Mary Boyce has challenged this interpretation of Ḥāfez’s poem as bursting with orthographically dependent polysemy. As Boyce notes, Ḥāfez would have been known to his audience not visually, through the silent individual perusal of a written text, but aurally (“...Persian poetry is recited and sung, rather than read; and many illiterate Persians have learnt much poetry...by ear alone”). G.M. Wickens, “An Analysis of Primary and Secondary Significations in the Third Ghazal of Hafiz”. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 14:3 (1952), 627-638 and Mary Boyce, “A Novel Interpretation of Hafiz,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 15:2 (1953), 280. Michael Hillman’s study of this poem stresses the musical qualities of the Ḥāfezian lyric, arguing that while this poem lacks other forms of unity, it is held together by its song-like attributes. Michael Hillman, “Hafez’s *Turk of Shiraz* Again,” *Iranian Studies* 8:3 (1975), 164-182, and see also his monograph on unity in Ḥāfez’s poems: Michael Hillman, *Unity in the Ghazals of Hafez* (Minneapolis and Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1976).

¹⁹ In a footnote in his book devoted to the subject of poetic unity in the Arabic tradition, Geert van Gelder provides a microhistory of “molecular” terminology in scholarship on this subject, locating the first such usage in a 1933 study by Tadeusz Kowalski. Geert Jan van Gelder, *Beyond the Line: Classical Arabic Literary Critics on the Coherence and Unity of the Poem* (Leiden: Brill, 1982), 14.

absolute, self-evidently simple, and/or universalizable across the incredibly diverse world of the Arabic, Persian, Ottoman, and Urdu lyric.

Engaging the question of lyric unity on this broadest of levels frequently leads to a retrofitting fallacy. For instance, pointing to the undeniable musical and oral-performative aspects of the *ghazal*, both in Hāfez’s time and, centuries later in the Urdu lyric tradition with its practice of public recitation at *mushā’iras* (social gatherings at which poetry was performed, usually with emphasis on individual couplets instead of whole poems), some scholars have argued that the *ghazal* possesses no unity in principle.²⁰ It is not the aim here to provide a definitive answer to the question of whether or not there can be unity in the *ghazal tout court*, for the question itself seems to be hopelessly general. Instead of taking aim at the lyric genre of the Islamic world as such, the present study is guided by Franklin D. Lewis’s words of caution:

...the importance of the performance milieu has been stressed by a number of commentators on the Urdu *ghazal*, where the recitation tradition is still alive...since poems are sung, there is no need for them to be unified. In fact, goes one argument, they are not at all unified.²¹

Lewis argues that the validity of such reasoning, and especially of the extension of this

²⁰ See, for example, Ralph Russell in “The Pursuit of the Urdu Ghazal,” where he claims that “I would most definitely assert that the typical ghazal has no unity of content.” Ralph Russell, “The Pursuit of the Urdu Ghazal,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 29:1 (1969), 107-124. See also Frances Pritchett, “Orient Pearls Unstrung: The Quest for Unity in the Ghazal,” *Edebiyāt* 4 (1993), 119-135. C.M. Naim is less categorical, restricting his claims to the Urdu lyric and the *mushā’ira* tradition: “Fundamentally, each couplet in a *ghazal* is a distinct and organic unit of thought, not necessarily linked in any way to the other couplets except in meter and rhyme.” C.M. Naim, “The Ghazal Itself,” in *Urdu Texts and Contexts: The Selected Essays of C.M. Naim* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), 79. Naim also notes that “the basic unit of poetry in a ghazal is a couplet...two lines which are grammatically and, more often than not, also thematically independent of the other couplets in that ghazal (C.M. Naim, “Poet-Audience Interaction,” *ibid*, 115).

²¹ Franklin D. Lewis, *Reading, Writing, and Recitation: Sanā’ī and the Origins of the Persian Ghazal* (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1995), 29-30. For a thorough history and commentary upon existing scholarship on the unity-of-the-*ghazal* problem, see *ibid*, 14 et passim.

argument for lack of unity in the Urdu *ghazal* across many centuries to the classical Persian tradition, is “doubtful,” and suggests instead that “it seems much more likely that different organization patterns were perceived by the audience/reader in different genres of poems (narrative, thematic, lexical, etc.).”²² Furthermore, Lewis emphasizes that

...it is important to remember that the ghazal was not always the *Ghazal*; that is to say that it was in a constant state of evolution and we should not always expect it to conform nicely to the description given in the rhetorical manuals. It seems necessary to me, at least in the period up to Ḥāfeẓ, to deconstruct the notion of ghazal and to recognize that different topoi with various and perhaps mutually exclusive semiotic horizons should be considered as separate genres ... which only gradually grew to share a common formal structure. The semiotic expectations which each genre or separate topos generated may help us to understand how one topos bleeds into the next to create a complex spectrum of meaning in those poems which, lacking a discernible narrative structure, appear notoriously atomistic.²³

Shamsur Rahman Faruqi’s study of the Indo-Persian lyric cites Pritchett and Naim, and seems to arrive at similar conclusions for the Indo-Persian lyric as well;²⁴ yet elsewhere in his essay, a wider view is also advanced: Faruqi notes, albeit with caveats, that the cerebral quality of the typical *sabk-e Hendī* lyric poem allows for it to “[thrive] best under rigorous and vigorous reading, for its driving force [is] the intellectual, and not the emotional imagination,”²⁵ noting further that this kind of poetry is in fact not best suited for Sufi recitation and singing. For reasons that are elaborated here in subsequent chapters, Bīdel’s intense lyric density certainly can be said to exemplify this “cerebral

²² Ibid, 30.

²³ Ibid, 35-36.

²⁴ Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, “A Stranger in the City: The Poetics of *Sabk-e Hindi*,” *Annual of Urdu Studies* 19 (2004), 20.

²⁵ Ibid, 49.

quality:” it bears all the marks of belonging to a culture of lyric poetry which would have been absorbed through individual silent reading rather than through music and song at social gatherings.²⁶

Brian Quayle Silver’s study of Ghālib’s Urdu ghazals, which is guided by close reading of individual poems, nevertheless maintains that characterizing Ghālib’s *ghazals* as possessing a “nuclear structure” still has merit: the compressed space of couplet forces what he calls a dynamic relationship upon all constituent parts. Moreover, various topoi of the ghazal must be examined not in isolation, but in relationship to each other – something Silver calls “connotative analysis,” leading, ideally, to a “connotative concordance” of Ghālib’s verse. Yet this “atomistic” approach is balanced out by Silver’s close readings of three of Ghālib’s most famous *ghazals* as whole poems, which demonstrates that they *do* possess unity – albeit a different kind of unity in each poem. Silver advocates for critical attention to what he calls the ghazal’s dynamic forces: as he says of one poem, “This ghazal has a definite, internally logical continuity...created by a variety of techniques,”²⁷ and only close reading can expose what those various kinds of internal logic and unity are, and in what the poet’s individual style consists.

This approach has been put into practice for the early modern Persian lyric by Paul E. Losensky in his study of the poet Bābā Feghānī (15th/16th centuries):

²⁶ Chapter 6 takes up this issue directly, analyzing a poem by Bīdel in which he meditates on the idea of a social gathering of one, and on the lyric practice of imagination which makes such a paradoxical solitary “gathering” possible. And as Chapter 5 argues, an early modern Persian lyric poem that is “cerebral” and “difficult” need not thereby be divested of “emotional imagination.” Like the English Metaphysicals, lyric poets of the “Indian style” masterfully fuse together the work of idea and affect.

²⁷ Brian Quayle Silver, *The Noble Science of the Ghazal: The Urdu Poetry of Mirzā Ghālib* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 2015), 202.

The basic unit of Fighānī's literary style is the *ghazal*. Individual verses are sufficient to identify and exemplify stylistic features, but their rhetorical purposes and artistic effect are usually apparent only in their full poetic context. This is not a strong claim for the *ghazal*'s artistic unity – poets may enact one role with dramatic consistency throughout a poem or may switch freely between roles, relying on other sorts of verbal and imagistic patterning to link the verses. In either case, the performance develops over the course of the entire poem. ...any verse is affected by what comes before and after it, however independent it may seem.²⁸

Losensky also notes that “the many sorts of unity that have been ascribed to the ghazal suggests that this is an area in which the poet exercised a great deal of personal choice and that the arrangements of verses may be of great help in defining a poet's particular approach to the tradition.”²⁹ His close readings of Feghānī's ghazals, and later poets' responses to them, reveal the kind of care Feghānī took in composing his poems *as poems*, and the degree to which this was central to the establishment – and perception by later poets – of his unique poetic voice.

Citing both Al-Jurjānī and Rosamund Tuve, Julie Scott Meisami offers a salutary reminder that, when dealing with the Persian and Arabic lyric, the centrality of the work of metaphor (*este 'āre*) cannot be overstated: metaphors are not mere ornaments, filigree upon an already discernible surface of poetic meaning; rather, metaphor plays a constitutive role in the creation of meaning, and, as such, is a form of thought that is rigorous and is capable of advancing claims and arguments:³⁰

One thing that is lacking in most modern discussions of *isti 'āra* [metaphor] is an analysis of metaphor (as of imagery in general) in terms of function, as well as of its use as a unifying technique. It seems clear that poets did not deploy their

²⁸ Paul E. Losensky, *Welcoming Fighānī*, 93.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Julie Scott Meisami, *Structure and Meaning in Arabic and Persian Poetry: Orient Pearls* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 342.

metaphors, or images, at random, but in relation to the larger poem (and, moreover, that critics were well aware of this), and that, as we have indeed seen, metaphors or images were often extended beyond the single line. Several devices in particular have obvious structural as well as semantic potential: the use of linked or functionally related images to create image-clusters throughout a poem.³¹

This central role of metaphor in the way whole poems work becomes especially prominent in the early modern period. As Natalia Prigarina argues in her book on the early modern “Indian style” of Persian verse, its defining quality lies in semantic complexity, or what can be called *semantic stacking*:

The Indian style strives for outward simplification, brevity, aphoristic conciseness, and the bringing-down-to-earth of lofty poetic lexica. However, old forms and symbols remain untouched, and therefore all these attempts at “simplification” and laconic expression lead in the end to increased structural complexity, stronger suggestiveness in the text, and a larger role played by the subtext. These in turn influence the expansion of the territory of meaning in a single *bayt* [couplet], the smallest unit of poetic speech in Persian poetry. Along with this comes the incredible capacity of the poetic image for containing multiple meanings; this is bolstered even more by the poets’ constant preoccupation with creating new forms, themes, and contexts.³²

Over the last two centuries, scholarly wrangling over this issue of unity in the *ghazal* has burgeoned into a phenomenon in its own right. As Meisami argues, academic preoccupation with “unity” has tended to stem from the fact that Western scholars are not

³¹ Ibid, 323.

³² «Индийский стиль стремится к внешнему упрощению стилистической манеры, краткости, афористичности, снижению высокой поэтической лексики. Однако неприкосновенными остаются старые образность и символика, поэтому все попытки «упрощения», стремление к лаконизму и поиски выразительности на этом пути в конечном счете выливаются в усложнение структуры, усиление суггестивности текста и увеличение роли подтекста и сказываются в возрастающей образной и смысловой нагрузке пространства бейта – единицы поэтической речи в персидской поэзии. Этим достигается необычная емкость и многозначность поэтического образа, усиливающаяся постоянно проявляемой авторами заботой о создании новых образов, новых поэтических тем и сюжетов.» Natalia Prigarina, *Индийский стиль и его место в персидской литературе: вопросы поэтики* [The Indian Style and its Place in Persian Literature: Questions of Poetics] (Moscow: Izdatel'skaia firma “Vostochnaia literatura” (RAN), 1999), 10.

well enough attuned to the many possible varieties of poetic unity in non-European lyric traditions:

Sustained personification and extended metaphor provide obvious means of unifying poems or parts of poems. But there are many poems in which the images employed seem diffuse, unrelated, fragmentary, or in which the poet resorts to that bane of Orientalists, the use of mixed metaphors. The appearance of fragmentation, however, is often only that, and the impression results largely from the failure to consider the function of imagery in the broader context of the poem.³³

Elsewhere throughout her works, Meisami has demonstrated the importance of grounding any large-scale claims about the poetry in close reading. For instance, her analysis of a single ode by Nāṣer-e Khosrow shows that critical awareness of the poet's individual cosmological orientation is a basic requirement for understanding his full range of possible meanings and varieties of poetic unity. Careful analysis of the poem reveals that Ismā'īlī numerology serves as an organizing principle for Nāṣer-e Khosrow both on cosmic and poetic scales alike. Such organizing principles, Meisami stresses, "encompass the whole poem and [are] not merely its 'ideas' or thematic content."³⁴

This central point, that imaginative literature – including lyric poetry – is founded on a special kind of thought (and moreover, a rigorous form of thought worthy of specialized critical study) has been made by Angus Fletcher, who outlines the discipline of "noetics" – a systematic investigation of "thinking in literature" that is distinct from the kind of thought most often examined in the history of ideas.³⁵ If poetics is chiefly concerned with how a work is made, with strategies deployed by the poet as he fashions

³³ Meisami, *Structure and Meaning in Arabic and Persian Poetry*, 341.

³⁴ Julie Scott Meisami, "Symbolic Structure in a Poem by Nāṣir-i Khusrau," *Iran* 31 (1993), 103.

³⁵ Angus Fletcher, *Colors of the Mind: Conjectures on Thinking in Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 3-5.

his poem in such a way that it coheres poetically – the study of literary hardware, as it were – noetics reveals the software view, being concerned with how “the use of ideas, thoughts, reflections, memories, judgements, intuitions, and visions are involved in the fundamental process of making the poem.”³⁶ Central to this critical enterprise is the widening of the notion of “thought” beyond strictly analytical models, and taking seriously the vitality of “incomplete, inconsistent, nonsystematic thinking” – kinds of thinking that are often discarded by the philosopher, but elevated by the poet.³⁷ Poetic thinking, Fletcher argues, can be of very high order, for its claims and meanings are produced primarily by metaphor.³⁸

For the purposes of this dissertation, which is concerned with the recovery of one early modern lyric poet’s style, it is expedient to bracket the modern scholarly quest for an absolute verdict in the matter of lyric unity in the entire premodern Islamic world. Such global conclusions may or may not be supportable (or even ultimately all that helpful) when several lyric traditions – Arabic, Persian, Ottoman, Urdu, each with its own long, complex history – are taken all together as one. Instead, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that, in the traditions of the non-European lyric, there was both historical

³⁶ Ibid, 4.

³⁷ For examples of various styles of coherence accompanying unique ways of poetic thinking, see Helen Vendler, *Poets Thinking: Pope, Dickinson, Whitman, Yeats* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004).

³⁸ Paul Ricœur locates the work of metaphor in its ability to fundamentally redescribe reality by displacing and extending meaning in a way that cannot be achieved through literal description. See Paul Ricœur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multidisciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. Robert Czerny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), especially 129-140.

scope and theoretical possibility for greater or lesser degrees of lyric unity, depending upon the specific tradition, time, and place in question – and that a poet’s style consists partly in their individual approach to strategies of unity. And finally, as this chapter shows, assertions about poetic unity are best achieved on a poet-by-poet – or even poem-by-poem – basis. As even this survey of scholarship reveals, premodern Persian poets approach the issue of lyric coherence and unity in a wide variety of ways. Some poems are structured according to the demands of sung musical performance; others take the form of dialogue, between a Sufi master and his disciple, or between a lover and beloved; still others take the form of vignette, recalling the events of last night (e.g., what happened in the wine tavern). By the later early modern period, many poets, including Bīdel, move away from these classical forms of lyric unity, and turn to more idiosyncratic and complex models of coherence.

The strategy for achieving unity that most significantly informs Bīdel’s lyric style is the presence in many poems of an emphatic circularity, or ring structure, wherein the first and last lines are bound together in a non-trivial way by a key word, concept, image, or even an alliterative or paronomastic echo.³⁹ This symmetry across beginnings and ends definitively shapes the whole poem. Such a circular structure scuppers all terminally linear readings of the poem, since the end, which gestures back towards the beginning and thus imposes a requirement of re-reading, applies repeated, non-linear interpretive pressure to the middle lines and to the poem as a whole. Thus, the careful re-reading entailed by the circular structure in turn demands a doubling, sometimes tripling, of time

³⁹ For an example of a poem by Bīdel fitting this description, and for a discussion of this lyric ring structure, see Chapter 6.

spent re-interpreting the poem as the reader negotiates their way into the complex hermeneutic feedback loop between part and whole, beginning and end. Bīdel's response poem in the following section clearly exemplifies Bīdel's circular variety of lyric unity: the word "hem" (*dāman*), which is repeated in the first and last lines, extends across the whole poem, and becomes a vital clue to the poem's interpretation.

1.3 Variations on a Theme of Exile: Bīdel and Ḥazīn Respond to Šā'eb

Ambiguous geography has long been a mainstay of Persian poetry, as places of various kinds were made to carry many different types of significance, depending on the context and particular poetic perspective. For instance, in Ferdowsī's *Shāhnāme* (1010), Iran and Turan (and the frequently blurred borders between them) are, in a sense, among the main dramatis personae of the epic.⁴⁰ The following *ghazal* by Šā'eb is replete with geographical vocabulary, and the metaphorical work done by this vocabulary hinges on the interplay between real and imagined geographies. This poem and the two responses to it by Bīdel and Ḥazīn form a felicitous triad, since both later poets (in very different ways) draw upon Šā'eb's lexicon of exile, and, as we shall see, Ḥazīn has in mind both Šā'eb's original poem and Bīdel's response when composing his own.

⁴⁰ For analyses of the complex interaction between power, politics, and history in Ferdowsī's *Shāhnāme*, see, for example, Dick Davis, *Epic and Sedition: The Case of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh* (New York: Mage Publishers, 2006), xix-xxiii, 71-96, and 171-184; and see also Julie Scott Meisami, "The Past in Service of the Present: Two Views of History in Medieval Persia," *Poetics Today* 14.2 (1993), 247-275.

The meter is *ramal*,⁴¹ and the *radīf* (refrain) is the rather unusual “*madad-ī*” (the exclamatory call for “help”), with an appropriately plangent *qāfeye* (rhyme) of “-ān.”⁴²

The three poems are reproduced here in their entirety.⁴³ Šā’eb:

- 1 *mī-gazad rāhat-am ay khār-e moghaylān madad-ī*
*pāy-am az dast shod ay Kheẓr-e beyābān madad-ī*⁴⁴

می‌گزد راحتم ای خار مغیلان مددی
پایم از دست شد ای خضر بیابان مددی

Arabian thorns
gnaw at my comfort – help!
My footsteps falter.
Kheẓr of the desert – help!

- 2 *tā be kay kh”āb-e gerān panbe nehad dar gūsham*

⁴¹ The full meter is *ramal-e moṣamman-e sālem al-ṣadr va makhbūn al-ḥashv va l-zarb va maḥzūf al-zarb*: – ˘ – – | ˘ ˘ – – | ˘ ˘ – – | ˘ – (left to right).

⁴² As would be expected in formal response poems, all three *ghazals* share a meter, *radīf*, and *qāfeye*. On the formal requirements of the *javāb*, see Losensky, *Welcoming Fighānī*, 107 et passim.

⁴³ In subsequent chapters, spatial constraints do not permit the inclusion of whole poems in their original Persian, transliteration, and translation in the main text of the dissertation. In order to maintain this study’s commitment to treating Bīdel’s works as wholes whenever possible, some poems and passages that are referred to but not cited in their entirety in Parts I and II are reproduced in full in Part III: Translations. For lyric poems, see T2: Selected Lyric Poems by Bīdel. Similarly, T1: Selections from *The Four Elements: An Autobiography* provides continuous passages from Bīdel’s *Chahār ‘onṣor*, his prosimetrum autobiography. T3: Selections from Bīdel’s Long Narrative Poems contains continuous excerpts from two of Bīdel’s *maṣnavīs* (long narrative poems): *Mount Sinai of Enlightenment (Ṭūr-e ma’refat)* and *The Enchanted World of Wonder (Ṭelesm-e ḥayrat)*. And finally, T4: Bīdel’s Subtle Points (*Nekāt*), Letters, and Quatrains offers a selection of whole quatrains, letters, and “subtle points” from Bīdel’s corpus, several of which are discussed in the final section of the present chapter (Section 1.4). The translations here and throughout this dissertation hew as closely as possible to the meaning(s) of the original while at the same time attempting to translate them *as poems*, and are not intended to be rigidly literal cribs. Sometimes this involves blending two or meanings into an analogously polysemic English phrase, or drawing on the rhetorical resources of English in order to accentuate a similar, but not identical, rhetorical maneuver in Persian. Whenever possible, these complexities, translation choices, and alternative readings are unfolded in the course of the analysis.

⁴⁴ Moḥammad ‘Alī Šā’eb Tabrīzī, *Dīvān-e Šā’eb-e Tabrīzī*, ed. Moḥammad Qahremān (Tehrān: Chāpkhāne-ye Sherkat-e Enteshārāt-e Adabī va Farhangī, 1985), VI:3319.

ay navā-ye jaras-e selsele-jonbān madad-ī

تا به کی خواب گران پنبه نهد در گوشم
ای نوای جرس سلسله‌جنیان مددی

How long will deep slumber
caulk my ears?
Caravan bell, tolling
the signal for departure – help!

3 *dāne-am khāl-e rokh-e khāk shod az sūkhtegī
che gereh gashte-ī ey abr-e bahārān madad-ī*

دانه‌ام خال رخ خاک شد از سوختگی
چه گره گشته‌ای ای ابر بهاران مددی

Burning, my seed became
a black mark
of beauty on dust's cheek.
What a knot you've become;
Heavy clouds of springtime – help!

4 *chand ḥanẓal ze par-e kh^vīsh khorad tūṭe-ye man
ay be shīrīn-sokhanī chūn shakarestān madad-ī*

چند حنظل ز پر خویش خورد طوطی من
ای به شیرین‌سخنی چون شکرستان مددی

How long must my parrot
subsist on bitter fruit?
With speech as sweet
as sugarcane fields – help!

5 *gol-e khemyāze be ṣad rang bar āmad ze khomār
che forū rafte-ī ay sāqī-ye dowrān madad-ī*

گل خمیازه به صد رنگ بر آمد ز خمار
چه فرو رفته‌ای ای ساقی دوران مددی

The yawning rose rises
from its intoxicated daze
in countless colors.
Why have you collapsed?
Cupbearer of time:
cure me – help!

- 6 *dīgar az bahr-e che rūz-ast havā-dārī-ye to
del-e man tang shod ay chāk-e garībān madad-ī*

دیگر از بهر چه روز است هواداری تو
دل من تنگ شد ای چاک گریبان مددی

How long will your concern
wait to reveal itself?
My heart is bursting with constraint;
torn-open collar – help!

- 7 *cheshm-e dāgh-am be tah-e panba ze gham gasht sefīd
na ze almās shod o na ze namak-dān madad-ī*

چشم داغم به ته پنبه ز غم گشت سفید
نه ز الماس شد و نه ز نمکدان مددی

My burn-scarred eye turned white-blind
under cotton gauze;
Neither salt nor diamonds
offered any help.⁴⁵

- 8 *zard-rūyī natavān dar ṣaf(f)-e maḥshar bordan
khūn-e man bar sar-e jūsh ast shahīdān madad-ī*

زردرویی نتوان در صف محشر بردن
خون من بر سر جوش است شهیدان مددی

One cannot join the ranks
of Judgement Day
with a timid-yellow face.
My blood is practically at boil;
martyrs – help!

- 9 *zakhm-e nāsūr-e ma-rā marham-e moshk ast ‘elāj
be sar-e khod bokon ey zolf-e parīshān madad-ī*

زخم ناسور مرا مرهم مشک است علاج
به سر خود بکن ای زلف پریشان مددی

⁴⁵ While some connections between salt and diamonds are obvious (both are white; one is highly rare, the other – ubiquitous and cheap), other specific implications of this couplet likely depend on knowledge of premodern medical and minerological assumptions and practices. Al-Bīrūnī, for instance, notes (dismissively) that diamonds in his time were thought to make an effective poison if ground into a fine enough powder. I am grateful to Franklin Lewis for this suggestion. For a discussion of Al-Bīrūnī’s comments, see Jack Ogden, *Diamonds: An Early History of the King of Gems* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 17-19.

A salve of musk will soothe
my festering wound;
Distressed curls,
use all your ends and means, help!

- 10 *chand pāy-am be tah-e sang nehād kh^vāb-e gerān
sūkhtam sūkhtam ay khār-e moghaylān madad-ī*

چند پایم به ته سنگ نهد خواب گران
سوختم سوختم ای خار مگیلان مددی

How long will boulder-heavy sleep
immobilise my steps?
Burned! I have burned!
Arabian thorns – help!

- 11 *chand bī-sorme-ye meshkīn-e savād-at bāsham
mī-parad cheshm-e man ay khāk-e Şefāhān madad-ī*

چند بی‌سرمه مشکین سوادت باشم
می‌پرد چشم من ای خاک صفاهان مددی

How long must I live without
the musk-black kohl
inscribed on your environs?
My eyes throb;
dust of Esfahan – help!

- 12 *khār-khār-e vaṭan-am na 'l dar ātash dārad
cheshm dāram ke konad shām-e gharībān madad-ī*

خار خار وطنم نعل در آتش دارد
چشم دارم که کند شام غریبان مددی

Thorn-piercing anguish for my homeland
keeps me restless.
I hope that an evening spent
with fellow strangers
might extend me help.

The poem opens with the poet presenting his experience of the bitterness of exile, longing for home. This theme of exile is as old as the Persian lyric tradition itself: Rūdakī (10th c.), the founding father of Persian poetry, formulated his famous plea to his patron to

return to Bokhārā by conjuring the unique pleasures of that city in verse.⁴⁶ Šā'eb's poem tells a less straightforward tale. The circumstances of exile as they are revealed in the first lines are shorn of geographical specificity, but build towards the explicit reference to his *vaṭan* (homeland), Esfahan.⁴⁷ Outside the circumference of that glorious city (and it is important to note that it is a city, not a larger unit of space),⁴⁸ all is wasteland, a desert full of thorns (*khār-e moghaylān*). This harsh landscape is mirrored inwardly by the poet's lack of will even to move (*pāy-am az dast shud*).⁴⁹

⁴⁶ For a thorough reading of this poem, see Justine Landau, *De Rhythme et de Raison: Lecture croisée de deux traités de poésie persans du XIIIe siècle* (Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2013) 255-259.

⁴⁷ Although Šā'eb's attributive surname (*nesbat*) "Tabrīzī" indicates that his place of origin is Tabriz, he considered his homeland to be not Tabriz, but Esfahan. This practice of adopting a homeland that is different from one's birthplace is common in this period. Indeed, it is often the case that the attributive surname indicates one's father's or further ancestor's birthplace, not necessarily the poet's own. When discussing the lives of poets, early modern *tazkere* authors frequently distinguish between a person's *vaṭan*, their original homeland, and the place with which their literary endeavors are primarily associated. For instance, Ṭāher Naṣrābādī, who was Šā'eb's contemporary, writes of him that after a series of journeys to Hendūstān and 'Erāq, he finally became a "naturalized" resident of Esfahan ("*al-yawm dar Esfahān tavaṭṭon dārad*," literally "he currently makes a homeland for himself in Esfahan"). See Mīrzā Moḥammad Ṭāher Naṣrābādī Eṣfahānī, *Tazkere-ye Naṣrābādī*, ed. Vaḥīd Dastgerdī (Tehrān: Chāpkhāne-ye Armaghān, 1317SH [1938CE]), 218.

⁴⁸ On how the notion of homeland can be restricted to a single city, and on the concomitant experience of exile when forced to move to another city (even within the same region), see Alam and Subrahmanyam, "Of Princes and Poets in Eighteenth Century Lucknow," in *India's Fabled City: The Art of Courtly Lucknow*, ed. Stephen Markel and Tushar Bindu Gude, 187-197 (Los Angeles: County Museum of Art, 2011).

⁴⁹ For detailed biographical information on Šā'eb, including a careful appraisal of what may be fact and fiction in the *tazkere* tradition, see Aḥmad Golchīn-e Ma'ānī, *Kārvān-e Hind: dar aḥvāl va āsār-e shā'erān-e 'aṣr-e Ṣafavī ke be Hendūstān raft-e-and* (Mashhad: Qods-e Reżavī, 1369 [1990-1991]), 700-712. See also: the introduction to Golchīn-e Ma'ānī's dictionary of Šā'eb's idioms: Aḥmad Golchīn-e Ma'ānī, *Farhang-e ash'ār-e Šā'eb* (Tehrān: Mo'assase-ye Moṭāla'āt va Taḥqīqāt-e Farhangī, Vezārat-e Farhang va Āmūzesh-e 'Ālī, 1365SH [1985CE]); Paul E. Losensky, "Šā'eb Tabrīzī," in the *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2003 (available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/saeb-tabrizi>; accessed on 11 April 2019); and Theodore S. Beers, "Tazkirah-i Khayr al-bayān: The Earliest Source on the Career and Poetry of Sa'ib Tabrizi (d.ca.1087/1676)," *Al-'Usur al-Wusta* (Middle East Medievalists) 24 (2016), 114-138.

The thorns in question, *khār-e moghaylān*, come from the tree of Umm Ghaylān in the Arabian desert; this thorn species appears often in conjunction with the holy cities of Mecca and Medina,⁵⁰ as in Ḥāfeẓ, where thoughts of reaching the Ka‘ba are meant to keep the weary pilgrim from feeling the painful pricking of thorns on the way.⁵¹ The context for the thorns in this *ghazal* does not quite seem to be one of piety, however; rather, the image of the Arabian thorn itself underpins the whole poem, and is evoked three times – twice explicitly (lines 1 and 10), and once again in the last line:

12 *khār-khār-e vaṭan-am na ‘l dar ātash dārad*
 cheshm dāram ke konad shām-e gharībān madad-ī

خار خار وطنم نعل در آتش دارد
 چشم دارم که کند شام غریبان مددی

Anguish for my homeland
 keeps me restless.
 I hope that an evening spent

⁵⁰ Golchīn-e Ma‘ānī’s invaluable dictionary of Ṣā‘ebian images, metaphors, and idioms, *Farhang-e ash‘ār-e Ṣā‘eb*, is illuminating also because of the many contextualized examples he provides under each entry (though these examples take the form of single couplets, not entire *ghazals*). Some entries are common idioms: for instance, “*pam̄be dar gūsh nehādan*” is glossed as “willful ignorance”, “*ghaflat*” (ibid, 133) and “*garībān-chāk*” refers to the stereotypical lover’s rending of the shirt-collar (ibid, 632), but other entries very helpfully unpack Ṣā‘eb’s more idiosyncratic poetic lexicon. For example, Golchīn-e Ma‘ānī gives several examples of Ṣā‘eb’s use of “*khār-e moghaylān*” (see both “*moghaylān*” and “*khār-khār*,” ibid, 686 and 236, respectively); both of these examples speak to Ṣā‘eb’s tendency to deploy this image of a specific variety of desert thorn in the service of depicting mental anguish.

⁵¹ Ghazal N^o250. Shams al-Dīn Moḥammad Ḥāfeẓ Shīrāzī, *Dīvān-e Ḥāfeẓ*, ed. Parvīz Nātel Khānlarī (Tehrān: Kh‘ārazmī, 1362SH [1983CE]), 516-517: “*Dar beyābān gar be-showq-e Ka‘be kh‘āhī zad qadam / Sar-zanesh-hā gar konad khār-e moghaylān gham makhor*” (“If passionate desire for the Ka‘ba moves you to set foot in the desert / Don’t despair if the Moghaylān thorns hurl reproaches”). In his gloss on *moghaylān* in another Ḥāfeẓ poem, Ghazal N^o53 (ibid, 122-123), beginning with the couplet “*Yā rabb īn Ka‘be maq̄sūd-e tamāshā-gah-e kī-st / Ke moghaylān-e ṭarīq-ash gol-o-nasrīn-e man-ast*”), Khorramshāhī remarks that Sa‘dī similarly associates these thorns with the Ka‘ba: “*Jamāl-e Ka‘be chenān mī-davāndam be neshāt / Ke khār-hā-ye moghaylān ḥarīr mī-āyad*” (“I ran towards the beauty of the Ka‘ba in such a joyous state / That the Moghaylān thorns turn to silk”). Bahā’ al-Dīn Khorramshāhī, *Ḥāfeẓ-nāme: sharḥ-e alfāz, a‘lām, mafāhīm-e kelīdī va abyāt-e doshvār-e Ḥāfeẓ* (Tehrān: Sherkat-e Enteshārāt-e ‘Elmī va Farhangī, 1391SH, 1366SH [2012CE, 1987CE]), 304-305.

with fellow strangers
might extend me help.

where “*khār-khār-e vaṭan-am*” is not just any kind of anguish, but the specific thorn-like (*khār*), repetitive (*khār-khār*), piercing torment of being alone, far from one’s homeland. This geographically modulated variation on the stock motif of grief-in-separation almost verges on the classic depiction of the mad lover, who, sundered from his beloved, wanders in the desert like the fabled Majnūn – except that here, for Ṣā’eb, the beloved is not a person, but Esfahan itself.⁵²

Ṣā’eb’s lyric world is a well-cited one: along with Esfahan, other cities such as Tabriz, Amul, Kabul, Multan, Agra, Lahore, among many others make appearances in his ghazals.⁵³ While some of these function mostly as abstract token-images,⁵⁴ other cities – like Esfahan in this poem – are endowed with a more vivid existence. Layering abstract

⁵² The idiom “*na’l dar ātash dārad*” (“to keep a horseshoe in the fire”) in the same couplet supports this reading of Esfahan, the poet’s homeland (*vaṭan*), as the beloved. Golchīn-e Ma’ānī glosses this idiom as indicating a state of restlessness and anguish, especially on account of love. It refers to the superstitious practice of inscribing the beloved’s name on a horseshoe and placing it in a fire in the hope that this will ease the pain of separation (Golchīn-e Ma’ānī, *Farhang*, 727). In this poem, perhaps the heat invoked by this idiom also resonates with the heat of the desert in which the poet imagines himself to travel.

⁵³ These toponyms frequently occur when Ṣā’eb refers to his own lyric style, which he calls “*ṭarze tāze*,” or the “fresh style.” Ṣā’eb often predicates such freshness of thought and mind as well: for example, *tāze-khayāl*, “[a style of] fresh imagination,” as in Ghazal N^o 720 (Ṣā’eb, *Dīvān*, I:349-350) and Ghazal N^o 1717 (ibid, II:845), and also *tāze-fekr* “[a style of] fresh thought,” as in Ghazal N^o 403 (ibid, I:203-204).

⁵⁴ The city of Khotan is one such example: its location on the Silk Road probably contributed to the early modern cross-association of such images as musk, musk-deer, musk-scented black locks of hair, Khotan, and other stock-in-trade aspects of the beloved in the Persian lyric lexicon. For typical pairings of Khotan with *nāfe*, *āhū*, *ghazāl*, *moshk*, and *meshkīn*, see for example Ṣā’eb, Ghazal N^o 782 (ibid, I:380) and Ghazal N^o 1393 (ibid, II:693-694).

lyric landscapes over concrete historical entities is one distinctive feature of Šā'eb's style.⁵⁵ In the penultimate line,

11 *chand bī-sorme-ye meshkīn-e savād-at bāsham
mī-parad cheshm-e man ay khāk-e Šefāhān madad-ī*

چند بی‌سرمه مشکین سوادت باشم
می‌پرد چشم من ای خاک صفاهان مددی

How long must I live without
the musk-black kohl
inscribed on your environs?
My eyes throb;
dust of Esfahan – help!

the description of the black-soil fertile lands that surround the city (*savād*) are just a hair's breadth from the typical description of the beloved's black curls that surround their face; the dust of Esfahan may as well be the dust on the doorstep of the beloved's house. “*Savād*” also draws connotations of letters, literacy, and literary culture – all things that a city would have, especially a magnificent one like Šafavid Esfahan; these features would be painfully lacking in a desert, or even a foreign country, depending on one's perspective. For Šā'eb, there is a stable connection between kohl (*sorme*) and Esfahan: there are at least a score of ghazals in his *dīvān* where the two are joined in the same

⁵⁵ This is a sensibility that Šā'eb may have inherited from the *maktab-e voqū'*, the “realist school” of poetry, which flourished in the sixteenth century. For a discussion of this style, see Paul E. Losensky, “Poetics and Eros in Early Modern Persia: The Lovers' Confection and The Glorious Epistle by Muhtasham Kāshānī,” *Iranian Studies* 42:5 (2009), 749. For analysis of what is particularly “fresh” about Šā'eb's unique treatment of image and metaphor (“*ebdā'-e mazāmīn-e tāze*”), see Gholām-Ḥosayn Yūsofī, “*Taṣvīr-e shā'erāne-ye ašhyā' dar nazar-e Šā'eb*,” in *Šā'eb va sabk-e hendī: majmū'e-ye sokhanrānī-hā-ye īrād shode dar majma'-e baḥṣ dar afkār va aš'ār-e Šā'eb*, ed. Moḥammad Rasūl Daryāgasht, 237-264 (Tehrān: Ketābkhāne-ye Markazī va Markaz-e Asnād, 1354SH [1976CE]), 341.

couplet. It is as though the city for him represents a unique cultural outlook, a collective eye of sorts, distinctively and beautifully accentuated by its surrounding black *savād*.⁵⁶

Another geographically laden word in this *ghazal* is “*ḥanẓal*”, a type of bitter gourd⁵⁷ or melon also known as “*Abū Jahl*” – the name of a man who is told in the Qur’ān (Sūrat al-ṣāffāt) that, in contrast to the gardens of paradise (*jannat*), the inhabitants of hell are forced to eat the bitter fruit of the *zaqqūm*, a tree of which the Qur’ān says, “We have appointed it as a trial for the evildoers. It is a tree that comes forth in the root of Hell; its spathes are as the heads of Satans.”⁵⁸ In Ṣā’eb’s couplet, the implied contrast between sugar, which a parrot craves, and the acerbic *ḥanẓal* fruit (which no one craves?), mirrors that of heaven and hell. Interestingly, the *ḥanẓal* fruit was also known as “*hendovāne*”, a bitter fruit originating in India.

⁵⁶ This image became so iconic that it was picked up later poets, including Bīdel: for example, Ghazal N^o28, Line 5: “*Govāh-ī chūn khamūshī nīst ma ‘mūre-ye del-hā rā / savād-e del-goshāyī sorme bas bāshad Ṣefāhān rā*” (“There is no witness to the habitations of the heart like silence / Delightful, rich environs are kohl enough for Esfahan”), a paronomastic play on the proverbial notion that an Islamic judge is typically satisfied with two witnesses. ‘Abd al-Qāder Bīdel Dehlavī, *Kolleyāt-e Abū l-Ma ‘ānī Mīrzā ‘Abd al-Qāder Bīdel Dehlavī*, ed. Khalīlollāh Khalīlī (Tehran: Enteshārat-e Ṭalāye, 1389 [2010/2011], I:13. Golchīn-e Ma ‘ānī notes that the best kohl was thought to come from Esfahan, and the second-best from Mecca (Golchīn-e Ma ‘ānī, *Farhang*, 438). This connection may have attained proverbial status, as in the case of Aleppo and its crystal or Kerman and cumin (as memorialized by the proverbs “*ābgīne be Ḥalab bordan*,” “*zīre be Kermān bordan*” – “to take crystal to Aleppo,” “to take cumin to Kermān”), an allusion to doing something utterly unnecessary. For these and similar proverbs on the same pattern, see ‘Alī Akbar Dehkhodā, *Amsāl va ḥekam* (Tehrān: Amīr Kabīr, 1960), II:934-944.

⁵⁷ Ṣā’eb frequently associates *ḥanẓal* with bitterness; see Golchīn-e Ma ‘ānī’s entry for “*ḥanẓal-jabīn*” (“*ḥanẓal-browed*”), which is glossed as “*talkh-rūy*” (“sour-faced”) and is attested at least once in Ṣā’eb’s corpus. Golchīn-e Ma ‘ānī, *Farhang*, 233.

⁵⁸ “*Innā ja ‘al-nā-hā fītnatan li l-ẓālimīna / Inna-hā shajaratun takhruju fī aṣli l-jahīmi / Ṭal ‘u-hā ka-anna-hu ru ‘ūsu l-shayāṭīni.*” Qur’ān, 37.63-65. *The Koran Interpreted*, transl. Arthur J. Arberry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, 1955), 458.

This constellation of images comprising parrots, sugar, and India already has a long and traceable history by Ṣā'eb's time. Amīr Khosrow of Delhi (d. 1325) proclaimed himself proudly to be the “parrot of India” (“*tūtī-ye Hend*”), a boast alluding to that bird's verbal prowess and sweetness of speech – an intentional contrast, perhaps, to the sweet-songed nightingale of Iranian Persian.⁵⁹ In Shiraz a century later, Hāfez (d.1390) attempts to put this parrot in its place, asserting the superiority of his own homeland, which exports the most refined poetry to the Subcontinent:

*shakkar-shekan shavand hame tūṭeyān-e Hend
z-īn qand-e Pārsī ke be Bengāle mī-ravad*⁶⁰

شکرشکن شوند همه طوطیان هند

⁵⁹ For a sustained example of Khosrow's famous Indian patriotism, see his nine-part narrative poem, *Noh Sepehr* (*The Nine Spheres*, composed in 1318), which details the various customs and superior qualities of South Asian culture. His poem “proves” that Hendāstān (South Asia) is the best of all possible places on earth by appealing to its significance in Islamic history (Adam, falling from Paradise, is alleged to have alighted first in India – the most paradise-like place on earth) and also touting the intellectual contributions of its non-Islamic Indic traditions (e.g., the Brahmins and their invention of the idea of zero, etc.) See Nāṣer al-Dīn Amīr Khosrow Dehlavī, *Maṣnavī-ye Noh Sepehr* (*The Nine Spheres*), ed. Mohammad Wahid Mirza (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), 74-146 and especially 211-318. On Amīr Khosrow, see Muzaffar Alam, “The Pursuit of Persian: Language in Mughal Politics,” *Modern Asian Studies* 32:2 (1998), 317-349; Rajeev Kinra, *Writing Self, Writing Empire: Chandar Bhan Brahman and the Cultural World of the Indo-Persian State Secretary* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2015), 224; and Sunil Sharma, *Amir Khusraw: The Poet of Sufis and Sultans* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005).

⁶⁰ Ghazal N^o218. Hāfez, *Dīvān*, 452-453. On this couplet's significance in generations of scholarship on the Persianate world, and specifically in Bengal, see Thibaut d'Hubert, “Persian at the Court or in the Village? The Elusive Presence of Persian in Bengal,” in *The Persianate World: The Frontiers of a Eurasian Lingua Franca*, ed. Nile Green, 93-112 (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2019), 94-100. In reference to “*tūtī*” in Hāfez, Khorramshāhī notes that parrots are famous also for their power of imitation of various kinds of voices (“*qodrat-e taqlīd-e barkh-ī ṣedā-hā*”). In other words, they are capable of repeating the speech of others correctly, but lacking true comprehension (“*sokhan-e dīgarān rā nā-fahmīde naql konad*”). Khorramshāhī, *Hāfez-nāme*, 121-122. Reversing the direction of Hāfez's cultural chauvinism, the famous Mughal secretary and poet Chandar Bhān Brahman (d.1662/1663) composed the following riposte: “Carry this message from Hindustan to Iran, O Nightingale: That if they require a sugar-scattering Brahman, I am the one” (“*Be Irān mī-barad aṣṣāne-ye Hendūstān bolbol Barahman rā shakkar aṣṣhānī ar bāshad hamīn bāshad*”); translation and original Persian as cited in Kinra, *Writing Self, Writing Empire*, 226.

زین قند پارسی که به بنگاله می‌رود

All the parrots of Hindustan
consume this sugar candy
exported to Bengal by Persia.
They become professional crushers of sugar.

In Šā'eb's poem, it is clear that there can be no worse fate for a parrot than having to subsist on the bitter fruit of exile. Perhaps he had the Sūrat al-ṣāffāt in mind also in lines 8-9, which mention the ranks of Judgement Day (*ṣaff-i maḥshar*):

8 *zard-rūyī natawān dar ṣaf(f)-e maḥshar bordan*
 khūn-e man bar sar-e jūsh ast shahīdān madad-ī

زردرویی نتوان در صف محشر بردن
خون من بر سر جوش است شهیدان مددی

One cannot join the ranks
of Judgement Day
with a timid-yellow face.
My blood is practically at boil;
martyrs – help!

9 *zakhm-e nāsūr-e ma-rā marham-e moshk ast 'elāj*
 be sar-e khod bokon ay zolf-e parīshān madad-ī

زخم ناسور مرا مرهم مشک است علاج
به سر خود بکن ای زلف پریشان مددی

A salve of musk will soothe
my festering wound;
Distressed curls,
use all your ends and means, help!

Blood at boil, bravery in battle, festering wounds – all these images unmistakably evoke the end of days, abstracting the poet's private catastrophe of exile into the Apocalypse itself. The last few lines of the poem may carry specifically Shī'ī resonances as well: the final couplet refers to the *shām-e gharībān*, an evening spent among fellow travellers, all strangers in a foreign land banding together for comfort of company and a fireside meal,

often in the middle of nowhere, in straitened circumstances. This *shām-e gharībān* is also the name of the first night of mourning after someone’s death, and, during the holy month of Muḥarram, it refers to the night of lament for Imām Ḥusayn following his martyrdom.

The most immediate sense evoked in this poem, however, is probably the the pain of separation from Ṣā’eb’s home city, felt acutely in his harsh present circumstances, perhaps even in India. Ṣā’eb spent several years (1624/5-1632) travelling there, visiting various cities in the northern India, Kashmir, and the Deccan. Though frequently he describes India in laudatory terms, elsewhere he also displays a degree of ambivalence about its offerings.⁶¹

Ṣā’eb’s poem only hints at the possibility that this cultural wasteland and wilderness far from his beloved Esfahan is, in fact, India – an ambiguity that is further deepened by the possibly intentional concealment of India behind Arabian imagery.⁶²

⁶¹ For example, Ghazal N^o899: “Ṣā’eb az Hend majū ‘eshrat-e Esfahān rā / fayz-e ṣobḥ-e vaṭan az shām-e gharībān maṭalab” (“Ṣā’eb, don’t seek the pleasures of Esfahan in India / Don’t look for the grace of a homeland morning in an evening spent with strangers.” Ṣā’eb, *Dīvān*, I:445. This couplet is also listed by Golchīn-e Ma’ānī under his entry for “*shām-e gharībān*,” which he defines as “*shām-e mosāferān ke vaḥshatnāk mī-bāshad khoṣūṣan dar moflesī*” (“An evening spent together by travelers, perhaps anxiously and/or in the wilderness, and especially in poverty”). Golchīn-e Ma’ānī, *Farhang*, 466. In the *Farhang*’s examples, *shām-e gharībān* is frequently paired with “*vaṭan*” (“homeland”). See also the entry on “*ghorbat*” (“foreign country”), defined as “*dūrī az vaṭan*” (“being far from one’s homeland”); *ibid*, 541. Further examples under the entry for the related adjective, “*gharīb*” (“strange”) also point to the frequent pairing of this word with “homeland” (“*vaṭan*”) and with various terms for thought and poetic craft (“*khayāl*,” “imagination;” “*sokhan*,” “discourse;” “*fekr*,” thought): “*Har chīz-e nāder va nou, va mosāfer va dūr-shavande*” (“Everything unique and new; a traveler, one who has gone far [from home]”). *Ibid*, 541. In this connection, Losensky notes that Ṣā’eb frequently boasts of his own verse that it is full of “*ma’ nā-ye bīgāne* (unfamiliar or alien conceits).” Losensky, “Ṣā’eb Tabrīzī.” On Ṣā’eb’s “*bīgāne*” (“strange”) and “*tāze*” (“fresh”) style, see also Parvīz Khānlārī, “Yād-ī az Ṣā’eb”, in *Ṣā’eb va sabk-e hendī: majmū’e-ye sokhanrānī-hā-ye īrād shode dar majma’-e bahs dar afkār va ash’ār-e Ṣā’eb*, ed. Moḥammad Rasūl Daryāgasht, 297-317 (Tehrān: Ketābkhāne-ye Markazī va Markaz-e Asnād, 1354SH [1976CE]).

⁶² While Ṣā’eb is associated primarily with a positive assessment of India and his experiences there, the individual couplets gathered by Golchīn-e Ma’ānī in *Kārvān-e Hend* form an illuminating collection, in several of which he frequently draws sharp contrasts between Iran and

Even if one takes this poem to revolve primarily around a prickly statement about his experiences in the Subcontinent, that specific misery itself does not form the centerpiece of the poem. Instead, Ṣā'eb's poem depicts exile as a state of mind: the periphery remains but a metaphorical wasteland, whereas the beloved evocative city of Esfahan at the poem's center is very much real. It is this tension between what is real and what is not that forms the poem's main pivot, a carefully achieved balance of reality and abstraction on the scales of metaphor that contrasts sharply with the style of Ḥazīn, who, as we shall see, does not hold back in excoriating India and all of its historically concrete particulars, including its inhabitants, language, and culture.

Bīdel, however, takes Ṣā'eb's template in an entirely different direction, by doing away with the ambiguous periphery's concrete center altogether:

- 1 *na nafas tarbeyat-am kard o na dāmān madad-ī
ātash-am khāk shod ey sūkhte-jānān madad-ī*⁶³

نه نفس تربیتم کرد و نه دامان مددی
آتشم خاک شد ای سوختهجانان مددی

No breath trained me,
nor hem
extended me its help.
My fire
turned to ash.
Scorched souls – help!

- 2 *showq-e dīdār-am o yek jelve nadāram tāqat*

India. This list discloses a remarkable range of attitudes, the variety of which renders any attempt to distill Ṣā'eb's views on the matter into his "general" take on India a reductive and bootless enterprise. Golchīn-e Ma'ānī, *Kārvān-e Hend*, 710-712 ("*Īrān va Hendūstān az dīdgāh-e Ṣā'eb dar ḥālāt-e mokhtalef.*")

⁶³ Bīdel, Ghazal N^o2856. Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, II:1334. There is a second *ghazal* by Bīdel with the same rhyme and meter: Ghazal N^o2819, *ibid*, II:1317. The analysis in this chapter focuses on Ghazal N^o2856, since internal evidence (discussed in the following pages) suggests that this poem is likely the one that Ḥazīn had in mind, although it is not impossible that he may have known of both.

magar āyīne konad bar man-e hayrān madad-ī

شوق دیدارم و یک جلوه ندارم طاقت
مگر آینه کند بر من حیران مددی

I desire ardently to see,
but cannot bear to see
a single manifestation
Without the mirror
lending me,
astonished, help.

3 *ār(e)zū mī-keshad-am bar dar-e ebrām ṭalab
kū hayā tā konad az važ 'e pashīmān madad-ī*

آرزو می‌کشدم بر در ابرام طلب
کو حیا تا کند از وضع پشیمان مددی

Desire drags me
to the door
of insistent demand.
Where is shame
that would, in this disgraced position,
offer help?

4 *yād-e cheshm-e to ze āvāreg(e)-yam ghāfel nīst
gard-e īn dasht-am o dāram ze ghazālān madad-ī*

یاد چشم تو ز آوارگیم غافل نیست
گرد این دشتم و دارم ز غزالان مددی

The memory of your eyes
does not overlook
my desolation;
I am dust
in this desert,
and have only gazelles' help.

5 *besmel-am garm-ṭavāf-e chaman 'āfeyat-ī-st
ay tapīdan be taghāfol nazanī hān madad-ī*

بسملم گرم طواف چمن عافیتی است
ای تبیین به تغافل نرنی هان مددی

I am freshly sacrificed;
circumambulation of the garden

is salvation.
Agitating heat of beating wings,
don't be negligent;
hurry – help!

6 *rāḥat az qāfele-ye hūsh borūn tākhte ast*
ay jonūn tā shavad-am bār-e del āsān madad-ī

راحتم از قافله هوش برون تاخته است
ای جنون تا شوم بار دل آسان مددی

Comfort broke free
and galloped away
from the caravan of wit.
Madness, ease
the burden of my heart – help!

7 *kī-st bār-e tapes̄h az dūsh-e havas bar dārad*
bī- 'aṣā-yī nakonad gar be za 'īfān madad-ī

کیست بار تپش از دوش هوس بر دارد
بی عصایی نکند گر به ضعیفان مددی

Who will lift the burden
of palpitation
from desire's shoulders⁶⁴
If the caneless don't support
the weak with any help?

8 *bā hame zolm rahā nīst kas az mennat-e charkh*
āh az ān rūz ke mī-kard be eḥsān madad-ī

با همه ظلم رها نیست کس از منت چرخ
آه از آن روز که می کرد به احسان مددی

Despite its tyranny,
none are free
from Fate's favors.
Curse the day
when it beneficently
offered help.

⁶⁴ This image of a “burden” being lifted off a creature’s shoulders strengthens a possible reading of Line 5, in which the poet as a “freshly sacrificed bird” would be sacrificed by beheading.

- 9 *ḥīle-jū-ye nam-e ashk-īm dar-īn vādī-ye khoshk
kāsh az ābele bakhshand be mozhgān madad-ī*

حیلہجوی نم اشکیم در این وادی خشک
کاش از آبلہ بخشند بہ مژگان مددی

We seek the remedy
of tears' dampness
in this dry desert.
If only blisters would confer
upon the eyelashes
any help.

- 10 *Bīdel az ghonche gereftam sabaq-e zānū-ye fekr
būd kūtāhī-ye dāman be garībān madad-ī*

بیدل از غنچہ گرفتم سبق زانوی فکر
بود کوتاہی دامن بہ گریبان مددی

Bīdel, I have reached forth
and grasped the lesson
of the rosebud's pensive pose:
The hem's shortfall
extended the collar
help.

It is easy enough to discern how Bīdel takes his theme from Ṣā'eb's poem: *rāḥat* is repeated, as is Ṣā'eb's imagery of immobility – the same sort of torpor imposed by weakness, wandering, and exile that in Bīdel's poem are of a similarly unspecified nature and place. But Bīdel's poem is even more vague and abstract; he transforms the hostility of the country in which Ṣā'eb is exiled into a generalized lament against the universal tyranny of fate, depicted here as a ruler presiding over the whole world and bestowing favors (if they can be called such). Although there are no *khār-e moghaylān* in this poem, Bīdel does preserve a nonspecific picture of an Arabian wilderness through scattered images of the desert (*dasht*), one quasi-pious circumambulation (*tavāf*), pervasive heat (*ātash*, *sūkhte*, *garm*, *tapīdan*), and salvation (*āfeyat*). All of these may indirectly point

toward the two holy cities, Mecca and Medina, although this dry wasteland (*vādī-ye khoshk*) could just as easily be taken to be the wasteland of the mind.

This poem, as is true of most of Bīdel's *ghazals*, is relatively underpopulated: instead of the usual cast of lyric characters found in abundance in the earlier Persian tradition (an incomplete roster includes the spiritual master, the preacher, the *mohtaseb*, the *sāqī*, etc.), Bīdel's verse boasts a proliferation of ambiguous pronouns, including his trademark habit of shunning the the unambiguous amatory/devotional binary "*man-o-to*" ("you and I") of the classical ghazal in favor of the more complex pronominal plural "*man-o-mā*" ("I and we").⁶⁵ This poem is dominated by a solitary figure, who, aside from the appeal in the first couplet to the nameless "*sūkhte-jānān*" and the unidentified, non-recurring "*to*" ("you") in line 4 ("the memory of your eyes"), is not just alone, but wholly isolated. Like the archetypal figure of Majnūn, the mad poet who, exiled from society, is kept company only by gazelles in the desert, the poetic persona here does not simply wander in the desert: he *has become* the very dust of the desert itself ("*gard-e īn dasht-am*", line 4). If Ṣā'eb's typical troping tendency consists in the deft guidance of poetic abstractions through a plausible realm of the historically concrete, Bīdel more often than not evokes concrete reality only to swerve away from it into abstraction. Thus, in this poem, lovelorn desert wanderings are reconfigured as an ardent, anxious exploration of the desert of one's own mind.

This feature of his style has been broadly characterized above as an inward turn:

⁶⁵ As Prashant Keshavmurthy notes, "That this first person plurality is no mere convention throughout his oeuvre becomes apparent when we recognize the transpersonal quality of the self who speaks." Keshavmurthy, *Persian Authorship and Canonicity in Late Mughal Delhi*, 56. For a detailed discussion of the importance of this transpersonal self in Bīdel's works and on the influence of Ibn 'Arabī's monism on Bīdel's thought in general, see *ibid*, 62-67.

subverting the form of speaker-and-addressee that ought to be required by the pleading imperative “help” in the refrain, Bīdel presents a sequence of appeals for assistance not to various other persons, but to impersonal, nonhuman entities (a mirror, shame, madness, blisters). Compounding this curiously isolated effect is the fact that this poem (along with most of Bīdel’s ghazals) resists narrative, refusing to lend itself obviously or naturally to prose restatement. There is no account of tortured separation from one’s homeland that can be extracted from this poem, no tale of the woes of exile to be unraveled from his tangle of complex metaphors. Instead, the dramatic action – if it can be called that – centers around the poem’s grammatical progression: the first-person singular established in the first half of the poem (lines 1-6) gives way to the impersonal question-and-answer form of lines 7 and 8 (“*kī-st*”, “who?” and “*nīst kas*”, “there is no one”), and the only instance of the first-person plural (line 9) is followed by a return to the singular “I” in the final couplet.

Reinforcing the poem’s circular structure⁶⁶ is the recapitulation of the opening line’s images at the end: the hem, “*dāman*” of line 1 returns in the final couplet, and the allusion to failed “training” (“*tarbeyat*”, line 1) recurs in line 10, this time as the successful grasping of a lesson (“*gereftam sabaq*”) – the difficult, elusive lesson of thought itself (“*fekr*”). In this final couplet’s denouement, Bīdel substitutes Ṣā’eb’s *shām-e gharībān* for an image of the paronomastically similar *garībān* (shirt-collar):

⁶⁶ A deliberately circular structure is observable in many of Bīdel’s *ghazals*, where the first and last lines are connected by a shared word, concept, or image. This symmetrical coincidence of beginning and end has the effect of restructuring the whole poem by shifting even more interpretive pressure on the middle lines, which must be re-read and re-interpreted in light of what is revealed in the end to be the key concept. For a detailed discussion of this circular structure, see Chapter 4 and Chapter 6.

10 *Bīdel az ghonche gereftam sabaq-e zānū-ye fekr
būd kūtāhī-ye dāman be garībān madad-ī*

بیدل از غنچه گرفتم سبق زانوی فکر
بود کوتاهی دامن به گریبان مددی

Bīdel, I have grasped the lesson
of the rosebud's
pensive pose:
The hem's shortfall
extended the collar
help.

This double occurrence in the first and last lines of “*dāman*” (“hem”, a metonymic reference to a supplicant reaching importunately for the hem of a king or patron’s garment) appears to indicate a cruel lack of patronly generosity. Reference in a poem’s final line to the patron’s generosity was a centuries-old Perso-Arabic convention; yet such a patron never attains the fullness of existence in Bīdel’s poem. Instead, the would-be patron figure dissolves in the final line into the lone poetic persona from the first half of the poem, whose final pose is disclosed in the metaphor of the closed rosebud, clinging to itself, on the verge of blossoming with brilliant meaning. The poetic “lesson” seems to be that the rosebud’s tightly tied hem, ostensibly a nod to proverbial lack of generosity and also an allusion to the virtues of silence, yields a curious advantage. If the rosebud were to blossom, its petals would circle outward to form an ever-widening circumference, resembling the wide hem of a garment (*dāman*). But here rosebud does *not* flower, and would possess no such hem. As if in compensation, all the kinetic pressure shifts to the *garībān*, the collar of the upper garment which is classically torn by heartbroken lovers in a self-destructive expression of despair; this produces a vertical split in the fabric, observable here in the rosebud’s overlapping petals. It is in this way that the closed rosebud can still, paradoxically, flourish even more expansively as it blooms while not

blooming, a silent inflorescence of eloquent verse that pulses with meditative melancholy.⁶⁷

In contrast to Bīdel’s predisposition to vertiginous complexity of metaphor, Ḥazīn crafts his response-poem in accordance with his own defiantly different lyric temperament. Where Bīdel emphasizes the ambiguous nature of Ṣā’eb’s poetic landscape and elevates it to ever more abstract levels, Ḥazīn does the opposite, by retrenching the geographical concreteness of his metaphors, often to scathing effect:

- 1 *khaṣm-e āsūdegī-yam ay gham-e jānān madad-ī*
*dāgh-e jam ‘īyat-am ay zolf-e parīshān madad-ī*⁶⁸

خصم آسودگیم ای غم جانان مددی
داغ جمعیتم ای زلف پریشان مددی

I am the enemy
of repose.
Grief for the beloved, help!
I am the stigma
that scars composure.
Locks of hair, unravel – help!

- 2 *‘oqde-hā pīsh-e rah az ābele-ye pā dāram*
dast-am o dāman-at ey khār-e beyābān madad-ī

عقدہا پیش رہ از آبلہ پا دارم
دستم و دامنٹ ای خار بیابان مددی

⁶⁷ This pair of possibilities open to the rosebud – of remaining closed or flowering – is a commonplace allusion to the binary of silence and speech. For a nuanced discussion of speech and silence in Bīdel’s long narrative poem *Mohīt-e a’zam*, see Hajnalka Kovacs, “The Tavern of the Manifestation of Realities:” *The Masnavi Muhit-i Azam by Mirza Abd al-Qadir Bedil (1644–1720)* (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2013), 173-183 and 241-250. For further lyric examples of Bīdel’s use of the inflorescing rosebud to describe states of imaginative attention and meditation, see Chapter 4 and Chapter 6. And on the significance of the knee (*zānū*), cf. Chapter 3 for an analysis of Bīdel’s dream, recounted in his autobiography, *The Four Elements (Chahār ‘onşor)*, in which the Prophet sits upon Bīdel’s bed and places his kneecap against Bīdel’s head while he dreams – a connection that facilitates a conjoined visionary experience.

⁶⁸ Ghazal N^o-802. Shaykh Moḥammad ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭāleb Ḥazīn Lāhejī, *Dīvān-e Ḥazīn-e Lāhejī*, ed. Bīzhan Taraqqī (Tehrān: Enteshārāt-e Ketāb-forūshī-e Khayyām, 1350SH [1971CE]), 391-392.

Impediments blister
on my feet
and knot the road before me.
My pleading hand,
your fleeting hem;
desert thorns, help!

- 3 *rang-e zardī be-sharāb az rokh-e man nat(a)vān bord
che-konam gar nakonad sīlī-ye ekhvān madad-ī*

رنگ زردی بشراب از رخ من نتوان برد
چکنم گر نکند سیلی اخوان مددی

Wine cannot flush
this timid-yellow hue
from my cheeks;
What will I do
if the bracing slaps
of comrades' hands
do not help?

- 4 *hast del-rā sar-e mastāne be-khūn ghalīdan
cheshm dāram ke konad 'eshve-ye penhān madad-ī*

هست دلرا سر مستانه بخون غلطیدن
چشم دارم که کند عشوه پنهان مددی

The heart must toss and turn
in its own blood, rolling
like a drunkard's lolling head.
I hope that coquetry
concealed from the eye
might offer help.

- 5 *khār-khār-ī-st shab-e hejr-e to dar pīrhan-am
be-taghāfol mazan ey sho 'le-ye 'oryān madad-ī*

خارخاریست شب هجر تو در پیرهنم
بتغافل مزن ای شعله عریان مددی

Night of separation
from you: disquiet nettles
beneath my shirt.
Don't be negligent,
naked flame – help!

- 6 *jelve-ī gar nabovad kūshesh-e Mūsá che-konad
sakht sar-gashte-am ey ātash-e sūzān madad-ī*

جلوه‌ای گر نبود کوشش موسی چکند
سخت سرگشته‌ام ای آتش سوزان مددی

With no theophany
for what
would Moses struggle?
I wander, lost,
completely speechless.
Burning fire – help!

- 7 *chūn zanān hajle-ye tan chand nashīman sāzam
sakht dar-mānde-am ey hemmat-e mardān madad-ī*

چون زنان حجله تن چند نشیمن سازم
سخت در مانده‌ام ای همت مردان مددی

How long will I dwell, secluded
like a woman
in the body's bridal chamber?
I am so helpless!
Manly resolution – help!

- 8 *del be zolmat-kade-ye Hend gharīb oftād(e) ast
che shavad gar rasad az shāh-e gharībān madad-ī*

دل به ظلمت‌کده هند غریب افتاده است
چه شود گر رسد از شاه غریبان مددی

My heart has fallen
homeless
in the India of darkness.
Would it hurt
the King of Foreigners
to send some help?

- 9 *chand dar shām zanad ghūṭe ṣafā-ye ṣobḥ-am
dam-e yārī [yār-ī] bovad ay gardesh-e dowrān madad-ī*

چند در شام زند غوطه صفای صبحم
دم یاری بود ای گردش دوران مددی

How long will the purity

of my dawn
plummet into dusk?
Were there a moment, a breath
of friendship!
Time's turning revolution – help!

10 *tā be-key khūn be-del-am Hend jegar-kh'āre konad
jor'e-nūsh-e to-am ey sāqī-ye mastān madad-ī*

تا بکی خون بدلم هند جگرخواره کند
جر عنوش توام ای ساقی مستان مددی

How long must I suffer?
Hend devours
my liver.
I've drunk my fill of you.
Cupbearer
to the intoxicated – help!

11 *sakht az parde-ye nāmūs be-tang ast Ḥazīn
gol-e rosvā'ī-yam ay chāk-e garībān madad-ī*

سخت از پرده ناموس بتنگ است حزین
گل رسواییم ای چاک گریبان مددی

Harshly is Ḥazīn
straitened
by chastity's veils.
I am the rose of disgrace:
constricted collar,
unstitch your seams – help!

All the central elements of Ṣā'eb's ghazal are recapitulated here: the absence of comfort and repose, desert wanderings, the anguish of exile, locks of hair, thorns and thorn-caught hems. Furthermore, enough of Bīdel's specific innovations⁶⁹ are reprised in this poem that we can speculate with considerable confidence that Ḥazīn penned his response poem with Bīdel's response to Ṣā'eb in mind as well. Ḥazīn differs from Bīdel in several

⁶⁹ These include such terms as “manifestation” (*jelve*), and, perhaps most tellingly, the same substitution of “*garībān*” for Ṣā'eb's “*gharībān*” in the final couplet.

important ways. Where Bidel deliberately eschews direct real-world references, Ḥazīn does not hold back in his display of caustic candor, and names India as the specific agent of his oppression⁷⁰ by using the word “*Hend*” twice. The first occurrence is the “heart of darkness” moment in the eighth couplet, where India is referred to as “*zolmat-kade*,” an abode of darkness where any favors one might receive from the “King of Foreigners” are not sufficient compensation for the general state of acute oppression. The second reference, though unambiguous, is more modestly veiled in metaphor. Just as Ṣā’eb and Bidel employ Arabian-landscape abstractions to evoke a sense of lost helplessness in exile, in the penultimate couplet Ḥazīn refers to the famous episode in Battle of Uhud, when Amīr Ḥamza, the Prophet’s uncle, was killed in battle and had his liver consumed in a savage act of madness and grief by Hind bint al-Khuss, the woman whose father Amīr Ḥamza had previously slain. Perhaps this image was suggested to Ḥazīn by the opening words of Ṣā’eb’s poem : “*mī-gazad*,” “gnaws.” These homologies arranged by Ḥazīn – woman/man, weak/strong, India/Iran – could hardly be more bluntly formulated.⁷¹

⁷⁰ For details of Ḥazīn’s travels and forced departure from Ṣafavid Iran, see Sarfaraz Khan Khatak, *Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Alī Ḥazīn: His Life, Times, and Works* (Lahore: M. Ashraf, 1944), 97-101. See also Ḥazīn’s own autobiography: Shaykh Moḥammad ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭāleb Ḥazīn Lāhejī, *Tārīkh-e aḥvāl be tazkere-ye ḥal-e Moulānā Shaykh Moḥammad ‘Alī Ḥazīn (ke khod neveshte ast)* (London: Printed for the Oriental Translation Fund, 1831), 102-128.

⁷¹ It may be useful here to contextualize Ḥazīn’s chauvinism. It is important to note that poetic vilification of India had become something of a trope in the early modern period. For example, the last line of a *ghazal* by Salīm Tehrānī (d. 1647/1648), an Iranian poet who travelled to India in 1631 and, after failing to secure a position in Shāhjahān’s court, spent the last years of his life in the employ of a governor of the Deccan, is as follows: “*Gashtīm Salīm īn-hame dar Hend o ze ‘eṣyān / Dārīm hamīn rū-ye seyāh-ī o degar hīch*” (“We went to India, Salīm, and rebellion / Has given us only a blackened face, and nothing more”). Salīm Tehrānī, Moḥammad Qolī. *Dīvān-e kāmel*, ed. Raḥīm Rezā (Tehrān: Ebn Sīnā, 1349SH [1970/1971CE]), 149. Bidel too was not free from such bigoted elitism: in an uncharacteristically vulgar *ghazal*, he sketches a savagely satirical portrait of the “Mughalized” Indian: “*Az ṣan ‘at-e moḥāvare-ye lūleyān-e Fārs / Hendūstāneyān be tamaghghol khazīde-and*” (“Indians have slithered away from the idiom-craft

Among Ḥazīn’s gravest woes in exile is what he perceives to be his total social isolation. In this poem, and frequently throughout his *dīvān*, he bewails time and again his lack of friends (*ekhvān, yār*), mourning his separation from companions who might give him courage and company. As he makes plain in nearly every genre in which he composed,⁷² nobody in India was up to that task. What is particularly interesting about this poem is that although it is but one of many examples in his *dīvān* of anti-Indian sentiment, the poetic management of language – albeit for his own ends – is not entirely

of Persian gypsies, imitating the Mughals”). Ghazal N^o975, Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, I:456. There is room to interpret moḥāvare as either “spoken idiom” (thus making Bīdel’s point a comment about pronunciation) or “literary idiom” (making it a different kind of statement about relative value). The latter reading may be supported by this hemistich’s likely reference to a hemistich by Ḥāfez, the great poet of Shiraz in Fārs, from his famous “Turk of Shiraz” poem: “*Feghān k-īn lūleyān-e shūkh-e shīrīn-kār-e shahr-āshūb*” (“Alas – these teasing gypsies, who plunge the city into chaos”). Bīdel’s reception of Ḥāfez’s poem is an excellent candidate for the method of geocritical analysis set forth by Domenico Ingenito in his brilliant reading of Ḥāfez’s poem. See Domenico Ingenito, “Hafez’s ‘Shirāzi Turk’: A Geopoetical Approach,” *Iranian Studies* 51.6 (2018), 851-887. The interesting term “*tamaghghol*” – a neologism constructed on the model of Arabic fifth-form nouns (*tafa* ‘ul, n., from *tafa* ‘alla, v., which has a reflexive valence) around the imagined trilateral root “m-gh-l”, of “*mughul*” – means “fashioning oneself into a Mughal,” and appears in one other *ghazal* by Bīdel, also with quite a blistering effect: “*Khonak-tar ze zāgh ast taqlīd-e kabk / Ke Hendūstānī tamaghghol konad*” (“The partridge’s imitation is even more tasteless than a crow’s: /It’s like an Indian fancying himself to be a Mughal”). Ghazal N^o964, *ibid*, 451. For further examples of poetic connections between India, blackness, and despair, see Annemarie Schimmel, *A Two-Colored Brocade: The Imagery of Persian Poetry* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 139-141.

⁷² These include Ḥazīn’s lyric poetry; his autobiography (*Tārīkh-e aḥvāl*); a biographical compendium, *Tazkerat al-mo’āserīn*, ed. Ma’šūme Sālek (Tehrān: Nashr-e Sāye, 1996); treatises, *Rasā’el-e Ḥazīn-e Lāhījī*, ed. ‘Alī Oujabī (Tehrān: Āyene-ye Mīrās, Daftar-e Nashr-e Mīrās-e Maktūb, 1377 [1998]), especially the treatise on Iran and India, “*Resāle-ye vāqe’āt-e Īrān va Hend*” (*ibid*, 185-246 and especially 241-243); and his Persian commentary (*sharḥ*) on his own Arabic *qaṣīda* (*ibid*, 127). Even Ḥazīn’s treatise on pearls, a summa of scholarship and reported lore on the subject, does not credit Indian waters with the production of pearls. He mentions only the shores of Bahrain and Persia, an omission noticed by the editors, who note that Ḥazīn has neglected to mention “the ancient world’s most famous pearl-banks in the gulf of Manaar, between India and Ceylon.” Ḥazīn, *The Treatise on the Nature of Pearls*, ed. S.K. Khatak (Walldorf-Hessen: Verlag für Orientkunde, 1954), 7.

dissimilar from that of Bīdel and Ṣā'eb in its reliance on metaphor (*este'āre*) and ambiguity (*ihām*).

While Ḥazīn and Bīdel take their responses to Ṣā'eb's poem in vastly different directions, these poems show how all three poets operate within a broadly shared lyric landscape. They employ an intentionally complex vocabulary of place, achieving a meticulous balance between reality and abstraction – though how these are weighted is an important point of contrast. Such a difference can perhaps best be stated as being a matter of emphasis and orientation: while Ḥazīn uses high metaphorical language to direct attention to the work of real geography, Bīdel deploys real-world geography in the service of more rarefied ideas⁷³ – a standard feature of what has been called the difficult, abstract, decadent “Indian” style of Persian lyric. The history of this term in the early modern period, contemporary scholarly preoccupation with its usage, and suggestions for handling this issue are discussed in detail in Chapter Two, which examines four early modern biographical compendia (*tazkeres*) alongside other Persian genres of literary criticism from this period, including poets' own prose prefaces to their collections of verse. Before turning to this issue of the “Indian style,” the final section in this chapter looks to several non-lyric moments in Bīdel's corpus where he makes a point of thinking

⁷³ This difference in emphasis is expressed also in the very different ways these two poets approach other genres as well, and the very different kinds of collision between art and reality exemplified in Bīdel's and Ḥazīn's autobiographies is a striking example well worth investigating. As Keshavmurthy notes of Bīdel's autobiography, it interprets specific real-world events “as bearing an archetypal or mythic significance transcending their dateable and nameable particularity.” Keshavmurthy, *Persian Authorship and Canonicity in Late Mughal Delhi*, 30. Ḥazīn, on the other hand, in his *Tārīkh al-aḥvāl* hews with unflinching precision to events that happened concerning named individuals in specific places on known dates.

about the interconnected ideas of homeland and exile, India and “Indianness,” geography and lyric style.

1.4 Is There an “Indian style” of Persian lyric?

This chapter has unfolded some of Bīdel’s lyric ideas about homeland and exile in the context of a seventeenth- and eighteenth-century conversation with two other poets. Before turning to the early modern literary critical context to which these ideas and sensibilities belong, it will be helpful to have in mind a fuller (though still precursory) sense of some of Bīdel’s general orientations regarding geography and lyric style.

Direct statements expressing clear ideas in plain language are not often found in Bīdel’s corpus. His lyric poetry, prosimetrum autobiography, and long narrative poems are permeated with polysemy, allusion, and allegory – features that require significant exegetical time and effort, and frequently lead to perplexity. There are, however, three genres in which Bīdel composed that have received comparatively little scholarly attention: his *robā’eyyāt* (quatrains), *roqa’āt* (letters), and *nekāt* – literally “subtle points,” an aphoristic prosimetrum genre with a limpidly didactic, almost introductory-lecture-like quality. These three genres all share a compact transparency: they focus on a single point – a question, term, concept, idea, or problem – that Bīdel engages with unusual directness of diction, efficient eloquence, and word-count economy. These three genres, then, are a useful first port of call when gathering a preliminary sense of Bīdel’s ideas. Were analysis of Bīdel confined only to his lyric poetry, his ideas can appear obfuscated to the point of near indecipherability. These three “easy” genres can also serve as confirmation of patterns discerned in the ghazals. For instance, as will be discussed in detail in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, Bīdel’s lyric style of steadfast imagining relies upon the

dense interconnections between *ta`ammol* (attentive slow reflection), *khayāl* (that which is imaginary; the imagination), *āgāhī* (enlightenment), breath and breath control (*zabt-e nafas*),⁷⁴ and the idea of the world as a manuscript (*noskhe*) to be carefully studied (*moṭāla`e*). These concepts are bound together by Bīdel’s highest aim: the lyric cultivation of an ideal state of composure (*jāme`īyat*). Bīdel’s letters, quatrains, and subtle points confirm his preoccupation with these concepts.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ On the theological significance of breath, see for instance Subtle Point N^o25: “On the Breath of the Merciful and the True Reality of Language” (given in full in T4.N2), where Bīdel provides a straightforward exposition of the Sufi terms of art *nafas-e raḥmānī*, the “Breath of the Merciful.”

نفس رحمانی که اصطلاح اهل تحقیق منشأ الهی کلّیش نامیده‌اند و مصدر حقایق موجودات کلی و جزوی معین گردانیده فی الحقیقت حقیقت سخن است در غیب.

The “Breath of the Merciful” [God’s Breath] is a technical [Sufi] term of art; those who investigate the truth of divine origins [Sufis] use it to denote “that which is Universal,” i.e., that which is appointed [by God] to be the source of the true realities of all existent things, both particular and universal. In truth, [this Breath of the Merciful] is the true reality of language [as it exists] in the Hidden Realm. [Bīdel, *Kolleyāt*, IV:483].

For a discussion of Bīdel and the Breath of the Merciful, see Prashant Keshavmurthy, *Persian Authorship and Canonicity in Late Mughal Delhi*, 19-20 and Hajnalka Kovacs, “The Tavern of the Manifestation of Realities.” *The Masnavi Muhit-i Azam by Mirza Abd al-Qadir Bedil (1644–1720)*, 100-101.

⁷⁵ Subtle Point N^o54 discusses how the “riddle of attentive slow reflection” (*mo`ammā-ye ta`ammol*) assists in the deciphering of the “manuscript of metaphysical mysteries” (*noskhe-ye asrār*). This idea is carried forward in Subtle Point N^o55, which describes God as *jāme`* (one who “collects” or “gathers together” all attributes), and connects prophethood with extraordinary imagination (“*ma`nī-ye nobovvat taṣavvor kardan ast...be khayāl āvordan*”). Subtle Point N^o63 describes the world (*ālam*) as a page (*ṣafhe*) demanding careful exegetical study (*moṭāla`e*), to which idea Subtle Point N^o64 adds the requirement of attentive slow reflection in this interpretive process (*ta`ammol*). Subtle Point N^o74 describes a “manuscript of collected composure” (*noskhe-ye jam`īyat*) through the figuration of “a rosebud imagining springtime” (*ghonche...bahār-khayāl*), and the following Subtle Point (N^o75) attends to the seemingly contradictory dual aspects of this composure (*jam`īyat*) of speech and silence. Other tropes and signature images in Bīdel’s lyric poetry are echoed throughout the Subtle Points: e.g., Subtle Point N^o70 connects the iconic Bīdelian image of the bubble with human breath, a single moment of time, and enlightenment (*yek-nafas*; “*l-ī ma`a llāhi waqtun*”). There seems to be a logic of progression throughout these subtle points: taken together, they can be grouped into clusters where the same idea is examined in each subtle point from a slightly different angle. It is tempting to discern in these subtle points an arc of progress in order of increasing conceptual

The *nekāt*, Bīdel’s aphoristic “subtle points” (sing. *nokte*, lit. “point”), are direct, didactic presentations of a specific idea, topic, concept, or thesis. They usually take the form of a single opening prose paragraph, in which the “point” is presented in straightforward delivery, followed by supporting arguments, elaborations, or illustrative examples – often in the form of various verse genres.

What follow are several non-lyric moments from these three genres where Bīdel addresses ideas of geography, belonging, and lyric craft with precision, directness, and clarity. For instance, in Subtle Point N^o32,⁷⁶ the explicit topic is homeland and exile. This Subtle Point consists of one prose paragraph, followed by a two-line verse fragment and ten-stanza *mokhammas* (longer stanzaic poem of five-line stanzas). As is typical of Bīdel’s subtle points, the opening sentence articulates a general statement about the human condition:

آدمی به علت افسون امل در جمیع احوال دشمن آسایش خود است.

Human beings in all their states, deceived by hope, are enemies of their own repose.⁷⁷

This point, rather gnomic in its initial presentation, is elaborated in the following sentence thus:

اگر در منزل است فضولی هوای سفرش بیابان مرگ دوری وطن
می‌دارد و اگر در سفر است خار خار سودای وطن دامنش نمی‌گذارد.

difficulty, from avoiding inept and corrupt spiritual mentors (e.g., Subtle Points N^o3-4) to the more complex ideas about steadfast imagining, composure, and enlightenment mentioned above.

⁷⁶ For a full transcription, transliteration, and translation of all the subtle points, quatrains, and letters discussed here, see T4.

⁷⁷ “*Ādam-ī be ‘ellat-e aḥvāl-e amal, dar jamāt-e aḥvāl došman-e āsāyesh-e khod ast.*” Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, IV:498. See T4.N1.

If they are at a way-station, obsessive wanderlust keeps them slain in a desert far from homeland; and if they travel, the piercing anguish of mad longing for homeland snags their hem and keeps them ensnared.⁷⁸

Bīdel's subtle point draws attention to the human condition of never-being-at-home: when established in a certain place, the excitement of travel and adventure irresistibly beckons; but when we are abroad – we pine for home. This bleak picture of perpetual dissatisfaction and neverending longing is extended to descriptively encompass the created world as such:

عالمی در تلاش بی‌حاصلی نفس گداخته و می‌گدازد و خلقی به تردد بی‌فایده رنگ هستی باخته و می‌بازد.

The world wastes its breaths – and ever will keep wasting them – on fruitless effort; people waver, in pointless irresolution, as they gamble and lose – and ever will keep gambling and losing – the colors of their existence.⁷⁹

As might be expected, Bīdel finds much in this that is metaphysically resonant: he rounds out the prose paragraph with this piece of wisdom: that a wise person, in *any place* where they might find themselves, must value that place as their homeland – since it is the case that “every place where someone feels comfortable, they consider that place to have the pleasant blessings of homeland; and wherever they sleep, they enter that accustomed abode with contented feet.”⁸⁰ In other words, Bīdel here restates succinctly one of the ideas expressed in his poem on exile: that homeland (*vaṭan*) is not to be found on a

⁷⁸ “*Agar dar manzel ast, fożūlī-ye havā-ye safar-ash beyābān-marg-e dūrī-ye vaṭan mī-dārad va agar dar safar ast khār-khār-e sowdā-ye vaṭan dāman-ash namī-gożārad.*” Ibid.

⁷⁹ “*Ālam-ī dar talāsh-e bī-ḥāşel-ī nafas godākhte va mī-godāzad va khalq-ī be taraddod-e bī-fāyede rang-e hastī bākhte va mī-bāzad.*” Ibid.

⁸⁰ “*Har jā jā-ī garm kard, az moghtanamāt-e zowq-e vaṭan shomord, va har kojā pahlū gozāsh, qadam-e khorsandī be maskan-e ma`lūf afshord.*” Ibid.

political map, but is something we carry within ourselves – if we would only realize it.⁸¹

Bīdel drives the point home in the following verse fragment, where we are told that since the spiritual goal (*maqṣad*, a place of destination) is repose (*ārām*), “for those who have lost their minds, impatient in their search – the road can also be a way-station.”⁸²

Concretizing the metaphor of the Sufi spiritual path (*ṭarīqat*, lit. “way”) is a familiar trope in Sufi literature; Ibn ‘Arabī, for instance, draws heavily upon pre-Islamic Arabian lyric

⁸¹ Bīdel’s *Mohīṭ-e a‘zam* (*The Greatest Ocean*, the first of his four *masnavīs*, or long narrative poems, which he composed in 1667), describes the creation of the world. Hajnalka Kovacs’s thorough study of this poem shows how this cosmogonic description unfolds in several fascinating ways. On one hand, as Kovacs demonstrates, Bīdel draws on the conventions of the *sāqīnāme*, a Persian verse genre in which the poet gives vent to frustrating personal circumstances and beckons the musician and the cupbearer (*sāqī*) to help erase all woes. On the other hand, Kovacs shows how Bīdel creatively reworks the philosophical tale of King Lavaṇa from the Indic *Yogavāsishṭha*, the story of a king who magically turns into a low-caste sweeper and passes many years this way, forgetting his former life. Upon death, he finds himself miraculously restored to his previous existence of royal luxury as a king, where only a brief span of time has passed. Yet, instead of feeling immense relief, the king grieves for his lost “imaginary” life. As Kovacs notes, this story is inserted into the *sāqīnāme* at what at first glance appears to be an odd place in the *sāqīnāme*, between the description of wine, and just prior to the invocation of musical instruments. See Hajnalka Kovacs, “*The Tavern of the Manifestation of Realities: The Masnavi Muḥit-i Azam by Mirza Abd al-Qadir Bedil (1644–1720)*,” 66-111 (on the *sāqīnāme* structure of the poem) and 112-172 (on the Lavaṇa story). Bīdel’s idiosyncractic vocabulary of exile and homeland outlined in this chapter may shed further light on why Bīdel may have inserted the Lavaṇa story at this specific place in the *sāqīnāme*. In Chapter 2 of this dissertation, several early modern examples of *sāqīnāmes* are presented, which demonstrate that, among Iranian emigres living in India during the early modern period, this genre had become a fashionable way of describing their exile, their hatred of India, and their longing for their homeland of Iran. For instance, in a *sāqīnāme* penned by Mīr Sanjar b. Mīr Ḥaydar Mo‘ammā’ī (d.1622), an Iranian poet who found employment at Emperor Akbar’s court, the poet begs the musician to “Strike up a melody in the Iranian mode / Play me a song of homeland.” Given Bīdel’s propensity to enfold the historically specific within metaphysical abstractions – often while in explicit dialogue with more concretely minded poets – it seems plausible that story of King Lavaṇa in *The Greatest Ocean* performs a structurally similar function to the invocation in Mo‘ammā’ī’s *sāqīnāme*: it demands an urgent sense of pining for one’s true homeland – which is not Iran, or any other “real” place, but rather the realm of God’s true reality.

⁸² “*Maqṣad ārām ast ay kūshesh makon āzār-e mā / Bī-demāghān-e ṭalab rā jāde ham sar-manzel ast.*” Ibid.

preoccupations with desert travel, oases, and stages of a difficult (circular) journey.⁸³ But one feature that distinguishes Bīdel from other early modern Sufi poets is his persistently extreme enclosure of the historically specific within metaphysical abstraction, a tendency that manifests itself even in a genre as reality-rooted as his letters.

Bīdel’s letters touch upon a wide variety of topics, occasions, and concerns, and Bīdel inhabits them through several distinct forms of authorial presence. Some letters contain ingenious, if slightly vacuous, displays of rhetorical brio, such as Letter N^o170, addressed to Moulānā ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ‘Ezzat, where both the letter and the ghazal it contains are entirely devoid of orthographic dots.⁸⁴ Other letters are valuably informative, such as Letter N^o108 (“To Shokrollāh Khān, on the Completion of *Mount Sinai of*

⁸³ See, for example, Ibn ‘Arabī’s famous Poem 18 from *Translation of Desires (Tarjumān al-ashwāq)*, which opens with this elegiac *ubi sunt*: “At the way stations / stay. Grieve over the ruins... Where are those we loved, / where have their dark-white camels gone? / Over there / cutting through the desert haze.” Michael A. Sells, “‘At the way stations, stay’: Ibn ‘Arabī’s Poem 18 (*Qif bi l-Manāzil*) from the *Translation of Desires*,” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society* 18 (1995), 57-65.

⁸⁴ Since exactly half of the Persian alphabet comprises letters with dots (18 letters out of 36), composing a poem or letter with no dots at all requires considerable ingenuity. This flavor of clever bravura has its origins in classical Arabic literature, where the rigidly patterned inclusion or complete exclusion of dotted letters is an established mode of creative brilliance. The renowned essayist Al-Ḥarīrī (d.1122), for instance, has a letter in his collected works (*Al-maqāma al-marāghiyya*) in which every other word contains no dots at all, while the other words are formed exclusively from dotted letters. See Roger M.A. Allen, *An Introduction to Arabic Literature*: (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 164. Amīr Khosrow of Delhi (d.1325) is an early practitioner of similar orthographically dependent rhetorical gymnastics in the Indo-Persian tradition. In the prose preface to his collection of verse, he describes in boastful detail his mastery of the Arabic canon as well as the Persian tradition, a mastery that encompasses even the most abstruse and baroquely flashy flourishes of the Arabic tradition: “Although I have not been born in the palm-tree plantation of Arabia, as I write, God’s Spirit descends upon my nature as I move my pen, just as He whispered in pregnant Maryam’s ear... thus, the life-giving Lord rules with vice-regency in Hendūstān as well, through the Messiah’s breath – such that [the art of] metaphor reaches perfection *through me*.” Nāṣer al-Dīn Amīr Khosrow Dehlavī, *Ghorrat al-kamāl (The New Moon of Perfection)* (Patna: Edāre-ye Taḥqīqāt-e ‘Arabī va Fārsī, 1988), 61-62. Listing examples of these various bravura rhetorical figures, Amīr Khosrow mentions, for instance, entire poems that can be read simultaneously in Arabic and in Persian simply by adjusting the diacritical marks (ibid, 58-60).

Wonder”), where Bīdel describes himself as one “whose practice it is to salute inner meaning in the place of worship of his own thought.”⁸⁵ This letter provides important insight into the motivations behind his composition of this long narrative poem (“within it are the contents of a whole world of illumination”) and also yields clues as to its intended audience and purpose (he humbly requests that his patron study it carefully).⁸⁶

In other letters, Bīdel’s geographical surroundings come luminously into view, such as in Letter N^o210 (“To Shokrollāh Khān, on the Rainy Season”), where meteorological distinctiveness of South Asia – its monsoon season - is evoked in what seems at first like geographical particularity, only to be submerged within theological concerns (which mirrors Bīdel’s swerve into abstraction in his poem on exile, discussed earlier in this chapter). He writes in this letter that “those whose hearts are stolen [lit. “Bīdels”] open their eyes and gaze upon the brilliant manifestation of things-as-they-are; and in this state, they are able to pass through the doors, entering a paradise of certain knowledge.”⁸⁷ The outward landscape, then, exists only insofar as it can be read as a map of internal geography.

Elsewhere in his letters, Bīdel reflects quite directly on aspects of the professional craftsmanship in early modern Persian lyric. Letter N^o258 contains his famous exposition on lyric style, in which he affirms that, in his time, lyric style was theorized in explicitly geographical terms, whereby the Persianate sphere was divided into the culturally, linguistically, and stylistically distinct regions of Hend (South Asia), ‘Erāq (western

⁸⁵ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, IV:352-353. See T4.L1.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* See T4.L1.

⁸⁷ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, IV:397-398. See T4.L2.

Iran), and Fārs (central/eastern Iran). Moreover, Bīdel argues that “[Indian Persian poets’] lyric craft does not easily achieve greatness, because of the scrupulous care [Indian] poets must take to avoid various kinds of slip-ups.”⁸⁸ This letter will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2. But for now, it is worth noting that, along with Bīdel’s insistent abstraction away from geographical concreteness (as seen in his lyric poem on exile and in Subtle Point N^o32), Bīdel is also capable of conceiving of lyric style in hyper-specific geographical terms. Moreover, he makes use of a shared early modern vocabulary for style that is emphatically geographical in its distinctions between “Indian” and “Iranian” Persian lyric style and usage.

Before exploring this shared geographical vocabulary of style in the next chapter, Bīdel’s quatrains merit brief mention. The compressed nature of the quatrain form imposes specific constraints on the volume of ideas that each poem can convey. Interestingly, Bīdel’s quatrains also display a tendency seen in the longer lyric poems – where the penultimate line constitutes a *volta*, or an unexpected and significant “turn” of thought immediately prior to the final line’s conclusion. The third hemistich’s importance is reinforced by the fact that it is the only hemistich which does not conform to the poem’s obligatory rhyme (Persian quatrains follow the rhyme scheme AABA or AAAA). In general, Bīdel’s quatrains are generally less complex than his longer lyric poems; there are fewer changes of address, and they are mostly in a straightforward second person. Each quatrain usually has one “point,” and it is almost never hard to figure out what that

⁸⁸ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, IV:421-423. See T4.L3. On this division of style into geographical regions, and for a discussion of how the Timurids in Jāmī’s time viewed their own geographical and literary position as a middle link between India (*Hend*) and Iran (*Fārs*), represented by Delhi and Shiraz respectively, see Lewis, “To Round and Rondeau the Canon: Jāmī and Fānī’s Reception of the Persian Lyrical Tradition.”

point is. The aphoristic, adage-like nature of the quatrain genre does not admit longer elaboration of more complex (hidden, nested, ambiguous, etc.) structures of thought. Perhaps because of this directness imposed by the genre's compression, Bīdel's quatrains frequently serve as moments of reflection on his own literary craft. Bīdel's quatrains are formed around a single clearly visible thread of thought, and, unlike the *ghazals* (comprising around 10-60 hemistichs), they are not overwoven with elaborate metaphors and tangential ideas as happens frequently in his *ghazals*. There is simply not enough space. Instead, the quatrains focus on single metaphors, images, ideas, and conceptual terms that are also found in Bīdel's lyric poetry, where they receive more thorough and elaborate treatment (and where their individual meanings are compounded and complicated). Taken together, the quatrains form what could be considered a skeletal outline or blueprint for Bīdel's more complex lyric thought: ideas are worked out in the quatrains on a very small scale, thus making visible the conceptual and rhetorical building blocks from which the longer *ghazals* are constructed.⁸⁹ All of these aforementioned tendencies can be seen in the following quatrain:⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Bīdel's letters too, in a different way, offer an instinctively magnified view of the texture of his thought. Like the quatrains, each letter typically revolves around a single point or idea, which is unfolded through the ornate epistolary prose that is characteristic of early modern Persian formal correspondence. This prose is interspersed with couplets and sometimes longer whole-poem specimens of verse. Bīdel's letters are the only genre (aside from his autobiography) in which he leaves a legible record of his lived social and historical reality. Prashant Keshavmurthy argues that, "On the one hand, the [epistolary] genre committed [Bīdel] to a basic realism: he was addressing real individuals in specific times and places and often in reference to specific occasions... On the other hand, his use in prose of tropes and metaphors popular in the Persian *ghazal* of the period, his copious insertions of poetry into these letters and his synthesis of these with Sufi imagery and terminology in Ibn 'Arabī's tradition assigned each such particular occasion a generalized affective and metaphysical meaning beyond itself." Prashant Keshavmurthy, "Inscribing the Eternal into the Everyday: Voice in Bedil's *Ruqa'āt*," forthcoming.

⁹⁰ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, II:448. See T4.Q5.

رنگی گل کرده‌ام ز بو نازک تر
نقشی ز خط میان او نازک تر
تصویر من اندکی تأمل دارد
ای کلک خیال یک دو مو نازک تر

- I have mixed a color **more subtle** (1)
than a flowering scent;
I have composed an image **more subtle** (2)
than a graceful waistline.
My painting requires (3)
attentive slow reflection:
O paintbrush of the imaginary! (4)
It is **more subtle**
than single brush-hair.

The first, second, and fourth hemistichs indulge in repeated boasts about Bīdel's subtle powers of literary imagination. Importantly, even though Bīdel's imagery of images is often synaesthetic (as in Hemistich 1), here and elsewhere he conceives of the imagination in exclusively *visual* terms (painting, color). In Hemistich 3, the poem pivots from description to prescriptive dictum: addressing the implied reader, Bīdel names the specific interpretive process his art requires: *ta'ammol*, attentive slow reflection.⁹¹ While this quatrain itself might not be very subtle (there are no grammatical, syntactic, or other obvious difficulties to shroud the literal meaning), its clearly stated point – that Bīdel's subtle imaginative art of poetry requires interpretive time and care on the reader's part – resonates beyond this quatrain. By directly acknowledging the difficulty of his poetry and the virtuosity of his imagination, this quatrain gestures significantly towards Bīdel's more difficult genres, and provides an important moment of insight into how Bīdel intended this difficulty to be handled by his interpreters.

⁹¹ Bīdel's concept and practice of *ta'ammol* and the important role it plays in Bīdel's style of steadfast imagining is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

Bīdel does not usually include his name in his quatrains (this is not a formal requirement of the genre), although his signature (*takhalloṣ*), “Bīdel” or sometimes the plural “Bīdelān”, does appear in them from time to time.⁹²

ای شوق تو در کسب فنون گرم تلاش
چندان هوس آماده هر نسخه مباحث
در سیر رباعیات بیدل مفت است
درد و عبرت و سلوک و تحقیق و معاش

O passion, how ardently you seek
to learn the arts and sciences!
How many low desires there are!
Do not dwell in endless scrutiny
of every manuscript [or genre].
Take a turn instead
through Bīdel’s quatrains –
where these are freely found:
Pain and counsel,
the Sufi Path and Research into True Reality,
a means of living.

This image of “taking a turn” (*sayr*) through the place of literature – even through a specific generically demarcated region – clearly derives from the shared early modern vocabulary of travel, homeland, and exile, of aimless wanderings, and purposive journeys towards self-perfection with which this chapter has been concerned. That the terrain in question is Bīdel’s quatrains themselves suggests that they are indeed meant to be traversed briskly (i.e., not studied and pored over as one would a difficult manuscript), taken several at a time, and read with the understanding that they lead towards an edifying end. The explicit seriousness of this intended end – which is no less than knowledge, enlightenment, perfection of the self, and reshaping one’s life according to Bīdel’s specific Sufi principles – lends credence to the idea that these quatrains are intended by Bīdel to be preparatory, and that, taken together, they constitute a primer, or

⁹² See, for instance, T4.Q7 and T4.Q8.

a preliminary educational stage that the reader must pass before entering more difficult landscapes of his imagination.⁹³

Many ideas and images that are central to Bīdel's *ghazals* appear in the quatrains as if *in ovo*: for instance, the idea that ends become beginnings (a notion that Bīdel explores elsewhere through Indic theology)⁹⁴ is expressed in one quatrain thus:

در عالم اعتبار تغییر آثار
هر شام که دیدیم و دمانید سحر
هندو پس مرگ سوختن کرد ایجاد
انجام زغال است ته خاکستر

In this world of credible reflection,⁹⁵
marked by constant change,
As soon as we beheld an evening –
then came the break of dawn.
Hindus, after burning death,
bring life into existence:
The end
is a glowing ember
under ashes.

Not surprisingly, Bīdel's quatrains also address geography, place, travel, and the idea of India – with succinctness, directness, and instructive clarity:

از مرکز هند تا خط ملتانش
از حد عراق و یزد تا کاشانش
بر هر معموره‌ای که کردیم گذر

⁹³ By Bīdel's time, this would have been a well recognized "use" of quatrains. For a thorough study of the pedagogical importance of quatrains in the Sufi thought of 'Aṭṭār, their relation to other genres in which 'Aṭṭār composed, and the therapeutic role of these quatrains, see Austin O'Malley, *Poetry and Pedagogy: The Homiletic Verse of Farid al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār* (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2017), especially 57-79.

⁹⁴ Chapter 6 discusses in detail Bīdel's creative interpretation of Islamic doctrines through Indic theology, especially the important doctrine which should distinguish one from the other irreconcilably – the Indic doctrine of the endlessness of times.

⁹⁵ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt* II:447. See T4.Q2. Another quatrain works against the *explicit* adoption of Indic doctrine of the endlessness of time: see T4.Q4. Elsewhere, a middle ground is struck: for instance, in T4.Q1, Bīdel contrasts his poetry with the Torah, saying that unlike that scripture, his poetry does not "descend" all at once, but in "so many" moments of time, and "in a hundred tongues."

دیدیم اول سواد گورستانش

From central India
to the margins of Moltan,
From the borders of Iraq and Yazd
all the way to Kashan:
In every inhabited region
through which I've passed
What first I saw was this:
the lush black-soil suburbs
of their graveyards.

Bīdel's geography here seems remarkably concrete. The quatrain opens with "India" (*Hend*), but then employs the ambiguous third-person possessive (or dative, or accusative) marker *-ash* to demarcate smaller areas belonging within larger territories: the "center" of India, the city of Moltan (at the extreme northwest of Hindustan). The poem then moves north into the Near East, which is not mentioned by name (*Īrān*), but which is, like India, evoked through regions and cities: 'Erāq (western Iran), Yazd, and Kāshān (both in central Iran). This journey is first-personal, specific, and actually plausible: if we were to plot these place-names on a map and connect them following the order in which they appear in the quatrain, this would indeed produce the outline of a credible itinerary. While "Iran" is not mentioned explicitly by name, its presence is felt through the vocabulary of lyric association, especially in the word *savād* – the black fertile outskirts of cities in the Near East which had become associated with Esfahan (in part through Ṣā'eb's influence, as this chapter has shown), as well as with black kohl which would be traced around the beloved's eyes. But this is as far as Bīdel's concreteness goes. The quatrain inscribes a miniature version of the swerve towards the abstract that is seen in Bīdel's response poem to Ṣā'eb, subsuming the real-historical within the imaginal. What Bīdel "sees" in this quatrain is not a particular place, but rather an idea – that life is,

everywhere, girded by death. The third hemistich effectively erases all the significant specificity of the cities and regions the poem has just listed, burying them under generality with the phrase “wherever I have been.”

This is a rather macabre reversal of Ṣā’eb’s flourishing dark-soiled surrounding environs of Esfahan. The quatrain conjures a city surrounded not by culture and cultivation, but by a crop of corpses. It is easy to overread the grotesqueness of this image. Bīdel likely means most of all to draw attention to the fact that life is always undergirded by death, and that this is true no matter where in the “real” world one happens to be. Although the major urban and literary centers of Delhi and Esfahan, while unnamed, may nevertheless be felt in this poem, Bīdel appears primarily to enlist geography in this quatrain not to draw geographical distinctions, or to represent reality with descriptive fidelity – but in order to set geography aside altogether, with emphasis.

Perhaps the most startling *volta* in this quatrain is found not in the third hemistich, but in the fourth one. In this last hemistich, the *first* thing Bīdel sees (*avval*), the metaphysical cemetery, entirely rewrites the initially joyous journeying motion of the first part of the quatrain, which contain the pleasantly lilting repetitive listing of places “from A to B,” “from C to D.” The quatrain’s end, then, demands of its audience that the poem be reread – perhaps even in reverse in order – so as to mimic the insight Bīdel describes: (1) I see death before I see anything else. (2) This is true wherever I go, be it places in (3) Iran or (4) India. This combination of antilinear circularity, the reversal of expected order, and compelled rereading are key structural features of Bīdel’s poetry that find still more complex and important expression in Bīdel’s ghazals. As Chapters 4 and 6

argue, this ring structure is doctrinally significant: it is the very engine driving the mechanism of Bīdel’s style of steadfast imagining.

* * *

The conversation between Bīdel, Šā’eb, and Ḥazīn, along with the metaliterary moments culled from Bīdel’s quatrains, letters, and subtle points, have served as an introduction to Bīdel’s preferred vocabulary of place, his habits of lyric thought, and some of the aims and tendencies that govern his work. Before undertaking to identify, describe, and analyze Bīdel’s lyric style of steadfast imagining, one further contextualizing prelude is in order.

How can twenty-first-century scholarship today best formulate an historically faithful and practically useful account of the differences in emphasis and orientation that these poems by Šā’eb, Bīdel, and Ḥazīn have brought to light? What kinds of conceptual and critical vocabulary ought to be used? In the following chapter, I propose an emic approach to the reconstruction of style. This approach allows a range of early modern Persian literary critical voices to speak, instead of relying implicitly on modern (Western) categories, criteria, and concepts. To this end, Chapter 2 examines several kinds of sources from the early modern Persian literary critical tradition in order to recover emic approaches to questions of style, value, and literary analysis. These sources reveal the centrality of specific figurations in the early modern period: metaphor, ambiguity, and most importantly, the concept of *khayāl* (“that which is imaginary”), all of which are explicitly associated with an “Indian” style in the early modern critical tradition itself. These sources also reveal how early modern critics – both Indian and Iranian – themselves made use of geographically, politically, and even patriotically inflected

theories of literary history, periodization, style, and value. So while a reevaluation of the problematic term “Indian style” is certainly in order, Chapter Two also argues that something more is required: a carefully recovered understanding of how literary theory, geography, and politics were intertwined in the early modern period itself. The key terms, categories, values, and orientations identified in Chapter Two form a conceptual template from which the rest of the dissertation will build a detailed picture of Bīdel’s style of steadfast imagining.

Chapter 2

Early Modern Conceptions of an “Indian Style” of Persian Lyric

کسی کز معرفت یک شیوه بگزید
جهان بی‌نهایت منحصر دید

Anyone who chooses
but one style
of enlightenment
Will find their vision
of a boundless world
restricted.

– Bīdel of Delhi, *Mount Sinai of Enlightenment* (1688)¹

As a River runs fometimes precipitate and fwift, then dull
and flow; now direct, then *per ambages*; now deep, then
shallow; now muddy, then clear; now broad, then narrow;
doth my stile flow.

– Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621)²

In Chapter 1, the lyric colloquium on the intertwined themes of exile, Persianate geography, and literary belonging has revealed a wide spectrum of possible early modern forms of engagement with ideas through metaphor in lyric. This has served as a preliminary point of entry into understanding how Persian poets at this time turn to lyric (as opposed to systematic forms of prose discourse, such as treatises) in order to refine, debate, and subvert important concepts, definitions, and orientations. A further aim of

¹ Line 14604 (“*Kas-ī k-az ma ‘refat yek shīve bog(o)zīd / jahān-e bī-nehāyat monḥaṣer dīd*”). Mīrzā ‘Abd al-Qāder Bīdel Dehlavī, *Kolleyyāt-e Abū l-Ma ‘ānī Mīrzā ‘Abd al-Qāder Bīdel Dehlavī*, edited by Khalīlollāh Khalīlī (Tehrān: Enteshārāt-e Ṭalāye, 1389SH [2010/2011CE]), III:542.

² Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Oxford: Henry Cripps, 1638), 13.

Chapter 1 has been to add texture to terms that have been used in modern scholarship on early modern Persian literature to formulate concerns about lyric style in this period, including the much-discussed *sabk-e Hendī*, or the “Indian style” of Persian verse, and *tāze-gū’ī*, the style of “Speaking Anew.”³

The present chapter undertakes to examine some of the problems and virtues associated with modern terms and approaches to Persian lyric style by turning to premodern literary-critical thought. Instead of looking to twentieth- and twenty-first-century scholarship for problems, answers, and reasons, the view taken in this chapter is that the early modern Persian literary critical tradition itself ought to be recentered as a primary point of reference. By looking to genres such as the biographical compendium (*tazkeres*), prose prefaces composed by poets to their own verse collections, letters, and other genres in which poets and critics allow themselves candid moments of critical reflection, the objective is to see how early modern critics and poets themselves handle issues of style, geography, canonicity, terminology, and periodization.

Following an initial overview of the varieties of literary critical thought available in the early modern period and the disjunction between early modern critical thinking and twentieth-century scholarship (Iranian, Soviet, and Western) in Section 2.1, Section 2.2 turns to four biographical compendia (*tazkeres*), spanning from the early seventeenth century to the late eighteenth century, in order to recover emic approaches to matters of style, geography, and literary value. By drawing conclusions from these texts as wholes, and also by dwelling on surprising individual passages of hitherto unremarked

³ I follow Prashant Keshavmurthy’s translation of *tāze-gū’ī* as “Speaking Anew.” Prashant Keshavmurthy, *Persian Authorship and Canonicity in Late Mughal Delhi: Building an Ark* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 2.

importance, several trends come to light.⁴ These include: the centrality to early modern literary-critical thought of specific concepts and figurations, such as metaphor (*este 'āre*), ambiguity (*īhām*), and that which is imaginary (*khayāl*); approaches to periodization and literary history that display a robust sense of an Indo-Persian canon; and also the existence – formulated in early modern terms – of *sabk-e Hendī*, an “Indian style” of Persian lyric.

Section 2.3 looks to another valuable source of premodern criticism: poets’ prefaces to their own verse collections. Analysis of prefaces penned by three major Indian Persian poets – Amīr Khosrow (d.1325), Fayzī (d.1595), and Ghāleb (d.1869) – sheds light on how they conceived of their own lyric craft, and reveals a remarkable continuity of critical awareness regarding the Indo-Persian canon they inaugurate (Amīr Khosrow), uphold (Fayzī), and bring to an end (Ghāleb). The example considered here of a common critical vocabulary held by these poets consists in how all three poets – each later one likely in dialogue with their predecessors – exploit the idea of “color” (*rang*) and “colorfulness” (*rangīnī*) when discussing matters of lyric style and imagination, a vocabulary that, in the early modern period and later with Bīdel, emerges as a theory of the lyric rooted in ideas about “the colors of imagination” and “the lyric interim.” This Indo-Persian critical arc in turn helps to highlight what is new, what is old, and what is most salient in the ways in which early modern poets like Bīdel, Ḥazīn, and Ṣā’eb conceived of their own and others’ literary styles (Section 2.4). The final section (2.5) brings these reconstructions of early modern critical thought to bear on practical questions for contemporary criticism and issues of scholarly methodology. Respecting

⁴ None of the *tazkeres* examined here have been translated. All translations in this chapter, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

the concerns and sensibilities revealed in the early modern critical tradition, the chapter concludes by suggesting that contemporary scholarship can only benefit from emically reconstructed terms like “Indian style” alongside other definitions and terms for lyric practice. Instead of attempting to settle on one or the other “definitive” designation, the more terms we have at our disposal with which to think critically about early modern Persian lyric style, the better equipped we are to adjust them productively to the analysis of individual poets’ styles.

Ultimately, the aim is to arrive at a clearer sense of what terms, categories, and sensibilities were salient in the early modern Persian critical tradition itself – and then to apply them to contemporary analysis of the early modern Persian lyric. Specifically, the subsequent chapters (3-6) will draw on the early modern concepts and orientations recovered here in order to identify, conceptualize, and analyze what this dissertation calls Bīdel’s lyric style of steadfast imagining.

2.1 Varieties of Early Modern Persian Literary Criticism

The main claim of this chapter is that a carefully reconstructed emic sense of an “Indian style” of Persian poetry can helpfully inform modern analysis of Bīdel’s lyric style, and of early modern Persian lyric in general. Today, use of the term “Indian style” (“*sabk-e Hendī*”) requires one to confront two conceptually distinct yet interconnected problems, both of which have received a great deal of scholarly attention in recent years. The first problem concerns the appropriateness of the term “Indian style” as predicated of a particular body of literature, much of which was produced either outside of the Subcontinent, or on Indian soil but by Persian-speaking expatriates and visitors from Iran,

Central Asia, and elsewhere in the Persianate world.⁵ In other words, the workmanlike facts of literary production appear to be at odds with the real-geographical implications of the terminology applied to it. The second problem has to do with whether or not there can be said to be something essentially “Indian” about this style: if there is, in fact, a specifically “Indian” quality to a certain subset of early modern Persian poetry, then what precisely is that quality, what are the criteria for identifying it as such, and on whose authority should we accept these criteria?

William Empson famously says that “critics, as ‘barking dogs’, are of two sorts: those who merely relieve themselves against the flower of beauty, and those, less continent, who afterwards scratch it up.”⁶ At the risk of irreverence by classification, it is important to mention briefly several modern critical approaches to *sabk-e Hendī*. There is a tendency particularly in the criticism of the last forty years or so for critics writing about *sabk-e Hendī* to put their finger on something vitally important without actually getting their hands dirty (in the Empsonian sense). As recently as 2005, Ḥoseyn Hasanpūr Ālāshī, a student of Shaḫīr Kadkanī, described with breathtaking generality the dominant ethos of *sabk-e Hendī* verse in his view:

شعر سبک هندی شعر لذت است نه شعر معنوی است... بنمایه‌های فلسفی و عرفانی در شعر
این عصر بسیار ضعیف است و آنچه نیز دیده می‌شود غالباً تقلیدی و کلیشه‌ای و رسوبت ذهنی
باقی مانده از عصرهای پیشین است.

The poetry of *sabk-e Hendī* is a poetry of pleasure, not of meaning... The philosophical and mystical foundations of poetry in this age are very weak;

⁵ The problem of this tripartite division takes on new aspects in modernity. For the fascinating reception of Bīdel in nineteenth-century Central Asia, see Kevin L. Schwartz, “The Local Lives of a Transregional Poet: ‘Abd al-Qāder Bīdel and the Writing of Persianate Literary History.” *Journal of Persianate Studies* 9.1 (2016), 83-106.

⁶ William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (New York: New Directions, 1966), 9.

whatever [good] may still be found [in it] is mostly imitation and cliché, and any dregs of reason it has are merely what is left over from earlier ages.⁷

He also tends to describe *sabk-e Hendī* rather anachronistically in terms of certain European poetry movements – Impressionism, Symbolism, Imagism. His point seems to be that images float through the lyric poetry of *sabk-e Hendī* like clouds across a sky: unconnected, vacuous, and acquiring the occasional interesting shape only by accident.

Twentieth-century Soviet scholarship on *sabk-e Hendī* tends to be occupied with articulating grand historical narratives of Persian lyric style – perhaps in part because of the defensive position that Soviet critics had to take against the earlier (and, to some degree, still dominant) Soviet academic tendency to glorify the “classical” style originating with Rūdakī (d.940) and ending with Jāmī (d.1492), and to see everything after the sixteenth century as pockmarked with decline.⁸ Z.G. Rizaev’s 1971 monograph *Indiiskii stil’ v poëzii na farsī kontsa XVI-XVIIvv. (The Indian Style of Persian Poetry from the End of the Sixteenth Century through the Seventeenth Century)*, for instance, is an attempt to legitimise and resituate *sabk-e Hendī* vis-à-vis its classical ancestry by stressing the legitimacy of this poetry’s philosophical concerns:

To return to the initial question as to whether *sabk-e Hendī* is a literary style or a philosophical trend: in its artistic expression, it is a literary style which, in a sense, is a continuation of the ‘Erāqī [western Iranian] style, albeit with significant developments. However, the essence of that style lies in its new conceptual and philosophical content. This essence is what in turn defined that trend within which the form itself changed and developed.⁹

⁷ Ḥoseyn Ḥasanpūr Ālāshī, *Ṭarz-e tāze: sabk-shenāsī-ye ghazal-e sabk-e Hendī* (Tehran: Enteshārāt-e Sokhan, 1384SH [2005/2006CE]), 26.

⁸ See, for instance, M. L. Reĭsner, *Ėvolyutsiya klassicheskoi gazeli na farsī, X-XIV veka* (Moskva: Nauka, 1989) and A. M. Mirzoev, *Rudaki i razvitie gazeli v X-XV vekakh* (Stalinabad: Tadjhikgosizdat, 1958).

⁹ «Вернемся к поставленному выше вопросу о том, является ли индийский стиль литературным стилем или же философским течением. По своему художественному

In twentieth-century Iranian criticism, Shafī'ī Kadkanī's influential magnum opus on the role of image, imagination, and that which is imaginary (*khayāl*) in Persian poetics, is representative of the modern tendency to slip into obloquies against the early modern *sabk-e Hendī* lyric. In the outline of his work, he presents a typical twentieth-century view of the general arc of the premodern (classical) Persian canon (ca.900-1800):

بخش دوم حرکت و سیر صور خیال از سنائی تا نظامی، که قدمی است برای نوعی دگرگونی در شیوه تصویر؛ و بخش سوم از مولوی تا حافظ، که موازین تصویر و ملاکها و مباحث مربوط به صور خیال به کلی تغییر می‌کند. بخش چهارم از عصر جامی – دوره‌ای که مضمون‌سازی جای تصویر را می‌گیرد – تا عصر صائب تبریزی و اقمار او، که کوشش ارجمندی برای تحول و تجدد در نوع تصاویر ارائه دادند. بخش پنجم دوره‌ای است که از **بیدل دهلوی** – در اوج تصویرسازی نابجا و تراحم صور خیال – آغاز می‌شود و به قانلی – که حسیب انحطاط خیال و کوششهای تلفیقی است – ختم می‌شود.

The second part [of this book] concerns the movement and transformation of forms of that which is imaginary [*šovar-e khayāl*] from Sanā'ī to Nezāmī, whose poetry takes a step towards a different style of imagery [*tašvīr*]. The third part spans from Rūmī to Hāfez, who completely change the criteria for evaluating imagery and the grounds for discussion and debate surrounding forms of that which is imaginary. The fourth part is from the era of Jāmī (when the creation of new lyric topoi replaced earlier preoccupations with imagery) until the age of Šā'eb of Tabrīz and other poets in his orbit, all of whom display a particular tendency to strive towards the further development and renewal of poetic imagery. The fifth part treats of the era beginning with **Bidel of Delhi – the pinnacle of unbecoming imagery and an overcrowding of forms of that which is imaginary** – and ending with Qā'ānī, who represents the nadir of the decline of that which is imaginary and all attempts to speciously adorn and falsify [poetry].¹⁰

проявлению это – литературный стиль, продолжающий в некотором смысле художественную традицию иракского стиля, но значительно обновивший его. Сущность же этого стиля – новое идейное, философское содержание. Эта суть и определила в свою очередь то направление, в котором обновлялась сама художественная форма.» Z. G. Rizaev, *Indiiskii stil' v poëzii na farsī kontsa XVI-XVII vv.* (Tashkent: Fan, 1971), 48.

¹⁰ Moḥammad Rezā Shafī'ī Kadkanī, *Šovar-e khayāl dar she 'r-e Fārsī: taḥqīq-e enteḡādī dar taṭavvor-e imāzh-hā-ye she 'r-e Pārsī va seyr-e naẓarīyeh-ye balāghat dar Eslām va Īrān* (Tehran: Enteshārāt-e Nīl, N. I. L., 1350SH [1971CE]), 5. For a more nuanced approach that Shafī'ī Kadkanī would later come to adopt regarding Bīdel and the Indian style, see his *Shā' er-e āyene-hā: bar-rasī-ye sabk-e Hendī va she 'r-e Bīdel* (Tehran: Mo'assase-ye Enteshārāt-e Āgāh, 1366SH [1988CE]). In an especially beautiful comparison, Shafī'ī-Kadkanī describes style as being fundamentally comparative, like colors that need to be viewed side by side in order for distinctive hues to become visible (ibid, 37-38).

It is not the case that Shafī'ī Kadkanī locates the “fault” of the decline of Persian lyric in “that which is imaginary” (*khayāl*), for elsewhere he makes the general claim that “that which is imaginary (*khayāl*) is the fundamental element of poetry.”¹¹ The problem, then, with the “Indian style” is that here, imagination becomes “overcrowded,” because poets like Bīdel have allowed their imaginations to run amok. This is an especially inapt way to characterize the lyric style of Bīdel, since – time and again, in a variety of genres – he *makes a point* of cautioning against the perils of untrained imagination. For instance, in the long narrative poem *Mount Sinai of Enlightenment*, a poem whose overarching theme is the recasting of one’s physical environment in order to train the imagination through the practice of *ta`ammol*, attentive slow reflection – Bīdel issues this warning to the reader:

sabaq-hā-ye khayāl-e khām tā chand 14654
varaḡ-gardānī-ye owhām ta chand

سبق‌های خیال خام تا چند
 ورق گردانی اوهم تا چند

How long will you struggle
 to learn your lessons
 with untrained imagination?
 How long will you flip through
 the pages of illusion
 with careless haste?¹²

For Bīdel, one of the most vital requirements for training the imagination is *slowing down*: paying attention in a way that causes one’s experience of time to dilate, and, in

¹¹ “*Khayāl ‘onṣor-e aṣṭī-ye she‘r.*” Ibid, 11.

¹² Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, III:405-537.

some cases of especially intense lyric meditation, even slowing down time itself.¹³ Bīdel describes the results of successfully completing this process of training the imagination through lyric:

yaqīn-am shod ke dar har qatṛe jān-ī-st 14989
nehān dar har kaf-e khākī jahān-ī-st

یقینم شد که در هر قطره جانیت
 نهان در هر کف خاکی جهانیت

Finally, I reached
 this certain knowledge:
 every drop of water is a life,
 And every handful of earth
 contains within itself
 a hidden world.

ta`ammol z-īn adā ṣad jelve dārad 14990
ḥaq(q) o bāṭel ta`ammol mī-negārad

تأمل زین ادا صد جلوه دارد
 حق و باطل تأمل می‌نگارد

Attentive slow reflection
 yields these brilliant manifestations
 by the hundreds;
 Both vanity and true reality
 adorn – and are created by –
 attentive slow reflection.

ta`ammol `aynak-e taḥqīq-e ašhyā-st 14991
agar bāshad ta`ammol jelve az mā-st

تأمل عینک تحقیق اشیاست
 اگر باشد تأمل جلوه از ماست

Like spectacles,
 attentive slow reflection
 looks to see the truth of things.
 If we practice attentive slow reflection,
 its brilliant disclosures – theophanies –
 come from our selves.

¹³ On Bīdel's distinctive approach to lyric time and the place of this approach in his style of steadfast imagining, see Chapters 3 and 4.

The stakes of Bīdel’s program for training the imagination could not be higher. The ultimate aim is to arrive at complete certainty (*yaqīn*, the highest and surest form of knowing truth in Islamic thought). Conversely, failing to train the imagination has real and significant consequences as well. As he says in another long narrative poem, *The Enchanted World of Wonder* (*Telesm-e ḥayrat*):

nam-e baḥr-ī ke īn tūfān forūshad 13543
salāmat kū agar nāgah bejūshad

نم بحری که این طوفان فروشد
 سلامت کو اگر ناگه بجوشد

This storm [of untrained imagination]
 offers to sell
 an ocean’s worth of moisture;
 But where is the guarantee of safety,
 were it all suddenly
 to come to boil?¹⁴

This poem details the ways in which an untrained imagination can overwhelm and engulf a person, and prevent them from attaining certain knowledge of true reality. The specific dangers and virtues that Bīdel assigns to that which is imaginary, and a detailed account of the program he sets forth for training the imagination, are given in Chapters 3-6. For the moment, it is sufficient to note the great discrepancies that can arise between largest-scale literary-critical conceptions of a millennium-long lyric tradition and the *actual styles of lyric thought* of individual poets.

Many tendencies and biases found in twentieth-century literary criticism on classical Persian literature can be traced to influences from the Bāzgasht (“Literary

¹⁴ For longer excerpted passages from these two poems, see T3; and for analysis of these poems with especial reference to the practice of *ta’ammol* (attentive slow reflection), see Chapter 5.

Return”) movement of the nineteenth century.¹⁵ Beginning around the mid-eighteenth century, the Bāzgasht-e Adabī movement arose among Persian-language poets and critics; founded on a denunciation of the “Indian style” of Persian lyric poetry, this movement called for a corrective return to the simpler style of the earlier masters associated with the regions of Khorasan and ‘Erāq (eastern and western Iran, respectively).¹⁶ The term “*sabk-e Hendī*” itself was coined in the 1940s by Muḥammad Taqī Bahār,¹⁷ and only in relatively recent times has this term, and its underlying mode of thinking, come under long-overdue critical scrutiny. Rightly stressing that the uncritical application of geographical qualifiers such as “Indian” to a long and diverse literary tradition may be a problematic practice that ultimately distorts more than it illuminates,¹⁸

¹⁵ For an examination of how the premodern genre of the *tazkere* (biographical compendium) came to be repurposed in the twentieth century for “literary history,” see Alexander Jabbari, “The Making of Modernity in Persianate Literary History,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 36.3 (2016), 418-434. And for the important contrast between premodern and modern conceptions of “place” in Persian literary criticism, see Mana Kia, “Imagining Iran before Nationalism: Geocultural Meanings of Land in Azar’s Atashkadeh,” in *Rethinking Iranian Nationalism and Modernity: Histories Historiographies*, eds. Kamran Aghaie and Afshin Marashi, 89-112 (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2014).

¹⁶ For a brief history of this view, see William H. Hanaway, Jr., “Bāzgašt-e adabī,” in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* IV/1 (1989). Available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/bazgast-e-adabi> (accessed on 24 April 2019).

¹⁷ Moḥammad Taqī Bahār, *Sabk-shenāsī, yā tārikh-e taṭavvor-e naṣr-e Fārsī* (Tehran: Chāpkhāne-ye Khodkār, 1942/1943), I: *jīm-yab*, within which, especially *ye-yā*. It should be noted, however, that the only truly anachronistic part of this term is the word “*sabk*,” “style.” On this, see Faruqi, “A Stranger in the City,” 5 et passim.

¹⁸ See, for example, Muzaffar Alam, “The Culture and Politics of Persian in Precolonial Hindustan,” in *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, ed. Sheldon Pollock, 131-198 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 177-189; Faruqi, “A Stranger in the City;” Rajeev Kinra, “Fresh Words for a Fresh World: Tāza-Gū’ī and the Poetics of Newness in Early Modern Indo-Persian Poetry,” *Sikh Formations* 3.2 (2007), 125-149; *ibid*, “Make it Fresh: Time, Tradition, and Indo-Persian Literary Modernity,” in *Time, History, and the Religious Imaginary in South Asia*, ed. Anne C. Murphy (New York: Routledge, 2011), 12-39; and *ibid*, *Writing Self, Writing Empire: Chandar Bhan Brahman and the Cultural World of the Indo-Persian State Secretary* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2015), especially 201-239; Paul E. Losensky, *Welcoming Fighānī: Imitation and Poetic Individuality in*

recent reevaluations by Shamsur Rahman Faruqi,¹⁹ Riccardo Zipoli,²⁰ and many others has exposed and overthrown many of these anti-*sabk-e Hendī* prejudices, calling for a more nuanced approach to questions of style and periodization and urging the adoption of a critical methodology free from metageographical assumptions (nationalist and others) and demanding a more minutely gradated spectrum of literary movements and styles. Moreover, as some scholars have argued, one need not grapple with the term “Indian style” at all, since another apparently more appealing term, unsoiled by geographical associations, is available for use: *tāze-gū’ī*, or “Speaking Anew,” a term used in the Persian critical tradition to designate a specific literary style from the early modern period, rooted in the notion that this style prizes and cultivates poetic craft that is *tāze* – in both senses of “fresh” and “new.”²¹

the Safavid-Mughal Ghazal (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1998), 92-94; and Ehsan Yarshater, “The Indian or Safavid Style: Progress or Decline?” in *Persian Literature*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater, 249-28 (Albany, N.Y.: Bibliotheca Persica, 1988). For examples of the later evolution of the relationship between “Iranian” and “Indian” in the modern period, see Mana Kia, “Indian Friends, Iranian Selves, Persianate Modern,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 36.3 (2016), 398-417. And for an account of how the idea of “Iranian” vs. “Indian” Persian and the implicit superiority and purity of the former over the latter came to haunt the Indo-Persian and Urdu literary tradition, see Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, “Unprivileged Power: The Strange Case of Persian (and Urdu) in Nineteenth-Century India,” *The Annual of Urdu Studies* 13 (1998), 3-30; see especially *ibid*, 17-22, where Faruqi provides an overview of the origins of these debates in the early modern tradition itself. On this topic, see also Paul E. Losensky, “Qodsī Mašhadī,” in the *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2006. Available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/qodsi-mashadi> (accessed on 24 April 2019).

¹⁹ Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, “A Stranger in the City: The Poetics of Sabk-e Hendī,” *Annual of Urdu Studies* 19 (2004).

²⁰ Riccardo Zipoli, *Cherā sabk-e hendī dar dunyā-ye gharb sabk-e bārūk kh’āndeh mīshavad?* (Tehran: Anjoman-e Farhangī-i Itāliyā, 1363SH [1984CE]).

²¹ See Kinra, *Writing Self, Writing Empire*, 203-204.

Paul Losensky summarizes the essential qualities of the *tāze-gū'ī* style in the following way: “This ‘poetics of the new’ prizes the unexpected turn of thought or startling connection between image and idea...*Ṣā'ib* himself uses the phrase *ma'nā-ye bigāna*, ‘unfamiliar or alien conception,’ to refer to the unexpected images, startling similes, and unusual metaphors that flowed from his pen.”²² While the *tāze-gū'ī* style is associated with the early modern Persian ghazal, metapoetic use of the term “fresh” (*tāze*) with reference to conscious innovation in the lyric is also attested much earlier. Rūmī, for example, also pairs “*tāze*” and “*sokhan*” (lit. “speech,” or “literary discourse”) in the following way:

هین سخن تازه بگو تا دو جهان تازه شود
وارهد از حد جهان بی حد و اندازه شود

Make haste!

Compose fresh discourse [*sokhan-e tāze*]

so that both worlds will be renewed [*tāze*]:

[Discourse] will be freed

from the restrictions of the world –

it will outstrip all measure and limit.²³

In early modern literary criticism, certain poets whose works were thought to possess this quality of “freshness” were often described as belonging to a “fresh” style,²⁴ and the

²² Paul E. Losensky, “*Ṣā'eb Tabrīzī*,” in the *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2003. Available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/saeb-tabrizi> (accessed on 11 April 2019). On the terms “*bīgāne*” and “*tāze*,” see also Losensky, *Welcoming Fighānī*, 214 and 194-207, respectively. For examples of metapoetic uses of “*tāze*” in *Ṣā'eb*'s ghazals, see *ibid*, 212 et passim. Prashant Keshavmurthy locates the distinctive quality of the Speaking Anew style in how it is given to “playing on the reader’s awareness of the ... classical canon to evoke new topoi, new logics of intertextual relation and new metaphors and syntax.” Keshavmurthy, *Persian Authorship and Canonicity in Late Mughal Delhi*, 2.

²³ *Hīn sokhan-e tāze begū tā do jahān tāze shavad / vā-rahad az ḥad(d)-e jahān bī-ḥad(d)-o-andāze shavad*. Jalāl al-Dīn Moḥammad Balkhī Rūmī, *Kolleyyāt-e Shams*, ed. Badī' al-Zamān Forūzānfar (Tehrān: Mo'assase-ye Maṭbū'ātī Amīr Kabīr, 1336SH [1957-1966CE]), 242.

²⁴ For example, Paul Losensky calls attention to Owḥadī Baylānī's seventeenth-century biographical compendium *Arafāt al-'āsheqīn va 'araṣāt al-'ārefīn*, where the influential poet

frequent pairing in Šā'eb's *ghazals* of Esfahan with references to the “fresh” quality of his style has been noted in Chapter 1.

The controversy and elasticity attending the terms “Indian style” and “Speaking Anew” respectively create a confusing terminological problem for the modern scholar, a situation further complicated by the fact that these terms are often used interchangeably – even though it is far from clear that they can be said to be coextensive in the early modern period, especially if one takes the Indian style to originate as early as the thirteenth century.²⁵

As Guy Davenport brilliantly demonstrates in his essay “The Geography of the Imagination,” sensitivity to metaphor can uncover a meaningful, frequently complex vocabulary of ideas. How does one decipher such a vocabulary? As metaphors accrue

Bābā Feghānī (d.1519) is described as a master of “a firm, fresh style,” “*ravesh-e tāze-ye matīn*.” Losensky, *Welcoming Fighānī*, 34-35. Losensky makes the important point that Feghānī’s “fresh style” (*tarz-e tāze*) gives rise to a *variety* of subsequent “fresh styles” (ibid, 42). A slightly later example of the complex proliferation of this literary-critical term is found in a seventeenth-century *tazkere* composed in Delhi by Moḥammad Afzal Sarkhūsh (*Kalemāt al-sho‘arā*, composed in 1682). Stefano Pellò notes that in his introduction, Sarkhūsh broadly characterizes his contemporary literary scene as being dominated “by the concepts of newness in writing poetry.” Stefano Pellò, “Persian Poets on the Streets: The Lore of Indo-Persian Poetic Circles in Late Mughal India,” in *Tellings and Texts: Music, Literature, and Performance in North India*, ed. Francesca Orsini and Katherine Butler Schofield, 303-326 (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2015), 306. For an overview of the politics and practices of the *tāze-gū‘ī* style, with particular attention to its evolving valences and reception, see also Kinra, *Writing Self, Writing Empire*, 229-239.

²⁵ As Muzaffar Alam observes, the origins of the “Indian style” did not begin in the Mughal period; indeed, the entire corpus of Persian literature “developed not very far from the Indian frontier, and, in fact, not strictly inside Iran itself.” Muzaffar Alam, “The Culture and Politics of Persian in Precolonial Hindustan,” 151. Alam further distinguishes between three distinct stages of “Indian Persian,” only the last of which was during the early modern (Mughal) period (ibid, 154). Sunil Sharma traces the origins of the Indian style to the late 11th / early 12th centuries with the innovations of the poet Mas‘ūd-e Sa‘d-e Salmān of Lahore (for instance, his adaptation of the Northern Indian vernacular *bārahmāsā* genre into Persian). See Sunil Sharma, *Persian Poetry at the Indian Frontier: Mas‘ūd Sa‘d Salmān of Lahore* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2000), 116-123, 159-164.

layers of meaning over time, a very delicate critical archaeology is called for, one that is capable of revealing a coherent picture of change over time. Davenport suggests that taking metaphors of place seriously as a category of thought involves far more than mere cartographical considerations, for geography under the pressure of metaphor can become a constitutive force in the shaping of thought, identity, and style.²⁶ Similarly, serious attention to metaphors of style and geography both in the Persian lyric and in the early modern Persian critical tradition can reveal important, perhaps too hastily dismissed aspects concerning the “Indian style” of Persian verse. This chapter continues the project begun in Chapter 1 of recovering early modern vocabularies for style by presenting an under-the-hood view of a range of early modern literary-critical thought.

2.2 Biographical Compendia (*Tazkeres*): Four Case Studies

The *tazkere* genre is fascinatingly, and often frustratingly, contradictory. Technically, *tazkeres* are “biographical dictionaries,” compendia of notices with brief factual overviews of the lives of poets and/or other notable figures (saints, nobles, etc.).²⁷ *Tazkeres* are both restrictive, since – in theory – they constitute a mere list; and yet at the same time, these are also open-endedly elastic texts, since – in practice – these compendia are interspersed with digressions, contain unexpected excursions on a wide

²⁶ Guy Davenport, “The Geography of the Imagination,” in *The Geography of the Imagination: Forty Essays by Guy Davenport* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1997), 10.

²⁷ Jan Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1968), 438-459, and especially Ahmad Golchīn-e Ma’ānī, *Kārvān-e Hind: dar aḥvāl va āṣār-e shā’erān-e ‘aṣr-e Ṣafavī ke be Hendūstān raft-e-and* (Mashhad: Qods-e Reṣāvī, 1369SH [1990-1991CE]). For a thorough overview of genres of Persian biographical writing, see Paul Losensky, “Biographical Writing: Tadhkere and Manāqeb,” in *A History of Persian Literature, Volume 5: Persian Prose*, ed. Bo Utas (forthcoming).

range of topics, and can surprise the reader with moments of critical and metacritical reflection and on topics including lyric style, canon-formation, and aspects of practical criticism. One might look to a particular entry in a *tazkere* for a certain kind of information about a poet's life, their socio-historical circumstances (like patronage), and a few representative lines of verse – and be surprised to find there a passage detailing a cause célèbre involving a heretical treatise treading a not subtle enough line on the issue of metempsychosis, an instructive disquisition on prosody, or a description of early modern South Asian practices of breath control. For these reasons, the *tazkere* genre is most productively utilized if it is approached in an exploratory spirit of discovery and unscripted investigation.

Persian *tazkeres* have long formed the factual backbone of modern scholarship on the Persian literary tradition. As major sources of information about poets' lives and works, *tazkeres* “constitute the only form of literary history created by the tradition itself”²⁸ – although the prefaces considered in this chapter require that this general observation be qualified. Given that close reading of the poems themselves may best be accomplished alongside recovery of emic terms for and critical approaches to problems of style, geography, and the connections between them, this section considers several significant passages from early modern *tazkeres* composed both by Indian authors (Āzād Belgrāmī and Sher ‘Alī Khān Lodī) and by Iranians (Ṭāher Naṣrābādī and ‘Abd al-Nabī Fakhr al-Zamānī Qazvīnī). These four works of literary criticism reveal important early

²⁸ J.T.P. de Bruijn, “Tadhkira,” in the *Encyclopædia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Available online at http://dx.doi.org.proxy.uchicago.edu/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1140 (accessed on 24 April 2019).

modern reflections on canonicity, the history of Persian literary-critical thought, periodization, lyric style, and even an “Indian” style of lyric poetry.

2.2.1 Gholām ‘Alī Āzād Belgrāmī, *Khezāne-ye ‘āmere* [*The Imperial Treasury*], (1762/3)

The northern Indian critic Gholām ‘Alī Āzād Belgrāmī (1704-1786) completed his biographical compendium *Khezāne-ye ‘āmere* (*The Imperial Treasury*) in 1762/1763,²⁹ forty years after Bīdel’s death and four years prior to Ḥazīn’s. As is so often the case with premodern *tazkeres*, Āzād does not discuss matters of poetic style, periodization, and other pivotal issues in dedicated sub-sections; instead, he embeds his arguments within individual biographical notices themselves. One such excursus occurs when Āzād interrupts his entry on the northern Indian critic and poet Khān-e Ārzū (1688-1756)³⁰ to divagate into an important, perhaps even path-breaking discussion concerning the periodization of Persian literary history, which, he argues, began to be reconfigured along hardline perceptions of an Indian-Iranian divide at a specific point in time in the latter third of the seventeenth century. Indeed, Āzād locates the beginning of this reconceptualization in a specific biographical compendium, the *Tazkere-ye Naṣrābādī*

²⁹ For the dating of this work to 1176H (1762-1763CE), see C.A. Storey and Francois de Blois, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey: Poetry of the Pre-Mongol Period* (New York: Routledge, 2004; London: Luzac & Co., 1927), V:4.

³⁰ On Ārzū’s life and thought, see Prashant Keshavmurthy, “Kān-e Ārezu, Serāj-al-din ‘Ali,” in the *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition (New York, 1996-). Available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kan-e-arezu> (accessed on 6 April 2019). See also Arthur Dudley, “Khān-e Ārzū’s Middle Way for Poetic Authority in Eighteenth-Century Indo-Persian,” *Journal of Persianate Studies* 9.1 (2016), 60-82. On the famous debate between Ārzū and Ḥazīn, see Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels in the Age of Discoveries, 1400–1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 229 et passim.

(*Naṣrābādī's Biographical Compendium*, composed during the 1670s). A paraphrase of this important discussion follows, in order to attend as closely as possible to the precise language of Āzād's arguments.³¹

Āzād opens his excursus with an overview of the history of Indo-Persian literature. This takes the form of a schematic presentation of the Indo-Persian canon, in chronological order, that includes succinct characterizations of the changing poetic style. He begins with the first of several generations of Islamic rulers of India (*tabaqāt-e salāṭīn-e eslāmeyye-ye Hend*), who lived during the pre-Mughal era when masters of every art came to the Subcontinent from Iran, Central Asia, and beyond – including various distinguished groups (*ṭā'efe, gorūh*) of poets such as Abūl Faraj Rūnī (11th c.), Mas'ūd-e Sa'd-e Salmān of Lahore (d.ca.1121-1122), Amīr Khosrow of Delhi (d.1325), Amīr Ḥasan of Delhi (d.1336), and Shaykh Jamālī (b. 1457, Delhi, d.1535, Gujarat). Āzād then proceeds to the age of Emperor Akbar (r.1556-1605), under whom Persian poetry gained even greater widespread currency in India. He describes this new phase as being characterized by the spread of Persian from the capital city of Delhi to more peripheral urban centers. Such a multitude of capable poets began to populate these towns that each one became a veritable garden of nightingales (“*amṣār be-vojūd-e sokhan-sarāyān golestān-hā-ye 'anādel gardīd'*). Āzād notes that during this period, relations between the Tīmūrīds (i.e., the Mughals) and the Ṣafavīds in Iran were such that not a single noble family was to be found across Iran and Tūrān (i.e., Central Asia) who did not come to

³¹ The following pages provide a paraphrase of the Persian original as found in Gholām 'Alī Āzād Belgrāmī, *Khezāne-ye 'āmere* [*The Imperial Treasury*] (Lahore: Naval Kishore, 1271 [1854]), 116-121. For the same passage in the more recent edition, see Gholām 'Alī Āzād Belgrāmī, *Khezāne-ye 'āmere* [*The Imperial Treasury*],], eds. Nāṣer Nīkūbakht and Shakīl Aslam Beyg (Tehran: Pāzhūheshgāh-e 'Olūm-e Ensānī va Moṭāla'āt-e Farhangī, 2011), 148-158.

India in search of prosperity (“*dar ‘ahd-e īshān hīch khāndān-e ‘omde namānd ke dar Hendūstān nayāmad*”). Among these, Āzād lists the following poets: Ghazālī of Mashhad (d.1572 in Ahmadabad, Gujarat; he was one of Emperor Akbar’s poet laureates), ‘Orfī of Shīrāz (d.1591 in Lahore), Ṣanā’ī of Mashhad (d.1587/1588, who worked under the great Mughal patron of the arts, ‘Abd al-Raḥīm Khān-e Khānān), Nazīrī of Nīshāpūr (d.ca.1612-1614, in Ahmadabad, Gujarat), Nou’ī of Khabūshān (b. near Mashhad; also entered the service of ‘Abd al-Raḥīm Khān-e Khānān; d.1610 in Burhanpur), Moshfeqī of Bokhārā (d.1588; visited India twice before being made poet laureate under the Uzbeks in Central Asia), Ḥakīm Roknā of Kāshān (d.unkown), Ṭāleb of Āmol (d.1626-1627 in India), Abū Ṭālib Kalīm of Hamadān (d.1651 in Kashmir), Qodsī of Mashhad (d.1646 in Lahore), Mīrzā ‘Enāyat of Esfahan (d.unkown), and countless others. Āzād separately mentions another group of distinguished Persian poets from Akbar’s time who were born in India (“*Hendūstān-zāyān dar ‘ahd-e Akbarī*”), including Shaykh Fayzī (d.1595), whom Āzād credits with elevating the banner of poetry (“*levā-ye shā ‘erī bar-afrākht*”), and several of his contemporaries. During the subsequent reigns of Emperor Jahāngīr (r.1605-1628) and Emperor Shāhjahān (r.1628-1658), Āzād singles out Moḥsen Fānī of Kashmir³² (d.1670/1671) and Ghanī of Kashmir (d.1669) as preeminent poets of their time, remarking that they “applied **fresh rouge** to the face of this attractive beauty [i.e., poetry]” (“*ghāze-ye tūze be-rū-ye īn shāhed-e ra ‘nā mālīdand*”). In the time of Emperor Awrangzēb (r.1658-1707), Āzād says that poetry rebelled, rising up in every corner of the empire (“*gholovv kard...az har gūshe shā ‘erī bar-khāst*”) – a situation that Āzād attributes, with remarkable frankness, to the Emperor’s negligent inattention (“*‘adam-*

³² The 1871 edition of the *Khezāne-ye ‘āmere* erroneously reads “Ṣānī” instead of “Fānī.”

tavajjoh-e bādshāh”). During this period, Āzād observes that Nāṣer ‘Alī Serhendī and Mirzā Bīdel recast the foundation of poetry **in a new tradition** (“*tarḥ-e sokhan be-ā’īn-e tūze andākhtand*”).

Here Āzād introduces his argument about the origins of what we might call a “geographical turn” in early modern Persian literary criticism. Āzād claims that it was precisely during the Awrangzēb era that Iranian and Indian Persian poets came to be classified in separate categories for the first time. According to Āzād, Mirzā Ṭāher Naṣrābādī (b.1618),³³ who composed his biographical compendium in Esfahan (the *Tazkere-ye Naṣrābādī*, begun in 1672/1673), was the first critic to do so (“*dar Esfahān tazkere nevesht va faṣl-e mouzūnān-e Hend rā jodā sākht*”). Prior to Naṣrābādī, Āzād says that Iranian *tazkere*-writers like Moḥammad ‘Oufī (late 12th / early 13th centuries), Doulatshāh Samarqandī (d.1494/1507), Mīr Moḥammad Taqī Kāshī (fl.16th c.), and others had always evaluated the Persian poets of India – such as Nokatī Lāhūrī,³⁴ Mas‘ūd-e Sa‘d-e Salmān, Amīr Khosrow, Amīr Ḥasan, Shaykh Fayzī, and others – equally alongside Persian poets from Iran (“*pīsh az īn tazkere-nevīsān-e Velāyat [i.e., Iran] ... sho ‘arā-ye Hend rā ... dar zemn-e sho ‘arā-ye Velāyat [Iran] fekr mī-kardand*”). Āzād then notes (perhaps with some measure of reproach to critics) that during the same period, figures like Moḥammad Afzal Ṣābet Elāhābādī, Khān-e Ārzū, Mirzā ‘Abd al-Ghanī Qabūl Kashmīrī, Mirzā Moḥaffar Jān-e Jānān, and several of their contemporaries

³³ Ṭāher Naṣrābādī is mistakenly identified in the 1871 edition of Āzād’s *Khezāne-ye ‘āmere* as “*Naṣrābādī*” (sic). For biographical information about Naṣrābādī and the *Tazkere-ye Naṣrābādī*, see C.A. Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey*, Vol. 1, Part 2, 818-821. This work is discussed in the following section of the present chapter (2.2.2).

³⁴ He is considered to be the “earliest poet of Lahore.” See Sunil Sharma, *Persian Poetry at the Indian Frontier: Mas‘ūd Sa‘d Salmān of Lahore* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2000), 7.

installed the beauty of poetry upon an even higher throne (“*shāhed-e sokhan rā bar korsī-ye bālā-tar neshāndand*”).

Having thus traced the historical timeline up to his own era, Āzād closes his excursus on the Indo-Persian canon by casting an anxious glance forward: God only knows what sorts of calamities will be revealed by insurrectionists of the future, he muses (“*khodā dānad shūr-afganān-e zamān-e esteqbāl che qeyāmat-hā āshekārā mī-konand*”). Since he will not be present in this future, he expresses hope that he will be remembered well by just-minded friends (“*yārān-e dād-ras*”).

This entire passage is remarkable for several reasons. Here is an Indian Persian critic, writing during the highest pitch of the eighteenth-century debates about geography and style, who presents an historically scrupulous reconstruction of the (Indo-)Persian canon – while at the same time marshalling arguments about how that canon was first formed and later contested in the early modern period, a century before Āzād’s own time. It is illuminating to note Āzād’s limited use of the descriptor “*tāze*” (“fresh”): for him, a “fresh” style is applied to a specific period within the longer history of Indo-Persian literature (approximately the mid-17th through the 18th centuries) and describes the poetry of a very particular set of Indo-Persian poets of that period (Fānī and Ghanī, both of Kashmir, and Nāṣer ‘Alī and Bīdel, both of northern India).³⁵ Furthermore, the criterion of a poet having flourished during this “fresh” period is a necessary but not sufficient condition for having their poetry ascribed to the Speaking Anew style; for example,

³⁵ This would seem to complicate any across-the-board contemporary scholarly substitution of “fresh style” for “Indian style;” if the modern critical aim is to remain faithful to emic conceptions of style, then this example shows how “freshness” was by no means a kind of lyric style that spanned the entire early modern period in the entire Persianate world, but was seen by critics like Āzād in a more delimited and, crucially, in a more *poet-specific* way.

although Ḥazīn’s erudition receives considerable praise, the term “*tāze*” is nowhere to be found in Āzād’s discussion of his style.³⁶ Interestingly, Āzād also uses “*tāze*” to describe the literary-critical style of Ārzū, remarking that Ārzū’s biographical compendium *Majma‘ al-nafā‘es* [*Compendium of Precious Objects*] contains “fresh interpretations” (“*ta‘bīrāt-e tāze*”).³⁷ This description sheds light on how, in the early modern period, both lyric poetry and literary criticism were seen as stylistically intertwined forms of thought.

The passage paraphrased above reveals Āzād’s vision of Indo-Persian literary history: this emic schema is inflected by politics, both at the literal level (literary progress is divided into stages that coincide with imperial reigns) and in more subtle rhetorical ways (poetry itself is capable of conquest, expansion, and rebellion). Āzād’s pointedly political diction in this passage is perhaps intended to accentuate his central argument that, although Indo-Persian literary history can certainly be said to possess an independent narrative of its own (indeed, he has just demonstrated this), and despite the fact that this Indo-Persian canon came to be formed through a diffuse set of processes involving shifting migration patterns of intellectuals, the politics of patronage, and many different groups’ evolving perceptions of each other across several centuries – nevertheless, Āzād claims that the practice of partitioning Persian literary history more inflexibly and prejudicially into “Iranian” versus “Indian” can be traced to a specific author and work: Ṭāher Naṣrābādī’s *Tazkere-ye Naṣrābādī*.

³⁶ Āzād, *Khezāne-ye ‘āmere*, 193-200.

³⁷ Āzād, *Khezāne-ye ‘āmere* (1854), 118. For Ārzū’s historicist defense of Bīdel specifically and of the Speaking Anew style generally, see Keshavmurthy, *Persian Authorship and Canonicity in Late Mughal Delhi*, 127-150.

2.2.2 Ṭāher Naṣrābādī, *Tazkere-ye Naṣrābādī* (*Naṣrābādī's Biographical Compendium, 1672/1673*)

Ṭāher Naṣrābādī was born near Esfahan into a once-wealthy family of civil servants who were compelled by a sudden fall in fortune to seek employment in India. A poet himself, he admired Ṣā'eb greatly, citing him among his greatest influences.³⁸ His biographical compendium, which he completed in 1672-1673,³⁹ consists of a preface, five chapters or “ranks” (*ṣofūf*, which discuss, respectively, amīrs, khāns, and attendants to the king; sayyids and nobles; scholars; poets; and the accomplishments of the author's own family), and an epilogue. Of the main chapters, the first (on amirs, khans, and other royal attendants) and the fourth (on poets) are further subdivided into three sections each, called “sects” or “groups” (*feraq*), and in both of these chapters Hendūstān is treated in a separate group (*ferqe*) from Iran (in the first chapter), and as separate from 'Erāq and Khorāsān (western and eastern provinces of Iran) and Māvarānnahr (Transoxania, or Tūrān) in the fourth chapter. Naṣrābādī emphasizes the interconnections between poetry and politics already in the preface, where, in a passage extolling the political virtues and uses of literature, he cites a couplet by Neẓamī of Ganje (1141-1209), given in the epigraph to Chapter 1: “poets are are the *amirs* of speech.”⁴⁰ Perhaps, then, his markedly

³⁸ Mīrzā Moḥammad Ṭāher Naṣrābādī Eṣfahānī, *Tazkere-ye Naṣrābādī*, ed. Vaḥīd Dastgerdī (Tehrān: Chāpkhāne-ye Armaghān, 1317SH [1938CE]), 218-223 and 460-462.

³⁹ For information concerning the dating of this work and the biographical particulars of Ṭāher Naṣrābādī, see C.A. Storey and Francois de Blois, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey* I:2, 818-821.

⁴⁰ “*Al-shu 'arā' umarā' u l-kalām.*” An Arabic aphorism attributed to the philologist Khalīl (d.791), quoted by the Persian poet Neẓamī Ganjavī in his long narrative poem *Makhzan al-Asrār* (*Treasury of Mysteries*, late 12th c.). See Neẓamī Ganjavī, *Makhzan al-asrār*, ed. Behrūz Sarvateyān (Tehrān: Enteshārāt-e Tūs, 1363SH[1984CE]), 84. This, in turn, is cited by Ṭāher

separate treatment of India and Iran is dictated by the overarching political commitments of his biographical compendium (which, after all, spends many chapters discussing non-literary employees of the state). This kind of politically charged literary-critical sensibility is explicitly eschewed by some later *tazkere* authors, such as Sher ‘Alī Khān Lodī (discussed below), who declares in the preface to his biographical compendium that he departs from other *tazkere* authors by *not* analyzing the lives and works of kings and khāns alongside those of poets.⁴¹

Naṣrābādī explicitly identifies several poets with the Speaking Anew style. For instance, Ṭāleb of Āmol (d.1626-1627), a poet originally from Māzandarān who travelled to India and eventually became poet laureate under Emperor Jahāngīr, is described in the following way:

گلشن طبعش از نسیم فیض الهی تازه و عندلیب خاطرش بر شاخساره تازمگویی بلند آوازه چنانچه
خود گفته:

طالباً عندلیب زمزمه‌ایم سخن تازه آفریده ماست

The rose-garden of [Ṭāleb’s] nature is made fresh [*tāze*] by the breeze of divine grace, and the nightingale of his thought sings upon the branches of Speaking Anew [*tāze-gū’ī*]; as he says in his own words,

O Ṭāleb! I am a murmuring nightingale:
Fresh speech is my creation.”⁴²

Naṣrābādī in the preface to his literary-critical biographical compendium *Tazkere-ye Naṣrābādī* (1670s). See Ṭāher Naṣrābādī, *Tazkere-ye Naṣrābādī*, 4. On the attribution of this aphorism to Khalīl, see Ramzi Baalbaki, *The Legacy of the Kitāb: Sībawayhi’s Analytical Methods within the Context of the Arabic Grammatical Theory* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 45.

⁴¹ Sher ‘Alī Khān Lodī, *Tazkere-ye me’rāt al-khayāl*, ed. Ḥamīd Ḥasanī (Tehran: Enteshārāt-e Rouzane, 1377SH [1998CE]), 16.

⁴² “*Golshan-e ṭab ‘-ash az nasīm-e fayz-e elāhī tāze va ‘andalīb-e khāter-ash bar shākhsāre-ye tāze-gū’ī boland-āvāze chenān-che khod gofte, ‘Ṭālebā ‘andalīb-e zamzama-īm / sokhan-e tāze āfarīde-ye mā-st.’*” Naṣrābādī, *Tazkere-ye Naṣrābādī*, 223.

Naṣrābādī does not take measures to conceal his anti-Indian bias. Having to account for why, in biographical entry after entry, so many Iranian poets abandoned their homeland of greater Iran to go to India, Naṣrābādī frequently has recourse to rueful, even somewhat histrionic explanations that include, for instance, blaming the fate of his present time.⁴³ Naṣrābādī’s chapter on the poets of Hendūstān is the least populated section of the entire work, filling up a mere seven pages; and, interestingly, the majority of the poets whom he discusses are from Kashmīr, not Hendūstān proper (the provinces of northern India south of Kashmir).⁴⁴ It seems likely that Naṣrābādī’s knowledge of poets from India was limited to the northernmost regions of the Subcontinent, and that he derived his information frequently from incorrect hearsay instead of firsthand knowledge. For instance, he misidentifies one ‘Abdol Qāder Bīdelī (sic) as being from Lahore.⁴⁵ “Strange” (perhaps also “exilic”), “*gharīb*,” is a recurring characterization of these poets’

⁴³ “*Be-sabab-e nāsāzī-ye rūzegār*” (ibid, 452).

⁴⁴ On the distinctive regional characteristics of the Persian literary culture of Kashmir and its relationship, on one side, to India, and on the other, to Iran and Central Asia, see G.L. Tikku, *Persian Poetry in Kashmir, 1339-1846* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1971); Sunil Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia: Persian Literature in an Indian Court* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2017); Muḥammad ‘Abdullāh Qureshī, “Kashmīr kī fārsī shā‘irī,” in *Īrān-e kabīr va Īrān-e ṣaghīr*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abdullāh Qureshī (Muzaffarabad: Jashn-e Īrān Committee, 1971); and ‘Abd al-Qādir Sarwarī, *Kashmīr meṅ fārsī adab kī tārikh* (Srinagar: Majlis-i taḥqīqāt-i Urdū, 1968).

⁴⁵ This is one of the earliest entries on Bīdel, and the two couplets cited by Naṣrābādī in his brief notice affords the rare occasion of being able to ascribe one of Bīdel’s lyric poems definitively to the earlier part of his life, before the age of 30 (ibid, 451).

styles,⁴⁶ and the highest compliment he pays to Nāṣer ‘Alī Serhendī is that he became known as a “second Ṣā’eb.”⁴⁷

The fifth chapter of Naṣrābādī’s biographical compendium is devoted to the achievements of the author’s family, and includes a long section containing the author’s brief autobiography and a discussion of his own literary accomplishments – a fascinating first-personal account of how a young person might fashion themselves into a poet in Ṣafavid Iran. It also offers an invaluable glimpse into how ancients and moderns were studied, and what sorts of debates and discussions took place in the vibrant coffeehouse literary scene of Isfahan.⁴⁸ He opens his autobiographical account with the following self-deprecating couplet, drawing on the early modern avian vocabulary of literary value and lyric style that has been discussed in Chapter 1:

اگر زاغ اگر صعوه ناتوانم
همین بس که در جرگه بلبانم

If I am a crow,
or a feeble sparrow –
To be surrounded by nightingales
is enough.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ See, for example, his description of Shaydā’s poetry (ibid, 444) and Ghanī Kashmīrī (ibid, 445). This is not necessarily a negative evaluation: as noted above, Ṣā’eb was known to boast about his “unfamiliar” (“*bīgāne*,” “*gharīb*”) poetry.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 447.

⁴⁸ See especially ibid, 460-461. He also includes an account of his only son, who had yet to show interest in following in his father’s literary footsteps – or indeed any inclination to commit himself to a profession at all. The parental anxiety Naṣrābādī allows himself to express when speculating about his son’s future is especially poignant. Ibid, 455-456. On the importance of the coffeehouse as a locus of cultural activity in Safavid Iran, see Kathryn Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 440-443.

⁴⁹ *Agar zāgh agar ṣa’ve-ye nātavān-am / hamīn bas ke dar jargah-e bolbolān-am*. Naṣrābādī, *Tazkere-ye Naṣrābādī*, 457.

Although Naṣrābādī stops short of being openly polemical about Indian Persian poets being examples of those un-lyrical “crows” (as Ḥazīn does, without scruple, in the following century), nevertheless, it is clear why Āzād would identify this work as the beginning of the rigid division of literary history into Iranian and Indian Persian traditions.

2.2.3 ‘Abd al-Nabī Fakhr al-Zamānī Qazvīnī, *Tazkere-ye may-khāne* [*The Biographical Compendium of the Wine-House*, 1618]

A stronger case for a work that marks a turn into geographically partisan literary criticism could be made of ‘Abd al-Nabī Fakhr al-Zamānī Qazvīnī’s *Tazkere-ye may-khāne* [*The Biographical Compendium of the Wine-House*], completed in 1618, half a century before Naṣrābādī’s biographical compendium. Unlike Naṣrābādī, who never left Iran, Fakhr al-Zamānī travelled extensively throughout the Subcontinent, and was employed variously in the Mughal government as a librarian, head of revenue (*dīvān*), and storyteller (*qeṣṣe-khān*).⁵⁰ In the words of the author himself, the purpose of composing this compendium was “to shatter the idols of every temple” (“*beshekanad har bot-hā-ye har bot-khāne-ī*”).⁵¹ As much a *bayāz* (a commonplace book, or personal anthology of poems) as a *tazkere*,⁵² Fakhr al-Zamānī’s compendium is concerned with only one literary genre: the

⁵⁰ For an account of Fakhr al-Zamānī’s life and especially on his contributions to the art of storytelling (*qeṣṣa-khānī*), see Pasha M. Khan, “A Handbook for Storytellers: The Ṭirāz al-Akhhār and the *Qissa* Genre,” in *Tellings and Texts: Music, Literature, and Performance in North India*, ed. Francesca Orsini and Katherine Butler Schofield, 185-207 (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2015).

⁵¹ ‘Abd al-Nabī Fakhr al-Zamānī Qazvīnī, *Tazkere-ye may-khāne*, ed. Aḥmad Golchīn-e Ma‘ānī (Tehran: Enteshārāt-e Sherkat-e Nesbī-ye Ḥājj Moḥammad Ḥoseyn Eqbāl va Shokarā’, 1340SH [1961CE]), 924.

⁵² Fakhr al-Zamānī refers to his *tazkere* as a *bayāz* (commonplace book, or “fair copy” for presentation) at least twice: in the section on his own life and works (ibid, 764), and in the conclusion, where he calls it “a compendium of reports and a collection of discourse” (“*majmū‘e-ye akhhār o bayāz-e sokhan*”). Ibid, 924.

sāqī-nāme, “a poetic genre in which the speaker, seeking relief from his hardships, losses, and disappointments, repeatedly summons the *sāqī*,” or young and beautiful wine-bearer who appears so often in the world of Persian amatory lyric poetry.⁵³

For present purposes, two important aspects of this *tazkere* will be highlighted: Fakhr al-Zamānī’s explicitly articulated vocabulary for analyzing poetic style, and the implicit arguments he makes about geography and literature.

The compendium is divided into three straightforward sections, which proceed chronologically. The first section or “level” (*martabe*) concerns deceased poets; the second is on living poets; and the third section treats of poets with whom the author was personally acquainted. The entry on Ḥāfeẓ of Shīrāz (d.1390) serves as a representative example of how Fakhr al-Zamānī handles poets’ lives and works. Ḥāfeẓ is introduced as “the enchanting nightingale at the literary soiree of poetry, the bewitching nightingale in the garden of subtleties...the parrot in the garden of speech.”⁵⁴ Fakhr al-Zamānī’s characterization of Ḥāfeẓ’s style introduces an interesting twist into the problematic “pearls at random strung” hypothesis about Persian lyric unity: no one “can unravel a single knot from the string of jewels that is his verse” in order to add or subtract from the piece.⁵⁵ In other words, the tradition places value on tightly bound lyric legibility and perfection. This emphasis can be seen to shift in the early modern period with poets like

⁵³ Paul E. Losensky, “Sāqī-nāma,” entry in the *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2016. Available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/saqi-nama-book> (accessed on 25 April 2019).

⁵⁴ “*‘Andalīb-e del-farīb-e anjoman-e sokhan-varī, va bolbol-e dastān-sarā-ye chaman-e nokte-parvarī ...ṭūfī-ye būstān-e sokhan-pardāzi.*” Fakhr al-Zamānī Qazvīnī, *Tazkere-ye may-khāne*, 84.

⁵⁵ “*Gereh-ī az ta ‘rīf-e reshte-ye javāher-e nazm-ash namī-tavānad goshūd.*” Ibid.

Bīdel, who revel in the complex knots they tie into in their lyric lines. These poets see their poems are requiring less in the way of praise and more in the way of *time*: early modern lyric knots demand, most of all, a great deal of committed interpretive attention.⁵⁶

In other entries, Fakhr al-Zamānī is remarkably precise in defining a poet's style: for instance, the verse of Vaḥshī (d.1583) is described as being penned “in the realist style” (“*be-ṭarz-e voqū*”),⁵⁷ and ‘Orfī (d.1591) is said to be “distinguished in the style of metaphor-creation and peerless in the art of Speaking Anew” (“*dar shīve-ye este ‘āre kardan momtāz va dar fann-e tāze-gūyī bī-am̄bāz-ast*”).⁵⁸ An explicit connection is made time and again throughout this *tazkere* between the style of Speaking Anew and the profusion of complex metaphor. Of the poet Mo‘ammā’ī (d.1622),⁵⁹ Fakhr al-Zamānī writes that “after ‘Orfī, nobody was better adept in the style of metaphor-creation than [Mo‘ammā’ī]” (“*ba ‘d az ‘Orfī dar este ‘āre kardan kas-ī beh az-ū mortakeb-e īn shīve nashode*”).⁶⁰ Other poets' styles are described in opposite terms: of Gheyāsī of Esfahan, the author writes that “his verse is completely smooth, with little metaphor” (“*ash ‘ār-e ū*

⁵⁶ An interesting variation on this critical motif of “difficult knots” can be found throughout Bīdel's corpus. For instance, in his long narrative poem *Ṭūr-e ma‘refat* [*Mount Sinai of Enlightenment*], Bīdel advises the reader to “Become a rosebud, for a moment – bind your heart into a knot.” Line 15624. See T3.M1.13 for a longer excerpt from this passage.

⁵⁷ Fakhr al-Zamānī Qazvīnī, *Tazkere-ye may-khāne*, 181. On the “realist school” of Persian poetry in the early modern period (the *maktab-e voqū*), see Paul E. Losensky, “Poetics and Eros in Early Modern Persia: *The Lovers' Confection* and *The Glorious Epistle* by Muhtasham Kāshānī,” *Iranian Studies* 42:5 (2009), 745-764 and Paul E. Losensky, “Vaḥshī Bāfqī,” in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, 2004. Available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/vahshi-bafqi> (accessed on 24 April 2019).

⁵⁸ Fakhr al-Zamānī Qazvīnī, *Tazkere-ye may-khāne*, 215.

⁵⁹ On this poet, see Nabi Hadi, *Dictionary of Indo-Persian Literature* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1995), 496.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 231.

hame hamvār va kam este 'āre vāqe ' shode').⁶¹ Furthermore, a poet's aptitude for metaphor-creation falls along an appraisable spectrum: for example, Fakhr al-Zamānī praises Naẓārī (d.ca.1612-1614) by saying that his “verse is free of inelegant metaphor” (*“este 'āre-ye bad-nemā dar kalām-ash nīst”*).⁶² It is clear, then, that for Fakhr al-Zamānī, the style of Speaking Anew is linked to – and perhaps even principally defined by – the proliferation of metaphor and poetic complexity.

The *Tazkere-ye may-khāne* also contains a more subtle argument about Iran, India, and the connections between geography and poetic style. While sketching out the biographical details of Iranian poets who travelled to India, Fakhr al-Zamānī inserts a great deal of hyperbolic and fulsome parenthetical praise of the Subcontinent. ‘Orfī, for example, sets off for India in the following way: “He left his homeland and went to Hendūstān, the abode where sharp-witted critics flourish, the testing-ground of intellectuals (*“az vaṭan khorūj karde be Hendūstān ke khāne-ye nashv-o-namā-ye nokte-sanjān va dār-al- 'eyār-e kheradmandān-ast”*).⁶³ And one Moulānā Dūstī of Samarqand is described as

بحسب تقدیر ایزدی دل از حب وطن برداشته قدم در بادیه مسافرت گذاشته و در هنگام سیر و سفر به هندوستان که رونق‌ده هنرمندان و نشو و نمادهنده خردمندان است آمده.

...having erased the love of his homeland [eastern Iran] from his heart, by divine decree, he stepped into the desert of travel. In the course of his journeys, he came to India, which bestows splendor upon the learned and allows intellectuals to flourish.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Ibid, 280.

⁶² Ibid, 787.

⁶³ Ibid, 218.

⁶⁴ *Be-ḥasb-e taqdīr-e īzādī del az ḥobb-e vaṭan bar-dāshte qadam dar bādeye-ye mosāfarat gozāshste va dar hangām-e sayr-o-safar be Hendūstān ke rownaq-deh-e honarmandān va nashv-o-namā-dehande-ye kheradmandān ast āmade*. Ibid, 661.

The sincerity of these favorable prose characterizations of India, however, is dampened by closer examination of the examples of verse that Fakhr-e Zamānī includes in his compendium. Two examples here from *sāqī-nāmes* – one by Mo‘ammā’ī, the other by Fakhr al-Zamānī himself – reveal resentment verging on open contempt harbored by some Iranian expatriates in India, simmering in these examples just below the prose surface of the *tazkere*.

As Paul Losensky observes, the *sāqī-nāme* genre is an elastic one, capable of accommodating diverse themes within its basic formal parameters – the most fixed among which is perhaps the trope of the poet calling upon the cupbearer (*sāqī*) to deliver them from their abysmal present circumstances by bringing wine, music, mirth, and forgetfulness.⁶⁵ As such, the *sāqī-nāme* is well suited to bear the motif of exile and longing for one’s homeland. Mīr Sanjar b. Mīr Ḥaydar Mo‘ammā’ī (d.1622), an Iranian poet from Kāshān who travelled to India and found employment in Emperor Akbar’s court, has a section in his *sāqī-nāme* (which is quoted in full in the *Tazkere-ye may-khāne*) dedicated to “Love of Homeland” (titled in Arabic, “*Fī ḥubb al-vaṭan*”).⁶⁶ This section opens with the contrasting emotions of love of homeland (*ḥobb-e vaṭan*) and the grief of exile (*gham-e ghorbat*). The denouement at the end – the evocation of the musician and the cupbearer – is as follows:

agar dāgh-ī az cherkenān bar del-ast
cho šābūn ‘Erāqī rajā ḥāṣel-ast

⁶⁵ Losensky, “Sāqī-nāma”.

⁶⁶ Fakhr al-Zamānī, *Tazkere-yi Maykhāna*, 336-341.

اگر داغی از چرکنان بر دلست
چو صابون عراقی رجا حاصلست

If one's heart is stained by unclean people,
'Erāqī [music] washes it away like soap.

moghannī dam-ī z-īn malāl-am bar-ār
be-ḥāl-am rasān o ze qāl-am bar-ār

مغنی دمی زین ملالم برآر
بحالم رسان و ز قالم برآر

O musician! Deliver me for a moment from this grief!
Transport me to a different state, away from all this chatter!

to-ī bolbol-e mast-e īn būstān
'alā raghm-e zāghān-e Hendūstān

تویی بلبل مست این بوستان
علی رغم زاغان هندوستان

You are the intoxicated nightingale of this garden,
Notwithstanding all the crows of Hendūstān.

be-āhang-e Īrān navā-ī bezan
navā-ye vaṭan-āshenāyī bezan

به آهنگ ایران نوایی بزن
نوی وطن آشنایی بزن

Strike up a melody in the Iranian mode,
Play me a song of homeland.

sokhan chand Hendūstānī bovad
be-har ṭūṭī-ī ham-zabān-ī bovad

سخن چند هندوستانی بود
بهر طوطیی همزبانی بود

How long will discourse flow in Hendūstānī?
For every parrot, there is a bird of the same tongue.

beyā sāqī az man ma-rā bāz khar
*cho bī-qīmatān-am be-ṣad nāz khar*⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Ibid, 341.

بیا ساقی از من مرا باز خر
چو بی‌قیمتاتم بصد ناز خر

Come, cupbearer – purchase me from myself!
Like those without worth, acquire me with a hundred flirtations.

In his own *sāqī-nāme* poem, which he includes in his biographical compendium, Fakhr al-Zamānī also deploys the expected *sāqī-nāme* trope of calling upon the musician to relieve his painful separation from the beloved. Like Mo‘ammā’ī (and also like Ṣā’eb with Esfahan, as shown in Chapter 1), Fakhr al-Zamānī too refigures the beloved as his faraway homeland of Iran:

konam tāze afsāne-hā-ye kohan
shavad rowshan az man cherāgh-e sokhan

کنم تازه افسانه‌های کهن
شود روشن از من چراغ سخن

I refashion old tales anew:
The lantern of speech is made radiant by me.

moghannī bezan nākhun-ī bar del-am
ke oftāde dūr az vaṭan bolbol-am

مغنی بزن ناخنی بر دلم
که افتاده دور از وطن بلبلم

O musician, run your finger along my heartstrings!
My nightingale has fallen far from its homeland.

chenān hāy-o-hūy bokon dar chaman
ke az ghorbat āyam be-sū-ye vaṭan

چنان های و هوئی بکن در چمن
که از غربت آیم بسوی وطن

Fill the garden with such music
That will guide me out of exile, homeward.

be-ḥadd-ī parīshān-am andar jahān
ke cheshm-am nabīnad zamīn o zamān

بحدی پریشانم اندر جهان
که چشم نبیند زمین و زمان

So afflicted am I in this world
That I perceive no space, no time.

*gereftār-e Hend-am ze jowr-e falak
fetādam dar-īn dām(-e) naqsh-e kalak*

گرفتار هندم ز جور فلک
فتادم درین دام نقش کلک

Oppressive Fate has imprisoned me in India;
I've been caught by these ill-omened snares.

*che sāzam k-az īn dām bīrūn ravam
magar ān-ke z-īn varṭe majnūn ravam*

چه سازم کز این دام بیرون روم
مگر آنکه زین ورطه مجنون روم

How can I liberate myself from this snare?
I can only flee from this labyrinth, a madman.⁶⁸

*jonūn-am magar sū-ye jānān barad
ze Hendūstān-am be Īrān barad.⁶⁹*

جنونم مگر سوی جانان برد
ز هندوستانم به ایران برد

My madness will carry me
to my beloved;
My madness will lead me
out of India to Iran.

That Fakhr al-Zamānī's poetic and literary-critical approach is broadly modulated by geographical considerations can also be ascertained from his evaluations of poets'

⁶⁸ There is a note of ambivalence here. Perhaps he wants to suggest that leaving India with all of its opportunities for salaried employment would be madness, and that seeking his beloved – Iran – is a ruinous prospect (emotionally, patriotically, *and* financially). I am grateful to Franklin Lewis for this insight.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 777-778.

individual legacies. Naẓīrī, he says, is famous throughout most of the regions of India;⁷⁰ Zohūrī's fame was especially great in the Deccan;⁷¹ Mīrzā Malek Mashreqī's verse was far more well known in 'Erāq than in India;⁷² and the lyric poetry of Amīr Khosrow is frequently set to music in India, and is immensely popular among the musicians of that country.⁷³ Though this is but a small sample of the poets discussed in Fakhr al-Zamānī's *tazkere*, it is worth noting that the three aforementioned poets whose fame is said to have endured primarily in the Subcontinent – Naẓīrī, Zohūrī, and Amīr Khosrow – all compose poetry in a style described by the author as colorful (*rangīn*), which is distinguished by use of metaphor (*este 'āre*) and elaborately crafted conceits (*ma 'ānī*); the style of Mīrzā Malek Mashreqī – the poet famous primarily in Iran – is not described in any of these or similar terms.

Fakhr al-Zamānī's *tazkere* reveals how a form of geographically inflected literary criticism that associates certain poetic styles with specific regions already exists at the beginning of the seventeenth century. It also proves the presence of a robust India/Iran binary in the early modern period – simultaneously at the level of personal travel narrative and also as a micro-trope in the early modern *sāqī-nāme* genre. The final compendium that will be considered here, Sher 'Alī Khān Lodī's *Mer 'āt al-khayāl*,

⁷⁰ Ibid, 787.

⁷¹ Ibid, 263.

⁷² Ibid, 589.

⁷³ Ibid, 58. According to Pasha M. Khan, Fakhr al-Zamānī's geographically inflected critical orientation extends to his endeavors in the sphere of storytelling (*qeṣṣe-kh'ānī*) as well: in his storytelling manual *Ṭerāz al-akhbār*, he distinguishes between three distinct styles of storytelling – Indian, Iranian, and Turanian. Khan, "A Handbook for Storytellers," 199.

carries these tendencies further still, presenting a fully fledged alignment of specific figurations (such as metaphor, ambiguity, difficulty, and “color”) with India.

2.2.4 Sher ‘Alī Khān Lodī, *Mer’āt al-khayāl* (ca.1690)

The Indian scholar Sher ‘Alī Khān Lodī (fl.17th c.) was active in Delhi during Emperor Awrangzēb’s reign. He completed his *tazkere*, *Mer’āt al-khayāl* [*The Mirror of the Imaginary*] around 1690.⁷⁴ This compendium contains a preface, conclusion, and main body of biographical notices arranged chronologically. Interspersed between these entries one finds excurses on various subjects, some of which serve to highlight aspects of non-Islamic Indian forms of knowledge and practice. These subjects include, *inter alia*, dream interpretation, Indian music, medicine, *mirabilia mundi*, prosody, and the Indian “*‘elm-e nafas*,” or “science of respiration.”⁷⁵ The following examples from the *Mer’āt al-khayāl* are illustrative of how Lodī’s critical approach takes a decisively geographical turn, culminating in what can be taken as a nascent definition of an “Indian

⁷⁴ For an evaluation of this *tazkere*, see also Kinra, *Writing Self, Writing Empire* (especially 264 et passim; Kinra regards Lodī as a “culturally conservative” critic who considered Hindus like Chandar Bhān Brahman to be unwelcome parvenus in elite Indo-Persian society).

⁷⁵ For a description and analysis of this fascinating topic in Lodī’s biographical compendium, see Stefano Pellò, *Ṭūṭiyān-i Hind: Specchi Identitari e Proiezioni Cosmopolite Indo-Persiane (1680-1856)* (Florence: Società Editrice Fiorentina, 2012), 77-80. Pellò demonstrates that Lodī’s interpretation of the Indian “science of respiration,” or *prāṇa-yoga*, was likely influenced by the illuminationist philosophy (*hekmat-e eshrāq*) of Shehāb al-Dīn Sohrawardī (d.1191). According to Pellò, such examples from Lodī and other Indo-Persian litterati of eighteenth-century Delhi represent a more mature stage of cross-cultural interaction and understanding, the result of earlier, more “intermediate” processes of acculturation. In this later phase, Indic traditions had permeated speculative theology, philosophy, literature, and even linguistics, forming “an ideal Indian extension of Perso-Islamic culture” (“un’ideale estensione indiana della cultura perso-islamica”). *Ibid*, 79-80.

style” that hinges on lyric poets’ use of ambiguity (*ṭhām*), metaphor (*este ‘āre*), and a specific approach to that which is imaginary (*khayāl*).

Not surprisingly, Amīr Khosrow of Delhi (d.1325) occupies a central place in Lodī’s vision of Persian literary history, appearing several times in crucial passages of the compendium. For instance, in the preface, Lodī touches upon the origins of Persian and Arabic literature, where he discusses the superior nature of poetry (*she ‘r*) above all other sciences (*‘elm*) – definitive proof of which was provided by the poets themselves. Here he includes several couplets by Amīr Khosrow that present a brilliantly paralogical lyric argument for the supremacy of poetry. Amīr Khosrow’s poem “proves” the supremacy of poetry over science by emphasizing the sublime irreality of lyric, in contrast to the limited (albeit mathematically correct) offerings of science:

*‘elm k-az takrār ḥāṣel shod cho āb-ī dar khom ast
k-az vay az dah dalv gar bālā keshī noqṣān bovad*⁷⁶

علم کز تکرار حاصل شد چو آبی در خم است
کز وی از ده دلو گر بالا کشی نقصان بود

Science is like water in a barrel;
its repetitions bring results:
If you draw from it ten times,
there will be less of it.

*līk ṭab ‘-e she ‘r ān cheshm(e)-ast zāyande k-az ū
gar keshī ṣad dalv bīrūn āb ṣad chandān bovad*

لیک طبع شعر آن چشمه است زاینده کز او
گر کشی صد دلو بیرون آب صد چندان بود

But poetry’s nature
is a fertile wellspring:
Even if you draw from it a hundred times –
there won’t be less.

⁷⁶ Sher ‘Alī Khān Lodī, *Tazkere-ye mer’āt al-khayāl*, 4.

Amīr Khosrow figures once more in the preface during a different discussion on the origins of Persian poetry, its genres, meters, and rhetorical figures (*ṣanāʿe*). According to Lodī, these figures have been analyzed both by authoritative “ancients,” like Amīr Khosrow, and the “moderns,” such as Shaykh Ḥabībollāh Akbarābādī (fl. 18th c.) In the actual biographical entry on Amīr Khosrow, Lodī remarks that this great poet’s unrivalled poetic achievement consists in having perfected the art of ambiguity (*ṣanʿat-e ṭhām*), which he defines as the poet employing a word with two or more possible meanings.⁷⁷ By way of example, he cites a couplet by Amīr Khosrow containing a word with no fewer than eight possible meanings – a feat, Lodī says, that has not met its match (*javāb*, lit. “response-poem”) even today.⁷⁸ This idea that all of Persian literary history has been propelled forward in large part through this agonistic process between poets of “challenge” and “response” is central to Lodī’s critical vision. Countless entries include anecdotes about a poet either providing a superior response (*javāb*) to a hitherto unconquered poem, or the reverse – composing a poem that is so triumphantly superior that none can surpass its perfection.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ “*Dar ṣanʿat-e ṭhām zī l-vojūh vāqeʿ shode va ʿajab-tar az ān kas-ī nagofte-ast...ṣanʿat-e mazkūr chenān ast ke shāʿer lafz-ī darj nemāyad ke ān rā do maʿnī yā zeyāde bāshad... tā emrūz hīch-kas javāb natavānest rasānīd.*” Ibid, 38-39.

⁷⁸ Muzaffar Alam suggests that the kind of *ṭhām* allegedly invented by Amīr Khosrow is central to the Indian Persian style: “The new thing in Khusrau’s discussion of *ṭhām* was the suggestion that a poet might use a word, or a combination of words, in as many senses as he could (*zūl vujūh*) and that all these could be simultaneously intended – each direct, equally true (*durust*), logical, and sensible... The Sufi religious circles resonated with echoes of this aspect of Indian Persian literary culture... the extended connotative power of *ṭhām*... creates space for possible meanings far removed from the explicit.” Alam, “The Culture and Politics of Persian in Precolonial Hindustan”, 180-181.

⁷⁹ See, for instance, Zohūrī, who composed a ghazal to which the eminent poet laureate Fayzī could compose no response (ibid, 62).

Looking towards future times, the author speculates that forms of lyric practice will continue to evolve, since each era has its own unique sensibility – and accompanying literary-critical approach to that sensibility. Lodī then presents a theory of literary change that is premised upon two related notions: first, that stylistic difficulty necessarily increases with the passage of time; and second, that this kind of change is inevitable, for such is the pattern that is woven into the very fabric of creation. Citing the well known claim in Islamic theology that there is no repetition in creation,⁸⁰ Lodī stresses that no literary-historical moment is the same as next:

هر روز تکلفی دیگر و صنعتی نکوتر بر روی کار می‌آرند... در هر زمانی بل در هر لحظه و
 آنی به رنگ دیگر صفت ظهور می‌گیرد.

Every day, more elaborate conceits and more beautiful rhetorical figures are brought into existence...at each time – every instant, every moment – the attributes of appearance acquire different colors.⁸¹

⁸⁰ In Ibn ‘Arabī’s formulation, “*Lā takrāra fī tajallī*” (“There is no repetition in God’s divine disclosure”). See William C. Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn ‘Arabī’s Cosmology* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1998), 57-65, 69-70. And see also William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), 19-20, 103-105. Ibn ‘Arabī’s theory of non-repetition in creation is especially relevant, since he connects divine self-disclosure to God’s Breath of the Merciful (*nafas-e raḥmānī*) – that is *verbal* disclosure – as well as imagination (*khayāl*), the only human faculty capable of perceiving God’s self-disclosures. For Bīdel’s own discussion of *nafas-e raḥmānī*, see his Subtle Point N^o25 (T4.N2). Thus, for Lodī, a well known cosmological principle becomes perfectly suited to describing “lyric self-disclosure” throughout the Persian canon. For a similar cosmologically infused literary-critical conception of the role of poetry in Renaissance England, see the opening sentence of George Puttenham’s *Arte of English Poesie* (1589): “A Poet is as much to say as a maker...such as (by way of resemblance and reuerently) we may say of God: who without any trauell to his diuine imagination, made all the world of naught.” George Puttenham, *Arte of English Poesie*, ed. Edward Arber (London: A. Murray, 1869, 1589), 19. For a discussion of Puttenham’s conception of the poet as a creator, see Joel Spingarn, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963, 1899), 168-169.

⁸¹ “*Har rūz takallof-ī dīgar va šan‘at-ī nekū-tar bar rū-ye kār mī-ārand.. dar har zamān-ī, bal dar har lahze va ān-ī, be rang-e dīgar šefat-e zohūr mī-gīrad.*” Sher ‘Alī Khān Lodī, *Tazkere-ye mer‘āt al-khayāl*, 7-8. On the pivotal importance of this unit of temporal reckoning – the single moment – see Chapter 4; for a discussion of the significance of the “colors” of imagination, see below (Section 2.3).

Lodī goes on to set his own (early modern) era apart: while esteemed predecessor-poets may have given literature its foundation, it is *contemporary* poets who have bestowed upon Poetry their own uniquely difficult, colorful, and elegant qualities of imagination.⁸² Moreover, Lodī argues that just as each era demands to be judged according to its own literary standards, similarly, every region, tribe, and language are also in possession of their own specific qualities and standards. He offers no hierarchy of which of these regions might be superior; yet, taken as a whole, his work appears to bear a pro-Indian bias, which discloses itself in several ways.

First, although the biographical notices proceed chronologically and are not divided by region (as was the case with Naṣrābādī's *tazkere*), there is nevertheless a discernible geographical preoccupation simmering just beneath the surface of Lodī's work. Like Fakhr al-Zamānī, Lodī often describes the reception and popularity of certain poets as being limited to certain regions, which typically break down according to the tripartite division of Īrān, Tūrān, and Hendūstān.⁸³ Other poets are described by Lodī as being the best of a certain region (Mīrzā Jalāl Asīr, for instance, is described as being one of the most capable poets of “Īrān-zamīn,” the “land of Iran”).⁸⁴ Secondly, although geographically neutral terms such as “fresh” (“*tāze*”) and “Speaking Anew” (“*tāze-gū'ī*”)

⁸² “*Har chand zavī l-‘oqūl-e salaf asās-e sokhanvarī nehāde...ammā ‘ālī-feṭratān-e mota’ akhkerīn ḥosn-e chehre-ye ān [sokhanvarī] rā be rang-e takallof-e lafzī va taṣanno ‘-e ma ‘navī va tarz-e nāzok va adā-ye rangīn va khayāl-bandī va ma ‘shūq-tarāshī ṣafā-ye dīgar bakhshand.*” Sher ‘Alī Khān Lodī, *Tazkere-ye mer’āt al-khayāl*, 8.

⁸³ See, for instance, the entries on Ghanī (ibid, 142) and Jāmī (ibid, 58), both of whom merit the high (and, we can surmise, uncommon) distinction of being revered in all three regions.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 61.

occur frequently,⁸⁵ Lodī’s discussion of poetic style is by no means confined to this geographically unspecific term. Indeed, his *tazkere* bears unmistakable signs of his literary-critical preoccupations with geography – and of the distinctive ways in which he allows geography to inflect his critical reflections on lyric style.

For instance, in the entry on the Indian poet Shaydā (d.1632), Lodī paraphrases a passage by Shaydā from the conclusion to his volume of prose, where Shaydā airs a complaint that Iranians do not value him on account of his being Indian.⁸⁶ This kind of judgement, Lodī says (in Shaydā’s words), is not only wrong, but wrong *in principle* – since being of Indian or Iranian origin cannot constitute in and of itself a warrant for renown (“*Īranī va Hendī būdan fakhr rā sanad nagardad*”).⁸⁷ Moreover, if Iranians who harbor this kind of prejudice dare to proclaim that the Persian language is theirs alone (“*agar Īrāneyān zabān-e ta ‘n bogoshāyand ke Fārsī zabān-e mā-st*”), they ought to recall that the first place on earth where the prophet Adam alighted after leaving paradise was India (Sarāndīb, or Sri Lanka).⁸⁸

Elsewhere, Lodī makes it clear that differences between Indian Persian and Iranian Persian do not consist in the mere interpolation of Indic words, phrases, and images (a practice called “*este ‘māl-e Hend,*” or “Indic usage”). Citing several couplets

⁸⁵ Sā’eb, Qodsī, Ghanī, and many others are credited with creating “fresh themes” (*mazāmīn-e tāze*); Faghfūr Yazdī and others are explicitly described as being practitioners of the Speaking Anew style (see *ibid.*, 71, 68, 142, and 62, respectively).

⁸⁶ “*Īrāneyān ma-rā be Hendī-nezhād būdan hīch meqdār-ī na-nehand*” (*ibid.*, 73). Possibly the Iranians held this view because they would not have considered him to be a “native speaker.”

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* On the importance of this myth of Adam’s connection to the Subcontinent in the early modern period, see Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels in the Age of Discoveries*, 148-149.

from an ode to Emperor Shāhjahān by the Kashmiri poet Moḥsen Fānī (d.1670/1671), Lodī merely notes that Fānī makes use of many Indic words in a way that produces a pleasing effect; however, at no point does Lodī argue that such usage fundamentally constitutes or even alters Fānī’s overall poetic style.⁸⁹

Terms for style in the *Mer’āt al-khayāl* are numerous: “*shīve*,” “*tarz*,” “*tarīq*,” and “*ravesh*” all make regular appearances. Interestingly, the term “*tarz*” here may be used by Lodī in the specific sense of the style limited to a single poem within a poet’s oeuvre.⁹⁰ Elsewhere, Lodī defines a poet’s style by the rhetorical device most frequently and felicitously used by that poet: Lotfollāh Nīshābūrī, for instance, is described by Lodī as excelling in “the harmony of imagery” (“*morā āt-e nazīr*”)⁹¹ more than any other poetic figuration (*sanāye ‘-e she rī*).⁹² Difficulty itself seems to constitute a stylistic descriptor for Lodī, among ancient and modern poets alike. For instance, Khāqānī (12th c.) is said to have composed many “difficult couplets” (“*abyāt-e moshkele*”), and Lodī refers to a conversation at a literary soiree in own time is at which participants discuss and analyze the “difficult verse” of Ḥāfez (d.1390) (“*ash ‘ār-e moshkele*”).⁹³ Difficulty as

⁸⁹ “*Akṣar alfāz-e Hendī dar ān darj nemūda va be tarīq-ī āvorde ke zībande va khosh-nemā-st.*” Sher ‘Alī Khān Lodī, *Tazkere-ye mer’āt al-khayāl*, 146-147.

⁹⁰ See, for instance, Lodī’s description of a ghazal composed “in this strange style” (“*bar īn tarz-e gharīb*”) by Moḥammad Sa‘īd Qoreyshī. The poem in question has the very simple refrain of “-as” – however, the final word in each couplet occurs three times (“*Nafas nafas makon ey bū l-havas havas be havas / marou cho morgh-e asīr az qafas qafas be qafas*”, etc.). Ibid, 151.

⁹¹ On this figure, see Annemarie Schimmel, *A Two-Colored Brocade: The Imagery of Persian Poetry* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 38-39.

⁹² Lodī, *Tazkere-ye mer’āt al-khayāl*, 46.

⁹³ Ibid, 24 and 41.

a stylistic marker for Lodī is explicitly connected with complexity of metaphor and ambiguity, both of which, in different ways, generate multiplicity of meaning.

Lodī's literary-critical orientations with respect to poetic style and geography intersect definitively in his decidedly partisan introduction of the Indian Persian poets of his own time. These include Nāṣer 'Alī of Serhend (d.1697), Bīdel of Delhi (d.1721), and other poets of such capable imagination from that specific era whose pleasingly difficult lyric poetry constitutes *an Indian style*. Lodī says that poetry in this style exerted great influence upon contemporary poets in Iran and Tūrān (Central Asia):

ذکر بعضی نازکخیالان و خیالبندان که امروز در عرصه هندوستان کوس بلند آوازگی می‌زنند
و زاده طبع آنها مستعدان ایران و توران دست به دست می‌پرند.

The following discussion concerns several poets of subtle and elegant imagination [*khayāl*] who enjoy great fame today in the land of Hendūstān. Their poetry is passed around eagerly among the distinguished poets of Iran and Tūrān.⁹⁴

This statement should not be taken as an assertion on Lodī's part that these poets *invented* the style of *khayāl-bandī* (the style of the “virtuosic imaginary”) – only that they elevated it to new levels of perfection. For instance, in his entry on Mīrzā Jalāl Asīr (d.1639), an Iranian poet from Esfahan, Lodī notes that his style is characterized by subtle conceits (*ma' nī-ye bārīk*), and that while he is the *original* founder of the *khayāl-bandī* style, he is not well known today (i.e., in India – though perhaps elsewhere too).⁹⁵

⁹⁴ “*Zekr-e ba 'z-ī nāzok-khayālān va khayāl-bandān ke emrūz dar 'arše-ye Hendūstān kūš-e boland-āvāzegī mī-zanand va zāde-ye ṭab 'e ān-hā mosta 'eddān-e Īrān va Tūrān dast be dast mī-barand.*” Ibid, 247.

⁹⁵ “[*Mīrzā Jalāl Asīr*] *bānī-ye bonyād-e ṭarz-e khayāl-bandī-st...asās-e sokhanvarī bar hamīn ṭarz nehād.*” Ibid, 61.

Interestingly, Lodī’s subsequent analysis of the poetic styles of Nāṣer ‘Alī, Bīdel, and other Indian Persian poets of his own time contains practically no mention of “freshness” (“*tāze*,” “*tāzegī*,” or “*tāza-gū’ī*”). Instead, Lodī emphasizes such qualities as subtlety (*bārīkī*), elegance (*nāzukī*), and colorfulness (*rangīnī*) as primary descriptors of these poets’ conceits (*ma’ānī*), themes (*maḏāmīn*), and their very capacity for lyric thought and imagination (*khāṭer*; *khayāl*).⁹⁶ Bearing in mind the theory of perpetually self-renewing literary change delineated in Lodī’s introduction, whereby increased complexity and stylistic change over time are theorized as being *inevitable*, this shift away from freshness in the later early modern period gains even more legibility: if, in Lodī’s time, poetic “freshness” had run its course and was no longer possible or even desirable at this point in history (the late early modern period in northern India), then lyric creativity, perforce, had to be rechanneled in a different direction. As indicated even in the *tazkere*’s very title, *Mer’āt al-khayāl* (*The Mirror of the Imaginary*), one of Lodī’s main critical undertakings consists in demonstrating how a new avenue for lyric poetry is paved by contemporary poets *in India*, whose distinguishing feature of style is their sustained appreciation, preoccupation with, and manipulation of the varicolored complexities of the virtuosic lyric imaginary, *khayāl*.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Such descriptions include, for instance, the “colorfulness of discourse” (“*rangīnī-ye kalām*”), and more detailed analysis, such as Lodī’s remark of Bīdel that he is “peerless in the observance of the rules of the imaginary” (“*dar morā’āt-e qavānīn-e khayāl naḏīr nadārad*”). Ibid, 247 and 251, respectively.

⁹⁷ Rajeev Kinra draws attention to an important later discussion of the “style of the imaginary,” “*ṭarz-e khayāl*,” in Ārzū’s *Majma’ al-nafā’es* [*The Compendium of Precious Objects*], composed some sixty years after Lodī’s compendium. Kinra makes the important point that there were “multiple ways of classifying literary newness and imagination among seventeenth-century Indo-Persian cognoscenti... In fact, the aesthetics of *tāza-gū’ī* were being contested all along, as some poets pushed the limits of metaphorical and semantic possibility, while other poets and critics chided them for overdoing it.” Kinra, *Writing Self, Writing Empire*, 231-232.

The foregoing analysis of four early modern Persian *tazkeres* has uncovered several important aspects of Persian literary-critical thought that ought to inform modern scholarly efforts to analyze early modern Persian lyric poetry. First of all, it is patently clear that the ebb, flow, and modulation of tensions between Iranian and Indian styles of poetry (mirroring extra-literary real-historical tensions) profoundly informs both Indian and Iranian literary-critical thought.⁹⁸ Furthermore, this “geographical turn” in Persian-language criticism has a clearly traceable history – a history that the critics themselves frequently acknowledge. Secondly, the importance of untangling the ways that early modern critics coined and handled terms like *tāze* and names for specific styles like “Speaking Anew” is undeniable. However, this important endeavor of recovering emic terminology for lyric “freshness” as one of the early modern vocabularies for style does not necessarily benefit from conflation with arguments for and against *modern* scholarly use (in the twentieth century and today) of terms like “*sabk-e Hendī*,” where critics write in an era marked by nationalism and other circumstances of modernity that are entirely foreign to early modern critics. Instead, if the goal is to achieve a faithful, non-anachronistic approach to early modern Persian lyric, it is helpful always to take bearings from the early moderns themselves. Rather than debating the ethics of *modern* scholarly

⁹⁸ The selection of *tazkeres* in this chapter is intended to highlight the Īrān-Hendūstān binary. A fuller picture would necessarily include Tūrān (Central Asia), the frequently acknowledged third category of premodern geographical criticism. On the Timurid self-perception as both a chronological and stylistic middle link between Īrān and Hendūstān, see Franklin Lewis, “To Round and Rondeau the Canon: Jāmī and Fānī’s Reception of the Persian Lyrical Tradition,” in *Jāmī in Regional Contexts: The Reception of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī’s Works in the Islamic World, ca. 9th/15th – 14th/20th Century*, ed. Thibaut d’Hubert and Alexandre Papas, 463-567 (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

uses of “*sabk-e Hendī*” as a term for style, it seems important to focus on, for instance, how in Lodī’s compendium, there may be smoking-gun evidence for the presence *in the premodern period* of a clearly conceived “Indian style” of Persian poetry. It is also worth noting that Lodī’s *tazkere* predates another important compendium, a work frequently cited as the locus classicus in the origin story behind the modern term *sabk-e Hendī* – Vāleh Dāghestānī’s *Reyāz al-sho‘arā* – by half a century.⁹⁹

These four examples from the early modern *tazkere* tradition also reveal the limits of a face-value approach to literary-critical prose. As demonstrated by the *sāqī-nāme* poems embedded within the prose of the *Tazkere-ye may-khāne*, poetry itself – and not just the literal meaning of literary-critical prose – needs to be brought into evidence before a full picture can emerge. If there is any hope of arriving at informed final judgements, it is necessary to listen to as many voices as possible, including the poets themselves. With this in mind, the following section turns to prose prefaces penned by three prominent Indo-Persian poets, who form an indispensable backdrop against which Bīdel’s statements about lyric craft and his own style can be most clearly understood.

2.3 The Lyric Interim is Full of Color: Prose Prefaces by Amīr Khosrow, Fayzī, and Ghāleb

One of the most urgent preliminary questions regarding early modern Persian lyric style concerns the widespread conscious conceptual intertwining (within the tradition itself) of “speaking anew” and freshness of style, the very idea of an Indo-

⁹⁹ In Aziz Ahmad’s summary, “... the traditional theory of the rise of the *sabk-e Hendī* [the “Indian style”] begins with Wāliḥ Dāghistānī, who asserts that these great immigrant poets, ‘Urfī, Naẓīrī, and Ṣā‘ib, all of whom followed the stylistic tradition of Fīghānī, implanted the ‘Indian style’ in India, although this theory has been recently contested.” Aziz Ahmad, “Safawid Poets in India,” *Iran* 14 (1976), 123-124.

Persian canon, and what we might call the virtuosic imaginary (*khayāl*, that which is imaginary, and *khayāl-bandī*, a style of verse grounded in the elegant and difficult rhetorical manipulation of *khayāl*). As a conceptual cluster, these ideas fuse over the centuries, in the minds of poets and critics alike, into a lyric practice of the imagination, the availability of which – according to early modern poets and critics themselves – frequently hinges on the notion of a specifically “Indian” style of Persian verse. Bīdel, for example, relies on the availability of terms like “fresh” lyric style (Speaking Anew, which reaches its height of popularity in the era just before Bīdel) as a vocabulary *against which* to define his own style of steadfast imagining. In one lyric poem, Bīdel boasts about how “if the rays of his imagination” were to “fall upon the thoughts of Speaking Anew poets,” then each page of their otherwise lackluster black-and-white verse collections would become filled with color, “like peacock feathers.”¹⁰⁰ A few lines later, he says that even his “most faded colors” (of imagination) can be used to sketch the outlines of colorful blooming gardens. These lines about the colors of Bīdel’s lyric imagination are carefully framed in this poem, which opens with a reference to the burning brilliancy of (white) dawn, and ends with an image of (black) smoke, the sole remnant of a now-extinguished fire.

Before turning full attention to Bīdel’s own ideas about lyric style and literary craft, the present section pursues a lead revealed by the foregoing micro-survey of the early modern Persian *tazkere* genre: the prevalence in early modern critical thought of the descriptor *rangīn* – “colorful” – as predicated of a poet’s thought, their virtuosity of

¹⁰⁰ “*Be fekr-e tāze-gūyān gar khayāl-am partov andāzad / par-e ṭāvūs gardad jadval-e ourāq-e dīvān-hā.*” Ghazal N^o196, Line 5. Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, I:89.

composition, and the texture of their lyric style. Lodī's *tazkere* in particular stresses repeatedly that poets of the "Indian style" who flourished during the late early modern period (the era of Bīdel, Nāṣer 'Alī, and others who were active during Emperor Awrangzēb's reign, approximately 1658-1707), composed poetry whose style is markedly *colorful*. Indeed, for Lodī, it would seem that a "colorful imagination" (*rangīn-khayāl*) is a definitive attribute of literary excellence in northern India at this time.

It would be easy to overlook this descriptor, or to dismiss it as a disposable form of hyperbolic praise. Of course, the literal meaning of *rangīn* is "colorful" in the sense of something that is beautiful, attractive, interesting, and alluring.¹⁰¹ However, the argument here is that there is much more at stake in this term. Just as Chapter 1 outlined one particular vocabulary of lyric value – a vocabulary of exile, homeland, and various species of birds – the following pages turn to three Indo-Persian poets who, in prose prefaces to their own collections of lyric poetry, make pointed, significant, and sophisticated use of ideas concerning "the colors of imagination" and what is called here "the lyric interim."

Like the three poems in Chapter 1, the three prefaces considered here – from the 14th century, the 16th century, and the 19th century – are also in conversation with each

¹⁰¹ The idea that Indian Persian literature is distinctively "colorful" finds persistent traction in modern criticism as well. See, for instance, Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak's essay on the career of Persian in India, titled "Behind the Colors of Autumn: The Language of Persian Poetry in India." Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, "*Posht-e rang-hā-ye khazān: zabān-e she 'r-e fārsī dar Hend*," *Irān-nāme* 11.4 (1993), 599-620. For the trajectory Karimi-Hakkak traces from the earliest Indo-Persian poets through the early modern period and "sabb-e Hendī," see *ibid*, 122. Karimi-Hakkak here also suggests that throughout the millennium of classical Persian literature, across the Persianate world, Iranians always felt themselves to be at the "center" (*eḥsās-e markazīyat*), taking themselves to be uniquely capable of exerting influence – in terms of language and style – upon "others" (non-Iranian Persian-language poets and intellectuals in Central Asia, India, etc.) living on the Persianate "periphery." *Ibid*, 125.

other: Fayzī would have certainly been acquainted with Amīr Khosrow, and Ghāleb explicitly refers to both earlier poets. For these poets, *color* is a complex concept used by them to denote the time, space, action, content, and style of lyric poetry. What emerges from the following analysis of their prefaces is that *lyric color* in Indo-Persian literary-critical thought comes to represent something akin to what Angus Fletcher has called “a defense of the interim,” in which the early modern (English) poet “invents a temporal and spatial field through which *action may continue*, a field where language will not end.”¹⁰² Color (*rang*) in Indo-Persian criticism is similarly bounded both by time (the brief burst of color in the middle of a nycthemeron, between white dawn and black night) and by space (the spectrum of colors, bookended by whiteness and blackness). In both of these senses, the idea of *color (rang)* in both lyric poetry and literary-critical prose is imbued with cosmological significance, and applied as such by poets and critics to a world of words: between the pure page-white silence of dawn and the blotted black silence of night, there is scope for the virtuosic human imagination to *act through language* – for the mind to show its colors through vibrant bursts of lyric creativity. The poet, being human, necessarily finds their field of action spatially and temporally constricted. However, a capable poet can so thoroughly master the colorful field of discourse through their imagination that their lyric practice – in spite of and even *because* it is constrained by hard limits – becomes a feat of virtuosic achievement, an exploration of the farthest extents of what is humanly possible. In Amīr Khosrow’s words, “[Divine] meaning

¹⁰² Angus Fletcher, *Time, Space, and Motion in the Age of Shakespeare* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007), 94.

requires the form of [human] literary expression”¹⁰³ – a thought echoed almost identically by Fayzī: “Meaning may come from God, but *literary expression* – I produce myself.”¹⁰⁴ Ghāleb is more radical still: “O Lord! Create someone like myself after I am gone, who has also traversed the entirety of literary discourse ...so that it will become understood how tall I built my mountain-high castle of discourse, and to what lofty peaks I fastened the lasso of my imagination [*khayāl*].”¹⁰⁵ In other words, the template of language and ideas may be given by God, but what can be *done* with this template – against the odds, creatively, virtuosically – belongs to the realm of human lyric endeavor.

The following pages turn to prose prefaces by these three influential (and markedly patriotic) Indo-Persian poets, in which they introduce collections of their own Persian lyric poetry. The genre of the prose preface appended before a poet’s own collection of verse is frequently characterized by a scrupulously crafted and rhetorically gymnastic sequence of self-conscious reflection on the poet’s own craft. As such, the prose preface, alongside the other varieties of criticism considered in this chapter, serves as a crucial source of evidence for how the Indian Persian tradition came to conceive of itself. The three prefaces here span the entire length of the Indo-Persian canon, and trace an arc beginning with Amīr Khosrow (d.1325), the “parrot of India” who helped to inaugurate a patriotic “Indianness” of style, continuing to Fayzī Fayyāzī (d.1595),

¹⁰³ “*Ma ‘nī mohtāj ast be šūrat-e ‘ebārat.*” Nāṣer al-Dīn Amīr Khosrow Dehlavī, *Ghorrat al-kamāl [The New Moon of Perfection]* (Patna: Edāre-ye taḥqīqāt-e ‘arabī va fārsī, 1988), 8.

¹⁰⁴ “*Ma ‘nī ze khodā būd o ‘ebārat az man.*” Abū al-Fayz Fayzī Fayyāzī, *Enshā-ye Fayzī [The Prose Works of Fayzī]* (Lahore: Majlis-i Taraqqī-yi Adab, 1973), 72.

¹⁰⁵ “*Yā rabb! Pas az man chūn man be-gerd-e sarāpā-ye goftār-gardīde-ī beyāfarīnī, tā vā-rasad ke dīvār-e kākh-e vālā-ye sokhan dar che pāye-ye boland ast va sar-reshte-ye kamand-e khayāl-am dar ān farāzestān be-kodāmīn zerve band.*” Mīrzā Asadollāh Khān Ghāleb Dehlavī, *Kolleyyāt-e Ghāleb-e Farsī* (Lahore: Majles-i Taraqqī-yi Adab, 1967), 143.

Emperor Akbar's brilliant court poet whose high literary achievements coincide with the apex of Mughal political power, and ending with Ghāleb of Delhi (d.1869), who witnessed the turbulent and tragic time of consolidated British colonial rule, when Persian was fast disappearing from South Asia. He considers himself to be the last Indo-Persian poet and the final torch-bearer of the Indian style.

Amīr Khosrow (1253-1325) was the son of a Turkic army officer employed by the Khaljī Sultanate, and his mother was Indian; in addition to Persian, he is said to have been fluent in Sanskrit, Turkic, Arabic, and Indian vernaculars.¹⁰⁶ Maintaining a difficult, delicate balance between his roles as court poet during an especially volatile and intrigue-ridden time in the Delhi Sultanate, and as a Sufi poet under the Cheshtī saint Neẓām al-Dīn Ouleyā', who advocated abstinence from politics and the affairs of the world, Amīr Khosrow established a style of lyric poetry suffused with *īhām*, ambiguity. He compiled four *dīvāns* (collections of his own verse), the third of which contains poems composed between the age of 34 and 43 (*Gorrah al-kamāl*, or *The New Moon of Perfection*, compiled in 1293/1294) and includes an important prose introduction by Amīr Khosrow himself. Here, as in other works, such as *The Nine Spheres* [*Noh sepehr*], a long narrative poem that "proves" the superiority of India and Indic (even brahmanical) thought over all other places and forms of thinking in the world, Amīr Khosrow is markedly patriotic. His commitment to the clearly defined Persian-Islamic literary, cultural, and religious identity of India (*Hendūstān*) shapes much of his preface, which contains long passages that

¹⁰⁶ On Amīr Khosrow's life, works, historical context, and thought, see Paul E. Losensky and Sunil Sharma, *In the Bazaar of Love: The Selected Poetry of Amir Khusrau* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2011); Sunil Sharma, *Amir Khusraw: The Poet of Sufis and Sultans* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005); and Alyssa Gabbay, *Islamic Tolerance: Amir Khusraw and Pluralism* (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), especially 20-23 on the preface considered here.

“prove” how Persian poetry is superior to Arabic (the main rival classical tradition in Amīr Khosrow’s time),¹⁰⁷ that Persian poets – especially those in Delhi – are the “best” of all Persian poets throughout the Persianate world, and how India more than any other place in Iran or elsewhere has achieved a *uniform* mastery of the Persian language: it is spoken and used everywhere in India the same way, whereas Persian varies widely from region to region outside of India in Iran and Central Asia – and, moreover, all the emigres living in India who are Khorasani (eastern Iranian), Turkic, Arab, etc. have *not* gained equal mastery of the Indian vernacular (*Hendavī*), which, when spoken by them, “is full of errors.”¹⁰⁸

Amīr Khosrow also sets forth important ideas about the nature of poetry. He once again adopts the rhetorical strategy of “proof” in order to demonstrate that poetry is not subservient to “science” (meaning theology, philosophy, rhetoric, etc.), but is in fact the *superior* discipline of knowledge;¹⁰⁹ human beings, of all creatures, are also superior precisely because of their *poetic abilities*. Some animals can mimic language – but only humans can be poets with original lyric thought.¹¹⁰ He also articulates in a fascinatingly systematic way what kinds of poetic temperaments there are, and what it takes to be a

¹⁰⁷ “*Sābet mī-dāram ke Pārseyān be ṭab ‘-e shā ‘erī bar ‘orabā’ rājeḥ-and’* (“I conclusively hold that, by nature, Persian poets are superior to Arabs”). Amīr Khosrow, *Ghorrat al-kamāl*, 28.

¹⁰⁸ “*Goftār-e Pārsī dar Hendūstān az lab-e āb-e Send tā dahāne-ye daryā-ye moḥīt yek zabān-ī-st...Khodāvand-e mufattiḥ al-abwāb dar-e sokhan bar-e mā goshāde ast va īn Pārsī-ye mā... dar īn chahār hazār...farsang yek-ī ast.*” (“Persian spoken in India – from the banks of the river Sind [the Indus] to the [Indian] ocean – is one [uniform] language. The Lord – *the Opener of Doors* – has opened the doors of literary discourse for us [Indians], so that this Persian language of ours is a single language spoken without variation throughout these four thousand parsangs.”) Ibid, 28-29.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 8.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 5-9.

“master” (*ostād*) in the art of poetry. There are three stages (*pāye*) of lyric discourse: the outward form of language (*abjad-e lafzī*), the form of meaning (*ṣūrat-e ma‘nī*) – including that which is imaginary, *khayāl*, and ambiguity, *ihām* – and finally, a kind of passionate aesthetic *taste* (*chāshnī-ye zowq*), which is quite rare, and which Amīr Khosrow claims to have in abundance.¹¹¹ He also outlines four different *styles* (*tarz*) of poetry, using Galenic terminology – moist, burnt, dry, and even-tempered. Interestingly, some of these styles are characterized by requiring more or less interpretive time – for instance, a “moist” lyric style can be comprehended *bī-ta’ammol*, “without delay” or “without attentive slow reflection.” Mastery of lyric discourse has five aspects. These are: intellectual, philosophical, “well-tempered,” amatory, and lyrical. Each of these different forms of lyric mastery are characterized by specific rhetorical figures – for example, the amatory lyric mode prefers paronomasia. The fifth mode – *lyric thought itself* (*dānesh-e panjom shā‘erāne*) – is superior to all the other styles (*tarz*), for it comprises all of them and their spheres of knowledge (*dānesh*).¹¹²

Poets vary in capability. Some who have not attained perfection and attempt difficult lyric maneuvers involving *khayāl* and *ihām* end up “drowning” in the ocean of lyric.¹¹³ Moreover, a poet has several paths for establishing their individual lyric style. Amīr Khosrow identifies three paths: first, certain masters – like Sanā’ī, Anvarī, Khāqānī – forge their own entirely new felicitous styles (*tarz-e mojaddad-e majdūd*). Other poets who come after these great masters are “shackled” to those masters’ original innovations.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 34.

¹¹² Ibid, 36.

¹¹³ Ibid, 37.

They can, however, become faithful “followers” of one or the other master’s style, and this is the second form of individual lyric style. Finally, there is a third group of “thieves” who steal others’ styles without attribution.¹¹⁴ Interestingly, although Amīr Khosrow is not one to shy away from self-praise, he does state explicitly that he himself is no “master” in the first sense, for each genre in which he composes follows “visionary” poets who came before him: Sanā’ī, Khāqānī, Sa’dī, Neẓāmī. Importantly, the specific locus of influence is *that which is imaginary (khayāl)*. With characteristic rhetorical brio, Amīr Khosrow tags each group of poets who have influenced him with one of the four elements – water, air, fire – and reserves “earth” for whatever small portion of his oeuvre that is truly original to himself. Put together, these elements of his work produce a “tree” with “fruits” – which he hopes may please God. He ends the section by restating that he himself is no “master” in the true sense of the word, for he has not attained *authoritative dominance in his style (melkeyyat-e tarz)*.

Throughout his preface, Amīr Khosrow frames endeavors of literary discourse in cleverly paronomastic terms of color: his “colorful preface” (“*dībāche*” or “preface” in fact means “colorful embroidery”) unfolds in the space and time between the blank whiteness of a clean page (*bayāz*) and an ink-blackened rough draft (*savād*), which are connected to “east” (where the sun rises) and “west” (where the sun sets).¹¹⁵ He talks at length about the span of time in which he composes the preface – from when the brilliant white sun rises and dispels the darkness, to when the black rough-draft of night is

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 38-39.

¹¹⁵ “*Mozayyan*,” or “colorfully adorned.” Ibid, 44.

replaced by a new blank page of dawn.¹¹⁶ In this interval, he writes that “I, Khosrow – every flame of whose ardent nature is its own element – took up the thread of my discourse.”¹¹⁷ Slowly, he “blackened” the blank page with discourse, within which blackness there began to glow various planets and stars of his brilliant rhetorical flourishes, and his imagination [*khayāl*, *takhayyol*] began to shine with newness and subtlety (“*khayāl-e bārīk va boland va now*”),¹¹⁸ such that “all day and all night, I rubricated the calendar of my self with my own blood.”¹¹⁹ These two interstitial descriptions – colorful flames, and red blood – are Amīr Khosrow’s way of getting at the “colors of imagination” that unfold in the “interim” between blank silence and black-inked discourse, between dawn and night. This vocabulary for conceptualizing literary endeavor – wherein the colors of imagination pour forth out of one’s very innermost self (his heart’s blood, his nature’s fire) – are taken up by Fayzī, Ghāleb, and many other Indian Persian poets. Although Amīr Khosrow here does not specifically use terms that will gain currency in the early modern period – like *rang* and *rangīn* (color and colorful), predicated of that which is imaginary (*khayāl*) – his preface clearly lays the foundation upon which these later poets build their theories of the lyric.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 45-46.

¹¹⁷ “*Hāşel-e bāmdādān ke khorshīd-e asadī savād-e moẓallam-e shabāne rā bayāz farmūd bande-ye Khosrow ke har sho‘le az ātash-e ṭab‘-e ū ‘onşor-ī ast kharīṭe-ye sokhan rā sar-reshte bāz kard.*” Ibid, 46.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 43.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 46.

¹²⁰ There are moments in his poetry where Amīr Khosrow shows himself to be preoccupied explicitly with the idea of color. For instance, Jayyūbī’s 1650 work, *Majma‘ al-şanāye‘ fī ‘olūm al-badāye‘*, supplies an example of complicated refrain by Amīr Khosrow, where the refrain is “black and white and red” (“*seyāh o sefīd o sorkh*”). Aḥmad b. Moḥammad Şāleḥ Jayyūbī, *Majma‘ al-şanāye‘ fī ‘olūm al-badāye‘* [*Compendium of Rare Examples from the Rhetorical*

Fayzī Fayyāzī (1547-1595), the great poet in the Mughal court of Emperor Akbar,¹²¹ also composed an important preface to his collection of Persian verse. His preface is titled “*Tabāshīr al-ṣobḥ*,”¹²² where *tabāshīr* has two meanings: it can be read as the broken Arabic plural of *tabshīr*, “good tidings,” and also as the Sanskrit *tvakshīra*, which is the sugar of bamboo, clay, and whiteness.¹²³ It is clear how, given the “whiteness” of both the Arabic-Persian and Sanskrit *tabāshīr*, that these two could become seamlessly merged into a bi- or trilingual pun (the Persian word “shīr,” “milk,” adds a further punning hue).

As Thibaut d’Hubert has noted, this preface is scattered throughout with “Indic” objects and images: chess, magic, references to Jagannātha practices, the “ruby in the dust” – all of which may show that Fayzī is influenced by the *premākhyān* tradition¹²⁴

Sciences], ed. Moḥammad Khoshkāb (Tehran: Enteshārāt-e Safīr-e Ardehāl, 1394SH [2015CE]), 123. In his own preface too, Amīr Khosrow speaks of his poetic discourse as being composed upon a “silken page” such that the pen becomes a “red-black satin flag.” Amīr Khosrow, *Ghorrat al-kamāl*, 34. He also compares inexperienced poets to children, who are easily distracted by “colors” – red and yellow (*sorkh va zard*) – and do not progress to achieve lyric mastery, remaining stuck in “colorful games” (*bāzīche-ye rangīn*). Ibid, 32.

¹²¹ On Fayzī’s life, works, and legacy, especially his retelling of an Indic story for politically inflected Sufi purposes, see Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Faizi’s Nal-Daman and Its Long Afterlife,” in *Writing the Mughal World: Studies on Culture and Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 204-248.

¹²² Fayzī Fayyāzī, *Enshā-ye Fayzī*, 65.

¹²³ See Dehkhodā’s two separate definitions for *tabāshīr* in the *Loghatnāme-ye Dehkhodā*: (I) *chīz-ī bāshad safīd ke az meṯān-e ney-e hendī ... bar-āyad* (“Something white that comes from inside an Indian reed”). Dehkhodā gives examples from Nezāmī and Khāqānī, both of whom use *tabāshīr* as a white pith, in contrast with something else that is red: a white “skeleton” contrasted with red pomegranate seeds, and (red) rose-water (*jolāb*). Dehkhodā also refers to the specific phrase “*tabāshīr-e ṣobḥ*,” meaning “the very first whiteness of dawn,” its initial absolute purity. (II) *jam ‘-e tabshīr; mozhde* (“the plural of “glad tidings”), or the auspicious beginning of anything – including dawn.

¹²⁴ Thibaut d’Hubert, personal communication. I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to read this preface with Professor d’Hubert.

(Sufi romance narratives in northern Indian vernacular languages).¹²⁵ Like Amīr Khosrow, Fayzī too frames his preface with the black-and-white binary of dawn-and-night, within which the interval, or lyric interim, is filled with exploratory travels through imagination: he refers to grains of sand from the desert of the imaginary (*rīg-e beyābān-e khayāl*),¹²⁶ and to objects that “shine” in this blank desert (diamonds; pearls that “glow at night”).¹²⁷ He contrasts the black earth of literary discourse with the shining sun of meaning, and speaks explicitly about the binaries of whiteness and blackness, light and darkness.¹²⁸ His verse, he says, is intended to please “the dark-skinned people of India” (*seyah-pūstān-e Hendūstān*) who live in its “black-soiled fertile grounds” (*savād*). Speaking with patriotic pride about being Indian, Fayzī attributes the “magical” qualities of his discourse to India itself, whose “magic” can transmute one form into another.¹²⁹

Speaking directly about his own poetic style, Fayzī says that he “does not like difficulty” (*man doshvār-pasandī bar khod napasandīde-am*).¹³⁰ Referring in Amīr Khosrow’s terms to the “moist” and “dry” qualities of his verse, he says he has made a selection of his own poetry here, and that “the blackness of his army of discourse” forms the “manuscript of the black-rough-draft grounds of Hendūstān,” and that these “black

¹²⁵ On the *premākhyān* tradition, see Aditya Behl, *Love’s Subtle Magic: An Indian Islamic Literary Tradition, 1379–1545*, ed., Wendy Doniger (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

¹²⁶ Fayzī Fayyāzī, *Enshā-ye Fayzī*, 63.

¹²⁷ *Almās...gouhar-e shab-tāb*. Ibid, 64.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 67.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 71.

environs of the cities of my meanings” are the “dark hyacinth patches in this ancient garden.” His Indian patriotism, then, is clearly situated within an historical appreciation of the wider Persian canon – a collectively tended lyric “garden” that can be modified, but within which all Persian poets flourish. Fayzī ends his preface with a series of quatrains, the last two of which end the preface on a definitive note of *color*:

ما خاک وجود خویشتن بیخته‌ایم
و آن خاک بخون جگر آمیخته‌ایم
هر نکته تر کز قلم انگیخته‌ایم
خاکستر دل برده برو ریخته‌ایم

I have sown the soil
of my own existence.
I have mixed that earth
with blood.
Every flowing subtle point
that I have pressed out of my pen
Carried away the ashes of my heart
and poured them out on it.

این نامه نگاریست رقم مرغولش
هر معنی تازه غمزه شننگولش
خواهم که کشم ز لاجوردش و سمه
و آنگاه ز شنگرف دهم تنبولش

This epistle is a Beloved:
letters are its twisted locks,
Every fresh meaning
is its flirtatious gaze.
I will paint its brows and lashes
with indigo-blue,
And then I'll present
a green-red betel leaf
made of vermilion.

Here, Fayzī describes his own verse as “fresh” (*ma' nī-ye taze*), – and he does indeed fall squarely into the timeline of the Speaking Anew style, as outlined by, for instance, Fakhr al-Zamānī, who, as mentioned above, applies this style to poets of the sixteenth century,

like ‘Orfī (d.1591), Fayzī’s exact contemporary. For Fayzī, however, his own freshness is explicitly Indian: it is full of vivid colors extracted from both himself (his blood) and from the Indian environment (its lapis lazuli skies, its bright red-green betel leaves). Ending on this note of color seems all the more intentional and significant given that, immediately following this preface, the first lyric poem that Fayzī includes in his collection opens with the color red:

وہ چہ موزون است آن گلگون قبا
کاش در بر گیرمش همچون قبا

How beautifully well-balanced
is that rose-red garment!
I wish I could embrace it like a garment.
take it into my arms.¹³¹

This poem also ends with two kinds of color: *atlas* (red) and *aksūn* (black satin). When considered alongside Fayzī’s statements about his role as the human architect of divinely given speech, defining himself as a poet who fashions forms from divine raw material (“*ma ‘nī ze khodā būd o ‘ebārat az man*”),¹³² the emphasis on color becomes especially striking. Color, then, is the material of the lyric interim, and this “color” resides both in Fayzī’s individual imagination and in the Indian environment itself. Piecing this all together, it is clear that Fayzī conceives of his own lyric enterprise as being a virtuosic human endeavor, which takes place in the colorful spatio-temporal interim between whiteness and blackness. And this lyric interim is full of color – specifically, full of *Indian* colors.

¹³¹ Ghazal N°1. Abū al-Fayz Fayzī Fayyāzī, *Dīvān-e Fayzī*, ed. A.D. Arshad (Lahore: Edāra-yi Taḥqīqāt-i Pākistān, Dānishgāh-i Panjāb, 1946), 177.

¹³² Fayzī Fayyāzī, *Enshā-ye Fayzī*, 73.

The nineteenth-century Indian Persian (and Urdu) poet Ghāleb of Delhi composed a prose preface to his collection of Persian lyric poetry that is an elegiac literary-critical masterpiece.¹³³ As a poet who stands self-consciously at the end of the Indo-Persian canon, his preface is at once full of boast, bravado, and tragic recognition that the Persian lyric tradition in India will likely perish with him. This remarkable preface merits a detailed study of its own; for present purposes, the discussion here is confined to Ghāleb's ideas concerning color, imagination, the Indian Persian canon, and lyric practice.

For Ghāleb, being human is defined by the endeavor to come to know oneself through language and lyric: “One must exist with purpose: breath is for sowing into sparks, the speaking tongue is for kindling the flame of praise; but also it is a wondrous thing – to take stock of one's self.”¹³⁴ Describing his own poetry in a vocabulary that draws on pre-Islamic Persian literary and religious (Zoroastrian) culture, Ghāleb says that

آری صهبای سخن بروزگار من از کهنگی تند و پرزور است و شب اندیشه را بفر دمیدن
سپیده سحری برات فراوانی نور است. هر آینه رفتگان سرخوش غنوده‌اند و من خرابستم
پیشینان چراغان بوده‌اند و من آفتابستم.

Truly, the wine of discourse in my day is pungent and potent because of its old age. In anxious hours of the night, [my poetry] is an auspicious nighttime celebration of abundant light, gleaming with the *farr*-like radiance dawn's whiteness. All the departed, inebriated [by the wine of classical Persian verse], have fallen asleep – but I am still drunk. My forebears were illuminating lamps, but I – I am the very sun.¹³⁵

¹³³ Mehr Afshan Farooqi's forthcoming book on Ghāleb's textual history studies Ghāleb's Persian and Urdu corpora together, and discusses Ghāleb's prose preface to his collection of Persian verse (“Prefacing the Poetry: Ghalib's Self-Presentation”).

¹³⁴ “*Ārī, bīkār nashāyad zīst, nafas dar sharāre kāshān ast, va zabān dar zabāne-ye dorūdan dar gereftan, va ham az khod māye bar-gereftan shagarf-hālat ast.*” Mīrzā Asadollāh Khān Ghāleb of Delhi, *Kolleyāt-e Ghāleb-e Farsī*. Lahore: Majles-i Taraqqī-yi Adab, 1967), 157.

¹³⁵ *Ārī, ṣaḥbā-ye sokhan be-rūzegār-e man az kohnegī tond o por-zūr ast va shab-e andīshe rā be-farr-e damīdan-e sepīde-ye saḥar-ī be-rāt-e farāvānī-ye nūr ast. Har āyene raftegān-e sarkhosh*

His pre-Islamic Iranian gestures make themselves felt at the level of grammar (the old Persian verbal form *-astam*), in the abundant Zoroastrian fire-imagery, and in the reference to the pre-Islamic Iranian idea of divinely ordained royal charisma, *farr*, often conceived of as literally shining with sun-like radiance. Color is already present here, though not explicitly articulated: wine is, for Ghāleb, implicitly full of “color,” as is the risen sun, which is no longer “purely white” at the first break of dawn. Ghāleb, like Fayzī, also conceives of the colors of his imagination in decidedly patriotic Indian terms:

مسنج شوکت عرفی که بود شیرازی
مشو اسیر زلالی که بود خوانساری

به سمناٹ خیالم در آی نا بینی
روان فروز برو دوش‌های زناری

Don't value the “Majesty” of ‘Orfī
just because he was from Shīrāz.
Don't be a “Captive” of Zolālī,
just because he was from Kh'ānsār.

Come into the Somnath
of my imagination –
so you can see
My brow, through which my soul shines,
and my shoulders draped with sacred thread.¹³⁶

Ghāleb here names four early modern Iranian poets who are associated in some way with the “Indian style” of Persian lyric. Two are explicitly named: ‘Orfī (d.1591) from Shīrāz, and Zolālī (d.1615), famous for his poem *Maḥmūd o Ayāz* (about Maḥmūd of Ghaznī, an

ghonūde-and va man kharāb-astam; pīshīneyān cherāghān būde-and o man āftāb-astam.” Ibid, 149.

¹³⁶ “*Masanj showkat-e ‘Orfī ke būd Shīrāzī / Mashow asīr-e Zolālī ke būd Kh'ānsārī; Be-Somnāt-e khayāl-am dar-āy tā bīnī / Ravān forūz barū dūsh-hā-ye zonnārī.*” Ibid, 149.

early Islamic ruler in northern India). Two further poets are named more slyly: Showkat Bokhārī (d.1695), whose pen-name is “Majesty” (*showkat*), and Asīr Eṣfahānī (d.1636), whose pen-name is “Captive” (*asīr*). It may even be the case that the later poet in each pair is beholden to the former (the later poets are grammatically beholden to the former ones, suggesting that this too is the case with their lyric styles). He invokes these famous early modern Persian poets from Iran, who are associated with India, in order to dismiss them – on the grounds that they are *not authentically Indian enough*; whereas he, Ghāleb, most certainly is. Not only is Ghāleb proud of being an Indian Muslim, but he describes his own imagination as an iconically non-Islamic Hindu place in India, Somnāth – which was sacked by Maḥmūd of Ghaznī in 1025. Not only does Ghāleb use Somnāth metonymically to refer to all of India as a description of his mind, but he makes his Indianness *emphatically Indic* by portraying himself as a Hindu god sitting inside the temple in Somnāth, his forehead radiating with divine grace, the sacred thread draped across his shoulders.

Elsewhere in the preface, Ghāleb says in what is a very close paraphrase of passage in Bīdel’s autobiography that

بزبان موجی که صهبا را بپیمانه اندر است سر گذشت جوش خویشتن پالایی
که در خلوت خم میزند شنیدن است.

In the language of waves that ripple within the glass of wine, there is a story that is worth hearing – a story of boiling and straining one’s self that happens in seclusion in the wine-cask.¹³⁷

¹³⁷ “*Be-zabān-e mowjī ke ṣahbā rā be-paymāne andar ast, sar-gozasht-e jūsh-e kh’īsh-tan-pālāyī ke dar khalvat-e khom mī-zanad shanīdanī ast.*” Ibid, 151. Cf. the following passages from Bīdel’s autobiography: “The plain white hue of this milk-revealing blood was a cypher worth understanding; the effervescent purity of this red daybreak like white dawn had a meaning **worth**

Ghāleb further describes the ethical and experiential dimensions of his lyric practice in terms that are clearly in dialogue with Fayzī and Amīr Khosrow: he defines his imagination, or that which is imaginary (*khayāl-i*) as something that appears before the eyes (*dar naẓar*), which consists in a violent act of “bleeding” or “killing” (*khūn kardan*) and calls that act of lyric violence “a blooming garden” (*golestān nāmīdan*).¹³⁸ He even talks about lyric practice as “my religion,” founded on the following ideas:

اشیا صور علمیه حقند و الوان نگار بال عنقا؛ بنقش‌هایی از رگ کلک فرو نریخته نقاش را صد
رنگ پرده‌داری و بنواهایی از ساز بدر ناجسته مطرب را هزار پرده رامشگری.

“Things” are God’s divine forms, and “colors” are pictures painted on the wings of the phoenix. The Painter has a hundred colors that reveal truth with images that *have not poured forth* from His pen. The musician has a thousand modes of music, songs that *have not escaped* the instrument.¹³⁹

This negative description of colors and songs that remain contained can be referred back to the passage above, where Ghāleb privileges the kind of lyric imagination that “boils within the wine cask.” Of all three Indian Persian poets examined in this section, Ghāleb is most blatant in his willingness to align his lyric practice with God’s own creative arts. Like Fayzī and Amīr Khosrow, Ghāleb describes *all things that exist in the world* as “colors” of God’s own imagination, colors that can be manipulated by the capable imagination of the lyric poet.

hearing” (see T1.E1.3) and before eyelashes come together and eyes close, **the spectacle must be seen**; before sleep carries the self away, **the tale must be heard** (see T1.E1.5).

¹³⁸ Ghāleb of Delhi, *Kolleyāt-e Ghāleb-e Farsī*, 154.

¹³⁹ “*Ashyā ẓovar-e ‘elmeyye-ye ḥaqq-and va alvān negār-e bāl-e ‘anqā; be-naqsh-hā-ī az rag-e kelk forū-narīkhte naqqāsh rā ṣad rang-e parde-darī va be-navā-hā-ī az sāz be-dar nā-jaste, moṭreb rā hazār parde rāmesh-garī*”. Ibid, 153. The phrase *ẓovar-e ‘elmeyye* is a Sufi term of art, denoting “divine forms.” For the importance of the phoenix (*‘anqā*), see Chapter 5.

In summary, these invaluable prefaces reveal an arc of continuity that defines a specifically Indian Persian style of lyric poetry, articulated through a shared vocabulary of *color* and *colorfulness* with which these poets think about and theorize their own lyric craft. The idea of color and the “lyric interim” is also of great importance for Bīdel. In his autobiography, he explicitly conceives of his own lifetime as spanning from the “whiteness” of dawn to the “blackness” of night, with the redness of color in between – an idea he first grasps in his infancy, as he perceives the red blood within his mother’s white milk.¹⁴⁰ Elsewhere in the autobiography (and it is perhaps significant that it is in the preface), Bīdel says that

بی‌رنگی را در عالم تهمت رنگ هزار رنگ خون خوردن است و بی‌نواایی را در محفل
مهتاب‌نوا شکوه هزار ناله پیش بردن.

Colorlessness must be slain by a thousand colors in this dyed and tainted world, and voiceless helplessness must bear the burden of the glory of a thousand laments in this assembly of musical moonlight.¹⁴¹

In other words, the human lifespan unfolds in a world full of color, and it is up to each individual to try to acquaint themselves with this multiplicity of beguiling and bewitching colors before their time runs out. As subsequent chapters argue, Bīdel develops his lyric practice of steadfast imagining precisely in order to engage with these colors of the lyric interim. For Bīdel, lyric poetry uniquely allows one to train their imagination (*khayāl*) through attentive slow reflection (*ta’ammol*) and other lyric techniques. Although Bīdel does not put his patriotism into words quite as straightforwardly as Amīr Khosrow, Fayzī,

¹⁴⁰ See T1.E1.3, and see also footnote 43 there for an account of why Bīdel and other premoderns believe that breastmilk is dependent upon, and therefore constituted by, blood.

¹⁴¹ See T1.P2.

and Ghaleb, Chapter 6 will show how Bīdel’s subtle engagement with Indic thought deeply informs his lyric style.

2.4 Mapping the Grounds of Poetry: Bīdel and Ḥazīn in Their Own Words

It is natural that every generation perceives itself as experiencing and fostering an unprecedented era of novelty; but of what exactly this novelty consists, of course, can vary greatly from generation to generation – and within each generation – in any literary tradition. Discussing the concept of innovation in the Sanskrit *kāvya* tradition, Yigal Bronner, David Shulman, and Gary Tubb stress the importance of recovering terms for innovation that are internal to the literary tradition in question. Following their lead, we may best learn about lyric style in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by allowing poets to speak for themselves.¹⁴² Given that the poems examined in Chapter One were centrally preoccupied with themes of homeland and exile, this chapter will conclude by

¹⁴² In the case of Sanskrit *kāvya*, poets themselves frequently mention important precursor-poets, making observations about those poets’ styles and what, in contrast, is distinctive about their own (a mode known as *kavi-prasamsā*). The poet presents a litany of innovators who came before him, frequently described as walking in sequence down a path (*mārga*) – or, as the case may be, taking a bold turn in a new direction. Dharmakīrti, for instance, stunningly describes himself breaking new ground thus:

No one is walking ahead;
No one follows behind.
There are no fresh footprints [*nava-pada*] on the road [*mārga*]
Could I be alone?
I understand.
The path taken by those before me is now desolate,
and it’s obvious I’ve left behind
the crowded, easy one.

Yigal Bronner, David Shulman, and Gary Tubb, eds., *Innovations and Turning Points: Toward a History of Kāvya Literature* (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 2014), 3-4.

examining statements made by Ḥazīn and Bīdel beyond confines of those specific poems, wherein each poet outlines their position on poetic value, style, and geography. As shown here, even Bīdel, for all his tendencies towards abstraction, conceives of poetic style in explicitly geographical terms. Before turning to Bīdel, it is instructive to see how Bīdel's antagonist, Ḥazīn, conceives of lyric style.

Ḥazīn composed response-poems to many poets besides Ṣā'eb (Ḥāfeẓ, Sanā'ī, Nazīrī, Sa'dī, Feghānī, among many others), and it is frequently in these response-poems that he, like Ṣā'eb in his time, boasts of the “fresh” (*tāze*) quality of his own verse. For instance, one ghazal ends with the line, “Ḥazīn, you have renewed [*tāze kardī*] the style [*ravesh*]¹⁴³ of Ḥāfeẓ of Shīrāz,” followed by an exact quotation from the ghazal by Ḥāfeẓ to which Ḥazīn's poem responds.¹⁴⁴ Elsewhere Ḥazīn explicitly invokes the style (*tarz*) of his classical predecessors with unequivocal deference:

این آن غزل که گفته پیش از حزین سنائی

¹⁴³ *Ravesh*: lit. “going or proceeding,” from *raftan*, “to go/proceed.”

¹⁴⁴ “*Tāze kardī ravesh-e Ḥāfeẓ-e Shīrāz Ḥazīn*.” Ḥazīn, Ghazal N^o294. Shaykh Moḥammad 'Alī b. Abī Ṭāleb Ḥazīn Lāhejī, *Dīvān-e Ḥazīn-e Lāhejī*, ed. Bīzhan Taraqqī (Tehrān: Enteshārāt-e ketāb-forūshī-e Khayyām, 1350SH [1971CE]), 308). This poem explicitly identifies itself as a response to a specific poem by Ḥāfeẓ by citing a hemistich from that Ḥāfeẓ poem in its last line: “*Ke ze anfās-e khosh-ash bū-ye kas-ī mī-āyad*.” Shams al-Dīn Moḥammad Ḥāfeẓ Shīrāzī, *Dīvān-e Ḥāfeẓ*, ed. Parvīz Nātel Khānlarī (Tehrān: Kh'ārazmī, 1362SH [1983CE]), 486-487. Direct citation (*taẓmīn*) as a way of signaling that the poem in question has been a response-poem is not unique to Ḥazīn. For further examples of the same technique, especially when responding to Ḥāfeẓ, see, among many others, Fayẓ-e Kāshānī (d.1679), the ghazal ending with “*Fayẓ az kalām-e Ḥāfeẓ mī-kh'ān barā-ye ta'vīd / del mī-ravad ze dast-am ṣāḥeb-delān khodā rā*.” Moḥammad b. Mortazā Fayẓ Kāshānī, *Kolleyyāt-e ash'ār-e Mowlānā Fayẓ-e Kāshānī*, ed. Moḥammad 'Alī Ṣafīr (Tehran: Ketābkhāne-ye Sanā'ī, 1354SH [1975CE]), 21. This poem responds to Ḥāfeẓ's ghazal N^o5. Ḥāfeẓ, *Dīvān* I:26-27. See also, for instance, the lyric poetry of Ḥazīn's lesser known contemporary, Abjadī of Madrās (d.1788): see, for example, Ghazal N^o103. Mīr Esmā'īl Khān Abjadī Madrāsī, *Dīvān-e Abjadī*, ed. Muhammad Husayn Mahvi (Madras: University of Madras, 1951), III:65. For analysis of Abjadī's style, biography, and importance, see Stefano Pellò, “Poesia Persiana nell'India Meridionale: Dodici Ghazal di Mir Esmā'īl Khān Abjadī (XVIII Sec.),” in *Poesia nell'Oriente Mediterraneo e Islamico*, ed. Stefano Pellò, 93-115 (Pasion di Prato: Campanotto Editore, 2003).

این طرز گفتگو را از وی شنید باید

This is that *ghazal* which Sanā'ī recited before Ḥazīn
This style of speech must be heard from him.¹⁴⁵

Ḥazīn's model of freshness appears to be essentially conservative. He is interested in carrying forward the style of the classical poets of the past, and in preventing that style from losing its luster in the present. There is a hard polemical edge to this orientation: the compulsory "*bāyad*" ("must", the last word in the *ghazal*'s final couplet) points to an unmistakable broadcasting of his opinions regarding the classical canon across the entire contemporary Persianate literary world, a disputatious tenor that resonates across most of his works.

Bīdel also uses terms such as "*tāze*" and "*ṭarz*" in conjunction, although, unlike Ḥazīn, he often refers to that "fresh" style elegiacally, as a poetic standard that can only be achieved through great struggle, if at all:

بی جگر خوردن بهار طرز نتوان تازه کرد
غوطه تا در خون نزد فطرت سخن رنگین نشد

Style's springtime cannot be renewed
without consuming one's liver with grief.
Speech will not bloom with colors
until [the poet's] nature plunges into blood.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ *Īn ān ghazal ke gofte pīsh az Ḥazīn Sanā'ī / īn ṭarz-e goftogū rā az vay shenīd bāyad.* Ḥazīn, *Dīvān*, 309.

¹⁴⁶ *Bī-jegar-khordan bahār-e ṭarz nat(a)vān tāze kard / ghūṭe tā dar khūn nazad feṭrat sokhan rangīn nashod.* Ghazal N^o-1170. Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, I:547. It is important to note that there is often an ambiguous overlap between the use of *tāze* in the non-technical sense of "fresh" and *tāze* as part of fixed terms for style, such as *tāze-gūyī*. Although each instance needs to be evaluated on its own terms, it is reasonable to suppose in Bīdel's case that there is a likely blurring of these possible senses and uses.

Eloquent springtime and fresh gardens of verse are naturally adjacent to another shared set of metaphors used by these poets as they grappled with questions of style, geography, and authority: birds. Parrots and crows are made to bear much of the polemical weight in poetic debates about style, parrots being typically melodious, delightfully colorful, and sweet-spoken (or rather, capable of impeccable imitation), while crows are the dark, discordant heralds of autumn and desolation. By the early modern period, the Iranian nightingale – that prototypical figure of the first, perfect, classical Persian poet – had become as far removed in time as the Iranian garden he inhabited was in space from the farther regions of the Persianate world. In early modern South Asia, these two species, parrots and crows, came to represent two alternatives in the early modern Persianate world for what a poet could be: a brilliant and worthy imitator, or a shrill and destructive mimic.

For Bīdel and Ḥazīn alike, these images are not mere stale tokens. In assigning and claiming (or reclaiming) these metaphors, what was at stake was no less than deciding who had the authority – based on his own given nature – to reign in the garden of Persian verse. Ḥazīn closes one ghazal, where he speaks of himself as “that nightingale” (“*ān bolbol-am*”) who has become lost in “this desert” (“*īn dash*”), in the following way:

در کام زاغ طعمه طوطی مکن حزین
بشناس قدر کلک شکر بار خویش را

Ḥazīn: place no treats
intended for parrots
into the mouths of crows;
Know well the worth
of your sugar-sweet pen.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ *Dar kām-e zāgh to ‘me-ye tūṭī maḥon Ḥazīn / besh(e)nās qadr-e kelk-e shak(k)ar-bār-e kh’īsh rā. Ḥazīn, Dīvān, 249.*

For Ḥāzīn, as Chapter 1 has shown, the geography of style very closely overlaps with real-historical geography, and all the binding laws of cultural inheritance that reign therein hold fast in the realm of style as well. His views are summed up nicely in two trenchant and oft-quoted remarks about how, of all the inarticulate “crows” who live in India, the only two Indo-Persian figures of whom he approved were Fayzī and the great Mughal statesman Abū-l Faḥl; as for the rest, he names Bīdel and Nāṣer ‘Alī as the worst of India’s offenders:

در زاغان هند از این دو برادر بهتری بر نخاسته.

Among the crows of India, none can be found better than these two brothers.¹⁴⁸

and

نظم ناصر علی و نثر بیدل به فهم نمی‌آید. اگر مراجعت به ایران دست دهد برای ریشخند بزم احباب ره‌آوردی بهتر از این نیست.

The verse of Nāṣer ‘Alī Serhendī and the prose of Bīdel are incomprehensible; if the opportunity to return to Iran were to present itself, no souvenir would be better than [their works] – to lampoon at a gathering of friends.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ “*Dar zāghān-e Hend az īn do barādar behtar-ī bar-nakhāste.*”

¹⁴⁹ “*Naẓm-e Nāṣer ‘Alī [Serhendī] va naṣr-e Bīdel be fahm namī-āyad. Agar morāja ‘at be Īrān dast dahad barā-ye rīshkhand-e bazm-e aḥbāb rah-āvard-ī behtar az īn nīst.*” All studies citing these two famous quotations that I was able to consult trace their source ultimately back to Muḥammad Ḥusain Āzād’s early twentieth-century Urdu work, *Nigāristān-i Fārs*. Āzād presents these two quotations in succession, introducing them in Urdu. He prefaces “*dar zāghān-e Hend...*” by saying that Ḥāzīn *has written* about the two brothers (“*[Ḥāzīn] Abūl Faḥl aur Faiẓī ko likhtā hai ki...*”), but does not give the source; and the sentence about Nāṣir ‘Alī and Bīdel is introduced thus:

Hindūstān ke shā‘iroñ meñ akṣar mazāmīn-i rangīn aur maṭālib-i mughlaq bahut bāndhte haiñ aur isī sabab se Nāṣir ‘Alī aur Bedil ke kalām ko pasand karte haiñ jo ki Shaikh aur akṣar ahl-i Īrān ke khilāf hai; chunān-chi Shaikh akṣar kahā kartā thā ki ...

The wording of Ḥazīn’s second statement concerning the “gag souvenir” of Indian Persian verse is strikingly similar to a phrase used by Bīdel in his Letter N^o258 (“On Lyric Style”):

هر چند سخنوران فارس این نوع تلفظ را تفاخر شمارند و زبان‌آوران هند غیر از دست‌آویز
تمسخر و رسوایی نمی‌پندارند.

Although poets of Fārs [Iranians] consider this type of pronunciation to be boast-worthy, poets of India do not consider it to be good for anything – except as a small souvenir to be passed around for the purpose of ridicule and shame.¹⁵⁰

It is not inconceivable that Ḥazīn had this statement by Bīdel in mind, which caused him to invest his words with specific allusive mordancy.

Ḥazīn’s introduction to his biographical compendium (*Tazkerat al-mo‘āsherīn*), which, as he states himself, was composed by him in exile (“when my fate has fallen

Since poets of Hindūstān make frequent use of colorful topoi and obscure conceits, they find the work of Nāṣir ‘Alī and Bīdel agreeable, to which Shaikh [Ḥazīn] and many Iranians are opposed; accordingly, the Shaikh [Ḥazīn] *often used to say...*

Muḥammad Ḥusain Āzād, *Nigāristān-i Fārs* (Lāhūr: Āzād Buk Ḍīpo, 1922), 212.

Once again there is no attribution to Ḥazīn’s written work, and this second quotation is explicitly identified as an oral statement. Ḥazīn’s biographer Sarfāraz Khan Khatak speculates that Āzād had access to another *tazkere* by Ḥazīn (*Tazkerat al-sho‘arā*) that is no longer extant, and that several quotations in the *Nigāristān* that cannot be attributed to Ḥazīn’s existing biographical compendium, the *Tazkerat al-mo‘āsherīn*, or any other extant work, may derive from this lost compendium. Sarfāraz Khan Khatak, *Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Alī Ḥazīn: His Life, Times, and Works* (Lahore: M. Ashraf, 1944), 226-227. Studies that discuss these two statements by Ḥazīn include, for example, Alam, “The Culture and Politics of Persian in Precolonial Hindustan,” 178; Serāj al-Dīn ‘Alī Khān Ārzū, *Tanbīh al-ghāfelīn*, ed. Sayyid Muḥammad Akram “Ikrām” (Lahore: Dānishgāh-i Panjāb, 1401 (1981), *bīst-u-hasht* [xxviii]; and Najm al-Rashīd, “*Sayr-e naqd-e she‘r-e Fārsī dar shebh-e qārre*” [“Literary Criticism of Persian Poetry in the Subcontinent”], *Ketāb-e māh: adabeyāt va falsafe* 77 (1382SH [2003CE]), 50-51.

¹⁵⁰“*Har chand sokhanvarān-e Fārs īn nou‘-e talaffoẓ rā tafākhōr shomārand, va zabān-āvarān-e Hend, gheyr az dast-āvīz-e tamaskhor va rosvāyī namī-pendārand.*” See T4.L3 for the full passage.

asleep in the Indian bed-chamber of ill fortune”¹⁵¹), contains a long digression on the fallen state of scholarship. He roundly excoriates his contemporaries’ attempts to compose histories, biographies, and *tazkeres* of any merit, saying that people these days are constitutionally incapable of distinguishing fact from fiction; make up stories out of whole cloth; have no respect for truth, scholarship, or genre; and approach the *tazkere*-writing enterprise as though it were a wayward folk narrative (*qeşşe-khvānī*).¹⁵² Although his comments are not explicitly directed at Indian scholars alone, the fact that he frames this discussion by announcing that his black fate has cast him onto the bleak shores of the Subcontinent (along with other thinly veiled hints about the stupidity and impudence of these poetasters and pseudo-scholars) strongly suggests that his invective is aimed primarily at Indian intellectuals. Perhaps both in this statement as well as in his poem on exile considered in Chapter 1, it is not simply that Ḥazīn found the Indo-Persian style unpalatable; rather, he considered the Indo-Persian style of thought itself to be deficient, lacking commitment to values that he himself firmly and fervently upheld, and which he associated with his homeland and with an earlier, prelapsarian Islamic “golden age.”¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ “...*dar vaqt-ī ke bakht ghonūde dar shabestān-e Hend-e tīre-rūzī ast.*” Shaykh Moḥammad ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭāleb Ḥazīn Lāhejī *Tazkerat al-mo‘āşerīn*, ed. Ma‘şūme Sālek (Tehrān: Nashr-e Sāye, 1996), 90.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 90-91.

¹⁵³ Ḥazīn writes bitterly of the degraded state of modern times compared with the “*şadr-e Eslām*,” the “Islamic golden age” (*ibid.*, 90). This attitude probably colors the overall style of Ḥazīn’s compendium, which he composed in extremely formal, Arabicized, and at times even convolutedly complex *enshā’* prose. For instance, a typical sentence begins with the Arabic exclamatory “*habba-dhā*,” a variety of what in Arabic grammar is known as *uslūb al-madh* (a rhetorical figure of praise). On these *asālīb*, see for example Ni‘ma, “*Asālīb nahwiyya*,” in *Mulakkhaş qawā‘id al-lughā al-‘arabiyya*, 183. For comments on Ḥazīn’s difficult prose style, see the editor’s introduction: Ḥazīn, *Tazkerat al-mo‘āşerīn*, 39-40. Ḥazīn’s enthusiasm for such Arabicization may have served as a way of distinguishing himself and his work from the surrounding Indo-Persian intellectual environment, in particular perhaps from the notoriously difficult prose of Bīdel (I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for this last suggestion).

It is important to remember that Ḥazīn’s views were not necessarily representative of a majority opinion. An example of a more tempered view is that of the critic and poet Vāleh Dāghestānī (d.1756), who, unlike Ḥazīn, did not hold all of India in utter contempt; indeed, in his entry on Ḥazīn in his compendium *Reyāz al-sho ‘arā’*, he even reprimands Ḥazīn for his uncompromisingly harsh attitude, saying that Iranians ought to be grateful to have found a home in India during times of hardship. Ḥazīn’s caustic comments are deemed by him to be “unworthy of the stature of the Shaykh” (“*hajv-hā-ye rakīk ke lāyeq-e shā’-n-e Shaykh nabūde*”).¹⁵⁴

In his entry on Bīdel in his biographical dictionary, the Indian literary critic and poet Khān-e Ārzū (1688-1756) refers to the “*sar-zamīn-e she ‘r*” (“the territory of verse”),¹⁵⁵ a favored term of his for the domain in which his teacher Bīdel’s great poetic achievements occurred. To annex Ārzū’s critical metaphor, perhaps conceiving of literature as being not *of* a place, but *as being* a place, might be a constructive reorientation for modern scholarship as well – something like Fayzī’s collectively tended garden of Persian literary discourse mentioned above.

If Persian literature of this time is thought of as a place, and (following the metaphors of Ārzū, Ḥazīn, Bīdel, et al.) if we allow that this place has a complex and contested geography – what, then, is style? In other words, what can terms for style,

¹⁵⁴ Vāleh Dāghestānī, ‘Alī Qolī Khān, *Reyāz al-sho ‘arā’*, ed. Sharīf Ḥusayn Qāsimī (Rāmpūr: Ketābkhāne-ye Reżā, 2001), 634.

¹⁵⁵ Ārzū, *Tazkere-yi Majma ‘ al-naḡā’is* [*Compendium of Precious Objects*], 1:240. This is perhaps a paronomastic allusion to “*zamīn-i sukhan*”, the formal “grounds” of poetry. On this term, see Losensky, *Welcoming Fighāni*, 215, and Gulchīn-i Ma‘ānī, *Farhang-i Ash ‘ār-i Šā’ib*, 392.

when examined in this context of metaphors for literature, reveal about the structure of Indo-Persian literary-critical thought?

2.5 A Wider Middle Path: The Indian Style, Speaking Anew, and the Virtuoso Imaginary

In contrast with the etymologically anodyne “*sabk*” (“style”, as in “*sabk-e Hendī*”), one of the several important terms for style¹⁵⁶ in the early modern period is “*ṭarīq*” – literally, a path or road. Chapter 1 has shown how, in modern scholarship, pearls and atoms have proven to be nearly ineradicable critical metaphors in the debates surrounding the unity of the Persian lyric. Perhaps, in the early modern Indo-Persian world, the figuration of lyric style *as a path* has similarly widespread traction. This seems to hold true for both premodern and modern Persian-language literary criticism. For example, in an essay on Ṣā’eb, Parvīz Khānlārī (d.1990) cites the disapproval of *sabk-e Hendī* in Āzar’s *Ātashkade* (1760), where Āzar’s harshest judgement is reserved for Ṣā’eb’s style (“*ṭarīq*,” “style, path” and “*ṭarīqe*,” lit. path, way, the Sufi path):

از آغاز سخنگستری ایشان طرق خیالات متینه فصحای متقدمین مسدود، و قواعد مسلمه استادان سابق مفقود، و مراتب سخنوری بعد از جناب میرزا مشار الیه که مبدع طریقه جدید ناپسندیده بود هر روز در تنزل تا درین زمان بحمدالله طریقه مخترعه ایشان بالکلیه مندرس و قانون متقدمین مجدد شده.

From the beginning of [Ṣā’eb’s] literary career, **the firmly established paths of imagination** forged by eloquent poets of the past **became obstructed**, and the certain rules of past masters were forgotten. The ranks of the literary discourse this aforementioned gentleman [Ṣā’eb], **the innovator of new and undesirable paths**, fell into decline with every passing day, which continued until the present time, when – praise be to God! – [Ṣā’eb’s] **new-contrived path of literary style** has been completely

¹⁵⁶ For a detailed analysis of terms for “style,” see Faruqi, “A Stranger in the City,” 5-8. Faruqi stresses the poor applicability of the modern term “*sabk*” to what was “Indian” about much of early modern Indian Persian literature: “There is, certainly, a non-Iranian air in the ghazals written in the *sabk-e Hendi*, but it is not oppressive, while the word *sabk* (mode or manner of formulating something) gives the impression of artifice and strain and oppression.” (Ibid, 8).

erased, and the canon of rules and regulations set forth by the ancient masters has been **renewed**.¹⁵⁷

The rhetorical effectiveness of Āzar's description of the career of Persian style is rooted in the consistent physical concreteness of his idea: the ancient poets paved a particular path of lyric style, a path that poets in the classical canon followed – until the arrival of Šā'eb, whose innovations (according to Āzar) are not merely undesirable and make his poetry alone unworthy of the classical predecessors – but his innovative style obstructs the *collective style* of the entire canon. In other words, a single poet is capable of exerting canon-wide influence, and of derailing the collective Persian lyric enterprise, which must then be repaired and repaved by poets in Āzar's time (the later eighteenth century).

Āzar's critique is further sharpened by his admixture of the vocabulary of heresy: a style or "path" is also the Sufi (or other Islamic) *way* to salvation, a collectively constituted set of rules and values which can experience undesirable *innovation (bed'at)*¹⁵⁸ or restorative *renewal*, which is frequently a conservative return to ideally pure origins (*tajaddod*).

Having cited Āzar, Khānlarī's discussion of this passage follows along, using the same vocabulary of paths:

¹⁵⁷ “Az āghaz-e sokhan-gostarī-ye īshān **toroq-e khayālāt-e matīne-ye foṣahā-ye motaqaddemīn masdūd**, va qavā'ed-e mosallame-ye ostādān-e sābeq mafqūd, va marāteb-e sokhanvarī ba 'd az janāb-e Mīrzā mushār-ilayh [Ša'eb] ke mobde '-e **ṭarīqe-ye jadīde-ye nā-pasande būd har rūz dar tanazzol, tā dar-īn zamān bi-ḥamd-illāh ṭarīqe-ye mokhtare 'e-ye īshān bi-l-kullīya mondares** va qānūn-e motaqaddemīn **mojaddad shode**.” From Āzar Bīgdelī, *Ātashkade*, ed. Ḥasan Sādāt Nāserī (Tehrān: Chāpkhāne-ye Ḥaydarī, 1958-1962). Cited in Parvīz Nātel Khānlarī, Khānlarī, Parvīz Nātel. “Yād-ī az Šā'eb,” in *Šā'eb va sabk-e hendī: majmū'e-ye sokhanrānī-hā-ye īrād shode dar majma '-e baḥs dar afkār va ash'ār-e Šā'eb*, ed. Moḥammad Rasūl Daryāgasht, 297-317 (Tehrān: Ketābkhāne-ye Markazī va Markaz-e Asnād, 1354SH [1976CE]), 297. Emphasis is my own.

¹⁵⁸ For an example of early modern Persian use of this vocabulary of innovation in a theological and cultural sense (where innovation is cast in a negative light), see the letter by Emperor Awrangzēb to his son concerning “Iranian” customs that have been reintroduced into South Asia as heretical innovations (*bed'at*) in Chapter 1.

اما اگر از نظر سیر تحول شعر در این دوران هزار ساله ادبیات دری بنگریم، این گروه از شاعران مقام و منزلتی خاص دارند. غزل فارسی از سنائی تا حافظ در یک راه سیر تکامل را طی کرد و با حافظ به سرحد کمال رسید. در این فاصله یعنی از اوایل قرن ششم تا اواخر قرن هشتم غزل فارسی همان راه‌هایی را که سنائی و انوری نشان داده بودند طی کرد. راه انوری به سعدی منجر شد و راه سنائی یعنی غزل آمیخته با عرفان یا اندیشه‌های عرفانی به حافظ رسید و در هر دو راه به کمال انجامید. اما هر کمالی نقصانی در پی دارد. پویندگان همه از یک راه رفتند و حاصل آنکه پس از حافظ تا دو قرن هیچ نکته ناگفته‌ای یا هیچ راه نارفته‌ای نمانده بود. معانی همه مکرر و شیوه بیان نیز هزاران بار تکرار شده بود. همه می‌خواستند از همان راه بروند که دیگران پیش از ایشان رفته بودند و بعضی مانند سعدی و حافظ به پایان آن رسیده بودند... از قرن نهم بعد گروهی از شاعران در پی آن بر آمدند که از تقلید و تکرار بپرهیزند و راهی که پیش گرفتند بیان احساسات ضمیمانه و صادقانه در غزل بود.

If we look at the trajectory of the development of Darī literature in this era [the 20th c.],¹⁵⁹ this group of poets occupies a special place. From Sanā'ī to Ḥāfeẓ, the Persian ghazal progressed along a single road of gradual development and self-perfection, and with Ḥāfeẓ, [the lyric] arrived at the limits of [that road's] perfection. In this interval (that is, from the beginning of the sixth century [12th c. CE] through the end of the eighth century [14th c. CE]), the Persian ghazal proceeded along that very same path established by Sanā'ī and Anvarī. **Anvarī's road [of lyric style] terminated in Sa'dī, and Sanā'ī's road [of lyric style] – that is, lyric poetry mixed with Sufism or Sufi ideas – led to Ḥāfeẓ; both roads led to perfection.** However, every form of perfection is followed by decline. All lyric travelers [poets] took one single path, and the result was that for two centuries after Ḥāfeẓ, no subtle point remained that had not been already said, and **no road remained untaken.** Poetic conceits all came to be repeated, and styles of exposition too were repeated thousands of times. **Everyone wanted to take the same road, which had been taken by their predecessors;** and some, like Sa'dī and Ḥāfeẓ, arrived at the end of that [road]. From the ninth [15th c. CE] century onwards, there came a group of poets who shunned imitation and repetition [of old lyric ideas], and **the road they took up** led them to the expression of intimate and sincere perceptions in lyric.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ On the transformation of premodern theories of literature and into the modern discipline of *adabeyāt* in the twentieth century, see Aria Fani, *Becoming Literature: Adabiyat and the Formation of an Academic Discipline in Iran and Afghanistan (1895-1945)*, PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2019.

¹⁶⁰ “*Ammā agar az nazar-e sayr-e taḥavvol-e she'r dar īn दौरان-e hazār sāla-ye adabeyāt-e Darī benegarīm, īn gorūh az shā'erān maqām va manzelat-ī khāṣṣ dārand. Ghazal-e Fārsī az Sanā'ī tā Ḥāfeẓ dar yek rāh sayr-e takāmōl rā ṭeyy kard va bā Ḥāfeẓ be sar-ḥadd-e kamāl rasīd. Dar īn fāsele, ya'nī az avāyel-e qarn-e sheshom tā avākher-e qarn-e hashtom, ghazal-e Fārsī hamān rāh-hā-ī rā ke Sanā'ī va Anvarī neshān dāde būdand ṭayy kard. Rāh-e Anvarī be Sa'dī monjarr shod va rāh-e Sanā'ī, ya'nī ghazal-e āmikhte bā 'erfān, yā andīshe-hā-ye 'erfānī, be Ḥāfeẓ rasīd va dar har do rāh be kamāl anjāmīd. Ammā har kamāl-ī noqṣān-ī dar pay dārad. Pūyandegān hame az yek rāh raftand va ḥāṣel ān-ke pas az Ḥāfeẓ tā do qarn hīch nokta nā-goṣte-ī, yā hīch rāh nā-rafte-ī, namānde būd. Ma'ānī hame mokarrar va shīve-ye bayān nīz hazārān bār takrār shode būd. Hame mī-kh'āstand az hamān rāh beravand ke dīgarān pīsh az*

Although Khānlarī updates Āzar’s “path” (*tarīq*) of lyric style into the appropriately modern twentieth-century “road” or “route” (*rāh*), his core ideas about the classical Persian canon and the trajectory of the development of lyric poetry are *fundamentally informed* by the metaphor of a collectively paved “path,” from which some poets deviate, and which other poets closely follow. The metaphor of lyric style as a path or road is not ornamental. Like color, and exile – these vocabularies *fundamentally shape* how Āzār, Khānlarī, and poets themselves conceive of lyric style. Thinking of style as a path emphasizes that, for them, style is both something given and something that can be, in a limited way, individually adjusted; that style is the dynamic site where the classical canon is formed; that this canon-formation is collective and cumulative; and, perhaps most importantly, that style is not a stale, static object – but an urgent *action*, a constantly evolving negotiation between the old and the new, between the individual poet and their predecessors, between the worlds of historical realities and imagination.

There is a longer history to be traced of literary-critical conceptions of style as a “path.” For instance, it might be argued that “style” as a “path” is also a cross-traditional South Asian critical trope.¹⁶¹ Sheldon Pollock has written extensively about style in

īshān rafte būdand va ba ‘z-ī mānand-e Sa ‘dī va Hāfez be pāyān-e ān rasīde būdand. ... Az qarn-e nohom be-ba ‘d gorūh-ī az shā ‘erān dar pay-e ān bar āmadand ke az taqlīd va takrār be parhīz-and va rūh-ī ke pīsh gereftand bayān-e ehsāsāt-e samīmāne va šādeqāne dar ghazal būd.” Khānlarī, “Yād-ī az Šā ‘eb,” 297-298. Emphasis is my own.

¹⁶¹ Rajeev Kinra outlines the tantalising possibilities of comparing Sanskrit and Persian conceptions of style: “It makes...sense to see Chandar Bhān and his rival poets, whether in Mughal India, Šafavid Iran, or elsewhere further afield, as competing players, yes – but largely playing by the same cosmopolitan rules, with the same canonical literary equipment, on the same cultural playing field. There is a striking parallel here with the dynamic described by the Sanskrit scholars Yigal Bronner and David Shulman, regarding what they call the “metapoetic awareness” of regional “Sanskrit of the place” in late medieval and early modern India: their description of the ways in which regional Sanskrit poets balanced their rootedness in particular localities with their commitment to participating in a much larger cosmopolitan ecumene”. Kinra, *Writing Self*,

Sanskrit poetry (*kāvya*) and its connections with geography: the word for style in Sanskrit *mārga*, is literally a path or road, denoting the grand, translocal style of literature produced in what Pollock calls the “Sanskrit cosmopolis.” *Mārga* is contrasted with *deśī*, a vernacular style rooted in a specific regional place.¹⁶²

Bīdel’s views on style are formulated in very similar path-like terms. Long before Moḥammad Taqī Bahār outlined the three styles of Persian poetry in the twentieth century, Bīdel also had a geographically inflected taxonomy of style and poetic value: his letter on the imperfections of poetic diction¹⁶³ contains one of his most straightforward statements about style, and what any discussion of style must imply about norms, variation, and poetic nature. Identifying three distinct groups (“*Hendī*,” “*Erāqī*,” and the “*ahl-e Fārs*”), Bīdel argues that each group possesses its own criteria for evaluating poetry:

هر طائفه را به وسع استعداد تفتیش افکار خود باید نمودن، تا مستحسن زبان دانان آن طریق بر آید.

Every tribe [of poets] must scrutinize their own [lyric] thought each according to their unique capacities, in order to win the approval of connoisseurs of **that style**.¹⁶⁴

Writing Empire, 226-227.

¹⁶² “*Mārga*” envisions the unity of Sanskrit literature as transregional, cosmopolitan literature of which there are a variety of regional types. Contrasted with the concept of this one great Way (*mārga*), was *deśī* – “the multiple cultural practices of Place which do not travel,” which only existed within the larger framework of cosmopolitan culture, or what Pollock calls the “Sanskrit cosmopolis.” Sheldon Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 2006), 221 et passim. For the significance of the term “*mārga*” in Sanskrit poets’ own statements on style, see also Brunner, Shulman, and Tubb, *Innovations and Turning Points*, 3-4.

¹⁶³ Bīdel, *Kolleyāt*, V:421-423. See T4.L3 for a complete transcription, transliteration, and translation of this important letter.

¹⁶⁴ *Har ṭā’efe rā be vos ‘-e este dād taftīsh-e afkār-e khod bāyad nemūdan, tā mostaḥsan-e zabān-dānān-e ān ṭarīq bar āyad*. Ibid.

This term for style, “*ṭarīq*” – meaning also “path, way, road” – occurs in the context of how the poets of ‘*Erāq*, *Fārs*, and *Hend* (to whom he refers as different tribes or groups, *ṭā’efe*, *qabīle*, and *ferqe*) diverge from each other in pronunciation, and also each possess their own criteria for the evaluation of good or bad Persian poetry.¹⁶⁵ That which is pleasing to one ear may strike another as a grating perversion of beauty. All people, and all poets, are born with a certain set of capacities (*este dād*), determined by the accident of their geographical belonging.¹⁶⁶ These terms – “tribe,” “innate capacity” – carry implications of inflexible fixity, and one begins to wonder if Bīdel might be arguing for a radical relativism of poetic value.

However, Bīdel concludes his letter with an illuminating word of caution to his fellow Indian poets that leaves open the possibility for conscious adjustment on the part of individual poets. Noting the uniquely difficult position occupied by Indo-Persian poets (*sho’arā’-ye Hend*), Bīdel says that the path of the Indo-Persian poet is constrained on both sides (“...*ṭarafayn...tangī-ye tamām dārad*”): on one hand, Indian poets must study (*tatabbo* – “imitation,” lit. “following after someone”) the earlier Persian poets in order to avoid mistakes; but on the other hand, an excess of studiousness (*nash’e-ye deqqat-e*

¹⁶⁵ Bīdel was by no means the first poet to make use of a geographical triad with reference to style and pronunciation. In the preface to his collection of verse, Amīr Khosrow (d.1325) uses the same term for style – *ṭarīq* – to differentiate between the way that people from all over the Islamic world who live in cosmopolitan Delhi (Arabs, Khorasanis, Turks, Hindus, and other Muslim émigrés into northern India) all retain their own *style of speech* (“*Albatte sokhan be-ṭarīq-e velāyat-e kh’īsh gūyad.*”) He notes that emigres in India from Khorasan, ‘Erāq, Shiraz, Central Asia, etc. all speak the northern Indian vernacular (*Hendavī*) in a “broken” style, just as “rustic” Indians speak “broken” Persian. Amīr Khosrow, *Ghorrat al-kamāl*, 27-28.

¹⁶⁶ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, V:422.

tab ') can lead to the kind of heavy pedantry that prevents daring flights of the imagination and the (desirable) creation of new poetic meaning (*ma 'ānī-ṭarāzī*).¹⁶⁷

In the midst of all these fixed coordinates of time, geography, circumstance, and given nature, in Bīdel's view, there is yet some room to maneuver: a poet's style, his *ṭarīq*, is in some measure still of their own choosing. This view is in keeping with the general principle that dominates the long history of Perso-Arabic poetics, where beauty, achievement, and originality are thought to flourish best when carefully cultivated within a bounded tract of land on the shared soil of the Persian lyric tradition.¹⁶⁸

Harold Bloom has famously said of the Western lyric that the meaning of a poem can only be another poem;¹⁶⁹ and while Bloom's theory of influence cannot be superimposed *simpliciter* upon the Persian lyric tradition,¹⁷⁰ the remarkable fact remains that early modern Persian poets did not articulate their views, refutations, and defenses of

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 423. Imitation (*tatabbo* ') of esteemed predecessors was frequently seen as an unqualifiedly positive quality, and even the greatest poetic desideratum. For example, see the concluding couplet of Fayḏ-e Kāshānī's remarkable ghazal whose refrain itself centers on the superiority of Ḥāfeẓ's lyric poetry over that of any other poet ("*-ellā ghazal-e Ḥāfeẓ*," "except for the lyric poetry of Ḥāfeẓ"), including other classical masters he mentions explicitly, such as Sa'dī and Rūmī: "*Ay Fayḏ tatabbo ' kon ṭarz-e ghazal-ash chūn nīst / she 'r-ī ke bovad mokhtār ellā ghazal-e Ḥāfeẓ*" ("O Fayḏ! Imitate the style of [Ḥāfeẓ's] *ghazals*, for no poetry is excellent except for the lyrics of Ḥāfeẓ"). Fayḏ-e Kāshānī, *Kolleyyāt*, 219-220.

¹⁶⁸ As Franklin Lewis puts it, "The latecomers... did not so much try to overthrow their predecessors as they worked to fill in the interstices of the literary space opened up by the motif, much the way that a Persian miniature or a Persian carpet concentrates on fine detail and craftsmanship, vividness of imagery, and boldness of color rather than originality of theme, pattern, or design." Franklin D. Lewis, "The Rise and Fall of a Refrain: The Radīf *Ātash u Āb*," in *Reorientations: Arabic and Persian Poetry*, ed. Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, 199-226 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 212.

¹⁶⁹ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 70.

¹⁷⁰ An important point made by Losensky (*Welcoming Fighāni*, 104 and 210) and Lewis ("The Rise and Fall of a Persian Refrain," 212-214, 224-225).

central points concerning style, thought, geography, belonging, and innovation only – or even primarily – in prose form. In an almost Bloomian sense, the lyric itself was simultaneously the battleground, the stakes, and the prize.

The evocative etymology for “*ṭarīq*” provided in the Persian dictionary compiled in South India in 1888-1889, the *Farhang-e Ānandrāj*, is a fitting image for this process of debate about lyric style in lyric itself: as a word for road, way, and style, *ṭarīq* is said to derive from the Arabic root *ṭ-r-q*, “to beat” – as in the action of the traveler’s feet as they beat a path into existence.¹⁷¹ In order to most meticulously investigate matters of style with these poets, the best course of action may be to follow the tracks they have left in their poems.

To conclude: despite the eminently reasonable reevaluations of the term “Indian style” outlined above, retaining this term alongside other relevant designations (*tāze*, *tāze-gū’ī*, *ṭarz-e khayāl*, *khayāl-bandī*, and, as the dissertation argues in the case of Bīdel, “style of steadfast imagining”) has the advantage of keeping in focus what seems to have been a central points of concern for early modern Persian poets themselves. Close analysis of the three poems in Chapter 1 with particular attention to their deployment of geographical metaphors, examined alongside the evidence in this chapter that emerges from careful study of the early modern critical tradition itself, demonstrates that no matter how theoretically inclusive the Persianate world of the ‘*ajam* may have been, decisive borders nonetheless *did exist* in the minds of early modern Persian intellectuals, poets, and critics when it came to matters of lyric style, canon, and literary belonging. As the

¹⁷¹ From *Farhang-e Ānandrāj*, as cited in Dehkhodā’s *Loghat-nāma*: “‘*Ṭarīq*’ *ma’ khūz ast az ‘ṭ-r-q’ be-ma’ nī-ye ‘kūftan,’ chūn pā-ye ravandegān rāh rā mī-kūbad, li-hazā rāh rā ‘ṭarīq’ guftand.*” ‘Alī Akbar Dehkhodā, *Loghat-nāme-ye Dehkhodā*, XXVII:236-237.

poems in Chapter 1 have shown, for Šā'eb, Bīdel, and Ḥazīn, these boundaries could be as locally scaled as the circumference of Esfahan (Šā'eb), as abstract as the horizons of the mind (Bīdel), or as immovably and tragically concrete as the Himalayan range (Ḥazīn). But the point is that boundaries did very much exist, separating the familiar from the strange, the domestic from the foreign, the known from the unknown – and these orientations profoundly inform the way these poets conceptualize lyric style.

Bearing in mind this central role played by difficulty, freshness, and that which is imaginary (*khayāl*) in the ways that early modern Persian intellectuals theorized lyric style – alongside the important metaphors (color, path, exile) that inform their literary-critical thought – the besieged term “Indian style” might continue to have some purchase in modern scholarship as well. Rather than attempting to solve a terminological problem in the history of modern criticism, the argument here for continued use of the term “Indian style” (which must be circumspectly qualified with fine-grained historical contextualization) rests on the assumption that there is inherent value in casting a critical spotlight on how early modern poets *themselves* conceived of and formulated concepts of innovation and tradition. This chapter has shown how these poets conceptualize style using terminology of freshness and geography, paths and color; and that terms like “*tāze*” and even “Indian” acquire specific enough valences for different poets and critics that any unelaborated assignment of a literary figure to one of these categories is only ever a critical beginning, never an end. If early modern Persian poets and critics helped themselves to a variety of vocabularies of style, perhaps modern scholarship too ought to follow their lead, moving away from such uncompromising disjunctions as “Indian” versus “Speaking Anew” in favor of a more flexible and inclusive approach, one that

makes use of either or both terms where appropriate, along with other relevant emic terms for lyric style, such as that which is imaginary (*khayāl*).

Retaining the term “Indian style” in this sense, where it is understood to be indirectly and not factually descriptive, may actually help to unburden modern critical endeavors of those unwelcome inheritances from earlier nationalist-minded criticism. After all, one cannot demand of a category-term that it be precisely and equally applicable to every item that falls within its scope, and yet have it remain a broad descriptor. As J.Z. Smith has argued in the case of the term “religion,” this is not a native category, and as such, it does not come bearing clear-cut instructions for application; rather, it is a term used by scholars to establish what he calls a useful, even indispensable “disciplinary horizon.”¹⁷² The same might be said of the term “Indian style,” as long as it is deployed with full awareness that it forms a critical horizon partly drawn by our own hand, extending lines of thought first formulated by early modern critics like Lodī and others, and by the poets themselves.

The case of English Metaphysical poetry is another instructive precedent.¹⁷³ T.S. Eliot persisted in using the term “Metaphysical,” despite its acknowledged problematic

¹⁷² Jonathan Z. Smith, “Religion, Religions, Religious,” in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor, 269-284 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 281-282.

¹⁷³ In his lectures on Metaphysical poetry, T.S. Eliot begins with an acknowledgement that the term “Metaphysical,” as applied to the works of early modern English poets such as Donne, Cowley, Crashaw, Carew, and others, was coined by Dr. Johnson, who was himself no great admirer of that style of verse. According to Johnson’s famous definition, Metaphysical verse is a style in which “the most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together.” Johnson’s quibble was with the particular handling of metaphor at the hands of Donne and subsequent poets who displayed what he saw as a consistent and traceable Metaphysical “wit,” which Johnson defined as “a kind of *discordia concors*; a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike.” Samuel Johnson, *Johnson’s Lives of the Poets* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1896), 1:24-25. Noting that none of the poets in question would have identified themselves as poets of a “Metaphysical style” and thereby revealing the problems associated with the history of the term “Metaphysical,” Eliot proceeds with his lectures,

history and anachronistic usage, because it served the very simple but valuable practical purpose of allowing him to trace the change of mind over time, through shifts in the work of metaphor. As Allen Tate remarks in his essay on Johnson's definition and use of the term "Metaphysical," it is the modern literary critic's duty not to react with strident indignation to Johnson's apparently "incorrect" appraisal of the Metaphysicals. After all, the degree of "violence" deemed permissible when metaphor yokes together dissimilar objects is a matter that is subject to great variation over time and temperament; in a word, as Tate says, it is not for us to judge. We must, he says, "note down as dispassionately as possible" the views of Johnson and others, and try to see them in as full, contextualized, and historical a light as possible.¹⁷⁴

This call for more dispassionate critical engagement is equally salutary in the case of the Indian style. Shamsur Rahman Faruqi's essay "Stranger in the City: The Poetics of Sabk-e Hendī" discusses this term's problematic history, yet persists in using it. Faruqi states that a central feature of the so-called Indian style resides in its distinctive mechanics of metaphor,¹⁷⁵ whereby instead of swerving away from a given "reality"

which are concerned principally not with questions of terminology, but with issues no less grand than what he considered to be the gradual, irreversible erosion of the European mind from the time of Dante (in whose work the unity of thought and feeling were perfectly achieved), to Donne (where such unity was no longer present, though vestiges of it persisted), to the Romantics (where the disarray of thought and feeling was irreparable). T.S. Eliot, *The Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry: The Clark Lectures at Trinity College, Cambridge, 1926, and the Turnbull Lectures at the Johns Hopkins University, 1933*, ed. Ronald Schuchard (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1996), 45 et passim.

¹⁷⁴ Allen Tate, "Johnson on the Metaphysicals," *The Kenyon Review* 11.3 (1949), 393.

¹⁷⁵ "It is not just the excessiveness or even 'excesses' of metaphor in sabk-e Hendi which the critic needs to highlight. He needs to ask about the use that the metaphor was put to, the task that it was made to perform. In a literary tradition where modes (even new modes) of composing poetry are like territories to be worked by all-comers, the important thing to map is not the territory, but the manner of the working of it." Faruqi, "A Stranger in the City," 17.

through the troping work of metaphor, poetry of the Indian style takes *metaphor* as a given fact and proceeds from there to even greater semantic complexity.¹⁷⁶ Faruqi observes that Sheblī No‘mānī (d.1914), who was unsympathetic to the Indian style,¹⁷⁷ was probably the first critic to formulate this insight. It is precisely by engaging dispassionately with Sheblī, as Allen Tate has suggested we must do with Dr. Johnson and the Metaphysicals, that Faruqi is able to set aside Sheblī’s bilious biases and appreciate his remarkable observations about the centrality of metaphor in certain parts of the early modern Persian lyric canon.

Similarly, if we take the Indian style of poetry to refer to a body of early modern (and perhaps even earlier) Persian poetry that is distinguished by its conscious turn to complexity of metaphor, multiplicity of meaning, cerebral celebration of difficulty, and commitment to the colors of the lyric interim – the term “Indian style” carries out a convenient and practical function. For instance, in the case of the three poems on exile analyzed in Chapter 1, any interpretation of these ghazals must begin by attempting to unravel the various poetic strategies through which the poets each achieve their own unique collocation of reality and abstraction through metaphor. In this specific case, then, it does seem helpful to begin by saying that Šā‘eb and Bīdel both composed in the Indian style, while Ḥazīn did not – even though Ḥazīn’s lyric poetry too was profoundly

¹⁷⁶ “The chief achievement of the Indian Style poets was *to treat metaphor as fact* and go on to create further metaphors from that fact. Each such metaphor in turn became a fact and was used to generate another metaphor... This is perhaps the greatest single innovation in the realm of metaphor in any poetics, but it hasn’t been given the attention it deserves.” Ibid, 28.

¹⁷⁷ “Shibli regards with disfavour what he calls ‘the intemperateness of the imagination’ and says that there is ‘no worse fate for poetry than improper use of the imagination.’ Shibli then cites some verses in the *sabk-e Hendi* as examples of such ‘improper use of the imagination.’” Ibid, 11.

informed by his confrontation with the Indian style and fundamental opposition to it. This preliminary identification has the advantage of placing all three poets along a spectrum of habituation to difficulty: Ḥaz̄n and Bīdel occupy positions at opposite ends of this spectrum, with Šā'eb falling somewhere between them.

However, this serves only as a beginning for modern critical analysis of early modern Persian lyric. The three poems analyzed in Chapter 1 show how the contours and salient features of the geography of the imagination were being defined, transgressed upon, and defended within the early modern Persian lyric itself. Although one must be careful in generalizing from one poem to an entire oeuvre, we may nevertheless speculate that these poems are, in some measure, representative of Ḥaz̄n's predisposition to caustic geographical concreteness, of Bīdel's metaphysically motivated preference for abstraction, and of Šā'eb's middle-ground position between them. As the foregoing analysis has attempted to show, each poet's distinctive features of style are only observable through careful attention to the work of metaphor. In setting poets like Šā'eb, Bīdel, and Ḥaz̄n against the idea of an "Indian style," modern scholarship is better able to articulate a series of preliminary questions that can only be answered by sustained careful attention to each poet's individual voice, aims, and commitments.

This chapter has examined both contemporary debates about premodern Persian style as well as premodern approaches to the same issues, attempting in the process to carefully distinguish modern and premodern concerns where, as it has been argued, they have been unhelpfully conflated. Above all, it has been the aim of this chapter to recover a *range* of methods and vocabularies with which *premodern* critics and poets themselves thought about style. Some were occupied with developing a robust literary-historical

sense of an Indo-Persian or Iran-centric canon; others helped themselves to models of influence based on the idea of “paths;” a third group formulated the critical notion of a “lyric interm” and its attendant “colors” in order to theorize the work of poetry. As this chapter has argued, none of these approaches and vocabularies were mutually exclusive in the early modern period; today too, approaches to early modern Persian lyric style are best served by a similarly diversified terminological and methodological plasticity. With this in mind, Chapters 4, 5, and 6 will delineate some specific features of Bīdel’s unique lyric style of steadfast imagining by drawing upon the terms, sensibilities, and orientations that have been sketched forth in Chapters 1 and 2. Before turning to an in-depth analysis of Bīdel’s lyric style, Chapter 3 situates Bīdel within one final early modern conversation – with fellow poets Ḥāfez and Ḥazīn, on the topic of haste and delay. This contextualization will assist in locating what precisely is distinctive about Bīdel’s approach to lyric time, one of the cornerstones of his style of steadfast imagining.

Chapter 3

The Art of Reality: Lyric and Autobiography

هر که زین نسخه تأمل سبق است
همچو آینه تحیر ورق است

Everyone who learns this manuscript's lesson
of attentive slow reflection
Turns into a page, mirror-like,
reflecting its own wonder.

– Bīdel of Delhi, *The Four Elements: An Autobiography*, Preface (1704)¹

نمی‌دانم چه خواندم زین دبستان خیال انشا
که تا مژگان گشودم شستم آن اوراق اجزا را

I know not what I've read
in this grammar school
of composing imagination.
As I opened my eyes,
I washed clean
all the scattered pages.

– Bīdel of Delhi, *The Four Elements: An Autobiography*, The Dream (1704)²

To whom then am I addressed? To the imagination.

In fact to return upon my theme for the time nearly all writing, up to the present, if not all art has been especially designed to keep up the barrier between sense and the vaporous fringe which distracts the attention from its agonized approaches to the moment... To refine, to clarify, to intensify that eternal moment in which we alone live there is but a single force – the imagination. This is its book.

– William Carlos Williams, *Spring and All* (1923)³

¹ “*Har ke z-īn noskhe ta`ammol sabaq ast / ham-cho āyīne taḥayyor varaq ast.*” Mīrzā ‘Abd al-Qāder Bīdel Dehlavī, *Kolleyyāt-e Abū l-Ma`ānī Mīrzā ‘Abd al-Qāder Bīdel Dehlavī*, ed. Khalīlollāh Khalīlī (Tehrān: Enteshārāt-e Ṭalāye, 1389SH [2010/2011CE]), IV:5.

² “*Namī-dānam che kh`āndam z-īn dabestān-e khayāl-enshā` / ke ta mozhgān goshūdām shostam ān ovrāq-e ajzā rā.*” Ibid, IV:303.

³ William Carlos Williams, *Spring and All*. In William Carlos Williams, *The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams: 1909-1939*, ed. A. Walton Litz and Christopher MacGowan (New York: New Directions, 1991), I:178.

This chapter mobilizes the early modern Persian literary-critical vocabularies, sensibilities, and orientations discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 in order to begin examining Bīdel’s distinctive approach to time. This chapter begins this process by looking to two first-personal genres: lyric and autobiography. The first section (3.1) introduces Bīdel’s difficult prosimetrum autobiography, *The Four Elements* (*Chahār ‘onşor*), with particular attention to how Bīdel describes and redescribes the *time* of his lived life. A case is made for reading lyric and autobiography together, as intentionally entwined genres in Bīdel’s oeuvre through which he presents a theory of philosophy in the first person. Section 3.2 examines a lyric conversation between Bīdel, Ḥazīn, and Ḥāfez on the theme of time – specifically, on the idea of haste and delay. Reading these poems against each other brings to light each poet’s distinctive approach to theorizing the flexibility or immutability of objective, divine, and human forms of time, a comparison which serves to highlight what precisely is different and remarkable about Bīdel’s style of time management.

In Section 3.3, several important passages from Bīdel’s autobiography are shown to extend and supplement ideas he sets forth in his lyric poetry, lingering on a crucial section of the autobiography in which Bīdel recounts a life-changing dream narrative. This extended passage describes a visionary experience during which Bīdel beholds the unfolding of the universe from God’s own perspective, guided by the prophet Muḥammad – in effect, experiencing all of created time within one clock-hour – and arrives at a perfect, intellectually and experientially certain interpretation of God’s true reality. However, as he wakes up, this interpretation slips away from him, and becomes “lost in the manuscript of the imaginary.” The argument here is that this dream narrative provides evidence for how to understand Bīdel’s ideas about the shape and aims of his life, the role of the imagination, and some of the motivations that drive his lyric practice.

3.1 At Time's Horizon: Lived Time, Lyric Time

Alessandro Bausani remarks that one of the many extraordinary features of Bīdel's autobiography, *Chahār 'onşor* [*The Four Elements*] is that this work does not accord much importance to the "external events" of the author's life. It is occupied instead with documenting "interior experiences," which are described with "unusual exactitude" for that time, and are "accompanied by philosophical ideas." Bausani then (very helpfully) teases out important factual information about Bīdel's life from this difficult work, and, separately, delineates some of these "philosophical ideas" with which Bīdel interweaves his life's narrative.⁴ What are we to make of this entwined exposition of life and ideas? Can one strand be so easily separated from the other? This chapter suggests that two of Bīdel's most first-personal genres – lyric and autobiography – may be productively read together precisely because this affords a more contextualized understanding of Bīdel's style of thought, which, as has been argued throughout this dissertation, is inseparable from his lyric style.

The idea of a "first-personal" genre in Bīdel's corpus requires important qualification. In what sense are lyric poems by the poet whose most cherished pronoun is the complex conjunction *I-and-we* first-personal? Furthermore, in the early sections of Bīdel's autobiography,⁵ events as first-personal as his own birth are described in curiously *impersonal* way. For example, Bīdel describes his own birth in the third person thus:

Pūshīde mabād ke chūn paykar-e bī-neshān-e qāderīyat, kesvat-e āb-rang-e 'obūdīyat be khod pūshīd, va şafā-ye āyīne-ye haqīqat bā rang-e kodūrat-e majāz jūshīd, 'anqā-ye āsheyān-e eṭlāq dar qafas-e andīshe-ye taqyīd oftād va āhang-e parde-e 'aynīyat neqāb-e qānūn-e ghayrīyat goshād.

⁴ Alessandro Bausani, "Note su Mirza Bidel," *Annales de l'Institut des Etudes Orientales* 6 (1955-1956), 163-199.

⁵ See T1.P1-3, and also T1.E1.1-5.

پوشیده مباد که چون پیکر بی‌نشان قادریت کسوت آب رنگ عبودیت به خود پوشید و صفای آینه حقیقت با رنگ کدورت مجاز جوشید عنقای آشیان اطلاق در قفس اندیشه تقیید افتاد و آهنگ پرده عینیت نقاب قانون غیریت گشاد.

May it not be concealed that, when the traceless form of Divine Powerfulness⁶ clothed itself in the brilliant white-and-red garments of Servitude, and when the pure, clear-polished mirror of true reality boiled and seethed with the colors of metaphor's impure opacity, the phoenix left its nest of absolute freedom and fell into the cage of thought's imprisonment, and the melody of the preparatory tuning for the musical mode of Divine Sameness unveiled the harp of Otherness.

In other words, Bīdel's individual existence is grammatically, factually, and experientially subsumed within the *philosophical idea* of God's self-disclosure through creation. Chapter 2 has noted the importance of color (*rang*) with respect to the lyric interim, and Bīdel's autobiography gives good reason to extend this "interval" across his entire lifetime. Such a reading is supported by his description of the white purity of dawn taking on "impure dark colors" in the paragraph above, and further color-imagery is given in the next passage, with "*kolfat*" meaning "encumbrance," and also a "red-black hue."

Javāher-e 'oqūl-o-nofūs be kaṣāfat-angīzī-ye a 'rāz-e emkānī pardākht va kayfīyat-e ajrām-o-'anāṣer ṭarḥ-e ejtemā'-e kolfat-e jesmānī andākht: khāk az martabe-ye jam'īyat-e zātī be parīshānī-ye asbāb geravīd, va ātash az ehtezāz-e ṭabī'ī be dāgh-e 'ārezī mobtalā' gardīd; āb tā ṭarāvāt-ī be taṣavvor āvarad, tūfān-e gerye angīkhte būd va bād tā nafas-ī rāst nemāyad, be selsele-ye āh āvīkhte.

جواهر عقول و نفوس به کثافت‌انگیزی اعراض امکانی پرداخت و کیفیت اجرام و عناصر طرح اجتماع کلفت جسمانی انداخت خاک از مرتبه جمعیت ذاتی به پریشانی اسباب گروید و آتش از اهتزاز طبیعی به داغ عارضی مبتلا گردید. آب تا طراوتی به تصور آورد توفان گریه انگیخته بود و باد تا نفسی راست نماید به سلسله آه آویخته.

⁶ "Divine Powerfulness" translates the word "*qāderīyat*", a noun formed from the agentive adjective "*qāder*", "he who is powerful" – one of the names of God. Although in this sentence the word has a generalized metaphysical meaning, this must be a reference also to the Qādiriyya, the name of the Sufi order to which Bīdel's family belonged an after whom "Abd al-Qāder" Bīdel was named. This conjecture is further supported by the pairing of "Divine Powerfulness" in this passage with "Servitude" ("*obūdīyat*"), which is etymologically related via a shared Arabic root with "*abd*", "slave."

The essences of intellects and souls began to stir up the impurity of possible accidents, and the quality of bodies and elements laid the foundation for the adjunction⁷ of black-and-red⁸ corporeal encumbrance: earth, abandoning its state of essential collectedness, submitted to distraught scattering by causes; fire, impelled by inherent shimmering agitation, was calamitously branded by the burn-scar of attributes; water, wishing to draw some moisture of fresh thought into its imagination, precipitated a tropical storm of weeping; and air, attempting to steady its breath, clove to a sequence of sorrowful sighs.

Even a metaleptic moment in which Bīdel gestures at the current time of composition serves to conceal rather than disclose:

Az ān hangām tā ḥāl ke nafas-shomārī-ye ‘omr moqāren-e sāl-e chehel o yekom ast hamān naqsh-e taslīm sar-e lowḥe-ye noskhe-ye jabīn ast va hamān naqd-e rezā’ sarmāye-ye jīb-o-āstīn.

از آن هنگام تا حال که نفس‌شماری عمر مقارن سال چهل و یکم است همان نقش تسلیم سر لوحه نسخه جبین است و همان نقد سرمای جیب و آستین.

From that time to the present moment – when [my] age has been tallying [my] breaths for forty-one years⁹ – [I have borne] that same imprint of reverent prostration upon the blank manuscript of [my] forehead, and [I have carried] that same ready cash of deferential acquiescence in [my] pockets.

⁷ “Adjunction” in the philosophically specific sense of “predication of something with the accident of ‘body’”. “Essences” earlier in this sentence (“javāher”, sing. “jowhar,” or *jawhar* in Arabic) could also be translated as “atoms” (*jawhar* meaning precisely that in, for example, the classical Ash‘arite doctrine of atomism, which holds that atoms are indivisible, and bodies are composite, formed by the adjunction of atoms).

⁸ For the entire passage describing Bīdel’s birth, and for corresponding page numbers in Bīdel’s *Kolleyyāt*, see T1.E1.1. Aside from explicit references to “plainness” of color, references in these paragraphs to whiteness, redness, and blackness are my additions, making explicit what is implied in the words “shafaq” (daybreak, always red), “ṣobḥ” (dawn, always white), “kolfat” (“encumbrance”, also a dark hue, between red and black. Kh. K. Baranov, *Arabsko-russkiĭ slovar’* (*Arabic-Russian Dictionary*) (Moscow: Izdatel’ Valerĭi Kostin, 2005), II:697.

⁹ Bīdel was forty-one years old in 1684/1685. See T1.E1.5.

This passage and others like it are artfully, even gymnastically impersonal. Although early modern Persian prose conventions generally favor long sentences full of complex symmetrical digressions and concatenated clauses, such a high degree of self-erasure is uncommon. Indeed, the singular first-personal Bīdel appears for the first time in his autobiography in lyric – in a poem interpolated into this passage, whose refrain itself is *man* (“I”). The poem stresses the author’s bewildered coming-into-awareness of his own existence, and even with its first-personal refrain, it reads more like an attempt to *make sense* of this new feeling of being an “I” rather than declaring it simply to be the case:

4 *bas ke āshūb-e ghobār-e hayrat-am pūshīd cheshm*
 šūrat-e āyīne-ye man nīz raft az yād-e man

بس که آشوب غبار حیرتم پوشید چشم
 صورت آینه من نیز رفت از یاد من

So cloaked were my eyes
 by the chaos of my wonder’s dust
 That I forgot even the form
 of the mirror of my self.

Several important structuring ideas are carefully placed by Bīdel at the very beginning of his narrative of his own life: the idea of one’s embodied life forming a manuscript (*noskhe*), the permeation of this lifetime with color (*rang*), and the idea of breaths – that is, moments – forming the unit of measurement of one’s lifetime (*nafas-shomārī*). Indeed, time operates in complex ways in Bīdel’s autobiography. One way in which Bīdel traces a purposive arc through his own life is by describing – in chronological order, from his very birth – his endeavor to gain control over time through imagination, a project that culminates in the visionary dream he experiences at the age of twenty-six in 1670. This dream narrative is presented in detail in Section 3.3. In order to appreciate the extraordinary depiction of Bīdel’s experience of time in this dream narrative, the following section places Bīdel in conversation with two other lyric

poets on the idea of haste and delay. Comparing these poets' approaches to how (if at all) one's individual experience of time can be manipulated, and what the role of lyric poetry might be in that endeavor, helps to highlight what is particularly distinctive about Bīdel's handling of time.

3.2 Poems of Haste and Delay: Lyric Responses to Ḥāfeẓ

As has been discussed in Chapter 2, one of the distinguishing traits of the Indian style of Persian lyric poetry, in Shamsur Rahman Faruqi's formulation, is the impulse to treat metaphor as fact, and to go on creating further metaphors based upon that "fact." Faruqi also remarks that "this is perhaps the greatest single innovation in the realm of metaphor in any poetics, but it hasn't been given the attention it deserves."¹⁰ A high degree of awareness of the centuries of preceding tradition permeates the Indian style of the Persian lyric tradition in the early modern period, as the lyric conversation in Chapter 1 has shown. Natalia Prigarina has argued the central quality of the Indian style lies in what can be called semantic stacking: old symbols remain untouched, and are made to produce greater structural complexity as the capacity of the poetic image expands to accommodate multiple meanings.¹¹

This is something that early modern Persian poets of the Indian style and the English Metaphysicals have in common: when it comes to well-trodden topoi – such as wine, and dawn – the Persian and the English poet must necessarily reach for ever more innovative resources with which to repurpose and reinvent the old in something new. For instance, John Donne's "The

¹⁰ Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, "A Stranger in the City: The Poetics of Sabk-e Hendī," *Annual of Urdu Studies* 19 (2004), 28.

¹¹ Natalia Prigarina, *Indiiskii stil' i ego mesto v persidkoj literature: voprosy poētiki* [*The Indian Style and its Place in Persian Literature: Questions of Poetics*] (Moscow: Izdatel'skaia firma "Vostochnaia literatura," RAN, 1999), 10.

Sunne Rising” takes the hardened conventions of the medieval *aubade* and repurposes them for new, early modern ends. By scuppering the straightforward narrative of lovers forced to part that is usually found in medieval alba poetry,¹² Donne’s poem becomes a much more involved lyric inquiry into the very nature of time. The clear first-personal voice of the earlier *aubade* is replaced by rather more cerebral (though hardly less compelling) meditation, as in the last line of the first stanza: “Love, all alike, no season knows nor clime, / Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time.”¹³ As Franklin Lewis has shown, the Persian lyric tradition has its own

¹² See, for example, the following excerpt from an anonymously authored fourteenth-century *aubade*:

Deep in an orchard, under hawthorn leaves,
The lady holds her lover in her arms,
until the watcher cries, he sees the dawn
Dear God, the daybreak! Oh how soon it comes!

“If only God let night stay without end,
and my beloved never left my side,
and never again the guard saw day or dawn –
Dear God, the daybreak! oh how soone it comes!”

“Let us kiss, sweet beloved, you and I,
down in the meadows where the birds now sing –
defy my jealous husband and do all!
Dear God, the daybreak! Oh how soon it comes!

Peter Dronke, *The Medieval Lyric* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2002, 1968), 174.

¹³ Busy old fool, unruly Sun,
Why dost thou thus,
Through windows, and through curtains, call on us?
Must to thy motions lovers’ seasons run?
Saucy pedantic wretch, go chide
Late school-boys and sour prentices,
Go tell court-huntsmen that the king will ride
Call country ants to harvest offices;
Love, all alike, no season knows nor clime,
Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time.

John Donne, “The Sun Rising.” In John Donne, *The Songs and Sonets of John Donne*, ed. Theodore Redpath (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009, 1956), 232.

vibrant history of handling the alba topos, which is traceable to its very lyric beginnings with the *ghazals* of Sanā'ī (d.ca.1130). Lewis notes that, three centuries later,

perhaps the century of the *Alba* had passed by the time Ḥāfiz wrote his *ghazals*. If that is the case, it testifies to the dynamism of the tradition, which, though highly conventional in many ways, is discarding or re-arranging certain earlier motifs and generating new ones...¹⁴

According to Lewis, almost one in five Ḥāfez *ghazals* refer in some way to dawn,¹⁵ and it is a testament to Ḥāfez's ingenuity that he was able to lend new lustre to this fading theme. How much more ingenuity is required, then, of the early modern Persian poet – who has not only the earliest classical alba topos to contend with, but Ḥāfez's brilliant recreations thereof as well? As with the Metaphysical poets, a frequent strategy adopted by Persian poets writing in the Indian style is that of retreat into ever more abstract, intellectual, difficult realms. Joan Bennett makes the important point about Metaphysical poetry that

recondite imagery is a common cause of difficulty... but a difference should be made between the almost impassable obstacle of private symbolism, such as Blake uses in his Prophetic Books, or even imagery derived from individual literary pursuits, such as Mr. Eliot uses in his *The Waste Land* and, to a lesser degree, in *Ash Wednesday*; and the imagery of a poet like Donne, which demands only an acquaintance with widespread contemporary ideas.¹⁶

This seems also to be a feature of the Indian style of Persian lyric: the poetry of Bīdel in particular cannot be fully understood, much less appreciated, without broad acquaintance with the wide variety of philosophical, theological, and scientific ideas circulating throughout the Persianate world during his time. As the Soviet Orientalist E.Ė. Bertel's has stressed, Bīdel can

¹⁴ Franklin D. Lewis, "The Semiotic Horizons of Dawn in the Poetry of Ḥāfiz," in *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn, 251-277 (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 264.

¹⁵ Ibid, 266. Lewis also provides an annotated lexicon of Ḥāfez's eon terms. Ibid, 266-276.

¹⁶ Joan Bennett, *Five Metaphysical Poets: Donne, Herbert, Vaughan, Crashaw, Marvell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 12.

only be read with anything approaching correct interpretation when constant reference is made to his early modern Islamic intellectual milieu. Bertel's also notes, with characteristically blunt realism, that, for the most part, we will never find in Bīdel's works clearly flagposted evidence of direct influence by specific authors, schools, trends, etc. Nevertheless, it is important to read Bīdel with at least a general sense of some of the patterns of thought that would have been available to him.¹⁷ With this critical dictum in mind, the following analysis of response-poems penned by Bīdel and Ḥazīn to the same Ḥāfeẓ *ghazal* interweaves close reading of each poem with references to philosophical ideas of time held by three philosophers: Ibn 'Arabī, his interpreter Al-Qāshānī, and his bitter opponent 'Alā' al-Doule Semnānī.

The lyric poetry of Ḥāfeẓ of Shiraz (d.1390) captured the imagination of every subsequent generation of poets. Imported through the translations of Orientalists such as William Jones and Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, his ghazals found fervent admirers in Europe as well, Goethe among them. As Leonard Lewisohn remarks, Ḥāfeẓ was “perhaps the first poet in the Persian world who perfectly realised the unity of the mundane and the spiritual,”¹⁸ and part of his enduring appeal must have been his simultaneously shocking and compelling “anti-clerical erotic spirituality,” the sum of whose lyric expressions formed a quasi-doctrine of their own, known as *rendī*, or libertinism.¹⁹ Despite the pronounced nature of his decidedly anti-establishment orientation, interpretation of Ḥāfeẓ remained (and remains) a challenging pursuit. From the beginning, his *ghazals* were admitted to have several levels of meaning, a critical

¹⁷ Evgeniĭ Ėduardovich Bertel's, *Izbrannye trudy*, ed. I.S. Braginskiĭ (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Vostochnoiĭ Literaturny, 1960-1968), V:343-362.

¹⁸ Leonard Lewisohn, “Prolegomenon to the Study of Ḥāfīz,” in *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn, 251-277 (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 6.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 7.

conviction that continued well into the late early modern period.²⁰ Today too, ink continues to be spilled, with no clear consensus, as to whether Ḥāfeẓ was a devout Muslim, a visionary mystic, a singer, a social critic and castigator of hypocrisy, a libertine, or all of them at once. In the eyes of the subsequent Persian tradition, most everyone did concede that in the art of the *ghazal*, nobody had attained greater perfection than Ḥāfeẓ. For a later poet to “respond” formally to one of his *ghazals*, therefore, was no trivial matter; in going pen to pen against this acknowledged master of the lyric, a poet was doing no less than testing his own poetic mettle.

In order to best appreciate Bīdel’s creative engagement with Ḥāfeẓ and Ḥazīn’s engagement with both Bīdel and Ḥāfeẓ, the following pages turn to each of the three poems in chronological order. First, Ḥāfeẓ’s lyric poem N^o388, which has an urgent, impatient imperative refrain of “do!”:

1 *soḅḅ ast sāqeyā qadaḥ-ī por-sharāb kon*
 *dowr-e falak derang nadārad shetāb kon*²¹

صبح است ساقیا قدحی پر شراب کن
 دور فلک درنگ ندارد شتاب کن

²⁰ The introduction to an early modern commentary on Ḥāfeẓ composed in India is illustrative of the many facets felt to be present in Ḥāfeẓ’s *Dīvān* (lyric corpus). The commentary begins by stating that the poetry of Ḥāfeẓ has no fewer than five levels (*vojūh*, lit. “faces”), comprehension of each of which requires a unique method of approach. These include solving grammatical difficulties, as well as more rarefied problems corresponding to the commonplace triad of Islamic thought: outward Islamic law (*sharī‘at*), the Sufi inward path (*tarīqat*), and true reality (*ḥaqīqat*). *Sharḥ-e Dīvān-e Ḥāfeẓ* [Commentary on the Lyric Poetry of Ḥāfeẓ] by Afzal (Elāḥābādī?), reproduced in Khudā Bakhsh Oriyental Pablik Lāibrerī, *Catalogue of the Persian and Arabic Manuscripts in the Oriental Public Library at Bankipore (Patna): Persian Poetry, Firdausi to Hafiz* (Patna, Bihar: Superintendent, Govt. Print., 1980, 1962), 270-272.

²¹ Ḥāfeẓ, *ghazal* N^o388. Shams al-Dīn Moḥammad Ḥāfeẓ Shīrāzī, *Dīvān-e Ḥāfeẓ*, ed. Parvīz Nātel Khānlarī (Tehrān: Kh‘ārazmī, 1362SH [1983CE]), 792-3. As the modern commentator on Ḥāfeẓ Bahā’ al-Dīn Khorramshāhī notes, Ḥāfeẓ’s near contemporary, the poet Kh‘ājū Kermānī (d.1349?, Shīrāz) has a poem in the same meter and with the same refrain. Bahā’ al-Dīn Khorramshāhī, *Ḥāfeẓ-nāme: sharḥ-e alfāz, a ‘lām, mafāhīm-e kelīdī va abyāt-e doshvār-e Ḥāfeẓ* (Tehrān: Sherkat-e enteshārāt-e ‘elmī va farhangī, 1391SH, 1366SH [2012CE, 1987CE]), 1099-1100. Indeed, Ḥāfeẓ has another poem on the same pattern, as does Ḥazīn, and a fuller investigation ought to include all of these poems; due to spatial constraints, the present chapter examines only the poems that speak most directly to each other.

It is daybreak, cupbearer!
Fill the glass with wine!
The turning sky
does not delay;
make haste!

- 2 *z-ān pīsh-tar ke 'ālam-e fānī shavad kharāb
mā rā ze jān-e bāde-ye gol-gūn kharāb kon*

زان پیشتر که عالم فانی شود خراب
ما را ز جام باده گلگون خراب کن

Before this fleeting temporal world
falls into ruin,
Ruin us –
with a glass
of rose-colored wine.

- 3 *khoshīd-e may ze mashreq-e sāghar ṭolū ' kard
gar barg-e 'eysh mī-ṭalabī tark-e kh'āb kon*

خورشید می ز مشرق ساغر طلوع کرد
گر برگ عیش می طلبی ترک خواب کن

The wine's sun rose
from the East
of the wineglass.
If you seek the provisions of pleasure,
abandon slumber!

- 4 *rūz-ī ke charkh az gel-e mā kūze-hā konad
zenhār kāse-ye sar-e mā por-sharāb kon*

روزی که چرخ از گل ما کوزه ها کند
زنهار کاسه سر ما پر شراب کن

The day
when the heavens will spin
wine-jugs from the clay of us,²²

²² This line very closely echoes a quatrain by 'Omar Khayyām (d.1131): "O idol, fill up a glass from that capacious wine-jug [kūze]! / Drink it, give me another – before it comes to pass / That the craftsman of vessels [kūze-gar] / Makes vessels [kūze] from the clay of you and me." ("Z-ān kūze-ye may ke nīst dar vey zārar-ī / por kon qadaḥ-ī bekhōr be man deh dīgar-ī / z-ān pīsh-tar ey ṣanam ke dar rah-goṣar-ī / khāk-e man o to kūze konad kūze-gar-ī." 'Omar Khayyām, *Robā'eyāt-e 'Omar Khayyām* (Lucknow:

Take heed! Make the vessels
of our skulls
full with wine.

5 *mā mard-e zohd o toube vo ṭāmāt nīstīm*
bā mā be jām-e bāde-ye šāfi khaṭāb kon

ما مرد زهد و توبه و طامات نیستیم
با ما به جام باده صافی خطاب کن

We are not ascetics,
nor penitents,
nor idle prattlers;
Preach to us
with a cup of pure wine.

6 *kār-e šavāb bāde-parastī-st Hāfezā*
bar-khīz o ‘azm-e jazm be kār-e šavāb kon

کار صواب بادهپرستت حافظا
برخیز و عزم جزم به کار صواب کن

Virtuous action
is the worship of wine.
O Hāfez!
Rise, and strengthen your resolve
to act virtuously.

In all aspects of outward appearance, this poem conforms to the requirements of the Persian alba topos: the poem begins with the moment of dawn’s arrival, which bursts upon the poem declaratively with the very first words (*ṣobḥ ast*, “it is dawn”). The rest of the poem hews closely to a well established pattern: finding himself confronted with a time-limit, the poet calls upon the cupbearer to bring more wine, the first of several evasive maneuvers intended to circumvent the inevitable appearance of morning – which must necessarily put an end to all nocturnal revelry

Naval Keshūr, 1332SH [1914CE]), 92. On this quatrain and on ‘Omar Khayyām’s influence in early modern South Asia, specifically in the Kashmiri *vākhs* of Lalla, see Sonam Kachru and Jane Mikkelsen, “The Mind Is Its Own Place: Of Lalla’s Languages,” *University of Toronto Quarterly*, special issue, “World Poetics, Comparative Poetics,” ed. Jonathan Hart and Ming Xie (forthcoming 2019).

and merrymaking. Dawn here functions as an immovable barrier, an implacable boundary conceived of in spatial terms from the very first line, where the passage of time is the uniform motion of “the sky’s rotation” (*dowr-e falak*). One cannot still this impersonal rotation; the only recourse is to exert as much effort as is humanly possible to make the deadline – in other words, to make haste. Lines 2-4 offer a more daring countermeasure: the poet calls upon the cupbearer to beat time to the punch, by accomplishing time’s work (the ruin of man) *before* time itself can get around to doing the same. There is a slightly victorious flavor to this approach, for such ruin, though inevitable, will at least occur on the poet’s own terms: the cause of ruin will be not time, but a far more palatable and pleasant agent – wine. The last two lines spin this approach into a more general creed, a religion, even, of wine and irreverence, for which Ḥāfeẓ’s lyric style is so well known: the best path to virtuous action proceeds not through traditional religious territory, but instead must take a rather heretical turn towards the worship of wine (*bāde-parastī*). The repetition of “virtuous action” at the beginning and end of the final couplet (“*ṣavāb*,” or “what is correct,” being a technical term in Islamic jurisprudence) is perhaps something of a joke made at the expense of precisely the sort of “dry” religious systems – with all of their empty definitions, prohibitions, and tautologies – that Ḥāfeẓ urges us to abandon.

So much for the surface meaning. In a more subtle way, the poem establishes in the first four lines a pair of correspondences that will be of paramount importance for Bīdel and Ḥazīn as later interpreters of this poem. These correspondences extend between the sky’s horizon, the vessel of the mind, and the cup of wine – each of which constitutes its own sphere, capable of interacting to greater or lesser degrees with the others. This set of relationships is expressed strikingly in Line 3, which begins to blend the outer world with the cup of wine through evocative use of the *ezāfe* possessive construction (“the sun of wine,” “*khoshīd-e may*,” “the

Orient of the cup”, “*mashreq-e sāghar*”), as if attempting to confine the world to a single wine-cup (as in the legendary cup of Jamshīd, often described as “*jām-e jahān-nemā*” – “world-revealing cup”); and in Line 4, where the imagery of wine-jugs and skulls further collapses the interior mental realm into the circumference of a wine-vessel. The first, or outermost, level is impersonal, and lies beyond the immediate reach of any human influence; this is the realm of objective time, ruinous and unstoppable. The second, or innermost, level is that of the human mind, a pitifully passive and malleable thing which, left to its natural state of inert slumber (*kh’āb*), would be nothing more than fodder for time’s destruction.

It is the third, or intermediate, level that is of particular interest: this is the realm of wine, which in this poem forms a remarkable bridge between mind and world. Occupying as it does something like a middle position, it shares certain traits with both: like the horizon’s rotation, wine may be measured, and it must pass away; and yet, unlike time (though perhaps like the mind) it comes closer, and even sometimes succeeds, in being taken into hand by human will. Through the work of wine, the mind becomes influenced by a more pleasant authority than the calamitous passage of time: perhaps somewhat paradoxically, intoxication allows man more perfectly to perceive the structure of the world, and to see more clearly how best to thrive in it. Though man must ever remain at the mercy of the *sāqī* (cupbearer), nevertheless there is still always a chance of enjoying “one more round,”²³ whereas with the turning of the sky’s horizon, there can be no such plea for extension.

The last line, with doubled imperatives bracketing its final hemistich (“rise”, “*bar khīz*”, and “do”, “*kon*”), doubles down, as it were, on this idea that in spite of the inherent tragedy attending the human situation (caught as man is under the inescapable horizons of objective time

²³ “*Dowr*” can mean both “round [of wine]” and a more abstract sense of rotation, e.g., of the heavens.

and their destructive ends), there is yet some hope. Should enough will and intention be mustered, a person can turn to wine, and in doing so, can at least partially overcome their abject state (both “‘*azm*” and “‘*jazm*” signify decision and intention). True to the tenor of rebellious braggadocio associated with Ḥāfeẓ, the final lines resonate with something like defiant optimism: the choice of verb, “arise” (“*bar khīz*”), cannot but recall the first word that sets the whole poem in motion: dawn (*ṣobḥ*), and the rising of the sun (*tolū*). By emphasizing the possibility of willing a strong alignment of mind and world through wine, it is almost as though Ḥāfeẓ wants to assure us that – for a time, at least – it is possible to “rise,” sunlike, and take over time itself.

There is something almost mythic about this manner of bringing inner and outer world into alignment, however temporary, uneasy, and hard-won such an alignment may prove to be. But in even articulating such a possibility, this poem succeeds in charting a hopeful course for mind-becoming-world. The combined action of will and wine necessary for this transformation is elegantly encapsulated in the word “haste” (“*shetāb*,” only a single letter away from “*sharāb*,” wine), in Line 1:

dowr-e falak derang nadārad shetāb kon

دور فلک درنگ ندارد شتاب کن

The turning sky [lit. “the rotation (*dowr*) of the sky”]
does not delay;
make haste!

Both Bīdel and Ḥazīn, in their respective readings of Ḥāfeẓ’s poem, identify this particular hemistich as being of central importance. The following *ghazals* by Bīdel and Ḥazīn are formal response-poems (*javābs*) to the above poem by Ḥāfeẓ. As with the trio of poems examined in Chapter 1, the nature of the Persian response-poem dictates that all three poems must share the

same meter²⁴ and rhyme (“-āb kon”).²⁵ In Ḥazīn’s case, the hypothesis that his poem responds to this one by Ḥāfeẓ is proven beyond a doubt, since he explicitly mentions Ḥāfeẓ by name and cites a hemistich directly from this poem. Although Bīdel does not interpolate Ḥāfeẓ’s words directly, he makes so many references to the diction and sense of Ḥāfeẓ’s *ghazal* that it is highly likely that this poem is in his mind as well.

Ḥāfeẓ’s poem establishes and then attempts to erase the fluid boundaries between mind and world through the worship of wine. This mind/world binary finds an obvious parallel with the kind of microcosm/macrocosm structure upon which so much of the architecture of Islamic thought depends.²⁶ Bīdel takes this structure, and makes it more radical: in his response-poem, the correspondences indicated by Ḥāfeẓ harden into more systematic and philosophically robust homologies. Understanding the kind of revision to which Bīdel subjects Ḥāfeẓ’s poem requires reference to several important concepts that were current in the early modern Islamicate world, discussion of which is interwoven throughout the following analysis.

1 *del gar na dāgh-e ‘eshq forūzad kebāb kon
dar khāne-ī ke ganj nayābī kharāb kon*²⁷

دل گر نه داغ عشق فروزد کباب کن
در خانه‌ای که گنج نیابی خراب کن

If your heart is not scarred
by marks of ardent passion –

²⁴ The meter for all three poems is *moẓāre ‘-e moṣamman-e akhrab al-ṣadr va makfūf al-ḥashvayn va mahzūf al- ẓarb* (E.S. #4.7.14): (→) --~ | -~ -~ | ~--~ | -~ - (maf’ūlo fā ‘elāto mafā ‘īlo fā ‘elon).

²⁵ As expected in response-poems, all three *ghazals* share a meter, *radīf*, and *qāfeye*. On the formal requirements of the *javāb*, see Losensky, *Welcoming Fighānī*, 107 et passim.

²⁶ See, for instance, the famous saying attributed to ‘Alī: “You think you are a small body; but within you is a greater world.” On the historical importance of the development of microcosmic thinking” in Islamic thought, see Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam II*:225 et passim. Hodgson’s central idea here concerns what he calls “the myth of the microcosmic return” – i.e., applying principles and ideas about the cosmos as a whole to one’s own individual “unconscious.”

²⁷ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, 2:1172-3.

make it roast.
Ruin any house
in which you find no treasure.

2 *nā-maḥram-e kereshme-ye olfat kas-ī mabād
bāb-e tarāḥḥom-īm zamān-ī 'etāb kon*

نامحرم کرشمه الفت کسی مباد
باب ترحمیم زمانی عتاب کن

May no one be estranged
from the amorous gaze
of friendship.
We stand at mercy's threshold.
Cast reproaches,
for a time!

3 *hastī farīb-e doulat-e bīdār khordan-ast
kh^vāb-ī to ham be bālesh-e nāz-e ḥobāb kon*

Existence is deception
wrought by charms
of wakeful fortune.
Build your dreams too
upon the fragile bubble's pillow.

4 *khalq-ī be zaḥmat-e sar-e bī-maghz mobtalā-st
bā īn kadū to nīz shenā-ye sharāb kon*

خلقى به زحمت سر بی مغز مبتلاست
با این کدو تو نیز شنای شراب کن

Creation is destined for calamity
by empty-headed labour.
And you as well:
swim through the wine
while clinging to this hollow gourd.

5 *pīrī cho ṣobḥ shobhe-ye āsār-e zendegī-st
īn noskhe rā be noqte-ye shakk entekhāb kon*

پیری چو صبح شبهه آثار زندگی است
این نسخه را به نقطه شک انتخاب کن

Old age, like dawn,
casts doubt

upon life's traces.
Mark your selections
from this manuscript [of life]
with dots of doubt.

- 6 *gerd-e nafas shekast o to dārī gham-e jasad
ourāq raft ehāṭe-ye jeld-e ketāb kon*

گرد نفس شکست و تو داری غم جسد
اوراق رفت احاطه جلد کتاب کن

Breath's circle
shattered,
and you mourn the body.
The folio pages
scattered.
Secure the binding of the book.

- 7 *yek-ḥalqe qāmat-īm che hastī kojā 'adam
īn ṣeḡr rā be har che pasandī ḥesāb kon*

یک حلقه قامتیم چه هستی کجا عدم
این صفر را به هر چه پسندی حساب کن

Our figure
forms a single circle.
What is existence? Where is nonbeing?
Tally this zero
in whatever way you like.

- 8 *bar gardan-e taṣarrof-e edrāk baste-and
bīdārī-ī ke khedmat-e ta 'bīr-e kh'āb kon*

بر گردن تصرف ادراک بسته‌اند
بیداری که خدمت تعبیر خواب کن

The authority of perception
is burdened, weighed down at the neck
By being awake.
Employ it to interpret dreams.

- 9 *rang-e qabūl-e houṣale-ye 'ajz nāzokī-st
ey sāye tark-e makramat-e āftāb kon*

رنگ قبول حوصله عجز نازکی است
ای سایه ترک مکرمت آفتاب کن

The color
of taking on the patience of poverty
is delicate and subtle.
O shadow!
Abandon all the magnanimity
of the sun.

- 10 *jām-e morovvat-e hame bar sang khorde ast*
z-īn dowr-e khoshk cheshm-e tavaqqo ‘ por-āb kon

جام مروت همه بر سنگ خورده است
زین دور خشک چشم توقع پر آب کن

Everyone’s wineglass
of humanity
has shattered, smashed against a stone.
Fill your expectant eyes
with tears
at this dry round.

- 11 *gard-e nemūd-e fetne nadārad savād-e faqr*
z-īn shām rīsh-e ṣobḥ-e qeyāmat khezāb kon

گرد نمود فتنه ندارد سواد فقر
زین شام ریش صبح قیامت خذاب کن

Poverty’s black plains
contain no dust
of insurrection.
Use this black night
to dye the beard
of this Apocalyptic dawn.

- 12 *Bīdel ze ekhteyār bar-ā har che bād bād*
forsat kam ast tark-e derang o shetāb kon

بیدل ز اختیار برآ هر چه باد باد
فرصت کم است ترک درنگ و شتاب کن

Bīdel, overcome free will!
What will be,
will be.
Opportune moments
are few.
Abandon delay and hasten.

Bīdel’s poem diverges in several obvious ways from Ḥāfez’s *ghazal*. First of all, wine imagery is scarce, and certainly does not function as a unifying topos. There is a brief reference to wine in Line 2, and the only other occurrence is in Line 10, where, instead of Ḥāfez’s jubilant revelry, Bīdel presents us with a shattered wine-glass and a “dry” round, where the only liquid poured is the tears that fill the disappointed eye. There is no longer any cupbearer (*sāqī*); and while the poem, like Ḥāfez’s *ghazal*, is necessarily addressed to a second person (per the imperative refrain, “do”), this addressee remains vague and abstract; indeed, it appears as though Bīdel is primarily addressing himself. After thus casting aside the entire wine topos that forms the centerpiece of Ḥāfez’s ribald iconoclasm, Bīdel creates a vacuum of sorts, which he then proceeds to fill with his own distinctive vision.

Although wine may be scarce in his poem, Bīdel takes up Ḥāfez’s alba topos with a vengeance. Although the poem does not open with daybreak, time itself is still very much the poem’s overarching concern. It is very likely that Bīdel had this exact poem by Ḥāfez in mind, since, in the last couplet, he partially quotes the famous “haste and delay” hemistich:

forṣat kam ast tark-e derang o shetāb kon

فرصت کم است ترک درنگ و شتاب کن

Opportune moments
are few.

Abandon **delay and hasten**.

The grammar of this hemistich is tantalizingly ambiguous. One can read the final auxiliary verb “to do” (*kon*) as being distributed across two actions: *tark-e derang kon*, “abandon delay,” and *shetāb kon* (“hasten”). However, one could also read *delay-and-haste (derang-o-shetāb)* as a compound noun formed from the fusion of opposites – a noun-compounding process that is quite

common in classical Persian – and treat it as the direct object of the imperative: “abandon delay-and-haste,” or, in a sense, “seize the opportune moment – abandon *haste and delay, since these are both pedestrian attempts to manipulate time.*”

This second reading may be supported by other ways in which Bīdel hews to a non-standard management of the human experience of time. Bīdel pointedly replaces the first word in the Ḥāfeẓ poem, “dawn” (“*ṣobḥ*”), with “heart” (“*del*”). This word (as is the case with so many terms used by Bīdel) must not be read in the ordinary anatomical sense of a four-chambered organ, or as a breezy Romantic shorthand for the locus of turbulent emotions. Rather, the heart here must be taken in the technical Sufi sense, where the “heart” (Arabic *qalb*, Persian *del*) is the central organ of intuition and experiential understanding, through which the well-trained adept may move beyond the realm of reason and logic (*‘aql*) and into visionary metaphysical territory.²⁸

This intermediary role played by the heart as organ of intuition is especially important in the work of the great Sufi philosopher of Andalusia, Ibn ‘Arabī (d.1240), whose ideas and vocabulary echo throughout Bīdel’s work.²⁹ Ibn ‘Arabī frequently cites this well known *ḥadīth qudsī* (a tradition in which God speaks in the first person):

My earth and My heaven embrace me not, but the heart [*qalb*] of My believing servant does embrace Me.³⁰

²⁸ William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-‘Arabi’s Metaphysics of Imagination*. (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), 106-7.

²⁹ For a discussion of Ibn ‘Arabī’s theory of imagination in relation to Bīdel approaches to that which is imaginary, see Chapter 4.

³⁰ Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 107.

As noted, Bīdel has been widely taken to have been influenced by Ibn ‘Arabī, whose brand of theistic monism cast a long shadow over the entire Islamicate world.³¹ Ibn ‘Arabī has been taken to be an early exponent of the *vaḥdat-e vojūd* (“oneness of being”) doctrine, which is contrasted (somewhat artificially)³² with the doctrine of *vaḥdat-e shohūd* (“oneness of witnessing”).³³ At the risk of perilously oversimplifying this difficult matter, the former doctrine argues for there being a total unity between God and creation, whereas the latter maintains that there remains a difference, and distance, between God and his creation – a sliver of perspective through which the act of witnessing is possible.

While it is tempting to read Bīdel exclusively as a follower of Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought, and leave it at that, it is important to remember that we do not have glaring proof that this was in fact the case. As Prashant Keshavmurthy has argued, close scrutiny of Bīdel’s oeuvre reveals that if we want to locate Bīdel somewhere along the *vojūdī/shohūdī* axis, he would actually fall somewhere in the middle, drawing for his own purposes from both doctrines.³⁴ For this reason, the concepts and definitions that follow are taken from both sides of the divide, to illustrate Bīdel’s equal-opportunity use of ideas.

One of Bīdel’s most defining traits is his commitment to what we might call manipulating the interval, and what Chapter 2 has called “the lyric interim.” Here the influence of the Ibn ‘Arabī school is especially palpable, for one of the pillars of Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought is the concept

³¹ For a further comparative discussion of Bīdel and Ibn ‘Arabī, see Chapter 4.

³² For a welcome reappraisal of this dichotomy, see Shankar Nair, “Muḥibb Allāh Ilāhābādī on Ontology: Indian Islamic Debates over the Nature of Being (wujūd),” in *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Philosophy*, ed. Jonardon Ganeri, 657-692 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

³³ Ibid, 226.

³⁴ Keshavmurthy, *Persian Authorship and Canonicity in Late Mughal: Building an Ark*, 21-22.

of the *barzakh* – an intermediate imaginal world located between God’s realm and creation. Through rigorous education and Sufi training, an adept can gain mastery over his visionary experiences and learn to navigate this imaginal realm, thereby coming closer to God and the true ultimate reality than systematic knowledge alone can allow. The following Qur’ānic verse is frequently cited by Sufis who hold to this kind of thinking:

Sa-nurī-him ayāti-nā fī l-āfāqi wa fī anfusi-him ḥattá yatabayyana la-hum anna-hu l-ḥaqqu awa-lam yakfī bi-rabbi-ka anna-hu ‘alá kulli shay’in shahīdun

سنريهم آياتنا فى الافاق و فى انفسهم حتى يتبين لهم انه الحق اولم يكف بربك انه على كل شىء شهيد.

We shall show them Our **signs** in the **horizons** and in **themselves**, till it is **clear** to them that it is the truth. Suffices it not as to thy Lord, that He is witness over everything?³⁵

It is clear how this verse can be read by Sufis as setting up the binary of outer world (macrocosm) vs. inner world (microcosm), with an important middle ground between them in which there is room for correct interpretation of signs.

The co-presence of these two horizons, inner and outer, endures in Islamic thought throughout the early modern period. Al-Qāshānī, a fourteenth-century interpreter of Ibn ‘Arabī who compiled a dictionary of technical Sufi terms that circulated widely in the Islamic world, refers to these two horizons thus: the Clear Horizon, which marks the end of the realm of the heart, and the Highest Horizon (the realm of God);³⁶ and it is the heart and the imagination that, however asymptotically, are capable of bridging the two horizons. If space comes to be metaphysically structured in this way, with two separate realms and middle ground between

³⁵ *Sūra Fuṣṣilat*, Q.41.53. See *The Koran Interpreted*, trans. Arthur J. Arberry (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996, 1955), 191.

³⁶ “*Al-ufuq al-mubīn...huwa nihāyat al-maqāmi l-qalb*” and “*al-ufuq al-a’lá*”. ‘Abd al-Razzāq Al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya [Sufi Terms of Art]* (Cairo: Al-Hay’a al-Miṣriyya al-‘Āmma lil-Kitāb, 1981), 13.

them, ripe with visionary potential, time too receives similar treatment. The quarry here as well for Sufis is that elusive interval, the moment. Indeed, one of the terms by which Sufis were known was “*ibn al-waqt*”, or “son of the moment”, which, in Ibn ‘Arabī’s stronger reformulation became “*ṣāhib al-waqt*,” “master of the moment”.³⁷ In a characteristically Sufi maneuver of radically aligning macrocosm and microcosm, time itself (*al-zamān*) came to be defined as a single, infinite moment (*al-ān al-dā’im*), the “extension of divine presence that encompasses pre-eternity and post-eternity...it is called ‘the inner realm of time’ and ‘the foundation of time.’” Most relevantly for the present purposes, such definitions frequently end with Al-Qāshānī quoting the phrase, “For your Lord, there is no morning and no evening.”³⁸

Such interval-oriented thought is not limited to the diffuse circle of Ibn ‘Arabī’s followers. Even the philosopher ‘Alā’ al-Doule Semnānī (d.1336), who was vehemently opposed to much of Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought, shows similar patterns of thinking. He developed the notion of two different kinds of time: *zamān-e āfāqī*, objective time (lit. “horizontal” time) and *zamān-e anfosī*, or interior time (lit. “the time of souls”).³⁹ Another of Semnānī’s central ideas is that human beings are separated from God by the unsurpassable fact of God’s having created

³⁷ See Michael A. Sells, “Ibn ‘Arabī’s Garden among the Flames: A Reevaluation,” *History of Religions* 23.4 (1984), 306, and Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 243.

³⁸ *Huwa imtidādu l-ḥaḍrati l-ilāhiyyati l-ladhī yandariju bi-hi l-azalu fī l-abadi wa kullā-humā fī l-waḳti l-ḥāḍiri li-zuhūri mā fī l-azali ‘alā aḥāyīna al-abadi, wa kawnu kulli ḥaynin min-hā majmā’u al-azali wa l-abadi, fa-yattaḥidu bi-hi l-azalu wa l-abadu wa l-waḳtu l-ḥāḍiru, fa-li-dhālika yuqālu la-hu bāṭinu l-zamāni wa aṣlu l-zamāni, li-anna l-ānātu l-zamāniyyatu nuqūshun ‘alay-hi wa taghayyurātu tazhuru bi-hā aḥkāmu-hu wa ṣuwaru-hu, wa huwa thābitun ‘alā ḥāli-hi dā’iman sarmadan wa-qad yuḍāfu ilā l-ḥaḍrati l-‘indiyyati ka-qawli-hi ‘alay-hi l-salāmu “laysa ‘inda rabbi-ka ṣabāḥa wa lā masā’a.”* Al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt*, 32.

³⁹ See Henry Corbin, *The Man of Light in Iranian Ṣūfism* (New York: Random House, 1978), 126-127 et passim.

creation.⁴⁰ Yet Semnānī too has a way of bringing these two realms into alignment: in his treatises (*risālas*), one sees the recurring term “iltiyām” (“conciliation; the healing or closing of a wound”), which is one of Bīdel’s own favored images as well:

*joz marg nīst chāre-ye āfāq-e zendegī
chūn zakhm-e shīshe-ī ke godāz elteyām-e ū-st*

جز مرگ نیست چاره آفاق زندگی
چون زخم شیشه‌ای که گداز التیام اوست

Death is the only solution
to life’s horizons:
Like cracked glass,
the only cure is melting.

One of Bīdel’s most striking philosophical innovations is his concept of the opportune moment, *forṣat*. The question posed by the Ḥāfez poem above is how, if at all, one can “heal” the human condition by slowing down time; and Bīdel, both here in this poem, and throughout his oeuvre, presents his own solution. His solution is to withdraw from time by seizing upon its smallest unit – the moment – and bending it to his will through the imagination. By thus carving out a space of one’s own within (and yet also partly beyond) time, in the span of this opportune moment (*forṣat*), one can – perhaps imperfectly, and fleetingly – become God.

One of the ways this is achieved is by bending time into a chromatic circle. Ḥāfez begins with morning, and Bīdel *ends* with morning – with the white dawn of apocalypse painted evening-black (Line 11). There is something uncannily anthropomorphic about time bent into this kind of circle: first there is the image of the white hair of old age being recolored into a more youthful black, and the almost bodily-physical description of the cyclicity of existence and nonexistence, bound to each other like the doubled-over figure (*qāmat*, also a person’s posture)

⁴⁰ See Jamal J. Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God: The Life and Thought of ‘Alā’ al-Dawla as-Simnānī* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 68 et passim.

of a single circle. Circle imagery abounds throughout the poem: the bubble (*ḥobāb*, Line 3), the circle and the zero (Line 7), the circle of breath (*gerd-e nafas*, Line 6), the round (*dowr*, Line 10). With this profusion of circles and cycles, Bīdel seems to place emphasis on *not* knowing where one thing ends and another thing begins; indeed, the real question may be whether the cycle will ever end at all. Throughout his lyric corpus, Bīdel laments the apparently endless, torturous cycle of repeated endeavors to establish control over time within one’s lifetime, which, as the autobiography has shown, is measured out breath by breath, moment by moment – each one a missed opportunity. Release from this torment can only be achieved through stopping the passage of moment – or rather, by seizing a single breath, and extending it as far into infinity as possible.

Much more can be said of this poem. For instance, all four elements – fire, water, earth, and air – are distributed quite ingeniously across the final four lines (*āftāb*, the fiery “sun” in Line 9; *āb*, water, Line 10; *savād*, “black fertile earth” in Line 11; and *bād*, wind, in Line 12). We might also attend to the function of color, and the homologies Bīdel arranges for us in the pairings of white-dawn-age, black-night-youth, with the full spectrum of color (*rang*) unfolding between them as if possessed of its own lifetime – an apt example of the color of the lyric interim described in Chapter 2.

The final line, with its paradoxical command to leave aside free will (*ekhteyār*)⁴¹ and to abandon delay and haste(n), is a quintessentially Bīdelian rhetorical move. To hasten or to delay means, in both cases, choosing to conform to an external measure of time, to an outside point of reference; whereas this poem commands the erasure of *all* such external reference points, of time

⁴¹ This may very well be a paronomastic reference to Ḥāfeẓ’s “*ṣavāb*”, virtuous action, in his final couplet; etymologically, “*ekhteyār*” is related to “*khayr*”, or “the good”.

itself. Bīdel’s solution to Ḥāfez’s problem of time is to step out of the frame of reference altogether.

One way that Bīdel manages to achieve this is by calling into question some very basic phenomenological givens. Twice he alludes to the antithesis between dreaming and waking states, and casting doubt on whether we can even tell the difference between them. This is a lesson that Bīdel has drawn perhaps both from his own dream, recounted in his autobiography, and from Indic traditions. As Wendy Doniger has shown, Sanskrit texts like the *Yogavasistha* are characterized by the powerful message that only in *retrospect* can we tell what was dream and what was reality; in other words, it is not possible to falsify the hypothesis that we are sleeping, or waking.⁴² Bīdel’s incorporation of the Indic doctrine of the infinity of times is discussed at length in Chapter 6.

Ḥazīn’s interpretation of Ḥāfez’s poem is starkly different from Bīdel’s – not surprising, given what has been revealed about Ḥazīn’s lyric style and literary-critical orientations in Chapters 1 and 2. A scholar, poet, critic, historian, and memoirist, Ḥazīn had the mixed fortune of living through both the tremendous cultural efflorescence of early-eighteenth-century Eṣfahān as well as the violent and tragic end of Ṣafavid rule at the hands of Afghan invaders.⁴³ Two

⁴² Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty, *Dreams, Illusion and Other Realities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 177. For the influence of the *Yogavasistha* on Bīdel’s narrative poems, see Hajnalka Kovacs, “The Tavern of the Manifestation of Realities:” *The Masnavi Muhit-i Azam by Mirza Abd al-Qadir Bedil (1644–1720)* (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2013), Chapter 3. David Shulman also hypothesizes about tantalizing possible Indic influences, citing the “remarkable revision” in seventeenth-century Sanskrit poetics wherein a new premium came to be placed on maintaining the tension between truth and illusion. See David Shulman, *More Than Real: A History of the Imagination in South India* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012).

⁴³ For details of Ḥazīn’s biography, including his travels and forced departure from Ṣafavid Iran, see Sarfāraz Khan Khatak, *Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Alī Ḥazīn: His Life, Times, and Works* (Lahore: M. Ashraf, 1944) and Ḥazīn’s own autobiography: Shaykh Moḥammad ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭāleb Ḥazīn Lāhejī, *Tārīkh-e aḥvāl be tazkere-ye ḥal-e Moulānā Shaykh Moḥammad ‘Alī Ḥazīn (ke khod neveshte ast)* (London: Printed for the Oriental Translation Fund, 1831).

aspects of his worldview are of particular importance to the following analysis of his response-poem. The first is his trenchant dislike of India (outlined in Chapters 1-2), founded perhaps upon the cataclysmic circumstances that forced him to spend his final years of life exiled there in poor health and even worse humor. The second important feature is that, especially as a Shī'ī Muslim, and perhaps also as witness to an especially violent and tragic historical moment, Ḥazīn's worldview is deeply colored by millenarian premonitions and anxious foreglimpses of the Apocalypse (*qeyāmat*).

As Chapter 2 has discussed, Ḥazīn's biographical compendium (*Tazkerat al-mo'āṣerīn*) contains a long digression on the fallen state of scholarship, offering a barely indirect rebuke to the intellectuals of India. Ḥazīn saw them as deviating from the values that he held, which are associated both with his homeland and with an earlier prelapsarian Islamic "golden age." Ḥazīn's attitude towards classical poet-predecessors has also been mentioned in Chapter 2: he composed many response-poems to poets including Ḥāfeẓ and others (Sanā'ī, Naẓrī, Sa'dī, Feghānī, Ṣā'eb, et al.), boasting of his ability to uphold their "fresh" (*tāze*) lyric qualities in his own poems. For instance, one *ghazal* concludes with the line, "*tāze kardī ravesh-e Ḥāfeẓ-e Shīrāz Ḥazīn*" ("Ḥazīn, you have renewed the style of Ḥāfeẓ of Shīrāz"), followed by an exact quotation from the *ghazal* of Ḥāfeẓ that is being imitated.⁴⁴ Ḥazīn's model of freshness, then, is essentially conservative. He is interested in carrying forward the style of the classical poets of the past, and in preventing that style from losing its luster in the present.

⁴⁴ Ghazal N^o294. Shaykh Moḥammad 'Alī b. Abī Ṭāleb Ḥazīn Lāhejī, *Dīvān-e Ḥazīn. Noskhe-ye taṣṣīh-karde-ye moṣannef Malek 'Alī Qolī Vāleh Dāghestānī*, ed. Momtāz Ḥasan (Karachi: National Publishing House, 1971), 308.

These considerations ought to be borne in mind when reading the following poem, which, in addition to being a formal response-poem to Ḥāfez, engages in a more subtle lyric dialogue with Bīdel's response as well.⁴⁵

- 1 *zāhed beyā vo rūy be-rāh-e šavāb kon
bogzār del ze dast o be-sāghar sharāb kon*⁴⁶

زاهد بیا و روی براه صواب کن
بگذار دل ز دست و بساغر شراب کن

Come, ascetic – turn
towards the path
of virtuous action.
Let your heart be stolen;
fill your cup with wine!

- 2 *moṭreb kaḡ-at ze dāman-e maṭlab jodā mabād
dast-ī be-tār-e ṭorre-ye chang o robāb kon*

مطرب گفت ز دامن مطلب جدا مباد
دستی بتار طره چنگ و رباب کن

Musician, may your hand
never let go of meaning's hem.
Run your fingers through the wavy hair
of lute and guitar strings.

- 3 *z-ān pīsh-tar ke gardesh-e dowrān konad kharāb
sāqī ma-rā be-yek-do-se sāghar kharāb kon*

زان پیشتر که گردش دوران کند خراب
ساقی مرا به یک دو سه ساغر خراب کن

O sāqī! Before the turn of time
will ruin us,

⁴⁵ I suspect that this is far from a unique occurrence. Several further examples can be found in Ḥazīn's *Dīvān* of his responding not only to a classical poet, but to a more contemporary poet's response to that poem as well, creating a complex polemical palimpsest. For instance, in responding to a Ṣā'eb poem about exile, Ḥazīn engages not only Ṣā'eb, but Bīdel's response to the same poem (see Chapter 1). Another example is found in Ḥazīn's variation on the popular early modern lyric topos and refrain of "We are...nothing" ("mā-yīm ... hīch"), which Bīdel employed in three *ghazals* as well.

⁴⁶ Ghazal N^o-664. Ḥazīn, *Dīvān*, 432.

Ruin us
with one – two – three
glasses of wine.

- 4 *gar 'ahd-e gīso-ye to be-golzār sar zanad
bef(e)kan be-ṭorre tāb o be-sombol 'etāb kon*

گر عهد گیسوی تو بگلزار سر زند
بفکن بطره تاب و بسنبل عتاب کن

If the epoch of your locks
should raise its head,
appearing in the rose garden –
Coil the ends into curls,
reprimand the prim and curly hyacinths!

- 5 *gar bogzarad to-rā nafas-ī dar havā-ye dūst
ay del ze 'omr-e kh^vīsh hamān-rā heṣāb kon*

گر بگذرد ترا نفسی در هوای دوست
ای دل ز عمر خویش همان را حساب کن

If one breath of yours should pass
in desiring the beloved,
Tally it, o heart,
from your own lifespan.

- 6 *naqsh-at agar dorost neshīnad dar-īn ketāb
ān-rā khayāl-e jelve-ye naqsh bar āb kon⁴⁷*

نقشت اگر درست نشیند درین کتاب
آنرا خیال جلوه نقش بر آب کن

If your image sits securely moored
printed in this book,
Imagine it
to be a brilliant manifestation
of imagery inscribed on water.

- 7 *besnnow ḥadīs-e Ḥāfez-e shīrīn-sokhan Ḥazīn*

⁴⁷ According to the requirements of the meter, there appears to be one syllable missing in this hemistich. It is also missing in the manuscript edited by Ḥazīn himself. See Ḥazīn, *Dīvān*, 269). Since only one syllable is unaccounted for, we can be fairly sure that a whole word is not likely to have gone astray; perhaps a definite suffix may have been dropped (“*naqsh-t*” instead of “*naqsh*”); the meaning of the line, however, remains clear enough.

“*dowr-e falak derang nadārad shetāb kon*”

بشنو حدیث حافظ شیرین سخن حزین
'دور فلک درنگ ندارد شتاب کن'

Hazīn, hear this history
from sweet-spoken Ḥāfeẓ:
“The turning sky
does not delay;
make haste!”

The first thing to note is that Ḥazīn has exactly reversed Ḥāfeẓ’s poem: he begins with Ḥāfeẓ’s end (*rāh-e ṣavāb*, the virtuous path – replacing Ḥāfeẓ’s *kār-e ṣavāb*, virtuous action; and wine, *sharāb*), and ends by quoting verbatim Ḥāfeẓ’s memorable beginning: “The turning sky does not delay; make haste!” We may note further that, unlike Bīdel’s poem, Ḥazīn’s response is amply populated by figures associated with the verse of Ḥāfeẓ and other classical Persian poets: the ascetic (*zāhed*, Line 1), musician (*moṭreb*, Line 2), cupbearer (*sāqī*, Line 3), and, of course, Ḥāfeẓ himself in the last line (Line 6). It is in these lines that Ḥazīn hews most closely to the tenor and environment of Ḥāfeẓ’s lyric world: the attempt to stall the passage of time by prolonging the interval of pleasure is stated quite plainly, and the social world in which this ritenuto takes place is also vividly realized. Like Ḥāfeẓ, Ḥazīn makes wine the prime agent of time change, and, therefore, the most proper object of worship (surpassing, of course, the ascetic’s dryly abstemious practices).

The remaining lines, especially Lines 5 and 6, are where Ḥazīn most clearly reveals his engagement with Bīdel. Words unique to Bīdel’s response-poem that are not found in the original Ḥāfeẓ *ghazal* but are present in Ḥazīn’s include ‘*etāb*, *ketāb*, *nafas*, and *ḥesāb*. Though “*khayāl*”, “that which is imaginary,” does not occur in Bīdel’s poem, as Chapter 2 has shown, this term and its association with the early modern Indian style of lyric immediately evokes the

early modern lyric environment and individual lyric style of Bīdel. “*Khayāl*” as a *picture* or image in the mind here is like a reflection upon water: we believe it to be fixed, but in reality, it is unstable and fluid – an apt description of the “middle” realm of the imagination that is so central to Bīdel’s thought. A further gesture towards the hallmark imagery of Bīdel’s thought is found in Line 5:

*gar bogzarad to-rā nafas-ī dar havā-ye dūst
ay del ze ‘omr-e kh’īsh hamān-rā heṣāb kon*

گر بگذرد ترا نفسی در هوای دوست
ای دل ز عمر خویش همان را حساب کن

If one breath of yours should pass
in desiring the beloved,
Tally it, o heart,
from your own lifespan.

This line recalls at once the couplet in Bīdel’s poem about the futility of tallying with zero.

“*Nafas*” too, the single breath so important in Bīdel’s thought, also signals that there may be a polemical undercurrent here. Ḥazīn’s aim, however, is not to abolish time, but to alter its natural span. He tries to do this by bringing about a metaphysically and mathematically sound exchange where a single breath, or single moment, that is spent in devout desire can change one’s own lifespan.⁴⁸

Yet despite skirting the edges of Bīdel’s metaphysical territory, Ḥazīn swerves decisively at the end towards a very different vision time, self, and experienced history. He remains committed in this poem, and in his oeuvre more generally, to a fixedly linear and

⁴⁸ This line is very probably a play on a couplet from a poem by Sa’dī (d. 1291/2), a rather melancholy *ubi sunt* poem in which dawn is drawn out of the night like antidote from a snake (Line 10). The following line (Line 11) refers to the malevolent caprices of the heavens (*charkh-e ‘arbade-jū*), and the subsequent line (Line 12) runs thus: “*cho ‘omr-e khosh-nafas-ī gar gozar konī bar man / ma-rā hamān nafas az ‘omr dar shomār āyad*” (“If you pass over me like a sweet breath of lifetime, / That breath will be tallied from my lifespan.” Sa’dī Shīrāzī, *Kolleyyāt-e Sa’dī*, ed. Moḥammad ‘Alī Forūghī (Tehrān: Hormos, 1385SH (2006/2007CE), 696.

historical view of time, event, span, and possibility. The word “*ḥadīṣ*” in the last line – meaning “history”, “narrative”, and “tradition” (the collected sayings of the Prophet) – reconfirms this set of commitments. Line 2 makes this explicit as well:

*z-ān pīsh-tar ke ‘ālam-e fānī shavad kharāb
mā rā ze jā-m-e bāde-ye gol-gūn kharāb kon*

زان پیشتر که عالم فانی شود خراب
ما را ز جام باده گلگون خراب کن

Before this fleeting temporal world
falls into ruin,
Ruin us –
with a glass
of rose-colored wine.

Quoting Line 2 of Ḥāfeẓ nearly verbatim about the necessity of “making the deadline,” Ḥazīn lays out his own version of manipulating time. Unlike Bīdel, he does not attempt to achieve this through the willed dilation of a single, indivisible moment; rather, he is able to carve out space for action through the addition of *more numbers* to the timeline. He calls not just for one more glass of wine, as Ḥāfeẓ does, but for one – two – three more, in tidy linear-progressive order.

Time-terms like *dowrān* (periods of time) and *‘ahd* (era) contribute further to the distinctly Islamic-historical flavor of Ḥazīn’s interpretation of Ḥāfeẓ, in the sense that all history on this view is directed towards an anticipated end. “*Ḥesāb*,” meaning “tally, account, reckoning,” has specific apocalyptic connotations. In fact, “*yawm al-ḥisāb*,” or “Day of Reckoning,” is directly synonymous with the End of Days, whereupon God will begin his “account” of human actions, tallying the good deeds and the bad, all of which have been inscribed throughout each individual’s lifetime in a book (*ketāb*). According to the (especially Shī‘ī) Islamic interpretation of the Apocalypse, this final end is not merely a stopping-point, but also a return to origins (*al-ma‘ād* or *al-raj‘a*, lit. “the return”): certain worthy individuals deemed

worthy are resurrected, and therefore “return” to life alongside God, their creator and initial point of departure. Here, as in his oeuvre more generally, Ḥazīn’s mind inclines to origins: towards the Golden Age of earliest Islamic history, towards the earlier classical masters of Persian verse, towards his homeland of Iran from which he has been exiled to India and to which he likely knew he could never return. By reversing the order of Ḥāfeẓ’s poem, Ḥazīn succeeds in achieving in lyric a linear return.

The differences that emerge through this close reading of Bīdel’s and Ḥazīn’s response-poems shed light on what is perhaps an obvious point: that there can be no talk of any *single* “early modern” style of lyric thought and experiences of time. Rather, throughout the early modern Persianate world we find a very wide and variegated spectrum of possible intellectual orientations, where poets draw from a shared inheritance of systematic and literary thought, and adapt it for their own purposes.

The very existence of such a rich range of sophisticated theoretical inquiries into the nature of time, all of which could be expressed – and were indeed frequently *only* expressed – through lyric poetry no doubt aptly characterizes the situation in early modern Europe as well, and the parallels and divergences between early modern Persian and English lyric treatments of time beg to be addressed through serious comparative work. Both Bīdel and Ḥazīn are, after all, engaged in a rather universal early modern enterprise: in gleaning what they can from the colossal harvest of their philosophical heritage, they strive to redefine the scope of human action by exploring and charting its limits, its possibilities, and its ends – in lyric poetry.

To summarize: while Ḥazīn and Bīdel take their responses to Ḥāfeẓ’s poem in very different directions, it is important to perceive how they both still operate within a broadly shared poetic landscape. Both employ an intentionally complex vocabulary, achieving a meticulous

balance between reality, imagination, and abstraction – though how those three realms are weighted and stacked against each other is an important point of contrast between the poets. If Ḥazīn uses metaphorical language to direct attention to the work of historical, eschatologically charged time, Bīdel deploys Ḥāfez’s topoi of time and dawn in the service of philosophical ideas. This difference in emphasis is expressed also in the very different ways these two poets approach autobiography as well: Ḥazīn’s account of his life is first-personal (singular), linear, geographically specific, and always embedded in a real-time unfolding of history in all of its political, military, cultural, and social specificity. Bīdel, on the other hand, as Prashant Keshavmurthy notes, interprets specific real-world events “as bearing an archetypal or mythic significance transcending their dateable and nameable particularity.”⁴⁹

3.3 Capturing the Momentous Through the Manuscript of the Imagination: Bīdel’s Lost Dream

This feature of Bīdel’s autobiography – the simultaneous narration of first-personal experience through a vocabulary of philosophical ideas, and the exposition of those ideas through embodied experiences – is particularly prominent in what could be considered the denouement of *The Four Elements*: the dream narrative mentioned earlier, which is recounted by Bīdel at the very end of the work. The following pages introduce and analyze this dream narrative, paying attention especially to the extraordinary experiences of time and imagination it discloses.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Prashant Keshavmurthy, *Persian Authorship and Canonicity in Late Mughal Delhi: Building an Ark*, (New York: Routledge, 2016), 30. Ḥazīn, on the other hand, in his *Tārīkh al-ahvāl* hews with unflinching precision to events that happened concerning named individuals in specific places on known dates.

⁵⁰ The following pages refer to, and paraphrase, the dream narrative in Bīdel’s autobiography found here: Bīdel, *Kolleyāt*, IV:296-297. This section is transcribed, transliterated, and translated in its entirety in T1.E4.

Bīdel prefaces the dream narrative with a small subsection describing the ideally balanced temperament (*mezāj-e mo‘tadel*) of saints and prophets – figures characterized by virtuosic powers of imagination, composure, and control over their experience of time. The temperaments of these extraordinary persons are described by Bīdel as *manuscripts (noskhe)*, in which there are traces – importantly, traces or signs that need to be discovered and deciphered through careful interpretive scrutiny – marking the way for others to follow. The dreams of saints and prophets, Bīdel goes on to say, require no interpretation, since their well-balanced temperaments ensure that neither in their waking states nor while asleep are they subjected to the unwelcome vacillations of experiential states that most people must endure most of the time. Importantly, Bīdel connects this quality of saints’ and prophets’ constant, unchanging enlightenment with their ability to *collect color* in such a way that it no longer *fractures*:

*har ke rā nabz-e mezāj-e mo‘tadel āmad be dast
dar benā-ye rang-e taḥqīq-esh namī-bāshad shekast*

هر که را نبض مزاج معتدل آمد به دست
در بنای رنگ تحقیقش نمی‌باشد شکست

If the pulse⁵¹ of a well-balanced temperament
should come into your hands,
The foundation – cemented with color –
of your research into true reality
shall have no scattered fractures.

As Chapter 2 has shown, the Indian Persian vocabulary of color and the lyric interim has cosmological dimensions, and it is necessary to keep this complex vocabulary in mind in order to fully understand Bīdel’s meaning here. Saints and prophets, he argues, by virtue of their composure, have transcended time – where time is figured as color. In order to imitate – literally,

⁵¹ Bīdel’s description of a well-balanced temperament is always physically grounded. The extended metaphor of the embodied lifetime as a manuscript never loses this physical pulse.

to follow the path – of these perfect exemplars, one must *train the imagination*. Why? Because underqualified seekers

Ḥarakāt-e mast o bangī ke moṭābeq-e sonan-e khavāṣṣ namī-oftad, be 'ellat-e ān ast ke e'tedāl az īn amjeze ramīde ast, va ghobār-e bī-tamyīzī dar naẓar-e sho'ūr dīvār keshīde. Kh'āb-hā-yeshān hamvāre bā ṣovar-e mūhesh dochār, va bīdārī-hā peyvaste āyīne-ye fasād dar kenār.

حرکات مست و بنگی که مطابق سنن خواص نمی‌افتد به علت آن است که اعتدال از این امجزه رمیده است و غبار بی‌تمیزی در نظر شعور دیوار کشیده. خواب‌هایشان همواره با صور موحش دچار و بیداری‌ها پیوسته آینه فساد در کنار.

...perform drunken and *bang*-intoxicated movements – which do not follow the paths paved by the elect [prophets and saints] for this reason: their temperament has no equilibrium, and dust arising from their want of discrimination forms itself into a wall that cuts off perception's gaze. Dreaming, they constantly encounter terrifying forms; in their waking states, they continually embrace a broken mirror.

As always, Bīdel is careful to distinguish between imaginal content that is *illusory* (*vahm*), which is to be despised and shunned, and *khayāl* – that which is imaginary but also delightful, educational, and allows scope for visionary manipulation:

*gar na jām-e vahm peymāyad mezāj-e monḥaref
hīch kas rā nīst bā jahl-e jonūn-paymāne kār*

گر نه جام وهم پیماید مزاج منحرف
هیچ کس را نیست با جهل جنون پیمانۀ کار

Those whose temperaments
are out of balance
drink deeply from illusion's cup.
No one else
has anything to do
with such ignorant measuring of madness.

Bīdel then begins the dream narrative proper. In what may be the only such passage in his entire autobiography, he meticulously dwells on the historically specific time and place at which this visionary experience takes place:

Sa 'ādat-ḥoṣūl azmene-ī ke dar balde-ye Akbarābād besāt-e forṣat-e tavaqqof mī-gostarānīd, va ferdows-āyīn owqāt-ī ke be sayr-e īn gol-e zamīn separī mī-gardīd.

سعادت حصول ازمنه‌ای که در بلده اکبرآباد بساط فرصت توقف می‌گسترانید و فردوس آیین اوقاتی که به سیر این گل زمین سپری می‌گردید.

Blessed were those moments which offered [me] an opportune time to halt in the city of Akbarabad [Agra]; like paradise were those hours which brought [my] travels throughout this region [of northern India] to a conclusion.

Bīdel describes in detail the succession of *dawns and evenings* that he witnessed while halting here in Agra: the *allurements* of cyclical time itself eventually brings on “sudden onrushes of thought, which did not admit attentive slow reflection” (*bī-ta 'ammolī-hā-ye hojūm-e khavāter*). These thoughts are accompanied by “galloping frantically searching breaths” that cannot be brought under control. At this point, neither in his sleeping nor in his waking state is Bīdel capable of correctly interpreting (*ta bīr*) his experiences and thus discovering true reality. However: eventually, he is at last able to *gather himself*, literally “to arrange a gathering in [his] imagination” (*anjoman-ī dar khayāl mī-ārastam*).⁵² This act of concentration immediately produces wondrous results:

3 '*ālam-ī dar ḥayrat-ābād-e jonūn-am jelve dāsht*
 man hamān yek khāne-ye āyīne mī-pardākhtam

عالمی در حیرت‌آباد جنونم جلوه داشت
من همان یک خانه آئینه می‌پرداختم

A world was manifested
within the abode of wonder

⁵² Chapter 6 is devoted to discussing the significance of this particular description of a *gathering* of mind in imagination.

of my madness –
And all the while, I polished
that very house of mirrors.

This private experience of self inaugurates what will become the defining visionary experience of Bīdel’s lifetime. Unlike other Sufis, who stress the importance of being led on the Path by a teacher (*shaykh*) through frequently collective, social practices of spiritual training, Bīdel makes a point of the *solitary* nature of his journey:

5 *hīch kas āgāhī az kayfīyat-e ḥāl-am nadāsh*
 bā ghobār-e bī-kasī ya ‘nī be khod mī-sākhtam

هیچ کس آگاهی از کیفیت حالم نداشت
با غبار بی‌کسی یعنی به خود می‌ساختم

No one knew
the quality
of my ecstatic state.
I encountered⁵³
the dust of being-no-one
– that is, my self –
all by myself.

Bīdel then proceeds to describe – again, in precise historical-chronometric detail – the time of his visionary experience. The following long elaborate sentence is, in effect, a paraphrase of Bīdel’s act of simply falling asleep:

Shab-ī dar sane-ye yek-hazār o hashtād o yek-e hejrī ke āftāb az eqtebās-e rowshanī-hā-ye savād-esh khel ‘at-e bī-pardegī mī-pūshīd va nūr be eltebās-e kayfeyāt-e zolmat-esh chūn negāh az mardomak mī-jūshīd, ghonūdan-ī bar ṭab ‘-e majbūr hojūm bī-ekhteyārī āvard va sāye-ye mozhegān bar negāh za ‘īfī-ye dastgāh-e gerānī kard.

⁵³ “Encountered [x]” is lit. “built with [x]” (*bā X be Y sākhan*, “to keep with/see/do X by Y”) where *sākhtan* is “to build, to make.” Taken with the “abode of wonder” (*ḥayrat-ābād*), the “vast steppes of the heart’s mirror,” and the preliminary architectural sketch (*ṭarḥ*) of the first line, this *ghazal* cleverly rounds out this section on the *place* of the dream. Another reading of this like is “I put up with the dust of being-no-one” (*bā ghobār...mī-sākhtam*), though the architectural vocabulary in the other lines suggests that Bīdel is mining this common meaning of *sākhtan* for deeper resonances as well.

شبی در سنه یکهزار و هشتاد و یک هجری که آفتاب از اقتباس روشنی‌های سوادش خلعت
بی‌پردگی می‌پوشید و نور به التباس کیفیت ظلمتش چون نگاه از مردمک می‌جوشید غنودنی بر
طبع مجبور هجوم بی‌اختیاری آورد و سایه مژگان بر نگاه ضعیفی دستگاه گرانی کرد.

One evening, in the year 1081H [1670CE], when the sun – interpolating
borrowed fires from its own black-soil outskirts – was clothing itself in
brazen robes of honor, and when light poured forth with the obscure
ambiguity of its own dark quality, like rays of vision from black pupils –
at this time, a sleeping state involuntarily assaulted [my] nature, and the
shadow of [my own] eyelashes heavily overpowered [my] weak sight.⁵⁴

He understands that this might be the opportune moment (*forṣat*) that he has been waiting for,
and prepares himself to witness something momentous (*tamāshā*). However, no matter how
collected he thinks his mind may be, his visual imagination is always on the verge of escaping
from his control:

1 *moqtaṣṣiyāt-e vojūd az parde-ye asrār-e ghayb*
 mī-konad bī-kh'āst gol chūn gardesh-e layl-o-nahār

مقتضیات وجود از پرده اسرار غیب
می‌کند بی‌خواست گل چون گردش لیل و نهار

The events of existence
come from the veil of mysteries
in the Hidden Realm.
They bloom into being, unbidden,
like the rotation
of nights and days.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Here, as earlier in this dream narrative, opposites are arranged in a carefully balanced way, as if preparing for the ambiguous in-between state to come (constraint/free will, power/weakness, darkness/light) – an instance of *morā'āt-e naẓīr* (the observance of “congruous” vocabulary).

⁵⁵ This poem is full of what appears to be a purposive repetition of words from the preceding prose paragraph. Such repetition is very common throughout the prosimetrum in *The Four Elements*. Thoughts often come in prose-verse pairs: they are first stated in prose, and then elaborated, or explicated, in verse. As noted earlier, the “balanced” sentence-clause pairs of the prose neatly mirror the “balanced” hemstichs of the verse couplets. Just as each prose clause, and each hemstich, must be weighed and interpreted against the other member of its pair, on a macro-level too, each half of every prose-verse pairing must be similarly cross-interpreted. No doubt this vertiginous pairs-within-pairs structure appealed to Bidel’s predisposition towards all things fractal.

This is because he has not accounted for God's decisive role in visionary experience. No amount of personal preparation can take the place of God's grace:

10 *mā hame dar sāye-ye abr-e karam kh'ābīde-īm*
tā che vaqt āgah shavad feṭrat ze faẓl-e kerdegār

ما همه در سایه ابر کرم خوابیده‌ایم
تا چه وقت آگه شود فطرت ز فضل کردگار

We all sleep, and dream
under the shadow
of a generous cloud.
At which moment
will our given nature
become enlightened
by our Lord and Maker's virtue?⁵⁶

This “moment” – *vaqt*, the smallest instant of time – is then miraculously and graciously granted to Bīdel, and he then proceeds to give an account of his first-personal visionary experience of the unfolding of the cosmos from God's own atemporal perspective:

Sā 'at-ī chand ghalabe-ye ḥokm-e jalāl maḥv-e jahān-e aḥadīyat-am dāsht tā ān-ke nasīm-e golshan-e vefāq ya 'nī taqāzā-ye bī-neqābī-hā-ye jamāl, ḥarakat bar ajzā-ye bī-ḥess-am gomāsh; va ān dowrān ettefāq-ī būd az ḥozūr-e nash'e-ye e'tedāl va zamān[-e] āgāhī az laṭāyef-e sa 'ādat-e eqbāl.

ساعتی چند غلبه حکم جلال محو جهان احدیتم داشت تا آنکه نسیم گلشن وفاق یعنی تقاضای بی‌نقاب‌های جمال حرکت بر اجزای بی‌حس گماشت و آن دوران اتفاقی بود از حضور نشئه اعتدال و زمان آگاهی از لطایف سعادت اقبال.

For several hours [for a while], I was under the sway of God's divine greatness, which kept me obliterated in a world of unity – until a breeze from the garden of harmonious coincidence (in other words, the exigencies attending God's unveiled beauty) brought movement back to my senseless limbs. **That period of time** was

⁵⁶ Since this poem makes a point of carefully distinguishing between what we mean by sleep and wakefulness, ignorance and enlightenment, it is significant that it ends with a question about time. At which precise *moment* (*vaqt*) – a single instant of time – will true God-given knowledge arrive? The next prose paragraph, beginning with the word “hours” (*sā 'at-ī chand*), goes on to answer this question, taking literally the subsection heading of “the time of the dream.”

a remarkable fortuitous occurrence, made possible by the intoxicating presence of equilibrium; **that moment** was a period of awareness, springing from the subtleties of destiny's good fortune.

In other words, he begins with God's original perfect unity of being, then starts on a downward journey into ever-increasing degrees of multiplicity in the created world – characterized, as may be expected, by color and imagination:

Nokhostīn qadam-ī ke dar kār-gāh-e ta'ammol goshūdam, gardesh-e rang-e sho'ūnāt dāsham tajaddod-negār-e sovar-e haqāyeq-e ashyā', va avvalīn qadam-ī ke dar rayāhīn-kade-ye takhayyol zadam, ḥarakat-e nafas-ī dīdam khorūsh-e āmāde-ye keyfeyāt-e arvāh o asmā'.

نخستین قدمی که در کارگاه تأمل گشودم گردش رنگ شئوناتم تجدد نگار صور حقایق اشیا و اولین قدمی که در ریاحین کده تخیل زدم حرکت نفسی دیدم خروش آماده کیفیات ارواح و اسما.

With the first step I took in the workshop of **attentive slow reflection**, I experienced **constantly changing colors** of particular occasions, which limned the perpetual renewal of the outward forms taken by objects' true realities. And with the first step I took in the fragrant herb-garden of the **imagination**, I saw the movement of breath as a shrill call to make ready the qualities of souls and names.

This is a highly important sentence. Here we see Bīdel explicitly aligning – through perfectly balanced syntactic parallelism – *ta'ammol* and *takhayyol*, attentive slow reflection and the work of imagination. Moreover, attentive slow reflection is a *workshop* (*kār-gāh*): a place where *craft* takes place; of course, crafts comprise skills which must be learned through practice.⁵⁷ The “workshop of attention and imagination” here is vibrantly synaesthetic: vision (colors, perpetually changing), hearing (the “call to readiness”), smell (the fragrant herb-garden) are all hyper-stimulated and intermixed (one “sees” a sound). Still perfectly collected (*jam'iyat*), Bīdel's descent proceeds, and his mind acquires new shapes of thought in each realm:

Āsār-e marāteb-e 'oqūl az pas-e zānū-ye ta'aqqol moshāhade kardam va asrār-e madārej-e nofūs dar savād-e manzar-e ṭabī'at be moṭāla'e dar-āvordam.

⁵⁷ On the significance of *ta'ammol*, especially with reference to the exposition of this practice in the long narrative poems, see Chapter 5.

آثار مراتب عقول از پس زانوی تعقل مشاهده کردم و اسرار مدارج نفوس در سواد منظر طبیعت به مطالعه در آوردم.

I **witnessed** the traces of intellects' stages⁵⁸ from behind intellection's **knees**;⁵⁹ I **studied** the mysteries of souls' degrees through the blackened rough draft⁶⁰ of nature's pageant.⁶¹

Following this is a difficult description of the habits of mind he acquires from each planetary sphere – beginning with Saturn and moving inward, towards earth – a trajectory that is the exact reverse of Muḥammad's visionary journey through the cosmos, the *mi'raj*, which begins on earth and moves up through each sphere until finally arriving at God's threshold.⁶² Bīdel's evolution

⁵⁸ These "stages" and "degrees" unfold gradually throughout the rest of the paragraph.

⁵⁹ "Behind the knees" of intellection: this phrase hints at two important concepts: first, it evokes the traditional posture of meditation, an upright fetal position where the knees are drawn up into the arms, and the forehead is placed upon the knees. Secondly, this introduction of "knees" foreshadows the crucial shared experience, the connection that is about to materialize between Bīdel and Muḥammad – with the prophet's kneecap becoming joined to Bīdel's forehead in what could be called their *joint meditation*. This image-cluster – meditation, knees, and the imaginative content that can be retrieved from the inner mental space "behind the knees" – is also taken up by Bīdel in his lyric poetry: for example, "Consolation's final destination is a journey behind the knees [lit. "from neck to knee"] / This interval – this league – from wave to pearl is not a number."

سرمنزل تسلی سیر وفای زانوست / فرسخ شماره‌ای نیست از موج تا به گهر

Ghazal N^o-1694, Line 4. Bīdel, *Kolleyāt*, I:788-789.

⁶⁰ Bīdel has been carefully stage-managing his own pivotal dream experience by seeding the vocabulary of manuscripts, rough drafts, book-binding, and interpretation from the very beginning of the autobiography. If the collapse of the macrocosm-microcosm distinction is one of the main features of visionary experience, then Bīdel is about to describe his with the vocabulary of "cosmic education:" in the following sentences, the entire cosmos becomes his own private schoolhouse, grammar school, higher education.

⁶¹ This pairing of witnessing/experiencing and careful study (*moshāhade* and *moṭāla'e*) reprises their first and equally significant appearance in T1.P3, the final prefatory section in which Bīdel's embodied life is first presented as a manuscript worth studying, and the world around him as a spectacle worth beholding.

⁶² While Bīdel's *first-personally narrated* cosmic journey may be unique, a suggestive comparison can be found in the way that early modern lettrist (*hurūfī*) doctrine rewrites the earlier philosophical concept of the transcendental modulation of being (*tashkīk al-wujūd*) as "letters of light" (*tashkīk al-ḥarf*), the fundamental elements of the cosmos, which are thought to descend from God into the world and into written form. On Ibn Turka's ideas about *tashkīk al-ḥarf* and his influence on early modern Islamic philosophers, see Matthew Melvin-Koushki, "Of Islamic Grammatology: Ibn Turka's Lettrist Metaphysics of Light." *Al-'Uṣūr al-Wuṣṭā* [*The Journal of Middle East Medievalists*] 24 (2016), 42-113.

of mind continues once he reaches earth: he learns from, and, in a sense, collects the kingdom-wide accumulated experiences, of minerals, plants, and animals (who inhabit illusion, *vahm*), before finally reaching humanity. Here, he passes through all the less qualified ranks of humankind until he reaches perfection – the Perfect Man, Muḥammad:

*Bel-qovve este 'dād-e demāgh rā shāyeste-ye nash'e-ye jāme 'īyat andīshīdam;
ḥaqīqat-e ensān be 'arż-e taḥqīq rasīd.*

بالقوه استعداد دماغ را شایسته نشئه جامعیت اندیشیدم حقیقت انسان به عرض تحقیق رسید.

[Finally,] I considered my mental capacities *in potentia*⁶³ to be worthy of receiving the intoxication of [saintly, prophetic, perfect] **composure** [*jāme 'īyat*].⁶⁴ I undertook to investigate true human reality [i.e., the “truth” of the Perfect Man].⁶⁵

⁶³ *Be l-qovve*, “*in potentia*,” an important term in philosophy – contrasted with *be l-fe'l*, “*in actu*.” In Avicenna, for instance, this term distinguishes, among other things, mental events (*khayāl / mouhūm*) from those in the world. On this, see Jon McGinnis, “Avicenna’s Natural Philosophy,” in *Interpreting Avicenna*, ed. Peter Adamson, 71-90 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 80 et passim. Here, the discussion of Avicenna’s use of “potentiality” is embedded within McGinnis’s analysis of Avicenna’s theory of mixture, where the four elements, once mixed (producing forms of matter on earth, e.g., blood, bone, etc.), only exist in the resulting mixture *in potentia*. On this topic, Avicenna (like Aristotle) dwells extensively on the idea of the “equilibrium” of elements in mixtures.

⁶⁴ This is the culmination of Bīdel’s visionary cosmos-assisted “education:” he evolves (or *thinks* he has evolved) far enough to be capable of becoming a perfect human – one who has not only composure (*jam 'īyat*), but someone – like Muḥammad, like God – who has *direct agency* over the creation of composure, in the bringing-together and collection of elements, qualities, knowledge, etc. (*jāme 'īyat*).

⁶⁵ This Sufī term of art – the Perfect Man as “true human reality,” *ḥaqīqat-e ensān* – has a specific history in early modern South Asia. See for example Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam in India*, 87-90 for a discussion of how the concept of *ḥaqīqat-e ensān* figured within Mughal South Asian discussions of the doctrine of the “unity of being” (*vaḥdat-e vojūd*), and especially Alam’s description of a sixteenth-century text, *Ḥaqā'eq-e hendī* by 'Abd al-Vāḥed Belgrāmī, which aligns Vaisnava Hindu concepts with Islamic ideas – including that of the “perfect man” (*ḥaqīqat-e ensān*). See also Francesca Orsini’s analysis of this text. Francesca Orsini, “‘Krishna is the Truth of Man:’ Mir 'Abdul Wahid Bilgrami’s *Ḥaqā'iq-i Hindī* (Indian Truths) and the circulation of dhrupad and bishnupad,” in *Culture and Circulation*, ed. Allison Busch and Thomas de Bruijn, 222-246 (Leiden, Brill: 2014).

At this point, Bīdel becomes filled with wonder at the idea of Muḥammad, the Perfect Man, an experience described as an overflow of the colors of imagination:

4 *rang-e khold az gard-e dāmān-e takhayyol rīkhtam
gar namī-zad ārezū sāghar be khūn kowsar nabūd*

رنگ خلد از گرد دامان تخیل ریختم
گر نمی‌زد آرزو ساغر به خون کوثر نبود

I laid the colorful foundation
of paradise, using dust
collected on my imagination's hem.
Had desire not consumed
a cup of blood,
there would be no fountain in paradise.

The result is a transcendental experience of *being everything*, where microcosm and macrocosm collapse into one:

9 *'ālam-ī būdam moḥīt-e taht o fouq o pīsh o pas
ghayr-e pā-yam zīr-e pā vo joz sar-am bar sar nabūd*

عالمی بودم محیط تحت و فوق و پیش و پس
غیر پایم زیر پا و جز سرم بر سر نبود

I was a world: like an ocean I comprised
above, below
before, behind:
Beneath my feet
were just my feet;
Above my head
was just my head.

At this moment of profoundly solitary, literally embodied awareness of the universe, which would appear at first to be the desired end of his meditative efforts, Bīdel realizes that while he has attained enlightened awareness (*āgāhī*), he has not yet attained absolute certainty (*yaqīn*), the truly final end of spiritual and philosophical inquiry. At this juncture, he sees the Prophet. This poem forms a tight segue into the next prose paragraph introducing Muḥammad (cf. *tamāshā* in the first line of the poem and in the first clause of the following prose paragraph). It is at this

moment that Bīdel’s visionary dream and his embodied historical reality begin to collide. In the midst of witnessing (*tamāshā*) the unfolding of the cosmos outside of time, he gradually becomes aware of being in his bed in Agra in 1670. But he is not alone: he intuits the presence of someone sitting at the head of his bed. This person is Muḥammad himself:

Dar ‘ayn-e tamāshā, shakḥṣ-ī dīdam chūn cherāgh bar bālīn-am neshaste, va tārak-e sar-am be āyīne-ye zānū-yesh naqsh-e etteṣāl baste. Fatīle-ye demāgh eqtebās-e nūr az garmī-ye ān zānū dāsht va naqqāsh-e feṭrat be lam ‘e-ye partov-esh romūz-e īn daqāyeq mī-negāshht. Chūn vā-rasīdam jowhar-e ījād-e ‘ālam o ādam būd, ya ‘nī rasūl-e khātam ṣallā allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam.

در عین تماشا شخصی دیدم چون چراغ بر بالینم نشسته و تارک سرم به آینه زانویش نقش اتصال بسته. فتیله دماغ اقتباس نور از گرمی آن زانو داشت و نقاش فطرت به لمعه پرتوش رموز این دقایق می‌نگاشت. چون وارسیدم جوهر ایجاد عالم و آدم بود یعنی رسول خاتم صلی الله علیه و سلم.

In the midst of this very spectacle,⁶⁶ I saw a person, sitting at the head of my bed like a shining lamp. The crown of my head was joined to his kneecap.⁶⁷ The wick of my mind borrowed light from the warmth of that knee. The painter of given nature painted the mysteries of these minute particulars using the brilliant ray of light coming from Him [as a paintbrush].⁶⁸ Then I arrived at an understanding that this [person] was the pearl of all existents – the very essence of the existence, of the world and of humanity – in other words, that this was the Prophet, the Seal [of Prophets and of Creation], *peace be upon Him*.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ There are multiple paronomastic effects in *‘ayn-e tamāshā*: “that very spectacle,” “the eye of the spectacle,” “the essence of the spectacle.” Emphasis is, as before, on the visual quality of this visionary experience.

⁶⁷ The word for “kneecap,” *āyīne-ye zānū*, is literally the “mirror of the knee.” And the word for “joined” is *etteṣāl*, related to *vaṣl*, the term in Sufism for ultimate spiritual union with God.

⁶⁸ Continuing the emphasis in the previous sentence on (1) visual imagination; (2) embodied experience; and (3) spiritual *connection*, physically realized.

⁶⁹ This paragraph begins and ends with “essence”: *‘ayn* (also “eye”) at the beginning, and “*jowhar*” (also “pearl”) at the end, as if to underscore the “joint” nature of the visionary experience: the essence of what Bīdel sees with his eyes *is* the essence of all creation. Bīdel and Muḥammad are thus physically and metaphysically connected and conjoined.

The importance of this specific point of contact – between Muḥammad’s *kneecap* and the crown of Bīdel’s head – is stressed in the next line of verse:

1 *ān-ke emkān tā vojūb o vāhedīyat tā aḥad*
 ṣūrat-e temsāl-ī az āyīne-ye zānū-ye ū-st

آنکه امکان تا وجوب و احدیت تا احد
صورت تمثالی از آئینه زانوی اوست

Everything there is –
from the possible to the necessary,⁷⁰
from Oneness to the One⁷¹ –
Is but a form
of a reflection
within the mirror of **His** kneecap.⁷²

Felicitously, the word for “kneecap” is *āyīne-ye zānū*, literally “the mirror of the knee,” and, as another line of verse makes clear, this physical connection allows Muḥammad to be in contact with, and to influence, Bīdel’s imagination:

4 *har che āyad az khayāl o ān-che bālad dar nazār*
 yek-qalam jūsh-e bahārestān-e rang-o-bū-ye ū-st

هر چه آید در خیال و آنچه بالاد در نظر

⁷⁰ This line also sets a pattern, repeated throughout the poem, of “spans”: from X, to Y – an exhaustive coverage of space, direction, conceptual range.

⁷¹ On *vāhedīyat* and *aḥadīyat*, see Chittick, “The Perfect Man as the Prototype of the Self.” For a discussion of *aḥad* being the transcendent undifferentiated unitary absolute (the One), and *vāhed* as the first thing that *aḥad* generates, see Samer Akkach, “Ibn ‘Arabī’s Cosmogony” (129).

⁷² *Emkān* (possibility) and *vojūb* (necessity) are Avicennan metaphysical modalities. (On this, see for example, Catarina Belo, *Chance and Determinism in Avicenna and Averroes* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 100-104. Since in Islamic emanationist cosmology, all of creation comes into existence because the first Intellect (*aql*) *thinks itself* – Bīdel’s choice of *āyīne-ye zānū* to express this is particularly apt, not only because of the pun on “kneecap” (*āyīne-ye zānū*, the “mirror of the knee”), but because this is the physical conjunction between Bīdel’s head (his mind, his imagination) and the Prophet’s body. Bīdel – that is, the world of Bīdel, the world that he comprises, the world he brings into being through imagination – comes into being self-reflexively (and self-reflectively!) through Muḥammad’s knee.

یک قلم جوش بهارستان رنگ و بوی اوست

All that comes
from the imagination,
and everything that grows
before your eyes –
It's all the sudden chaos
boiling over in springtime garden
of **His** fragrances and colors.

At this moment, Bīdel opens his eyes, and his limbs begin to stir: he starts to wake up more fully. However, Muḥammad is still there, his kneecap still pressed against Bīdel's head. Although overwhelmed by Muḥammad's presence, Bīdel still attempts to practice attentive slow reflection (*ta'ammol*) in order to process in real time what is happening to him:

*Be forṣat-shomārī-ye ta'ammol selsele-ye taḥayyor reshte bar sāz-e bī-khodī bast
va nash'e-ye tamayyoz be selk-e bī-sho'ūrī-ye moṭlaq peyvast.*

به فرصت‌شماری تأمل سلسله تحیر رشته بر ساز بی‌خودی بست و نشئه تمیز به سلک بی‌شعوری مطلق پیست.

Seizing the opportunity to practice **attentive slow reflection**, the causal chain of bewilderment [at my own state] fastened strings upon the instrument of selflessness, and the intoxication of being separated [from myself] let go of the thread of pure unconsciousness.⁷³

This state lasts for one hour (or, if not a precise hour, then some chronometric unit of worldly time), although his experience of that time will continue to fluctuate and redefine itself:

*Pas az sā'at-ī be emdād-e zamān-e efāqat sar az 'ālam-e dīgar be dar
āvordam va jahān-ī dīgar dar parde-ye mesāl moshāhede kardam.*

پس از ساعتی به امداد زمان افافت سر از عالم دیگر به در آوردم و جهانی دیگر در پرده مثال مشاهده کردم.

⁷³ The abundance of fifth-form verbal nouns (*tafa'ul*, denoting reflexive action, action upon oneself) further signals the return of first-personal agency: *ta'ammol*, *taḥayyor*, *tamayyoz*. It seems significant that attentive slow reflection – *ta'ammol* – is the main channel of the return of imaginative agency.

After an hour, by extending the time of my recovery,⁷⁴ I brought my head out from that other world, and I witnessed – I experienced – still another world behind the veil of forms.

By using his faculty of non-illusory *true* imagination (*takhayyol*, related to “*khayāl*”, not *tavahhom*, related to *vahm*, “illusion”), he is able to undertake a journey to God’s very threshold, under Muḥammad’s guidance. His approach to God’s court is described in meticulous decelerating detail. For instance, the attendants (saints and prophets) who stationed along the royal carpet are each described in turn. Bīdel comes to know that a certain majestic figure is ‘Alī through the process of *attentive slow reflection*:

Sorūsh-e asrār-e yaqīn gūsh-e ta’ammol-am be īn āhang goshūd va molham-e romūz-e taḥqīq āyīne-ye āgāhī-yam be īn şeyqal zodūd ke “Janāb-e velāyat-maāb, ‘Alī Mortazā ast, motamakken-e masnad-e besāṭ-e kebreyā.”

سروش اسرار یقین گوش تألم به این آهنگ گشود و ملهم رموز تحقیق آینه آگاهیم به این صیقل زدود که جناب ولایت مآب علی مرتضی است متمکن مسند بساط کبریا.

An angel⁷⁵ disclosing the secrets of **certainty** spoke into my ear as I practiced **attentive slow reflection**. He who is inspired by the mysteries encountered in the course of investigation into true reality polished the mirror of my **enlightened awareness** with these furbishing words, saying “This is His Majesty, the Possessor of Supreme Authority: ‘Alī. He resides upon the throne of this earth-colored carpet of greatness.”

⁷⁴ Two fascinating and important adverbial time-clauses: on the one hand, there is one clock hour; on the other hand, this objective hour is quickly qualified as a “dilation” or “extension” of time – maybe even of a single moment (*zamān*) of recovering his senses. Perhaps Bīdel gestures here towards the well-known definition of Sufism formulated by Junayd of Baghdād (and quoted by Dāra Shikoh in his *Majma‘ al-baḥrayn*): “Sufism means to sit for an **hour** [*sā‘at-ī*], unattended.” Prince Moḥammad Dārā Shikōh, *Majma‘ al-baḥrayn [The Mingling of the Two Oceans]*, ed. M. Mafuz-ul-Haq (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 1998 [1929]), 89-90. The quote occurs in Chapter 7, “An Exposition of the Four Worlds” [*Bayān-e ‘avālem-e arba‘e*]. This also points to an interesting possible reading of the previous passage in which the “watchman of courteous civility” keeps *attending* to Bīdel’s body so that he cannot move.

⁷⁵ The pre-Islamic Iranian Zoroastrian angel, Sorūsh, is correlated with the Islamic angel Gabriel, through whom the Qur’ān was disclosed to Muḥammad.

Just as Bīdel is about to draw closer to God's own presence, something keeps him back. It is as though his imagination has reached a hard limit:

Gardūn-vār kham-e hazār mo 'abbed-e taslīm be yek kāse-ye jabīn daryūze kardam tā sejde-ī az dūr be ān āstān-e jalāl-āsheyān be jā āvordam, ammā heybat-e hożūr-esh band band be godāz-e zahre aḡbāshte būd va larze dar banā-ye esteqāmat-am joz gard az-ham-forū-rīkhtan nagozāshte.

گردون وار خم هزار معبد تسلیم به یک کاسه جبین در یوزه کردم تا سجده‌ای از دور به آن آستان جلال آشیان به جا آوردم اما هیبت حضورش بند بند به گداز زهره انباشته بود و لرزه در بنای استقامتم جز گرد از هم فرو ریختن نگذاشته.

Like the crooked-spined horizon, I encased a thousand bent backs of submissive devotion within the single wine-cup of my creased forehead, which I turned into a pious begging-bowl. I did this, so that I could perform the prostration of worship from afar before that threshold which is the abode of [God's] glory. However, reverent fear of His presence had melted my courage, binding it with shackles and bonds; and timid trembling and tremors in the foundation of my upright integrity left me with nothing but the dust of scattered irresolution.

At this moment of irresolution, Bīdel hears Muḥammad's voice, which reassures him that, if he comes closer, God will erase all remaining illusion from his imagination:

*Nāgāh šalā-ye karam dar-e raḡmat-ī bar rū-yam goshūd va be zabān-e faşāḡat-e bayān-navāz-esh īn khaṡāb-am farmūd ke "Nazdīk-tar ā, tā be zeyārat-e īn janāb-e moqaddas, **ghobār-e tavahhom az āyīne-ye takhayyol** bar-dārī va be vasīle-ye īn taqarrob-e ettefāq-ī, dāman-e **jam 'īyat-e davām** az dast nagozārī."*

ناگاه صلاى كرم در رحمتى بر رويم گشود و به زبان فصاحت بيان نوازش اين خطايم فرمود كه نزديكتر آ تا به زيارت اين جناب مقدس غبار توهم از آيينه تخيل بر دارى و به وسيله اين تقرب اتفاقى دامن جمعيت دوام از دست مگذارى.

Suddenly, an invitation issued by divine generosity opened the doors of mercy before me, and spoke these words to me in eloquent language and soothing discourse: "Come closer, so that by undertaking pilgrimage to this, His holy place, you might remove all **dust of illusion** from **the mirror of your imagination**, and so that, through this blessed event of attaining proximity [to God], you might never let the hem of **eternal composure** fall from your hands."

The God-given perfection that Muḥammad offers here is explicitly described in the vocabulary of attention: through divinely assisted practices of imagination, Bīdel can acquire not just

composure – but *eternal composure*. Bīdel acquiesces. And for a while, he is “as content as a child at his father’s side” under Muḥammad’s direct guidance. But then, as the last remnants of the dream begin to fade, Bīdel begins to question reality:

Dar ḥālat-ī ke sarāpā-ye khod rā maḥv-e ān akhlāq moshāhade kardam va bar shobohāt-e owām-e doyī dar-e ghayrat bar-āvordam, zabān-e so`āl-e jor`at-āhang modda`ā gardīd va lab-e ḥayrat-navā āyīne-ye ezhār-e maṭlab be ṣayqal rasānīd ke emshab rasūl-e khodā rā ṣallā allāhu `alay-hi wa sallam be kh`āb dīde-am va farq-e neyāz be zānū-ye robūbīyat-e panāh-esh mālīde.

در حالتی که سراپای خود را محو آن اخلاق مشاهده کردم و بر شبهات اوهم دویی در غیرت بر آوردم زبان سؤال جرأت آهنگ مدعا گردید و لب حیرت‌نوا آئینه اظهار مطلب به صیقل رسانید که امشب رسول خدا را صلی الله علیه و سلم به خواب دیده‌ام و فرق نیاز به زانوی ربوبیت پناهنش مالیده.

In that state, wherein **I experienced myself** as being erased in that [divine] nature and closed the doors to all zealous doubts raised by illusions of duality, my tongue began to formulate a bold question, and my lips, brimming with sounds of wonder, fully polished the mirror of meanings, asking: “Have I seen the Lord’s Messenger – *peace be upon Him* – in my dream tonight? Have I rubbed the crown of my supplicant head against his Lordship’s generous knee?”

He then describes how his imagination struggles with the task of processing this experience as it attempts to seize on the correct interpretation (*ta`bīr*). At this moment, a voice interprets the dream for him:

*Zamzame-ye qānūn-e asrār taheye-ye sorūr-e jāvīd-am nemūd va farmūd:
“Ta`bīr-e kh`āb-at īn ast ke ḥaqīqat-e moḥammadeyye hame vaqt sāye-afkan-e aḥvāl-e to-st bā ān-ke ghaflat cheshm-at nagoshāyad. Bāten-e novobbat hīch-gāh dāman-e tarbīyat az sar-at bar namī-gīrad har chand ādāb-e zāher az to be jā namī-āyad.”*

زمزمه قانون اسرار تهیه سرور جاوید نمود و فرمود تعبیر خوابت این است که **حقیقت محمدیه** همه وقت سایه‌افکن احوال توست با آنکه غفلت چشمت نگشاید. باطن نبوت هیچ‌گاه دامن تربیت از سرت بر نمی‌گیرد هر چند آداب ظاهر از تظ به جا نمی‌آید.

A gentle murmur from the instrument of divine mysteries prepared to impart infinite joy unto me, saying: “This is the interpretation of your dream: **Muḥammadan Reality** casts its shadow upon all your states at every moment of time, even though ignorance keeps your eyes from being opened to it. The inner content of prophethood has never removed the hem of instruction [grasped by

you in supplication], however much your outward courteous civilities have fallen short.”⁷⁶

No sooner are these words uttered than Bīdel forgets their meaning. As he completes his return into waking reality, “the bound manuscript of my senses was torn – undone by the movement of my eyelashes.” The vocabulary of the manuscript – *noskhe*, with which Bīdel began this dream narrative – is used again to describe the failure of his brief enlightenment to endure:

*Savād-e āgāhī ke mowqūf-e zamān-e kh’āb būd varaq-e rowshanī bar-gardānd⁷⁷
va ma ‘nī-ye ta ‘bīr-ī ke dars-e sa ‘ādat-e yek ‘ālam-e bīdārī dāsht moẓmar-e
noskhe-ye khayāl mānd.*

سواد آگاهی که موقوف زمان خواب بود ورق روشنی بر گرداند و معنی تعبیری که درس سعادت یک
عالم بیداری داشت مضمّر نسخه خیال ماند.

The blackened rough draft of my enlightened awareness, which had been consigned to stillness **during the time of the dream**, now turns the page of illumination over – and **the meaning of the dream interpretation**, which contained the lesson of a whole blessed world of enlightenment, **remained hidden in the manuscript of the imaginary**.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Although grammatically impersonal, this direct speech is likely the voice of Muḥammad himself. The technical Sufi concept of *ḥaqīqa muḥammadiyya*, “Muḥammad’s true reality” or “the Muḥammadan reality,” is the idea that the absolute Oneness of God and the unity of being (i.e., that all creation *is God*) is best expressed through the all-encompassing, omniscient, time-transcending figure of the Perfect Man – that is, Muḥammad. On this term and its significance in Ibn ‘Arabī, and especially on its interconnections with *naḥās-e raḥmānī* and the imaginal realm, see Michel Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean Without Shore: Ibn Arabi, the Book, and the Law*, 43-45 and 98.

⁷⁷ Bīdel may have intentionally selected verbs here – *gardāndan* and *māndan* – which are impossible to interpret with certainty (beyond what can be supplied by context) as either present-tense or past-tense in the third-person singular form. I have rendered them in the present tense, to emphasize their life-long present-ness: “the meaning of this dream interpretation *still remains hidden* in the manuscript of my imagination.”

⁷⁸ There seems to be an important contradiction here: hasn’t he just reported the the dream interpretation verbatim? Stressing the word *ma ‘nī*, “inner meaning,” might get us out of this interpretive tangle: while the “outward form” – the words – of the interpretation have stayed with Bīdel and are transcribed here in his account, yet their *inner meaning* is what eludes him now.

It seems significant that at this point in the text, Bīdel transitions once more to lyric poetry in order to lament his situation in the present tense (“*namī-dānam*”, “I do not know”). This shift to the present firmly encases the just-recounted dream in the past, and encloses that lost interpretation of true reality in the scattered text of his own imagination:

1 *namī-dānam che kh^vāndam z-īn dabestān-e khayāl-enshā*
 ke tā mozhgān goshūdam shostam ān ourāq-e ajzā rā

نمی‌دانم چه خواندم زین دبستان خیال انشا
 که تا مژگان گشودم شستم آن اوراق اجزا را

I know not what I’ve read
 in this grammar school
 of composing by imagination.
 As I opened my eyes,
 I washed clean
 all the scattered pages.

Gaining more distance from the immediate pain of this event, Bīdel is able to offer an idea – a theory, even – for how this visionary experience has come about:

10 *nabūdam qabel-e ān jelve ammā faẓl-e yektāyī*
 be īn rang āb dād āyīne-ye owhām-farsā rā

نبودم قابل آن جلوه اما فضل یکتایی
 به این رنگ آب داد آئینه اوهام فرسا را

I was not worthy
 of this splendor; but nonetheless –
 the grace of God’s Oneness
 Gave me this color-tinted
 lustrous mirror as an instrument
 with which I might erode illusions.

In other words, the colors of imagination (*khayāl*) are theorized as being the creative point of contact and collaboration between himself and God (through Muḥammad), and it is within this *middle realm of imagination* – the lyric interim of that which is imaginary, *khayāl* – that his mind became freed from *false* imagined things (*owhām*), for a moment.

This entire narrative of visionary experience is, in a sense, a philosophical idea. It recapitulates the way the universe came into being; makes claims about the structure of time and space; takes a turn into epistemology; and meditates intensely on the specific role of imagination. Perhaps the centrality of imagination in this exposition accounts for why Bīdel interweaves art, life, and ideas: if imagination is at once the object *and the site* of systematic inquiry, perhaps philosophy for Bīdel *has* to be first-personal. This would also explain why Bīdel’s lyric poetry and his autobiography share so many of the same ideas, rhetorical strategies, and even vocabulary: in these genres, he is able to engage directly in his lifelong project of recovering certain truth by pursuing philosophy in the first person – through what we might call a lifelong lyric practice of the self. This practice make it possible for Bīdel to *inhabit ideas*: like the time-extending wine of Ḥāfez, Bīdel’s colors of that which is imaginary make it possible to extend, dilate, and otherwise manipulate one’s own experience of time.

Chapter 6 will return to this dream narrative, identifying here an important metaliterary reflection on Bīdel’s lyric practice that finds echoes in his lyric poetry too. The claim is that in this dream narrative, Bīdel discloses how he views his life as being shaped by an endeavor – a repeated attempt to recapture that lost moment of certain knowledge of true reality by trying to recover it from the manuscript of his own imagination, through lyric. Before turning to this in greater detail, Chapter 4 will continue to examine Bīdel’s preoccupation with attempting to manipulate time in his lyric poetry by isolating his approach to the smallest possible temporal unit: the moment. Chapter 5 will then place Bīdel in an experimental conversation with a new interlocutor – Avicenna – in order to get clear on the ways in which Bīdel, creatively extending the existing philosophical tradition, develops his own theory of that which is imaginary (*khayāl*).

Part II | Bīdel's Lyric Style of Steadfast Imagining

Chapter 4

Meditations on the Moment: Bīdel and Imagination's Pyrrhic Leap

به وی این دایره مکمل شد
آخرین نقطه عین اول شد

Through Him,
the Perfect Man,
the perfect circle closed.
The final point
became
the essence of the first.

– ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (d.1492), *The Golden Chain*¹

I am the reality of the world, the center of the circumference.

– Ibn ‘Arabī (d.1240), *The Book of Self-Disclosures*²

آخر نگاه کن که چه آغاز کرده‌ای

In the end, look –
what a beginning you have made!

– Bīdel, *The Four Elements: An Autobiography*³

¹ “Be vey [*ensān-e kāmel*] *īn dāyere mokammal shod / ākharīn noqte ‘ayn-e avval shod.*” Jāmī, *Silsilat al-dhahab*. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, *Masnavī-ye Haft Awrang*, ed. Mortazā Modarres Gīlānī (Tehran: Ketābforūshī-ye Sa‘dī, 1337SH [1958/1959CE], 70-71. See also William C. Chittick, “The Perfect Man as the Prototype of the Self in the Sufism of Jāmī,” *Studia Islamica* 49 (1979), 138.

² Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī, *Kitāb al-tajalliyāt* [*The Book of Self-Disclosures*]. Translated by Henry Corbin. Cited in Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sūfism of Ibn ‘Arabī*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969), 174.

³ See T1.E1.3.

This chapter extends the discussion of Bīdel’s approach to handling time by attending to the unit of time-experience that forms a centerpiece of Bīdel’s lyric style of steadfast imagining: the moment. By placing Bīdel’s concept of that which is imaginary (*khayāl*) in conversation with Ibn ‘Arabī’s idea of *al-barzakh*, the intermediate realm of the imagination between the human world and God’s true reality, important similarities and divergences (in tenor more than content) between Bīdel’s and Ibn ‘Arabī’s systems of thought emerge, which are revealed upon close comparative examination of the textured intertwining of imagination and the single experienced moment of time within the larger context of each thinker’s specific practices of attention and meditation. This chapter reads a poem by Bīdel in which he meticulously documents the fleetingly near-transcendent experience – and the ultimate failure – of attempting to “capture the moment” by training the imagination through lyric poetry.

4.1 Bīdel and Ibn ‘Arabī: The World of the Imagination in Islamic Thought

In the Islamic thought of that “greatest master” (*al-shaykh al-akbar*) of Andalusia, the Arabic philosopher and poet Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī (d.1240), time and imagination are intimately conjoined. An unusually straightforward exposition of his thought can be found in his manual on retreat, a treatise titled *Risālat al-anwār* [*Treatise of Lights*]. One of the first admonitions dispensed here to the novitiate is that they should under no circumstances attempt to enter retreat until they “know [their] strength with respect to the

power of imagination.”⁴ Once a satisfactory assessment of imaginative capacity has been established, the first activity in retreat is to undertake various devotional acts that combine language and visual imagination through attention – namely, through *dhikr* practices (attentive repetition of certain words or phrases),⁵ which allow the novice to “move from the sensory to the imaginal level.” This “move” in its fullest extent has been carried out in complete perfection only by prophets, figures who are distinguished by extraordinary imagination.⁶

The Sufi path (*ṭarīqa*, lit. “way”) is often transposed in figurative description as an arduous desert journey, along which there are several stations (*manāzil*). This progressive linear journey cannot be completed by all; but for those who do, the “end” is union with God (*fanā*’, annihilation of the self in God). In Ibn ‘Arabī’s particular redescription of the Sufi path, this straight road to gnostic experience is bent into a loop: once the journey reaches its “end,” it circles back to the beginning by retracing all the initial steps: “You return to your path and examine all that you saw in different forms

⁴ Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī, *Journey to the Lord of Power: A Sufi Manual on Retreat, with Notes from a Commentary by ‘Abd al-Karīm Jīlī*, trans. Rabia Terri Harris (New York: Inner Traditions International, 1981), 30.

⁵ On the role of the body in *dhikr* practices, see Shahzad Bashir, *Sufi Bodies: Religion and Society in Medieval Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013, 2011), 80-85 (on solitary retreat), and 68-70 on the role of breath control in the silent *dhikr* of Naqshbandī Sufi practices during the period between Ibn ‘Arabī and Bīdel (ca. 1300-1500). For similar spiritual trajectories, see also Abū l-Majd Majdūd b. Ādam Sanā’ī Ghaznavī, *Sayr al-‘ibād min al-mabda’ ilā l-ma’ād* [*The Journey of the Faithful from the Place of Origin to the Place of Return*], ed. Sa’īd Nafīsī (Tehrān: Āftāb, 1316SH [1937/1938CE]), and Austin O’Malley’s discussion of saintly ascent in ‘Attār’s *Moṣibat-nāme*. Austin O’Malley, *Poetry and Pedagogy: The Homiletic Verse of Farīd al-Dīn ‘Attār* (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2017), 260-294.

⁶ Ibn ‘Arabī, *Journey to the Lord of Power*, 35-36. See Chapter 5 for a discussion of Al-Fārābī and Avicenna on prophetic imagination.

until you return to the world of your limited earthly senses.”⁷ In a striking phenomenological description of this journey, Ibn ‘Arabī says that the successful seeker “will say unceasingly with every breath, ‘My Lord, increase me in knowledge while the heavenly sphere turns by Your Breath.’”⁸ This seeker must then strive to make their “Moment *be* His breath.” Ibn ‘Arabī then goes on to say that “The Moment lengthens and shortens with the presence of one who partakes in it.”⁹

This is as directly intelligible a statement as one can hope for from an author as elliptically prolific as Ibn ‘Arabī on how precisely imagination and time are conceptually and practically cross-implicated. The aim of the Sufi path is an ideally infinite dilation of the experience of a single moment of time, to the point that the seeker’s perspective sheds all traces of human time-constraint until they are able to behold the universe from God’s own atemporal viewpoint. This potentially infinite “circular” moment of time-out-of-time maps onto the infinite single “breath” of God, the breath that is the causal underpinning of the turning of the spheres and therefore of everything sublunary. The there-and-back-again circularity of the Sufi path in Ibn ‘Arabī’s description seems to be a geometrical echo of his preoccupation with attaining an experience of time which is circular, infinite, and symmetrical. This manual is interspersed with ornate calligraphic depictions that quite literally illustrate this idea: for instance, “God is One whose existence is endless” is rendered with perfect mirror-symmetry along a vertical axis.¹⁰

⁷ Ibn ‘Arabī, *Journey to the Lord of Power*, 48.

⁸ Ibid, 60. For Bīdel’s own views of the Sufi term “God’s Breath [of the Merciful],” see T4.N2.

⁹ Ibn ‘Arabī, *Journey to the Lord of Power*, 48.

¹⁰ Ibid, 65-66.

Throughout his vast corpus, Ibn ‘Arabī presents a carefully elaborated theory of imagination in which that which is imaginary constitutes a very real (i.e., not hypothetical or heuristic) middle realm, an isthmus of sorts – called *al-barzakh*, the etymological significance of which term is discussed below. This realm is located between “that whose existence is necessary” (*vojūb*) and “that which is not yet manifest” (*ghayb*).¹¹ In his poetry too, Ibn ‘Arabī dwells on the idea that human beings, in their unenlightened state, are necessarily entangled in the lowest world of sensory perception; if they attempt to enter into the higher intermediate imaginal realm, they become quickly overwhelmed there by an onrush of images and forms they cannot control.¹² Ibn ‘Arabī’s Sufi path, then, can be described as a circular journey through the realm of imagination, along

¹¹ For a discussion of these technical terms of art in Ibn ‘Arabī’s philosophy, see William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-‘Arabi’s Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), 130. For a thorough study of the importance of the *barzakh* in Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought, see Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabī*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton, N.J.; Princeton University Press, 1969). On the long history of imagination, the realm of the imaginary, and Arabic poetics and philosophy, see Geert Jan Van Gelder and Marlé Hammond, eds., *Takhyīl: The Imaginary in Classical Arabic Poetics* (E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust: 2009), especially 124-125 for a discussion of Ibn Khaldūn’s definition of *khayāl* as a “mold or loom” for images. For an example of how Ibn ‘Arabī’s cosmological concerns with the realms of sensory and imaginal experience find echoes in theories of rhetoric, see for instance Joseph Héliodore Sagesse Vertu Garcin de Tassy, *Rhétorique et Prosodie de l’Orient Musulman* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Cie, 1873), 13-15. Here, he summarizes Arabic theoreticians’ views on the nature of comparison: there may be many varieties of comparison, but ultimately, they all fall within one of two categories: *ḥessī* (*sensible*) or *‘aqlī* (*intellectuelle*). This may be one source (in a distant sense) for Bīdel’s insistent distinction between *vahm* (illusion rooted in unexamined deliverances of sensory perception) and *khayāl* (imaginal content over which one may gain a certain degree of control through close examination and training).

¹² For example, Line 4 in Ode 11 of his *Tarjumān al-ashwāq*: “*Tanāwahaṭi al-arwāḥu fī ghayzati l-ghazā / fa-mālat bi-afnānin ‘alay-ya bi-afnāni*” (“The spirits faced one another in the thicket of *ghadā* trees and bent their branches towards me, and it (the bending) annihilated me”, trans. Nicholson). Ibn ‘Arabī, *Tarjumān al-ashwāq [Translator of Desires]*, ed. and trans. Reynold A. Nicholson (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1911), 19, 66.

which successful completion of practices of attention through language and visualization (*dhikr*) allows one to gain a stronger foothold in the world of the imagination – and the more one can control imagination, the greater the control one is capable of extending over one’s experience of time. His word for “moment” is an especially apt expression of this process: *al-ḥāl* means “moment,” “now,” and also “present *state*.” The measurement and the experience of time are, literally, one and the same thing.¹³

Certain assumptions, practices, and shapes of thought that inform Bīdel’s lyric style of steadfast imagining closely echo the ideas of Ibn ‘Arabī that have been briefly sketched out above. Indeed, most modern scholarly studies of Bīdel point to Ibn ‘Arabī as his main source of influence – however diffused that process of influence may be.¹⁴ He too is concerned with tracing a systematic, phenomenologically inflected path to certain knowledge of God’s true reality – through the medium of imagination, and with the aim of capturing the present moment. Instead of assuming a perfect correspondence between

¹³ For an interesting use of *barzakh* with application to a personal journey of philosophical exploration before Ibn ‘Arabī, see Nāṣer-e Khosrow (d.ca.1072-1078), *Zād al-mosāferīn* [*Travellers’ Provisions*], which opens with reference to *barzakh* and the human lifetime as a journey towards self-knowledge in present moments: “*Bar kheradmandān vājeb ast ke ḥāl-e kh’īsh bāz jūyand ke tā az kojā hamī-āyand va be-kojā hamī-shavand va andīshe konand tā bebīnand be-cheshm-e baṣīrat mar kh’īsh tan rā dar safar-ī ravande ke...tā mardom andar īn ‘ālam ast az do ḥarakat-e afzāyesh o kāhesh khālī nīst va ḥarakat nabāshad magar andar zamān...va meyān-e īn har do qesmat-e zamān..barzakh ast ke ān qesmat-pazīr nīst bar meṣāl-e khaṭṭ-ī ke dar meyan-e āftāb o sāye bāshad...va mar ān barzakh rā ke meyān-e īn do qesmat-e zamānī ast be-tāzī “al-ān” gūyand va be-pārsī “aknūn” gūyand-ash*” (“Wise people must discover their own present state [*ḥāl*]: they must understand where they come from and where they are going; they must behold themselves with spiritual sight, travelling... While human beings are in this world, there always two kinds of movement: increase and decrease; and movement only happens through time. Between these two kinds of time there is an **isthmus** [*barzakh*], which cannot be subdivided – like the line between sun and shade... And this isthmus between these two divisions of time is called “now” in Arabic [*al-ān*] and “now” in Persian [*aknūn*].” Nāser-e Khosrow, *Ketāb-e zād al-mosāferīn* (Berlin: Kaviani, 1341SH [1923CE]), 2-3.

¹⁴ For a discussion of this process, see Chapter 6.

the thought of Ibn ‘Arabī and Bīdel and leaving it at that, as it were, this chapter examines and compares these two philosophers’ approaches to the world of the imagination by attending closely to Bīdel’s use of terms for that which is imaginary. As Chapters 1, 2, and 3 have shown, *khayāl* – that which is imaginary – is a highly important lyric term of art the early modern Persianate world, particularly in India. Throughout his works and across genres, this is Bīdel’s preferred term for describing imagination – specifically, the kind of imagination over which one may gain incremental control. Other terms for imagination used by Bīdel which are drawn from the Arabic philosophical lexicon carry other idiosyncratic connotations: for instance, *vahm* (Ar. *wahm*) in Bīdel’s works is best translated not as “imagination” or “estimation,” but as “illusion,” with all the negative associations that this term implies.

If Bīdel is such a close adherent to the teachings of Ibn ‘Arabī, why is it the case that he makes *almost* no use of this philosopher’s primary term for the world of the imagination, *barzakh*? This word occurs only once among Bīdel’s ghazals, and is therefore a lyric hapax legomenon.¹⁵ The mere fact that there *is* such an anomalous lexical event in Bīdel’s otherwise lavishly repetitive lyric corpus of nearly three thousand ghazals seems significant. By presenting a close reading of the lyric poem in which *barzakh* makes its sole appearance, the present chapter attempts to make some sense of this singular word and the significance of its singular occurrence. As the reading of the

¹⁵ “*Barzakh*” occurs very infrequently, perhaps only once, in Bīdel’s long narrative poems. I am grateful to Prashant Keshavmurthy for pointing out an occurrence of *barzakh* in Bīdel’s long narrative poem ‘*Erfān* [*Gnosis*], where the *barzakh* is used to describe Divine Unity between the Unseen (*ghayb*) and Necessity [of coming into existence, *vojūb*]: “*Shod konūn barzakh-ash maṭlūb / hamcho vahdat meyan-e ghayb o vojūb*”). ‘Abd al-Qāder Bīdel Dehlavī, *Kolleyāt-e Abū l-Ma‘ānī Mīrzā ‘Abd al-Qāder Bīdel Dehlavī*, ed. Khalīlollāh Khalīlī (Tehran: Enteshārat-e Ṭalāye, 1389SH [2010/2011CE], III:46.

poem shows, Bīdel’s use of *barzakh* in only one poem may be read as evidence that, while Bīdel shows himself to be familiar with Ibn ‘Arabī’s term for that which is imaginary, he prefers to use his own terms, on his own terms.

Before turning to the poem, a few words about time. The concept of time has riddled countless philosophers, theologians, mystics, and poets across traditions. Some philosophers console themselves with pithy formulations, as Boëthius¹⁶ does in his easy, perhaps too-easy, definition: “The now that passes produces time; the now that remains – produces eternity.” Contemplation of this “now that passes”, that is, the phenomenologically transient nature of the moment, often leads by analogy to insights about the brevity of one’s own span of life. Nabokov has starkly captured this intuition in the opening sentences of *Speak, Memory*: “The cradle rocks above the abyss, and common sense tells us that our existence is but a brief crack of light between two eternities of darkness.” How correctly to define these two darknesses is the task of philosophers and theologians; but the meaning of that brief crack of light, as Nabokov

¹⁶ “*Nunc fluens facit tempus; nunc stans facit aeternitatum*”. This quotation appears to be widely misattributed to Boëthius’s *Consolation of Philosophy*: an inspection of the Latin text reveals no such phrase. It may be the case that Thomas Aquinas’s attribution of this exact wording to Boëthius’s *De Trinitate* caught on, and became inextricably associated with Boëthius’s more commonly known *Consolation*. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: Volume 2, Existence and Nature of God* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), II:138. However, no such exact Latin phrasing appears in Boëthius’s *De Trinitate* either, though he does make similar statements, albeit with rather more prolixity: “But the expression ‘God is ever’ denotes a single Present, summing up His continual presence in all the past, in all the present – however that term be used – and in all the future. Philosophers say that ‘ever’ may be applied to the life of the heavens and other immortal bodies. But as applied to God it has a different meaning. He is ever, because ‘ever’ is with Him a term of present time, and there is this great difference between ‘now,’ which is our present, and the divine present. Our present connotes changing time and sempiternity; God’s present, abiding, unmoved, and immovable connotes eternity. Add *semper* and *eternity* and you get the constant, incessant, and thereby perpetual course of our present time, that is to say, sempiternity.” Aquinas’s paraphrase is, no doubt, easier on the memory. Boëthius, *The Theological Tractates*, trans. H.F. Stewart and E.K. Rand (London: W. Heinemann, 1946, 1918), 21-23.

would argue, falls within the poet’s purview.¹⁷ The aim of this chapter is to begin examining a centrally important feature of Bīdel’s style of steadfast imagining by attending to his lyric approach to the fleeting moment.

Many ghazals in Bīdel’s lyric corpus seem to be threaded through with unifying motifs, a kind of hidden scaffolding cleverly woven in and embellished with secondary themes. While hundreds of Bīdel’s poems on various topics contain imagery that alludes to the moment, in this particular ghazal, the moment itself is the central axis, and all other images align themselves along one conceptual concern: the interconnections of time, attention, imagination – and failure.

4.2 Hapax Legomenon: Bīdel’s *Barzakh* Poem

Since the analysis of this poem dwells extensively on the specific sequential structure of the lines, what follows here is a line-by-line account of this relatively short seven-line poem. The meter is *kāmel-e moṣamman-e sālem*, the rhyme is *-an*, and the refrain is *-at* (you; for/to/of you).¹⁸ Line 1:

nasezad be vaṣ‘-e fesordegī ze bahār-e del mozhe bastan-at
*ke godākht jowhar-e rang o bū be feshār-e ghonche neshastan-at*¹⁹

نسزد به وضع فسردگی ز بهار دل مژه بستنت
 که گداخت جوهر رنگ و بو به فشار غنچه نشستنت

To bar your eyelashes against despair

¹⁷ For a fascinating parallel example in early modern English lyric of a poet reworking ideas inherited from a classical tradition of systematic thought on time and the moment of “now,” see Timothy M. Harrison, “John Donne, the Instant of Change, and the Time of the Body,” *ELH* 85.4 (2018), 909-939.

¹⁸ Elwell-Sutton N^o.5.3.5(4): *Motafā‘elon motafā‘elon motafā‘elon motafā‘elon*. ~ ~ - ~ - | ~ ~ - ~ - | ~ ~ - ~ - | ~ ~ - ~ - (→).

¹⁹ Ghazal N^o.824. Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, I:382.

From the vernal desires of the heart does not suit you;
The essence of color and fragrance has thawed,
Wrung out by your unsprung, unblossomed pose.

As a prelude to the close inspection of this ghazal, it is necessary to mention what will gradually unfold as the poem's underlying structure – not a collection of external formal features, but its unique internal form, which only begins to come into view after reading and re-reading. This internal structure will reveal itself as a symmetrical three-part movement from closure, to opening, and back to closure again. At the very centre of this shape – in the poem's middle line – is the hapax legomenon *barzakh*. One of the aims of this analysis is to show how conscious, even hyper-conscious, the poem is of its own form, scale, and limits – the very opposite of a sequence of “pearls at random strung.”²⁰

The ghazal begins with an image, presented through a web of syntactic convolution, of melancholy and private stillness, all of which evoke a sense of tense inaction: “*vaz*” (“position, placement, situation”), “*fesordegī*” (“dejection, coldness; wiltedness”), “*feshār*” (“pressure”), “*mozheh bastan*” (“to close the eyelashes”), “*ghonche neshastan*” (“to lie in the fetal position;” “to sit, unblossomed, like a flower bud”). The person described is curled up in the fetal position, assumed due to some form of distress, or concentration, or intensity.²¹ “*Bahār-e del*” (“springtime of the heart”), however, forms a counterpoint to this opening image, complicating the initial impression of unrelieved despair. Combined with “*godākht*” (“melted”) and “*ghonche*” (“rosebud”),

²⁰ For an overview of this problematic view of unity in the Persian lyric, see Chapter 1. On the hypothesis that many of Bīdel's ghazals adhere to a circular structure, see Chapter 6.

²¹ Cf. *Loghatnāme-ye Dehkhodā*, entry “*ghonche neshastan*”. Available online at <https://www.parsi.wiki/fa/wiki/topicdetail/580edab82a3d490b82fea3cfaf0cd51d> (last accessed 31 July 2019).

it adds a layer of complete contradiction: in warmth and expanse it forms a foil for “*fesordegī*”, which implies both coldness and dejection, and opens up the possibility that “*ghonche neshastan*” is not an indefinite resting place, but rather the beginning of something new and fresh, full of color and fragrance and life. This springtime, however, does not appear to be external: everything about the couplet, especially “*mozhe bastan*” and the tightly coiled rosebud pose, suggests that it is something of an imaginary nature which will blossom. “*Godākht gowhar-e rang o bū*” hints at the beginnings of some kind of synaesthetic alchemy, portending sea-changes that lie ahead. Line 2:

*makesh ay ḥobāb-e baqā-havas alam-e setamgarī-ye nafas
che-qadar gereh be del afkanad kham-o-pīch-e reshte gosastan-at*

مکش ای حباب بقاھوس الم ستمگری نفس
چقدر گرہ بہ دل افکند خم و پیچ رشتہ گسستنت

Bubble, bent on persistence: do not draw out
Grief over the cruelty of breath.
The purl and twist of your trail of lace, tearing:
How many knots it knits into the heart.

This line contains one of the most iconic lyric images associated with Bīdel: the bubble (*ḥobāb*). The bubble in this couplet comes with a very unusual compound in tow: “*baqā-havas*” (“desiring persistence”), which, of course, it cannot have, no matter how strenuously it tries to hold on to its one allotted breath. Just as in the first line there was an unlikely pairing of opposites (“*bahār*” and “*fesordegī*”), here too the reader is faced with the confound of “*gereh*” (“knots”) and “*reshte gosastan*” (“tearing of thread/connection”). What exactly is this thread that is torn by the the bubble’s ephemeral existence? It is tempting to read it as time’s own thread, which, in the case of the bubble, snaps all too quickly. What is left, however, is the observer’s concern, even distress, at

this short-lived state of affairs, and these knots that are knit into the observer's heart are at least some proof that the bubble's demise has not gone unmarked. These knots, ironically, live on in the observer's heart far longer than the bubble with its torn timeline was given to live.

The *ḥobāb*, then, here and also in other ghazals, appears to be a confined space, perceived by Bīdel's lyric vision as reverberating with universal impermanence. As such, it is the perfect metaphor for the moment. Line 3:

be takallof-e qadaḥ-e havas sar o barg-e ḥowsele bākhī
narasīde nash'e-ye hemmat-ī ze tarang-e zowq-e shekasta-at

به تکلف قدح هوس سر و برگ حوسله باختی
نرسیده نشنه همتی ز ترنگ ذوق شکستنت

You gambled away the last token of your patience
On the formalities of the cup of desire;
The clang and quiver of your broken enthusiasm
Dampened your intoxicated striving.

The poem here shifts to a different vintage of images, one that is deeply soaked in poetic precedent: drinking and intoxication. Once more we see the contrast of opposites: “*takallof-e qadaḥ-e havas*”, the formalities of desire's drinking cup, and “*nash'e*” and “*zowq*”, true intoxication and enthusiasm. What binds this couplet to its predecessor is the evocation of a sense of loss and waste – there, in the bubble's unfulfillable wish to perdure, and here, in the futile outpouring (or rather, intake) of wine without attaining the desired result.

The word “*tarang*” requires a gloss: I have translated the one word with two, “clang and quiver”, to reflect the fact that it spans across two different, though related, semantic registers: it can mean the clang of a sword or a mace as it bears down and strikes its mark, and it also denotes the quivering sound made by a bow upon the release

of its arrow.²² These two registers share several qualities: both actions conjure a temporary, even momentary, sound wave, which dies out shortly after it begins; and in both, there is a background valence of violence and imminent end. In the case of the quivering bowstring, the duration of its sound is subject to an interesting double measure: one is the tensile capacity of the string itself, and the other is the distance travelled by the arrow before it too comes to a standstill.

There is a third semantic register of the noun “*tarang*,” which is not martial, but musical: it is the sound of the striking of an instrument’s string. But since that very image recurs more elaborately in the fifth couplet, I will not expand upon it here, except to mark the connection. The Indic etymology of “*tarang*”, which in Sanskrit means “wave”, is yet another image of time-bound finitude. So the overwhelming impression left by this couplet, colored as it is by the potent valences of “*tarang*”, is of the sound of intention falling short of achievement. Coming on the heels of the previous couplet, it seems like a variation on the theme of span, which was introduced by the *hobāb* with its span foreshortened and tragically foreseen as such. Even the verb in the second hemistich, “*na-rasīde*” (“un-arrived”), falls grammatically short of definite action, and hangs there as a participle at the beginning of the line, forever in partial completion. This image of an inconclusive, failed state of in-between spills over into the next couplet, which is the ghazal’s dramatic conceptual culmination. Line 4:

*che namūd forṣat-e bīsh-o-kam ke ramīdī az chaman-e ‘adam
naneshast rang-e ta ‘ammolī cho sharār-e barzakh-e jastan-at*

چه نمود فرصت بیش و کم که رمیدی از چمن عدم
ننشست رنگ تأملی چو شرار برزخ جستنت

²² *Loghatnāme-ye Dehkhodā*, “*Tarang*”. Available online at <https://www.parsi.wiki/fa/wiki/topicdetail/60241253c5ac4e0f8ebc886cf38bbb50> (last accessed on 31 July 2019).

What did the split second of less-and-more divulge
That you bolted in horror from the garden of nonexistence?
Your reflections did not acquire definite color,
Like sparks from the imagined interval of your leap.

This couplet is as startling as it is difficult. Before turning to the hapax legomenon “*barzakh*”, several other striking features require attention. As we have seen, each of the first three couplets is fueled in one way or another by the tension between two opposites (frigid dejection and blooming spring, knots and sundered string, formality and true enthusiasm, intention and achievement). After such a profusion of opposites, the reader is well-attuned to look for the same in this couplet; and what we find is that this micro-topos of opposites has been whittled down to an absolute, stark minimum: for what could be more basic an example of opposites than “*bīsh o kam*”, “less and more” – or, for that matter, existence and non-existence? In the latter case, it is noteworthy that Bīdel mentions non-existence by name, “*adam*”, but only implies its counterpart: the poem’s addressee is depicted as rushing out of a paradoxically blooming garden of non-being, presumably into the realm of being – rather the opposite of what one would expect.

The word “*forsat*” (“occasion; opportunity; respite; a time”) is also worth pausing over. Occurring in roughly one out of five ghazals, it is one of the most frequently used terms in Bīdel’s complex vocabulary of time. There are, of course, many such vocabularies: for one, there are physical marks of time: the minute, the hour, the year, etc. – in other words, terms of mechanical and so-called objective time-keeping. But there is another kind of vocabulary, which is the kind more relevant to Bīdel’s poetics: the phenomenological impression of time, made on a much smaller, individual scale. Examples of such terms would include “*omr*” (“age”), “*nashv o namā*” (“growth”),

“*ajal*” (“the appointed hour of death”), to name just a few found abundantly in Bīdel’s ghazals. These terms of time are all individually spanned, and what they share is not an impersonal chronometric function, but the capacity to vary from person to person. Bīdel is fond of other relative markers, such as “*māzī o mostaqbel*”, “past and future”, which also fall into the phenomenological rather than mechanical category of time terms, being both relative and variable in content and quality, depending on the individual.

The most pared-down unit of time is the moment: Bīdel does not appear to be fond of technical terms for an instant or moment of time, like “*ān*” or “*vaqt*” or “*ḥāl*” from Arabic; instead, he capitalises on the inherent metaphorical power of the Persian “*dam*” (to whose many valences we will return in the discussion of the last two couplets). Throughout his lyric corpus, Bīdel meticulously collects his own heap of images for the moment, many of which overlap with his metaphors for lifespan: *dam* (instant, breath; blood), *ḥobāb* (bubble), *maūj* (wave), *shabnam* (dewdrop), *gowhar* (pearl), *nafas* (breath), *ābele* (blister), *jaras* (caravan bell), *jalājel* (small bells around a drum), *tasbīḥ* (rosary), *sharār* (spark), *barq* (lightning), *akhgar* (live ember), *gereh* (knot), *gām* (step, stride) – and this is only a small selection.

But returning to “*forṣat*”: this is a term of time specifically calibrated to allow for human striving. It is not just a small, fixed amount of time, but an opportunity. And in this couplet, it is not an opportunity of more *or* less in span that is being offered, but of more *and* less. So whatever impulse it was that drove the second person to run out of the garden of non-being (be it terror, or excitement, or both), it did not stem from his getting more when he wanted less, or less when he wanted more; perhaps it was the revelation of the sheer fact of span, the very *idea* of less and more, that caused his frightened flight

from the eden of naïve, timeless non-being into the fallen world of timeworn existence. Each person is given a certain span, allotted a certain cut, short or long, from the moving reel of time (indeed, *f-r-ṣ* in Arabic means “to cut”, which echoes the image of the second line’s “*reshte gosastan*”), and the realisation of this fact can induce horror. It can, however, also kindle the desire to seize opportunity.

Such “opportune moments” were familiar stock in trade among the Sufi philosophical traditions of Bīdel’s time, and he was, no doubt, familiar with the famous Sufi catchphrase “*ebn al-vaqt*”, “son of the moment”, which, in Ibn ‘Arabī’s stronger reformulation becomes “*ṣāḥeb al-vaqt*”, “master of the moment”. But nowhere, to my knowledge, do either of these phrases occur in his lyric corpus. Even if Bīdel was indeed in close contact with these ideas of Ibn ‘Arabī, it seems to me that he appropriated what he needed, and then went off in his own direction, with his own aims and vision.

The hapax legomenon “*barzakh*” is an even more loaded term of time, far more complex than “*forṣat*”. A Qur’ānic word, it occurs there three times: in two instances,²³ it is a physical barrier, an isthmus between two kinds of ocean, salty and freshwater. In the third instance, the weight it carries is more eschatological than literal. It is in the *Sūrat al-mu’minīn*, which describes the actions of the virtuous and pious, the inheritors of *al-firdaws*; the *sūra* goes on to recite a litany of several generations of prophets and disbelievers, and how by not heeding their prophets’ messages they met their end.

²³ Cf. Q.25.53 (*Sūrat al-furqān*): “And he is the one who has released the two seas, this one palatable and sweet, and this one salty and bitter; and he made between them a barrier and a partition forbidden.” [“*Wa ja’ala bayna-humā barzakhān wa ḥijran mahjūran*”]. And Q.55.20 (*Sūrat ur-rahmān*): “He released the two seas, meeting; between them is a barrier, which they do not transgress.” [“*Maraja al-baḥrayni yaltaqiyāni; baynahumā barzakhun lā yabghiyāni*”]. The Qur’ān, Sahih International translation, available at www.quran.com (last accessed 30 August 2013).

Significantly, it is written that each such nation has its own span, *ajal*: no nation will die before its time, nor will it outlast its given measure.²⁴ Following this passage, a person to whom death has come pleads to be sent back, so that he may do righteous deeds. The answer that he receives is emphatic: “No!...behind them [that is, the dead] is a barrier [*barzakh*] until the day they are resurrected”.²⁵ So the *barzakh* here is not just a physical division between two realms, though it certainly is that too; but it is a length of time after death, a waiting period, one during which the righteous are at peace and the sinners suffer in torment and regret.

One possible etymology for “*barzakh*” is the Middle Persian “*farsang*”,²⁶ which, like the English league, marks the distance that a person can walk in a certain amount of time, based on his capabilities. This tinge of individual variation nicely underscores the soteriological implications of this third Qurʾānic occurrence of “*barzakh*”, where the quality of the duration of this intermediate waiting period between death and resurrection depends on each person’s own track record. “*Farsang*” is another word of which Bīdel makes frequent use.

A very brief arc of the Qurʾānic exegetical tradition concerning *barzakh* is worth tracing. Ibn Qutayba defined *barzakh* simply in the following way: between any two

²⁴ Q.23.43 (*Sūrat al-muʾminīn*): “No nation will precede its time [of termination], nor will they remain [thereafter].” [“*Mā tasbiqū min ummatīn ajala-hā wa mā yastaʾkhirūna*”]. Ibid.

²⁵ Q.23.100 (*Sūrat al-muʾminīn*): “‘That I might do righteousness in that which I left behind.’ No! It is only a word he is saying; and behind them is a barrier until the Day they are resurrected.” [“*Laʾallī aʾmalu ṣāliḥān fī-mā taraktu kallā inna-hā kalimatun hua qāʾilu-hā wa min warāʾihim barzakhun ilā yawmi yubʾathūna*”]. Ibid.

²⁶ See Mona M. Zaki, “Barzakh,” in the *Encyclopedia of the Qurʾān*. Available online at http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1875-3922_q3_EQCOM_00023 (accessed on 31 July 2019).

objects is another object²⁷. Other *mofasserīn* expand the definition: Aṭ-Ṭabarī allowed that *barzakh* is literally an isthmus, or possibly the division between the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean (separated by Qolzom, a trade port on the Suez Canal with heavy traffic between the two bodies of water; there will be further discussion of Qolzom in the sixth couplet). But he also granted the *barzakh* both spatial and temporal dimensions, defining it both as a fixed span (like *ajal*) between death and resurrection, and also as the physical barrier between this world, *al-dunyā*, and the hereafter, *al-ākhirā*. At death, the *barzakh* falls like an irreversible portcullis in both time and space, barring all return.²⁸

Further allegorical and cosmological definitions include *barzakh* as the division between good and evil, heaven and earth, etc., in which that barrier marks both the separation of, and the tenuous point of contact between, two opposites. Eschatological interpretations suggest that the dissolution of the *barzakh* will be a signal of the coming of the Apocalypse, with the overspill of the two oceans heralding the end of times. One theory is that this *barzakh* and *baḥrayn*, the two oceans and the barrier between them, are part of a long-lost Semitic cosmology, which is reconstructible only from fragments.²⁹ For further comparison, one can look to the many mythical fragments reflected in the Qur'ānic story of Moses and Khidr, and their search for immortality at the *majma' al-baḥrayn*, the confluence of the two oceans – which itself may be an echo of Gilgamesh

²⁷ Ibid. The definition in Arabic is “*Kullu shay' in bayna sha'ayni fa-huwa barzakh*”.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

seeking out Utnapishtim at the confluence of two rivers. The point is that the motif of two oceans and their barrier is clearly an ancient image, and an incredibly powerful one.³⁰

For present purposes, the most relevant re-interpretation, however, may be that of Ibn ‘Arabī, who expands the idea of the *barzakh* to encompass not only dead souls, but living ones as well. Humans are reconceived as constituting *in themselves* an intermediate stratum of creation, a *barzakh* between God and the created world. Other such intermediate states accrue under the *barzakh* banner: dreams are considered a means through which one could travel beyond this world and into the intermediate one; and similarly, the imagination was redescribed by Ibn ‘Arabī as a powerful creative faculty capable of grazing, if not fully attaining, transcendence. Preceding Ibn ‘Arabī by about half a century, Suhrawardī may have been the first to develop this idea of the *barzakh* as an intermediate, corporeal realm between pure light and pure darkness, an imaginal world (in Henri Corbin’s phrasing³¹) full of shadow play, striving, and creative ambition.

None of this, however, is meant to be explanatory with reference to this particular ghazal; what this offers, rather, is a widened scope for the spectrum of possible images and ideas that Bīdel may have had at hand. Simply noting the presence of Ibn ‘Arabī’s signature term and assuming direct applicability of his thought to Bīdel’s does not seem

³⁰ See, inter alia, Aaron Hughes, “The Stranger at the Sea: Mythopoesis in the Qur’ān and Early Tafṣīr,” *Studies in Religion / Sciences Religieuses* 32.3 (2003), 261-279, and Mario Casari, “Il viaggio a settentrione: mitografia e geografia dall’età classica al medioevo arabo-persiano,” in G. Carbonaro, M. Cassarino, E. Creazzo, G. Lalomia (eds.), *Medioevo Romano e Orientale: Il viaggio nelle letterature romanze e orientali*, 213-228 (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2006).

³¹ See, for instance, Henry Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth: From Mazdean Iran to Shī’ite Iran*, trans. Nancy Pearson (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977 [1960]), 78-79; Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 14-15; and Mehdi Amin Razavi, *Suhrawardi and the School of Illumination* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1997), 78-80. See also Maria Massi Dakake, “The Soul as *Barzakh*: Substantial Motion and Mullā Ṣadrā’s Theory of Human Becoming,” *The Muslim World* 94 (2004), 107-130.

satisfactory. Why use this term *only once* in 3,000 poems? The rest of the poem itself, and the subsequent rereading of the poem as a whole, supplies some possible answers.

Once more, in “*Naneshast rang-e ta`ammol-ī cho sharār-e barzakh-e jastan-at*”, there is a pair of opposites – or rather, of not-opposites, because of the initial negation (“*na-neshast*” and “*jastan*”) – and, caught between them, is the *barzakh*. It is tempting to read *barzakh* as a metalepsis³² – that is, as a metaphor for a metaphor – for the moment. The moment has already been reconfigured metaphorically in the previous couplets, and before that, there has been the first image of the poet, tensely coiled, who, after warming up with several different moment-metaphors, is finally ready to take their most daring leap of the imagination yet. The *barzakh*, then, is also the gap across which the poet’s imagination must leap as it attempts this trans-dimensional jump from metaphor to metalepsis. In the darkness of non-being, the figure strikes a spark and tries to kindle into being *the* ultimate metaphor which would combine all metaphors for the moment, a metaphor which would at the same time gesture at the enormity of this tall poetic order. But the colors of the imagination, to adapt Shelley’s phrase to “*rang-e ta`ammol-ī*”, have not set in sufficiently; the spark does not catch, the fire is not conjured, the leap does not succeed – just as the ambitious bubble must burst and the quivering string must fall mute.

³² Quintilian defined metalepsis in terms uncannily appropriate for a trope that Bidel constructed out of *barzakh*: “Of tropes which modify signification, there remains to be noticed the **μετάληψις (metalepsis)**, or *transsumptio*, which **makes a way**, as it were, **for passing from one thing to another**. ... For the nature of metalepsis is that **it is an intermediate step, as it were, to that which is metaphorically expressed, signifying nothing in itself, but affording passage to something**. It is a trope that we give the impression of being acquainted with rather than one that we actually ever need. ... I shall dwell no longer upon it, for I see but little use in it except, as I said, where one thing is to lead to another.” I am grateful to Sonam Kachru for this reference. Emphasis is my own. Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory*, Book 8, Chapter 6, N^o37-38. Quintilian, *Quintilian’s Institutes of Oratory; or, Education of an Orator*, trans. John Selby Watson (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1891), II:133.

The significance of “color” in the Indian Persian vocabulary for describing the work of imagination in the lyric interim has been discussed in Chapter 2. Its pairing here with the term *ta’ammol* is especially important. Translated throughout this dissertation as “attentive slow reflection,” this term defines one of the main features of Bīdel’s style of steadfast imagining. Indeed, it describes the actual practice of attentive imaginative effort, a practice both conceptualized and made possible through lyric style.

The use of *barzakh* in this line brilliantly combines all the semantic richness of an interval of time – the moment – and the imaginary leap *into imagination* taken by the poet to try to pin down and span that image in just two short syllables. That attempt, however, is a failure, and so it remains only a pyrrhic leap of the imagination, albeit a bright one. Even the Arabic root of “spark” (*sh-r-r*, “wickedness” and “sin”),³³ is perhaps an irreverent nod to the Qur’ānic *barzakh* by implying the impious and therefore doomed nature of this daring lyric endeavor.

Now, finally, we may be close to Bīdel’s paradoxical definition of the moment – a paradox amply accommodated by lyric thought: the moment is always there, and always instantly gone; it is that which the imagination can never fully fathom, despite constant attempts at figuration. It is an enigma eternally pinned between two opposites: between winter’s freeze and spring’s thaw, sound and silence, spark and darkness, before and after, being and non-being. It is that brief crack of light between two eternities of darkness. It forever divides, and forever conquers. Line 5:

*to navā-ye mahfel-e ghayrat-ī ze che rū fesorde-ye ghaflat-ī
nafas-ī ke zakhme be tār zad ke nabūd eshāre-ye rastan-at*

تو نوای محفل غیرتی ز چه رو فسرده غفالتی

³³ Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon, Derived from the Best and the Most Copious Eastern Sources* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1872), I.IV:1524.

نفسی که زخمه به تار زد که نبود اشاره رستنت

You are the singing-voice of this elite gathering;
Why be disheartened by forgetfulness?
In that breath, as the plectrum struck the string,
Why did that not signal your release?

Here and in the last two couplets, we enter the coda of the three-part movement mentioned at the beginning: after closure and opening, we move back into closure again: *fesordegī* returns, as does the *tarang* of the third couplet, and again we have a misfire: the singing voice that was supposed to enter, doesn't. I will return to this evocation of accompanied singing in the discussion of the last couplet. Line 6:

*hame dam ze Qolzom-e kebreyā tab-e showq mī-zanad īn ṣalā`
ke farīb-e mowj-e gohar makhor ze do-rūze ābele bastan-at*

همه دم ز قلزم کبریا تب شوق میزند این صلا
که فریب موج گهر مخور ز دوروزه آبله بستنت

In the vast Red Sea, at every cataclysmic moment
Thirst's fever pulses with this summons:
Swallow not the false charms of pearl-bearing waves
To soothe your too-fast blistering.

Finally, we have the first of two occurrences in the poem of *dam* (or three, if you count the hidden *dam* in 'adam of the fourth couplet). It is a syllable with an impressive range of trans-linguistic meanings: from Persian, it can be breath, the sharp edge of a blade, a border or barrier (like *barzakh*), a moment; from its Arabic associations, it can also be blood; and from Sanskrit/Prakrit/Hindi, it can mean deceit, trickery, fraud, and false

hope.³⁴ All of these come into play in Bīdel’s poetic conception of the moment as something painful, fraudulent, and dangerous.

As for Qolzom: the connection between the Red Sea and *barzakh* has been mentioned already.³⁵ Geographically, it “splits” the Persian Gulf. It contains both pearls and blisters, which are opposite in several respects: pearls are desired, solid, made by cold water, and last – while blisters are unwanted, flimsy, made by hot sand, and do not last long. The blistered poet stands on the scalding beach, looking across the dividing shoreline at the ocean, and is told not to expect rewards for his painful metaphors. “*Makhor*” echoes “*makesh*” of the second line; significantly, both negative imperatives occur in an oceanic context.

“*Do-rūze*” here is highly important as well; meaning “lasting only for two days”, in the sense of being evanescent³⁶, it flags what has been, I think, a deliberate shift in the poem’s clever use of sundered pairs of various kinds, but before elaborating upon this, we need to look at the final couplet. Line 7:

che vafā-st Bīdel-e sakht-jān ke dam-e jodā`ī-ye dūstān
jegar-e setamzade khūn shavad ze ḥayā-ye sīne nakhastan-at

چه وفاست بیدل سخت جان که دم جدایی دوستان
جگر ستمزده خون شود ز حیای سینه نخستنت

³⁴ See the entries for “*dam*” in Francis Joseph Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner, and Co., 1930, 1892) and in John T. Platts, *A Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindi and English* (London: W.H. Allen and Co., 1884).

³⁵ Incidentally, the word “*Qolzom*” itself comes from the Greek “*clysmos*”, meaning “flood, deluge.” See “*Cataclysm*,” in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, second edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989). Available online at <http://www.oed-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/view/Entry/28673?redirectedFrom=cataclysm&> (accessed 31 July 2019).

³⁶ See “*Do-rūze*,” in *Loghatnāme-ye Dehkhodā*. Available online at <https://www.parsi.wiki/fa/wiki/topicdetail/523a94f71eb446b8ab1dd7bee2146e34> (accessed 31 July 2019).

Heavy-souled Bīdel: what faith is there
That, at the moment of the sundering of friends,
The harrowed liver blooms with blood
For shame of the unscarred, unscoured chest.

Again, we have “*dam*”, with its sharp implications of painful division and separation. “*Jodā ’ī-ye dūstān*”, while outwardly conforming to the timeworn Persian poetic topos of lovers’ separation, I believe here is actually a deep pun, for which we should be prepared by the first six couplets. Pairing, unpairing, and despairing have been carefully laid out for us in the first four couplets, each of which contains a rather commonplace conjunction of two words: *rang-o-bū* (“color and fragrance,” Line 1), *kham-o-pīch* (“twisting and turning,” Line 2), *sar-o-barg* (“accoutrements and means of subsistence,” Line 3); *bīsh-o-kam* (“more-and-less,” Line 4).

After the pivotal fourth couplet, however, with “*barzakh*” splitting the poem right down the middle, such word-pairs disappear. Instead, we are given hints, buried beneath layers of metaphor, of two objects sundered, the most prominent of which are “*qolzom-e kebreyā*” (“the vast Red Sea,” which splits the Gulf; Line 6), “*do-rūze*” (“fleeting,” lit. “lasting *two* brief days”; Line 6), and the final “*jodā ’ī-ye dūstān*” (“the sundering of friends/lovers”; Line 7).

The separation, then, is likely not only of two literal friends or lovers, *dūstān*, but perhaps also *do + stān*, “two” + “places,” those two great stretches of eternity, past and future, sundered by the present moment. Another reading of *stān* (*su-tān*) can mean “good time”, in the sense of keeping time in music. In northern India, the musical genre of classical singing known as “*khayāl*” was developed during Bīdel’s lifetime; it placed particular emphasis on improvisation, particularly virtuosic vocal improvisation. This

usually included a technique called *tān*, which, like the Arabic *āhāt*, was the syllable *ā* stretched across rapid melodic passages, an improvised run between two statements, or fixed phrases, of the *khayāl*. The accompanist's role was to fill in while the singer paused for breath.³⁷

There are several good reasons for supposing that Bīdel had this musical valence in mind: the explicit reference to accompanied singing in the fifth couplet; the “*tān*” in “*dūstān*”; and the improvisational and virtuosic nature of the singing run, which takes us back to the daring “*barzakh-e jastan*”. Also, *tān* shares its etymological roots with the last two syllables of this poem's refrain: “*tan-at*”. The root meaning is to stretch, from which the improvised run, *tān*, and the body, *tan*, are both derived.

The poem ends on an unequivocally despairing note: the liver fills – blossoms, even – with blood, a painful and unexpected consummation of the *ghoncheh* image from the first line. It is a perversion of “*bahār-e del*”, the heart's springtime: the rose is supposed to bloom with color, not blood, and this blossoming is supposed to be productive, where here it is a failure. The use of the epithet “*sakht-jān*” is perhaps another clue to this despair: the poet's innate heaviness of soul might be a hint as to why he was not able to take that soaring leap of the imagination: he was too weighed down.

A third possible parsing of “*dūstān*” is “*do+ setān*”, with “*setān*” meaning “sleeping or lying weakly on one's back”.³⁸ The poem, then, would begin and end with the poet lying down, alone, tensely coiled at first, then exhausted and despondent after his

³⁷ The *khayāl* genre has many different modes, called *rāgs* – a word related to “*ranj*” or “*rang*”, “color” – something which no doubt appealed greatly to Bīdel's synaesthetic sensibilities. Cf. Bonnie C. Wade, *Khyāl: Creativity within North India's Classical Music Tradition*.

³⁸ Cf. Steingass and *Loghatnāmeḥ-ye Dehkhodā*.

failed leap. This may also explain the sudden appearance of “*sīne nakhastan*”, the “unscratched chest”: if someone who was tightly coiled in concentration, in the fetal position like the unsprung petals of a spring rosebud, has failed in his attempt to jump the barrier (of the moment, of the imagination), they could very well be seen afterwards lying in defeat on their back, chest exposed, with no strength left even to claw at it in shame of failure. “*Posht*” (“back”, like “the back of something” including the body) and “*sīne*” (“chest”, or the body’s front side) are tidy analogies to somatically experienced past and future times, with a momentary chestful of bleeding breath between them.³⁹

Returning to the question of the three-movement shape of the poem: some symmetries have been discussed already, and the list that follows provides a picture of the symmetrical distribution of verbal time in this poem:

Line 1: present (*nasezad, godākht*)

Line 7: present (*ast, shavad*)

Line 2: present + prohibitive (*makesh, afkanad*)

Line 6: present + prohibitive (*mī-zanad, makhor*)

Line 3: past (*bākhtī, narasīde*)

Line 5: past (*zad, nabūd*)

Line 4: past/pluperfect (*namūd, ramīdī, naneshast*)

The main governing verbs in Lines 1, 2, 6, and 7 are all in the present tense. In Lines 3 and 5, they are in the past tense. And in the central fourth line, there is something like a

³⁹ There is, of course, the danger of reading too many possible micro-valences in single words, as Mary Boyce finds G.M. Wickens to have done in his interpretation of Ḥāfez (for a discussion of which, see Chapter 1, footnote 18). I wish here to be less definitive, and more suggestive. Unlike Ḥāfez, whose poetry would have been absorbed perhaps primarily through the medium of heard song, Bīdel’s poems are likelier to have been taken in through silent reading, and may therefore admit more paronomastic elasticity with the visual-orthographic element in play than poems intended primarily for sung performance or recitation.

pluperfect: action is set up such that the verb “*namūd*” has to be logically and causally anterior to “*ramīdī*”, while “*na-neshast*” is located even further in time behind these two, as sort of a background explanation for why the endeavor was never going to succeed. Completing the near-perfect grammatical symmetry are the two prohibitives in Lines 2 and 6: “*makesh*” and “*makhor*”. It is also worth noting that every single line has a negative verb or verbal form (*nasezad, makesh, narasīde, naneshast, nabūd, makhor, nakhastan*).⁴⁰

This revelation of formal mirror-symmetry in verbal tense leads to a crucial question: who is this doubled agent, the mysterious second person described by the poem, the “you” to whom the poem is addressed and whom the prohibitives enjoin?

Let us take a brief, preliminary census of the personæ who figure in the poem:

Persona_a – The grammatical agent, the describing and proscribing voice.

Persona_b – The poet described by Persona_a in Lines 1-3 as tensely curled up in the fetal position, meditating on metaphors for the moment.

Persona_c – That same (?) poet, a moment later, described by Persona_a in Lines 4-6 as lying supine, weakened after their failed poetic attempts.

It is obvious that Persona_b and Persona_c are, if not identical, then closely related – by grammatical tense, if nothing else. But it is precisely the about-face of time, the shift from present back to present again, that creates confusion. Even the poem’s final word, “*na-khastan*”, suggests “*nokhostīn*”, “first”. It is an end that loops back to its beginning.

As Chapter 3 has shown, unlike quasi-narrative lyric poets such as Rūmī and Ḥāfez, Bīdel does not usually allow his ghazals to unravel into a serially ordered timeline (one which, classically, might open with the concrete adverbial “*dūsh*”, “yesterday”, recount a past-tense narrative, move into the present, and end with a generalised nod to

⁴⁰ I am grateful to Franklin Lewis for this insight.

the future⁴¹). Instead, he revels in tying knots in linear time, bending and blending past, present, and future one into the other. A corollary to this seems to be the deliberate proliferation of voices and personæ, which marks yet another point at which Bīdel departs from the clear lyrical vision of Rūmī and Ḥāfeẓ; here, as in many other ghazals, there is an absence of an understood interlocutor, a *pīr* or guide of some sort, one persona whose authoritative voice commands and directs the other poet-persona as they struggle.

If the central preoccupation of this ghazal has been the idea of capturing the moment, then what we have here may be a twin case of form intentionally reflecting content. The word “*barzakh*”, an unmistakable double footnote to orthodox Qur’ānic thought and to the philosophy of Ibn ‘Arabī, is framed, symmetrically, in several senses. Being bounded equally on both sides by the present tense, it itself nevertheless remains firmly in the past, evading capture by refusing, as it were, to become present. This is the first formal effect: the central placement of “*barzakh*” physically and temporally reproduces in the poem and on the page what a moment does to time, dividing it into two halves. But there is a second formal function of this symmetry, one that is implied by the first; and it concerns not time, but personhood.

⁴¹ For example, Rūmī, Ghazal N^o. 2219, Line 3: “Last night, I lost my mind; Love saw me and said, ‘I’ve come; don’t be angry, don’t tear your clothing, don’t say anything’” (“*Dūsh dīvāne shodam ‘eshq marā dīd o begoft / āmadam na’re mazan jāme madarr hīch magū*”). Jalāl al-Dīn Moḥammad Balkhī Rūmī, *Kolleyāt-e Shams*, ed. Badī‘ al-Zamān Forūzānfar (Tehrān: Mo’assase-ye Maṭbū‘ātī Amīr Kabīr, 1336-1345SH [1957-1966CE]), 832; and Ḥāfeẓ, Ghazal N^o. 22, Lines 1-2: “Curls disheveled, sweating, laughing, drunk...yesterday, in the middle of the night, he came and sat down at the head of my bed” (“*Zolf-āshofteh vo khey-kardeh vo khandān-lab o mast...nīm-shab dush be bālīn-e man āmad beneshast*”). Shams al-Dīn Moḥammad Ḥāfeẓ Shīrāzī, *Dīvān-e Ḥāfeẓ*, ed. Parvīz Nātel Khānlarī (Tehrān: Khārazmī, 1362SH [1983CE]), 60-61.

There is an apparent (though ultimately deceptive) “before-and-after” structure to the poem, and what cleaves it into those two relative halves is the crucible of the fourth line. Academically, it is evident that the elusive, infinitesimal present moment may be defined as that vanishing interval of time which separates past from future; but why is the poet (or rather, the chorus of poetic personæ) unable to experience this division *cleanly*? In other words, once the strenuous moment of Line 4 has passed, why has the poetic persona not come through their momentary trial triumphantly?

Before attempting to answer this question, we must return to the allusion made in the fourth line, however loosely, to Ibn ‘Arabī’s concept of “the master of the moment,” “*ṣāheb al-waqt*”. The companion idea to this is the famous doctrine that the world is destroyed and recreated at every moment (“*tajdīd al-khalq fī l-ānā*”). A well-known consequence of this is that every created thing is cast into a state of constant change, with no repetitions.⁴² Several possible problems flow out of this doctrine of recreation, including the miracle – or perhaps the illusion – of individual persistence. Besides basic (and, therefore, plausibly faulty) intuition, what can assure us that a person at time A is the same person at time B, be that a span of a few moments, hours, days, weeks, or years?

Had Personab of Lines 1-3 been a true subscriber to the philosophy of Ibn ‘Arabī, he might have endured the *barzakh* of Line 4 and come out on the other side of it as a so-called master of the moment; he would then no longer have to *be* the same person in Lines 5-7, a metaphysical consequence that he would receive as a liberating revelation, and perhaps even as a practical relief. But that is not what happens: to be sure, the

⁴² Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 18-19. For a discussion of the doctrine of non-repetition in creation with reference to the early modern Persian literary-critical tradition, see Chapter 2.

persona seems to have become divided, but with enough confusion about the division to cast doubt upon it. What this division (or rather, probable lack of division) evokes is not jubilation, but a sense of miserable, muddled continuity, underscored at the end of the poem's every line by the emphatic enclitic "you" (-at), an epistrophe that is almost ironic in its relentless consistency.

Perhaps it was during this arduous contemplation of the moment that the poet began to investigate some of its chilling implications for personhood – coming to the realization that, contrary to the exuberant philosophical offerings of Ibn 'Arabī, the idea of individual non-perdurance might not be an abstract, academic flip-side of eternal change. Instead, as the poem suggests, living as a self perpetually divided by time and lost in imagination might actually be a stark, confusing, and painful human reality.

Perhaps this is one reason that Bīdel, here and in a great preponderance of other ghazals, often avoids using the first person singular.⁴³ In this poem, he talks to himself – or rather, to his split-second personality, whose only sense of persistence lies, ironically, in his abiding posture of failure and suffering. This is where the powerful drama of Bīdel's lyric takes place: at the level of grammatical person. After all, nothing *happens* in this poem as such. On the literal level, there has been only one observable action: a body simply uncurls from the fetal position into a supine pose.

Bīdel may have used the term "*barzakh*" deliberately to bring into the poem's fold a brand of speculative philosophy that was widely popular in his day, by using one of its most recognisable buzzwords. He seems to do this, however, only to dismiss it – or at least to call into question some of its implications. Departing in emphasis from the shape

⁴³ "*Man o mā*", on the other hand, is quite common.

of Ibn ‘Arabī’s philosophy, Bīdel’s lyric is less concerned with abstract philosophical ideas about the structure and workings of the universe; instead, the struggle with time, the difficulties of attempting to master the moment through creative imagination, and the dangers lying therein – these in Bīdel are delineated in terms and tone that are intimately private, individual, and tinged with despair.

4.3 Steadfast Imagining: Towards an Account of Bīdel’s Lyric Style

What can poetry contribute to the storehouse of ingrained knowledge concerning time that philosophy, theology, and mysticism have already filled rafter-high? There is an Arabic aphorism which holds that “sufism and philosophy are neighbours, and they visit each other”.⁴⁴ What then is poetry’s social and real estate status in that community? Even if we grant that poetry may also be their neighbour, when direct communication is attempted, all too often it is about as successful as a shadow play projected onto two different sides of an impermeable wall.

Bīdel has been the subject of mystical interpretations and critical studies whose central concern lies in the simple explanatory alignment of what is most intractably difficult and unique in Bīdel’s lyric thought with that which is conveniently rubricated, explicated, charted, and defined by Sufi theology as expounded in treatises like Ibn ‘Arabī’s manual on retreat discussed at the beginning of this chapter.⁴⁵ In light of the

⁴⁴ See Franz Rosenthal, “Ibn ‘Arabī between ‘Philosophy’ and ‘Mysticism’: ‘Sufism and Philosophy Are Neighbors and Visit Each Other’.” *Fa-inna at-taṣawwuf wa-t tafalsuf yatajāwarāni wa yatazāwarāni.*” *Oriens* 31 (1988), 1-35.

⁴⁵ See, for instance, Mohammed Moazzam Siddiqi, *An Examination of the Indo-Persian Mystical Poet Mirza ‘Abdul Qadir Bedil with Particular Reference to His Chief Work ‘Irfān.*” PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1975 and “The Influence of Bedil on the Indo-Persian Poetic

reading of Bīdel's barzakh poem, it seems important to keep in mind that lyric and theology are not always the same, and should not be forced into unexamined equivalence. To make them synonymous in Bīdel's case is perilously reductive.

The contours of lyric thought – that category of human creativity which is not subordinate to other forms of mental activity, like systematic or narrative forms of discourse – have been charted by pioneer critics like Harold Bloom⁴⁶, Helen Vendler⁴⁷, and many others. Shelley's opening of *A Defence of Poetry* is a vivid formulation:

According to one mode of regarding those classes of mental action, which are called reason and imagination, the former may be considered as mind contemplating the relations borne by one thought to another, however produced: and the latter [imagination], as mind acting upon those thoughts so as to color

Tradition,” in *The Rose and the Rock: Mystical and Rational Elements in the Intellectual History of South Asian Islam*, ed. Bruce B. Lawrence, 14-31 (Durham, N.C. Duke University Programs in Comparative Studies on Southern Asia [and] Islamic and Arabian Development Studies, 1979); Muhammad Iqbal, “Bedil in the Light of Bergson” (unpublished article); for a different approach, one that tackles the issue from a different angle, see the recent study that attends to the texture of and structure of metaphor in Bīdel's ghazals: Moḥammad Reżā Akramī, *Este 'āre dar ghazal-e Bīdel* (Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, 2011). His minute linguistic analysis and close readings build towards his interesting thesis about Bīdel's *falsafe-ye ya's*, “philosophy of despair,” a mode of thought that is best understood not by applying others' doctrines to Bīdel's corpus, but by examining how Bīdel himself puts metaphor to work. Akramī argues that Bīdel views the world and everything in it *through metaphor*. Ibid, 228-238, especially 235.

⁴⁶ Harold Bloom's essay on A.R. Ammons (whose poem “Moment” is another magisterial meditation on time's compressions and impressions) shows that talk of mysticism *simpliciter* may be ancillary, or even utterly irrelevant, when analysing a poet's internal pressures and style: “I find that Ammons reminds me (without, I think, his knowing anything, overtly, about Kabbalah) of the origin or original sin of the image of the vessels breaking... In his private experience, which hardly benefits by being termed “mysticism”, the young Ammons seems to have taught himself this paradox of all belated creativity.” Harold Bloom, “A.R. Ammons: The Breaking of the Vessels,” in *Figures of Capable Imagination* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 217.

⁴⁷ Helen Vendler writes in the Introduction to *Poets Thinking*: “All poems, it seems to me, contain within themselves implicit instructions concerning how they should be read. These encoded instructions – housed in the sum of all the forms in which a poem is cast, from the smallest phonetic group to the largest philosophical set – ought to be introduced as evidence for any offered interpretation. In recent years, such intentionality has often been disregarded or resisted.” Helen Vendler, *Poets Thinking: Pope, Dickinson, Whitman, Yeats* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 5.

them with its own light, and composing from them, as from elements, other thoughts, each containing within itself the principle of its own integrity.⁴⁸

Lyric thought may perhaps bear more of a resemblance to systematic than to narrative forms of thought, the kinship being that in systematic and lyric thought alike, sequence is of no consequence.⁴⁹ Certain lyric ideas become legible only over the course of many readings of a poet's entire corpus, and acquire meaning and value not through the necessary unfolding of a narrative progression, but rather ideas emerge *en masse* – as an already interconnected system of concepts bound together by certain kinds of relations, the precise nature of which varies radically from poet to poet. Deciphering these relations as minutely as possible is, in Bīdel's case, one of the only entry-points into identifying the precise nature of his lyric style.

As Chapters 5 and 6 will continue to demonstrate, Bīdel's lyric style of steadfast imagining contains the principles of its own integrity. If one works through enough of his lyric corpus, certain rhetorical, syntactic, and structural maneuvers are repeated enough that the reader begins to develop a sense of Bīdel's unique marks of craft. Such is the case with Bīdel's lyric meditations on the phenomenology of the experienced moment. Time and again in his ghazals, Bīdel casts his imagination upon the moment, most notably perhaps as the coruscating surface of a bubble, which is no sooner gloriously there than it is burst and gone. Bīdel's contemplation of the flimsy construct of the fleeting moment leads to reflections about the idea of span more generally, and about the inescapable transience of any quantity of human life. Bīdel's lyric poetry explores a vast

⁴⁸ Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Shelley's Defence of Poetry; Browning's Essay on Shelley*, ed. L. Winstanley (London: D.C. Heath and Company, 1911), 3.

⁴⁹ For an extended discussion of lyric, narrative, and systematic thought, see Chapter 5.

range of emotional reactions to these ideas – from awe to despair, from arrogantly jubilant triumph to humility verging on self-loathing. Often one finds in a single poem some combination of these extremes. In the poem examined in this chapter, more of the side of despair is revealed rather than the side of jubilation.

What, then, does this reveal about Bīdel’s individual lyric style? As Chapters 5 and 6 elaborate in greater detail, this poem is an example of a wider trend observable in Bīdel’s lyric poetry, a trend that could be called something like an “inward swerve”. By his reclamation of *barzakh*, this philosophically laden word for poetry tagged to a specific philosopher, Bīdel reminds the reader that *barzakh* is, first and foremost, a figure – and that philosophy and theology would do well to visit not only each other, but lyric poetry as well.

This chapter has shown how, although Bīdel freely uses terms of art from philosophical Sufism, he engages in a sophisticated recalibration of the various vocabularies that are ambiently available to him, reconfiguring them along his own trajectory. This trajectory, as the remainder of this dissertation shows, is an inward journey towards self-knowledge, undertaken in lyric by repeatedly pacing the boundaries of the self, testing the limits of imagination, and manipulating the single moment of time. These lyric practices together constitute Bīdel’s lifelong program for training the imagination through attentive slow reflection (*ta’ammol*) on that which is imaginary (*khayāl*). Chapter 5 now begins to examine in detail some of Bīdel’s articulations of this regimen of lyric exercise.

Chapter 5
Flights of Imagination:
Avicenna's Phoenix (*'Anqā*) and Bīdel's Figuration for the Lyric Self

میدان که زمانه نقش سوداست
بیرون ز زمانه صورت ماست
زیرا قفسیست این زمانه
بیرون همه کوه قاف و عنقااست

Understand: time
is an image of melancholy.
Outside of time
is our true form.
For this worldly time
is a cage:
Outside – all
is Mount Qāf
and the phoenix.

– Rūmī¹

Examples used in logical arguments have a distressing way of lingering on with a life of their own.

– Paul de Man²

The phoenix (*'anqā*) appears in the philosophy of Avicenna as his example of a “vain intelligible,” a fictional being which exists in the soul, but not in the world. This remarkable bird is also notable (along with the Earth, the moon, the sun, and God) for being a species of one. In this chapter, I analyze the afterlife of Avicenna's phoenix example in Bīdel's lyric thought,

¹ “*Mī-dān ke zamāne naqsh-e soudā-st / bīrūn ze zamāne šūrat-e mā-st // zīrā qāfas-ī-st īn zamāne / bīrūn hame kūh-e qāf o 'anqā-st.*” Ghazal N^o365, Lines 1-2. Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, ed. Badī' al-Zamān Forūzānfār, *Kolleyāt-e Shams-e Tabrīz* (Tehrān: Mo'assase-ye Maṭbū'ātī Amīr Kabīr, 1336SH [1957-1966CE]), 178-179.

² Referring to an example given in J.L. Austin's “On Excuses” of an attendant at an insane asylum who has accidentally boiled an inmate to death in a scalding bath due to an untimely lapse in attention to the water taps. Paul de Man, “The Epistemology of Metaphor,” in *On Metaphor*, ed. Sheldon Sacks, 11-28 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 18.

building a case for the phoenix being one of the most expressive, elastic, and intertextually resonant metaphors in Bīdel’s oeuvre. The phoenix is at once a creature that is imagined (indeed, it is *only* imagined) and is also an imagining agent; as such, in Bīdel’s thought, the phoenix becomes a key figuration, or master metaphor, which perfectly suits both Bīdel’s articulation of rigorous, impersonal systematic ideas as well as his presentation of his individual first-personal experiences of those ideas. I argue that Bīdel exploits the singularity, ontological murkiness, and conceptual evocativeness of Avicenna’s phoenix example, and fashions it into one of the governing metaphors for his own arguments about mind, self, and the status of the imagination.

The first section (5.1) introduces Bīdel’s phoenix through the example of an early lyric poem. Section 5.2 presents an overview – necessarily patchy and incomplete – of the career of the phoenix in the history of Islamic thought, including several early migrations into Persian literature. In section 5.3, I situate Avicenna’s famous phoenix example within his system of thought generally and within his theory of “vain intelligibles” specifically; I then put Avicenna’s phoenix into conversation with Bīdel (5.4) through the close reading of phoenix examples in Bīdel’s corpus: its appearances in the long narrative poem *Mount Sinai of Wonder* (*Ṭūr-e ma’refat*), in several lyric poems, and in his autobiography, *The Four Elements* (*Chahār ‘onşor*), where it functions as an important framing device. The conclusion (5.5) offers some thoughts about the value of reading Bīdel in the light of Avicenna, and addresses the adjacencies, shared territories, and dividing boundaries between lyric poetry and philosophy.

5.1 The Neighboring Phoenix: Bīdel’s ‘*Anqā*

This chapter argues that the figuration of the phoenix (‘*anqā*) takes on the role of a master metaphor in Bīdel’s vast oeuvre, and that, when thoroughly understood, it can illuminate

Bīdel’s thought (the overall texture, preoccupations, and aims of his imaginative craft – in short, his style) quite comprehensively. I call it a “master metaphor,” because its explanatory reach extends far beyond the confines of local occurrences. For reasons discussed in detail below, it is argued here that Bīdel consciously employs the figure of the phoenix as a bearer of great intra- and inter-textual significance: it serves as a vehicle not only for the propositional content of ideas found in Bīdel’s difficult lyric poetry, but also as a figuration for his creative endeavors, his individual literary style, and his philosophical aims.³

Bīdel composed nearly three thousand lyric poems, of which only a handful may be dated with reasonable confidence. His vast *dīvān* (collection of verse) is arranged alphabetically by the last letter of the refrain (i.e., not chronologically), and, taken as a whole, these thousands of poems display a great deal of consistency in their syntax, metaphor, imagery, and diction. Certain metaphors stand out due to their multiple occurrences, as do recurring patterns of intertwined concepts – repetitions which Prashant Keshavmurthy has called “rhizomic

³ A similar hierarchy of metaphors (those bearing only local significance, and those with greater burdens) is made by Austin Warren in his analysis of the later works of Henry James. Warren identifies two distinct modes of figuration: the first is an extended conceit (reminiscent of those used by early modern Metaphysical poets), which is both cerebral and beautiful, and produces momentous effects within the immediate confines of a specific passage. The second mode is what Warren calls “emblematic perception, a symbolized intuition, in form an original image” that gestures towards the “mythic” (556-557), whose significance extends beyond local context and adds meaning to, or assists in the interpretation of, the work as a whole. See Austin Warren, “Myth and Dialectic in the Later Novels,” *The Kenyon Review* 5.4 (“The Henry James Number,” 1943), 551-568. To this, we could add a still higher third mode of figuration – a master metaphor – such as the eponymous object in *The Golden Bowl*: it reverberates, spills over, and cracks through the whole novel, including characters’ innermost mental spaces. It runs amok through the novel’s reality, crossing and recrossing the lines between the domains of the author, narrator, and characters. In passing through so many hands, the golden bowl gains tremendous power, radiating subtle – and obvious – interpretive influence throughout the whole work. (In a climactic scene, a quorum of major characters physically interact with the golden bowl together: they examine, handle, and finally shatter their own plot’s governing metaphor.) The phoenix in Bīdel’s oeuvre, I believe, has similar weight and luminous interpretive importance. As “master” metaphors, both the golden bowl and the phoenix – a bit like housekeepers – are able to gain unique admittance into all diegetic levels of their constructed reality.

interconnections.”⁴ These are somewhat reminiscent of Shakespeare’s famous imagery clusters: some are obviously significant (Shakespeare’s Kates, coxcombs, and upright tree branches; springtime and red-nosed sickness; Bīdel’s circles and breaths; minds and lanterns), while others feel more like an idiosyncratic tic of diction (Shakespeare’s apples, eels, and crabs; Bīdel’s color and fracture).⁵ As a result of this consistency and lack of chronology, Bīdel’s lyric corpus can feel fused into an impressively resistant monolith, across whose surface it is all but impossible to trace developmental arcs.

One way to etch out some semblance of evolution in Bīdel’s lyric poems is with the aid of third-party testimony, such as that found in early modern Persian biographical compendia (*tazkeres*), collections of biographical notices about authors that frequently include examples of each author’s work. Since *tazkeres* are often reliably dated, examples of Bīdel’s poems found therein furnish the occasional timestamp. An example of a time-anchored poem by Bīdel is found in the literary critic Muḥammad Afzal Sarkhūsh’s biographical compendium *The Words of the Poets (Kalemāt al-sho‘arā’)*, 1682), where the entry on Bīdel⁶ contains a brief reference to Bīdel’s *ghazal* N^o.14.⁷ While this poem is not, strictly speaking, a sample from Bīdel’s juvenilia

⁴ Prashant Keshavmurthy, *Persian Authorship and Canonicity in Late Mughal Delhi: Building an Ark*, (New York: Routledge, 2016), 117.

⁵ For classic examples of Shakespeare’s “clusters,” see Caroline F.E. Spurgeon, *Shakespeare’s Imagery and What It Tells Us* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, 1935).

⁶ Moḥammad Afzal Sarkhūsh, *Kalemāt al-sho‘arā’ (The Words of the Poets)*, ed. ‘Alī-Rezā Qazve (Tehrān: Markaz-e Pazhūhesh-e Ketābkhāne, Mūze va Markaz-e Asnād-e Majles-e Shūrā-ye Eslāmī, 2011), 48-53. All subsequent references to and paraphrases from this *tazkere* are from this passage.

⁷ Ghazal N^o.14 (“Āyīne bar khāk zad ṣon‘-e yektā”). ‘Abd al-Qāder Bīdel Dehlavī, *Kolleyāt-e Abū l-Ma‘ānī Mīrzā ‘Abd al-Qāder Bīdel Dehlavī*, ed. Khalīlollāh Khalīlī (Tehran: Enteshārat-e Ṭalāye, 1389SH [2010/2011CE]), I:6-7.

(born in 1644, Bīdel may have been as old as 37-38 when he composed a poem included in Sarkhūsh’s *Kalemāt*), nevertheless, this poem can at least be traced to the first half of his life.

Sarkhūsh notes that this poem was composed on the “model” (“*zamīn*,” lit. “ground” – meaning shared meter and other formal features)⁸ of Ḥāfeẓ (d.ca.1390), whose poetry set the tone, form, and standard for the Persian lyric for centuries, including Bīdel’s era. Ḥāfeẓ composed three *ghazals* in this particular meter (N^o376, N^o409, and N^o410),⁹ a variety of *motaqāreb*¹⁰ in which pairs of long syllables surround a hemmed-in short syllable. These metrical feet perfectly accommodate any number of supplicatory utterances commonly found in prayer and other forms of direct invocation of God’s will, God’s mercy, and God’s will: *al-ḥukm li-llāh*, *astaghfiru - llāh*, and *al-ḥamdu li-llāh*. Unlike Ḥāfeẓ, Bīdel does not mention God directly in his poem; instead, he modestly invokes himself – alongside the phoenix. The poem begins with a condemnation of human perception, noting its inability to arrive at truth through the imperfect instruments of the human mind; instead of truth, they yield illusory beliefs about the world:

14.1 *āyīne bar khāk zad ṣon ‘-e yektā*

⁸ Sarkhūsh notes that the common “grounds” do not include a shared refrain (*qāfeye*). For a premodern South Asian example of the use of “*zamīn*” to refer to the meter, rhyme, and refrain together, see for example Mīr Taqī Mīr, *Zikr-i Mīr*, ed. and trans. C.M. Naim (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 157. Bīdel frequently composes such quasi-*javābs*, response-poems which, for a variety of formal and semantic reasons, are in clear dialogue with famous precursor poems, but do not conform strictly to the requirements of the *javāb* (a formal response-poem). On the formal requirements of the *javāb*, see Paul E. Losensky, *Welcoming Fighānī: Imitation and Poetic Individuality in the Safavid-Mughal Ghazal* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1998), 107-114. In the present case, the connection Sarkhūsh makes between this Bīdel *ghazal* and Ḥāfeẓ is bolstered by the *-āh* refrain in Ḥāfeẓ N^o409 and N^o410, with the almost-silent “h” forming a nearly perfect rhyme with Bīdel’s *-ā* refrain.

⁹ Shams al-Dīn Moḥammad Ḥāfeẓ Shīrāzī, *Dīvān-e Ḥāfeẓ*, ed. Parvīz Nātel Khānlarī (Tehrān: Kh^vārazmī, 1362SH [1983CE], I:768, 834, 836. Ghazal N^o376, “*Chandān ke goftam gham bā ṭabībān*” (I:768); Ghazal N^o409, “*Eysh-am modām ast az la ‘l-e del-kh’āh*” (I:834); and Ghazal N^o410, “*Gar tīgh bārad dar kū-ye ān māh*” (I:836).

¹⁰ *Motaqāreb-e moṣamman-e ašlam al-šadr* (Elwell-Sutton No.1.2.11), *fe ‘lon fo ‘ūlon fo ‘ūlon fo ‘ūlon*: (→) --|~--| (‘) --|~-- . L.P. Elwell-Sutton, *The Persian Metres* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 91.

*tā vā-nemūdand kayfīyat-e mā*¹¹

آینه بر خاک زد صنع یکتا
تا وا نمودند کیفیت ما

The art of divine singularity
cast a mirror upon the dust
So that our qualities
would be revealed.

14.2 *bonyād-e ezhār bar rang chīdīm*
khod rā be har rang kardīm rosvā

بنیاد اظهار بر رنگ چیدیم
خود را به هر رنگ کردیم رسوا

We constructed the foundation
of what is manifest
upon shifting colors.
We disgraced ourselves
in every tinge and hue.

This poem is about the human state of things, and about our benightedness as we grope – erringly and bewilderedly – towards truer forms of reflection about ourselves, God, and the world. Given our state of ignorance, it can be difficult to see where the surest path towards certainty lies:

14.6 *āyīne-vār-īm maḥrūm-e ‘ebrat*
dādand mā rā cheshm-ī ke mag(o)shā

آینهواریم محروم عبرت
دادند ما را چشمی که مگشا

Like mirrors, we are barred
from explanation.
We were given eyes,
and told:
“Keep them closed.”

14.7 *dar-hā-ye ferdows vā-būd emrūz*
az bī-demāghī goftīm fardā

¹¹ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, I:6-7. See T2.G1 for a complete translation and transliteration of this poem.

درهای فردوس و ابود امروز
از بی‌دماغی گفتیم فردا

The gates of paradise
were open
today.
Thoughtlessly,
we said:
“Tomorrow.”

14.11 *kaṣrat nashod maḥv az sāz-e vaḥdat*
ham-chūn khayālāt az shakḥ-e tanhā

کثرت نشد محو از ساز وحدت
همچون خیالات از شخص تنها

Multiplicity was not erased
by the apparatus
of unity –
Like figments
imagined
by a single mind.

Yet even in the midst of this declaration of no-confidence in human faculties, Bīdel pursues a delicate ontological balancing act between what is most real (that is, “unicity” – *vaḥdat* – or the absolute unity-of-being in God’s oneness) and what is *less* real (the world as we perceive it), the latter of which is explicitly aligned with what is imagined (*khayālāt*, objects which are imagined) but is nevertheless not wholly *unreal* (“not erased”). Somehow, what seem to be mutually exclusive ontological states – unity, multiplicity – can still co-exist, in a relationship described by the analogy of the imagining agent, a single individual (*shakḥ-e tanhā*) whose mind “contains” a multiplicity, perhaps even an infinity, of things which are imaginary.

The poem then shifts into a bold declaration of who and what the poet is, and it seems plausible that here Bīdel most obviously takes his cues from one of the Ḥāfeẓ poems. For instance, in *ghazal* N^o410, Ḥāfeẓ clearly draws a line between himself and other poets given to

more sober, panache-free varieties of piety and thought: “I do not associate much with *shaykhs* (Sufi masters) and preachers,” Hāfez declares, because “I am a libertine and a lover.”¹² Bīdel similarly “defines” himself in the final couplet of his poem, while at the same time presenting something like an argument *against paths* – that is, against orthodox Islamic paths to piety and truth, and perhaps even against commonplace Sufi spiritual *ṭarīqes* (ways; lit. “paths”):

14.14 *z-īn ya 's-e manzel mā rā che ḥāṣel*
ham-khāne Bīdel ham-sāye 'anqā

زین یأس منزل ما را چه حاصل
 همخانه بیدل همسایه عنقا

This despondent longing
 for a dwelling: what profit
 does it yield for us?
 Bīdel dwells
 under the same roof;
 the phoenix shares
 the neighboring shade.

The topos of the inward journey of the soul is very familiar, even worn-out by Bīdel’s time. While the idea of longing for a dwelling – lit. “way-station” (*manzel*) at which to break one’s long, tiring spiritual journey – is immediately legible, it is worth pausing over the deceptively simple final hemistich that follows it: “*Ham-khāne Bīdel ham-sāye 'anqā.*” Four nouns, perfect parallelism. Grammatically, this hemistich can be resolved into the idea, meant to be consoling, that one’s ideal housemate – were one to give up the outward-bound spiritual journey – is none other than Bīdel himself, with the phoenix residing next door (the word for “neighbor” is literally one who “shares shade”). But how precisely are we to understand this? To whom is Bīdel addressing these words, and where exactly is this dwelling-place with the neighboring phoenix? And most importantly, what is the relationship between Bīdel and the phoenix? Or is there

¹² “*Man rend o 'āsheq dar mowsem-e gol*” (Line 3) and “*Mā shaykh o vā 'eẓ kam-tar shenāsīm*” (Line 4). Hāfez, *Dīvān*, I:836.

perhaps only the subtlest difference between them? The poem unequivocally tells us that having Bīdel and the phoenix inhabiting such adjacent, neighboring quarters is a highly favorable housing outcome. The insistent brick-like parallelism (*ham-khāne...ham-sāye*, “sharer of the same house...sharer of the same shade”) further cements the impression that the Bīdel-phoenix association is not only desirable, but inevitable.

In the traditional mode of self-praise, we can grant that Bīdel, who frequently boasts of his own virtuosic spiritual accomplishments, might certainly be a spiritually advantageous housemate. Or, if the last line is addressed to himself, we can also readily enough imagine Bīdel as a solitary thinker, exploring his own inner geography. But what *specific* benefit can be drawn from the neighboring phoenix? The question becomes more intriguing still when we consider that the phoenix (‘*anqā*, two long syllables) occupies the important final-word signature position in Bīdel’s poem, metrically unseating *Allāh* (God) in Ḥāfez’s template-poems.

If this *ghazal* by Bīdel were our only evidence, I submit that there would be no obvious way to answer these questions, or to make full sense of the poem beyond superficially obvious grammatical explication. Of course, reasonably educated guesses as to the significance of the phoenix could be put forward. Perhaps we might think of that most famous of Sufi allegories from the thirteenth century, Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār’s *Manteq al-tayr* (*The Conference of the Birds*), and form a hypothesis that Bīdel in his poem alludes to a similar avian-allegorical journey of the soul. However, without a thorough sense of the role played by the phoenix across Bīdel’s vast corpus in a variety of genres, and without importing extra-textual information about the phoenix in other forms of Islamic-philosophical discourse, we can have only a skeletal and impoverished intuition about the full meaning of this couplet and the poem which it crowns.

This chapter will attempt to remedy both of these deficiencies by analyzing several pivotal examples of the phoenix in Bīdel's long narrative poem (*maṣnavī*), *Mount Sinai of Enlightenment* (*Ṭūr-e ma' refat*, composed in 1688), in his lyric poems, and in his autobiography, *The Four Elements* (*Chahār 'onṣor*). Before turning to these, I would like to propose a set of horizons against which to examine Bīdel's phoenix, the aim being to enhance our sense of the *specific* importance of the phoenix in Bīdel's thought. This in turn will allow us to decipher the riddle of Bīdel and his neighboring phoenix, and also to begin forming some ideas about the phoenix's larger role as a master metaphor.

5.2 Hunting the Phoenix: The 'Anqā in Philosophy and Literature

In Plato's *Phaedo*, men are terrified of death, because "after [the soul] has left the body it no longer exists anywhere...it is dispersed like breath or smoke, has flown away and gone and is no longer anything anywhere."¹³ This winged flight of the soul is at once groundedly substantial and insubstantial: it partakes of existence in the natural world, yet also flies towards nonexistence, hovering on the margin between being and nonbeing before finally disappearing. This ambiguity, or rather, this ontological richness, that so often accompanies avian figurations for the human soul is exploited by poets and philosophers alike. So potent and ubiquitous is the ascription of "winged" qualities to human spiritual feats and faculties that, throughout premodernity, there can hardly be found a tradition which does not harness the rhetorical power of wings, flight, and determined directedness when discussing serious matters of the soul.

The phoenix in particular is a bird fitted for countless traditions and purposes. In what is likely an ancient Greek redescription of the Egyptian ardeine deity Bennu, Herodotus refers to

¹³ Plato, *Phaedo*, 70a. Plato, *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Phaedrus*, trans. Harold North Fowler (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966), 60.

the phoenix as a “sacred bird,” and admits (with admirable candor) that, since it appears only once every five hundred years, he himself has seen it only in pictures.¹⁴ The core of the familiar legend is already present in the fifth century BCE: the phoenix is a bird of remarkably long lifespan, capable of miraculously regenerating itself through fire; it is, therefore, an object of understandable reverence. In subsequent centuries in the West, the phoenix lends itself to further reinterpretation and repurposing in Christian resurrection allegory, where, by dint of their uniquely extraordinary natures, both Christ and the phoenix cheat death.¹⁵ What remains fascinatingly unclear is whether or not people *truly believed* the phoenix existed, or if they simply received it as a flexible truth of legend.¹⁶

The Greek *phoenix* enters Arabic (transliterated as ‘*anqā*’) during the mass-translation of the Greek philosophical archive into Arabic in ‘Abbāsīd-era Baghdād. There, it encounters new

¹⁴ “There is another sacred bird, too, whose name is phoenix (φοῖνιξ). I myself have never seen it, only pictures of it; for the bird seldom comes into Egypt: once in five hundred years, as the people of Heliopolis say.” Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. A.D. Godley (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1920), 2.73.1. For the relationship between Herodotus’s phoenix and the Egyptian heron-deity, see the note by W.W. How and J. Wells in *A Commentary on Herodotus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920), 203.

¹⁵ See Valerie Jones, “The Phoenix and the Resurrection” in *The Mark of the Beast: The Medieval Bestiary in Art, Life, and Literature*, ed. Debra Hassig, 99-116 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999). For a thorough overview of the phoenix as an allegory for resurrection, see Janet E. Spittler, *Animals in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles: The Wild Kingdom of Early Christian Literature* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 29-30, 60-64 and “Animal Resurrection in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles” in *Entwicklung von Passions- und Auferstehungstraditionen in frühen Christentum*, ed. A. Merkt and T. Nicklas, 337-360 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

¹⁶ For example, on whether or not Aquinas thought the phoenix was real, see Gyula Klima, “On Kenny on Aquinas on Being: A Critical Review of Aquinas on Being,” *International Philosophical Quarterly* 44.4 (2004), 567-580. Paul Veyne helpfully phrases the issue thus: “What is myth? Is it altered history? History that has been amplified? A collective mythomania? Is it allegory? What was myth to the Greeks? This is the moment for us to note that the feeling of truth is a capacious one (which easily comprehends myth) but also that “truth” means manythings...and can even encompass fictional literature.” Emphasis is mine. Paul Veyne, *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths? An Essay on the Constitutive Imagination*, trans. Paula Wissing (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 14-15. I am grateful to Franklin Lewis for this reference.

influences and interacts with various pre-Islamic Persian traditions. One such convergence is that of the Greek phoenix and the legendary Iranian bird, the *sīmorgh*.¹⁷ We might speculate that the ‘*anqā*’ could have encountered Indic counterparts as well during this extraordinary time of translation and literary-cultural exchange, when the *Pancatantra* tales made their way from Sanskrit into Arabic by way of Pahlavī and Persian.¹⁸ At any rate, this particular moment in the international career of the phoenix is especially significant, because it is around this time in the eastern Islamic world that the ‘*anqā*’ – that is, the Greek *phoenix* in Arabic and Persian – started becoming associated with Mount Qāf, the legendary mountain range in Iranian lore. Its mountains encircle the inhabited world, and somewhere on its peaks is the dwelling-place of the fabled Simorgh, a creature that separates the mortal world from the world of the gods.

Arabic-language philosophy during this period was also absorbing eastern influences. Al-Fārābī (d.950), Avicenna’s most important predecessor, brought Plato and Aristotle together within a Neoplatonic emanationist framework, and, in the course of unifying the sciences, inaugurated the tradition of theorizing prophecy within philosophy – a topic of keen interest in Islamic thought in subsequent centuries. On Al-Fārābī’s view, the cosmos came into being through a series of emanations, beginning with God and ending with this elemental earth, with

¹⁷ The *sīmorgh* is likely a distant descendant of the Avestan raptor *saēna*, perhaps even of the hawk *śyená* in the Ṛg Veda, with closer relatives attested in later ‘Abbāsīd-era Pahlavī sources, such as the *sēnmurw* in the *Dādestān-e dēnīg*. On such migrations across Indian and Iranian traditions, see David M. Knipe, “The Heroic Theft: Myths from Ṛgveda IV and the Ancient Near East,” in *History of Religions* 6.4 (1967), 328-360, especially the discussion on 331-332. For a recent study of the phoenix that also includes a study of the Chinese bird *fenghuang*, see Joseph Nigg, *The Phoenix: An Unnatural Biography of a Mythical Beast* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

¹⁸The philosophical epistles by the Brethren of Purity (*Ikhwān al-ṣafā’*) present an important example of this confluence of source material. See for instance their reworking of Ibn al-Muqaffa’s *Kalīla wa Dimna* (a translation of the Sanskrit *Pancatantra* by way of a Middle Persian translation) in Lenn E. Goodman and Richard McGregor, *The Case of the Animals versus Man Before the King of the Jinn: A translation from the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 156-162, and the note on 162 concerning the merging of the *sīmorgh* with the phoenix and the Indic bird *garuda*.

the spheres, or intellects, occupying and dividing up the cosmological middle ground between them. Earth is governed by the lowest sphere – which, as Peter Adamson notes, might very well be the most interesting of all the spheres, since it is simultaneously in contact with the divinity-adjacent higher spheres and with our human world below. In Adamson’s beautiful phrase, this lowest sphere is “like a complete library of possible knowledge...that is always reading its own books.”¹⁹ Contrapuntally mirroring this top-down process of cosmic emanation, human understanding must undertake the opposite journey, from low to high. Humans thus perceive God last (if they perceive God at all), after an arduous journey of thinking themselves out of the web of illusory sense-perceptions in which they find themselves entangled. Crucial for Avicenna is Al-Fārābī’s notion that a prophet is an exceptional human being who is uniquely able to complete this spiritual journey – a success attributed to his extraordinary imagination.²⁰

With Avicenna (d.1037) the entire course of philosophy changes: in his wake, the Islamicate world comes under what has been aptly called “la pandémie Avicennienne.”²¹ Competing schools of interpretation emerged soon after Avicenna’s death,²² and even philosophers and theologians who vehemently disagreed with his ideas had to contend with and even reproduce those ideas. Avicenna’s most influential ideas include the famous distinction

¹⁹ Peter Adamson, *Philosophy in the Islamic World*, vol.3 of *A History of Philosophy without Any Gaps* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 68.

²⁰ On Al-Fārābī’s life, thought, and works, see Majid Fakhry, *Al-Fārābī: Founder of Islamic Neoplatonism: His Life, Works, and Influence* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2014, 2002).

²¹ A phrase coined by Jean Michot. See Jean R. Michot, “La Pandémie Avicennienne au VIe/XIIIe siècle: Présentation, *editio princeps* et traduction de l’introduction du *Livre de l’advenue du monde (Kitāb ḥudūth al-‘ālam)* d’Ibn Ghaylān al-Balkhī,” *Arabica* 40:3 (1993), 287-344.

²² For a detailed reception history of Avicenna’s thought, including a helpful division of the Avicennan heritage into “mainstream Avicennism,” “illuminationist Avicennism,” and “traditional peripatetics, theologians, and mystics,” see Ahmad Al-Rahim, *The Creation of Philosophical Tradition: Biography and the Reception of Avicenna’s Philosophy from the Eleventh to the Fourteenth Century A.D.* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2018).

between essence and existence; the compelling interweaving of his philosophical system with his autobiography; his introduction of new philosophical genres, such as the allegorical thought experiment, “hints” (*ishāra*), and “pointers” (*tanbīh*); and his theory of mental objects, which supplies us with the famous phoenix example.

Avicenna’s conceptual and generic innovations influenced practically everyone who would, in turn, shape the landscape of Islamic thought in early modern South Asia, from Sohrawardī (d.1191) and his philosophy of illumination (*ḥikmat al-ishrāq*) to Ibn ‘Arabī (d.1240), the Sufī philosopher and poet from Andalusia whose doctrine of monism spread throughout the Islamic world. The phoenix too was caught up in this tidal wave of Avicennan thought, and, through channels both direct and diffuse, takes up residence in, for example, Sohrawardī’s philosophical allegories (which make copious use of mythical birds)²³ and Ibn ‘Arabī’s treatise on sainthood, *Kitāb ‘anqā mughrīb* (*The Book of the Wondrous Phoenix*).²⁴

With the twilight of the ‘Abbāsīd era (ca.900-1258) and in the following centuries, Persian lyric thinkers also hit conceptual pay-dirt in the philosophical example of the phoenix (now in its Iranian-inflected form), deploying it as a complex metaphor through which can they think hard about what work unreal-yet-real objects can do. Rūmī (d.1273), in the epigraph given

²³ See, for example, Sohrawardī’s treatises, such as *Risālat al-ṭayr* (*Treatise of the Birds*), *Ṣafīr-e Sīmorgh* (*The Sīmorgh’s Cry*), and *‘Aql-e sorkh* (*The Red Intellect*). These are included Shehāboddīn Yahyā Sohrawardī, *The Philosophical Allegories and Mystical Treatises: A Parallel Persian-English Text*, ed. and trans. Wheeler M. Thackston (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1999). Perhaps the most famous avian allegory in the Persian Sufī tradition is Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār’s *Conference of the Birds* (*Manṭeq al-ṭayr*). For a study of the “spiritual flight” depicted by ‘Aṭṭār, see Fatemeh Keshavarz, “Flight of the Birds: The Poetic Animating the Spiritual in ‘Aṭṭār’s *Manṭiq al-ṭayr*,” in *Attar and the Persian Sufi Tradition: The Art of Spiritual Flight*, eds. Leonard Lewisohn and Christopher Shackle (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 112-134.

²⁴ Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī, *Kitāb ‘anqā mughrīb*, in *Islamic Sainthood in the Fullness of Time: Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Book of the Fabulous Gryphon*, ed. and trans. Gerald T. Elmore (Leiden: Brill, 1999, 1998).

at the beginning of this chapter, locates the phoenix at the outermost edges of creation, where it functions something like a sentry posted to the farthest boundary of human understanding:

میدان که زمانه نقش سوداست
بیرون ز زمانه صورت ماست
زیرا قفسیست این زمانه
بیرون همه کوه قاف و عنقااست

Understand: time
is an image of melancholy.
Outside of time
is our true form.
For this worldly time
is a cage:
Outside – all
is Mount Qāf
and the phoenix.²⁵

Here the *'anqā*, living atop Mount Qāf, marks the limit of human consciousness, an encircling asymptote towards which the human soul strains and strives. The human mind beats its cognitive wings against the constraining cage of this-worldly temporal reality as it tries to catch a glimpse of “true” reality beyond the world, outside of time. Rūmī unfolds his phoenix in a distinctive mode tinged with melancholy, that affective quality which, for Rūmī and many other Persian-language Sufis, colors all human efforts to approach and transcend the limit of understanding. This specific attribute of melancholy (as opposed to ecstasy, or joy, or fear) arises from the great difficulty of the task, and the frequency – even the inevitability – of failure; and such despondency becomes a crucial feature that gains in strength and importance in the hands of later early modern Persian lyricists, including Bīdel. Even Ḥāfez, the Persian lyricist known for raucous rakishness and wild exuberant cheer – in other words, not a poet primarily known for

²⁵ *Mī-dān ke zamāne naqsh-e sōwdā-st / bīrūn ze zamāne šūrat-e mā-st // zīrā qāfas-ī-st īn zamāne / bīrūn hame kūh-e qāf o 'anqā-st.* Ghazal N^o: 365, lines 1-2. Rūmī, *Kolleyyāt*, 178-179.

giving way to melancholy – mentions the phoenix in the same breath as he acknowledges the vanity of any attempt to capture it:

*'anqā shekār mī-nashavad dām bāz chīn
k-ān jā hamīshe bād be dast ast dām rā*

عنقا شکار می نشود دام باز چین
کان جا همیشه باد به دست است دام را

The phoenix is captured by none;
fold up your hunting nets:
In that place, nothing
is ever caught
but the wind.²⁶

With each poet, the details, contexts, and conceptual baggage shouldered by the phoenix vary, but certain salient features remain remarkably fixed: (1) the phoenix defies death;²⁷ (2) it is both conceptually and natural-historically *singular*, a species of one; (3) it partakes of the events in the human historical world and in the world beyond; (4) it is liminal, imaginal, and

²⁶ Hāfez, *Dīvān*, I:30. There is a slight variant attested: “*Anqā shekār-e kas nashavad.*” For an analysis of phoenix references in Hāfez, see Bahā’ al-Dīn Khorramshāhī’s commentary on Ghazal N°26. Bahā’ al-Dīn Khorramshāhī, *Hāfez-nāme: sharh-e alfāz, a lām, mafāhīm-e kelīdī va abyāt-e doshvār-e Hāfez* (Tehrān: Sherkat-e Enteshārāt-e ‘Elmī va Farhangī, 1391SH, 1366SH) [2012CE, 1987CE], 275 et passim, esp. 277, and also the comments on Ghazal N°6 (ibid, 140 et passim).

²⁷ Austin O’Malley points out two important features of the phoenix (*qoqnos*, a synonym of *anqa*) in *Manteq al-tayr*: in ‘Aṭṭār’s poem, this bird is described as being the originator of music, and is associated also with the transmigration of souls (*tanāsokh*) and with India (Hindusim). On O’Malley’s reading, one of the most striking things about the phoenix in ‘Aṭṭār is not simply that it defies death, but that it *knows beforehand* of its own death. See Austin O’Malley, *Poetry and Pedagogy: The Homiletic Verse of Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār* (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2017), 137-177. For the persistence of this connection between the phoenix, music, and India, see for example the entry in Moḥammad Lāl Dehlavī’s 1899 dictionary, *Mo’ayyed al-fozalā*, which divides each letter into further subheadings for words of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish origin, respectively: the *anqā* (listed under the “Arabic” subsection of the letter *‘ayn*) is associated with music, the *chang* instrument, and also a specific mode of song. Moḥammad Lāl Dehlavī, *Mo’ayyed al-fozalā* (Kānpūr, 1899).

extraordinary. In short, the phoenix is perfectly suited to be a figuration for a maverick poet, a prophet, a “renewer” of Islam,²⁸ a Perfect Man.²⁹

Before turning to a more detailed consideration of Avicenna and Bīdel together, it may be useful to take one last turn through the labyrinth of definitions, philological speculations, origin-hunting, and cross-traditional resonances pertaining to the phoenix by following an eighteenth-century Indo-Persian source. The literary critic Āzād Belgrāmī composed his biographical compendium (*tazkere*), the *Khezāne-ye ‘āmere* (*The Imperial Treasury*), in 1762/1763, not long after Bīdel’s death in 1721; this text, then, is an example of an early modern Indo-Persian intellectual’s perception of the phoenix, and is representative of both the confidence and confusion on the subject current in South Asia at around Bīdel’s lifetime.

The topic of the phoenix arises in *The Imperial Treasury* as a tangent, in the course of Belgrāmī’s discussion of the odes by Khāqānī (d.ca.1186-1199), the classical Persian poet famous for both Persian and Arabic panegyric poems and for his difficult, paradox-embracing “mannerist” style.³⁰ Āzād Belgrāmī cites a couplet by Khāqānī (“I am that bird which kindles a fire / And throws itself upon the flames”),³¹ and notes that the bird in this couplet requires a

²⁸ A *mujaddid*, appearing once every 100, 500, or 1,000 years.

²⁹ According to the Islamic doctrine of the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*), there exists an individual whose enlightenment is perfect and complete. This Perfect Man is both the prototype and the telos of all creation, the pinnacle of perfection towards which humans must strive. This beginning-and-end coincidence is characteristic of the Sufī return-to-origins arc. Often the Perfect Man is Muḥammad, but interpretations vary with different thinkers (Ibn ‘Arabī, Jīlī, Jāmī, etc.). See for instance William Chittick, “Jāmī on the Perfect Man,” in *In Search of the Lost Heart: Explorations in Islamic Thought*, eds. Mohammed Rustom, Atif Khalil, and Kazuyo Murata, 143-152 (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2012).

³⁰ On Khāqānī, see Anna Livia Beelaert, “Kāqānī Šervānī ii. Works,” in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, XV/3, 523-529 (2011). Available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kaqani-servani-works> (accessed on 20 February 2019).

³¹ “*Man-am ān morgh k-āzar āfrūzad / kh’ishtan rā be āzar andāzad.*”

[منم آن مرغ کاذر افروزد / خویشتن را به آذر اندازد]

gloss. It is, he tells us, the *qaqnūs* (and he is careful to note down how *qaqnūs* is vocalized – suggesting that this term may not have been all that familiar in eighteenth-century South Asia). He also supplies an etymology, saying that in the language of Byzantium (*be loghat-e rūmī*), the *qaqnūs* is a bird with a pleasing, mellifluous voice whose beak has 360 perforations (a calendrically significant number) with an impressive lifespan of one thousand years. It has no mate (*ū rā joft namī-bāshad*), and reproduces in a wondrous manner (*be vajh-e gharīb-ī*) by parthenogenesis: at the time of its death, it gathers brush for a fire, sits upon the kindling, and begins to sing. Each perforation in its beak emits a unique melody, and the phoenix becomes intoxicated (*mast*) by the sounds of its own final symphonic performance. Beating its wings, the phoenix sets the kindling alight, and dies in a grandly theatrical act of self-immolation. An egg then appears amidst the fire’s ashes, and from this egg a new phoenix hatches. Belgrāmī rounds out his definition by gesturing towards the iterative continuity of the phoenix species, summed up by the Arabic phrase “and so on” (*halumma jarran*).

Belgrāmī then cites a couplet by the philologist and literary critic Khān-e Ārzū (d.1756), whom he invokes as a source of authority:³²

*bayže-ye qaqnūs³³ ze khākestar tamāshā kardanī-st
showq chūn sūzad tan-e ‘oshshāq rā del mī-shavad*

بیضه ققنوس ز خاکستر تماشا کردنیست

This and all subsequent citations from *The Imperial Treasury* are from Gholām ‘Alī Āzād Belgrāmī, *Khezāne-ye ‘āmere* (Tehrān: Pozhūheshgāh-e ‘Olūm-e Ensānī va Moṭāla‘āt-e Farhangī, 2011), 293-297.

³²Imaginative literature is often cited as source of authoritative information on exotic flora and fauna. As Thibaut d’Hubert notes, the seventeenth-century Bengali poet Ālāol turned to ‘Aṭṭār’s narrative poem *The Conference of the Birds* in order to define the phoenix. Thibaut d’Hubert, *In the Shade of the Golden Palace: Ālāol and Middle Bengali Poetics in Arakan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 105.

³³ The first hemistich only scans properly if the value of the second syllable of *qaqnūs* is shortened from overlong (-nūs, –) to long (-nos, –). Perhaps Ārzū found this an admissible breach of the *ramal* meter (*ramal-e moṣamman-e mahzūf*) because of the Greek etymology of *qaqnūs*, which, being neither Persian nor Arabic, may have been regarded as metrically flexible.

شوق چون سوزد تن عشاق را دل می‌شود

The phoenix's egg in the fire's ashes
is a thing worth seeing;
When passion burns lovers' bodies,
only hearts remain.

This couplet supplies the phoenix with both a Sufi Islamic and a Hindu interpretive context, and Belgrāmī explores the latter possibility towards the end of the passage. But first, Belgrāmī himself argues for the semantic and conceptual near-synonymity between the *qaqnūs*, the *samandar* (salamander), and the *'anqā*, referring to all three animals “inhabitants of the same nest” (*ham-āsheyān*). The salamander's home, Belgrāmī asserts, is in India, and its existence is “proven” by the testimony of the Zoroastrian community in Bandar Sūrat, Gujarat, described as keepers of the sacred thousand-year fire, who have *heard* of the salamander, but have not actually seen it: Belgrāmī is thus canny enough to provide a simultaneously plausible and patchy chain of authoritative transmission. Belgrāmī then shifts to a different set of associations, connecting the phoenix with the Hindu practice of *sati*, wherein a widow willingly steps onto her husband's funeral pyre – an act of exceptional moral virtue and performative brio (she wears her best clothes and jewelry).³⁴ In addition to self-immolation, what the phoenix and the widow

³⁴ *Sati* is a topic that sparks acute interest among Muslim Persian-language literati in South Asia since well before the early modern period: the first Persian narrative poem on *sati* is thought to be the *'Eshq-nāme* by Amīr Ḥasan Sejzī Dehlavī (d.1336). For an overview of the *sati* topos in early modern Persian literature, see Sunil Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2017) 185-187. Works of literature in Persian that describe the Hindu practice of *sati* are not so much concerned with understanding a Hindu tradition; rather, the Muslim authors seem interested in enfolding any and all suitable imagery into a pre-existing matrix of Sufi allegory. Thus the Hindu widow becomes a paragon of the Sufi “lover,” willingly destroying her physical self out of her ardent desire to become one with God (her beloved). For a more elastic example of the interaction between Islam and Hinduism, see Bruce Lawrence, *Shahrestani on the Indian Religions* (The Hague: Mouton, 1976), especially the discussion of the connection between the phoenix and metempsychosis (*tanāsokh*) and the difficulty in locating a precise source for this phoenix (126-127). For Shahrestānī, the *'anqā* explicitly represents cycles of creation and destruction and re-creation associated with Indic (Hindu) thought. As will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6, I suspect that Bīdel was drawn to certain non-Islamic Indic concepts, doctrines, and practices – metempsychosis, the infinity of times, breath control and meditation – not in order to declare open allegiance to them, but instead to deepen his own Islamic Sufi ideas. For example, the infinity of

have in common, Belgrāmī notes, is a motivation to destroy themselves because they have no mate (*az bī-joftī*). However, Belgrāmī draws attention to an important distinction between them: one is natural (*tabīʿī*), i.e., is found in nature (the widow), and the other is unnatural (*ghayr-tabīʿī*). Here he cites a couplet by Amīr Khosrow (d.1325) extolling the courage of the Hindu woman who willingly steps into the fire out of love of her deceased partner. Immediately following this, Belgrāmī reverts to his initial discussion of Khāqānī, explicating a rather obscure topos in a different couplet (the alleged causal link between the death of a certain species of worm or firefly, and a celestial event – the appearance of the star Canopus). Belgrāmī’s explication contains scrupulous philological references, including one to a couplet by Al-Mutanabbī (d.955), master of the classical Arabic ode; Belgrāmī even corrects Al-Mutanabbī’s most authoritative interpreter, Wāhidī.

The point of this rather pedantic reproduction of what is itself a rather pedantic early modern footnote is to illustrate how, in eighteenth-century Persianate South Asia, the phoenix is both impressively (and confusingly) overdetermined, and also frustratingly under-drawn. A mere passing reference to a phoenix in a poem prompts a learned linguist and capable scholar to apply (or perhaps to misapply) his literary-critical acuity and philological skills to admitted hearsay and barely tethered speculation. At this time in South Asia, then, it would seem that the lyric figure of the phoenix generates a semantic and hermeneutic surplus, leading to hypotheses that range across a dazzling multiplicity of languages, regions, and religious traditions – which blend into a brilliant cacophony of cross-cultural echoes, resonances, and unresolved ambiguities.

times provides a way of thinking about the virtuosically expanded single moment of time in Sufism (on this, see Chapter 4); similarly, a single human lifespan can contain many “cycles,” since an individual person continually creates, destroys, and re-creates their own world of the imagination. For Bīdel, all doctrine – even non-Islamic doctrine – is potential grist for the imagination’s mill, providing materials through which he traces an “inward turn.”

5.3 Vain Intelligibles: Avicenna's *'Anqā*

How is Avicenna relevant for Bīdel? Why is the monism of Ibn 'Arabī, with its proven influence on Islam in South Asia (refracted as it is through translations, commentaries, and reworkings across the centuries), not enough of an explanatory framework for understanding Bīdel's thought? I wish to emphasize that my attempt to bring Avicenna and Bīdel into conversation here is not historical, but hermeneutic. In other words, in this chapter, I do not present a carefully reconstructed, philologically unimpeachable chain of transmission, where I prove beyond a doubt that Bīdel was reading specific Avicennan texts. I wish only to argue that our understanding of the contours of Bīdel's thought and lyric style can be enriched by reading him in light of Avicenna, and that Avicenna can form another interpretive horizon against which certain features of Bīdel's thought become more clearly visible.

While the argument here is not strictly historical, nevertheless, historical continuity between Avicenna and Bīdel is, in theory, neither absurd nor implausible – however unprovable direct influence may be. Indeed, Ibn 'Arabī himself reverts time and again to Avicenna. For example, in his characteristically difficult prose work *Kitāb 'anqā mughrib* (*The Book of the Wondrous Phoenix*, composed in 1199), Ibn 'Arabī sets forth key aspects of his ideas on the subject of Islamic sainthood (*walāya*) and the mysterious figure who functions as “the seal of saints” (*khatm al-awliyā'*), an office he not-so-humbly assumes himself. Gerald T. Elmore, who has translated and edited this text, remarks that the text never explicitly states what precisely the role of its titular “wondrous phoenix” (*'anqā mughrib*) might be, although there are plenty of conjectures we might make about the analogical links between saints and phoenixes. For instance, saints, prophets, and phoenixes are extraordinary species of one.³⁵

³⁵ Ibn 'Arabī, *Kitāb 'anqā mughrib*. Gerald T. Elmore, *Islamic Sainthood in the Fullness of Time*, 183 et passim.

Premodern commentators on Ibn ‘Arabī do not do much to clarify the matter of the phoenix either. ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Jurjānī (d.1413)’s influential dictionary of philosophical terms, *Al-Ta’rīfāt (Definitions)*, which includes his explications of Ibn ‘Arabī’s *iṣṭilāḥāt* (terms of art), glosses the ‘*anqā* thus:

Al-‘anqā huwa l-habā’u l-ladhī fataḥa l-lāhu fī-hi ajsāda l-‘ālamī ma‘a anna-hu lā ‘ayna la-hu fī l-wujūdi illā bi ṣ-ṣūrati llātī futiḥat fī-hi wa inna-mā summiya bi l-‘anqā’i li-anna-hu yusma‘u bi-zikri-hi wa yu‘qalu wa lā wujūda la-hu fī ‘ayni-hi.³⁶

العنقاء هو الهباء الذي فتح الله فيه أجساد العالم مع انه لا عين له في الوجود الا بالصورة التي فتحت فيه و انما سمي بالعنقاء لانه يسمع بذكره و يعقل و لا وجود له في عينه.

The phoenix is the particulate matter [*habā’*] through which God disclosed the physical objects of the world. It has no essence in [its] existence, except in the form disclosed through it. It was called “phoenix” because it is heard as being mentioned [in this way], and it is understood to have no existence in its essence.

The language of this gnomic definition, with its chiasmic references to the phoenix’s essence and existence, goes back directly to Avicenna, who pioneers the important distinction between essence (‘*ayn*) and existence (*wujūd*). Robert Wisnovsky has shown how Ibn ‘Arabī and also Sohrawardī – thinkers who are frequently categorized as “mystics” diametrically opposed to Avicennan rationalism – are in fact quite directly responding to Avicenna’s philosophy, even as they pursue philosophical aims that are not at all in line with Avicennan ideas (e.g., Ibn ‘Arabī’s *wahdat al-wujūd*, the doctrine of the unity of being).³⁷ But what concerns us here is not post-Avicennan philosophers’ direct engagement with specific details of Avicenna’s system, but rather the post-Avicennan situation, characterized by Wisnovsky thus: “There seems to be a trajectory in the history of Islamic Avicennism, from Avicenna’s directly influencing subsequent

³⁶ ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Jurjānī, *Al-ta’rīfāt* (Istanbul: n.p., 1883), 109.

³⁷ Robert Wisnovsky, “Avicenna’s Islamic Reception,” in *Interpreting Avicenna: Critical Essays*, ed. Peter Adamson, 190-213 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 206-208.

thinkers to his influencing them indirectly.”³⁸ For Bīdel, living in South Asia more than six centuries following Avicenna’s death, what is important is not this or that specific doctrine per se – but rather what we might call the *ambient availability* of Avicennan ideas in the Islamic world from the 11th century through the early modern period. Here I examine the overall shape of the Avicennan system, with the aim of seeing how Bīdel can be interpreted within this ambient availability of the Avicennan system.

Among other things, Bīdel and Avicenna share a distinctive strategy of mobilizing autobiography in the service of philosophy. Their own lived lives are recorded and recoded as virtuosic examples of the attainment of certain truth, which is best disclosed through their own meticulously elaborated systems of thought and practice.³⁹ I think Bīdel can be read in a similar way. His thought too is extraordinarily consistent, rigorous, and systematic, although the grammar of systematicity is not based on the rules of syllogisms, or on the discovery of the hidden “middle term” – but rather on lyric logic, and on discoveries achieved through metaphor. It is also striking that both Avicenna and Bīdel consider themselves to be the best examples of successful lives lived by their principles and aims: there is a true reality, and the goal of virtuous human life is the attainment of this true reality – with bulletproof certainty (*yaqīn*), and each of their autobiographies “proves” this by way of extended case study. Both Bīdel and Avicenna

³⁸ Ibid, 207-208.

³⁹ Avicenna’s short autobiography is translated in Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition: Introduction to Reading Avicenna’s Philosophical Works* (Leiden: Brill, 2014, 1988), 11-19. Time and again, Avicenna stresses his ability to read, absorb, analyze, and verify the content of the Greek and Islamic philosophical traditions, and outlines his method of “finding the middle term” for syllogisms (*ḥads*). As he recounts in his autobiography, whenever he found himself unable to hit upon the middle term, Avicenna would pray at the local mosque, and would sometimes even keep working on the argument in his sleep. Thus, Avicenna’s autobiography is simultaneously a record of the events of his life, of his own education, of an ideal philosophical curriculum, and of the Avicennan method. This method for arriving at truth comprises the solitary interpretive practice of reading and rereading, of going over something exhaustively in one’s mind – something Bīdel also champions, with a different emphasis.

propose paths to certainty. In both cases, the path is systematic: it is informed by the logic of the syllogism (Avicenna), or the logic of metaphor (Bīdel), and consists in increasingly abstract reflections on one's own experience (*mushāhada*). The main difference lies in Avicenna's championing of the rational faculties, in contrast to Bīdel's commitment to the imagination and that which is imaginary (*khayāl*).

Another important point on which Bīdel and Avicenna diverge concerns the nature and scope of prophetic knowledge. Avicenna only goes so far as to say that the human intellect, at rare moments of perfect communion with the supernal world of the intellects (spheres), can experience a prophetic glimpse of the world-historical past and future. In other words, prophets can acquire knowledge of specific events that directly concern them.⁴⁰ Bīdel, on the other hand, has a more ambitious assessment of the noetic power of human faculties: in extraordinary circumstances, he argues that the human mind can reflect universal as well as particular truths, i.e., can come into knowledge that it is not simply world-historical, but *beyond time*.⁴¹ Another significant difference is in the degree to which Bīdel, like most Sufis, is concerned with the *affective* aspects attending the attainment of certain knowledge of transcendental truth. Bīdel is interested in the attainment of certain truth, but also wants to answer the question: what does certain truth *feel* like? Although Avicenna too, in a more restrained way, is interested in this,⁴²

⁴⁰ On Avicenna's treatment of prophets and their faculties, and for a strong argument cautioning against any ascription of mystical leanings to Avicenna, see Dimitri Gutas, "Intellect Without Limits: The Absence of Mysticism in Avicenna," in *Intellect et imagination dans la Philosophie Médiévale (Actes du XI^e Congrès International de Philosophie Médiévale de la S.I.E.P.M., Porto, du 26 au 31 août 2002)*, eds. M.C. Pacheco and J.F. Meirinhos, 351-372 (Turnhout: Brepols).

⁴¹ I discuss this in detail in Chapter 6 while analyzing Bīdel's account of his visionary dream and communion with Muḥammad.

⁴² Gutas, "Intellect without Limits," 360-363.

Bīdel's preoccupation with the affective qualities of knowledge and experience is no afterthought: it is a cornerstone of his system.

Among Avicenna's many field-changing contributions to the subsequent history of philosophy (Islamic and Western) are his ideas concerning the status of objects that exist in the mind, but not "out there" in the world. These objects are called *al-ṣuwar mawjūda fī l-nafs*, "forms that exist in the soul," or what Michot translates as "vain intelligibles."⁴³ The phoenix as an example of a vain intelligible occurs in several places throughout Avicenna's works, in the context of his discussion of modality. According to Avicenna, things in the world – existents – fall into three categories: their existence is either necessary (e.g., God), impossible (e.g., a round square), or contingent (e.g., human beings, and most things in the world). But there is also a curious class of object that could in theory exist, but doesn't – like the phoenix, which is not prohibited by logic from existing (like the round square), and *does* exist in our minds as we imagine it – just not in the world as such.⁴⁴ One of the most interesting questions Avicenna poses about vain intelligibles is: what happens to objects that exist in the human soul – that is, in the imagination – after the imaginer dies?⁴⁵

⁴³ For a critical edition and French translation of Avicenna's treatise dealing with vain intelligibles, and for the argument with the phoenix example, see Jean Michot, "L'Épître sur la disparition des formes intelligibles vaines après la mort d'Avicenne," in *Bulletin de philosophie médiévale* 29 (1987), 152-157. For some doubts about the authorship of this treatise, see Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 456. For a study of this treatise and its implications, see Deborah Black, "Avicenna on the Ontological and Epistemic Status of Fictional Beings," in *Documenti e Studi sulla Tradizione Filosofica Medievale* 8 (1997), 425-453. And on the interesting substitution by Avicenna of the "heptagonal house" example for the phoenix, see Thérèse-Anne Druart, "Avicennan Troubles: The Mysteries of the Heptagonal House and of the Phoenix," in *Tópicos: Revista de Filosofia* 42 (2012), 51-74. Kiki Kennedy-Day provides an overview of the phoenix's appearances in Avicenna's works. See Kiki Kennedy-Day, *Books of Definition in Islamic Philosophy: The Limit of Words* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 145-147; see also Sajjad Rizvi's review of this book, in the *Journal of Islamic Studies* 16.3 (2005), 362-366.

⁴⁴ I take this helpful summary of Avicenna on modality from Peter Adamson, *Philosophy in the Islamic World*, 121 et passim.

⁴⁵ On this, see Black, "Avicenna on the Ontological and Epistemological Status of Fictional Beings."

It is obvious why a compelling, coherent theory of mental objects and the role of the human imagination in producing, housing, and handling such objects would be of vital interest and importance to philosophically inclined poets. Certainly it is no surprise that this topic would hold great appeal for Bīdel, who devotes himself so thoroughly to the study of his own imagination and of that which is imaginary (*khayāl*). Again, I do not wish to suggest that Bīdel *directly* imports Avicenna’s notion of vain intelligibles. But what is interesting, and also, I believe, relevant and helpful, is the fact that Avicenna’s most famous *example* of a vain intelligible – the *‘anqā mughrīb*, that “wondrous phoenix” – goes on to enjoy what Paul de Man calls “a distressing way of lingering on with a life of [its] own:” distressing perhaps because one does not feel analytically comfortable with the idea that an example (which we might think is merely a decorative illustration of a weighty argument) should outlive, and even outshine, the specific proposition to which it is subordinated and to which it owes its existence. Isn’t this a bit like missing the engine for the hood ornament?

The function of such “famous” examples and their hierarchy-overturing relationship to the ideas they serve necessarily varies from philosopher to philosopher. While thinking about the significance of Avicenna’s flyaway phoenix, it is helpful to bear in mind another way in which Avicenna was a pioneer: in his pedagogical strategy of intentionally placing a significant interpretive burden upon his readers. From his famous thought experiments (e.g., the “floating man”) to his introduction of new philosophical prose genres like the “hint” and the “pointer” (*ishāra* and *tanbīh*), it is clear that Avicenna makes it a priority not simply to convey information, but to spark a specific cognitive process in readers’ minds, allowing them to arrive *actively*, not passively, at an understanding of that information.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ On thought experiments in Islamic philosophy generally, and in Avicenna specifically, see Jon McGinnis, “Experimental Thoughts and Thought Experiments in Medieval Islam,” in *The Routledge*

In the following analysis of important appearances of the phoenix across Bīdel’s oeuvre, these two main features of Avicenna’s phoenix example should be kept in mind: (1) the phoenix denotes a class of objects which do not exist in the world, but nevertheless partake of existence in the realm of the imagination; and (2) this example, along with Avicenna’s thought experiments, pointers, reminders, allegories, and allusions, is not just a perfunctory example – but is intended as a spur to further thought. In this sense, Avicenna’s phoenix performs a function quite different from that of a typical example in philosophy. It is not a footnote, or a superficial supplement to a declarative proposition. It invites the reader to *keep thinking*.

5.4 The Phoenix in Bīdel’s *Mount Sinai of Enlightenment* (Ṭūr-e ma‘refat), Lyric Poems, and *The Four Elements* (Chahār ‘onşor)

The phoenix (‘*anqā*) appears time and again throughout Bīdel’s works. It recurs with significant and emphatic insistence: it abounds in his lyric poetry, is scattered significantly throughout his long narrative poems (*masnavīs*), and plays a crucial role in the framing of his autobiography. In the following pages, the close reading of Bīdel’s phoenix examples builds towards a broader consideration of what value there is in reading Bīdel in the light of Avicenna, and offers some thoughts on the adjacencies, shared territories, and dividing boundaries between lyric poetry and philosophy.

Companion to Thought Experiments, ed. Michael T. Stewart, Yiftach Fehige, and James Robert Brown, 77-91 (London: Routledge, 2017). See also Taneli Kukkonen, “Ibn Sīnā and the Early History of Thought Experiments,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 52.3 (2014), 433-459. On *ishāra* (“pointer”) as both a genre and a rhetorical technique in philosophy and Sufism (i.e., allusive discourse), and on Avicenna’s use of *tanbīh* (“reminder” or “warning”) and the difference between them, see Jari Kaukua, *Self-Awareness in Islamic Philosophy: Avicenna and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 33-34. Kaukua notes that the “pointer” or “reminder” may be substituted for a true philosophical demonstration “for educational purposes in order to have the student arrive at the necessary conclusion by herself and in the course of doing so understand the matter at hand more thoroughly than would be the case had the teacher given a ready-made demonstration that could be learnt by heart” (33).

5.4.1 The Phoenix in *Mount Sinai of Enlightenment* (*Ṭūr-e ma' refat*)

Bīdel composed his long narrative poem (*masnavī*) *Mount Sinai of Enlightenment* (*Ṭūr-e ma' refat*) in an impressively brief two days,⁴⁷ while sojourning on the Bayrāt Mountains in central India during the arrival of the monsoon (the rainy season, *barshakāl*). The poem comprises a series of physical descriptions of Bīdel's natural surroundings, and each description lingers on a particular feature of the mountains (their moisture, flora, rocky surfaces, vistas, etc.). *Mount Sinai of Enlightenment* (1687/1688) and Bīdel's narrative poem *The Enchanted World of Wonder* (*Telesm-e hayrat*, composed in 1669) complement each other well, and the later poem can be seen as an elaboration – from a different perspective – on key ideas presented in the earlier poem. Both poems are creative, didactic explorations of specific philosophical problems, the elucidation of which serves to illuminate various aspects of Bīdel's most cherished issue: the role of the human imagination in the quest to attain certain knowledge of true reality. While *The Enchanted World of Wonder* looks inward to investigate the complex entanglements between the faculties, the senses, affect, and the body,⁴⁸ *Mount Sinai of Enlightenment*, in contrast, turns outward – showing how the real-historical natural world around us (in his case, the Bayrat Mountains of central India) can be enlisted to train the imagination. From opposite perspectives, both poems shed light on what specifically Bīdel means by *ta'ammol* (attentive slow reflection),

⁴⁷ There is a potentially interesting contrast or even tension here, given that this poem, as this chapter will argue, is an exposition of the practice attentive *slow* reflection. The speed of composition is perhaps facilitated by the genre: the *masnavī* is a long poem consisting of rhyming couplets (AA, BB, CC...). The meter is quite easy: ~ --- | ~ --- | ~ -- (→), *hazaj-e mosaddas-e mahzūf al-zarb* (Elwell-Sutton N^o2.1.11), *mafā'ilon mafā'ilon fa'ūlon*. Chapter 6 will make an argument that lyric poems, in contrast, function in a different way, where the process of trying to attain *lyric composure* is reflected in both the time taken by the reader to understand poem *and* in the time taken by the poet to compose and experience the poem himself.

⁴⁸ For a detailed discussion of this, see Chapter 6.

his practice of focusing and fine-tuning the imagination through a series of exercises in lyric attention.

In *Mount Sinai of Enlightenment*, the concatenated lyrical descriptions (lyrical, because compressed, metaphor-imbued, and non-narrative) of the Bayrat Mountains are explicitly construed as brilliant études, or exercises in *ta'ammol* – the practice of attentive slow reflection. This term is a key concept in Bīdel's theory of imagination. He uses it to refer to the practice of training one's attention on a particular object, minutely attending to its every feature through extended lyric description. The result of this imaginative act of attention is no less than the rewriting of reality, and the slowing down of time. At some point in the process of *ta'ammol*, the real object that serves as an occasion for lyric attention loses its concreteness, and becomes more properly an object of the mind. It is the raw material taken up by the imagination, out of which the imaginal world may be manipulated, constructed, and reconstructed. As this happens, the individual mind performing this feat of imagination is drawn into a higher-order form of contemplation – reflecting, for example, on how this beautiful yet deceptive worldly reality, made up of coruscating multiplicity, relates to “true reality” (i.e., God), which is defined by absolute unity.

At several points in *Mount Sinai of Enlightenment*, Bīdel directly addresses the important function of *ta'ammol*.⁴⁹ For instance:⁵⁰

ta'ammol har kojā āyīne gardīd
be ṭab'-e qaṭre gowhar mī-tavān dīd 14978

ta'ammol az namī baḥr-āfarīn ast

⁴⁹ For further examples, see T3.M1 – especially the following lines: 14976, 14977, 14981, 14987, 14990, 14991, 15158, 15162, 15516, 15631, and 15750.

⁵⁰ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, III:556. These two lines are from the section entitled “On the Clouds and Colors of the Bayrāt Mountains, A Wineglass Brimming with Brilliant Manifestations” (“*Kayfīyat-e abr o rang-e kohsār / paymāne-ye jelve-hā-ye sarshār*”).

تأمل هر کجا آینه گردید
به طبع قطره گوهر می‌توان دید

تأمل از نمی بحر آفرین است
جهانی کش نهایت نیست این است

When attentive slow reflection
becomes a mirror,
One can look
into a water droplet's nature
and see within – a pearl.

Attentive slow reflection
fashions oceans
from mere moisture:
If you seek a world
without end –
this is it.

Throughout the poem, Bīdel proceeds in an orderly fashion, composing a complete description of the mountain one vignette at a time, as if recording the unbroken journey of his slow and thoughtful gaze.⁵¹ When he reaches the mountain's pinnacle (*owj*), his description reaches an important summit of attention. Prior to this, all the descriptive passages have been rooted in real-historical reality; indeed, he even goes so far as to declare that one need not seek out the natural beauty of Badakhshan or Nīshāpūr when so much wonder-eliciting scenery is available in India.⁵² However, as he attempts to describe the mountain's highest peak, Bīdel's vision fails: he has reached a limit of what he can see. No one (or rather, no bird) is capable of reaching (and

⁵¹ Bīdel's description here is perhaps modeled after the Perso-Arabic thematic genre *wasf*, lit. "description," frequently ekphrastic. For an example of *wasf* from the Arabic tradition (in a poem by Imru' al-Qays, 6th c.), see Akiko Motoyoshi Sumi, *Description in Classical Arabic Poetry: Wasf, Ekphrasis, and Interarts Theory* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 33-47.

⁵² Lines 14678-4680. See T3.M1.1.

witnessing firsthand) this pinnacle, he says,⁵³ *except the phoenix* – which can reach this highest point on earth by virtue of a *wingless flight* (*parvāz-e bī-bāl*). And yet, “If one inquires after its trace – it is nowhere to be found / For there is no ladder to the summit of the sky.”⁵⁴ Thus, the phoenix is distinguished from all other birds on earth by being uniquely capable of catching a glimpse of the mountain’s peak by the power of *inner vision*. This passage presents the reader with most of the important Bīdelian attributes of the phoenix: Bīdel’s phoenix is associated with the imaginative exercise of *ta’ammol*, attentive slow reflection; it straddles this world and the world beyond; it is liminal, and virtuosic in its apprehension of this very liminality; and it represents – tacitly – the poet’s vision of his own (ideal) mind.

5.4.2 The Lyric Phoenix

The proliferation of philosophical significance attending the *‘anqā* is extended and deepened in the context of Bīdel’s lyric poems. As a figuration, the phoenix felicitously unites several of Bīdel’s distinctive preoccupations: the continuity of experiential states, self, and metempsychosis; atomism and *tajdīd al-khalq* (the perpetual renewal of creation); language, interpretation, and meaning; *khayāl* (that which is imaginary) and the *barzakh* (the liminal world of the imagination). Bīdel explores all of these topics systematically, from a variety of angles, and with remarkable consistency – a consistency that sometimes feels lost in the labyrinth of his dense lyric reasoning.

⁵³ *Be ḥayrat-gāh-e īn me ‘rāj-e qodrat / nadārad hīch ṭāyer bāl-e jor’at* (line 15087). Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, III:560.

⁵⁴ *Ze rāh-ash gar neshān porsī neshān kū / be owj-e qaṣr-e gardūn nardobān kū* (line 15090). Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, III:560. For the full passage, see T3.M1.8.

In his lyric poetry, Bīdel probes various aspects of the phoenix’s “vain” existence in several ways. One strategy is his clever paronomastic analysis of the word *‘anqā* into its constituent letters, which, when reassembled, add up to more than the sum of the parts – and yet also to nothing at all. The phoenix, in other words, exists *only* as a word, as a concept in the mind; and while it has no real outward form or true physical existence, it does still exist in a partial way, linguistically and imaginally. For Bīdel, it seems that the partial existence of the phoenix is made possible by a lyric overflow of meaning:

848.11 *tāleb-e fahm-e mosammā-yī ‘eyār-e esm gīr*
*šūrat-e ‘anqā hamīn joz ‘ayn o nūn o qāf nīst*⁵⁵

طالب فهم مسمایی عیار اسم گیر
 صورت عنقا همین جز عین و نون و قاف نیست

If you seek to understand
 the meaning of the signified,
 put the signifier to the test:
 The form of “**phoenix**” is nothing –
 but **PH** and **OE**,
 the **N** of “now,”
 the essence of the seeing “**I**,”
 the fabled alpine homeward “**X**.”

There is a positive aspect to this seemingly negative grammatical breakdown⁵⁶ of the phoenix’s ontological status: each letter, as it is isolated and articulated one by one, acquires a superadded

⁵⁵ Bīdel, *Kolleyāt*, I:393. For the full poem, see T2.G4. This poem is likely an indirect response to Ḥāfeẓ’s Ghazal N^o. 45, which contains “*‘anqā*,” “*qāf*,” “*‘ayn*,” and a partially concealed “*nūn*” (in “*konūn*”). The rhyme and refrain of Ḥāfeẓ’s poem is *-āfast* [is], and Bīdel’s is *-āfnīst* [is not]. Further evidence that Bīdel had this poem by Ḥāfeẓ in mind could include their shared vocabulary of minting and coins, purity or impurity of wine, authenticity and fraudulence (Ḥāfeẓ’s *qallāb*, *šarrāf*, *zarr-e sorkh* and Bīdel’s *qalb*, *rāyej*, *dokkān*, *‘eyār gīr*). Ḥāfeẓ, *Dīvān-e Ḥāfeẓ*, I:106-107.

⁵⁶ There are many examples of similar breakdowns, or orthographic-semantic analyses, of theologically significant words into letters that add up to more than the sum of their letters. See, for example, the *kāf* and *nūn* of the Arabic imperative *kun* (forming God’s command, “Be!” – which brings creation into being) as discussed in, for example, Maḥmūd Shabestārī’s early Persian Sufi treatise, *Golshan-e rāz* (*Rose Garden of Secrets*), ed. E.H. Whinfield (Islamabad: Iran Pakistan Institute of Persian Studies, 1978), 1. Shabestārī’s treatise establishes the Persian Sufi vocabulary of love, for which he is explicitly indebted to Aḥmad Ghazzālī (d.ca.1123-1126), especially his *Savāneh* (1114), a treatise on love that

lyric significance. Any close (or even half-attentive) reader of Persian poetry will instantly recognize these resonances. The letter ‘*ayn* (ع), originally an Arabic word, means “eye,” “essence,” and also the Arabic reflexive “self;” the letter *nūn* (ن) is an abbreviation of *konūn* / *aknūn*, “now” – that most significant span of time in Sufism, the present moment; and the letter *qāf*, both as a word and also as a grapheme (ق), indicates Mount Qāf – the legendary mountain range that forms the circular boundary of the known world. Bīdel, then, while ostensibly parsing the ‘*anqā* into its constituent letters to showcase the word’s emptiness,⁵⁷ ends up highlighting its excess of meaning:

عنا‘anqā = ع ‘ayn + ن nūn + ق qāf

A further layer of significance is found in that these three letters (‘*ayn*, *nūn*, *qāf*) habitually allude to eyes and vision in classical Persian poetry: each letter (in its independent or

marks a conscious turn in Sufism away from philosophy towards the literary, the lyrical, and the allusive. See especially Ghazzālī’s preface to the *Savāneh*, where he discusses the “indefiniteness of words” and frames his use of allusion (*eshāre*) as inevitable, since truth cannot be articulated in any straightforward literal way. Aḥmad Ghazzālī, *Savāneh* (*Spiritual Events*), ed. Helmut Ritter (Tehran: Markaz-e nashr-e dāneshgāhī, 1368SH[1989CE]), 1. There are also “unsolved” letter-clusters. The most famous of these are the *muqatta‘āt*, the undeciphered letters that induct twenty-six chapters of the Qur’ān. Their status as undecipherable (for humans, at least) is a commonplace of orthodox *tafsīr* (Qur’ānic exegesis) – so much so that the commentary of al-Sulamī (d.1021) was denounced by others precisely because he attempts to interpret these letters. On this, see Yaman Hikmet, *Prophetic Niche in the Virtuous City: The Concept of Hikmah in Early Islamic Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 128. Ibn ‘Arabī draws a significant paronomastic connection between *mosammā* (“signified,” “that which is given a name”) and *mo‘ammā* (“riddle”) – a pairing also found in Bīdel’s lyric poetry. In the classic “*mo‘ammā*” riddle, the solution often hinges on the pedantic reparsing of a word’s constituent letters. On *mo‘ammā*, *loghaz*, and other Persian riddle genres, see Gernot Windfuhr, “Riddles,” in *General Introduction to Persian Literature*, ed. J.T.P. de Bruijn, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), especially 315-318. See also Shams Anwari-Alhosseyni, *Logaz und Mo‘ammā: Eine Quellenstudie zur Kunstform des Persischen Rätsels* (Berlin: K. Schwartz, 1986).

⁵⁷ Annemarie Schimmel notes that a modern Turkish proverb preserves this idea of the phoenix existing only in name: “*İsmi var cismi yok*,” “She [the phoenix] has a name but not a body.” Annemarie Schimmel, *A Two-Colored Brocade: The Imagery of Persian Poetry* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 188.

unconnected form) is shaped like a round, oval eye; and *nūn* (ن) commonly alludes to the bowl containing kohl (eyeliner).⁵⁸ Thus, even as Bīdel appears to dismiss the phoenix as an ultimately nonexistent mere collection of letters – those very letters reassemble themselves allusively into further meanings which accrue to the phoenix. It both does and does not exist, and its existence – in the mind of the reader – depends upon that reader’s interpretive and imaginative acuity.

In this way, Bīdel is able to transform the apparent randomness of the letters comprising the noun (*esm*) “phoenix” into a cluster of significations (*mosammá*) brimming with meaning. And this discovery – or recovery – of what the phoenix indirectly signifies is the result of a process of close scrutiny and hyper-sensitive reading made possible by the lyric form. Indeed, the vocabulary here – *esm* (signifier), *mosammá* (signified) – is that of the Arabic grammarians, and it is likely that Bīdel takes aim here at the dry scholastic endeavors of academics who believe they can arrive at truth only by rational means.⁵⁹

This example is illustrative of Bīdel’s general approach to that which is imaginary (*khayāl*): objects of the imagination are worthy of study, even though they are illusory and formed by accidents of sound and grammar. More strongly put, mental objects *must* become the focus of steady lyric-interpretive attention in order to train the faculty of the imagination. Only then is it possible to recognize that while our use of language – the phoenix being the foremost

⁵⁸ On the lyric significance of each Arabic letter, see Schimmel, *A Two-Colored Brocade*, 228-244.

⁵⁹ Grammar and logic are co-implicated from the earliest period of Islamic philosophy, when Aristotle’s *Categories* and other important Greek works on logic and grammar were being translated into Arabic in Baghdad. Even when logic and grammar were opposed to each other, they were considered worthy opponents: see, for instance, in the famous tenth-century debate between Abū Bishr Mattā and Abū Sa‘īd al-Sīrāfi, in which the former argued for the superiority of logic and the latter for the superiority of Arabic grammar. On this debate, see David Samuel Margoliouth, “The Discussion Between Abu Bishr Matta and Abu Sa’id al-Sirafi on the Merits of Logic and Grammar,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 37 (1905), 79-129.

example – may break down into “nothing real,” nevertheless, visionary discovery of allusive truths through language may still be possible.

In another poem,⁶⁰ the phoenix (‘*anqā*) is the poem’s very refrain, and as such, it makes thirteen appearances in this twelve-line *ghazal*. Unlike the previous poem, which was concerned with the phoenix’s vanishingly marginal status of existence, the opening line here emphasizes the supernatural and wondrous *excess* of existence the phoenix is able to partake of, given its unique capacity for self-renewal:

114.1 *tajdīd(-e) seḥr-kār(-)ī-st dar jelve-zār-e ‘anqā*
ṣad gardesh ast o yek gol(-)rang-e bahār-e ‘ānqā

تجدید سحر کاری است در جلوه زار عنقا
صد گردش است و یک گل رنگ بهار عنقا

Perpetual renewal is the craft of magic
in the brilliant splendor
of the phoenix.
One hundred turns, a single rose:
these are the vernal colors
of the phoenix.

Here, the phoenix is described as a miraculous species of one: constantly renewing itself, it is still but one and the same being. The scholastic term *tajdīd* – renewal – signals a parallel between this ever-rejuvenating yet never-changing lifespan of the phoenix and the nature of creation as a whole. According to the occasionalist argument in Islamic scholastic theology, the universe is re-created by God at every indivisible atomic moment of time. It may perhaps be heretical, then, to attribute to the phoenix the capacity to *enact* such renewal, and here the word “magic” may alleviate some of the theological pressure, for since the phoenix does not really exist, its continual self-recreation is an inferior creative act – a lower register of supernatural

⁶⁰ For the full poem, see T2.G3.

action, as opposed to true (non-magical, non-illusory) divine creation. Bīdel defines human existence by its proximity to that of the phoenix (once again, opposing it to God's true reality):

114.2 *har chand now-bahār-īm yā jūsh-e lāle-zār-īm*
bāgh-e degar nadārīm ghayr az kenār-e 'anqā

هر چند نوبهاریم یا جوش لاله زاریم
باغ دگر نداریم غیر از کنار عنقا

Although we are the newest spring,
the boiling blooming of the tulip field,
We possess no garden
except by the side of the phoenix.

Taking up a familiar theme, Bīdel asserts the blooming, boiling beauty of the world – only to repeal it by emphasizing its unreality. There is surely a pun hidden in this “side of the phoenix,” or “the embrace of the phoenix,” for the word “side” (*kenār*) contains the Arabic word for “fire” (*nār*). All the agitation of colorful lived experience is ultimately subsumed in the brilliantly illusory environment of the phoenix's embrace. This poem, with its insistent refrain and thematic focus on the phoenix itself, allows Bīdel to extend and multiply his approaches to the phoenix, modulating it with darker tones. As earlier, it is a stand-in for the first-personal perspective of the poet, but also a powerful descriptive resource for the entire environment of human experience. “This year, next year, last year,” (in line 3 of the same poem) “the phoenix wore out calendars.” There is no triumph here. It is rather a mark of defeat that the phoenix persists thus, immortal in a way, yet does not transcend time. Matters become even worse for the phoenix in line 7:

114.7 *ham-ṣoḥbat-īm o mā rā az yek-degar khabar nīst*
'anqā che vā-nemāyad gar shod dochār-e 'anqā

هم صحبتیم و ما را از یکدگر خبر نیست
عنقا چه وا نماید گر شد دچار عنقا

We are partners in conversation,
yet we know nothing

of each other.
What is re-revealed
in the encounter, face to face,
between phoenix and phoenix?

The clever doubling of the word *'anqā* in the second hemistich (it is both the first and last word) is further emphasized by their “encounter,” *dochār*, literally (“two-four”) – a mirror-doubling that happens when something sees something else face to face, often an uncomfortable encounter. (This is slightly ironic, since the two *'anqās* are separated by all the words in the hemistich.) Multiplication of self is another form of the phoenix’s recreative magic – but here, it is emphatically declared to be useless.

The vanity of any human attempt to attain certain knowledge of true reality (*tahqīq*, mentioned explicitly in line 3) is described again, insistently, in line 8: “The unattainableness of meanings rendered us nonexistent [*ma 'dūm*]. / What else can one attain, waiting for the phoenix?” It would seem that the best one can hope for, then, is recognition of one’s own essential nonexistence. And the figure of the phoenix is a necessary and important mechanism through which such a recognition may come about. The penultimate line of the poem (frequently a conceptually weighty line in Bīdel’s *ghazals*) states this idea unambiguously:

114.11 *goftīm bī-neshānī rang-ī be jelve ārad*
mā rā nemūd bar mā āyīne-dār-e 'anqā

گفتیم بی‌نشانی رنگی به جلوه آرد
ما را نمود بر ما آینه‌دار عنقا

We said: That which has no trace
brings color
into splendid being.
We were displayed
before ourselves
by the mirror-holding phoenix.

And in the final line, Bīdel declares his allegiance to the phoenix, describing himself as attending the phoenix’s graveside (an unexpected image, since the phoenix is never really *dead*) as a devotee would do in a pious act of discipleship at the tomb of a master:

114.12 *dar khāk-dān-e ‘ebrat ghayr az nafas che dārīm*
por-rowshanā-st Bīdel sham ‘-e mazār-e ‘anqā

در خاکدان عبرت غیر از نفس چه داریم
 پر روشناسست بیدل شمع مزار عنقا

In the dustbowl of this world,
 what sign of danger
 do we have – but breath?
 Bīdel: the graveside candle
 of the phoenix
 is a luminous wingful of light.

How is the idea of breath relevant for the phoenix? Chapter 6 embarks on a more thorough analysis of Bīdel’s complex ideas about infinity vs. finite time, and the important ethical “warning” (in the sense of a lesson, or example) one can glean from the unbroken concatenation of breaths. This unexamined life is contrasted with the controlled effort one can make to bring time, and breath, to an infinitely expanding point of stillness, through practices of meditation that lead, ideally, to perfect comprehension of true reality. The double, perhaps even triple pun in the final hemistich ensures that Bīdel will not divulge this lesson in a straightforward way. One must put in hard interpretive work to even begin to understand all of that line’s semantic valences: *p-r-r-w-sh-n-ā-s-t* can be vocalized as several different words,⁶¹ all of which resonate with the phoenix as it has been presented in this poem: *par* (wing), *por* (full), *rū-shenās* (famous; one whose “face is recognized”), *roushanā* (splendor, radiance, light). The danger posed by breath is paradoxically doubled: on the one hand, there is the danger of

⁶¹ The following possible puns depend entirely on the poem being *read* and not heard.

ceaseless re-creation, which, however, beautiful, lacks purpose; and on the other hand, as the final image suggests, a single breath could snuff out the graveside candle altogether – an interesting echo of *nirvāṇa*, that elusive “sense of an ending” encapsulated by the iconic image in the Pali Buddhist tradition of a candle being blown out.⁶² This former state is truly dangerous from a Sufi ethical standpoint; but while the latter might appear dangerous to the unenlightened, that kind of cessation is actually worth striving for. Bīdel, of course, does not come right out and say this. As with so many difficult passages in his corpus, this one must be interpreted in light of his entire oeuvre. For instance, in another poem (“The Sohravardī Ghazal”),⁶³ Bīdel presents breath in this way:

510.5 *pā-māl-e ghārat-e nafas-e sard(-e) ya’s nīst*
ṣoḥḥ-e morād-e mā ke gol-ash nā-damīdan ast

پامال غارت نفس سرد یاس نیست
 صبح مراد ما که گلش نادمیدن است

To be trampled by the plundering march
 of cold breaths is no hopeless state:

⁶² Steven Collins, *Nirvana: Concept, Imagery, Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 61 and 83.

⁶³ For the full poem, see T2.G5. I have tentatively called it “The Sohravardī Ghazal” because there occur several words and images in this poem that make their unique combination stand out among Bīdel’s *ghazals*, and these words and images are very striking verbatim echoes of Sohravardī’s allegorical treatise *The Red Intellect* (*‘Aql-e sorkh*). The following words cited from Sohravardī’s treatise, all of which also occur in Bīdel’s poem, are taken from Shehāb al-Dīn Yahyā Sohravardī, *The Philosophical Allegories and Mystical Treatises: A Parallel Persian-English Text*, ed. and trans. Wheeler M. Thackston (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1999): a hunting trap (*dām*) and bird seeds put in that trap as bait (*dāne*), both on 20; bird and nests, 20 et passim; Mount Qāf (described as being one of the wonders of the world, everyone’s original home, where everyone strives to return; encircling the known world, yet they are all but impossible to reach, “like a compass, travellign in circles around the same point”), 22 et passim; crawling (*khazīdan*), 21; seeing the friend/beloved (*dīdār-e dūst*), 20; fetters, bonds (*band*), 21, 22, et passim; constantly, perpetually (lit. “bound” to do something, *payvaste*), 24; seeing, opening one’s eyes (*dīde, dīdan, negarīstan, dīde bāz kardan*), 21; the difficulty of the road to Mount Qāf (*rāh doshvār ast*), 23; one can also compare the significantly repeated *borīdan* (to cut) that appears in the first and last lines of Bīdel’s poem to the question posed in the middle of the treatise as to whether one can reach Mount Qāf by making a hole in the mountainside (23). The *‘anqā* is not mentioned by name in the treatise, nor does Sohravardī dwell on breath: these are Bīdel’s signature extensions of Sohravardī’s theme of how to free oneself from the fetters of sense-perception and mental faculties in order to experience true reality.

It is the dawn of our desired end,
the dawn whose rose
is not to breathe
not to bloom
not to break.

Thus, learning the lesson of breaths – training oneself to halt their endless march – is both possible, and desirable. The following line transitions from breath to the realm of the imaginary and the fantastic, exhorting the reader to realize that the whole world is but a tale, one that must be attended to:

510.6 *bar har-che dīde vā-konī az kh'īsh rafte gīr*
afsāne-vār dīdan-e 'ālam shanīdan ast

بر هرچه دیده واکنی از خویش رفته گیر
افسانه‌وار دیدن عالم شنیدن است

Everything you see with open eyes –
take it as leaving,
as passing from itself.
Like a tale,
the beholding of the world
must be heard.

These two lines set up the next couplet, in which the phoenix is presented as an ideal of how one can extricate oneself – with great labor, courting danger – from the unreal fairy tale of this worldly existence, by attempting to reach the farthest limit of knowledge, experience, and reality represented by Mount Qāf:

510.7 *tā ḥeṣṣ āb o dāne be dām-at nayafkanad*
'anqā-ṣefat be qāf-e qanā 'at khazīdan ast

تا حرص آب و دانه به دامت نیفکند
عنقا صفت به قاف قناعت خزیدن است

Lest cunning greed place water
and luring seeds into its snares
to catch you,
Like a phoenix you must crawl
towards Mount Qāf,

contentment's fabled peak.

The poem ends with a rhetorically forceful comparison of how difficult such a spiritual journey can be, and how different an ethically mindful life is from a ordinary unenlightened existence:

510.12 *sa 'y-e qadam kojā vo ṭarīq-e fanā kojā*
Bīdel be khanjar-e nafas īn rah borīdan ast

سعی قدم کجا و طریق فنا کجا
بییدل به خنجر نفس این ره بریدن است

How different, how far apart
are the road paved by heavy human footsteps
and the Sufi path to death of self.
Bīdel: you must clear this path:
cut it
with the knife of breath.

In this poem, and in many others as well, the phoenix is a figuration for the striving ethical self, whose aim is no less than going “home” – back to God – by embarking on a difficult journey to the ends of the known world. In another poem,⁶⁴ Bīdel describes the perils of this journey, and the inevitable failures attending it:

300.8 *sabok-tāz ast showq ammā man ān sang-e zamīn-gīr-am*
ke dar rang-e sharar az kh^vīsh khālī mī-konam jā rā

سبکتازی است شوق اما من آن سنگ زمینگیرم
که در رنگ شرر از خویش خالی می‌کنم جا را

Passion is a light, swift rider –
but I am stone,
paralyzed, earthbound;
I vacate my place of self,
I leave it empty –
in a spark of color.

And yet, even amidst such failure, there is hope: hope in the form of the phoenix:

300.11 *ze shūr-e bī-neshānī bī-neshānī shod neshān Bīdel*
ke gom gashtan ze gom gashtan borūn āvard 'anqā rā

⁶⁴ For the full poem, see T2.G6.

ز شور بی‌نشانی بی‌نشانی شد نشان بیدل
که گم گشتن ز گم گشتن برون آورد عنقا را

In the chaos of tracelessness, Bīdel,
tracelessness
left a mark,
became a trace:
By getting lost,
getting lost
produced
a phoenix.

Just as the phoenix is a metaphysical paradox, an odd yet luminous example that functions like a heuristic spark, Bīdel too can become enlightened through lyric contemplation of the phoenix. He can even retrieve some measure of success despite the overwhelming dominance of failure. Again, the meaning that radiates lyrically from these two syntactically identical hemistichs outperforms the work of logic (how can not-X produce X?) by asserting that there *is* something positive, something deeply real and true, about coming to realize one's own unreality.

In another poem,⁶⁵ Bīdel once more forges and foregrounds the connection between the human being trapped by breath, and the similarly caged phoenix:

531.1 *to khod shakhs-e nafas-kh(ū)yī-ī ke bā del nīst payvand-at*
kodām afsūn ze nayrang-e havas afkand dar band-at

تو خود شخص نفس‌خویی که با دل نیست پیوندت
کدام افسون ز نیرنگ هوس افکند در بندت

You are a creature defined by breath,
bound in no way
to the heart.
What fraud, what trick
of lowly lust's deception
has thrown you into chains?

531.4 *nadārad daftar-e 'anqā savād-e mā-vo-man enshā*
konad dīvāne-ye hastī khayālāt-e 'adam chand-at

ندارد دفتر عنقا سواد ما و من انشا

⁶⁵ For the full poem, see T2.G7.

The volume of the phoenix
is not composed from any early draft
of “we-and-I:”
How long will imagined nonexistents
collect you, bookbind you,
mad with existence?

If it is the human plight to be chained by breath to physical life in this world, condemned to an illusory existence, then how are these bonds to be broken? The phoenix in this poem functions at once like an emblem and an aspirational limit: humans are trapped, as the phoenix is trapped, *between* realms of existence, yet both are capable of exertion, and can try to remove themselves from the realm of illusion by flying towards true reality. And yet, this is by no means an endeavor assured of success. Many attempts (rough drafts?) of this endeavor are required, and even then, one can be driven mad by trying to imagine nonexistent things – a madness which, paradoxically, only fastens the person to the illusory physical world more securely. Perhaps the ‘*anqā*’s advantage is that, being a species of one, it was already ahead of the game in divesting itself of plural pronouns, whereas the human situation is still characterized by the confusing conjunction of “I-and-we.” This metaphor of the human lifetime as a manuscript is further extended and developed in Bīdel’s autobiography, where it is also associated with the phoenix.

5.4.3 The Phoenix in Bīdel’s *Chahār ‘onşor* (*The Four Elements: An Autobiography*)

The phoenix lurks conspicuously at both the beginning and the end of Bīdel’s remarkable philosophical autobiography, *The Four Elements*, and it could be argued that the figuration of the phoenix functions as an important framing device for the entire text. In the following passage, Bīdel describes his own coming-into-the-world in this way, with the phoenix presiding over (or even residing within) his very birth:

*Pūshīde mabād ke chūn paykar-e bī-neshān-e qāderīyat kesvat-e āb-rang-e ‘obūdīyat be khod pūshīd va safā-ye āyīne-ye haqīqat bā rang-e kodūrat-e majāz jūshīd ‘anqā-ye āsheyān-e eṭlāq dar qafas-e andīshe-ye taqyīd ofīūd va āhang-e parde-e ‘aynīyat neqāb-e qānūn-e ghayrīyat goshād.*⁶⁶

پوشیده مباد که چون پیکر بی‌نشان قادریت کسوت آبرنگ عبودیت به خود پوشید و صفای آینه حقیقت با رنگ کدورت مجاز جوشید **عنقای** آشیان اطلاق در **قفس اندیشه تقیید افتاد** و آهنگ پرده عینیت نقاب قانون غیریت گشاد.

May it not be concealed that, when the traceless form of Divine Powerfulness clothed itself in the brilliant garments of Servitude, and when the pure, clear-polished mirror of true reality boiled and seethed with the colors of metaphor’s impure opacity, **the phoenix** left its nest of freedom and **was trapped in the cage of thought’s imprisonment**, and the melody of the preparatory tuning for the musical mode of Sameness unveiled the harp of Otherness.

As has been discussed in Chapter 4, Bīdel’s autobiography is intentionally, relentlessly philosophical. Perhaps it was the philosophical burden of narrating one’s life in this way – never being content with simple description, committed to the constant interrogation and rigorous analysis of one’s own origins – that spurred Bīdel’s interest in the “impossible experiences” of infancy, nursing, first sensations which follow immediately after this description of the soul becoming “caged” in existence like a phoenix.⁶⁷ His extraordinary account of coming-into-consciousness continues chronologically, proceeding from earliest sensations to breastfeeding:

Moddat-ī savād-e noskhe-ye sho ‘ūr šūrat-e bayāz-ī dāsht va raqam-e khāme-ye edrāk hamān daftar-e sādegī mī-negāshht...Negāh-ī būd chūn hayrat-e āyīne bī-neyāz az

⁶⁶ Bīdel, *Kolleyāt*, IV:9. For the full passage in *Chahār ‘onşor* where Bīdel describes his own birth, see T1.E1.2. For a discussion of this passage, see also Chapter 3.

⁶⁷ For other fascinating early modern examples of lyrical and autobiographical articulations of impossible-to-remember early-life experiences in the Western tradition, see Timothy Harrison, *Impossible Experience: Consciousness and Natality in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, forthcoming). We are co-authoring an article in which we compare how Thomas Traherne and Bīdel – living worlds apart, not at all in contact – came to compose strikingly similar accounts of infant experience (being in the womb, birth, first sensations, breastfeeding) at the same moment in the seventeenth century. We show how both Bīdel and Traherne receive key ideas from Neoplatonic thought and Avicenna’s empirical epistemology, and how they embed important arguments about experience within lyrical-prose autobiographical narratives of early childhood. (Timothy Harrison and Jane Mikkelsen, “Fabula Rasa: Narratives of Infant Experience in the Philosophical Autobiographies of Thomas Traherne (d.1674) and Bīdel of Delhi (d.1720),” in progress).

*jowhar-shenāsī va hūsh-ī [būd] be rang-e maṭla ‘-e ṣobḥ monazzah az kodūrat-e eqtebāsī.*⁶⁸

مدتی سواد نسخه شعور صورت بیاضی داشت و رقم خامه ادراک همان دفتر سادگی می‌نگاشت...نگاهی بود چون حیرت آینه بی‌نیاز از جوهرشناسی و هوشی ب رنگ مطلع صبح منزله از کدورت اقتباسی.

For a time, the black rough-draft of sense-perception’s manuscript had the form of a clean white commonplace-book, and the notations made by the pen of apprehension were inscribed into that very volume of pure blank whiteness... There was a gaze. It was like the wonder of a mirror that reflects, unencumbered by knowledge of its essential substance. There was a conscious mind. It was the color of the first point rising on dawn’s opening line, free of all interpolated impurity.

This is a beautifully entwined set of metaphors: at dawn, the sun rises above the horizon. At this moment of its first appearance, it is but a small, pure “point” of light upon this horizontal “ruled line” of the manuscript of the newly visible world. It is entirely singular, and original – it has not “borrowed,” or “interpolated,” any dark colors and multifarious qualities from the surrounding world. This interlacing imagery of the rising and the craft of lyric is particularly seamless and successful, since the technical term for “opening line of a lyric poem” is *maṭla* ‘ – literally, “the place of (the sun’s) rising.” What is one to do with this blank slate of infant consciousness? Towards the end of the prefaces to *Chahār ‘onṣor*, Bīdel gives us a hint of one of the most important aims of conscious human life: the messiness and the chaos of what confronts our senses *is worth experiencing* (and note the avian vocabulary):

Be moṭāla ‘e-ye īn ovrāq ke ma ‘ānī az shekaste-bālān-e olfat-e taḥrīr-e ū-st, parvāz-e āsheyānī moshāhade nemūdan ast; va bar fahm-e īn makātīb ke ḥaqāyeq dar ṭelesm-e nesbat-e khoṭūṭ-ash āsūde ast, bar jowlān-e zamīn-gīrī cheshm goshūdan [ast].

به مطالعه این اوراق که معانی از شکسته‌بالان الفت تحریر اوست پرواز آشیانی مشاهده نمودن است؛ و بر فهم این مکاتیب که حقایق در طلسم نسبت خطوطش آسوده است بر جولان زمینگیری چشم گشودن.

Careful study of these pages (wherein meanings arise from those whose wings have been broken by the intimacy of composition)⁶⁹ reveals a **nestward flight**

⁶⁸ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, IV:11.

⁶⁹ This refers at least in part literally to birds, whose wings have been broken and fashioned into quills.

worth experiencing. Scrupulous comprehension of these jottings (wherein true realities repose inside the enchanted worlds of concatenated letters) present **earthbound ventures worth beholding.**⁷⁰

The phrases in this passage given in **bold** (my own) pithily and importantly summarize Bīdel’s purpose in composing this autobiography: to present a creative reconstruction, didactic presentation, and philosophically ambitious higher-order reflection upon experience. In other words, he is not at all primarily concerned with preserving for posterity the idiosyncratic and unique experiences of his concrete, historical, individual life in the world (though some “facts,” scanty as they are, do present themselves); instead, he gives us *experience as such* – in the most philosophically robust, universal sense of the word. Both verbs used here, *moshāhade kardan* and *cheshm goshūdan*, could be translated simply as “seeing:” the former is literally “witnessing” and the latter, “opening the eyes;” but to do so would be to miss what I think is one of Bīdel’s most vital and central arguments. *Moshāhade* (*mushāhada* in Arabic) as a technical term in Islamic philosophy (for example, in Avicennan metaphysics) explicitly denotes “experience” – both at the crude level of perceiving objects in the world, and also in the higher-order sense of experiencing the movements of the mind.⁷¹ If “experience” in the Avicennan sense necessarily entails repetition, and involves second-order self-awareness, then Bīdel’s presentation of his life in the form of a manuscript to be interpreted *as an actual manuscript to be interpreted by readers* can be said to afford something like a third-order sense of experience:

⁷⁰ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, IV:7. For the full translation of this prefatory section in *Chahār ‘onşor*, see T1.P2.

⁷¹ For a detailed description of the term, concept, and pivotal role of experience (*mushāhada*) in Avicenna’s empirical epistemology, see Dimitri Gutas, “The Empiricism of Avicenna,” *Oriens* 40.2 (2012), 391-436. Gutas notes here the remarkable resemblance between Avicenna’s *mushāhada* and Locke’s “experience” (ibid, 396).

a narrative-philosophical meditation on the accumulation in time of one's self-awareness of one's experience.

Reflecting on his experiences and sorting them into a systematic scheme is the structuring aim of Bīdel's lifetime, and the phoenix functions as one of the most important master metaphors with which Bīdel theorizes this endeavor. It would be easy to say that the phoenix is simply a tidy way of articulating the ideal end of Sufism – coming to realize one's ultimate nonexistence. But there seems to be more at stake here. Bīdel's phoenix is no static, theoretical object: it is a *specific* creature, one that undertakes an extraordinary journey homeward to its nest on Mount Qāf. An object, as Avicenna tells us, whose ontological status confines it to the imagination, the phoenix perfectly fits Bīdel's lifelong preoccupation with exploring his own inward realm, the realm of that which is imaginary (*khayāl*), in order to discover – or recover – truth.

Is Bīdel's quest successful? Does the phoenix reach its nest? The phoenix reappears in the final lines of the poem (*naẓm*) that rounds out the autobiography's *khāteme* (conclusion):

*hīch-kas chūn man asīr-e vahm-e īn-o-ān mabād
tā nafas par mī-zanad bā khejlat oftād(e) ast kār*

*bī-par-o-bālī jonūn-parvāz-e 'anqā hemmat-ī-st
ay Karīm īn hīch-e hīch-e hīch rā ma 'zūr dār⁷²*

هیچ کس چون من اسیر وهم این و آن مباد
تا نفس پر می‌زند با خجلت افتاده است کار

بی پروبالی جنون پرواز عنقا همتی ست
ای کریم این هیچ هیچ را معذور دار

May no one be like me, held captive –
trapped in the illusion
of this-and-that;
So long as breath has wings and flies,
it must fall in

⁷² Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, IV:305. For the full poem, which is given at the end of the section “Conclusion of the Fourth Element,” see T1.E4.25.

with shame.

The 'anqā's wingless flight of madness
is an ambitious aim;
Generous Lord, please forgive
this nothing's
 nothing's
 nothing.

As is typical of Bīdel, he acknowledges here both the failure of his endeavor as well as the virtuosity of its having been attempted at all. There is perhaps a bit of a hidden boast in the final burst of “nothings” than first meets the eye: with his treble⁷³ self-effacement in the concluding signature, he identifies himself outright, with triumphant precision, as a creature as “vain” as the phoenix.

5.5 Lyric as Philosophy in Metaphor

Recent scholarly reappraisals have shown conclusively that it would be a mistake to take Avicenna as an *avant la lettre* Sufi, and attaining clarity on this point is certainly essential to contemporary Avicenna studies (perhaps especially when what is at stake is establishing Avicenna firmly as an Aristotelian philosopher worthy of study within the history of Western thought). But the historical fact of confusion on the matter of Avicenna's mystical inclinations (or lack thereof) can also be useful as a form of evidence for early modern studies. The incredibly close overlap in the set of concerns, aims, and ideas between Islamic philosophy,

⁷³ Such tripling of important words in Persian verse is attested throughout the classical canon. To cite just a few examples: Amīr Khosrow of Delhi (d. 1325) concludes the preface to his collection of verse, *Ghorrat al-khamāl* with this hemistich: “*Nā-tamām-am nā-tamām-am nā-tamām*” (“I am imperfect, I am imperfect, imperfect”). Amīr Khosrow, *Ghorrat al-kamāl* (Patna: Edāre-ye taḥqīqāt-e ‘arabī va fārsī, 1988) 42. See also Ghazal N°2712 by Rūmī, where the second hemistich of each couplet contains such triplets, such as “*kojā-yī to kojā-yī to kojā-yī*” (“Where are you? Where? Where?”). Rūmī, *Kolleyyāt*, 1006. For an English translation of this poem, see Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, *Rumi: Swallowing the Sun*, trans. Franklin D. Lewis (Oxford: Oneworld, 2008), 73.

Sufism, and lyric thought is a fact which, if forgotten, comes at great cost to our understanding of a poet as systematically ambitious and conceptually sophisticated as Bīdel. To draw a sharp line of demarcation between “dry” rationalist Aristotelian philosophy and “intoxicated” ecstatic lyric Sufism is to foreclose on many productive and rich ways in which these two forms of discourse interact. In the early modern Islamicate world, it is clear that philosophy and lyric were “things which interlend and inter-owe one another their essence,” to borrow a phrase from Florio’s Montaigne. How do we define the human soul? What are its capacities and limitations, its ideal ends? Does time exist, and if so, how is it felt and measured? How wide is the scope of human action? What can we know, and how can we be certain of our knowledge? These subjects are (today) usually associated with systematic forms of prose discourse. And yet, early modern Persianate intellectuals articulated precisely such questions by turning to lyric in order to reflect on both the *what* and the *how* of Islamic thought. Knowing the contours of one’s own mind; structuring the chaos of experience into a meaningful order; achieving certainty about God and the world, and about one’s place and possible scope of action within it – these are concerns that belong to the early modern poet of Delhi just as much as they do the eleventh-century philosopher from Bukhārā.

According to one of his biographers, Sohrawardī was once asked to compare his intellectual achievements with those of Avicenna. No doubt with all due humility, Sohrawardī responded, “We may be on a par, or I may be a little better than he is in the discursive [mode of philosophy], but I certainly surpass him in the revelatory and intuitive.”⁷⁴ While there is a deep assumed contrast (both within the premodern Islamic tradition and in contemporary scholarship) between rationalist philosophy and the free-wheeling allegory of Sufī thought, I would like to

⁷⁴ Quoted by Wheeler M. Thackston in the Introduction to Sohrawardī, *The Philosophical Allegories and Mystical Treatises*, xiii.

conclude this chapter by suggesting that when we are dealing with a poet as philosophically committed as Bidel, lyric and philosophy may actually be much closer to each other than either one is to allegorical narrative. Both philosophy and lyric make use of legend, allegory, and generally available examples of narrative lore, drawing upon them as source matter from which to chisel sharply formed thoughts and precisely sculpted ideas. Both rely on the “easy” material of narrative allegory and its being commonly available to the collective imagination (who hasn’t heard of the phoenix?). But philosophers and poets do *more* with it: they explore ambiguities, tap into deeper conceptual resources, track down complex implications. Plumbing the depths of ambiguity is not a feature of philosophy universally admired by scholarship, either modern or premodern, on the history of philosophy, which tends to value tidy explanation above unresolved conjecture. Working against centuries of commentary and interpretation that has sought to elide all that is elliptical and difficult in Aristotle’s thought, Edward Booth has argued that “at first sight the acknowledged and unacknowledged aporias [in Aristotle’s works] seem to be nothing but a statement of insoluble difficulties; but this is not the whole case: the aporias are **artfully exposed** so that the reader may be led by them into ontology, or epistemology, itself. To appreciate the aporia from within is a mark of competence; like an initiate he then perceives what kind of problem the philosopher **again and again attempts to resolve**...and what kind of a partial answer is temporarily tolerable.”⁷⁵ All thought which is philosophically rigorous and also aporetic requires committed rereading, and it is in this required rereading that lyric and systematic thought are closer allies than is often admitted. By undocking from narrative and from straightforward exposition, both lyric and philosophy employ highly compressed forms of

⁷⁵ Emphasis my own. See Edward Booth, *Aristotelian Aporetic Ontology in Islamic and Christian Thinkers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1983), 2. I am grateful to Sajjad Rizvi for this reference. For an overview of competing systematic vs. anti-systematic interpretations of Aristotle, see Jonathan Barnes, *Aristotle: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 59-63.

expression to hunt thought down to its most meaningful form – even if the result is difficult, ambiguous, and aporetic.

Both Avicenna and Bīdel intentionally place a heavy interpretive burden on the reader's shoulders, and set their ambitions on loftier goals than are often found in narrative allegory. Let us make a crude hermeneutic comparison by contrasting any of Bīdel's "phoenix" poems with 'Aṭṭār's *Conference of the Birds*. Once the reader has cracked the final pun in 'Aṭṭār's allegory, where the thirty birds who have gone on an arduous quest to find the mythical *sīmorgh* arrive at "sī + morgh" = "thirty + birds," i.e., themselves, the text's work grinds to a halt. All are one, one is all – all is nothing, God is all. We do not need to *reread* the narrative from the beginning to understand the deeper meanings of this denouement. Not so with the *'anqā* in Bīdel – or in Avicenna – where reading the text through is only the start of the interpretive journey.

Bīdel and Avicenna also have this in common: they present the reader with ideas – very complicated ideas – and at the same time they equip the reader with a deeply *participatory* method for interpreting and activating those ideas.⁷⁶ They then force the reader, quite intentionally, to do the heavy lifting.⁷⁷ Both Avicenna's theorization of "knowing that you

⁷⁶ Some Sufī philosophers and poets are more explicit in telling their readers how precisely they are to interpret and participate in the work and its ideas; for instance, Ibn 'Arabī supplies an auto-commentary to his *Tarjumān al-ashwāq*. With Bīdel, the intended participatory method is never directly expounded, and must be reconstructed. This chapter and Chapter 6 present a possible reconstruction of such a method.

⁷⁷ For an important study of the imaginative "work" demanded of the premodern reader of allegorical-narrative texts which fall generically the intersection between literature and philosophy, see Aaron W. Hughes, *The Texture of the Divine: Imagination in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Thought* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2004). Hughes argues that only by granting a central role to the imagination can the allegorical-narrative works of philosophy by Avicenna, Ibn Ṭufayl, and others be fully understood and appreciated. As Hughes notes, due to generations of positivist scholarship on these authors, the view still too often prevails that "if philosophy is about the august contemplation of divine and ephemeral truths, the imagination becomes the faculty that has the potential to undermine this activity, thereby corrupting the individual and banishing him or her to the dreamy obfuscations of mysticism" (ibid, 3).

know” and Bīdel’s theorization of “knowing that you imagine” share the aim of gaining, through a process displaced onto the reader, as steady as possible a footing on one’s own mind.

Avicenna’s method encourages the reader to “find the middle term” in order to complete the argument: readers must take up the problem in their minds and try to arrive at a solution on their own, and not be content simply to receive the answer. Bīdel’s lyric method of attentive slow reflection (*ta’ammol*) also is less concerned with providing direct answers; instead, it furnishes the reader with new habits of thought, attention, and imagination.

The case of the phoenix is an especially apt vehicle through which the poet can reflect on this method. For Bīdel, the phoenix is a figuration for mind, self, and imagination: it allows him to think through complex ideas about essence, vision, and origin (*‘ayn*); about the urgency of the present moment (*nūn*, the “now”); and about one’s ideal ethical orientation (striving towards the farthest horizon of knowledge, Mount Qāf) and the limits of human ability. Bīdel’s phoenix presents the reader with an example of a mind in motion : he displays a virtuosic flight of imagination, which is directed *now* – at the present moment of reading – towards the outermost edges of what is imaginably possible. Bīdel’s lyric, then, operates a bit like a participatory quasi-systematic thought experiment – which, like Avicenna’s “pointers,” “reminders,” and “allusions,” leads to an independent cascade of thought in the reader’s mind. For both Avicenna and Bīdel, reading affords an experience that forms an integral part of the process of figuring out – experientially and experimentally – what the text is trying to communicate. To be sure, for Bīdel and other Persian lyric thinkers, the unruly faculty of the imagination unseats the rational cognitive capacities preferred by philosophers as the most useful instrument of inward inquiry; however, both paths – systematic prose and lyric – share the ideal desired end of attaining certainty (*yaqīn*).

This chapter has mounted an argument for Bīdel’s phoenix playing the part of a master metaphor across his corpus. It clearly stands out as one of several important figurations, or what we might call important lyric “examples” – a list of which could also include *ḥobāb* (bubble), *āyīne* (mirror), and *noskhe* (manuscript-copy). Any and all of these examples, or figurations, or master metaphors function as entry-points into Bīdel’s system of thought, and allow the reader to begin to understand his philosophy in lyric. Thus, the phoenix is transformed from a static philosophical example in Avicenna into a dynamic emblem, whose evocative imagery and potent ambiguities become Bīdel’s example of lyric-as-thought-experiment. As Borges once observed, offering a drily prophetic preview of later twentieth-century scholarship on the history of ideas, “It may be that universal history is the history of the different intonations given a handful of metaphors.”⁷⁸

Why do philosophy in lyric? What does lyric do that is beyond the reach of philosophical prose? Perhaps there is a greater measure of honesty in philosophy conducted in lyric: after all, if what George Lakoff and Mark Johnson call the “systematicity of metaphor” (that is, understanding one concept through another concept)⁷⁹ necessarily colors all forms of philosophical discourse, then lyric – more openly than systematic prose, or even narrative – is capable of acknowledging the fundamental dependence of thought upon metaphor. As the case of Bīdel reveals, in the quest for certainty, lyric is capable of furnishing us with an extraordinary

⁷⁸ Jorge Luis Borges, “The Fearful Sphere of Pascal,” in *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*, 189-192 (New York: New Directions, 1962), 192. Composed in 1951, his note anticipates such landmarks in modern scholarship on the role of metaphor in history and philosophy as Hans Blumenberg’s *Paradigms for a Metaphorology* (1960), Jacques Derrida and F.C.T. Moore’s “White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy” (1974), and Reinhart Koselleck’s dictionary of historical concepts, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (1972-1989).

⁷⁹ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003, 1980), 10.

pairing of analytic rigor with first-personal experience, and it is in this that it diverges from, and perhaps even outperforms systematic prose. Bidel does not simply think through the implications of the idea of the phoenix, or the significance of the ontological and epistemic status of such a vain intelligible. He also *adopts the perspective of the phoenix itself*. By means of such first-personal figuration, Bidel's lyric is capable of articulating what truth *feels* like when attained *by a specific embodied individual*. Lyric poetry, then, can make philosophy explicitly (1) personal, not impersonal; (2) affect-oriented, not impartial (it admits the unembarrassed participation of emotion in systematic inquiry); (3) beautiful, not aesthetically neutral; (4) intentionally difficult and indirect, instead of (aspirationally) legible, logical, and clear; (5) urgent, not atemporal (it presses the reader into the present moment, compels them to think and act *now*).

By following the phoenix through Bidel's corpus, and reading it in light of as many outside sources as possible – we can arrive at a richer understanding of the specific features of Bidel's philosophical rigor, and gain clarity on his important claims about mental objects, reality, time, and imagination.

Chapter 6
In Every Breath, a World:
Breath Control and Meditation in Bīdel's Lyric Poetry

صنعتی دارد خیال من که در یک دم زدن
عالمی را ذره سازم ذره را عالم کنم

This is my imagination's craft:
that in a single breath
I make the world an atom
I fashion atoms into worlds

– Bīdel of Delhi (d.1721)¹

از عدمها سوی هستی هر زمان
هست یا رب کاروان در کاروان

Every instant, moving
out of nonexistence
into being,
There are – O Lord! –
caravans
within
caravans.

– Rūmī (d.1273), *Spiritual Verses*²

This chapter concentrates on a distinctive aspect Bīdel's lyric style of steadfast imagining: his incorporation of Indic (Hindu) concepts and practices into his lyric poetry. I suggest that Bīdel draws upon the doctrine of the endlessness of times as well as yogic

¹ Ghazal N^o2045 (“Ba ‘d az īn az *ṣoḥbat-e īn dīv mardom ram konad / Ghūl chand-ī dar beyābān parvaram ādam konam*”), Line 8. ‘Abd al-Qāder Bīdel Dehlavī, *Kolleyyāt-e Abū l-Ma‘ānī Mīrzā ‘Abd al-Qāder Bīdel Dehlavī*, ed. Khalīlollāh Khalīlī (Tehran: Enteshārat-e Ṭalāye, 1389SH [2010/2011CE]), I:958.

² Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, *Maṣnavī-ye ma‘navī (Spiritual Verses)*, ed. Reynold A. Nicholson (Tehran: Enteshārat-e Hermes, 1390SH [2011/2012CE], Leiden: Luzac and Co., 1924-1940), 86.

techniques of breath control and meditation in order to experiment with his own Islamic ideas about time, self, and salvation.

In section 6.1, I propose that Indic ideas are more than mere motifs in Bīdel’s poetry: they form important premises of Bīdel’s theory of the lyric. This hypothesis leads to the question of how a physical practice – breath control – can become translated into the text of a lyric poem. In section 6.2, I suggest that Bīdel’s theory of the lyric relies on an established way of conceptualizing poetry in the classical Persian canon, where lyric poetry is thought of as an act of extended translation – with significant theological commitments. Section 6.3 offers the hypothesis that specific Indic ideas may have come to Bīdel through the translations, scholarship, and original writings of Prince Dārā Shikōh (d.1659). I also examine the second of Bīdel’s four narrative poems, *Telesm-e heyrat* (*The Enchanted World of Wonder*), in which he maps the faculties of the mind, explores the relationship between the body and the mind in Sufi spiritual practice, and showcases his key idea of training the imagination through attentive slow reflection (*ta’ammol*) by concentrating on each part of the body. Having established this dialogue between Bīdel and Dārā Shikōh, I turn to the close reading of one lyric poem (*ghazal*) by Bīdel (section 6.4) in which yogic meditation and breath control are simultaneously the theme of the poem and its structuring principle. Although there are no overt intertextual references in this poem to Dārā Shikōh, I suggest that the way Bīdel’s poem describes and enacts breath control and meditation is uncannily similar to Dārā Shikōh’s account of these practices, as set forth in his treatise on the subject (the *Resāle-ye haqq-nemā*). And finally, in section 6.5, I place this poem in conversation with a remarkable dream narrative recounted by Bīdel at the end of his autobiography. I am convinced that this

passage supplies crucial evidence about the underlying motivations behind Bīdel's lyric theory and lyric practice.

6.1 Yogic Breath Control as a Theory of the Lyric?

In Islam, as in all Abrahamic religions, human drama is emphatically a one-act play: one is born, one “struts and frets his hour upon the stage”, and then *finis* – review of deeds, final judgment, eternal afterlife of either the pleasant or unpleasant variety, etc. Historical worldly time is firmly bookended by eternities,³ and therefore has an absolute beginning and an absolute end. Scope for ordinary human action and knowledge is proportionally limited, with perfect apprehension of the past, foresight into the future, or subjective experience of both eternities falling within the exclusive purview of extraordinary humans, such as saints (*ouleyā`*) and prophets (*ambeyā`*) – the last and best of whom is Moḥammad. The diverse set of theories and practices comprising Sufism (variously glossed as the mystical, psychological, esoteric, or inner counterpart to exoteric, scholastic, outward Islam) has this central appeal: it offers to ordinary human beings a path towards the attainment of perfect comprehension reality – even reality beyond time – through rigorous, attentive cultivation of mind and self.

What has lyric poetry to do with this? From its earliest beginnings, systematic thought in Persian has been fundamentally shaped by its adjacency to the literary.⁴

³ Islamic thought has specific terms that distinguish between these infinite spans: *azal*, eternity without beginning, and *abad*, eternity without end. For an overview, see, for example, Gerhard Böwering, “Ideas of Time in Persian Sufism,” *Iran* 30.1 (1992), 77-89.

⁴ Nāṣer-e Khosrow (d.ca.1078), for example, engages in philosophical and theological debates on the usual subjects that concern the Arabic-language philosophers and *mutakallimūn*, and in doing so, he created a Persian vocabulary for systematic thought that paralleled the Arabic tradition. He composed prose treatises, and also presented his thought in the form of poetry. See Nāṣer-e

Persian Sufism especially prefers narrative-allegorical and lyric forms of discourse over systematic prose treatises.⁵ The aim of this chapter is to argue for the fundamental inseparability of doctrine and lyric style.⁶ Insofar as Sufism has always commanded a strong claim on the human imagination, it is perhaps obvious that Persian lyric and Sufi

Khosrow, *Make a Shield from Wisdom: Selected Verses from Nāṣir-i Khusraw's Dīwān*, trans. Annemarie Schimmel (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001; London: Kegan Paul, 1993), especially his autobiographical “confessional” poem (46 et passim). For Nāṣer-e Khosrow’s treatise *Jāme‘ al-ḥekmatayn* (*Twin Wisdoms Reconciled*), composed in response to an ode on the subject of reconciling Ismā‘īlī and Neoplatonic thought, see Nāṣer-e Khosrow, *Reason and Revelation: Twin Wisdoms Reconciled*, trans. Eric Ornsby (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012). Nāṣer-e Khosrow repeatedly stresses the combined role played by logic, analogical thinking, and careful interpretation in the spiritual path leading to truth (ibid, 46-47). On the remarkably long-lived tradition of Ismā‘īlī thought and practice being intertwined with classical Persian lyric, from Nāṣer-e Khosrow to Rūmī to modern times, see Gabrielle van den Berg, “The Classical Persian Ghazal and Rumi in the Oral Poetry of the Ismailis of Tajik Badakhshan,” in “*Mais Comment Peut-On Etre Persan?*” *Elements Iraniens en Orient et Occident: Liber Amicorum Annette Donckier de Donceel*, ed. Christine van Ruymbeke, 3-13 (Leuven: Peeters, 2003). On how Nāṣer-e Khosrow combines logically rigorous interpretation, systematic thought, and allusive style in his poetry, see Julie Scott Meisami, “Symbolic Structure in a Poem by Nāṣir-i Khusrau,” *Iran* 31 (1993), 103-117.

⁵ For instance, *inter alia*, ‘Aṭṭār’s *Conference of the Birds*; Rūmī’s *Spiritual Verses* and lyric poetry; Shabestārī’s classic question-and-answer Sufi treatise, *Golshan-e rāz* (*The Rose Garden of Mysteries*), in verse form; and Aḥmad Ghazzālī’s (d.ca.1123-1126) *Savāneḥ* (*Spiritual Events*, composed in 1114), the discourse on love that highlights the allusive nature of Sufi thought. On Ghazzālī’s own description of his allusive style of thought and discourse, see Chapter 5.

⁶ Richard Strier’s *Love Known: Theology and Experience in George Herbert’s Poetry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983) makes a compelling argument for the need to “grasp the human content” of poetry not separately from (or with grudging concessions to) theology, but by full appreciation and understanding of the religious content at work in poetry (xxi). Compared to early modern English religious verse, early modern Persian religious poetry frequently suffers from overeager and underelaborated classification under the general rubric of “Sufi poetry,” without much attention to specific Sufi doctrines, or to how those doctrines might have been at play beyond the poem’s literal content in the deeper structure and style of lyric itself. Welcome recent approaches to premodern Persian poetry that move away from this tendency include, for example, Domenico Ingenito, *Beholding Beauty: Sa‘dī and the Persian Lyric Tradition* (forthcoming); Prashant Keshavmurthy, *Authorship and Canonicity in Late Mughal Delhi: Building an Ark* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Matthew Thomas Miller, *Embodying the Beloved: Embodiment and Mystical Modes of Meaning Creation in Medieval Persian Sufi Literature* (forthcoming); Austin O’Malley, *Poetry and Pedagogy: The Homiletic Verse of Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār* (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2017).

doctrine (in both its theory and practice) should be intimately connected. For Bīdel and many other early modern Persian-language intellectuals, lyric poetry is something akin to a premodern psychological laboratory, one in which poets can perform experiments with self and time through the imagination. In other words, lyric is a place where religious doctrine could be examined not for propositional content, but for experiential results – the aim being to investigate and document those results in all their phenomenological complexity and variety. For example, the general aim of esoteric Islamic theory and practice (Sufism) is the attainment of absolute union with God. Most Sufi treatises are concerned with tracing a prescriptive path leading to this goal, but do not dwell on what it actually is *like* to arrive there, or, moreover, on what it is like to fail to do so.⁷

This naturally leaves a great many questions unanswered. If God’s perspective is characterized by (among other things) omniscience and transcendence of human-historical time, what is it like, then, for a limited, time-bound human mind to experience the cosmos from God’s own transtemporal perspective? Bīdel’s lyric consciously experiments with various possibilities for the human experience of eternity. His poems show how what appears to the ordinary human mind as a fixed span of time (a single moment, or a human lifetime) can be reshaped by a virtuosic imagination in such a way that these apparently delimited spans might dilate, and, in rare cases of complete success,

⁷ Indeed, before the early modern era, explicit articulation of certain meditative practices was avoided, this being the domain of the Sufi teacher and not information to be widely disseminated and absorbed by unmentored individuals. On why this changed in the early modern period, see Scott Kugle, “Sufi Meditation Manuals from the Mughal Era,” *Oriente Moderno* 92.2 (2012), 459-489.

might actually become eternities.⁸ Another aspect of Bīdel’s lyric experimentation is his meticulous documentation of what happens when endeavors to attain enlightenment fail.

With such substantial conceptual and theological weight to carry, individual lyric style, then, cannot be regarded simply as a function or derivative of doctrine; the former must be understood as being fundamentally constitutive of the latter. Any careful attempt to reconstruct the lyric style of a poet as difficult as Bīdel must, therefore, situate the poetry within as wide and relevant a context as possible. One feature of Persian poetry that makes this approach particularly necessary, and also especially difficult, is the near-total absence in lyric poetry of explicit intertextual references. Familiarity with a poet’s entire corpus, then, is often required in order to get a true sense of what sort of doctrine may have mattered, and why.

So far, this dissertation has tried to arrive at an understanding of Bīdel’s lyric style by approaching the problem from various angles. These approaches have revealed several salient features of Bīdel’s style: the crucial role played by the imagination and that which is imaginary (*khayāl*; Chapters 2 and 5); Bīdel’s tendency towards extreme abstraction, exemplified by his predilection for constructing metaphors upon the foundation of other metaphors (Chapter 1) while at the same time anchoring his historically specific lived life within this abstract philosophical metaphor-woven framework; the malleability of time within the apparatus of the lyric (Chapter 3); and his obsessive focus on the present moment of time – the elusive “now” (Chapter 4). This chapter collects these various aspects of Bīdel’s lyric style, gathering them together into a

⁸ I owe this way of talking about the role of lyric poetry in the articulation of “impossible experience” to Timothy Harrison. Timothy Harrison, *Coming To: Consciousness and Natality in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, forthcoming).

reconstruction of Bīdel's own theory of the lyric. I present here a set of views that Bīdel plausibly may have held on such questions as what lyric poetry can uniquely accomplish, how it does so, and why understanding the work of lyric is important.

Bīdel's theory of the lyric, as I see it, comes sharply and convincingly into focus when we examine how he handles Indic ideas of breath control and meditation. I wish to suggest that these are more than mere motifs in Bīdel's poetry: they form important premises of Bīdel's theory of the lyric, because they allow him to reflect – in a valuably direct and focused way – on the very act of lyric attention. I argue in this chapter that Bīdel's lyric poetry not only thematizes, but is *fundamentally structured* by the physical, nonverbal, embodied yogic practice of meditation through breath control. Therefore, close attention to Indic themes of breath control and meditation, and analysis of how they exert engine-like influence upon the mechanism of a whole poem (and, arguably, across Bīdel's entire lyric corpus) can lead to significant insights into Bīdel's lyric style. It also sheds light on the importance of thinking with lyric style, and guides us towards Bīdel's own views on the theory and practice of lyric poetry.

How does yogic breath control work as a unifying technique for lyric poetry? Can a physical event like breath become translated into text? In the next section, I look at how Bīdel's lyric practice exploits an established way of conceiving of poetry in the classical Persian lyric canon, whereby lyric poetry is thought of as an act of extended translation – with significant spiritual stakes. There are at least three distinct ways in which Bīdel's lyric practice engages in acts of translation in this extended sense of the term: (1) through the theologically and ethically decisive lyric practice of translating divine truth into human language; (2) in the interpretively creative translation of Indic

ideas into an Islamic idiom; and (3) by the translation of a physical practice into a text, and even into the very theory of the lyric.⁹ By collecting these three intertwined forms of extended translation under the rubric of Bīdel’s “theory of the lyric,” the aim is to guide the dissertation towards a final summative (though by no means exclusive) formulation of Bīdel’s lyric style – his style of steadfast imagining.

6.2 Lyric as Infinite Translation

In the early modern period, not long after his death (and quite possibly in his own lifetime as well), Ḥāfeẓ of Shīrāz (d.1390) earned the epithet *lesān al-ghayb* (lit. “Tongue from the Beyond”) – one who translates divine truth into human utterance.¹⁰ This idea of lyric as translation has a long history in Islamic thought. The works of philosophy and theology by Ibn ‘Arabī (d.1240), for example, take the form of prose treatises as well as poetry. His collection of mystical odes bears the title *Tarjumān al-ashwāq*, or *The Translation of Passions*, and he explicitly sees himself as a translator of divine knowledge into the literary, linguistic, and imaginative parlance of his time.

⁹ In his landmark study of the Western lyric, Jonathan Culler suggests that one of the most distinctive – and too often ignored – features of (Western) lyric poetry is its *performative* quality: “Poems...perform the acts to which they refer.” Jonathan Culler, *Theory of the Lyric* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015), 125. To this end, Culler draws attention to the “ritualistic aspects of lyric...rhythm and sound patterns and...lyric address.” Bīdel’s lyric poetry seems to be at once an excellent and complicated example of lyric as performance – since, as the poem in this chapter demonstrates, in addition to performing themselves, Bīdel’s poems also theorize their own performative power.

¹⁰ The earliest known record of this epithet is found in a fifteenth-century manuscript of Ḥāfeẓ’s *Dīvān*. See Leonard Lewisohn, “Prolegomenon to the Study of Ḥāfīz. 1 – Socio-Historical and Literary Contexts: Ḥāfīz in Shīrāz,” in *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 13.

Translation and interpretation are inseparably conjoined notions: they are concerned with both performing and explaining the entanglement of human thought in language.¹¹ As a process of arriving at understanding, translation – especially in the Sufi context – is an ethically loaded activity: knowing how to correctly interpret a narrative, a revealed text, or a poem is not just a matter of objective correctness: it has a profound effect on the reader-interpreter’s soul.¹² Perhaps the most famous example of this notion that a Sufi poet-philosopher’s task consists in “translating” an eternal message into lyric or narrative poetry is Rūmī (d.1273), whose *Spiritual Verses* is explicitly conceived as a project of rendering the Qur’ān into Persian. (The *Spiritual Verses* is in no sense of the

¹¹ On this idea in the European hermeneutic tradition, see, for instance, Johann Gottfried Herder (d.1803), who argues – in the paraphrase of Michael Forster – that “thought is essentially dependent on and bounded by language.” See Johann Gottfried Herder, *Herder: Philosophical Writings*, trans. and ed. Michael N. Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), xv. Herder himself writes passionately about the complexity and creativity of the hermeneutic act: “What insightfulness... what moderation... what knowledge and flexibility of the soul is required” to understand something in the fullness of its historical context (from “Treatise on the Origin of Language;” *ibid*, 115). Similar ideas are found throughout the history of Islamic thought. As Alexander Key has argued, there is an intimate conceptual interrelatedness, even inseparability, between *ma‘ná* (usually “meaning” or “idea,” but convincingly translated in Key’s monograph as “mental content”), *lafz* (“vocal form”) and *ḥaqīqa* (“truth”, or in its more theologically laden sense, “true reality”) in eleventh-century Arabic philosophy, theology, linguistics, and criticism. See Alexander Key, *Language between God and the Poets: Ma‘ná in the Eleventh Century* (Oakland, Calif.: University of California Press, 2018), 62-69. For instance, ‘Abd al-Qāhir Jurjānī (d.1078) presents a fascinating early argument about verbal imagery (metaphor) being not merely ornamental, but rather a fundamental and distinct act of imaginative creation which expresses meaning that is otherwise impossible to express. Importantly, Jurjānī has, as Kamal Abu Deeb phrases it, “a well-defined concept of the image as a *process* rather than a *static* activity” – a process in which the individual imagination plays a central role. See Kamal Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjani’s Theory of Poetic Imagery* (Guildford, Surrey: Aris and Phillips, 1979), 4. For an analysis of Jurjānī’s innovative ideas on metaphor, image, and the work of imagination, see *ibid*, 157-164.

¹² Jāmī (d.1492), for instance, in his Sufi treatise *The Flashes (Lavāyeh)*, describes his authorial function by declaring that “the author’s only role is that of an interpreter” (*manṣab-e tarjomān-ī*). See ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, *Lawā’ih: A Treatise on Sufism*, ed. E.H. Whinfield and Mīrzā Muḥammad Qazvīnī (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1906), page number not given (fourth page from the end of the book).

modern word an actual Persian translation of the Arabic Qur'ān).¹³ Unlike our idea today of mechanically literal word-to-word translation, this premodern Sufi concept of translation as an ethically loaded, theologically significant, and personally transformative activity is far more interpretive and creative than it is “translational:” the method is oblique and allusive, and instead of producing a definitive final product, the result is more exploratory and open-ended – and often explicitly aware that the event of extended translation will continue to unfold in the mind of each reader-interpreter. As George Steiner has said (at a very different moment in time), translation is an act of perpetually evolving understanding, and “there is no unwobbling pivot in time from which understanding could be viewed as stable or definitive.”¹⁴ Certainly in Rūmī’s *Spiritual Verses*, the work itself, with its bewildering multiplicity of voices and interconnected narratives, bears witness to its own conception as a work of translation, interpretation, and at the same time as a meditation on the very meaning of translation and interpretation.¹⁵ A distinctive aspect of the extended-translation work that is carried out by Persian lyric and narrative poetry is an acknowledgement in the texts themselves that

¹³ In the Arabic introduction to his Persian masterpiece, Rūmī declares his poem to be *kashshāf al-Qur'ān*, an “unveiler/uncoverer/discoverer of the Qur'ān.” See Jalāl al-Dīn Moḥammad Balkhī (Rūmī), *Maṣnavī*, ed. Moḥammad Este'lāmī (Tehran: Ketābforūshī-ye Zavvār, 1369SH [1990/1991CE]), 7. On the subsequent history of Rūmī’s *Spiritual Verses* being known as “the Qur'ān in Persian,” see Franklin D. Lewis, *Rumi Past and Present, East and West: The Life, Teachings, and Poetry of Jalāl al-Din Rumi* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2008, 2000), 396-399.

¹⁴ George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, 1975), 262. For Steiner’s introduction to the idea of translation as a mode of understanding, see *ibid.*, 1-50.

¹⁵ On the complexity of voice, persona, and narration in Rūmī’s *Spiritual Verses*, see Alan Williams, “Introduction,” in Rumi, *Spiritual Verses*, trans. Alan Williams (London: Penguin Books, 2006), xx-xxiv; and Ahmet Karamustafa, “Speaker, Voice, and Audition in the Koran and the *Mathnawī*,” *Sufi* 79 (2010), 36-45.

such translations are neither literal, nor conclusive – and that these “translation projects” participate in an ever-evolving, potentially infinite process. In this sense, Islamic thought assigns to poetry a phenomenologically inflected hermeneutic function: it contributes to the “understanding of understanding,”¹⁶ which, in turn, is a prerequisite for the understanding of the self.

In this chapter, I explore these entwined senses of lyric as translation. Building on the foregoing discussion of the essentially translational function of the classical lyric in premodern Islamic thought, I now turn to Bīdel’s infusion into this preexisting framework of a second form of translation – that of one religious tradition into another. By translating the Indic into the Islamic – importantly, within the lyric – results in Bīdel’s creative reimagining of both traditions.

As we will see in the poem analysed in this chapter, the imaginative license and subjective commitments with which Bīdel handles the conceptual vocabularies of two distinct religious traditions anticipates a phenomenon associated (often exclusively) with European Modernism. In his study of the history and practice of translation, *The Translator’s Invisibility*, Lawrence Venuti delivers a rather harsh pronouncement upon the attitudes and orientations to translation adopted by T.S. Eliot, who, like other Modernists of his time, took the position that “translation is a fundamental domestication, resulting in an autonomous text.” Venuti quotes Eliot, according to whom “the work of translation is to make something foreign or something remote in time, live with our own life,” and Venuti tersely notes the presumptuousness of “our own life”, which, in Eliot’s

¹⁶ See Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 2008, 1983), 5.

case, is clearly defined as “classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and Anglo-Catholic in religion.”¹⁷ In other words, the enterprise of translation in High Modernism is fundamentally translation as interpretation, as appropriation, as purposive mobilization for very specific, necessarily tendentious, and frequently personal ends.

It is noteworthy, perhaps, that Eliot began writing his own poems in adolescence after reading Edward FitzGerald’s “translations” of ‘Omar Khayyām, FitzGerald being to Khayyām what Coleman Barks is to Rūmī in our time in terms of popularity: the streets of London resounded with his transcreated verses as do the tidy, “wise” soundbites attributed to Rūmī on social media today. Eliot’s ideas about translation, especially from a tradition belonging to a distant and foreign religious past, extend very much into his own poetry. *The Waste Land*’s mantric, untranslated “*shantih shantih shantih*” effectively rewrites the poem – allows the poem to reinterpret itself – as an Upaniṣad, bringing some semblance of order, or a prayer for order, to the devastated fragments and chaos of interwar modernity. In doing so, Eliot encloses and sanctifies what is personal within what is timeless, what is idiosyncratic within what is systematic and theological, what is Western and modern within what is Indic and ancient.¹⁸ In “The Music of Poetry”, Eliot himself says that “it is only at certain moments that a word can be made to insinuate the whole history and language of a civilization” – and *shantih shantih shantih* certainly does just that.

¹⁷ Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London: Routledge, 2008, 1995), 166.

¹⁸ See Cleo McNelly Kearns, *T.S. Eliot and Indic Traditions: A Study in Poetry and Belief* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 228.

With Eliot now perhaps more securely ensconced within a century of historical context, more recent studies have taken issue with Venuti's negative characterization of Eliot's modernist translation practices, which tends to elide the dynamism of Eliot's historical vision – that is, Eliot's aim of making the past and present speak *to each other*.¹⁹ Rather than asking the question of whether or not Eliot, Pound, and other Euro-American Modernists were objectively justified in their attitudes toward translation and appropriation, a more interesting question might be: if the Modernist repurposing of the practice of translation was founded on a bold move away from the literal recovery of meaning, what happens when this creative interpretation of other traditions seeps into the very foundation of an individual poet's style? And furthermore, how can religion in translation influence not just poetry, a poet's theory of the lyric?

Examples of accommodating Indic (Hindu) religious traditions within Islamic thought abound in early modern Persianate South Asia, and among the most influential of these are the works of translation, interpretation, comparative religion, and theological alignment by the Mughal prince and one-time heir apparent Dārā Shikōh (d.1659).²⁰ Part of the task in this chapter is to present an example of lyric as extended translation (or

¹⁹ See, for example, Roxana Stefania Bîrsanu, *T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land as a Place of Intercultural Exchanges: A Translation Perspective* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014).

²⁰ On Mughal and pre-Mughal efforts to translate and interpret Indic religious thought, and the implications that this had for Islam in South Asia, see for instance Tara Chand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture* (Allahabad: Indian Press, 1936); M.L. Roy Choudhury, "Hindu-Muslim Relation During the Mughal Period 1526-1707 A.D.," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 9 (1946), 282-296; Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam in India 1200-1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004) and "In Search of a Sacred King: Dārā Shukoh and the *Yogavāsishthas* of Mughal India," *History of Religions* 55.4 (2016), 429-459; and Shankar Nair, *Philosophy in Any Language: Interaction between Arabic, Sanskrit, and Persian Intellectual Cultures in Mughal South Asia* (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2013).

more precisely, as an extension of existing endeavors at creative translation) through close reading of one lyric poem by Bīdel in conversation Dārā Shikōh. Like many of the difficult poets of this time, Bīdel’s influences are staggeringly numerous, and reach him through a complex and diffuse process. It is common now, for example, to think of Bīdel as being an expositor of the monism of Ibn ‘Arabī, although with half a millennium between them, the way that Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought made its way into Bīdel’s world is far from straightforward, and involves generations of mediating commentaries, translations, and literary interpretations.²¹ The recent work of Hajnalka Kovacs and Prashant Keshavmurthy has further shown that Bīdel was certainly influenced by non-Islamic Indic (Hindu) thought as well, as demonstrated by his reworking of famous Indic narrative allegories.²²

²¹ For instance, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (d.1492) composed an Arabic commentary in 1459 on Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (*Bezels of Wisdom*). See ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, *Naqd al-noṣūṣ fī sharḥ naqsh al-fuṣūṣ*, eds. William Chittick and Jalāl al-Dīn Āshteyānī (Tehran: Mo’assase-ye Moṭāla‘āt va Taḥqīqāt-e Farhangī, 1370SH [1991/1992CE]). Another important example, among many others, is ‘Abd al-Karīm Jīlī’s (d.1403), *Al-insān al-kāmil fī ma’rifat al-awākhir wa l-awā’il* (*The Perfect Man in the Gnostic Knowledge of Endings and Beginnings*; Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfiyya wa l-Dīniyya, 2004). For an introduction and partial translation of Jīlī’s treatise, see Henry Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth: From Mazdean Iran to Shi’ite Iran*, transl. Nancy Pearson (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977, 1960), 148-159. For a thorough overview of the diffusion of Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought across South Asia, see William Chittick, “Notes on Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Influence on the Indian Subcontinent,” *Muslim World* 82 (1992), 218-241; and also James Winston Morris, “Ibn ‘Arabī and His Interpreters, Part II (Conclusion): Influences and Interpretations,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 107 (1987), 101-119.

²² For Bīdel’s reworking of the Sanskrit tale of Madan and Kāmdī (which circulated in the early modern period in Avadhi and other South Asian vernaculars), see Prashant Keshavmurthy, *Authorship and Canonicity in Late Mughal Delhi: Building an Ark* (2016), 90-126. On Bīdel’s adaptation of the *Yogavāsīṣṭa* story of King Lavaṇa, see Hajnalka Kovacs, “*The Tavern of the Manifestation of Realities*,” *The Masnavi Muḥit-i Azam by Mirza Abd al-Qadir Bedil (1644–1720)* (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2013), 112-172.

This chapter considers a further way in which Bīdel’s lyric thought was profoundly shaped by Indic influences. By closely reading one lyric poem and Bīdel’s autobiographical dream narrative alongside the works of Prince Dara Shikōh, I suggest that certain key Indic concepts and ideas came to Bīdel already translated (and therefore to some degree conceptually predigested) by Dārā Shikōh,²³ and that these ideas underpin, layer, and fundamentally inform Bīdel’s distinctive ideas about imagination, lyric, time, and the cultivation of an ideal state of attentive composure through meditation and breath control.

6.3 Bīdel and Prince Dārā Shikōh

Prince Dārā Shikōh (1615-1659) was the son and heir-apparent of the Mughal emperor Shāhjahān (r.1628-1658). Dārā lost his claim to the Mughal throne, and eventually his life, in the bloody war of succession between Shāhjahān’s four sons, the winner among whom was Aurangzeb. Dārā was a canny and ambitious political figure,²⁴ but also a poet,

²³ “Breath control” (*zabt-e nafas*) – along with the *‘anqā*, the phoenix of Chapter 5 – are both ideal candidates for submission to the branch of scholarly study that Roland Greene calls “critical semantics.” In his analysis of five words that carry out a great deal of conceptual heavy lifting in early modern Europe and the Americas (e.g., “invention,” “blood,” and “world”), Greene examines these ordinary, everyday words in a variety of contexts, traces their trajectories across genres and languages, and identifies the specific kind of work these words do and how their labour changes over time. See Roland Greene, *Five Words: Critical Semantics in the Age of Shakespeare and Cervantes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). In the early modern Islamic world, “breath control” is similarly ubiquitous, migratory, and complex – especially in South Asia; and while this chapter focuses on the possible resonances between Bīdel and Dārā Shikōh, ideally, a longer-format study would situate Bīdel’s “breath control” within a much broader non-literary context. Important work on this bigger picture has already been done: for instance, by Carl Ernst, whose many important studies shed light on Muslim translations of Hindu texts, ideas, and practices – including breath control. See Carl W. Ernst, *Refractions of Islam in India: Situating Sufism and Yoga* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2016), especially “A 14th-Century Persian Account of Breath Control and Meditation” (424-431).

²⁴ See Muzaffar Alam, “In Search of a Sacred King: Dārā Shukoh and the *Yogavāsīṣṭhas* of Mughal India,” *History of Religions* 55.4 (2016), 429-459; Rajeev Kinra, “Infantilizing Baba

Sufi, and scholar of comparative religion. Among his numerous works, the ones that are most relevant here are his translation of the Upaniṣads into Persian (*Serr-e akbar*, or *The Greatest Secret*, 1657),²⁵ a treatise on breath control and meditation (*Resāle-ye haqq-nemā*, 1646),²⁶ and *The Mingling of the Two Oceans* (*Majma' al-baḥrayn*, 1655), his famous attempt to align the monistic theologies of Hinduism and Islam.²⁷

Dara: The Cultural Memory of Dara Shekuh and the Mughal Public Sphere,” *Journal of Persianate Studies* 2 (2009), 165-193; and Jane Mikkelson, “The Way of Tradition and the Path of Innovation: Aurangzeb and Dara Shukuh Contend for the Mughal Throne,” in *Empires of the Near East and India: Sources for the Study of the Safavid, Ottoman, and Mughal Societies*, ed. Hani Khafipour 240-260 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019).

²⁵ This is the translation through which, via Latin, the Upaniṣads made their way into Europe. On François Bernier’s encounter with Prince Dārā Shikōh and Bernier’s role in the construction of the European notion of “pan-Asian thought,” see Urs App, *The Cult of Emptiness: The Western Discovery of Buddhist Thought and the Invention of Oriental Philosophy* (Kyoto: University Media, 2012), 161 et passim. For Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron’s quest to trace all Asian religions to the Vedas, and his translation into Latin and then French of Dārā Shikōh’s Persian translation of the Upaniṣads (*Serr-e akbar*), see Urs App, *The Birth of Orientalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 435-439.

²⁶ Dārā Shikōh’s treatise, and similar treatises on breath control whose production exploded in this period, marks an exciting (and hitherto unexplored) opportunity for comparative study. Louis Martz connects the rise of the early modern “meditative poem” in Europe with the democratization of meditation practices, as evident in the proliferation of such treatises as Edward Dawson’s 1614 “The Practical Methode of Meditation,” what Martz a “neat and compact treatise, which shows by its blunt, simple, ‘practical’ manner the way in which the art of meditation might become part of the everyday life of everyman.” See *The Meditative Poem: An Anthology of Seventeenth-Century Verse*, ed. Louis L. Martz (New York: New York University Press, 1963), xviii. For his important discussion of meditation as poetic discipline, see Louis L. Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation: A Study in English Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965, 1954) 67-70. It appears that during the early modern period, in both the Islamic world and in Europe, meditation is no longer a privileged practice available only to an elite religious minority – but something that anyone, anywhere can do. Dārā Shikōh’s treatise, composed in 1645-1646, explicitly aims to simplify, even streamline Sufism – boiling it down to its core practice of *breath control, imagination, and meditation* – thus making these practices readily comprehensible and available even to the uneducated masses. Never one to miss an opportunity to boast, Dārā here even claims to be a more successful synthesizer of the Sufi tradition than Jāmī (d.1492). See Dārā Shikōh, *Resāle-ye haqq-nemā* (Lucknow: Munshi Nawal Kishore, 1896), 5.

²⁷ For thorough studies of this text, see Supriya Gandhi, *Mughal Self-Fashioning, Indic Self-Realization: Dārā Shikoh and Persian Textual Cultures in Early Modern South Asia* (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2011) and Kazuyo Sakaki, *Dara Shukoh’s Contribution to Philosophy of*

A passage (paraphrased here) from Dārā's own introduction to his translation of the Upaniṣads²⁸ is succinctly illustrative of his translatorly aims. His endeavors are, among other things, quite personal. He begins by recounting his own turn to Sufism and his extended studies under Mollā Shāh in Kashmir, where he was exposed to a number of non-Islamic texts. He tells us that he experienced a strong desire to read everything that had ever been written on the subject of monism, and perused all the texts of the major monotheistic religions of which he could avail himself: the Torah, the Gospels, the Psalms; however, he found all of them to be too obscure (*marmūz*) and cursory (*mojmal*) in their treatment of important theological issues. Part of the problem, Dārā explains, was that the translations of these texts had been carried out by unworthy, partisan translators (*ahl-e gharaz*).²⁹ When he came to the Indian monotheists,³⁰ however, all was different. He found their exposition of monism to be clear, eloquent, and expansively detailed (*mofaṣṣal*), where the other revealed texts – including the Qur'ān – were not. The purpose of this translation of the Upaniṣads, he says explicitly, was to render into simple, word-

Religion: With Special Reference to His Majma' al-Bahrayn (PhD diss., Aligarh Muslim University, 1998).

²⁸ Prince Dārā Shikōh, *Serr-e akbar: The Oldest Translation of the Upanishads from Sanskrit into Persian by Dārā Shukoh*, eds. Tara Chand and S.M. Reza Jalali Naini. Tehrān: Taban Printing Press, 1957), *se, chahār, panj, shesh* [iii-vi].

²⁹Ibid, *chahār* [iv].

³⁰It is often customary (and incorrect) in the West to think of Hinduism, with its many deities, as being anything *but* monotheistic. Dārā Shikōh's focus, in contrast, is on the Indic doctrine of monism, which stresses the fundamental unity and one-ness of all reality despite the apparent multiplicity of its manifestations. He repeatedly refers to Hindus as *movaḥhedūn-e Hend*, the "monotheists of India." See, for example, Prince Dārā Shikōh, *Majma' al-bahrayn: The Mingling of the Two Oceans*, ed. M. Mahfuz-ul-Haq (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 1998, 1929), 80 ("*mashrab-e movaḥhedān-e hend*", "the creed of the monotheists of India"). He repeatedly uses this designation throughout the treatise.

for-word Persian this work on monism so that the Muslims of his own time, who were no longer able to understand the tenets of their *own* religion, might become enlightened. He goes further, saying that this book, which is the most ancient revealed book, is – anachronistic as it may seem – an interpretation (*tafsīr*) of the Qur’ān itself. In other words, Dārā’s aim here is quite Eliotic, insofar as he is helping himself to a foreign past and making it “live with his own life.” Dārā Shikōh and Bīdel share this important commitment: by using the Indic to interpret the Islamic, they creatively reimagine both traditions in the process.³¹

As I have been arguing, Bīdel’s lyric style is characterized by his commitment to the practice of steadfast imagining, and his style and its attendant commitments make Bīdel an exceptional, and exceptionally creative, reader of Dārā Shikōh. An obvious answer to why this might be the case is that Bīdel’s lyric style of steadfast imagining, as shown in Chapter 2, is embedded within a early modern critical discourse surrounding “Indianness” of language, thought, and lyric style: from the perspective of literary-critical and cultural history, Bīdel the “Indian-style” poet is primed by his historical context to receive the “Indian-style” Islamic thought of Dārā Shikōh. In the following pages, before turning to the poem, I would like to try to get a bit clearer on what specific aspect of Bīdel’s “Indianness” of style is most relevant here, and how clarity on this point can assist in fostering a productive conversation between Dārā Shikōh and Bīdel.

³¹ Jonardon Ganeri views Dārā Shikōh’s project as one of hospitality – that is, of generously making room for “stranger” Indic texts at the Persianate Mughal court. By thus welcoming them, he comes to recognize that they are not really “strangers” at all. See Jonardon Ganeri, “Migrating Texts and Traditions: Dārā Shukoh and the Transmission of the Upaniṣads to Islam,” in *Migrating Texts and Traditions*, ed. William Sweet, 177-188 (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2009), 178-179.

There seem to be at least three different ways in which an early modern Indian Persian poet can be “Indian” in style: (1) by borrowing single terms and images; (2) by reworking Indic stories in narrative poems; (3) through indirect, unmarked allusion. The first and most superficial way involves the use of terms or images that evoke the specific regional geography and culture of South Asia within an otherwise classical (translocal) Persian lyric model. An example of this kind of “Indian” influence is described by the early modern literary critic Sher ‘Alī Khān Lodī in his literary-critical treatise *Mirror of the Imaginary* (*Mer’āt al-khayāl*, 1690): discussing this practice, called “*este ‘māl-e Hend*”, or “Indic usage,” he cites several couplets from an ode to Shāhjahān by Muḥsin Fānī (d.1670/1671), a poet from Kashmīr, and merely notes that Fānī has made use of many Indic words in a way that produced a pleasing effect; however, at no point does Lodī argue that such usage fundamentally constitutes or even alters Fānī’s overall poetic style.³² Bīdel’s lyric is occasionally interspersed with such words: *pān*,³³ *bang*,³⁴ *ḥennā*,³⁵

³² Sher ‘Alī Khān Lodī, *Tazkere-ye mer’āt al-khayāl*, ed. Ḥamīd Ḥasanī (Tehran: Enteshārāt-e Rouzane, 1377SH [1998CE]),

³³ See, for instance, Ghazal N^o2260. Consisting of 27 lines, this is perhaps Bīdel’s longest ghazal. *Pān* occurs in line 5. Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, I:1055-1056. This poem appears to be a *javāb* (explicit response-poem) to Šā’eb’s (also very long) Ghazal N^o5356, which touches on Ešfahān and India, and may in turn be a response-poem to ‘Aṭṭār’s ghazal “*Dūsh chūn gardūn kenār-e khvīsh por-khūn yāftam*,” which has two references to “*hendū*.” See Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār Nīshābūrī, *Dīvān-e ‘Aṭṭār*, ed. M. Darvīsh ([Tehran]: Sāzemān-e Enteshārāt-e Jāvīdān, 1359SH, 1354SH [1980/1981CE, 1975/1976CE]), 440-441 and Moḥammad ‘Alī Šā’eb Tabrīzī, *Dīvān-e Šā’eb-e Tabrīzī*, ed. Moḥammad Qahremān (Tehran: Chāpkhāne-ye Sherkat-e Enteshārāt-e Adabī va Farhangī, 1985), V:2584-2585.

³⁴ See, for instance, Ghazal N^o2762, with *bang* as the last word in the final couplet, line 11. Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, I:1290-1291.

³⁵ See, for instance, Ghazal N^o137, with *ḥennā* in line 9. Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, I:62-63.

barshakāl (the monsoon rain),³⁶ references to Brahmins muttering “*Rām Rām*,”³⁷ and, in a particularly vitriolic poem, he even coins the word “*tamaghghol*”, a fifth-form Arabic noun deriving from the imaginary trilateral root *m-gh-l* of “mughal,” meaning something like “trying (and failing) to fashion oneself into a Mughal.”³⁸ Such usages, however, do not exert much influence on Bīdel’s overall lyric style.

A deeper form of engagement with non-Islamic Indic thought can be found in Bīdel’s narrative poetry: as Kovacs and Keshavmurthy have shown, Bīdel takes and reworks certain well-known Indic stories, like the tale of Madan and Kamdi, the Hindu allegory of the ideal philosopher-king, and the story of King Lavana from the *Yogavāsishtha* who quite literally lost himself and became a low-caste sweeper. In both cases, it is likely that Bīdel was not working directly from any Sanskrit version, but rather from already-existing Persian translations (e.g., Panipati’s Persian translation of the *Laghuyogavāsishtha* and Dārā Shikōh’s subsequent commissioned retranslation thereof).³⁹

³⁶ In three poems: Ghazal N^o273, line 11 (ibid, I.1:125); Ghazal N^o298, line 10 (ibid, I.1:135-136); Ghazal N^o1193, line 2 (ibid, I.1:557-558).

³⁷ In a poem about *zēkr*, the Sufi practice of remembrance (the repeated devotional uttering of a specific word or phrase): Ghazal N^o369, line 10 (ibid, I.1:168-169).

³⁸ Ghazal N^o975, “A Mordant Satire on Elitism;” *tamaghghol* in line 4 (ibid, I.1:456).

³⁹ There is a long tradition going back to pre-Mughal times of Sufi Persian narrative poetry taking up an Indic theme. For example, many poets tried their hand at composing poems about the practice of *sati*; yet the way that *sati* was presented by them as an ideal erasure of self-in-beloved was so firmly encoded in the Sufi ideas of *fanā* that these can hardly qualify as complex engagements. Such *sati* poems tend to be all façade and no structure. Bīdel’s narrative engagement with these two stories just mentioned goes deeper than this; in his version of the Lavana story for example, as Kovacs shows, the *Yogavāsishtha*’s message about the illusory nature of the world is aligned by Bīdel with the Sufi doctrine of *vahdat al-vojūd*, the idea that everything that exists is a manifestation of God, the one true reality. Kovacs, “*The Tavern of the Manifestation of Realities*,” 122-130. For an early example of Indo-Persian engagement with Indic genres, see Sunil Sharma, *Persian Poetry at the Indian Frontier: Masūd Sa’d Salmān of Lahore* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2000), 116-123, 159-164.

A third level of engagement with Indic thought occurs in the form of indirect allusion – an example of which can be seen in the second of his four narrative poems, *Telesm-e heyrat* (*The Enchanted World of Wonder*, composed in 1669). In this long poem, Bīdel explores some of the ideas attending the relationship between God and mankind, and outlines various aspects attending the duty of man to become perfectly self-aware through a difficult process of introspective self-discovery. Bīdel presents a systematically mapped geography of the embodied human imagination: in an uncharacteristically straightforward and orderly way, the reader is taken on a tour of the senses and faculties, is introduced to Galenic theories of temperament, and is invited to consider the interconnectedness of the body and the mind in Sufi spiritual practice – in other words, how affect, perception, and imagination are enmattered.⁴⁰ The aim of this discussion falls broadly in step with Bīdel’s overall concern with understanding the role of the imagination in the attainment of certain knowledge of true reality.

The narrative is structured around a skeletally bare allegory – or rather, around

⁴⁰ On the Aristotelian idea that affect and perception are *enmattered*, see Martha Nussbaum and Hilary Putnam, “Changing Aristotle’s Mind,” in *Essays on Aristotle’s De Anima*, eds. Martha C. Nussbaum and Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, 30-44 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, 1992), 41. In this poem’s mapping of the human body and mind, Bīdel is helping himself to Avicennan philosophy, and, through Avicenna, to the Aristotelian tradition. On Avicenna’s reception of Aristotle, see Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, especially his discussion of the *Najāt* (*Salvation*), 102 et passim. In *Interpreting Avicenna* (ed. Peter Adamson), David Reisman summarizes the influence of Aristotle upon Avicenna’s continued preoccupation with the mind and the body together in this way: in his *Compendium on the Soul* (*Maqāla fī n-nafs*), Avicenna lays out his concerns with the salvation of the human soul and how it can overcome the physical limitations of embodiment by training itself to use its faculties *through* the body – by “balancing emotional reactions (caused by ‘humoral imbalance’) which disrupt reasoning” – a process whose method and scope are drawn from Aristotelian ethics. The goal of this psycho-physical training is “to achieve a state of the human intellect that resembles (and even assumes the role of) the universal intellect of Neoplatonic cosmology.” David Reisman, “The Life and Times of Avicenna: Patronage and Learning in Medieval Islam,” in *Interpreting Avicenna: Critical Essays*, ed. Peter Adamson, 7-27 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 10.

what is barely an allegory: the “protagonist” is a nameless king, about whom we know nothing in the way of historical context, who embarks on a quest for self-knowledge. There is no “narrative” aside from the direct and philosophical exposition of his educational progress. So little does this king resemble anything like a character that he could easily have been replaced with the impersonal pronoun “one.” The device of giving him at least a nameless title works well for Bīdel here, since the king becomes a disciple of semi-personified Love, who tutors him just as a Sufi shaykh would guide an initiate. Many passages take the form of question-and-answer dialogue between them. After many false starts, which lead the king to conclude that neither scholastic knowledge, nor love, are enough to propel him towards truth – in a section titled “The Consolation of the Imaginary (*khayāl*),”⁴¹ the imagination itself is offered as both a palliative and as a guide, training the king to know his own mind through exercises of the imagination (*taṣavvor*) and attentive slow reflection (*ta`ammol*). This practice that has, among other things, a consoling effect.⁴² Yet one does not have endless opportunity for this kind of pursuit. In one of many lines stamped with the urgency of *carpe diem*, the narrator warns:

*mabādā forṣat-e kas ān-qadar tang
ze dast oftāde jāṃ o zīr-e pā sang*

مبادا فرصت کس آنقدر تنگ
ز دست افتاده جام و زیر پا سنگ

May no one’s opportune moment [*forṣat*]
be so confined;

⁴¹ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, III:497-8. For a full translation of this section, see T3.M2.3.

⁴² Line 13539: “Eventually, [these imaginative exercises] gladdened the heart, easing disappointment by populating a world of imagination.” “*Del-ī az naqsh-e ḥasrat shād mī-kard / jahān-ī az khayāl ābād mī-kard.*”

[دلی از نقش حسرت شاد می‌کرد / جهانی از خیال آباد می‌کرد]

Ibid, III:498.

My wineglass has fallen
from my hand –
and there's a stone
at my feet.⁴³

The king has exhausted the resources of stereotypical Sufi love, and turns to that which is imaginary; he is taught how to *train* his imagination, through the practice of *ta'ammol*. Since this is presented as a craft – with rules, tangible results, and hope for progress – in effect, the king is training to become an artisan of the imagination. Although the consolation afforded by this practice of the imagination can barricade the mind against the agony of illusion (which one experiences if one is *not* properly trained in the imaginative arts), it is but a temporary measure. Perfect control over the imagination cannot be sustained indefinitely; however, it is a necessary step, an integral part – even central part – of spiritual training, which helps the mind learn how to concentrate in increasingly more focussed ways.

The poem ends with the king's final hard-won triumph, in which he is at last able to transcend his own body – not by ignoring it, but rather, through minute attention to each part of his person, he comes to understand that his body is a microcosm.

This section is structured as an imagined journey (*sayr*) through several stations (*manāzel*, *maqāmāt*), which are allegorized as being various parts of the king's own body. As this journey unfolds, what emerges is a reverse-direction version of the typical description of the beloved that abounds in classical Persian amatory poetry, a description so mechanically fixed that it came to be called *sarāpā*, literally “head-to-toe,” the stock description of a beautiful human form. In Bīdel's poem, this journey constitutes one of

⁴³ Line 13573. Ibid, III:499.

the final stages of self-knowledge, where he arrives at the realization that his own body is a microcosm of the universe:

*ze jīb-e kh'īsh bīrūn nīst rāh-ī
negāh-ī kon negāh-ī kon negāh-ī*

ز جیب خویش بیرون نیست راهی
نگاهی کن نگاهی کن نگاهی

There is no path
outside
of your own pocket.
Look.
Look.
Look.⁴⁴

The nature of this inward survey of the body, as mentioned, is a reversal of the expected head-to-toe order. Bīdel begins with the feet, and meticulously moves upwards to the head, ending with the final full stature (*qāmat*). This form of description is strikingly similar to (and may very well be borrowed from) a passage from Dārā Shikōh's *Mingling of the Two Oceans*, in the chapter on *mukta* (salvation or release). Dārā says that one who is *jīvan-mukt* (enlightened, liberated during one's lifetime) is someone who realizes that "the world is a body;" there follows an extended correlation of everything that exists in the world with parts of the body, crucially, starting with feet and ending with head (this is Mahāpuruṣa, "the Great Man", or "Mahāporos" in Persian transliteration, of Indic theology). Dārā ends the chapter with an equivalence between the Perfect Man of Islam and the Indic figure of one who is liberated (*jīvan-mokt*), saying that both of these concepts get at the same thing – what it is like to physically embody the

⁴⁴ Line 13629. Ibid, III:501. For other instances of significant tripling in narrative poems, see Chapter 5, Footnote 73.

realization of oneness-with-God, to realize that one's self is a microcosm.⁴⁵ In Bīdel's narrative poem too, the king (who is now perhaps also a Perfect Man) finally arrives at that hallowed end of the Sufi path – certain knowledge (*yaqīn*) of union with God. Bīdel's *Telesm-e ḥeyrat*, then, can be thought of as an extended discourse on the idea that moving towards knowledge of God and of one's self is an emphatically *embodied* spiritual journey – with a possible intertext or subcurrent of Indic ideas, ones that are certainly present in works like Dārā Shikōh's *Majma' al-baḥrayn*, that are confluent with the literal meaning of the narrative.

All of these infusions of the Indic into the Islamic in Bīdel so far are, from the perspective of responsibly conducted scholarship, reasonably verifiable, traceable, and subject to clear analysis and scrutiny. Beyond this, however, I would like to suggest that there is a deeper, still more elusive level of influence that is far from easily traced and identified, an influence that informs the very style and structure of Bīdel's lyric poetry. In the following pages, I suggest that non-Islamic Indic (Hindu) ideas about the infinity of times and yogic practices of breath control⁴⁶ occupy a central place in Bīdel's lyric.

6.4 A Gathering of One: Bīdel's Lyric Meditation

The remainder of this chapter presents a close reading of one lyric poem by Bīdel which is, I believe, an example of this final and most elusive type influence. I will then turn briefly to Bīdel's autobiography to examine his account of a visionary dream which,

⁴⁵ Dārā Shikōh, *Majma' al-baḥrayn*, 107 et passim, especially 112.

⁴⁶ For a description and analysis of this curious appearance of breath control in early modern Persian literary criticism, see Stefano Pellò, *Ṭūṭiyān-i Hind: Specchi Identitari e Proiezioni Cosmopolite Indo-Persiane (1680-1856)* (Florence: Società Editrice Fiorentina, 2012), 77-80 et passim. See also Chapter 2 (section 2.2.4).

together with this poem, offers a rare and important statement about his lyric theory and practice.

Before turning to the poem, I briefly recapitulate here a key feature of Bīdel's distinctive style of lyric unity: that is, one of his main strategies for binding his lyric poems into coherent wholes. As has been discussed in Chapter 1, the Persian lyric has been famously likened in the West to a string of Orient pearls at random strung: beautiful, perhaps, in the qualified sense of beauty as something vapid and ornamental, but not substantial. Certainly this negative judgment is misplaced, since Persian poets across the tradition perfect the art of coherent lyric poetry in a dazzling variety of unities. Some poems are structured according to the demands of sung musical performance; others take the form of dialogue, between a Sufi master and his disciple, or between a lover and beloved; still others take the form of vignette, recalling the events of last night (e.g., what happened in the wine tavern). By the later early modern period, many poets, including Bīdel, had moved away from these classical forms of lyric unity, turning instead to more rarefied, and even idiosyncratic, models of coherence.

One technique that is especially important to Bīdel's lyric style is the presence in many poems of an emphatic circularity, or ring structure, wherein the first and last lines are bound together in a non-trivial way by a key word, concept, image, or even a sonic echo.⁴⁷ This symmetry or complementarity of beginning and end fundamentally shapes the whole poem, applying interpretive pressure from both ends to the middle lines. When

⁴⁷ For especially interesting examples of poems in Bīdel's lyric corpus fitting this description, see for instance Ghazal N^o-1414 (“*‘Ālam hame z-īn maykade bī-hūsh bar-āmad;*” Bīdel, *Kolleyāt*, I.1:660); Ghazal N^o-1739, (“*Ay del-at šayyād-e rāz az lab madeh bīrūn nafas;*” *ibid.*, I.2:810); Ghazal N^o-362 (“*Chī-st ādam moḥrad-e kelk-e dabīrestan-e rabb;*” *ibid.*, I.1:165); and Ghazal N^o-966 (“*Agar ta ‘ayyon-e ‘anqā havas-payām nabāshad;*” *ibid.*, I.1:452).

such a poem is read to the end, and the end gestures back to the beginning, this naturally demands that the poem be reread, and thus requires a doubling, sometimes tripling, of time spent rereading and re-interpreting.⁴⁸ This circularity is something like a larger-scale version of the Perso-Arabic literary figure *radd al-‘ajz ‘alá l-ṣadr* (“the return of the end to the beginning,” or anadiplosis), where the final word in a couplet refers either exactly or paronomastically to the first. I would venture to say that more than half of Bīdel’s nearly three thousand lyric poems are structured in this way.⁴⁹ Bīdel’s distinctive

⁴⁸ As will become clear in the course of the analysis of this poem, circularity and re-reading are not at all ornamental: they vital working parts of the devotional mechanism that undergirds this poem. For an account of the intriguingly similar “mechanisms of devotional acts” – that is, prayers of thanksgiving – that inform John Donne’s Holy Sonnets, see David Marno, *Death Be Not Proud: The Art of Holy Attention* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 81.

⁴⁹ For instance: Ghazal N^o76 (“*Por karde jozv-e lā-yatajazzá ketāb-e mā;*” *ibid*, I.1:35) – the first line has *joz*, *noqte*; the last line has *jozv*, *sharār*; Ghazal N^o2732 (“*Temṣāl-e khayālī-yam che zeshṭī che nekūyī;*” *ibid*, I.2:1277) – the first and last lines share *khayāl*; Ghazal N^o2529 (“*Sar be zīr-e tīgh o pā bar khār bāyad tākhtan;*” *ibid*, II.2:1182) – the first and last lines share string imagery (*tār*, *khatt*, *sobhe*, *zonnār*), and the second and penultimate lines share *ṣad bār*. Ghazal N^o1739 (“*Ay del-at ṣayyād-e rāz az lab madeh bīrūn nafas;*” *ibid*, I.2:810) – the first and last lines share metapoetic imagery (*maẓmūn*; *mouzūn*, *enshā*, *meṣra*); Ghazal N^o1208, (“*Khārej-e abnā-ye jens ast ān-ke mouzūn mī-shavad;*” *ibid*, I.1:564-565) – the first and last lines share metapoetic imagery (*mouzūn*, *gohar*, *baḥr*; *ash ‘ār*, *‘ebārat*, *maẓmūn*); Ghazal N^o1370, (“*Shab ke az shūr-e shekast-e del aṣar por-zūr shod;*” I.1:639) – the first and last lines are full of noises (*shūr*, *ṭambūr*; *khōrūsh*, *ṣūr*); Ghazal N^o247 (“*Kojā alvān-e ne ‘mat z-īn besāt āsān shavad paydā;*” *ibid*, I.1:112-113) – the first and last lines are about mankind, and animals (*ādam*; *gāv*, *khar*, *ensān*). Other examples include: Ghazal N^o950 (*ibid*, I.1:444), Ghazal N^o1500 (*ibid*, I.1:699), Ghazal N^o2045 (*ibid*, I.2:958), Ghazal N^o431 (*ibid*, I.1:198-199), Ghazal N^o1320 (*ibid*, I.1:616), Ghazal N^o58 (*ibid*, I.1:27), Ghazal N^o387 (*ibid*, I.1:177), Ghazal N^o1751 (*ibid*, I.2:815-816), Ghazal N^o1867 (*ibid*, I.2:872-873), Ghazal N^o1911 (*ibid*, I.2:895), Ghazal N^o2411 (*ibid*, I.2:1127), Ghazal N^o1818 (*ibid*, I.2:848), Ghazal N^o2525 (*ibid*, I.2:1180), Ghazal N^o2447 (*ibid*, I.2:1144), Ghazal N^o1421 (*ibid*, I.1:663), Ghazal N^o1871 (*ibid*, I.2:874-875), Ghazal N^o2481 (*ibid*, I.2:1160), Ghazal N^o1623 (*ibid*, I.1:755), Ghazal N^o2145 (*ibid*, I.2:1004), Ghazal N^o1327 (*ibid*, I.1:619-620), Ghazal N^o1267 (*ibid*, I.1:592), Ghazal N^o2033 (*ibid*, I.2:952), Ghazal N^o348 (*ibid*, I.1:159), Ghazal N^o297 (*ibid*, I.1:135), Ghazal N^o2835 (*ibid*, I.2:1324), Ghazal N^o2568 (*ibid*, I.2:1200), Ghazal N^o966 (*ibid*, I.1:452), Ghazal N^o140 (*ibid*, I.1:64), Ghazal N^o853 (*ibid*, I.1:396), Ghazal N^o2242 (*ibid*, I.1:1047), Ghazal N^o61 (*ibid*, I.1:28), Ghazal N^o500 (*ibid*, I.1:229), Ghazal N^o2595 (*ibid*, I.2:1213), Ghazal N^o664 (*ibid*, I.1:306), Ghazal N^o1961 (*ibid*, I.2:919), Ghazal N^o2709 (*ibid*, I.2:1266), Ghazal N^o2705 (*ibid*, I.2:1264), Ghazal N^o978 (*ibid*, I.1:457), Ghazal N^o1181 (*ibid*, I.1:552), Ghazal N^o269 (*ibid*, I.1:123), Ghazal N^o725 (*ibid*, I.1:334), Ghazal N^o1365 (*ibid*, I.1:637), Ghazal N^o533 (*ibid*, I.1:245), Ghazal N^o2264 (*ibid*,

commitment to lyric circularity is especially important – even crucial – for our understanding of the following poem.

The formal features of Bīdel’s Ghazal N^o986, which I have called “This Gathering,” are these: the rhyme is *-anī*, the refrain is *būd* (“she/he/it was”), and the meter is a modified *hazaj*⁵⁰ – which, perhaps significantly, scans identically forwards and backwards: – – ˇ | ˇ – – ˇ | ˇ – – ˇ | ˇ – – .

In the following pages, I analyze the poem couplet by couplet.⁵¹ Line 1:

īn anjoman afsāne-ye rāz-e dahan-ī būd
har jelve ke dīdam nashenīdan sokhan-ī būd

این انجمن افسانه راز دهنی بود
هر جلوه که دیدم نشنیدن سخنی بود

This gathering
was
a tale
of the secret
of the mouth.
Every manifestation I saw
was
the unheard Word.⁵²

The poem opens emphatically and demonstratively with a deixis of place – this gathering – and proceeds to supply the context invited by this deictic beginning, defining what precisely this gathering entails. The immediacy and specificity of the deictic determiner

I.2:1058), Ghazal N^o369 (ibid, I.1:168-169), Ghazal N^o566 (ibid, I.1:261-262), Ghazal N^o905 (ibid, I.1:422), Ghazal N^o2069 (ibid, I.2:969), Ghazal N^o1958 (ibid, I.2:917-918).

⁵⁰ The meter is *hazaj-e moṣamman-e akhrab al-ṣadr va makfūf al-hashv va maḥzūf al-zarb* (E.S. #3.3.14), or *maf’ūlo mafā’īlo mafā’īlo fo’ūlon*.

⁵¹ A full English translation, unpunctuated by Persian or commentary, is given in T2.G10 along with the Persian original and transliteration.

⁵² Ghazal N^o986. Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, I:461.

“this” , *īn*, is reinforced sonically by the reverberations throughout this line of similar syllables: *īn*, *an*, *an*, *ān*, *an-ī*, *shan*, *dan*, *an-ī* – the last being the poem’s recurring rhyme.

“*Anjoman*” in the world of classical Persian lyric means “gathering,” in the sense of the convivial gathering-together of people, an evening party full of music, wine, song, poetry, and conversation. As such, it is inherently social, interactional, multi-personal, and, of course, loud. Such a gathering would have been so full of the incidental sounds of food and drink, melodies, and voices as to become virtually synonymous with a state of pleasantly resonant din. Five of the words in this couplet are obvious sound-nouns of some sort: *anjoman*, *afsāne* (a story that is told; a fairy tale recounted for entertainment with all due pomp and ceremony); *dahan*, mouth; *shanīdan*, the verb “to hear”, and *sokhan*, meaning speech, but also more technically, the craft of poetry, with ample room for theological interpretation as well, as something like Logos. The grammar of this couplet appears at first glance further to environ this gathering with all its proper accoutrements: the past-tense verb of “to be,” “*būd*” (“it/he/she was”) invites the expectation that this will be a narrative account of a gathering that took place in the immediate past, a well-worn topos in classical Persian poetry where the poem is a next-morning review of what happened last night; and at the same time, it calls to mind a gathering *at which* tales, stories, legends, and all manner of things mirthful and fantastic would have been recited for entertainment. The obligatory repetition of the refrain “*būd*” in both hemistichs of the opening line here also recalls the beautifully illogical Persian formulaic “one-upon-a-time” beginning of fairy tales: “*Yek-ī būd, yek-ī nabūd...*”: “it was, and it wasn’t.” Yet here in this couplet, none of the expected things happen. Indeed, in what will be one of many deft sleights of hand, Bidel subverts expectations by drawing

an equivalence between the gathering, *anjoman*, and the tale itself (*afsāne*). This, then, is no ordinary stale story of adventure, magic, and intrigue: it tells, or perhaps rather keeps to itself, the secret of a mouth (*rāz-e dahan-ī*), an oral secret, one that ought not to be divulged – or at least one that does not unravel in the manner of traditional narrative.

The second hemistich makes the strange beginning even more uncanny: “every manifestation that I saw” was *nashanīdan sokhan-ī*, “the unhearing of a word” or “the unheard Word” – a phrase that is difficult to render into English in a way that preserves the syntactic oddness of the negative infinitive of “to hear”, *shanīdan* (*nashanīdan*, lit. “to not hear”), which half-adjectivally half-nominally qualifies “speech” (*sokhan-ī*). This word is grammatically ambiguous due to the enclitic *-ī*, which could be either indefinite (a speech/word/Logos) or specific (the speech/word/Logos). I hope to justify my translation of *nashanīdan sokhan-ī* as “the unheard Word” with more context shortly. But first, the full sense of this first couplet: at this gathering, someone – Bīdel – an “I” at any rate, the first-person singular, was in attendance, and witnessed a multiplicity of visual manifestations. *Jelve* (“manifestation”) has clear theophanic implications, sharing an Arabic root with the term *tajallī*, the way God unveils or discloses himself, for example to Moses on Sinai in the form of wordless blinding fire; so *jelve* here falls firmly under the sense-category of things which are perceived only visually, and are disclosed through silent visual splendor. The couplet appears to be contrasting the enjoyable, though trivial, noise of a social gathering with a different, more serious sort of collection, a gathering-together of one’s own attention in isolation, so that something – something secret – can be revealed and experienced.

Bīdel is a poet for whom beginnings and ends are in constant conversation, as mentioned earlier, and so we will return to this first line at the end of the poem; but before moving on, I would like to note, in passing for now, the possibility of a further meaning superadded to the word for mouth, *dahan*, which in unvocalized Persian script is simply d-h-n. In the third chapter of Dārā Shikōh’s *Mingling of the Two Oceans*, which is concerned with aligning Indic and Islamic theories of the senses (*bayān-e ḥavāss*), he says the fifth element (‘*onṣor-e a ‘zam*, “the greatest element” in Islam, and *mahā ākās*, or “great sky”, according to Dārā for the Indic monotheists) lends itself to human perception as a sound, a wordless voice.⁵³ Only certain adepts are capable of actually hearing this sound, and that too only through rigorous meditation practices that Dārā calls *pās-e anfās* in Persian, literally “watching over one’s breaths.” This practice is aligned by Dārā with the Indic concept of what in Persian transliteration is *dhon*: this is one of countless instances of substantial departure from original Sanskrit terminology, for the “true” term here is the Sanskrit *dhyāna*, denoting contemplative meditation and yogic training of mind and body through attention. What is noteworthy is that this Persian transliteration of *dhyāna*, *dhon*, in unvocalized Persian script is identical with the word for mouth, d-h-n, and thus could be read in Persian as either the standard word for “mouth”, *dahan*, or as this idiosyncratic transliteration by Dārā Shikōh of the Indic practice of *dhyāna* (*dhon*).⁵⁴

⁵³ Dārā Shikōh, *Majma ‘al-Baḥrayn*, 83. Fascinatingly, Dārā reports that the experiential result of successful breath control and meditation practice results in being able to hear the sound that underpins the universe – a *nonverbal voice*, which he likens to the “buzzing of bees” (“*Chūn āvāz-ī ke az zaḡbūr-khāne-ī āyad*”). Dārā Shikōh, *Resāle*, 12.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 84.

We can think of this first line, then, as setting the scene for precisely such an attempt to attune one's imagination to the Absolute through a virtuosic exertion of attention and control, a gathering-together of body, mind, resolve, and breath.

Line 2:

īn forṣat-e hastī ke nafas keshmakesh-e ū-st
hangāme-ye bītāb-e gosastan rasan-ī būd

این فرصت هستی که نفس کشمکش اوست
هنگامه بیتاب گسستن رسانی بود

This opportune moment of existence,
pulled this way
and that way
by breath,
was
a frayed gathering
of broken rope.

This second line explicitly refers to breath, describing it as that force that pulls one's existence this way and that way, inexorably forward. The contrast between *hastī* – mere, brute existence, the simple and accidental fact of being – and *forṣat*, an opportune moment, recurs throughout Bīdel's poetry: this opportune moment is a limited amount of time, a specific segment of one's lifetime in which one can do *more* than just exist: one can try know oneself, however briefly and fleetingly. Etymologically, *forṣat* comes from the Arabic verb "to cut," and this adds an explicit dimension to Bīdel's sense of an opportune moment as something that one must laboriously carve out from one's own existence. Bīdel likely had this etymological resonance in mind, given that, in the next line, the phrase *qaṭ'-e nafas* – one of several ways of referring to breath control – literally means "cutting off" one's breath.

Much of Bīdel’s lyric endeavor is devoted to describing repeated attempts to conquer both time and self by seizing the moment, subduing it, making it expand under one’s command – and the disappointment of failing to do so. Dārā Shikōh’s writings on comparative religion emphasize that both Indic and Islamic practices of perfecting the self are essentially attempts to become one with God, or, more precisely, attempts to realize, to wake up to the fact that one is *already* one with God. A crucial aspect of these practices of perfecting the self involves striving to adopt something like a God’s-eye-view perspective on self and world, a perspective that transcends time. Moḥammad, the prototype of the Perfect Man in Islam, is extraordinary because he preexists creation and will exist after it; he is simultaneously an ordinary historical individual and an extraordinary example of perfection, someone whose perfect awareness of reality has freed him from all temporal restraints. In Hindu thought, someone who is liberated (*jivan-mukt*) does the same – by waking up to an awareness of essential unity outside of time. Meditatively attending to the “unheard sound” of the cosmos is one way of getting at this attempt to experience time from God’s perspective: by attuning one’s imagination and perception to the sound of the cosmos, one might actually be able to hear infinity. Such experiences are, for the vast majority of humans, unattainable, or, at most, only fleetingly within reach.

The opportune moment (*forṣat*) in this couplet is a chance to master time through meditative practice; if successful, time itself could expand, even disappear. This couplet, however, acknowledges the failure that is almost guaranteed in any such attempt. If life is a brute mechanical concatenation of breaths, then the goal must be consciously to sever it – not to let it fray meaninglessly on its own. Thread and rope are among the literal

threads running through this poem: textile imagery is woven into many of the following lines as well. It is also worth noting that the first two lines of this poem each contain words for “gathering:” *anjoman* in line 1, and *hangāme* in line 2, which are synonyms; moreover, etymologically they are close kin, both being related to the Sanskrit “*sangamā*”. The third and final explicit reference to “gathering” will be, crucially, in the last line of the poem. We will return to this at the poem’s end later. Here is Line 3:

tā pāk bar-āyīm ze garmābe-ye owhām
qaṭ‘-e nafas az har man-o-mā jāme-kanī būd

تا پاک بر آییـم ز گرمابه او هام
 قطع نفس از هر من و ما جامه کنی بود

The severing of breath
 from all I-and-we
 was
 the undressing room
 of the bathhouse,
 Letting us rise, purified,
 from the warm bath
 of delusion.

In this couplet, the ideal practice of breath control is explicitly announced: holding one’s breath, *qaṭ‘-e nafas*, cutting off the breath, is likened to the changing room in a bathhouse where one would disrobe; here, however, one is divesting oneself not of clothing, but of personal pronouns, both singular and plural, I and we. “Letting us rise”: this upward motion, this arising-out-of-delusion, is also a directional reversal. Before, we had a linear picture of existence: life extends forward by the endless braiding-together of inhalations and exhalations. The practice of breath control allows one to halt that meaningless process, to radically change the direction and orientation of one’s life.

The purification achieved by this severance is tantamount to freedom from delusion, *ouhām* (delusions or illusions; sing. *vahm*), and it is important to note that this

specific term for delusion (*vahm*, pl. *ouhām*) is always negative, something that appears to the mind in a dangerously misleading way. In contrast, *khayāl*, the imaginary, or the objects of the imagination mentioned earlier, are also unreal, but are beautiful, consoling, and indeed are the means through which the imagination can successfully participate in the journey of perfecting oneself, of acquiring perfect knowledge and certainty of reality.

It is here that the other aspect of translation mentioned earlier – the transformation of a physical practice into a lyric image – comes into play. In this poem, we must make sense of the value and force of the *lyric idea of a physical practice*, and what it means for lyric to be a place where a physical practice like breath control is translated into a literary figure. The potential implications, I think, are remarkable. As Tony Stewart’s work on Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava meditation has shown,⁵⁵ prose treatises and manuals exhaustively analyze the step-by-step details of yogic meditative procedure; but as to the actual *content* of meditation, descriptions of the resulting mental state remain elusive and underrepresented. Early modern Persian lyric poetry, like the present poem, offers a unique opportunity to examine meditative religious practice from the inside; insofar as Bīdel’s lyric poetry is concerned not with straightforward exposition of doctrine, nor with technical details of procedure (how and where one should meditate, etc.), but with experience during meditation, in this kind of lyric poem we catch a rare glimpse beyond the surface descriptions of meditation to *what it is like* to meditate, to gather one’s attention with one’s whole body and mind. Line 4:

*jam ’īyat-e sar-baste-ye har ghonche dar īn bāgh
z-ān pīsh ke gol dar nazār āyad chaman-ī būd*

⁵⁵ Tony K. Stewart, “Reading for Krishna’s Pleasure: Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Meditation, Literary Interiority, and the Phenomenology of Repetition,” *Journal of Vaiṣṇava Studies* 14.1 (2005), 243-280.

جمعیت سر بسته هر غنچه در این باغ
زان پیش که گل در نظر آید چمنی بود

The concealed collectedness
of every rosebud
in this garden
was
a garden,
blooming before
the roses blossom into view.

Here is an arrestingly beautiful picture of the realizations that successful, collected meditative practice can yield. In every garden, there are roses; but before they were roses, they were rosebuds. However, instead of going one logical step further back, Bīdel loops the natural process around on itself, turning it into a vertiginous infinity: each rosebud, *before* it blooms, already has a garden within it. And within that garden, each unbloomed flower also contains an already blooming garden within itself. And so on, and so on, infinitely. Some of Bīdel's most signature images depend upon this fractal self-recurring structure.⁵⁶ For example, he takes the well-known classical image of an ocean wave that is full of pearls (denoting either the patron's generosity or the poet's eloquence) and reverses it, describing instead the infinite waves of luster on each pearl itself.

One cannot help but think of one of the most striking accounts in Dārā Shikōh's *Mingling of the Two Oceans*, where the Indic doctrine of the infinity of times (*bī-nehāyatī-ye advār*) is figured as the succession of day and night, followed by another day, and another night, without end. Remarkably, Dārā supplies a *ḥadīth* (a genre of authoritative reports about Moḥammad) not to refute but to support this apparently un-

⁵⁶ For this way of discussing poetic self-similarity in Pound's *Cantos*, see Hugh Kenner, "Self-Similarity, Fractals, Cantos," *English Literary History* 55.3 (1988), 721-730.

Islamic doctrine. This *ḥadīth*⁵⁷ is a narrative about Moḥammad, who, in the middle of the *me'raj* (his Night Journey, or ascension through the cosmos), suddenly beheld an endless caravan of camels, each of whom was carrying two large trunks. In every trunk, the

⁵⁷ No scholar so far has been able to find a source for this *ḥadīth*, to my knowledge. Tony Stewart suggests that this *ḥadīth* narrative is similar in idea and flavor to the Purāṇic story of the god Brahmā, who goes to visit the supreme deity Nārāyaṇa. During their conversation, another Brahmā arrives, followed by an infinite multitude of Brahmās – and thus the bewildered original (first) Brahmā came to understand each pore of Nārāyaṇa's skin contained an entire universe. (Tony Stewart, personal communication). Rūmī plays with similar ideas, though without any overt Indic references. For instance, one couplet in Rūmī's *Spiritual Verses* (given in this chapter's epigraph) refers to the bewildering plurality and constant flux of creation by describing this process as “caravan upon caravan,” an apparently endless procession “moving from nonbeing into existence.” See Rūmī, *Maṣnavī-ye ma'navī* (*Spiritual Verses*), ed. Reynold A. Nicholson (Tehran: Enteshārāt-e Hermes, 1390SH [2011/2012CE], Leiden: Luzac and Co., 1924-1940), 86. It is likely that Dārā's bibliographical omission (he does not refer anywhere to a source for this *ḥadīth*, contrary to standard premodern Islamic scholarly practice, which stresses a reliable chain of transmission) is intentional, and that he aims to present a cosmological vignette that could conceivably find a home in both Indic and Islamic traditions. Dārā Shikōh's early modern South Asian readership might think of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, where Līlā says, “Indeed, in every atom there are worlds within worlds.” See *The Concise Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*, ed. and transl. Swami Venkatesananda (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1984), 55. They might also be reminded of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*: “There are innumerable universes besides this one, and although they are unlimitedly large, they move about like atoms in You” (6.16.37). Perhaps their minds may also have turned to the passage in the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* (2.21.65-67) where Kṛṣṇa explains to Brahmā that there are several universes, each with its own Brahmā and Rudra. See Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, *Caitanya caritāmṛta*, transl. Edward C. Dimock, Jr., ed. Tony K. Stewart (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999). I am very grateful to Sonam Kachru for these three references. It is tantalizing to speculate that Bīdel may have been especially familiar with images, motifs, and stories from the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, which was composed at the beginning of the early modern period in Bengal, where Bīdel spent his childhood. For related examples in which the (Indic) ancientness and/or eternity of the world is aligned with an Islamic historical framework, see Muzaffar Alam's discussion of Muslim Sufis and historians citing *ḥadīths* to this effect: Muzaffar Alam, “Strategy and Imagination in a Mughal Sufi Story of Creation,” *IESHR* 49.2 (2012), 151-195; and see also his discussion of a fascinating eighteenth-century history by a Hindu Mughal historian and munshi, Lāl Rām (*Toḥfat al-Hend*) in Muzaffar Alam, “Early North India in Persian Historical Traditions: 14th-18th Centuries” (in progress). Lāl Rām relies on *Islamic* evidence – *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, histories – in order to assert an *Indic* view of the world's ancientness, even its infinity. Of particular relevance to this chapter is that Lāl Rām presents accounts of spiritually authoritative *non-humans* – such as Jibrīl and Khidr – who advance claims (in the form of striking cosmic narratives) about the age and/or infinity of the world, but at the same time *stress their own ignorance* as to the precise details about the structure and mechanism of time, the universe, and the many possible worlds it contains. This combination of scrupulousness and skepticism strikes me as having the same tone and texture as the *ḥadīth* mentioned by Dārā Shikōh.

narrative tells us, there was a world, and in every world, a Moḥammad. Moḥammad, amazed by this, asked the angel Gabriel: “What is this?” Gabriel replied, “As long as I have been alive, it has always been so; the camels keep coming and going, the caravan is infinite.” Such a doctrine of the infinity of times should be anathema for end-oriented orthodox Islam; yet here, Dārā seems as much to be aligning Islamic theology to accord with Indic theology as the reverse. Fascinatingly, another way that Dārā supports the doctrine of the infinity of times is by supplying lyric evidence: he cites a couplet by Ḥāfez, the fourteenth-century poet from Shīrāz, and suggests that Ḥāfez was articulating the same point when he wrote that “The event of myself and my beloved has no end; / Everything that has no beginning has no end.”⁵⁸

Why does Dārā Shikōh defend this Indic doctrine of infinity of times? And why does Bīdel appear to commit himself to it – aesthetically, at least, if not outright theologically? Answers to these questions must necessarily be somewhat speculative. In the introduction to his magisterial study of nirvana as a meaningful end to the painful endlessness of life (*samsāra*) in Theravāda Buddhism, Steven Collins perfectly captures the counterintuitive *undesirability* of eternal (after)life by painting a picture of what he calls the “Big Rock Candy Mountain” view of heaven: sure, it seems nice, but could one actually imagine enjoying rock candy for billions and billions of years, and longer? Nirvana, then, as an absolute end, offers something even more desirable than the best possible eternal afterlife we could conceivably design for ourselves: final closure,

⁵⁸ “*Mājarā-ye man o ma ‘shūq-e ma-rā pāyān nīst / har-che āghāz nadārad napazīrad anjām.*” Dārā Shikōh, *Majma‘ al-baḥrayn*, 116.

attained by the work of our own human will.⁵⁹ I suspect that perhaps something like this kind of drive for closure on one's own terms may be behind Dārā Shikōh and Bīdel's modulation of Islamic theology with Indic thought, which, like Buddhism, also stresses the importance of striving for salvation as an escape from the endless cycle of rebirth. For an early modern South Asian Muslim, then, what such a doctrine offered could maybe have been something like this: instead of waiting (however piously) to be sorted into the "good" afterlife following natural death, another option may have revealed itself with still greater appeal and urgency – the possibility, still very much *during* one's lived lifetime, of seizing the present moment for salvation, molding ever-longer times (perhaps even an eternity) out of that moment through meditative practice, and thereby escaping the bonds of time altogether. In other words, putting a stop to time *within* one's lifetime may have been seen, in the early modern South Asian Sufi intellectual milieu, as more virtuous – impressive? important? – than simply allowing life to end, to unravel where it will. By seizing the opportunity for salvation before death, one might get the chance not merely to be with God in the afterlife, but to actually become godlike by cultivating in oneself something akin to God's own power over time – all within one's own lifespan.

Of course, becoming godlike in this way is hardly everyone's destiny. Even saints and prophets do not possess perfect divine omniscience (Moḥammad being the important exception). For ordinary humans, however, attempts to do this must almost invariably end in failure. Bīdel's lyric presents us with precisely such accounts of intermittent proximity to fleeting perfection, and subsequent laments over the failure to sustain it.

⁵⁹ Steven Collins, *Nirvana: Concept, Imagery, Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 25.

This concern with striving and failure can be discerned not only in the remainder of this poem, but in Bīdel’s entire mature lyric corpus.

The key word in Line 4 is “*jam ‘īyat*”, collectedness, a kind of composure, both physical and mental – the unbloomed rose, the well-ordered mind, collected attention, a held breath. It is one Arabic-morphological step removed from one of the most important terms used by Bīdel – and Dārā Shikōh – to characterize human perfection: *jāme ‘īyat*, literally “the state of being a collector/gatherer,” a state-noun formed by adding nominal suffixes to the active-agent noun *jāme* ‘ (“one who collects/gathers/encompasses”). One can achieve composure at certain moments (*jam ‘īyat*), but *jāme ‘īyat* – concerted, intense, radical composure – is something only saints and prophets can claim to possess. In the logic of this poem, however, at least this lower-level composure does seem within reach. The “gathering” of mind, the practice of breath control, has yielded some results, compassed beautifully by the figure of the rosebud’s closure, aware in its eloquent silent meditation of all the infinity within and beyond itself. Such awareness, however, is only momentary. Line 5:

tekrār-e nafas shod sabab-e mabḥaṣ-e azdād
emrūz to-vo-mā-st k-az- īn pīsh man-ī būd

تکرار نفس شد سبب مبحث اَضداد
امروز تو و ماست کزین پیش منی بود

Repetition of breath
caused the dispute
of opposites.
Today, it is you and we;
before,
was
the mind’s I.

The brief glimpse of composure in line 4 is quickly displaced in line 5. Breath cannot humanly be held forever; it must resume and repeat. A further admission of failure is the pun on the word for “cause”, *sabab*, a philosophical term for something that causes something else, but literally means “rope” – a resumption of the “thread” of breath, pulling existence inexorably forward in line 2.

“Today” of the second hemistich seems to reprise the intimate immediacy of time and place evoked by the deictic “this” in lines 1 and 2 (“this gathering”; “this opportune moment”). The very word “today” in this line, however, connotes both belatedness and loss: social gatherings transpire, by definition, during the mirthful hours of evening and night, and consequently, any reference in a poem about such a gathering to dawn, morning, or the next day implies that the gathering has regrettably come to an end. The same logic applies to this poem, even though the gathering is more solipsistic than social; whatever the gathering may have been, the point is that it *was* (“*būd*”, emphatically in the refrain position), and now is no more. Before, while it lasted, for a brief time, there was an ideal “I” – *man*, the first-person pronoun that also means “mind” in Persian renderings of Sanskrit. But now this mind’s “I” has scattered again into a crowd of pronouns. Line 6:

dar bī-kasī-yam kheffat-e ham-cheshmī-ye kas nīst
ay bī-khabarān ‘ālam-e ghorbat vaṭan-ī būd

در بیکسیم خفت هم چشمی کس نیست
 ای بیخبران عالم غربت وطنی بود

In my solitude
 there are no slights
 from anyone’s companionship.
 O ignorant ones!
 the world of exile
 was
 homeland.

Lines 6-12 mourn the loss of this failed attempt at attentive solipsism: nobody sees what he sees, all was in his mind. Others cannot possibly understand what it is like for him to embody this brief state of enlightenment; although from the outside it might seem like exile, in truth, being thus exiled from mundane reality was so wonderful and welcoming an experience that it became his adopted homeland. Line 7:

*emrūz jonūn-e tab-e 'eshq-e to nadāram
sobḥ-e azal-am panbe-ye dāgh-e kohan-ī būd*

امروز جنون تب عشق تو ندارم
صبح ازلم پنبه داغ کهنی بود

Today I have no delirium
from the fever of passion for you.
The dawn of eternity-without-beginning
was
gauze on an old scar
for me.

This line continues the motif of lamenting his failed meditation. The image of tending to one's wounds is maybe unsolvably paradoxical: he says that his old scar was covered by the gauze of the dawn of eternity (in Islam, this is specifically pre-eternity, or eternity that has no beginning, *azal*). Line 8:

*mā rā be 'adam nīz hamān qayd-e vojūd ast
z-ān zolf-e gereh-gīr be har-jā shekanī būd*

ما را به عدم نیز همان قید وجود است
زان زلف گره گیر به هر جا شکنی بود

Even in our not-existing
there too is the same
cage of being.
Knots
of that tangled hair
were
everywhere.

Existence and nonexistence in this line are the same prison; where there is no enlightenment, there can be no purposive end to existence; one remains trapped in illusion. There is an important contrast here between the enclosure of prison (*qayd*) in this line and the intentional, collected composure (*jam 'īyat*) of the closed rosebud in line 4: the former is freely undertaken through an act of intense concentration, while the latter is a forced bondage. Line 9:

afsūs ke del rā be jalā-yī narasāndīm
soḥḥ-e chaman āyīne-ye ṣayqal-zadanī būd

افسوس که دل را به جلائی نرساندیم
 صبح چمن آئینه صیقل زدنی بود

What a shame
 that we were not able
 to illuminate the heart.
 Dawn in the garden
 was
 a mirror
 worth polishing.

The metaphor of “polishing the mirror of one’s heart” is perhaps one of the most well-known, and well-worn, Sufi articulations of striving to perfect the self. One makes one’s mind (heart) as pure as possible by laboriously polishing the rust off of its mirror, so that it may most perfectly reflect God. Here, Bīdel’s incredibly convoluted syntax makes even this typically recognizable metaphor something one needs to pause over and interpretively untangle: the second hemistich in literal English would be something like “dawn in the garden was a mirror-of-being-worth-polishing”. Line 10:

z-īn reshte ke dar kārgah-e mūy-e sefīd ast
jūlāh-e amal selsele-bāf-e kafan-ī būd

زین رشته که در کارگه موی سفید است
 جولاه امل سلسله باف کفنی بود

With this thread
from the workshop of white hair
The weaver of hope
was
weaving
a winding shroud.

Lines 9 and 10 continue the mournful tenor of the previous lines, and the locks of hair that form the prison of line 8 come back here too in a different way, as the white hair of old age slowly and inevitably forming a shroud. The opportune moment for enlightenment, and transcendence of time, it seems, has long passed. Line 11:

*ākhar be tapesh mordam o āgāh nagashtam
ān chāh ke zendānī-ye ū-yam zāqan-ī būd*

آخر به تپش مردم و آگاه نگشتم
آن چاه که زندانی اویم زقنی بود

In the end, I died –
heart beating –
and did not become wise.
That well
where I dwell, imprisoned,
was
a deep-dimpled chin.

In this line, the end – *ākhar* – is by no means joyous; meditative practice did not lead to self-perfection, awareness (*āgāhī*) was not attained. In another grammatically and temporally paradoxical way, the fact of recounting his own death after death rather does negate death; indeed, he says that he, in the present tense, still dwells in the prison of a deep well, a reference to another threadbare metaphor from classical Persian amatory poetry of the “dangerous” (because beautiful) dimpled chin, the well into which the beloved falls when carelessly absorbed by thoughts of the beautiful beloved’s face. This reference to wells, combined with all the references to thread that have come before it, could be an intentional evocation of a frequently cited metaphor for Indic eternity in the

early modern Persian tradition: the endlessness of times is likened to a well that is so full of thread that any attempt to count the individual strands would be impossible. Line 12:

fardā shavī āgāh ze parvāz-e ghobār-am
k-īn khel 'at-e nāzok be bar-e gol/gel-badan-ī būd

فردا شوی آگاه ز پرواز غبارم
کین خلعت نازک به بر گل بدنی بود

Tomorrow
the flight of my dust
will make you wise.
This delicate robe of honour
was
draped over
a clay-flower body.

It is unclear whom he is addressing in this penultimate line. The “you” could very well be the reader, reading these words long after his demise; it could also be himself, talking to a future self. He is, after all, imprisoned by a constant multiplication of personal pronouns. Even if the self that tried today did not succeed, perhaps he intends once more to try to achieve enlightenment tomorrow. Line 13:

Bīdel falak az sābet o sayyār(-e) kavākeb
fānūs-e khayāl-e man-o-mā anjoman-ī būd

بیدل فلک از ثابت و سیار کواکب
فانوس خیال من و ما انجمنی بود

Bīdel
firmament
with fixed stars
and roaming planets
a turning lantern
of the imaginary
of I
and we
was
a gathering.

This remarkable final couplet brings us back to the poem's beginning: the gathering, *anjoman*. The first line comprised, with one important exception, mostly sound words associated with a loud social gathering; but this last line brims with silent objects: *falak* (the horizon, firmament, the rotating celestial sphere); stars, stationary and moving; that which is imaginary (*khayāl*), a lantern. All these are vision-words, except *anjoman*, the same gathering that opened the poem in line 1 ("This gathering...", *in anjoman*). So this gathering, *anjoman*, the word that misleadingly introduces this poem as an account of a noisy social occasion, makes a pointed appearance again as the last non-refrain word of the *ghazal*. If this poem has been primarily definitional – defining, subverting, and redefining the word "gathering" – what, then, is the final meaning? What kind of peculiar solipsistic gathering does this poem seek to define?

Fānūs-e khayāl, "the turning lantern of the imaginary," is a literal translation of what we would call a Chinese lantern. It sometimes metaphorically refers to the sky, but here, Bīdel has reversed the direction of the metaphor, likening the skies themselves to this lantern. Such a lantern would have an outer covering cut with images that collectively tell a story (cf. *afsāne*, the "tale" of line 1) – a silent narrative told by brilliant images that rotate, a story whose end necessarily returns to its beginning. This lantern would have rotated on its own, propelled by the hot air and smoke of its inner fire.

This gathering, *anjoman*, then, according to this last line, has been (1) the firmament, turning with fixed stars and moving planets; (2) the lantern of the imaginary; (3) the pronouns "I" and "we", syntactically parallel to (and therefore importantly linked respectively with) the fixed and moving celestial bodies; and, grammatically, (4) "this gathering" can also be defined as Bīdel himself, perhaps his own mind. A poet's

signature in the final line of a Persian lyric poem is frequently vocative and thus often extraneous from the perspective of grammar; but here, there are four nouns – Bīdel, firmament, lantern, and gathering – and it is left to us to draw the definitional lines of equivalence between them. *Anjoman*, the gathering at the beginning and end of the poem, has folded in on itself, the end has returned to the beginning, and, harnessing the lantern-image from the poem's own final line, will continue to rotate – perhaps endlessly.

The most important “answer” to this poem, however, may reside in a final pun. If the first line introduces the word “gathering,” *anjoman*, and tries to define it, and the last line repeats this initial attempt at (re)definition, it does so with so many references to stars – four in the first hemistich. This forces the reader to reexamine the word *anjoman* and to re-parse it, unnaturally, into *anjom* (stars, plural of *najm*) and *man* (I; mind). If we remove all the intervening words in the poem and leave only the first and last, we might have something like this cryptic definition: “This gathering... was a gathering; these stars of mine were these stars of mind.”

To conclude: what does this poem do? Formally and logically, it presents us with a tautology: “this gathering was a gathering” appears to be an unnecessary pleonastic repetition. But the lyric form with its dense middle lines unstitch the fast seams of logic. In this poem, $X = X$ is no mere formal identity statement. In logic (and doctrine), such tautologies must be considered as devoid of meaning, and therefore are to be avoided; in lyric, however, they can overbrim with possibility. The poem redefines, even re-parses, a well-known word very idiosyncratically, and shows us, step by step, *what it is like* to try to gather the mind and collect the imagination, through something like lyric breath control – and also what it is like to fail in this extraordinary endeavor.

6.5 The Poem and the Dream: Bīdel's Lyric Practice of the Self

An invaluable piece of evidence for how to approach the question of Bīdel's lyric theory and practice is supplied by the remarkable dream narrative that Bīdel recounts at the end of his autobiography, *The Four Elements*,⁶⁰ discussed in Chapter 3. To briefly recapitulate: this dream occurred in 1670, when Bīdel would have been twenty-five, and can be summarized thus: he begins with an abstract disquisition on the ideal of a well-balanced temperament (*mezāj-e mo'tadel*), which he likens to a manuscript (*noskhe*) that ought be interpreted by closely scrutinizing past copies (i.e., the lives, deeds, and sayings of saints and prophets who successfully acquired such perfectly balanced temperaments). These rare examples of equilibrium and composure, of minds and bodies perfectly ordered, have this further attribute: the dreams of such persons are so unsullied that they require no interpretation (*ta'bīr*). Bīdel then minutely describes his visionary experience. The place is Akbarābād (Agra), and it is twilight, between night and day. Bīdel is half-awake, half-asleep. The description of his mental state at this time is a striking echo of “This Gathering:”

I arranged a **gathering in [my] imagination** that was free from the loud modulations of the rowdy assembly of I-and-we, and I illuminated a gathering in [my] thoughts that required no candles or candle-holders.⁶¹

This ambiguous, liminal state prepares him for the dream to come – a visionary experience that bursts upon his consciousness as a sudden realization of total unity with God. His awareness gradually descends to Earth from the outermost reaches of the

⁶⁰ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, IV:296-307.

⁶¹ *Anjoman-ī dar khayāl mī-ārāstam fāregh az zīr-o-bam-e hangāme-ye mā-vo-man, va majles-ī dar andīshe mī-afrūkhtam bī-eḥteyāj-e sham 'o-lagan.*

universe, each planet teaching him something along the way. The result of this cosmic education is no less than perfection: “I considered my mental capacities *in potentia* to be worthy of the intoxication of [saintly, prophetic, perfect] composure [*jāme ‘īyat*].”⁶² At that very moment, Bīdel becomes aware that Moḥammad is present both inside and outside the dream. He sits at the head of the bed so close to Bīdel, who is still dreaming, that his kneecap is pressed against – even joined to – the crown of Bīdel’s head.⁶³ Several more stages of reflection, bewilderment, and enlightenment follow. It is worth noting that time operates here in a peculiar way, with one clock-hour dilating (*emdād-e zamān*) far beyond that fixed objective span. A voice calls to him.⁶⁴

⁶² *Bel-qovve este ‘dād-e demāgh rā shāyeste-ye nash’ e-ye jāme ‘īyat andīshīdam.*

⁶³ “While beholding [this dream], I saw a person – like a lamp – sitting at the head of my bed, and the top of my head was joined to his kneecap” (*Dar ‘ayn-e tamāshā, shakḥṣ-ī dīdam chūn cherāgh bar bālīn-am neshaste, va tārak-e sar-am be āyīne-ye zānū-yesh naqsh-e etteṣāl baste*). For the full passage, see T1.E4.23. This remarkable description of proximity to the divine walks a delicate line, skirting but not fully committing to metempsychosis (*tanāsokh*, transmigration of souls – another Indic concept – which is to be avoided at all costs in orthodox Islam). Bīdel’s experience of the cosmos through descent (as opposed to Moḥammad’s *ascent* through the heavens, the *me ‘rāj*) in the previous passage leading up to this joining of head to knee may also subtly draw on Persian interpretations of the Indic concept of *avatāras*, lit. “descents” or manifestations of God in many different deities, which is glossed in Persian as *nozūl*, a physical descent, in Dārā Shikōh’s *Serr-e akbar*, and also is connected there with metempsychosis (*tanāsokh*). See Prince Dārā Shikōh, *Serr-e akbar*, 506 *be* (↔). The dangers of professing a doctrine with even a hint of metempsychosis during Bīdel’s lifetime were profound and real. For instance, Moḥebollāh Elāhābādī (d. 1642) composed a treatise (the *Taswiya*) on the Perfect Man and the “Moḥammadan reality” (*al-ḥaqīqa al-muḥammadiyya*) in which he entertained the idea that angels inhabit prophets’ bodies. Emperor Awrangzēb had all copies of this treatise hunted down and burned. On Moḥebollāh Elāhābādī, see G.A. Lipton, “Muḥibb Allāh Ilāhābādī’s *Taswiya* Contextualized,” in *Muslim Cultures in the Indo-Iranian World during the Early-Modern and Modern Periods*, ed. Denis Hermann and Fabrizio Speziale, 475-97 (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2010) and Shankar Nair, “Muḥibb Allāh Ilāhābādī on Ontology: Debates over the Nature of Being,” in *Oxford Handbook of Indian Philosophy*, ed. Jonardon Ganeri (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). For a seventeenth-century perspective on the incident, see Sher ‘Alī Khān Lodī, *Tazkere-ye mer’āt al-khayāl*, 182-183.

⁶⁴ It is worth noting that in his treatise on breath control and meditation, Dārā Shikōh recounts that one night in his youth, he was visited in a dream by a messenger (*hātef*) whose *voice* reached Dārā’s ears, repeating truths that no other temporal ruler has ever heard. After Dārā Shikōh “recovered” (*efāqat*) from this visionary dream, he interpreted it (*ta ‘bīr*) through the framework

“Come closer, so that by undertaking pilgrimage to this holy place, you might scrape the dust of illusion from the mirror of your imagination...and that you might never let go of the hem of **eternal composure**.”⁶⁵

Bīdel attempts to move closer to that holy place of divine presence, but at that very moment, his limbs begin to stir, his physical senses are revived, he comes into gradual awareness of lying down in his bed. Just before the dream evaporates, Bīdel hears the Prophet’s voice interpreting the dream for him. However, when Bīdel awakens, the words escape him before he is able to understand and remember them: “The meaning of the interpretation...remained hidden in the **manuscript of the imaginary**.”⁶⁶

The prose of this dream narrative – like the poem, “This Gathering” – has thus come full circle, with *noskhe* (manuscript/copy) of the very first sentence about the well-balanced temperaments of saints and prophets being like manuscripts that need to be studied reappearing at the end as well. This clearly mirrors the circular structure that informs so much of Bīdel’s lyric poetry.

Taken together, the poem and the dream allows us to speculate about why Bīdel spent his lifetime composing hundreds, even thousands, of lyric poems: through the repetitive, consuming, and difficult practice of lyric composition, perhaps he was trying

of Sufi gnosis (‘*erfān*). Gradually, the effects (*āṣār*) of this experience (*moshāhade*) began to reverberate across his outward life too, prompting him, for instance, to compose a work about the lives of Sufi saints (his *Safīnat al-owleyā*). This set of concerns and circumstances resonates unmistakably with Bīdel’s dream. In addition to sharing actual vocabulary, and, to some extent, the same narrative framework of their visionary dreams, Bīdel and Dārā both conceive of their life’s work – their literary-creative endeavors – as being directly caused by a transformative visionary moment they experienced as young men, the recovery or correct interpretation of which requires the lifelong practice of imagination (*taṣavvor*), attention (*tavajjoh*), and – in different ways – of breath control. See Dārā Shikōh, *Resāle-ye haqq-nemā*, 5-7.

⁶⁵ “*Nazdīk-tar ā, tā be zeyārat-e īn janāb-e moqaddas, ghobār-e tavahhom az āyīne-ye takhayyol bar-dārī va...dāman-e jam īyat-e davām az dast nagozārī.*”

⁶⁶ *Ma ‘nī-ye ta ‘bīr-ī...možmar-e noskhe-ye khayāl mānd.*

to recapture that first, perfect, and tragically lost interpretation which would have furnished him with absolute enlightenment and salvation. By placing this dream narrative at the end of his autobiography, Bīdel deliberately makes the sustained attempt, however futile, to recover truth from his imagination the crowning achievement – or perhaps failure – of his lifetime.

In his lyric poetry, we have seen how Bīdel engages in a creative extended translation of the Indic into the Islamic, and, like Dārā Shikōh, uses the Indic in order to more deeply and more thoroughly understand the Islamic *through* the Indic – a process perhaps best thought of as a concerted, strategic alignment of two theologies, and a sustained reimagining of both. Bīdel consciously folds specific Indic concepts into his unique exposition of the doctrine of the Perfect Man and the ideal achievement of experiencing and embodying perfect godlike composure (*jāme 'īyat*) – an endeavor that was, for Bīdel, inseparable from lyric. Bīdel's lyric practice forms an integral part of his cultivation of perfect, certain knowledge, which, as we have seen, is a beautiful, if doomed, repeated attempt to recover lost visionary experience. Thus Bīdel's lyric style – indeed, perhaps his life – was defined by his sustained endeavor to translate, interpret, and re-interpret himself through lyric poetry.

Conclusions

Lyric Style, Failure, Consolation

هر تجربه‌کاری که در این عرصه قدم زد
ساز دل جمع آن طرف ملک یقین داشت

Everyone armed with experience
who stepped into this field
of inquiry
Was kept on *that* side
of the kingdom of certain knowledge
by the fraudulent instrument
of the collected heart.

– Bīdel of Delhi, Ghazal N^o324¹

The sincerity and marrow of the man reaches to his sentences... Cut these words, and they would bleed; they are vascular and alive.²

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

Yazı hariç. Yazı hariç. Evet tabii, tek teselli yazı hariç.

Except writing. Except writing. Yes, naturally:
there is no consolation except writing.

– Orhan Pamuk, *Kara Kitap*³

¹ “*Har tajrobe-kār-ī ke dar īn ‘arṣe qadam zad / sāz-e del-e jam ‘ ān ṭaraf-e molk-e yaqīn dāsht.*” Ghazal N^o423, Line 4. Mīrzā ‘Abd al-Qāder Bīdel Dehlavī, *Kolleyyāt-e Abū l-Ma ‘ānī Mīrzā ‘Abd al-Qāder Bīdel Dehlavī*, ed. Khalīlollāh Khalīlī (Tehran: Enteshārāt-e Ṭalāye, 1389SH [2010/2011CE]), I:195. Readings of this hemistich also include: “*har tajrobe-kārī...*” – “every experience...” and “*har tajrobe-kār-ī*” “everyone who experiences...” In each case, the emphasis is on the idea of “experience” as a “repeated personal trial involving something difficult and dangerous.”

² Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Montaigne; Or, the Skeptic.” In Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Representative Men: Seven Lectures* (Boston: Phillips, Sampson, and Company, 1850), 167.

³ Orhan Pamuk, *Kara Kitap [The Black Book]* (Istanbul: Can Yayınları, 1990), 426.

Part II of this dissertation has traced the contours of Bīdel’s thought across several interrelated endeavors: his lyric attempt to inhabit, dilate, and master the single moment of time (Chapter 4); his aspiration to strive, through the figure of the phoenix, towards the farthest possible horizons of philosophical inquiry (Chapter 5); and his creative repurposing of techniques of meditation, attention, and breath control in the service of an immanent theory of the lyric. It has been argued throughout these chapters that what unifies these various endeavors is Bīdel’s lyric style. As a way of thought and form of practice, as a method of composition and means of attaining composure, Bīdel’s lyric style of steadfast imagining is a system dedicated to the management of experience.

The kind of experience that most keenly and urgently interests Bīdel is the experience of ideas. And it is through lyric style that Bīdel attempts a creative, restorative synthesis of systematic inquiry and first-personal experience. This attempt provocatively anticipates (and also importantly differs from) the kind of experience Henry James describes in 1908, when he writes in a preface to his own work that he has never sought to “go behind” – that is, to get at some great Truth behind particular experience; instead, he writes, “the thing of profit [in writing, in reading, in rewriting⁴] is to *have* your experience – to recognize and understand it, and for this almost any will do; there being surely no absolute ideal about it beyond getting from it all it has to give.”⁵ James

⁴ On the importance of reflecting on and revising his own work to James’ considered views on experience and the inalienable *experimental* component of how experience comes to be composed, see Paul Grimstad, *Experience and Experimental Writing: Literary Pragmatism from Emerson to the Jameses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1-3; for Grimstad’s assessment of the pragmatist approach to experience as “an open-ended experimental method,” see *ibid.*, 7.

⁵ Henry James, *Lady Barbarina, The Siege of London, An International Episode, and Other Tales* (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd, 1922), ix.

occupies a clearly marked place within the densely concatenated (and almost exclusively Western) literary-philosophical engagement with the experience of ideas. Sixty years before James's preface, Emerson's essay on Montaigne dissects the style of his own writing with the famous pronouncement, "Cut these words and they would bleed; they are vascular and alive" – an essay that opens with the statement that "every fact is related on one side to sensation, and, on the other, to morals. The game of thought is, on the appearance of these two sides, to find the other."⁶ Emerson's observation is rephrased as an urgent twentieth-century question by Stanley Cavell: "But can philosophy become literature and still know itself?"⁷ This dissertation has tried to show what a premodern non-Western approach to the diagnosis and suturing of this acknowledged rupture between literature and philosophy – in all its entangled disciplinary, aesthetic, and analytic dimensions – can involve. While for Bidel, unlike James, there *is* an absolute ideal behind experience, they share an urgent concern with what happens when, at times – maybe even at most times – this absolute ideal is absent or inaccessible. For both authors, this concern is expressed and resolved through aesthetic rigor.

C.1 The Consolation of the Imaginary: Lyric and the Art of Failure

When blended, the purviews of philosophy and the perspective of first-personal experience can produce a mercurially fluid tertium aliquid, and any answer to Cavell's

⁶ Emerson, "Montaigne: Or, the Skeptic," 167.

⁷ Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 496. This question in Cavell's formulation has become its own occasion for psychoanalytically tinged theoretical reflection. For instance: "Might philosophy be called on to cure the disorder, to put an end to some literary drift away from the real? Or is philosophy itself that which is potentially under diagnosis, to be cured, if at all, by literature?" Stephen Melville, "Oblique and Ordinary: Stanley Cavell's Engagements of Emerson," *American Literary History* 5.1 (1993), 172-192, 180.

question of whether philosophy can recognize itself when transmuted into literature (and vice versa) – given the infinite “general ranges of vision”⁸ that this transformation makes available – seems hopelessly lost in a bewildering variety of possibilities. The aim here has not been to provide a general answer to Cavell’s question, but instead to add another voice that asks the same question, another way of thinking about this problem. Bidel’s lyric style of steadfast imagining is no unblemished Avicennan success story. He does not offer an ideal and definitive program of study, inscribed autobiographically into a record of his own achievement. What sets Bidel’s thought apart from non-lyric forms of systematic discourse is the way his lyric poetry can conceptually accommodate something that systematic discourse rarely dwells on: what it is like when ideal endeavors and high aspirations end in failure.

For the most part, analysis of doctrine and style tends to conjoin the two in a positive way, the assumption being that carefully parsing a way of saying something reveals *something* – yields positive content. One final example from Bidel’s lyric corpus illustrates once more a less frequently acknowledged function of style: its ability to accommodate failure, the possibilities it offers for consolation, and the conditions it provides for an acceptance of the narrow scope of realistic human achievement within impossibly broad horizons of unattainable ideal aims.

Ghazal N^o423, “Kept World-Bound,” narrates the experience of failure on the part of one individual, while at the same time articulating the failure of experience (in a more general sense) to arrive at that final destination enjoined by systematic inquiry –

⁸ “The great truth...I think, is that one never really chooses one’s general range of vision – the experience from which ideas and themes and suggestions spring.” Henry James, preface, *Lady Barbarina*, viii.

certain knowledge of true reality (*yaqīn*). As the couplet quoted above demonstrates with devastating precision, attempts to *manufacture* experience (*tajrobe-kārī*, lit. “the making of experience,” or *tajrobe-kār*, “one who *makes/does* experience”) can fall short:

4 *har tajrobe-kār(-)ī ke dar īn ‘arše qadam zad*
sāz-e del-e jam ‘ ān-ṭaraf-e molk-e yaqīn dāsht

هر تجربه‌کاری که در این عرصه قدم زد
ساز دل جمع آن طرف ملک یقین داشت

Everyone armed with experience
who stepped into this field
of inquiry
Was kept on *that* side
of the kingdom of certain knowledge
by the fraudulent instrument
of the collected heart.

These agents who possess, make, or use experience are unsettlingly personified. Sketched into quasi-sentience with minimalist verbal economy as individual beings, they have feet; they intend; they enter a field of action; and they are physically barred from entry into the kingdom of certain knowledge (*molḵ-e yaqīn*). What prevents these dispatched persons from reaching their destination? The fault lies with the “instrument of the collected heart” (*sāz-e del-e jam*), which (on one reading, at least) is the restraining agent that keeps them, with force, on *that* side (*ān ṭaraf*) of the kingdom of certainty. The imperfect nature of experience is echoed in the clashing contradictory possible meanings of the agent that bars entry: “*sāz*” is a musical instrument and a weapon; an adjustment to harmony, a putting-in-order; a deceptive trick, an arrangement of fraud. This couplet paints dark and harrowing picture of “collectedness” (*jam*), the gathering of thought and attention through exercises of imagination that *should* lead ideally to perfect composure

(*jāme 'īyat*). Not only is this perfect composure pointedly absent from this poem, but even its less ideal form (*del-e jam* ' , a collected heart) does not just fail: it actively hinders.

Is this not an unexpected outcome? Shouldn't the rigorous training of the imagination through lyric poetry ensure that this endeavor of focusing one's entire being – gathering one's self, collecting thoughts, managing experiences – lead to success? The failure traced in this poem is affectingly specific (“tonight”) and tragically personal (“it's been a lifetime”). The single moment of time does not dilate on command with metaphysical triumph. This poem records a specific moment of failure as a terrifying inversion of the doctrine of “mastery of time” as found in, for instance, the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī (discussed in Chapter 4). Here, the moment has expanded, only to enclose Bīdel's lifetime with pain and grief:

5 *'omr-ī-st ke dar band-e godāz-e del-e kh'īsh-am*
 mā rā gham-e nā-ṣāfi-ye āyīne bar īn dāsht

عمریست که در بند گداز دل خویشم
ما را غم ناصافی آئینه بر این داشت

It's been a lifetime
I've been bound
to the burning of my heart.
Grief
over impurity of mirror
has kept me at this.

The poem is concerned with a discrete event of a particular evening, but the enormity of its experienced consequences transforms a single occurrence into what *feels* like a lifelong accumulation of ever-present failures, narrated with despair in the indefinitely long past-tense. There is no progression: the first line, which begins with a classical lyric gesture towards the present evening, is already imbued with a sense of proleptic dread:

1 *emshab ke be del ḥasrat-e dīdār kamīn dāsht*

har 'oʻzv cho sham '-am negah-ī bāz-pasīn dāsht

امشب که به دل حسرت دیدار کمین داشت
هر عضو چو شممع نگهی باز پسین داشت

Tonight, when disappointment
at not seeing
lies in wait to seize my heart,
My whole body – every part –
kept looking, like a candle
with one more
final gaze.

This word for “final,” *bāz-pasīn*, is somewhat unusual. Perhaps it is the slightly archaic Middle-Persian flavor of its prefix (*bāz-pasīn*, instead of the more typical *vā-pasīn*) that lends it an air of formality, ceremony, and significance – something like how the immovable gravity of the repetitively deictic “*this my last* will and testament” sets it apart from being merely a most recent statement or event. Ghāleb of Delhi (d.1856) uses *bāz-pasīn* twice in the elegiac preface to his collection of Persian lyric poetry. Once it occurs with reference to being a follower of the religion of “the last prophet” (*bāz-pasīn vakhshūr-am*),⁹ where both words (*bāz-pasīn* and especially *vakhshūr*) have markedly non-Arabic Middle Persian provenance and non-Islamic Zoroastrian associations. The second instance is when Ghāleb describes his Persian lyric corpus as *the final lamp* to illuminate the Indo-Persian canon (*bāz-pasīn cherāgh-ī-st*).¹⁰ This word alone, then, can contain an entire narrative of completeness, an arc that ought to end with vault-closing

⁹ Mīrzā Asadollāh Khān Ghāleb of Delhi, *Kolleyyāt-e Ghāleb-e Farsī* (Lahore: Majles-i Taraqqī-yi Adab, 1967), 150. On Ghāleb’s vocabulary of self-presentation as the last Indo-Persian poet, and for a discussion of his use of pre-Islamic Zoroastrian religious imagery and preference for archaic non-Arabic Persian vocabulary, see Chapter 2.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 143.

finality.¹¹ However, the logic of circular structure and repetition that governs Bīdel’s lyric style – added to the fact that the poem *begins* with an ending – all but ensures that this “final gaze” will not be the end of the story. Significantly, “*bāz*” in *bāz-pasīn* on its own means “again.” The poem’s end will exploit the paronomastic paradox contained in “*bāz-pasīn*” of the recurring nature of something absolutely final.

This poem makes a point of associating the failure of experience with the image of a “failed” circle, an image that plays out with variations in different couplets, all of which also share references to old age. Line 7 replays the worn trope of the world as old and ill-willed, equally unattractive and repugnant in its outward form and inner moral dissolution:¹²

7 *dar qad(d)-e do-tā shod do jahān ḥeṣṣ-e farāham*
 z-īn ḥalqe kamand-e amal ārāyesh-e chīn dāsht

در قد دو تا شد دو جهان حرص فراهم
 زین حلقه کمند امل آرایش چین داشت

Crooked-backed and doubled-over
 greedily were both worlds bent
 on joining together:
 But hope’s high-aimed lasso
 towards this unbroken circle
 was decorated with wrinkles.

¹¹ The two examples given in the nineteenth-century Persian dictionary compiled in South Asia, the *Farhang-e Ānandrāj*, illustrate the word’s gravity: *bāz-pasīn nafas* (a final breath) and *bāz-pasīn negāh* (a final glance). *Farhang-e Ānandrāj*, “Bāzpasīn.” Cited in Dehkhodā, *Loghat-nāme*. Available online at <https://www.parsi.wiki/fa/wiki/topicdetail/29cd6b3cc0da4417b641f0ea1c01379c> (accessed on 2 August 2019).

¹² For a discussion of this trope in classical Persian poetry, and on its probable origins in Zoroastrian thought, see Julie Scott Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 229.

Similarly, Line 6 presents the poet as prostrated, shadowlike, incapable of reflection, since his mirror is “mortgaged in the creases of his brow.” In other lines too there are marks of age and fatigue (the discontented “creased brow” of Line 2; sitting in a corner, “house-bound” in Line 3). It is a poem that allows itself to feel the weight of a lifetime of failed endeavor. Elsewhere, Bīdel boasts about his lyric power to “fashion atoms into worlds;”¹³ but here,

8 *az parde-ye del rost [rast] jahān līk che ḥāṣel*
 āyīne nafahmīd ke ḥayrat che zamīn dāsht

از پرده دل رست جهان لیک چه حاصل
 آینه نفهمید که حیرت چه زمین داشت

A world grew forth
 from the veil of the heart.
 But what’s the point?
 The mirror didn’t understand
 the grounds
 of wonder.

And what is worse still, this world-building lyric exercise has not afforded even the temporary relief of consolation:

9 *bā īn hame ḥayrat be tasallī naraśīdīm*
 faryād ke āyīne-ye mā khāne-ye zīn ast

با این همه حیرت به تسلی نرسیدیم
 فریاد که آینه ما خانه زین است

All this wonder! So what?
 We have not arrived
 at consolation.
 Alas – my mirror
 is nothing more
 than a saddle seat.

¹³ Ghazal N^o2045. Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, I:958. See Chapter 6.

In a rather ignoble variation on the figuration of the mind as horse,¹⁴ the instrument presented here that is designed for decisive intention and action and heroism *does not move* – a clear echo of the way the experiences in Line 4 can't go forward, cannot arrive at their intended end. As this poem makes clear, the Akbarian-Emersonian injunction to “master the moment” and “to find the journey's end in every step” is not always possible. Relying on the centuries-old metaphysical vocabulary of a mounted spiritual journey, the physical concreteness of a *saddle seat* rudely obtrudes on any heroic philosophical ambition. Succumbing to this environment permeated with despair, even Bīdel's most robust figures fail:¹⁵

10 *āfāq taṣarrof-kade-ye shohrat-e 'anqā-st*
 joz nām nabūd ān-ke jahān zīr-e nagīn dāsht

آفاق تصرفکده شهرت عنقاست
 جز نام نبود آنکه جهان زیر نگین داشت

The horizons
 are the realm of power
 belonging to the fame of the 'anqā –
 Nothing but name:
 that's all there was
 beneath the world's seal-ring.

¹⁴ Equestrian vocabulary for imagination and the heroic endeavors of the poet goes back to the Arabic tradition. One of the most famous lines by Al-Mutanabbī (d.965), a poet who at times doth nothing but talk of his horse, seamlessly connects the adventurous arts of poetry and horsemanship: “(Fa) l-khaylu wa l-laylu wa l-baydā'u ta 'rifu-nī / Wa s-sayfu wa r-rumḥu wa l-qurṭāsu wa l-qalamu” (“The horse, the night the desert – they know me; / The sword, the spear, the page, the pen”), where “horse” (*al-khayl*) shares an etymological root with *khayāl* (verbal form II, *khayyala*, “to gallop”). Al-Mutanabbī's *khayl* is the driving force of of the heroic poet's imagination, charging across vast landscapes – always moving, triumphantly, engaged in action. Al-Mutanabbī, *Qaṣīda* 12, Line 22. Abū al-Ṭayyib Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ju'fī Al-Mutanabbī, *Poems of Al-Mutanabbī: A Selection with Introduction, Translation, and Notes by A.J. Arberry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 73.

¹⁵ For a discussion of the importance of the phoenix in Bīdel's corpus, see Chapter 5.

The phoenix does not accomplish a virtuosic flight of mind towards timeless truth and far horizons; instead, like the unmoving saddle-seat, the journey has gone nowhere – and the entire enterprise is exposed as an empty language game. All these images, tones, and shades of failure culminate in the final line:

11 *Bīdel sar-e īn reshte be taḥqīq napayvast*
dar sobḥe o zonnār(-e) jahān-ī del o dīn dāsht

بیدل سر این رشته به تحقیق نپیوست
در سبحة و زنار جهانی دل و دین داشت

Bīdel did not connect and bind
these threaded ends of thought
to research into true reality –
His heart and his religion
kept world-bound, tied up
in Islam’s rosary,
in Indic sacred thread.

The agent-subject of the refrain word *dāsht* (“kept”) is ambiguously distributed. It could be “Bīdel” (undermining his own efforts; failing), or it could be “the world” (*jahān-ī*; he has tried to break free from the created realm, but *it* has pulled him back). Bīdel’s predilection for string, circles, knots, connections has been discussed at length in this dissertation,¹⁶ as has his overt aim across his corpus to *collect* himself – through meditation, attention, practices of training the imagination, breath control, visualization, reading and re-reading.¹⁷ So this final twinned image – the Islamic rosary, the Indic sacred thread – appears here in startling opposition to what Bīdel’s style of steadfast imagining would condition the reader to expect. Here, the poet presents himself as *imprisoned* – not liberated – by circularity, by the endless repetition of unmastered time,

¹⁶ See Chapter 6.

¹⁷ See Chapter 5.

by the lyric looping of ends back into beginnings. Bluntly put, he is sick of his own style. Chapter 4 has presented an example of metalepsis in Bīdel’s Ghazal N^o824, where the *barzakh* of Islamic philosophy – the isthmus, the realm of imagination – becomes a figure of a figure. Something similarly intricate is at work at the end of this poem. Even as the poet struggles against his style – against being double-bound by these entwined instruments of failed meditation – style expands to make room even for style-sickness.

C.2 Islamic Doctrine and Lyric Thought

Harold Bloom has remarked that “Montaigne’s triumph was to fuse himself and his book in an overt act that has to be called originality,” an originality defined by singular strangeness. Bloom suggests that it is precisely this recognizable attribute of strangeness that has made Montaigne canonical.¹⁸ Bīdel’s place in the Persian canon is secured for him in a similar way: his strange, difficult, striking originality of style consists in his being able to “fuse himself” with his lyric practice – and this is true regardless of whether he is read by later custodians of the canon as a melancholic proto-existentialist, or as a disagreeably difficult poet of the Indian style, or as a straightforward Akbarian South Asian Sufi, or simply as a poet whose mind is full of color.

This dissertation has tried to analyze the particular process of the fusion of self and lyric through style. Systematic discourse usually unfolds its program of research and philosophical inquiry (*taḥqīq*) into (God’s) true reality (*ḥaqīqat*) in a style that is linear, jubilant, inevitable: one endeavors, one progresses, one arrives. Yet this method offers no space to reflect on the actual human reality of this path, on the digressive, nonlinear

¹⁸ Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 2014), 147.

shape of what it is *actually like* to grope erringly towards truth – with no guarantee of success, and with vast and varied experiences of failure. Poems like “Kept World-Bound” make room for such experiences. In lyric poetry, Bīdel is able to center the labor and the felt physical and emotional intensity of concentrated mental activity that attend his pursuit of truth: the fevered pique of anticipation, the trembling dread of disappointment; fatigue and despair. Where systematic discourse draws straight impersonal lines, lyric poetry has the elasticity required to reproduce these experiences, the variable and infinitely varied outcomes of undertaking this trajectory. By supplying a framework for nonlinear shapes of thought, lyric allows Bīdel to re-experience, to think with, and to account for all the false starts, rereadings, steps retraced, repetitions, and failures of systematic inquiry. Philosophy’s problem of “adequate determination” becomes, in lyric, a problem of adequate determination to keep going in spite of failure.

Does all this emphasis on the individual idiosyncracies of experience and imagination prevent Bīdel from being systematic? To adapt Cavell’s pressing question, can Islamic thought become lyric and still know itself?

It is best, as always, to answer this question by turning to Bīdel himself. The poem “Kept World-Bound” has described a kingdom of certainty, protected by armed sentries posted to its borders, and this political-map picture of mental geography echoes one of the few places in his corpus where Bīdel makes a sustained effort to engage in philosophy in the third person. He does this in his long narrative poem (*masnavī*), *The Enchanted World of Wonder* (*Telesm-e heyrat*, composed in 1669). Spanning 3,478 lines (couplets), which are subdivided into an orderly progression of topical sections, this

genre, with its absence of lyric pressure, seems to have offered Bīdel a rare opportunity to experiment with being impersonal.

The poem is a narrative manual, a literal map, as it were, for how to reach self-knowledge. The protagonist is a nameless King, and his guide on this quest is Ardor itself (*'eshq*). Before embarking on this inward journey, the King surveys the kingdom of his mind with cartographic precision. Political metaphors are used throughout this poem to describe how the individual human soul (the King) indwells a physical body (a kingdom), which is divided into various regions (capacities, senses, etc.), each of which is tenanted by appointed viceregents (faculties), all of whom ultimately answer to the single highest will of the King's soul – which, however, is not yet enlightened (an expected ideal for a good ruler).¹⁹ Bīdel's vocabulary for mapping the mind is broadly Avicennan, although the emphases are Bīdel's own. In order to appreciate the swerve he makes at the poem's end, it is instructive here to briefly trace the arc up to that point.

The King begins by taking stock of his temperament (*mezāj*),²⁰ that all-important concept with which Bīdel begins the dream narrative at the end of his autobiography.²¹ Temperament is described as “the binding thread that holds together the book of life” (Line 11665), another echo of the autobiographical dream-narrative in which the

¹⁹ This way of conceiving of the body, mind, and soul with the political vocabulary of governance is also importantly present in early modern England. John Rogers discusses this period's “analogical imperative...that cultural pressure always pushing for the structural alignment of representations of political and material organization,” as in, for example, the pressure exerted by specific political movements on the scientific identification of the agency behind the circulation of blood. John Rogers, *The Matter of Revolution: Science, Poetry, and Politics in the Age of Milton* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 9, 16-27.

²⁰ Section 8. Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, III:427-429.

²¹ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, IV:296-297. See T1.E4.21.

discussion of temperament is intertwined with the idea of one's body as a manuscript.²² The poem details how one's temperament comes into being on earth and becomes ensouled in the body through the mixture of Galenic humours. Once this mixture has advanced to a certain stage, the body experiences its first emotion, love (*maḥabbat*). It is this emotion that *governs* the infant body, and is responsible for the first spark of desire to know one's own self, a desire further kindled by untutored wonder simply at being alive in a world full of color (Lines 11685-11704).

In the following section,²³ Bīdel gives an extended description of the faculties and senses, as the King comes to recognize them within himself. They are divided into three “castles” (*ḥeṣn*) thus: the mind (*demāgh*), with its five outward senses (hearing; sight; smell; taste; touch) and five inner faculties: *ḥess-e moshtarek* (“common sense,” which combines the various sense-data from the outward senses); *khayāl* (that which is imaginary); *qovve-ye motafakkere* (the faculty which rationally combines and reflects on what has been delivered to it by the imagination); *qovve-ye vāheme*, the “estimative faculty”; and *qovve-ye ḥāfeze*, memory. The second “castle” is the liver, which is the seat of eight physical powers (*qovve*), called “masters” or “teachers” (*ostād*): the “nutritive faculty” (*ghāzeeye*), the “augmentative faculty” (*nāmeeye*), the “reproductive faculty” (*movallede*), the “retentive imagination” (*moṣavvere*), the “attracting faculty” (*jāzebe*), the “grasping faculty” (*māseke*), and the “digesting faculty” (*ḥāzeme*). And the third “castle” is the heart, which is the seat of emotions: hope, fear, love, enmity, joy, and

²² Ibid. See also Chapter 6.

²³ Section 9. Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, III:430-447.

grief. This last emotion, grief (*gham*) is given the longest description, comprising almost one hundred lines.

Having surveyed these three “castles” and having studied with each of the “masters” dwelling therein, the King now undertakes a further journey, to survey the kingdom of his body by examining each of the four the Galenic humours separately.²⁴ In the course of this exploration, he learns about what happens when one or the other humour predominates: he both intellectually and experientially comes to understand the etiology of grief and the restorative powers of love and reason. The next section²⁵ maintains attention on the body: various diseases and afflictions are described, along with the final victory of mental exertion. This is followed²⁶ by a discussion of the specific work wrought by apprehension of beauty, the experience of wonder, and emotions such as joy, love, and spiritual passion or ardor (*'eshq*).

It is this experience of true Ardor that spurs the king onwards to the next stage of the inward journey to self-knowledge, a stage with more difficult subjects of study.²⁷ Having mapped his own mind, he is now ready to *experience travelling* throughout this carefully charted landscape. The novice’s lust (*havas*) for knowledge has been a preface; a more mature search for knowledge lies ahead, and only true Ardor (*'eshq*) can lead the King there.

²⁴ Section 10. Ibid, III:448-465.

²⁵ Section 11. Ibid, III:465-480.

²⁶ Section 12. Ibid, III:480-490.

²⁷ Section 13. Ibid, III:490-500.

The journey is far from easy. Time and again, the King becomes overwhelmed by the ecstatic wonder he experiences while beholding the profusion and momentariness of images, which are reflected in the mirror of his perception. He is also overwhelmed by the *physical* symptoms that accompany this act of witnessing the colorful multiplicity of this world forms: his pulse races, he falls into fevered agitation. But the King admirably keeps going on, guided by Ardor through his own imagination in search of answers to such questions as, “If I am ensnared in illusion, what, then, is possible?” (Line 13403). Ardor responds that the King must release the agitated fever of his heart and embrace imaginary flight: he must witness what transpires in his own imagination in order to see “what is possible.”²⁸ More attempts follow, annotated by the King’s continued dialogue with Ardor. Even under careful guidance,²⁹ the King’s various attempts at endeavors of imagination (*taṣavvor*, *takhayyol*) and attentive slow reflection (*ta’ammol*) end in failure:³⁰ visions multiply uncontrollably, and the King’s mind cannot cope with them. These first forays into of self-knowledge through imagination are vertiginous and bewildering. The King must try again.

After more attempts that result in “the madness of Ardor” (*jonūn-e ‘eshq*), the King is once more overwhelmed by the psychological and somatic effects of misguided thought. He tries to control himself, to abstract his mind from the multiplicity of forms and focus on the unicity behind them – but again, it doesn’t work. At this point, the poem’s next section describes “the consolation of the imaginary,” *tasallī-ye khayāl*.

²⁸ Lines 13404-13435.

²⁹ Line 13429: *Ershād-ī žarūr ast*, “Guidance is an absolute requirement.”

³⁰ Lines 13437-13445.

Ardor, the King's guide, tells the king that he must be *pure* to continue on this path to knowing himself, and that this purity can be attained by becoming an artisan of the imagination: the King must command his imagination to become a copyist, a scribe writing upon the tablet of memory, copying truth from the compendium of divine secrets. Only then will the King be able to "survey a hundred gardens with eyes closed."³¹

But the world of the imagination is turbulent: the King must steer himself through his own imagination with rationally structured attentive slow reflection. This seems to be the ultimate function of the King's mentor, Ardor – to keep the King on the right path of *intentional directedness*. Ardor gives focus, shape, and systematic precision to the King's training of his imagination. Following the expected arc of the apprentice/master-artisan relationship, eventually the apprentice begins to create independently: having been guided this far by the steadying influence of Ardor, the King's mind now begins to paint its own world of the imagination. Witnessing the painting of imagination he himself has created, he finally becomes purified, cleansed of illusion (*vahm*).³² This is what is described as *the consolation of the imaginary*: with proper training and guidance and attention, imagination can offer a deeply enjoyable consolation, a measure of solace in the dangerous quest for self-knowledge that is beset everywhere by madness, confusion, and failure. This exercise gladdens the heart and eases disappointment by "populating a world with that which is imaginary."³³

³¹ Line 13521.

³² Line 13533: "*Be taṣvīr-e khayāl az vahm shod pāk*" ("The King became purified, cleansed of illusion, through the painting of the imaginary.")

³³ Line 13539. "*Del-ī az naqsh-e ḥasrat shād mī-kard / jahān-ī az khayāl ābād mī-kard.*"

But the King’s mastery over that which is imaginary cannot be sustained indefinitely. The next section describes the return, described as a disease-like recrudescence,³⁴ of sadness, anxiety, fruitlessness, despair. The consolation can’t last; illusion returns. In an impersonal aside, the King remarks, “May no one’s opportune moment be that confined; my cup has fallen from my hand, and there’s a stone at my feet.”³⁵ Nevertheless, even after this disappointment, he calls himself to order: indeed, he calls on order itself³⁶ in the form of Ardor’s direction, for help. Ardor replies that if the King is sincere, he should keep trying to look inward even more closely. This time, when the King tries again to concentrate, the illusion of his body disappears, and it works – the moment *extends*.

At this point, the narrative swerves even further inward: in Section 14, the King loses himself in himself with passionate longing for truth; what he witnesses in this state is his own body, which, he comes to realize, is a microcosm. He journeys through this inland empire, one limb and feature at a time. This is a reverse-order *sarāpā* (the classical Persian description of the beloved, from head to toe): it begins with the feet and ends with the head.³⁷ In the final section of the poem proper, Section 15,³⁸ the King moves closer to the final desired end – absolute certainty (*yaqīn*) about true reality. There

³⁴ Line 13546: *jonūn-hā*, fits of madness; *tapesh-hā*, fainting spells; *tabkhāl* (fever pustules).

³⁵ Line 13573: “*Mabādā forṣat-e kas ān-qadar tang / Ze dast ofīāde jām o zīr-e pā sang.*”

³⁶ Line 13575: *Ey tadbīr beshetbāb* (“O Order, hasten!”)

³⁷ For analysis of this description, and a comparison with the discussion and similar toe-to-head description of Mahāpuruṣa in Dārā Shikōh’s *Majma‘ al-baḥrayn*, see Chapter 6.

³⁸ *Kolleyyāt* III:501.

are several stages of uncertainty, grief, and torment; followed by *ta'ammol-e ahvāl* – attentive slow reflection upon his spiritual states – followed by profound, bewildered wonder (*ḥayrat*) at those states. And then, finally, the King attains certainty (*yaqīn*).

The end of this path, then, is the same as that of philosophy: the grounded attainment of certain knowledge *yaqīn*, attained through a logically progressive program of systematic inquiry. But even here, in this most impersonal genre of didactic narrative poem, Bīdel presents an arc of progress as far from linear: it stops and starts, making room for the emotional and physical toll of experience of doctrine with all its failures and resumptions.

Despite this long poem's emphasis on the experiential dimensions of systematic inquiry, this is Bīdel at his most philosophically impersonal. Here he traces an ideal trajectory, not an autobiographical one. As the poem "Kept World-Bound" makes clear, Bīdel's own path towards self-knowledge was more circular and cyclical; and unlike the anonymous King guided by Ardor, Bīdel's lyric endeavors contain no implicit promise of reaching certainty. His practice of training the imagination is one that never ends, since, as the poem shows, even his most intensely concentrated lyric experiences are not guaranteed entry into the kingdom of certainty.

C.3 The Value of Style

Bīdel's "style of steadfast imagining" has been the designation used to denote the system encompassing various distinctive rhetorical techniques, strategies of reading and composition, and practices of self – a system that provides one way of reading Bīdel's vast lyric corpus as *collected*, bound together by the very act of attempting to find

composure. The idea of steadfast imagining conceptually unifies Bīdel’s lyric activity at all levels, from the single-word metaphor, to the couplet, to the circular structure that underpins so many poems, to the vast corpus in its 3,000-poem entirety, to the very way that lyric practice gives shape to Bīdel’s life. As this dissertation has tried to show, it is simply not possible to untangle *what* Bīdel thinks from *how* he thinks. His style *is* his thought – his systematic way of collecting himself, through imagination, in lyric.

Jeff Dolven describes literary style a way of “going on,” a general definition that emerges naturally and compellingly from Dolven’s experimental critical engagement with Frank O’Hara.³⁹ The vocabulary, grammar, and tone of this definition of style as “going on” cannot but reflect the distinctive paratactic exuberance of O’Hara’s poetry, and cannot but evoke the irreverent toe-tapping impatience (along with the insouciant well-heeled *dolce far niente*) of stylishly intellectual 1950s New York to which O’Hara’s breathless parataxis belongs. Bīdel’s lyric style can also be productively construed as a way of going on.⁴⁰ But – as always seems to be the case with the study of style – general principles are mutable: they necessarily take on the textures and hues of particular instances to which they are applied. Bīdel’s style of steadfast imagining does not *just* go

³⁹ Jeff Dolven, *Senses of Style: Poetry before Interpretation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 2-3, 46.

⁴⁰There is no reason that this transaction has to be unidirectional, where style as defined through O’Hara is simply applied to the style of Bīdel. O’Hara is a poet of his time and place who reaches back through Wyatt to the lyrics of Petrarch; Bīdel is a poet of his time and place who reaches back through Ṣā’eb, among others, to the lyrics of Ḥāfez. Why should matters of style not bring them together in a mutually illuminating conversation? Here is a further value of the study of style: in the exciting possibilities that result from a generous gathering of ideas from a variety of eras, places, and canons. Any critic interested in definitions of style, then, ought to convoke as wide an assembly of contributing voices as possible, working to promote what Bruno Latour in a different context has called the biodiversity of ideas within a discipline. Bruno Latour and Fadhila Mazanderani, “The Whole World is Becoming Science Studies: Fadhila Mazanderani Talks with Bruno Latour,” *Engaging Science, Technology, and Society* 4 (2018), 284-302.

on: it *resumes*. Arduously and ardently, sometimes arrogantly, sometimes exhaustedly – style picks up frayed dead ends and ties them to new beginnings; style takes back what has been claimed with decisive finality by other forms of discourse; style absorbs failure, mourns it, then resumes once more.

Style as a way of resuming comprises grief and grit, and the endless compromises between them. Bidel's lyric style of steadfast imagining both expresses and makes possible the will to resume.

Part III | Translations of Bidel's Works

Translation 1 | Selections from *The Four Elements: An Autobiography*
(Bīdel, *Chahār 'onşor* | چهار عنصر)

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-

I

Preface¹

T1.P1 Untitled Prefatory Section²

[p.3]

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

Khodāvandā zabān ma ‘zūr-e bī-šarfe-sarāyī ast, ‘ozr-e harze-darāyān bepazīr; va bayān majbūr-e āshofte-navāyī ast, bar ghaflat-kalāmān khorde magīr.

خداوندا زبان معذور بی صرفه سرایی است عذر هر زهد رایان بپذیر، و بیان مجبور آشفته نوایی است بر غفلت کلامان خرده مگیر.

O Lord, the tongue repents of talking nonsense; please accept the apologies of idle prattlers. All discourse is constrained by the bewildered distractedness of exposition; do not cavil, then, with those who speak ignorance.

Gosastegī-hā-e ‘enān-e nafas, nāgozīr khayāl-tāzī ast, besmel-ī par-afshānde bāshad; parīshānī-hā-ye maghz-e andīshe, bī-ekhteyār havas-tāzī-st, ghobār-ī dāman-e havāyī mī-kharāshad.

گسستگی های عنان نفس ناگزیر خیال تازی است بسملی پرافشانده باشد پریشانی های مغز اندیشه بی اختیار هوس تازیست غباری دامن هوایی می خراشد.

The twisting and turning of breath’s reins involuntarily becomes the galloping of the imagination – and one who is doomed³ might yet spread his wings. The scattered anxieties of a harried mind reflexively charge after low impulses; yet dust may still rise, grazing the hem of higher air.

Bī-maqṣadī(-ye) jowlān-e ashk, sar-manzel-e ta ‘ajjob-nemāyī ast, va bī-modda ‘āyī(-ye) parvāz-e rang āsheyān-e hayrat-pīrayī.

بی مقصدی جولان اشک سرمنزل تعجب نمایی است و بی مدعایی پرواز رنگ آشیان حیرت پیرایی.

¹ Mīrzā ‘Abd al-Qāder Bīdel Dehlavī, *Kolleyyāt-e Abū l-Ma ‘ānī Mīrzā ‘Abd al-Qāder Bīdel Dehlavī*, ed. Khalīlollāh Khalīlī (Tehrān: Enteshārāt-e Ṭalāye, 1389SH [2010/2011CE]), IV:3-8.

² Ibid, IV:3-5.

³ Lit. “sacrificed”; i.e., condemned to this human life, doomed to live and breathe.

Tears that flow swiftly, with no destination, are the resting-station where wonder breaks its journey; the directionless flight of color is where bewilderment finds its nest.

[Couplet]

Meter: -- ~ | ~ ---- | -- ~ | ~ ----

(→)

Hazaj-e mošamman-e akhrab al-šadrayn va sālem va akhrab al-ḥashvayn va sālem al-zarbayn (E.S. #3.3.07(2))

Maf'ūlo mafā'ilon maf'ūlo mafā'ilon

Hazaj = mafā'ilon mafā'ilon mafā'ilon mafā'ilon

First foot: *mafā'ilon* + kharb = maf'ūlo

Second foot: *mafā'ilon* = sālem

Third foot: : *mafā'ilon* + kharb = maf'ūlo

Fourth foot: *mafā'ilon* = sālem

mī-gūyam o ḥayrān-am mīpūyam o geryān-am
ḥarf-ī ke namī-fahmam rāh-ī ke namī-dānam

می‌گویم و حیرانم می‌پویم و گریانم
حرفی که نمی‌فهمم راهی که نمی‌دانم

I speak,⁴ and **am** struck with amazement;

I search, and **am** distraught with weeping.

The words **I** cannot comprehend
are a road **I** do not know.⁵

[Prose, 2 paragraphs]

[Paragraph 1/2]

Na daryā-yī ke be ghavāšī-ye fekr az to gowhar-ī bar-ārand va na āsmān-ī ke be qovvat-e nazar setāre-hā-yet shomārand.

نه دریایی تا به غواصی فکر از تو گوهری بر آرند و نه آسمانی که به قوت نظر ستاره‌ها بیت شمارند.

⁴ A striking, simple opening line, five curt sentences compressed within two hemistichs – almost Joycean in its portrait of original simplicity. Moreover, this is a rare instance of direct use of the first person, deployed with unusual declarative transparency and immediacy. Bīdel's prose in general throughout *The Four Elements* is grammatically impersonal to an extreme degree, especially in these opening sections; all agency is offloaded onto secondary and tertiary attributes of hypothetical agents – something I believe he did very consciously.

⁵ All classical Persian verse has a rhyme and refrain of some sort: at minimum this is a syllable, and sometimes also a word or longer phrase. In this translation, the words or phrases marked in **bold** within the verse sections indicate the refrain. Wherever the rhyme is only a syllable, nothing is highlighted in the English, and the original Persian refrain is given in footnotes. In this instance, the refrain is the semantically elastic syllable (-am), which can be a first-person enclitic particle, a first-person verb ending, a first-person possessive marker, or a first-person direct object marker. Since these can all be resolved into English with complete words, I have made them bold.

You are not an ocean that a pearl may be extracted from you by plunging thought;
you are not a sky that your stars may be enumerated by the power of sight.

[Paragraph 2/2]

Rang-ī nabaste-ī tā bahār-at dānand, partov-ī bīrūn nadāde-ī tā āftāb-at kh'ānand.

رنگی نبسته‌ای تا بهارت دانند پرتوی بیرون نداده‌ای تا آفتاب خوانند.

You have not been dyed fast with colors that they might call you springtime; you
have not shone forth with rays that they might think you are the sun.

*Sīne-chākī-hā-ye bahār-e edrāk az shekaste-bālān taṣvīr-e īn rang ast va dāgh-forūshī-
hā-ye āftāb-e feṭrat az khākestar-neshīnān sho 'le-ye īn nayrang [ast].*

سینه چاک‌های بهار ادراک از شکسته‌بالان تصویر این رنگ است و داغ‌فروشی‌های آفتاب فطرت از
خاکستر نشینان شعله این نیرنگ.

When those melancholy ones whose wings are broken lacerate themselves with
the springtime of perception, their bloodied chests become portraits of these hues.
And those who sit, dejected, by the ashes of spent fires, and claim to sell burning
brands from nature's very sun – this too is but a flicker of the same deception.

[Poem fragment, 3 lines]

Meter: - - - - | - - - - | - - - - | - - - -

(→)

Ramal-e mosamman-e sālem al-ṣadr va makhbūn al-ḥashv va l-ḡarb va maḥzūf al-ḡarb
(E.S. #3.1.15)

fā 'elāton fa 'elāton fa 'elāton fa 'elon/fe 'lon

Ramal = *fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton*

First foot (ṣadr): sālem

Second foot (ḥashv): *fā 'elāton* + khabn = fa 'elāton

Third foot (ḥashv): *fā 'elāton* + khabn = fa 'elāton

Fourth foot (ḡarb): *fā 'elāton* + khabn + ḥazf = fa 'elon

Qāfeye: -āb (“water”)

Radīf: kojā-st (“where is [it]?”)

1 *bahr bītāb ke ān gowhar-e nāyāb kojā-st*
charkh sar-gashte ke khorshīd-e jahān-tāb kojā-st

بحر بیتاب که آن گوهر نایاب کجاست
چرخ سرگشته که خورشید جهانتاب کجاست

2 *dayr az ghoṣṣe dar ātash ke che rang ast ṣanam*
ka 'be z-īn dard seyah-pūsh ke meḥrāb kojā-st

دیر از غصه در آتش که چه رنگ است صنم
کعبه زین درد سیه‌پوش که محراب کجاست

3 *ay samandar be havas dāgh-forūsh ātash kū?*
māheyān teshne bemīrīd dam-e āb kojā-st?

ای سمندر به هوس داغ‌فروش آتش کو
ماهیان تشنه بمیرید دم آب کجاست

The ocean is helpless:
where is the ungleamable pearl?
The horizon has lost its mind:
where is the world-illuminating sun?

The monastery burns with fury:
where is the idol?
The Ka'ba mourns, black-garbed, in pain:
where is the mihrāb?

You, salamander of desire –
where is the scarring fire?
You, fish – perish of thirst.
Where is there a breath of water?

[Prose, 2 paragraphs]
[Paragraph 1/2]

Khayāl-ī dar nazar khūn karde-īm be sayr-e golshan-e šefāt mī-nāzīm; ghobār-ī ān sū-ye ta 'aqbol angīkhte-īm, be 'arše-ye taḥqīq-e zāt mī-tāzīm.

خیالی در نظر خون کرده‌ایم به سیر گلشن صفات می‌نازیم غباری آن سوی تعقل انگیزته‌ایم به عرصه تحقیق ذات می‌نازیم.

Having slain all that is imaginary by the power of true vision, we will journey into the garden of divine attributes. We have brushed off all dust of illusion from our rational faculties, and will charge forth into the field of investigating divine essence.⁶

[Paragraph 2/2]

Mowj-e sarāb-ī az gard-e tavahhom maghrūr-e tūfān-ṭarāzī-st va zengar-e sāye-ī dar parde-ye takhayyol āyīne-ye khorshīd-pardāzī.

موج سرابی از گرد توهم مغرور توفان‌طراز‌یست و زنگار سایه‌ای در پرده تخیل آینه خورشیدپردازی.

⁶ Although the first-person plural is frequently used by authors to refer only to themselves and therefore must not be understood to indicate a literal plurality of persons, here I think Bīdel could mean either (1) Bīdel the author along with the reader(s); or (2) human beings in general (i.e., an aspirational rather than a descriptive statement).

Mirage waves upon the desert are deceived: the obscuring dust of their own self-illusion makes them believe they fringe a tropical storm. The dark rust of shadow, draped in veils of its own self-imagination, is deluded into thinking it is a mirror held up to the sun.

Har che az šefāt fahmīdīm, joz 'ebārat-e emkānī-ye mā nabūd va ān-che az zāt dar-yāftīm ghayr az ma 'nī-ye mowhūmī-ye mā nanemūd.

هر چه از صفات فهمیدیم جز عبارات امکانی ما نبود و آنچه از ذات دریافتیم غیر از معنی موهومی ما ننمود.

Thus, everything we thought we had understood about divine attributes was only the expression of the potentiality of our own selves, and all that we thought we had comprehended about divine essence revealed nothing, in the end, except our own illusory notions.

[Poem fragment, 2 lines]

Meter: -- ˘ | ˘ -- | ˘ --

(→)

Hazaj-e mosaddas-e akhrab al-šadr va **maq̄būz** al-ḥashv va **maḥzūf** al-žarb (E.S. #5.1.10)

maf'ūlo mafā'elon fo'ūlon

Hazaj = *mafā'ilon mafā'ilon mafā'ilon*

First foot (šadr): = *mafā'ilon* + *kharb* = *maf'ūlo*

Second foot (ḥashv): *mafā'ilon* + *qabz* = *mafā'elon*

Third foot (žarb): *mafā'ilon* + *ḥazf* = *fo'ūlon*

Qāfeye: -īdan

Radīf: ~

- 1 *mā rā ke ze khod bar-āmadan nīst
moshkel be ḥaqīqat-at rasīdan*

ما را که ز خود بر آمدن نیست
مشکل به حقیقت رسیدن

- 2 *ashk-e gohar-īm o khūn-e yāqūt
dārīm be rū-ye khod chakīdan*

اشک گهریم و خون یاقوت
داریم به روی خود چکیدن

We cannot get away
from our selves.
How difficult it is to reach
Your true reality.

We are the pearl's tears,
we are the ruby's blood:
We can do nothing but stream

down our own faces.⁷

[Prose 1 paragraph]

Az nā-mosā ‘adī-hā-ye zamān forṣat tā naḥas gardan-e jor ‘atī boland nemāyad, ghārat-zade-ye āshūb-e havā-st, va az nā-rasāyī-hā-ye moddat emteyāz, tā ta ‘ammol sar be jīb forū barad, zendānī-ye gerd-bād-e fanā [ast].

از نامساعدی‌های زمان فرصت تا نفس گردن جرأتی بلند نماید غارت‌زده آشوب هواست و از نارسایی‌های مدت امتیاز تا تأمل سر به جیب فرو برد زندانی گردباد فنا.

Time fails us in countless ways. The opportune moment is ever plundered by the chaos of low desires – until such a time when controlled breath bravely lifts its head high. Spans of time, in all their multiform inadequacy, continually ensure that our discernment remains imprisoned in a dust-storm of annihilation – until such a time when attentive slow reflection sinks its head collar-deep in contemplation.

Bayān-ī ke dar hojūm-e ‘ājez-maālī sar-reshte gom dārad, az

[p.4]

mo ‘ammā-ye kamāl-at che dar-yābad, va zabān-ī ke az ghobār-e shekaste-bālī, khāk bar sar konad, be parvāz-e sanā-yet che shetābad?

بیانی که در هجوم عاجزمالی سر رشته گم دارد از معمای کمالت چه دریابد و زبانی که از غبار شکسته‌بالی خاک بر سر کند به پرواز ثنابت چه شتابد؟

If logical explanation (which is always under threat of ending in futility) has lost the thread of meaning, how, then, can it hope to unravel the riddle of Your perfection? And why does the tongue (which is coated with the dust of failure’s broken wings), heaping earth upon its head in shame, hasten into flights of praising You?

[Poem fragment, 3 lines]

Meter: - ˘ - - | - ˘ - - | - ˘ - - | - ˘ -

(→)

Ramal-e moṣamman-e sālem al-ṣadr va l-ḥashv va **maḥzūf** al-ḥarb (E.S. #2.4.15)

Fā ‘elāton fā ‘elāton fā ‘elāton fā ‘elon

Ramal = *fā ‘elāton fā ‘elāton fā ‘elāton fā ‘elāton*

First foot (ṣadr): *fā ‘elāton* (sālem)

Second foot (ḥashv): *fā ‘elāton* (sālem)

Third foot (ḥashv): *fā ‘elāton* (sālem)

Fourth foot (ḥarb): *fā ‘elāton + ḥazf* → *fā ‘elon*

⁷ An example of Bīdel’s fractal microcosmic inversion of well-known poetic imagery (cf. gardens contained within the unbloomed rosebud in Chapter 6).

Qāfeye: -ar

Radīf: mī-zanīm (we beat, we strike)

- 1 *dar rah-at nā-rafte az khod har taraf sar mī-zanīm*
ham-cho mozhgān bī-khabar dar āsheyān par mī-zanīm

در رهت نارفته از خود هر طرف سر می‌زنیم
همچو مژگان بیخبر در آشیان پر می‌زنیم

- 2 *chūn saḥār khemyāze āghūsh-e fanā vā-mī-konad*
mā ze forṣat ghāfelān sar-khosh ke sāghar mī-zanīm

چون سحر خمیازه آغوش فنا وا می‌کند
ما ز فرصت غافلان خرخوش که ساغر می‌زنیم

- 3 *chūn sharar rowshan-savād-e feṭrat-īm ammā che sūd*
noqṭe-ī tā gol konad ātash be daftār mī-zanīm

چون شرر روشن سواد فطرتیم اما چه سود
نقطه‌ای تا گل کند آتش به دفتر می‌زنیم

We have not left ourselves.

Beating our heads, we scramble
in every direction
on the path to You.

Like eyelashes – passive, unperceiving –

we beat
our wings nestward.

Like yawning dawn
unclasping
annihilation's night embrace,

We, wine-drunk,
ignore the opportune moment
and **drink** another round.

We are luminously literate
– like a spark –
in our nature's black-inked language;
but what's the point?

While we coax a single dot
to bloom upon a single page,
we set fire to the whole volume.⁸

⁸ Refrain: *mī-zanīm*, “we strike, hit, beat” on its own; as an auxiliary verb, it combines with nouns to produce a great multitude of common meanings (to drink; to set fire; etc.).

[Prose, 2 paragraphs]

[Paragraph 1/2]

Ta 'ammol-ī 'arż-e parīshānī mī-bīnad, langar-e jam 'īyat andākhte-īm; vaḥshat-ī bāl-e parvāz mī-ārāyad, asheyān-e eqāmat shenākhte-īm.

تأملی عرض پریشانی می‌بیند لنگر جمعیت انداخته‌ایم وحشتی بال پرواز می‌آراید آشیان اقامت شناخته‌ایم.

When attentive slow reflection witnesses the appearance of distracted anxiety, we cast the anchor of collectedness, mistaking distraction for composure; and when the wasteland of solitude comes to adorn our wings of flight, we think we recognize the nest of intent stillness, misinterpreting that vast expanse of thought as the directed discipline of attention.

Ḥaqīqat-e sar-manzel-ī nafahmīde-im. Sa 'y-e ṭalab-hā besmel-āhang-e jonūn-tāzī ast; taṣavvor-e āsheyān-ī nabaste-īm, jahd-e ārzū-hā qafas-farsūde-ye sho 'le-parvāzī.

حقیقت سرمنزلی نفهمیده‌ایم. سعی طلب‌ها بسمل آهنگ جنون تازی است تصور آشیانی نبسته‌ایم جهد آرزوها قفس فرسوده شعله‌پروازی.

The reality, however, is that we have not understood the truth of our journey's end, and all our scrupulous searching efforts are sacrificed to galloping madness. We have not fixed our imagination upon the true nest, and so all the striving of our desire beats against the bars of a caged flight through fire.

[Paragraph 2/2]

Mī-gūyīm ḥaqīqat goftogū-st va be khāmūshī ḥavāle mī-nemāyīm. Mīdānīm ḥāṣel khāmūshī ast bī-ekhteyār zabān mī-goshāyīm.

می‌گوییم حقیقت گفتگوست و به خاموشی حواله می‌نماییم. می‌دانیم حاصل خاموشی است بی‌اختیار زبان می‌گشاییم.

We say, "True reality resides in speech," and then commit ourselves to silence; we understand silence to yield the greatest profit, and yet, involuntarily, we open our speaking mouths.

[Couplet]

Meter: -- ~ | - ~ -- || -- ~ | - ~ --

(→)

Mozāre' -e moṣamman-e akhrab al-ṣadrayn (E.S. #4.7.07(2))

maf'ūlo fā'elāton maf'ūlo fā'elāton

Mozāre' = mafā'ilon fā'elāton mafā'ilon fā'elāton

First foot: mafā'ilon + kharb = maf'ūlo

Second foot: sālem

Third foot: mafā'ilon + kharb = maf'ūlo

Fourth foot: sālem

Qāfeye: -īdīm

Radīf: ~

dar jostojū-yet az ḥarf tā khāmūshī davīdīm

joz goftogū nadīdīm chīz-ī ke mī-shanīdīm

در جستجوییت از حرف تا خاموشی دویدیم
جز گفتگو ندیدیم چیزی که می‌شنیدیم

We ran from speech to silence,
in search of You.
We didn't see a single thing we heard
– but speech.⁹

[Prose, 2 paragraphs]
[Paragraph 1/2]

Agar shekoftegī-ye gol-hā-ye ḥamd īn ast ke mī-setāyīm, ghonche-ye khamūshī ṣad pīrhan bālīde-tar, va agar vozūḥ-e daftar-e ma 'refat hamīn ast ke mī-goshāyīm, ma 'nī-ye jahl hazār martabe fahmīde-tar.

اگر شکفتگی گل‌های حمد این است که می‌ستاییم غنچه خاموشی صد پریهن بالیده‌تر و اگر وضوح دفتر معرفت همین است که می‌گشاییم معنی جهل هزار مرتبه فهمیده‌تر.

This encomium that we offer, however much it may contain flowering roses of praise, yet closed rosebuds of silence bloom a hundred petalfolds more; and this very work that we open, however lucid an explication of the book of knowledge it may be, yet notions ascertained through ignorance are understood with a thousand times more nuance.

[Paragraph 2/2]

Ghobār-ī seṭr-e āshoftegī bar havā negāsht; pendāsht ke “moṣannef-e ketāb-e āsmān-am.” Pargār-ī bonyād-e feṭrat bar bād gozāsht, dānest ke “monshī-ye ṭūmār-e kahkeshān-am.”

غباری سطر آشفتگی بر هوا نگاشت. پنداشت که مصنف کتاب آسمانم. پرکاهی بنیاد فطرت بر باد گذاشت دانست که منشی طومار کهکشانم.

Dust inscribed a line of bewildered distraction upon the air, thinking, “The author of the book of the sky is I.” A pair of compasses traced the foundation of nature upon the wind, supposing, “The scribe who writes upon the scroll of mountain ranges is I.”

[Poem fragment, 2 lines]

Meter: - ˘ - - | ˘ - ˘ - | - -

(→)

Khafīf-e mosaddas-e sālem va makhbūn va ašlam (E.S. #4.5.11)

Fā 'elāton mafā 'elon fe 'lon

Khafīf = Fā 'elāton mostaf 'elon fā 'elāton

⁹ Refrain: -īdīm, past-tense first-person-plural verb ending.

First foot: *sālem*
Second foot: *mostaf'elon + khabn* → *mafā'elon*
Third foot: *fā'elāton + şalm* → *fe'lon*

Qāfeye: -ār
Radif: -īm (we are)

1 *kay sanā-ye to rā sazāvārīm*
zanakh-ī mī-zanīm o bīkār-īm

کی ثنای تو را سزاواریم
زنخی می‌زنیم و بیکاریم

2 *modda 'ā-ye sepand mowhūm ast*
īn-qadar bas ke nāle-ī dārīm

مدعای سپند موهوم است
اینقدر بس که ناله‌ای داریم

How can **we be** worthy
of constructing praise for You?
We who wag our chins
so uselessly?

The claims of wild rue¹⁰
are illusory;
This much is enough:
that **we produce** laments.¹¹

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

Az jahl tā dānesh mo 'taref ke natavan setūd va mī-gūyand; az sāye tā āftāb mottafeq ke namī-tavān yāft o mī-pūyand.

از جهل تا دانش معترف که نتوان ستود و می‌گیرند از سایه تا آفتاب متفق که نمی‌توان یافت و می‌پویند.

They all affirm that their ignorance hinders any praise of knowledge; and yet they speak. They all agree that, as mere shadows, they cannot apprehend the sun – and still they go in search of it.

Majbūr-e bīdād-e e'tebār-īm, goftogū-hā-ye tazallom ezterārī ast; maḥbūs-e qafas-e nayrang-īm, par-feshānī-hā-ye nedāmat bī-ekhteyārī [ast].

¹⁰ A plant (*Peganum harmala*) native to Iranian soil; traditionally, this plant was dried and burned for various purposes, medicinal and superstitious. Its rising smoke was thought to guard against the evil eye.

¹¹ Refrain: -īm, present-tense verb ending or enclitic particle of the first-person plural.

مجبور بیداد اعتباریم گفتگوهای تظلم اضطراری است محبوس قفس نیرنگیم پرفشانی‌های ندامت بی‌اختیار.

We are constrained by the injustice of our powers of reflection, and are compelled to give voice to complaints of oppression. We are imprisoned in a cage of deceit; involuntarily, we spread our wings in regret.

[Poem fragment, 2 lines]

Meter: - - - | - - - | - - - | - - -

(→)

Ramal-e moṣamman-e sālem al-ṣadr va l-ḥashv va **maḥzūf** al-ḥarb (E.S. #2.4.15)

Fā'elāton fā'elāton fā'elāton fā'elon

Ramal = *fā'elāton fā'elāton fā'elāton fā'elāton*

First foot (ṣadr): *fā'elāton* (sālem)

Second foot (ḥashv): *fā'elāton* (sālem)

Third foot (ḥashv): *fā'elāton* (sālem)

Fourth foot (ḥarb): *fā'elāton* + ḥazf → *fā'elon*

Qāfeye: -om

Radīf: karde ast (has done)

- 1 *khāmoshī dar parde-ye sāmān takallom karde ast*
az ghobār-e sorme āvāz-ī tavahhom karde ast

خامشی در پرده سامان تکلم کرده است
از غبار سorme آواز توهم کرده است

- 2 *az 'adam nā-jaste shūkhī-hā-ye hastī mī-konīm*
soḥḥ-e mā ham dar neqāb-e shab tabassom karde ast

از عدم ناجسته شوخی‌های هستی می‌کنیم
صبح ما هم در نقاب شب تبسم کرده است

Silence carries on conversations
in purdah:
Kohl traced around the eyes
hints at imagined voices.

We flirt and flaunt our existence,
in nonexistence;
Behind the veil of night,
our dawn smiles.¹²

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

Agar khāmūsh-īm vā-mānde-ye nārasāyī-yīm va agar gūyā-yīm faryād-ī nātavānāyī
[-yīm].

¹² Refrain: *karde ast* (“has done”), from *kardan*, “to do,” a common auxiliary verb.

اگر خاموشیم و امانده نارسایی|یم و اگر گویایم فریادی ناتوانایی.

If we stay silent, we become dejected by our inexperience; and if we speak, we lament our impuissance.

Īn-jā khamūshī nīst joz bar-chīdan-e dokān-e 'ebārat-forūshī va sokhan nīst magar bar-khod-tapīdan-hā-ye besmel-e khāmūshī.

اینجا خاموشی نیست جز بر چیدن دکان عبارت‌فروشی و سخن نیست مگر بر خود تپیدن‌های بسمل خاموشی.

Here, silence is nothing more than the scrupulous arrangement of wares in the shop of linguistic expression, and speech is nothing more than the feverish palpitations of a sacrificial animal perceiving its imminent slaughter in propitiation of silence.

[p. 5]

[Poem fragment, 2 lines]

Meter: -- ^ | ^ - | ^ - -

(→)

Hazaj-e mosaddas-e akhrab al-ṣadr va **maq̄būz** al-ḥashv va **mahzūf** al-ẓarb (E.S. #5.1.10)

maf'ūlo mafā'elon fo'ūlon

Hazaj = *mafā'ilon mafā'ilon mafā'ilon*

First foot (ṣadr): = *mafā'ilon* + *kharb* = *maf'ūlo*

Second foot (ḥashv): *mafā'ilon* + *qabz* = *mafā'elon*

Third foot (ẓarb): *mafā'ilon* + *ḥazf* = *fo'ūlon*

Qāfeye: -ūsh

Radīf: ~

1 *vaṣf-e to cho porsam az khamūshī*
gūyad be eshārat-am ke bekh(o)rūsh

2 *har gah ze sokhan sorāgh gīram*
faryād bar-āvarad ke khāmūsh

When I ask silence to describe You,
It replies by mute gesture, “Cry out!”

When I pose the same question to speech,
It cries out, “Be silent!”¹³

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

¹³ Refrain: -ūsh. Both imperatives, “Cry out!” (*bekhorūsh*) and “Be silent!” (*khāmūsh*), are the final words in their respective couplets, and are therefore both bearers of this final repeated syllable. The resulting echo between these opposites reinforces Bīdel’s idea here that speech and silence, however antonymous, are bound together in some strange sympathy – perhaps by their shared destiny to end in failure, or by the null circularity of their mutual implication.

Na khāmūshī rā bar īn āstān jabhe-ye e‘tebārī ast va na sokhan rā dar īn dargāh ābrū-ye nesbat-e bārī. Khāmūshī hamān ḥalqe-ī-st bīrūn-e dar neshaste va sokhan ham-chenān ghobār-ī-st az āstān bīrūn-tar shekaste.

نه خاموشی را بر این آستان جبهه اعتباری است و نه سخن را در این درگاه آبروی نسبت باری. خاموشی همان حلقه ایست بیرون در نشسته و سخن همچنان غباریست از آستان بیرون تر شکسته.

Silence can place no credible forehead of supplication upon this royal threshold, nor can speech boast of the pride of admittance into this court. Silence is but a door-knocker, sitting ever on the door’s outer side – and speech is but the broken dust beyond the doorstep.

[Verses,¹⁴ 9 lines]

Meter: – – – | – – – – | – – –

(→)

Ramal-e mosaddas-e sālem al-ṣadr va **makhbūn** al-ḥashv va makhbūn va **maḥzūf** al-ḏarb (E.S. #3.1.11)

Mafā‘lon fa‘elāton fe‘lon/fa‘elon

Ramal = *fā‘elāton fā‘elāton fā‘elāton fā‘elāton*

First foot (ṣadr): sālem

Second foot (ḥashv): *fā‘elāton* + *khabn* → *fa‘elāton*

Third foot (ḏarb): *fā‘elāton* + *khabn* + *ḥazf* → *fa‘elon*

- 1 *kī-st az maktab-e edrāk-e qadam [/qadam]
daftar-e jahl nayāvorde be-ham*

کیست از مکتب ادراک قدم
دفتر جهل نوآورده به هم

Who, in this schoolhouse of perceiving
eternity’s traces,
Has not compiled
a volume of ignorance?

- 2 *gar sokhan ‘ājez-ī andūkht(e) ast
khāmoshī ham-nafas-ī sūkht(e) ast*

گر سخن عاجزی اندوخته است
خاموشی هم نفسی سوخته است

If speech is bound

¹⁴ This genre, the *maṣnavī*, indicates a poem (usually a longer narrative poem) composed in rhyming couplets, all of which share a single meter. Both hemistichs in each couplet share a rhyme, usually a single syllable or two, but each couplet will have its own refrain. Because the burden of meaning in this genre usually falls upon narrative progression (in contrast to short lyric poems, where the rhyme and refrain often play a leading semantic role), here, only those couplets with significant word-long rhymes will have those words given in **bold**.

to incapacity,
Silence burns as its companion,
a sharer of its breath.

- 3 *goftogū ramz-e 'ebārat nash(e)kāft*
khāmoshī ma 'nī-ye taḥqīq nayāft

گفتگو رمز عبارت نشکافت
خامشی معنی تحقیق نیافت

Speech has not solved the riddle
of linguistic expression;
Silence has not obtained the results
of investigating true reality.

- 4 *posht o rū-ye varaq-e dānāyī*
nīst joz khāmoshī yo gūyāyī

پشت و روی ورق دانایی
نیست جز خامشی و گویایی

Silence and speech
are no more
Than the verso and recto
of the manuscript of knowledge.

- 5 *ān yek-ī rū be garībān khūn shod*
īn degar sar be havā majnūn shod

آن یکی رو به گریبان خون شد
این دگر سر به هوا مجنون شد

One of them [silence] was slain,
head sunk into its shirt with shame;
The other one [speech] lost its mind,
head high in the air with desire.

- 6 *ān yek-ī tag zad o jāyī naraśīd*
īn degar dāgh shod o hīch nadīd

آن یکی تگ زد و جای نرسید
این دگر داغ شد و هیچ ندید

One of them [speech] bolted,
arriving at no destination.

The other one [silence] was scarred blind,
and saw nothing.

7 *hame hayrān ke che bāyad goftan*
dorr-e nāyāb nadārad softan

همه حیران که چه باید گفتن
در نایاب درارد سفتن

All are confounded.
“What, then, must be said?”
The unattainable pearl
cannot be punctured.

8 *har ke z-īn noskhe ta ’ammol sabaq ast*
ham-cho āyīne taḥayyor varaq ast

هر که زین نسخه تأمل سبق است
همچو آئینه تحیر ورق است

Everyone who learns this manuscript’s lesson
of attentive slow reflection
Turns into a page, mirror-like –
reflecting its own wonder.

9 *ma ’nī-ye ’ajz boland ast īn-jā*
āgahī nāle-kamand ast īn-jā

معنی عجز بلند است اینجا
آگهی ناله کمند است اینجا

Here, lowly incapacity
has loftly implications;
Here, enlightenment
is the plangent twang
of a skybound lasso.

[Prose, 2 paragraphs]
[Paragraph 1/2]

*’Aql az jīb-e tafakkor-e īn asrār ham-sar-e jahl bar mī-āyad va hūsh az parde-ye taḥqīq-e
īn ḥaqīqat neqāb-e jonūn mī-goshāyad.*

عقل از جیب تفکر این اسرار همسر جهل بر می‌آید و هوش از پرده تحقیق این حقیقت نقاب جنون می‌گشاید.

Reason arises from the shirt-collar of deep reflection upon these mysteries with no more authority than ignorance. The conscious mind lifts the veils of madness from the screen of secluded investigation into this true reality.

[Paragraph 2/2]

Partov-e Lā uḥṣī -e sayyed al-morsalīn [Muḥammad] cherāgh-i ast dar 'arż-e tārikī-ye īn shabestān va darā-ye Al- 'ajzu -e amīr al-mo 'menīn [Abū Bakr] dalīl-i [ast] bar bī-pāyānī-ye īn beyābān.

پرتو لا احصى سيد المرسلين چراغی است در عرض تاریکی این شبستان و درای العجز امیر المؤمنین دلیلی بر بی‌پایانی این بیابان.

The radiance of “*I cannot enumerate*”¹⁵ uttered by Muḥammad, the most noble of all prophets, is a lamp that scatters this room’s rising darkness; the tolling caravan-bell of “*Incapacity*”¹⁶ uttered by Abū Bakr, the commander of the faithful, is proof of this desert’s infinity.¹⁷

[Poem fragment, 5 lines]

Meter: - - - | - - - | - - -

(→)

Ramal-e mosaddas-e sālem al-ṣadr va **makhbūn** al-ḥashv va makhbūn va **maḥzūf** al-ḥarb
(E.S. #3.1.11)

Mafā 'ilon fa 'elāton fe 'lon/fa 'elon

Ramal = *fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton*

First foot (ṣadr): sālem

Second foot (ḥashv): *fā 'elāton* + khabn → *fa 'elāton*

Third foot (ḥarb): *fā 'elāton* + khabn + ḥazf → *fa 'elon*

Qāfeye: -īdan

Radīf: nīst (it/she/he is not)

¹⁵ Arabic, “*Lā uḥṣī*” (“I cannot enumerate”), the first words of a longer phrase, “*Lā uḥṣī thanā 'an alay-ka*” (“I cannot enumerate the praise [due] unto You”), contained in a ḥadīth (an authoritative report about Muḥammad and/or direct transcription of his words) by Ā'isha, one of Muḥammad’s wives. She describes witnessing him praying to God once in this way, saying, “O God! I seek protection against Your wrath in Your pleasure. I seek protection in Your pardon against Your chastisement. I am not capable of enumerating praise [due] unto You. You are as You have praised Yourself.” Al-Nawāwī, *Riyāḍ al-ṣāliḥīn*, Book 16 [The Book of Remembrance of God], ḥadīth N^o1430. See *Riyāḍ al-ṣāliḥīn min kalāmi Sayyid al-Mursilīn* (Al-Qāhira [Cairo]: Maktabat al-kulliyāt al-azhariyya, 1966). Available online at <https://sunnah.com/riyadussaliheen/16> (accessed on 1 August 2019). Annemarie Schimmel calls this reported prayer “one of the cornerstones of mystical gratitude.” Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 126.

¹⁶ Another first word flagging a well-known Arabic phrase: “*Al 'ajzu 'an dark al-idrāki idrākun*” (“The incapacity to apprehend [God] is apprehension”). See Tim Winter, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 259, Footnote 5.

¹⁷ Here and throughout the translation, Arabic words and phrases are given in *italics*.

- 1 *Bīdel ān gowhar-e nāyāb(-e) sorāgh*
be moḥīṭ-ī-st ke porsīdan nīst

بیدل آن گوهر نایاب سراغ
به محیطی است که پرسیدن نیست

Bīdel: that pearl,
distinguished by unattainability,
Is in such an ocean
that there's **no seeking** it.

- 2 *'aks-ī oftāde dar āyīne-ye hūsh*
gol tavān goft valī chīdan nīst

عکسی افتاده در آئینه هوش
گل توان گفت ولی چیدن نیست

A reflection appeared
in the mirror of the conscious mind:
"Rose" can be said,
but it **cannot be plucked**.

- 3 *noskhe-hā dar baghal o fahm moḥāl*
jelve-hā dar naẓar o dīdan nīst

نسخه‌ها در بغل و فهم محال
جلوه‌ها در نظر و دیدن نیست

We cling to volumes and manuscripts,
but comprehending them is beyond our reach.
Luminous manifestations play before our eyes,
beyond our vision's range.

- 4 *'ajz o edrāk agar fahmīdī*
ma 'nī īn ast ke fahmīdan nīst

عجز و ادراک اگر فهمیدی
معنی این است که فهمیدن نیست

If you have comprehended
"incapacity" and "apprehension,"
Then you know their meaning is this:
there can be **no comprehension**.

- 5 *sokhan-ī ṭorfe shanīdan dārad*
ke kam az ma 'nī-ye nash(e)nīdan nīst

سخنی طرفه شنیدن دارد
که کم از معنی نشنیدن نیست

There exists
a wondrous Word
worth hearing:
It is **no** less
than the meaning
of “**not to hear**.”¹⁸

T1.P2 Praise for His Majesty, Most Noble of All Prophets, Muḥammad (Peace Be upon Him)

Na ‘t-e ḥaẓrat-e sayyed al-morsalīn *ṣallā allāhu ‘alay-hi wa l-
sallam*¹⁹

[p.6]
[Prose, 1 paragraph]

*Ham-chenīn, na ‘t-e khātam-ī ke bar negīn-e zohūr-ash naqsh-ī joz huwa llāhu ṣūrat
nabast moshkel-tar ast az setāyesh-e zāt-e moṭlaq, va ṣefat-e maḥbūb-ī ke az kesvat-e
rang-ash ghayr az jamāl-e bī-rangī bahār nakard, doshvār-tar az bayān-e kayfīyat-e
ḥaqq.*

همچنین نعت خاتمی که بر نگین ظهورش نقشی جز هو الله صورت نیست مشکل تر است از ستایش ذات مطلق و
صفت محبوبی که از کسوت رنگش غیر از جمال بی رنگی بهار نکرد دشوارتر از بیان کیفیت حق.

Composing words of praise for Muḥammad – final seal of all prophets, whose coming into being is a seal-ring that bears only the inscription of *He is God* – poses greater difficulty than writing encomia upon God’s absolute divine essence. A description of the attributes of Muḥammad – that Beloved One, whose colors

¹⁸ Refrain: *-an nīst*, where *nīst* is a negation (“not”), and *-an* is the verbal suffix of infinitives. The grammatical form of infinitive + negation conveys an impersonal statement about an action that cannot, ought not, shall not, or will not be completed. For a discussion of Bīdel’s striking use of “to not hear” (*nashanīdan*), see Chapter 6.

¹⁹ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, IV:6-7. As far as premodern Persian devotional prefatory encomia go, this officially apportioned section in praise of Muḥammad is quite short. The usual course of such prefaces typically has several stages that run thus: praise of God, praise of Muḥammad, praise of ‘Alī and Muḥammad’s family (if the author is Shī‘ī), praise of patron. It could be argued that since Muḥammad makes a crucial, dramatic entrance at the very end of *The Four Elements* in Bīdel’s dream, the praise offered here is done out of mere perfunctory duty and with deliberate terseness, reserving the radical praise implicit in the description of Muḥammad’s personal appearance for the work’s culmination. This is the first of many examples of Bīdel’s complicated hubris, his rewriting of his own life as a process of virtuosic self-perfection, driven by his ambition to attain prophetic enlightenment.

dyed the garments from which the springtime of true beauty's colorlessness emerged – is more demanding than any disquisition on the qualities of God.²⁰

Bī-sāyegī-ye shakḥ-e mojassam motanabbeh ast ke īn jowhar-e fard kolfat-e ta'ayyon-e a'rāz namī-shomārad va īn rūḥ-e mojarrad ghobār-e te'dād-e ṣefat bar-namī-dārad.

بی‌سایگی شخص مجسم متنبه است که این جوهر فرد کلفت تعین اعراض نمی‌سمارد و این روح مجرد غبار تعداد صفت بر نمی‌دارد.

The shadowlessness of this corporeal individual [Muḥammad] is ever vigilant, lest this unique individual essence shoulder any incumbrance of the determination of accidents, and lest [Muḥammad's] immaterial soul acquire any dust of the multiplicity of attributes.

[Poem fragment, 3 lines]

Meter: - - - | - - - | - - - | - - -

(→)

Ramal-e moṣamman-e sālem al-ṣadr va l-ḥashv va **maḥzūf** al-ḥarb (E.S. #2.4.15)

Fā'elāton fā'elāton fā'elāton fā'elon

Ramal = *fā'elāton fā'elāton fā'elāton fā'elāton*

First foot (ṣadr): *fā'elāton* (sālem)

Second foot (ḥashv): *fā'elāton* (sālem)

Third foot (ḥashv): *fā'elāton* (sālem)

Fourth foot (ḥarb): *fā'elāton* + ḥazf → *fā'elon*

Qāfeye: -ānde

Radīf: -and (they are / they do)

1 *jor'at-andīshān ke dars-e ḥamd o na't-ī kh'ānde-and
chūn shavad ma'lūm az īn-jā rānde z-ān-jā mānde-and*

جرات اندیشان که درس حمد و نعتی خوانده‌اند
چون شود معلوم از اینجا رانده زانجا مانده‌اند

There are bold ones, those who **have learnt** well
the lessons of encomium and praise.
Yet in the end, **they are exiled** from the former
and **remain** far from the latter.

2 *noskhe-hā ṭay(y) karde-and ammā be 'elm-e āgahī
chūn zabān az bī-tamīzī yek varaq gardānde-and*

نسخه‌ها طی کرده‌اند اما به علم آگاهی

²⁰ This remarkably explicit valuation of Muḥammad above God is another example of Bīdel's near-heresy. It is also in keeping with the main focus of the introduction: since none exist who can speak with truth about what is absolute and transcendental, our critical focus should instead be directed here, upon this messy, perishable human world. It is precisely Muḥammad's humanity that makes him improbably perfect and endlessly compelling.

چون زبان از بی‌تمیزی یک ورق گردانده‌اند

They have pored over countless manuscripts;
but in the science of enlightenment,
Ever **have they remained**
but turners of a single page:
their own indiscrete tongues.

3 *bīsh az īn rowshan namī-gardad ke īn bī-dāneshān
az nafas bar sham ‘-e feṭrat dāman-ī afshānde-and*

بیش از این روشن نمی‌گردد که این بی‌دانشان
از نفس بر شمع فطرت دامنی افشانده‌اند

This much, at least, is clear:
such ignorant ones
Have spread wide the hem of breath,
and in so doing
have snuffed out nature’s candle.

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

*Har chand ṣalā-ye Anā basharun mithlu-kum ḥoṣele rā be da ‘vat-e jor ‘at-ī mī-kh^vānad,
shokūh-e Anā Aḥmadu bilā mīm hamān be dūrbāsh-e adab mī-rānad.*

هر چند صلاى انا بشر مثلکم حوصله را به دعوت جرأتی می‌خواند شکوه انا احمد بلا ميم همان به دورباش ادب
می‌راند.

However much the call of the Prophet’s “*I am a human being, like all of you*”²¹
summons our capacities to accept the invitation to be boldly forward, the regal
splendor of God’s “*I am Aḥmad, without the ‘mīm*”²² causes us always to be
driven back by the royal guard of polite conduct.

²¹ *Anā basharun mithlu-kum*. Qur’ān 18:110, Sūra of the Cave (*Sūrat al-kaḥf*). The full verse is:

*Qul inna-mā anā basharun mithlu-kum yūḥá ilay-ya anna-mā ilāhu-kum ilāhun wāḥidun
fa-man kāna yarjū liqā’a rabbi-hi fal-ya ‘mal ‘amalan ṣāliḥan wa lā yushrik bi- ‘ibādati
rabbi-hi aḥadan.*

Say, “Verily I am a man like all of you; inspiration has come upon me that your god is
God who is One [*ilāhun wāḥidun*]. Whoever wishes to meet his lord must do good works
as a pious person, and let him admit not one [*aḥadan*] partner [to God] in the worship of
his lord.” The Qur’ān. Available online at <https://quran.com/18> (accessed on 1 August
2019).

²² This is a “divine saying” (*ḥadīth qudsī*), a report of God’s own words as revealed to
Muḥammad. “Aḥmad” is one of Muḥammad’s names, meaning “one who is more/most worthy of
praise.” “Aḥmad” without the letter M (*mīm*) becomes “Aḥad” – one of the names of God that

Tā sāye rang-e hastī nazedāyad az āyīne-dārī-ye khorshīd che nemāyad? Va tā qaṭre dast az khod nashūyad az amvāj-e moḥīṭ che gūyad?

تا سایه رنگ هستی نزداید از آینه‌داری خورشید چه نماید؟ و تا قطره دست از خود نشوید از امواج محیة چه گوید؟

Until shadow scrapes all the colors of existence from its mirror, how can it reflect the sun? Unless the drop of water washes its hands of itself, what can it report of the ocean's waves?

Dar har šefat sar-reshte-ye nārasāyī-ye mā rasā-st va jāde-ye 'ajz-peymāyī-ye mā bī-entehā.

در هر صفت سررشته نارسایی ما رساست و جاده عجزپیمایی ما بی‌انتهای.

Our inexperience has at least this skill: it cleverly reaches out to snatch at every possible description. The wide roads along which we measure our own wretchedness are endless.

[Couplet]

Meter: ~ --- | ~ --- | ~ --- | ~ ---

(→)

Hazaj-e mošamman-e sālem (E.S. #2.1.16)

Maḥā 'ilon maḥā 'ilon maḥā 'ilon maḥā 'ilon

Hazaj = *Maḥā 'ilon maḥā 'ilon maḥā 'ilon maḥā 'ilon*

All four feet sālem.

Qāfeye: -an

Radīf: ~

*ze lāf-e ḥamd o na 't ūlá (a)st bar khāk-e adab khoftan
sojūd-ī mī-tavān bordan dorūd-ī mī-tavān goftan*

ز لاف حمد و نعت اولی است بر خاک ادب خفتن
سجودی می‌توان بردن درودی می‌توان گفتن

It is more exalted to sleep on the dust of polite conduct than falsely to boast of one's ability to praise.
What can be done? Prostration, forehead to the ground.
What is possible? The humble utterance of prayer.²³

means "the One" (see Footnote 21 for how it appears in Qur'ān 18:110). In other words, it is only the small circle of a single letter, mīm (م) that interposes between God and the world. Mystical Islam finds much significance also in the numerical value of *mīm* (40), which is aligned with the forty-day seclusion, the unfolding of the universe in forty degrees, etc. See Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 419.

²³ Refrain –an.

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

Āyīne-ye tavajjoh-e shafaqat-negāhān ghobār-andūd-e taghāfol mabād va kamand-e raf'at-dastgāhān chīn-e bī-tavajjohī mabīnād ke tohmat-ālūd nesbat-e āb o gel Abū l-ma'ānī 'Abd ol-Qāder Bīdel dar tūfān-gāh-e 'ālam-e ijād mohīṭ-ī-st, sāhel-forūsh-e ghobār-e nādānī va dar dayrestān-e eqlīm-e ta'ayyon sho 'le-ī khāshāk-be-dūsh-e kesvat-e nātavānī.

آیینہ توجہ شفقت نگاہان غبار اندود تغافل مباد و کمند رفأت دستگاہان چین بی توجہی مبیناد کہ تہمت آلود نسبت اب و گل ابوالمعانی عبدالقادر بیدل در توفان گاہ عالم ایجاد محیطیست ساحل فروش غبار نادانی و در دیرستان اقلیم تعین شعلہ ای خاشاک بدوش کسوت ناتوانی.

May the mirror of the attention of those who gaze compassionately upon this work not be smeared by any dust of careless negligence, and may the lasso of those with the power to aim high not wrinkle with any inattention during the perusal of this book. This accused sinner, this composite of water and clay, 'Abd al-Qāder **Bīdel**, “the Father of Meanings”, is an ocean in this abode of tropical storms, in this swirling world of coming-into-being – an ocean that offers vast shores of his sands of ignorance; Bīdel is a flame in the temple-house of this realm of determinations, draped in garments of inability, carrying kindling upon his back.²⁴

Agar be mowj āyad, shekast-e gowhar-e mastūr-ī, jīb-e 'āfīyat-ash mī-darrad; va agar moshta 'el gardad khākestar-e paykar-e ma 'zūr-ī az chāk-e garībān-ash mī-goẓarad.

اگر بہ موج آید شکست گوہر مستوری جیب عافیتش می درد و اگر مشتعل گردد خاکستر پیکر معذوری از چاک گریبانش می گذرد.

If [Bīdel] the ocean breaks into waves, the lustrous fracture²⁵ of a hidden pearl rips through his pockets of prosperous welfare; if [Bīdel] the flame catches fire, the ash-traces of a humble form emerge from his torn collar.

*Nāchār mohīṭ-ī rā be ṭab 'e ḥobāb-ī shekaste va **Bīdel**-ī rā be gardan-e qodrat baste.*

ناچار محیطی را بہ طبع حبابی شکسته و بیدلی را بہ گردن قدرت بسته.

The ocean must break against the bubble. Whoever goes forth, heart stolen [Bīdel], must cling to the neck of creative ability.

²⁴ As a further example of hubris, or ambition, or, at the very least, of a clear prophethood-oriented agenda, Bīdel chooses to introduce his own name here, in the section nominally devoted to praising Muḥammad.

²⁵ I.e., the “fracture” of color – that is, how unified white colorlessness splinters into a variegated rainbow, a scattering that would be visible in the colorful lustre of a pearl’s surface.

Āftāb, dāman be sāyegī forūkhte, dāgh-e khejlat partov-e ezhār-ī-st va āsmān kolfat-e zamīn-ī andūkhte, monfa 'el-e pāye-ye raf' at-shomārī.

آفتاب دامن به سایگی فروخته داغ خجالت پرتو اظهاریست و آسمان کلفت زمینی اندوخته منفعل پایه رفأت شماری.

The sun, scorched like a rasin, is a burn-scar of shame made by the bright ray of manifestation. And the sky is an accumulation of earthly encumbrances, which are ashamed of this low state of counting ranks and enumerating elevations.

Bī-rang(-)ī rā dar 'ālam-e tohmat-rang, hazār rang khūn khordan ast, va bī-navā(y/-)ī rā dar mahfel-e mahtāb-navā, shokūh-e hazār nāle pīsh bordan.

بی‌رنگی را در عالم تهمت رنگ هزار خون خوردن است و بی‌نواپی را در محفل مهتاب‌نوا شکوه هزار ناله پیش بردن.

Colorlessness must be slain by a thousand colors in this dyed and tainted world, and voiceless helplessness must bear the burden of the glory of a thousand laments in this assembly of musical moonlight.

[Poem fragment, 3 lines]

Meter: ~ --- | ~ --- | ~ --- | ~ ---

(→)

Hazaj-e moṣamman-e sālem (E.S. #2.1.16)

Mafā 'ilon mafā 'ilon mafā 'ilon mafā 'ilon

Hazaj = *Mafā 'ilon mafā 'ilon mafā 'ilon mafā 'ilon*

All four feet sālem.

Qāfeye: -āz

Radīf: -e man dārad (has [x] of mine)

1 *lab-ī k-az goftogū khūn shod navā-ye sāz-e man dārad*
be har jā khāmoshī bīnī zabān-e rāz-e man dārad

لبی کز گفتگو خون شد نوای ساز من دارد
به هر جا خاموشی بینی زبان راز من دارد

The lips that died of speech
are assisted by **my** instrument's voice.
Wherever you see silence,
it speaks the language of **my** secret.

2 *shekast-e rang-e jor'at mī-goshāyad bāl-e ezhār-am*
taṭīdan-hā-ye besmel shūkhī-ye āvāz-e man dārad

شکست رنگ جرات می‌گشاید بال اظهارم
تپیدن‌های بسمل شوخی آواز من دارد

The fracture of bold colors
spreads the wings of manifestation before me.

The agitated movements of one condemned to die
are accompanied by the impudent mirth of **my** voice.

3 *be nowmīdī cho mowj-e gowhar-am dāgh-e par-afshānī*
darūn-e bīze mordan noskhe-ye parvāz-e man dārad

به نومیدی چو موج گوهرم داغ پرافشانی
درون بیضه مردن نسخه پرواز من دارد

I am like the waves on a pearl,
scarred into immobility
as I try to spread my wings.
Death within the unhatched egg
is a perfect transcript
of **my** flight.²⁶

[p.7]

[Prose, 2 paragraphs]

[Paragraph 1/2]

Sharm-e sojūd-e nātavānī ‘araq-neshān-e jabhe-ye tāqat ast, va olfat-e chīn-e jabīn-e
nārasāyī shekanj-farsā-ye āsetīn-e jor’at.

شرم سجود ناتوانی عرق نشان جبهه طاقت است و الفت چین جبین نارسایی شکنج فرسای آستین جرأت.

Prostrating with shame, face to the ground, before powerlessness reveals the
sweat of effort on power’s brow; the friendly creases on the forehead of
inexperience gently iron out the wrinkles from bravery’s sleeves.

Har qadr vahm-e tanazzol ‘orūj-e marāteb-e tashbīh ast, pastī darajāt-e tanzīh [ast]; va
chandān ke khayāl-e ta ‘ayyon-pardāz āyīne-ye kaṣāfat ast, zengār ma ‘nī-ye laṭāfat [ast].

هر قدر وهم تنزل عروج مراتب تشبیه است پستی درجات تنزیه و چندان که خیال تعیین پرداز آینه کثافت است
زنگار معانی لطافت.

Since the illusion of [God’s] descent [into creation] is, in reality, an ascent
through the stages of anthropomorphism, lowliness comprises the many stages of
transcendence. And because objects of imagination – which are determinations --
are, in truth, a mirror reflecting foul impurity, any rust on its surface, therefore,
contains meanings of refined elegance.²⁷

²⁶ Refrain: *man dārad*, “[it] has the [X] of mine / of my self / of my mind.”

²⁷ A convoluted passage. The gist seems to be that what seems humble and low is, in fact, noble and high; what appears to be a tragic downfall turns out to afford the means of ascent to salvation. Anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*) and transcendentalism (*tanzīh*) are two terms of art in Islamic theology and philosophy that pertain to the possibility or impossibility of describing God. The former allows for similitude and analogy; the latter does not, preferring to contemplate God in pure form, unclothed by language. Thus, what might seem to be a hopeless endeavor of attaining

[Paragraph 2/2]

Dar-īn šūrat joz ‘arż-e neqāb rang che jelve bāyad nemūd va ghayr az bayān-e hejāb lab be kodām ḥarf bāyad goshūd?

در این صورت جز عرض نقاب رنگ چه جلوه باید نمود و غیر از بیان حجاب لب به کدام حرف باید گشود؟

Thus, what must color reveal but the appearance of veils? And what words must pass through lips but discourses of veils?

Pās-e nāmūs-e ‘ajz zeh-e garībān ast va eḥteyāṭ-e bandegī khār-e dāmān.

پاس ناموس عجز زه گریبان است و احتیاط بندگی خار دامن.

Preserving the honor of lowliness is the modest lace of a shirt-collar. The circumspection of servitude is the thorn catching at a hem.

[Lyric poem, 3 lines]

Meter: - - - | - - - | - - - | - - -

(→)

Ramal-e moṣamman-e sālem al-ṣadr va l-ḥashv va **maḥzūf** al-żarb (E.S. #2.4.15)

Fā ‘elāton fā ‘elāton fā ‘elāton fā ‘elon

Ramal = *fā ‘elāton fā ‘elāton fā ‘elāton fā ‘elāton*

First foot (ṣadr): *fā ‘elāton* (sālem)

Second foot (ḥashv): *fā ‘elāton* (sālem)

Third foot (ḥashv): *fā ‘elāton* (sālem)

Fourth foot (żarb): *fā ‘elāton* + ḥazf → *fā ‘elon*

Qāfeye: -ābī-hā

Radīf: kojā-st (where is/are [x]?)

1 *shām gol kardīm aknūn āftāb-ī-hā kojā-st*
āb(e)rū-ye baḥr dar gard-e sarābī-hā kojā-st

شام گل کردیم اکنون آفتابی‌ها کجاست
آبروی بحر در گرد سرابی‌ها کجاست

We bloomed at night.

Where now **are** the suns?

Where is honor, shimmering

upon the ocean’s surface,

amidst all this mirage-dust?

2 *raft ayyām-ī ke naqd-e bī-neyāzī dāshtīm*

true reality (God) in this way – by mere humble words, by exploring illusory objects of the imagination – is a necessary evil, and moreover, one that will lead in the end certain truth. Bīdel’s posture of humility here, then, has a threefold aspect: it is devotional, authorial, and also philosophical.

īn zamān ān ganj-e moṭlaq joz kharābī-hā kojā-st

رفت ایامی که نقد بی‌نیازی داشتیم
این زمان آن گنج مطلق جز خرابی‌ها کجاست

Those days are gone when we were in possession
of the capital of independent fortune;
Where now can we find
the treasure of the Absolute
except in ruins and ruination?

3 *bū-ye gol ham mī-keshad dīvār bar rū-ye bahār
bā do ‘ālam rang sāz-e bī-neqābī-hā kojā-st*

بوی گل هم می‌کشد دیوار بر روی بهار
با دو عالم رنگ ساز بی‌نقابی‌ها کجاست

The rose's fragrance drew a veil,
built a wall across the face of Spring.
Both worlds are drenched with color:
where is perfect unveiled harmony?

T1.P3 The Object and Purpose of Composing This Work, and a Description of its Entitling Mansha' va maqṣad-e taḥrīr; vajh-e tasmeye-ye ketāb²⁸

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

*Takhfīf-e ‘ebārat-ārāyī-hā shamme-ī moṭābeq-e rang-o-bū-ye golshan-e zohūr, az gol o
khār-e marāteb ṭayy karde, adā nemāyad; va parde-vārī az chehre-ye naqṣ o kamāl pay-
borde-ye khod mī-goshāyad – tā moḥtājeb namānad ke īn nash’-e-ye bī-khemār-e
khomestān-e ‘adam az sāghar-e e ‘tebār-e hasī che keshīd, va īn naghme-ye bī-navāyī-ye
ṭarab-gāh-e vaḥdat az sāz-e emteyāz-e kaṣrat che-hā shenīd.*

تخفیف عبارت‌آرایی‌ها شمه‌ای مطابق رنگ و بوی گلشن ظهور از گل و خار مراتب طی کرده ادا نماید؛ و
پرده‌واری از چهره نقص و کمال پی‌برده خود می‌گشاید تا محتجب نماند که این نشئه بی‌خمار خمستان عدم از
ساغر اعتبار هستی چه کشید و این نغمه بی‌نوایی طربگاه وحدت از ساز امتیاز کثرت چه‌ها شنید.

A small sample of the light adornments of expression, which are consonant with
the colors and scents of the garden of appearances, pass through the stages of rose
and thorn and arrive at an elegant conclusion; concealment discovers itself by
unveiling the face of perfection and defect. Thus, the contents of the wineglass of
reflection upon existence, imbibed by this world of pleasant intoxication – this

²⁸ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, IV:6-7.

winecellar of nonexistence – are revealed; and all the things which this voiceless song picked up from the instrument of discerning multiplicity in the musical pleasure-house of unity – are disclosed.

[Poem fragment, 3 lines]

Meter: - - - - | - - - - | - - - - | - - - -

(→)

Ramal-e moşamman-e sālem al-şadr va l-ḥashv va **maḥzūf** al-żarb (E.S. #2.4.15)

Fā‘elāton fā‘elāton fā‘elāton fā‘elāton

Ramal = *fā‘elāton fā‘elāton fā‘elāton fā‘elāton*

First foot (şadr): *fā‘elāton* (sālem)

Second foot (ḥashv): *fā‘elāton* (sālem)

Third foot (ḥashv): *fā‘elāton* (sālem)

Fourth foot (żarb): *fā‘elāton* + ḥazf → *fā‘elon*

Qāfeye: -am

Radīf: bī-parde ast (is unveiled)

- 1 *cheshm vā kon ḥosn-e nayrang-e qedam bī-parde-ast*
gūsh show āhang-e qānūn-e ‘adam bī-parde-ast

چشم وا کن حسن نیرنگ قدم بی‌پرده است
گوش شو آهنگ قانون عدم بی‌پرده است

Open your eyes:

the beauty of eternity’s deception **is unveiled**.

Lend an ear:

the melody of the harp of nonexistence **is broadcast**.

- 2 *ma‘nī-k-az fahm-e ān andīshe dar khūn mī-tapīd*
īn zamān dar kesvat-e ḥarf o raqam bī-parde-ast

معنی‌ای کز فهم آن اندیشه در خون می‌تپید
این زمان در کسوت حرف و رقم بی‌پرده است

The meaning that boils in the blood
from comprehension of that thought

Now, at this moment, **is disclosed**

in the garb of script and letter.

- 3 *ān-che mī-dānī monazzah z-e ‘tebār-e bīsh o kam*
forşat-at bādā ke aknūn bīsh o kam bī-parde-ast

آنچه می‌دانی منزله ز اعتبار بیش و کم
فرصتت بادا که اکنون بیش و کم بی‌پرده است

All that you know transcends

dependence upon more-and-less.

May you have many opportune moments!

“More-and-less” **is now unveiled**.

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

*Be moʼāla ‘e-ye īn ovrāq ke ma ‘ānī az shekaste-bālān-e olfat-e taḥrīr-e ū-st, **parvāz-e āsheyānī moshāhade nemūdan ast**; va bar fahm-e īn makātīb ke ḥaqāyeq dar ṭelesm-e nesbat-e khoṭūt-ash āsūde ast, bar **jowlān-e zamīn-gīrī cheshm goshūdan** [ast].*

به مطالعه این اوراق که معنی از شکسته بالان الفت تحریر اوست پرواز آشیانی مشاهده نمودن است و بر فهم این مکاتیب که حقایق در طلسم نسبت خطوطش آسوده است بر جولان زمینگیری چشم گشودن.

Careful study of these pages (wherein meanings arise from those whose wings have been broken by the intimacy of composition)²⁹ reveals **a nestward flight worth experiencing**. Scrupulous comprehension of these jottings (wherein true realities repose inside the enchanted worlds of concatenated letters) present **earthbound ventures worth beholding**.³⁰

Har chand besāt-e īn ṣafahāt az noqūsh-e emteyāz ṣāf ast, savād-e ḥayrat-ī rowshan mī-tavān kard va agar hame mīnā-ye īn maḥfel az ṣahbā-ye e ‘tebār khālī ast, paymāne-ye negāh-ī be gardesh mī-tavān āvard.

هر چند بساط این صفحات از نقوش امتیاز صاف است سواد حیرتی روشن می‌توان کرد و اگر همه مینای این محفل از صحبای اعتبار خالی است پیمانه نگاه‌ای به گردش می‌توان آورد.

²⁹ This refers at least in part literally to birds, whose wings have been broken and fashioned into quills.

³⁰ The phrases in this paragraph given in **bold** (my own) pithily and importantly summarize Bīdel’s purpose in composing this autobiography: to present a creative reconstruction, didactic presentation, and philosophically ambitious higher-order reflection upon experience. In other words, he is not at all primarily concerned with preserving for posterity the idiosyncratic and unique experiences of his concrete, historical, individual life in the world (though some “facts,” scanty as they are, do present themselves); instead, he gives us *experience as such* – in the most philosophically robust, universal sense of the word. Both verbs used here, *moshāhade kardan* and *cheshm goshūdan*, could be translated simply as “seeing:” the former is literally “witnessing” and the latter, “opening the eyes;” but to do so would be to miss what I think is one of Bīdel’s most vital and central arguments. *Moshāhade* (*mushāhada* in Arabic) as a technical term in Islamic philosophy (viz., in Avicennan metaphysics) explicitly denotes “experience” – both at the crude level of perceiving objects in the world, and also in the higher-order sense of experiencing the movements of the mind. For a detailed description of the term, concept, and pivotal role of experience (*mushāhada*) in Avicenna’s empirical epistemology, see Dimitri Gutas, “The Empiricism of Avicenna,” *Oriens* 40.2 (2012), 396. Gutas notes here the remarkable resemblance, perhaps even outright equivalence, between Avicenna’s *mushāhada* and Locke’s “experience.” The key point of intersection, perhaps even of direct influence, between Avicenna and Bīdel is in their mobilization of autobiography in the service of philosophy, where their own lived lives are recorded – are recoded – as virtuosic examples of the momentous attainment of certain truth, which can be disclosed only through their own meticulously elaborated systems of thought and practice.

Although the diceboard of these pages contains no die-engravings of great discernment, nevertheless, the blackened rough-draft of wonder can still be illuminated; and even if all the glasses in this gathering contain no wine of reflection, vision's cup can still be sent around.

[Verses, 6 lines]

Meter: ˘--|˘--|˘--|˘--

(→)

Motaqāreb-e mošamman-e sālem al-šadr va l-ḥashvayn va maḥzūf al-žarb (E.S. #1.1.11)

fo 'ūlon fo 'ūlon fo 'ūlon fo 'ūl

Motaqāreb = *fo 'ūlon fo 'ūlon fo 'ūlon fo 'ūlon*

First, second, third feet: sālem

Fourth foot: fo 'ūlon + ḥazf = fo 'ul

Qāfeye: -ūf

Radīf: ast o bas (it is [x], and nothing more)

- 1 *jahān ejtemā 'e ḥorūf ast o bas*
tamāshā-ī īnjā voqūf ast o bas

جهان اجتماع حروف است و بس
تماشایی اینجا و قوف است و بس

The world is a concatenation of letters,
and **nothing more**.
The spectacle here is an experience,
and **nothing more**.

- 2 *az īn ḥarf-hā-ye taḥayyor-mesāl*
bebīn tā che ma 'nī goshūd(e) ast bāl

از این حرف‌های تحیر مثال
ببین تا چه معنی گشوده است بال

Have a look
at these wondrous letters,
So you might see what meanings
spread their wings within them.

- 3 *ma 'ānī 'eyān ast ta 'vīl nīst*
sabaq-hā ravān ast ta 'fīl nīst

معانی عیان است تأویل نیست
سبق‌ها روان است تعطیل نیست

The meanings are clear:
there is no need for elaborate exegesis.
The lessons flow quickly:

there is no need to deny God's attributes.³¹

- 4 *dabestān-e showq-ī-st forṣat sabaq*
ze mozhgān zadan dar shomār-e varaq

دبستان شوقی است فرصت سبق
ز مژگان زدن در شمار ورق

Here is the school of passion,
and the opportune moment is that lesson
Learnt in the blink of an eye,
counting the pages as they turn.

[p.8]

- 5 *dar īn-jā na shanbe na ādīne ast*
be qadr-e negah forṣat āyīne ast

در اینجا نه شنبه نه آدینه است
به قدر نگه فرصت آینه است

No Saturdays, nor Fridays here –
no days of rest.
Vision's power fashions mirrors
out of opportune moments.

[Prose, 1 paragraph – the Contents]

Chūn mansha'-e taḥrīr-e īn marāteb-e khāme-ye 'onṣorī, tartīb-e nash'e-ye emkānī ast,
va garde-ye taṣvīr-e īn ḥaqāyeq-e ṣafḥe-ye mā-vo-man, tarkīb-e noskhe-ye jesmānī [ast],
kherad-e ma'nī-sanad sar-reshte-ye soṭūr be raqīme-ye maktab-e Bīdelī rasānīd va
qalam-e taḥqīq-raqam be mowsūmī-ye Chahār 'onṣor-ash momtāz gardānīd.

چون منشأ تحریر این مراتب خامه عنصری ترتیب نشئه امکانی است و گرده تصویر این حقایق صفحه ما و من
ترکیب نسخه جسمانی خرد معنی سند سر رشته سطور به رقیمه مکتب بیدلی رسانید و قلم تحقیق رقم به موسومی
چهار عنصرش ممتاز گردانید.

Since the object of using the elemental pen to these stages of existence to writing
is **the orderly arrangement of a possible world**, and since the purpose of this

³¹ Both *ta'wīl* (elaborate esoteric exegesis, associated with *Ismā'īlism*) and *ta'ḥīl* (radical denial of all of God's attributes, going beyond the "simple" transcendentalism of *tanzīh*) are technical terms in Islamic thought. While Bīdel rejects, and very often mocks, the dry scholasticism of the discipline of theology (*kalām*), he makes careful, respectful, and sometimes radically creative use of philosophical terms of art in ways that repay careful (if often conjectural) reconstruction. Other terms for hermeneutic practices, such as *tafsīr*, straightforward (Qur'ānic) exegesis, and *ta'bīr*, (dream) interpretation, are used positively.

stencilled outline, this preliminary sketch towards the painting of true realities upon the pages of we-and-I, is **the methodical arrangement of an embodied manuscript**, the Rational Mind – which is decreed for meaning – directed itself towards the lines of scrawl composed at the Bīdelian school of writing, and distinguished the analytical pen by compelling it to write out a work entitled *The Four Elements*:

'Onşor-e avval: eshte 'āl-e sho 'le-ye maqāl va garmī-hā-ye şohbat-e arbāb-e faẓl o kamāl

'Onşor-e dovvom: ravāyeh-e shekoftegī-ye bahār-e 'ālam-e manẓūm va nasāyem-e fayẓ-e ghanāyem-e favāyed-e ma 'lūm

'Onşor-e sevom: tarāvāt-e shabnamestān-e marāteb-e manshūr va ābyārī-ye nakhlestān-e kayfeyāt-e sho 'ūr

'Onşor-e chahārom: ghobār-feshānī-ye besāt-e şovar-e 'ajāyeb va zang-zedāyī-ye āyīne-ye noqūsh-e gharāyeb

عنصر اول: اشتعال شعله مقال و گرمی‌های صحبت ارباب فضل و کمال
 عنصر دوم: روایح شکفتگی بهار عالم منظوم و نسایم فیض غنائیم فواید معلوم
 عنصر سوم: طراوت شبنمستان مراتب منشور و آبیاری نخلستان کیفیت شعور
 عنصر چهارم: غبارفشانی بساط صور عجایب و زنگ‌زدایی آیینه نقوش غرایب

Element the First (Fire): On lighting of the flame of discourse, and on the warmth of ardent discussion with masters of learning and perfection.

Element the Second (Air): Concerning the sweet-scented winds sweeping through the flowering springtime of the universe of verse, and concerning the pleasant breezes carrying spoils acquired through grace by remarkable discourses.

Element the Third (Water): Of moisture inhering in the dew-realm of the stages of diffusion, and of the irrigation of the palmtree plantation sense-perception's qualities.

Element the Fourth (Earth): Relating to sweeping away dust from the wares-carpet displaying many forms of wonder, and relating to scraping off rust from the mirror reflecting countless mirabilia.³²

[Poem fragment, 2 lines – including the Title of *The Four Elements*]

Meter: -- ~ | - ~ - ~ | ~ - - ~ | - ~ -
 (→)

³² Fire, air, water, earth: this list traces a descent from lightness to heaviness, from insubstantiality to solidity. It is worth noting that the range of each element's movement, as described in each chapter's subtitle, expands its circumference with each subsequent element: the candle's handful of warmth, the broader ground covered by the breeze, water's diffusion across an entire plantation, and finally the implied scattering of dust. This forms a kind of counterweight of consolation to the increasing deterioration attending this chain of transformation, and this culminates in the visionary dream and (fleeting attainment of) perfect understanding at the end of the final fourth element.

Możāre -e moṣamman-e akhrab al-ṣadr va **makfūf** al-ḥashvayn va **maḥzūf** al- ḡarb
(E.S. #4.7.14)

maf'ūlo fā'elāto mafā'īlo fā'elon

możāre' = *mafā'īlon fā'elāton mafā'īlon fā'elāton*

First foot (ṣadr): *mafā'īlon* + *kharb* → *maf'ūlo*

Second foot (ḥashv): *fā'elāton* + *kaff* → *fā'elāto*

Third foot (ḥashv): *mafā'īlon* + *kaff* → *mafā'īlo*

Fourth foot (ḡarb): *fā'elāton* + *ḥazf* → *fā'elon*

Qāfeye: -astan

Radīf: ast (it is)

- 1 *dānesh dar īn moḥīṭ ze khod rakht bastan ast*
bar rū-ye chār mowj morabba' neshastan ast

دانش در این محیط ز خود رخت بستن است
بر روی چار موج مربع نشستن است

- 2 *fahm-ī be Chār 'onṣor-e Bīdel gomāshtan*
az dāmgāh-e shesh jehat-e vahm rastan ast

فهمی به چار عنصر بیدل گماشتن
از دامگاه شش جهت وهم رستن است

In this ocean, knowledge is:

Packing up the belongings of selfhood,
Sitting squarely
upon the surface of four waves,

Deputing one's understanding
to the study of Bīdel's *Four Elements*,
And **setting oneself free**
from the snare-mined hunting grounds
of illusion's six directions.³³

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

Cheshm-e ommīd be entezār-e īn sorme rowshan [ast] ke tamāshāyī-ye īn golzār-e
'erfān-nehāl, zaḥmat-e khār-e jahl mabīnād; va dast-e tamannā be īn do 'a boland ke
sayyāḥ-e vādī-ye ma 'ānī-ghazāl be ghobār-e kolfat-e nādānī maneshīnād.

چشم امید به انتظار این سرمه روشن که تماشایی این گلزار عرفان نهال زحمت خار جهل مینماید و دست تمنا به این
دعا بلند که سیاح وادی معانی غزال به غبار کلفت نادانی منشیند.

My hopeful eyes brighten as they wait for this collyrium: that the observer
wandering in this garden – which is overgrown with the fresh shoots of gnostic
knowledge – may not encounter any difficulties on account of any thorns of my

³³ Refrain: -an ast, “is” following the infinitive ending.

ignorance. My pleading hands are clasped together in this prayer: that the traveller roaming through this valley – which is populated with gazelles of meaning – may not alight upon any inconvenient dust of my inexperience.

[Poem fragment, 2 lines]

Meter: - ˘ - - | ˘ - ˘ - | ˘ ˘ -

(→)

Khafif-e mosaddas-e sālem al-ṣadr va **makhbūn** al-ḥashv va al- ḡarb **maḥzūf** al- ḡarb
(E.S. #4.5.11)

Fā'elāton mafā'elon fe'lon

khafif = fā'elāton mostaf'eon fā'elāton

First foot (ṣadr): sālem

Second foot (ḥashv): mostaf'elon + khabn → mafā'elon

Third foot (ḡarb): mafā'ilon + khabn + ḥazf → fa'elon

Qāfeye: -anī

Radīf: dārad (it has; it must; it is worth)

- 1 *be tamāshā rasīdanī dārad*
jelve moft ast dādanī dārad

به تماشا رسیدنی دارد
جلوه مفت است دیدنی دارد

It is **worth** coming here
to see the spectacle.
This splendid display –
worth nothing, freely offered –
is **worth** seeing.

- 2 *'ālam afsane ast o bāqī hīch*
ḥarf-e mā ham shanīdanī dārad

عالم افسانه است و باقی هیچ
حرف ما هم شنیدنی دارد

The world is but a fairy tale;
the rest – is nothing.
My words too
are **worth** hearing.

II

The First Element: Fire

‘*Onşor-e avval* [*ātash*]

T1.E1.1 Preface to the First Element

Tamhīd³⁴

[p.9]
[Prose, 3 paragraphs]
[Paragraph 1/3]

Maqşad-e taħrīr-e īn kalamāt towzīh-e ‘ebārāt-e şafhe-ye ettefāq ast va modda ‘ā-ye tartīb-e īn soṭūr taşrīh-e ta ‘ammeyāt-e haqīqat-e vefāq, ke be hazār dowr pargār-e falakī, noqtevārī naqsh mī-bandad va be chandīn laghzesh khāme-ye taqdīr khaṭṭ-ī be raqam mī-payvandad.

مقصد تحریر این کلمات توضیح عبارات صفحه اتفاق است و مدعای ترتیب این سطور تصریح تعمیمات حقیقت وفاق که به هزار دور پرگار فلکی نقطه‌واری نقش می‌بندد و به چندین لغزش خامه تقدیر خطی به رقم می‌پیوندد.

The purpose of writing these words is to clarify the metaphors that have been inscribed upon the page of chance; and the aim of arranging these lines is to solve the riddles buried within the true reality of harmonious coincidence – just as a pair of compasses, by a thousand turns of the horizon, trace and retrace but a single point, and just as the pen of fate, by countless slips and stumbles, forges a linked line of script.

Ārāmīdegī-ye dāne az tark-e taşavvor-e jam ‘īyat rīshe gol mī-konad, bahār-e kayfīyat-e e ‘tebār tamāshā-kardanī ast, va āsūdegī-ye noqte az vedā ‘-e andīshe-ye tamkīn khaṭṭ bar-mī-āyad, noskhe-ye haqāyeyeq-e owhām be moṭāla ‘e āvordanī [ast].

آرامیدگی دانه از ترک تصور جمعیت ریشه گل می‌کند بهار کیفیت اعتبار تماشا کردنی است و آسودگی نقطه از وداع اندیشه تمکین خط بر می‌آید نسخه حقایق او هام به مطالعه آوردنی.

The slumbering seed blooms with sprouting roots when it relinquishes all imagined collectedness; the subsequent springtime of the qualities of rational reflection is worth seeing. The resting dot rises and stretches into a line when it renounces all thought of authoritative stillness and gravity; the resulting manuscript on the truths of illusions is worth studying.

[Paragraph 2/3]

³⁴ Bīdel, *Kolleyāt* IV:9.

Abjad-e dabestān-e 'eshq "qul huwa Allāhu aḥadun" ast, na te 'dād-e bozorgī-hā-ye ab-o-jadd.

ابجد دبستان عشق قل هو الله احد است نه تعداد بزرگی های اب و جد.

In the school of mystical ardor, the alphabet is “*Say, He is God, the One*,”³⁵ not an enumeration of the greatnesses of fathers and forefathers.³⁶

Āyīne-ye asrār-e ḥāl zang-zedā-ye tavahhom-e abad o azal ast, na mo 'rez -e temsāl-hā-ye māzī-o-mostaqbal.

آیینہ اسرار حال زنگزدای توهم ابد و ازل است نه معرض تمثال های ماضی و مستقبل.

The mirror of the mysteries of the ever-present “now” serves to remove the rust of all illusory imaginings of pre-eternity and eternity without end; it concerns itself not with the reflected images of past and future.³⁷

³⁵ Qur'ān 112:1, “The Sincerity” (*Sūrat al-ikhhlās*) the antepenultimate chapter and therefore the third shortest chapter of the Qur'ān, with only four verses:

Qul huwa llāhu aḥadun.

Allāhu ṣ-ṣamadū.

Lam yalidu wa lam yūlad.

Wa lam lakun la-hu kufuwan aḥadun.

Say, “He is God, the One.

God is eternal.

He does not beget and has not been begotten.

And there is not a single equivalent unto Him.”

The Qur'ān. Available online at <https://quran.com/112/1-4> (accessed on 1 August 2019). The third verse, “He does not beget and has not been begotten,” is quoted by Bīdel elsewhere, even in lyric poems (see for ex. Ghazal N^o362, Line 2), where this Qur'ānic phrase is quoted immediately after a question to which it could not possibly offer an orthodox answer: “*Chī-st ādam?*” – “What is a human being?”). Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, I:165-166.

³⁶ The rather heavy pun here relies on a creative reparsing of the word “*abjad*” (“alphabet”, literally the first four letters – *alef, be, jīm, dāl* – strung together) as “*ab o jadd*” (“fathers and grandfathers”). Again, Bīdel is emphasizing the universal at the expense of the particular, and acquaintance with the sequence of the Perso-Arabic lines and letters is championed as infinitely more ennobling than one’s own ancestral lineage.

³⁷ This may be a point of important divergence, perhaps even polemically so, from Avicenna, whose analysis of the nature and scope of prophetic knowledge only went so far as to say that the human intellect, at rare moments of perfect communion with the the supernal world, can catch a prophetic glimpse of the (world-historical) past and the (world-historical) future – i.e., can acquire knowledge of specific events that directly concern the knower. Bīdel here presents higher, cosmological ambitions about the noetic power of human faculties, which can – in extraordinary circumstances – reflect universal as well as particular truths. (Cf. the next poem fragment, line 3: “You are a mirror of your own self: you reveal a world.”) For more on Avicenna’s dealings with the prophetic faculty, and for a strong argument cautioning against any ascription of mystical leanings to Avicenna, see Dimitri Gutas, “Intellect Without Limits: The Absence of Mysticism in Avicenna” *The Absence of Mysticism in Avicenna.* In *Intellect et imagination dans la Philosophie Médiévale (Actes du XI^e Congrès International de Philosophie Médiévale de la*

*Be-sahl-tarīn e 'tebār-ī az marāteb-e 'ālam-e zohūr cheshm-e hemmat nabāyad dūkhtan
va be afsorde-tarīn sharār-ī az kānūn-e mahfel-e sho 'ūr cherāgh-e feṭrat nashāyad
afrukhtan.*

به سهل‌ترین اعتباری از مراتب عالم ظهور چشم همت نباید دوختن و به افسرده‌ترین شراری از کانون محفل شعور
چراغ فطرت نشاید افروختن.

One must not hold up the simplest possible rational reflection to shield the eyes of
the mind from all the many gradations that inhere in this world of appearances.
One should not light the lamp of primordial nature with the coldest coal-piece in
the brazier of gathered consciousness.

[Paragraph 3/3]

*Be ḥokm-e taghayyor-e aḥvāl, tā shākh-o-barg be 'arż āyad, mowsem-e gol rang-e nāz
bar-mī-gardānad va be ta 'sīr-e tabaddol-e owzā', tā sharār-o-dūd be shomār rasad,
forṣat-e sho 'le dāman-e garmī mī-afshānad.*

به حکم تغییر احوال تا شاخ و برگ به عرض آید موسم گل رنگ ناز بر می‌گرداند و به تأثیر تبدیل اوضاع تا شرار
و دود به شمار رسد فرصت شعله دامن گرمی می‌افشاند.

Following the law of the inherent variability of momentary states, the season of
flowers continually refines and adjusts the colors of delight – until branches and
leaves come forth. Regulated by the rule of constant change intrinsic to physical
orientation, the flame's opportune moment keeps casting wide its hem of warmth,
so that sparks and smoke are brought forward into the account.³⁸

[Poem fragment, 5 lines]

Meter: -- ~ | - ~ - ~ | ~ - - ~ | - ~ -

(→)

Możāre'-e moṣamman-e akhrab al-ṣadr va **makfūf** al-ḥashvayn va **maḥzūf** al- ṣarb
(E.S. #4.7.14)

maf'ūlo fā 'elāto mafā 'īlo fā 'elon

możāre' = *mafā 'īlon fā 'elāton mafā 'īlon fā 'elāton*

First foot (ṣadr): *mafā 'īlon* + *kharb* → *maf'ūlo*

Second foot (ḥashv): *fā 'elāton* + *kaff* → *fā 'elāto*

Third foot (ḥashv): *mafā 'īlon* + *kaff* → *mafā 'īlo*

Fourth foot (ṣarb): *fā 'elāton* + *ḥazf* → *fā 'elon*

Qāfeye: -ūde-ī

Radīf: ~

S.I.E.P.M., Porto, du 26 au 31 août 2002), eds. M.C. Pacheco and J.F. Meirinhos (Turnhout:
Brepols, 2002), especially 360-363.

³⁸ Displaced grammatical agency is rarely arbitrary in Bīdel's prose. Here, for instance, it seems
significant that the "agents" of both sentence-halves of this thought are limited timespans (a
season, an opportune moment).

- 1 *aḥvāl-e dīgarān ze che bar khod fozūde-ī*
Bīdel ze khod begū ke to ham kam nabūde-ī

احوال دیگران ز چه بر خود فزوده‌ای
بیدل ز خود بگو که تو هم کم نبوده‌ای

Why do you expand
upon the momentary states of others?
You are not less than they, Bīdel:
and so, speak of yourself.

- 2 *gar rīshe-ī ze tokhm-e to āyad be rū-ye kār [rūy-kār]*
band-e neqāb-e kherman-e emkān goshūde-ī

گر ریشه‌ای ز تخم تو آید به روی کار
بند نقاب خرمن امکان گشوده‌ای

Were a root to sprout and grow
from your seed,
You have already unfastened
the dry kindling of possibility.

- 3 *barg-e gol-at hazār chaman ‘arż-e rang-o-bū-st*
āyīne-ye khod-ī o jahān-ī nemūde-ī

برگ گلت هزار چمن عرض رنگ و بوست
آئینه خودی و جهانی نموده‌ای

Your every roseleaf
presents a thousand gardens
of color and fragrance.
You are a mirror
of your own self:
you reveal a world.

- 4 *mozhgān-e to-st bast-o-goshād-e ṭelesm-e dahr*
ay cheshm-e āgahī ze che ghaflat ghonūde-ī

مژگان توست بست و گشاد طلسم دهر
ای چشم آگهی ز چه غفلت غنوده‌ای

Your eyelashes close and open,
loosing and binding
the enchanted world of aeviternity.³⁹

³⁹ “*Dahr*” is one of many terms that has both common-use meanings (“time”; “age” in a general way, sometimes “eternity” in a general way) as well as highly specific definitions in various

Enlightened eyes!
Through what negligent unconsciousness
have you been thus asleep?⁴⁰

5 *'ālam tamām(-e) 'arż(-e) payām-e khod ast o bas
ay showq(-e) nāle-ī ke che az khod shonūde-ī*

عالم تمام عرض پیام خود است و بس
ای شوق ناله‌ای که چه از خود شنوده‌ای

A complete world
is a mere presentation
of its report of self.
O passion! You are a cry of lament.
What have you heard
from yourself?

T1.E1.2 The Birth of Bīdel Velādat-e Bīdel⁴¹

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

*Pūshīde mabād ke chūn paykar-e bī-neshān-e qāderīyat, kesvat-e āb-rang-e 'obūdīyat be
khod pūshīd, va šafā-ye āyīne-ye haqīqat bā rang-e kodūrat-e majāz jūshīd, 'anqā-ye
āsheyān-e eṭlāq dar qafas-e andīshe-ye taqyīd oftād va āhang-e parde-e 'aynīyat neqāb-e
qānūn-e ghayrīyat goshād.*

پیشیده مباد که چون پیکر بی‌نشان قادریت کسوت آب رنگ عبودیت به خود پیشید و صفای آئینه حقیقت با رنگ
کدورت مجاز جوشید عنقای آشیان اطلاق در قفس اندیشه تقیید افتاد و آهنگ پرده عینیت نقاب قانون غیریت گشاد.

May it not be concealed that, when the traceless form of Divine Powerfulness⁴²
clothed itself in the brilliant white-and-red garments of Servitude, and when the

philosophical systems. It has been translated here as “aeviternity,” following S.H. Nasr’s translation of the term as it relates to the philosophy of Mīr Dāmād (d.1632), for whom this stratum of “metatime,” or atemporal pre-eternity, mediated between eternity (*sarmad*) and the time in this world (*zamān*), thus allowing God to have created the temporal world without, as it were, getting his hands dirty. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, “Mīr Dāmād,” in Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Mehdi Aminrazavi, *An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia: Volume V, From the School of Shiraz to the Twentieth Century* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 128.

⁴⁰ Refrain: *-ūde-ī*, second-person present perfect verb ending, “you have [done X]”.

⁴¹ Bīdel, *Kolleyāt*, IV:9-11.

⁴² “Divine Powerfulness” translates the word “qāderīyat”, a noun formed from the agentive adjective “qāder”, “he who is powerful” – one of the names of God. Although in this sentence the

pure, clear-polished mirror of true reality boiled and seethed with the colors of metaphor's impure opacity, the phoenix left its nest of freedom and fell into the cage of thought's imprisonment, and the melody of the preparatory tuning for the musical mode of Sameness unveiled the harp of Otherness.

Javāher-e 'oqūl-o-nofūs be kaṣāfat-angīzī-ye a 'rāz-e emkānī pardākht va kayfīyat-e ajrām-o- 'anāsher tarḥ-e ejtemā '-e kolfat-e jesmānī andākht: khāk az martabe-ye jam 'īyat-e zātī be parīshānī-ye asbāb geravīd, va ātash az ehtezāz-e ṭabī 'ī be dāgh-e 'āreżī mobtalā ' gardīd; āb tā ṭarāvāt-ī be taṣavvor āvarad, tūfān-e gerye angīkhte būd va bād tā nafas-ī rāst nemāyad, be selsele-ye āh āvīkhte.

جواهر عقول و نفوس به کثافت‌انگیزی اعراض امکانی پرداخت و کیفیت اجرام و عناصر طرح اجتماع کلفت جسمانی انداخت خاک از مرتبه جمعیت ذاتی به پریشانی اسباب گروید و آتش از اهتزاز طبیعی به داغ عارضی مبتلا گردید. آب تا طراوتی به تصور آورد توفان گریه انگیزنده بود و باد تا نفسی راست نماید به سلسله آه آویخته.

The essences of intellects and souls began to stir up the impurity of possible accidents, and the quality of bodies and elements laid the foundation for the adjunction⁴³ of black-and-red⁴⁴ corporeal encumbrance: earth, abandoning its state of essential collectedness, submitted to distraught scattering by causes; fire, impelled by inherent shimmering agitation, was calamitously branded by the burn-scar of attributes; water, wishing to draw some moisture of fresh thought into its imagination, precipitated a tropical storm of weeping; and air, attempting to steady its breath, clove to a sequence of sorrowful sighs.

[Poem fragment, 5 lines]

Meter: - - - | - - - | - - - | - - -

(→)

Ramal-e moṣamman-e sālem al-ṣadr va l-ḥashv va **maḥzūf** al-ṣarb (E.S. #2.4.15)

Fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elon

Ramal = *fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton*

First foot (ṣadr): *fā 'elāton* (sālem)

word has a generalized metaphysical meaning, this must be a reference also to the Qādiriyya, the name of the Sufi order to which Bīdel's family belonged an after whom "Abd al-Qāder" Bīdel was named. This conjecture is further supported by the pairing of "Divine Powerfulness" in this passage with "Servitude" ("obūdīyat"), which is etymologically related via a shared Arabic root with "abd", "slave."

⁴³ "Adjunction" in the philosophically specific sense of "predication of something with the accident of 'body'". "Essences" earlier in this sentence ("javāher", sing. "jowhar" or jawhar in Arabic) could also be translated as "atoms" (jawhar meaning precisely that in, for example, the classical Ash'arite doctrine of atomism, which holds that atoms are indivisible, and bodies are composite, formed by the adjunction of atoms).

⁴⁴ Aside from explicit references to "plainness" of color, references in these paragraphs to whiteness, redness, and blackness are my additions, making explicit what is implied in the words "shafaq" (daybreak, always red), "ṣobḥ" (dawn, always white), "kolfat" ("encumbrance", also a dark hue, between red and black. Kh. K. Baranov, *Arabsko-russkiĭ slovar' (Arabic-Russian Dictionary)* (Moscow: Izdatel' Valerii Kostin, 2005), II:697.

Second foot (ḥashv): *fā'elāton* (sālem)
Third foot (ḥashv): *fā'elāton* (sālem)
Fourth foot (zarb): *fā'elāton* + ḥazf → *fā'elon*

Qāfeye: -ād-e
Radīf: man (I)

- 1 *dāgh-e nayrang-am mapors az šūrat-e bonyād-e man
āsemān-hā bā zamīn-ī sākht az tījād-e man*

داغ نیرنگم مپرس از صورت بنیاد من
آسمانها با زمینی ساخت از ایجاد من

Do not inquire about the burn-scar
of the deceptive preliminary sketch of **myself**
from the form of my foundation;
Many skies colluded with the earth
upon **my** coming into being.

- 2 *sho 'le-ye ya 's-e sepand-am beh ke dar del khūn shavad
mī-keshad dūd az demāgh-e 'ālam(-)ī faryād-e man*

شعله یأس سپندم به که در دل خون شود
می‌کشد دود از دماغ عالمی فریاد من

It is better that a flame should burn
my grief's wild rue
than have it die within my heart;
My cry draws out the black smoke of melancholy
from the world's mind.

- 3 *ghayr mowhūm ast az ramz-e nafas ghāfel mabāsh
īn-qadar-hā jān(-e) Shīrīn mī-konad Farhād-e man*

غیر موهوم است از رمز نفس غافل مباحش
اینقدرها جان شیرین می‌کند فرهاد من

All that is Other is illusion; neglect not
the enigma of breath.
In how many ways does **my** Farhād
make Shīrīn his own sweet soul?⁴⁵

⁴⁵ The tale of Shīrīn and Farhād's tragic love is one of the most popular narratives in the Persian canon. Theirs is an impossible love triangle, Shīrīn being married to a king, Khosrow, and Farhād being a low-born sculptor whom Khosrow, in a fit of jealousy, sends away to complete impossible Herculean feats as punishment. He is, for instance example, commanded to hew an entire mountain; and so the image of Farhād the sculptor chipping away at an impossibly large rock face with doomed persistence in the name of love was, by Bīdel's time, iconic and universally known. (See for example the famous version of this story as told by Neẓamī Ganjavī

- 4 *bas ke āshūb-e ghobār-e ḥayrat-am pūshīd cheshm
ṣūrat-e āyīne-ye man nīz raft az yād-e man*

بس که آشوب غبار حیرتم پوشید چشم
صورت آینه من نیز رفت از یاد من

So cloaked were my eyes
by the chaos of my wonder's dust
That **I** forgot even the form
of the mirror of my self.

- 5 *z-īn setam-hā-ī ke az dast-e khod-am bāyad keshīd
ghayr-e khejlat kī-st tā az man setānad dād-e man*

زین ستم‌هایی که از دست خودم باید کشید
غیر خجلت کیست تا از من ستاند داد من

What else but Shame
can revenge me upon myself
For the oppression that I must suffer
at **my** own hands?

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

*Har qadr selsele-ye nafas tapesh-farsā-ye pīch-o-tāb mī-gasht, ghobār-angīzī-ye shūr-e
ṭalab-hā az aflāk dar mī-gozašt, va chandān-ī ke ḥarakat-e a 'zā' 'alam-e bālīdan mī-
afṛākht, 'enān-e kh'āhesh-hā do-aspe mī-tākht.*

هر قدر سلسله نفس تپش فرسای پیچ و تاب می‌گشت غبار انگیزی شور طلب‌ها از افلاک در می‌گذشت و چندان‌ی که حرکت اعضا علم بالیدن می‌افراخت عنان خواهش‌ها دو اسپه می‌تاخت.

However much the concatenation of [my] breaths would wear out their pulsing agitation with twisting and turning, the dust stirred up by the commotion of [my] inquiring demands kept rising, passing beyond the heavens. And however much the movement of [my] limbs would raise the banner of growth and development, the reins of [my] desires kept urging a gallop of redoubled haste.

*Talāṭom-e mohīṭ-e kebreyāyī shekast-e mouj pīsh mī-bord, va lame 'āt-e āftāb-e jalāl
marāteb-e neyāz-e zarre mī-shomord.*

تلاطم محیط کبریایی شکست موج پیش می‌برد و لمعات آفتاب جلال مراتب نیاز ذره می‌شمرد.

(d.1209), *Khosrow o Shīrīn*.) “Shīrīn” literally means “sweet”. See Neẓāmī Ganjavī, *Khosrow va Shīrīn* (Tehran: Enteshārāt-e Tūs, 1366SH [1987/1988CE]).

The ocean of Divine Greatness churned and clashed against itself, bringing forth breaking waves; the brilliant glare of the sun of Divine Glory tallied the gradations binding atoms of dust to it in complete dependence.⁴⁶

Kojā hūsh-ī ke az lafz-e eḥteyāj ma 'nī-ye ghenā estenbāṭ nemāyad va kū gūsh-ī tā az sāz-e 'ajz bar zamzame-ye qodrat āghūsh goshāyad?

کجا هوشی که از لفظ احتیاج معنی غنا استنباط نماید و کو گوشى تا از ساز عجز بر زمزمه قدرت آغوش گشاید.

Where is the conscious mind, capable of extracting the meaning of sufficiency from the letter of need? And where is such an ear to be found, which could embrace the murmuring music of power produced by an instrument of powerlessness?

[Poem fragment, 2 lines]

Meter: - - - | - - - | - - - | - - -

(→)

Ramal-e moṣamman-e sālem al-ṣadr va l-ḥashv va **maḥzūf** al-ḥarb (E.S. #2.4.15)

Fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elon

Ramal = *fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton*

First foot (ṣadr): *fā 'elāton* (sālem)

Second foot (ḥashv): *fā 'elāton* (sālem)

Third foot (ḥashv): *fā 'elāton* (sālem)

Fourth foot (ḥarb): *fā 'elāton + ḥazf → fā 'elon*

Qāfeye: -āz

Radīf: būd (it/she/he was)

1 *ān-che dar ṣaḥrā-ye emkān ṣūrat-e vā-māndegī-st
dar tamāshā-gāh-e vaḥdat shūkhī-ye andāz būd*

آنچه در صحرای امکان صورت و اماندگی است
در تماشاگاه وحدت شوخی انداز بود

Everything taking the shape of despondency
in the desert of contingent possibility
Had once been full of mirth and fine style
in the theater of fixed unity.

2 *dūrī-ye vaṣl-ash ṭelesm-e e 'tebār-e mā shekast
v-ar-na īn 'ajz-ī ke mī-bīnī ghorūr-e nāz būd*

دوری وصلش طلسم اعتبار ما شکست
ورنه این عجزی که می بینی غرور ناز بود

⁴⁶ The sun (God) is the animating force bringing human souls (atoms, motes of dust) into motion; in stock Sufi imagery, these atomic motes dance with ecstasy when thus illuminated. Even the smallest movement of the human mind, therefore, is completely dependent upon its reception of this quickening force from God.

Our distant remove from union with Him
shattered the spell of our credible reflections;
The lowly abjectness you see
had once been the pride of elegance.

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

Maṣlahat-hā dar īn ṣūrat jelve-ṭarāz ast va ḥekmat-hā dar īn āyīne temṣāl-pardāz.

مصلحت‌ها در این صورت جلوه طراز است و حکمت‌ها در این آئینه تمثال پرداز.

Prudent measures adorn brilliant manifestations: in this mirror, wisdom adorns reflection.

T1.E1.3 Infancy, Breastfeeding, and Early Childhood Dowre-ye rezā 'at⁴⁷

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

Doure-ye razā 'at: Nokhostīn ārzū-ī ke az neqāb-e bī-kh'āheshī sar keshīd va avvalīn jostojū-ī ke az khalvat-e bī-neyāzī bīrūn kharāmīd, ḥasrat-e ghazā-ye raqīq-ī, ke ābyārī-ye nashv-o-nemā-ye rīshe-ye ḥayvānī tavānad būd, va tā bālīdan-e nehāl-e zendegī man 'e pezhmordegī-hā-e mazra 'e jesmānī tavānad nemūd; va ān mosht-e khūn-ī būd dar kesvat-e shīr nemūdār va shafaq-ī dāsht āyīne-ye ṣobḥ dar kenār.

دوره رضاعت: نخستین آرزویی که از نقاب بی‌خواهشی سر کشید و اولین جستجویی که از خلوت بی‌نیازی بیرون خرامید حسرت غذای رقیقی که آبیاری نشو و نمای ریشه حیوانی تواند بود و تا بالیدن نهال زندگی منع پژمردگی‌های مزرع جسمانی تواند نمود؛ و آن مشت خونی بود در کسوت شیر نمودار و شفقی داشت آئینه صبح در کنار.

The period of nursing: The first desire that raised its head from behind the veil of desirelessness, and the first inquiry that gracefully emerged from the secluded retreat of freedom from need, was an impatient anxiety for delicate nourishment, capable of irrigating the roots of growth and development in all living beings, and which could impede the wilting of the sown field of the body. Such nourishment was found in that handful of blood, just visible within the garb of milk. The mirror of white dawn kept red daybreak hidden at its side.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, IV:10-11.

⁴⁸ According to premodern Islamic medical science, breastmilk and semen were thought to be formed from the blood humor – hence the weighty legal implications of nursing, which post-natally imposes blood-relationships that mark co-nurslings by that “forbidden degree” which prohibits their marrying each other and each other’s close relatives. (See *Encyclopedia of Islam* Second Edition, *Raḍā*’ entry.) Furthermore, Avicenna and other prominent physicians believed that the quality and quantity of breastmilk was dependent beyond its origins upon the blood

Sāde-rangī-ye īn khūn-e shīr-nemā ramz-ī būd fahmīdanī va şafā-jūshī-ye īn shafaq-e sobḥ-tamşāl ma 'nī-ī dāsht shanīdan-ī.

ساده رنگی این خون شیر نما رمزی بود فهمیدنی و صفا جوشی این شفق صبح تمثال معنی ای داشت شنیدنی.

The plain white hue of this milk-revealing blood was a cypher worth understanding; the effervescent purity of this red daybreak like white dawn had a meaning worth hearing.

Ya 'nī, ay tūfān-borde-ye ghobār-e tavahhom, chandān qadam be ba 'd [bo 'd] goshūdī ke tā khod rā be to rasānd, khūn dar paykar-e khūn namānd? Va ay ghārat-zade-ye rang-o-bū-ye takhayyol, ān-qadr az aṣl-e khod dūr oftādī ke tā be sorāgh(-e) gol/gel-at rasad, rang-hā 'enān be shekūfe rasānad?

یعنی ای توفان برده غبار توهم چندان قدم به بعد گشودی که تا خود را به تو رساند خون در پیکر خون نماند و ای غارت زده رنگ و بوی تخیل آنقدر از اصل خود دور افتادی که تا به سراغ گلت رسد رنگها عنان به شکوفه رساند.

That is to say: O you, borne away by a dust-storm of self-illusion! How many steps did you take into the distance, while blood transformed itself [into milk] in order to reach you? O you, plundered by the colors and aromas of self-imagination: how far did you fall from your own roots, while color kept giving rein to blooming until the rose reached you, as a sign?

[Poem fragment, 2 lines]

Meter: -- ~ | - ~ - ~ | ~ - - ~ | - ~ -

(→)

Możāre'-e moşamman-e akhrab al-şadr va **makfūf** al-ḥashvayn va **maḥzūf** al- zarb
(E.S. #4.7.14)

maf'ūlo fā'elāto mafā'ilon fā'elon

możāre' = *mafā'ilon fā'elāton mafā'ilon fā'elāton*

First foot (şadr): *mafā'ilon + kharb* → *maf'ūlo*

Second foot (ḥashv): *fā'elāton + kaff* → *fā'elāto*

Third foot (ḥashv): *mafā'ilon + kaff* → *mafā'ilo*

Fourth foot (zarb): *fā'elāton + ḥazf* → *fā'elon*

Qāfeye: -āz

Radīf: *karde-ī* (you have done [x])

1 *ay sham 'dāgh show ke naẓar bāz karde-ī*
az khod row ay saḥar ke nafas sāz karde-ī

humor: an oversupply of breastmilk was caused by a humoral imbalance in which there was too much of the blood humor, etc. See O. C. Gruner, *A Treatise on the Canon of Medicine, Incorporating a Translation of the First Book*, London, 1930, pp.363-371). Bīdel is, therefore, not talking about literally seeing red blood in white breastmilk (although he helps himself liberally to this suggestive color-imagery), but rather has in mind the invisible, humoral essence of breastmilk, a natural origin that seems to defy logic (how can redness be concealed by whiteness?).

ای شمع داغ شو که نظر باز کرده‌ای
از خود روای سحر که نفس ساز کرده‌ای

Your eyes have opened, Candle:
now become a black burn-scar.
You have tuned the instrument of breath, Dawn;
now leave yourself.

2 *ay sho 'le sar keshīde-ī az sūkhtan manāl*
ākhar negāh kon ke che āghāz karde-ī

ای شعله سر کشیده‌ای از سوختن منال
آخر نگاه کن که چه آغاز کرده‌ای

You have raised your head, Flame;
do not now repent your burning.
In the end, look –
what a beginning **you have made**.⁴⁹

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

Dar īn nash`e ma`nī-ye “Al-kamālu muqaddamatu l-zawāli” dar lafz-e bī-tamyīz-ī
možmar būd va mažmūn-e “wujūdu-ka dhanbun” dar `ebārat-e bī-khabar-ī mostater.

در این نشئه معنی الکمال مقدمه الزوال در لفظ بی‌تمیزی مضمیر بود و مضمون وجودک ذنب در عبارت بی‌خبری مستتر.

In this world, the meaning of “*Perfection is the premise of decline*”⁵⁰ was buried in unrefined words, and the true sense of “*Your existence is a sin*”⁵¹ was concealed within an ignorant idiom.

Moddat-ī savād-e noskhe-ye sho `ūr šūrat-e bayāz-ī dāsht va raqam-e khāme-ye edrāk
hamān daftar-e sādegī mī-negāsht.

مدتی سواد نسخه شعور صورت بیاضی داشت و رقم خامه ادراک همان دفتر سادگی می‌نگاشت.

⁴⁹ Refrain: *-ūde-ī*, second-person present perfect verb ending, “you have [done X].”

⁵⁰ *Al-kamāl muqaddimat al-zawāl*. “Moqaddeme” can mean an introduction or preface to a written work (e.g., Ibn Khaldūn), and also a proposition, the premise of a syllogism. It is that which anticipates, literally “that which goes ahead.” I have not been able to find a source for this Arabic phrase yet, and can only say that it is not Qur’ānic.

⁵¹ *Wujūdu-ka dhanbun*, a saying attributed to the famous early mystic Junayd of Baghdad (d.910), known for his “sober” brand of Sufism.

For a time, the black rough-draft of sense-perception's manuscript had the form of a clean white commonplace-book, and the notations made by the pen of apprehension were inscribed into that very volume of pure blank whiteness.

Negāh-ī būd chūn ḥayrat-e āyīne bī-neyāz az jowhar-shenāsī va hosh-ī [būd] be rang-e maṭla 'e ṣobḥ monazzah az kodūrat-e eqtebāsī.

نگاهی بود چون حیرت آینه بی‌نیاز از جوهرشناسی و هوشی به رنگ مطلع صبح منزله از کدورت اقتباسی.

There was a gaze. It was like the wonder of a mirror that reflects, unencumbered by knowledge of its essential substance. There was a conscious mind. It was the color of the first point rising on dawn's opening line, free of all interpolated impurity.

[p.11]

[Poem fragment, 3 lines]

Meter: - - - | - - - | - - - | - - -

(→)

Ramal-e moṣamman-e sālem al-ṣadr va l-hashv va **maḥzūf** al-zarb (E.S. #2.4.15)

Fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elon

Ramal = *fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton*

First foot (ṣadr): *fā 'elāton* (sālem)

Second foot (hashv): *fā 'elāton* (sālem)

Third foot (hashv): *fā 'elāton* (sālem)

Fourth foot (zarb): *fā 'elāton + ḥazf → fā 'elon*

Qāfeye: -īr

Radīf: būd (it/she/he was)

- 1 *bar zabān dars-e ravānī-hā-ye mowj-e shīr būd*
jombesh-e mozhgān-e bī-nam khāme-ye taḥrīr būd

بر زبان درس روانی‌های موج شیر بود
جنبش مژگان بی‌نام خامه تحریر بود

The tongue repeated the lessons
carried by milk's articulate flow;
The stirrings of dry eyelashes, dampened by no tears,
marked the movement of the writing pen.

- 2 *'arż-e sāmān-e bayān-hā e 'tebār-e āh dāsht*
nā-rasāyī-hā-ye mā-vo-man nafas-taqrīr būd

عرض سامان بیان‌ها اعتبار آه داشت
نارسایی‌های ما و من نفس تقریر بود

An apparatus of explanation emerged,
relying on sorrowful sighs:
The inexperience of we-and-I
wove a discourse of mere breaths.

3 *az ketāb-e bī-neyāzī-hā-ye āyāt-e sho 'ūr*
har che mī-tābīd bar del nāle-ash tafsīr būd

از کتاب بی‌نیازی‌های آیات شعور
هر چه می‌تابید در دل ناله‌اش تفسیر بود

All signs gleaned by self-awareness⁵²
from the book of autarkeia
illuminating the heart
Were interpreted by cries.⁵³

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

Chūn zāyeqe tavajjoh az olfat-e ta 'alloq-e shīr borīd va qovvat-e taṣavvor be kenār-e emteyāz-e vāladayn āramīd, mo 'ammā-ye robūbiyātī be esm-e "omm"-o- "ab" vā-shekāft va loghaz-e ebnīyātī be ghowr-e marāteb-e īn-o-ān dar-yāft.

چون ذایقه توجه از الفت تعلق شیر برید و قوت تصور به کنار امتیاز والدین آرמיד معمای ربوبیتی به اسم ام و اب و اشکافت و لغز ابنیتی به غور مراتب این و ان در یافت.

When sense of taste turned its attention away from intimate attachment to milk, and as the faculty of the imagination rested in the lap of being distinguished from parents, it⁵⁴ solved the riddle of divine lordship with the words “mother” and “father,” and deciphered the conundrum of filial servitude through deep reflection upon the distinction between “this” and “that.”

⁵² Self-awareness, *sho 'ūr*, can have a nonspecialized meaning of “perception” or “sense-perception,” but in philosophy can denote “self-awareness” (see, for example, Avicenna’s *shu 'ūr bi l-dhāt*, which D.L. Black translates as “the soul’s awareness of itself”). See D.L. Black, “Avicenna on Awareness and Knowing that One Knows,” in *The Unity of Science in the Arabic Tradition: Science, Logic, Epistemology and Their Interactions*, ed. Shahid Rahman, Tony Street, and Hassan Tahiri, 63-88 (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008), 63. It is likely that Bīdel here is also adding another paronomastic move to his long game of writing his life in such a way that he himself is the manuscript – a remarkable feat of consciously achieved human inlibration. The paronomasia hinges on this: *shu 'ūr* shares an Arabic root with the word for poetry (*shī'r*; sh-'r); the “signs” gleaned by self-awareness from the book (*ketāb*) of autarkeia in this line are “āyāt,” “signs” but also “verses”, specifically verses of the Qur'ān, which of course require sophisticated interpretation.

⁵³ Refrain: *-īr būd*, “he/she/it was” – rendered into less awkward English with past-tense verbs.

⁵⁴ What “it” is remains grammatically ambiguous, but I have resolved it here as referring back to the faculty of the imagination, i.e., Bīdel’s imagination. It is important to note that there is still no explicit mention of “I” or “Bīdel” anywhere here except in the poetic insertions. In the following passages, when avoidance of personal agency becomes especially difficult to achieve without violence to the English language, I have inserted “my” and “I” and “mine” in square brackets for ease of comprehension; in Persian, however, the prose remains decidedly impersonal.

Sa 'y-e bāšere āghūsh shenāsā-ye ḥosn-o-qobḥ mohayyā kard va jahd-e sāme 'e noskhe-ye edrāk-e setāyesh-o-nafrīn be tartīb āvard, chandān ke nesbat-e kašāfat-hā-ye jesmānī qavī gardīd, kayfīyat-e laṭāfat-e rūḥānī be za 'f anjāmīd.

سعی باصره آغوش شناسای حسن و قبح مهیا کرد و جهد سامعه نسخه ادراک شنایش و نفرین به ترتیب آورد
چهدان که نسبت کثافت‌های جسمانی قوی گردید کیفیت لطایف روحانی به ضعف انجامید.

Vision's effort prepared to embrace beauty and horror, good and evil with discernment, while hearing strove to collate the manuscript of apprehending praise and reproach. In this way, attributes of corporeal impurity grew strong, and the quality of spiritual elegance became weak.

Be-ḥokm-e majbūrī ṭabī 'at bī-ekhteyār har che az zengār-e kodūrat jam ' kard, šāfi-ye āyīne fahmīd va ān-che az asbab-e ghaflat farāham āvard, zakhīre-ye āgāhī andīshīd.

به حکم مجبوری طبیعت بی‌اختیار هر چه از زنگار کدورت جمع کرد صافی آینه فهمید و آنچه از اسباب غفلت فراهم آورد ذخیره آگاهی اندیشید.

Having no choice, nature involuntarily concluded that the rust of opacity it had accumulated was the polished purity of a mirror; and it considered the apparatus of forgetful negligence it had assembled to be a treasury of enlightened awareness.

[Poem, 3 lines]

Meter: - - - - | - - - - | - - - - | - - - -

(→)

Ramal-e mošamman-e sālem al-ṣadr va l-ḥashv va **maḥzūf** al-ḡarb (E.S. #2.4.15)

Fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elon

Ramal = *fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton*

First foot (ṣadr): *fā 'elāton* (sālem)

Second foot (ḥashv): *fā 'elāton* (sālem)

Third foot (ḥashv): *fā 'elāton* (sālem)

Fourth foot (ḡarb): *fā 'elāton* + ḥazf → *fā 'elon*

Qāfeye: -ād

Radīf: kard (it/she/he did)

1 *ghaflat-am ākhar be chandīn āgāhī ershād kard
har neqāb-ī rā ke dīdam jelve-ī ījād kard*

غفلتم آخر ب چندین آگاهی ارشاد کرد
هر نقابی را که دیدم جلوه‌ای ایجاد کرد

Negligence guided me
to boundless enlightenment;
Every veil I saw
unveiled luminous coming-into-being.

2 *dar ḥaqīqat dast-ranj-e kas talaf-sarmāye nīst*

kūshesh-e nādānī-yam dar 'elm-e vahm ostād kard

در حقیقت دسترنج کس تلفسرمایه نیست
کوشش نادانی|م در علم وهم استاد کرد

No one's labour towards attaining true reality
is a waste of capital;
My ignorant striving made me a master
in the science of illusion.

3 *būdam az dard-e vaṭan āvāregī-hā dāgh-e ya's
emteyāz-e īn-o-ān bārī be hīch-am shād kard*

بودم از درد وطن آوارگی‌ها داغ یأس
امتیاز این و آن باری به هیچم شاد کرد

Desperate longing for homeland
branded me with despair:
Separation of "this" from "that"
made me rejoice in "nothing," once.⁵⁵

T1.E1.4 The Death of Mīrzā 'Abd al-Khāleq, Bīdel's Father Vafāt-e Mīrzā 'Abd al-Khāleq (pedar-e Bīdel)⁵⁶

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

*Az ān-jā ke varaq-gardānī-ye noskhe-ye aḥvāl kamīn-andīsh-e ta'ammol nīst, be andak(-)
taḥrīk-ī az nasīm-e forṣat, vāled-e majāzī be sayr-e golshan-e ḥaqīqat shetāft va az
shekast-e khemār-e kasrat ḥozūr-e nash'e-ye vaḥdat dar-yāft.*

از آنجا که ورقگردانی نسخه احوال کمین‌اندیش تأمل نیست به اندک تحریکی از نسیم فرصت و آلد مجازی به سیر
گلشن حقیقت شتافت و از شکست خمار کثرت حضور نشئه وحدت در یافت.

The rapid page-turning of the manuscript of momentary states cannot be captured by attentive slow reflection. Prompted by the slightest movement of the opportune moment's breeze, [my] father in this world of metaphor passed away, beginning his journey through the garden of true reality. He broke through the veils of wine-sick plurality and gained admittance into the presence of unity's pure intoxication.

⁵⁵ Refrain: *-ād kard*, "he/she/it made or did", from "kardan," "to make or do," a common auxiliary verb. On "homeland" and "rejoicing in nothing," cf. T4.N1, first stanza of the *mokhammas*.

⁵⁶ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, IV:11.

Āshūb-e gard-e yatīm-ī jowhar-e āyīne-ye eshtehār gardīd va parīshānī-ye ghoḥār-e bī-kasī bar dāman-e jam īyat-e e ‘tebār pīchīd.

آشوب گرد یتیمی جوهر آینه اشتهار گردید و پریشانی غبار بی‌کسی بر دامن جمعیت اعتبار پیچید.

The confused grime of grief that settled upon the orphan pearl formed the essence of a mirror of renown; the dispersed grief of the dust of helplessness swirled around a collected hem of reflection.

[Poem, 3 lines]

Meter: -- ~ | ~ -- ~ | ~ -- ~ | ~ --

(→)

Hazaj-e moṣamman-e akhrab al-ṣadr va **makfūf** al-ḥashv va **maḥzūf** al-ḏarb
(E.S. #3.3.14)

Maf‘ūlo mafā‘īlo mafā‘īlo fo‘ūlon

Hazaj = *mafā‘īlon mafā‘īlon mafā‘īlon mafā‘īlon*

First foot (ṣadr): = *mafā‘īlon* + *kharb* = *maf‘ūlo*

Second foot (ḥashv): *mafā‘īlon* + *kaff* = *mafā‘īlo*

Third foot (ḥashv): *mafā‘īlon* + *kaff* = *mafā‘īlo*

Fourth foot (ḏarb): *mafā‘īlon* + *ḥazf* = *fo‘ūlon*

Qāfeye: -ar

Radīf: mānd (it/she/he remained)

- 1 *khorshīd kharāmīd o forūgh-ī be naẓar mānd*
daryā be kenār-e degar oftād o gohar mānd

خورشید خرامید و فروغی به نظر ماند
دریا به کنار دگر افتاد و گهر ماند

The sun departed, setting with graceful elegance;
its splendor **remained** in sight.
The ocean broke upon a farther shore;
the pearl **remained**.

- 2 *ātash-kade raft o ze gereh rīkht sharār-ī*
del āb shod o qaṭre-ye khūn-ī ze jegar mānd

آتشکده رفت و ز گره ریخت شراری
دل آب شد و قطره خونی ز جگر ماند

The fire temple disappeared;
sparks poured forth
from the householder's sanctum.
The heart liquified with shame;
a single drop
of liver's blood **remained**.

- 3 *ān sāye gozasht az aṣar-e dast-e navāzesh*
īn naqsh-e qadam dāgh shod o khāk be sar mānd

آن سایه گذشت از اثر دست نوازش
این نقش قدم داغ شد و خاک به سر ماند

That protective shadow passed,
guided by a nurturing hand.
These footprints grew fatigued, scarred;
earth, heaped
upon the head in shame, **remained**.

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

*Zamān-ī chand be važ ‘-e bī-sar-o-pāyī gozasht va moddat-ī be ʔarīq-e bī-parvāyī
monqazī gasht.*

زمانی چند به وضع بی‌سر و پایی گذشت و مدتی به طریق بی‌پروایی منقضی گشت.

Several moments elapsed in a state of flailing helplessness; a stretch of time passed in a style of careless inattention.

T1.E1.5 The Period of Attending Writing School and the Madrasa Academy

*Doure-ye maktab va madrase*⁵⁷

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

*Dar mabādī-ye shahr-e sādese az sāl-e sādes, vālede-ye moshfeqe – ke ʔaḡīqat-e tajallī-
ye dovvom az zāt-e qodseye-ʔefāt-ash mota ‘ayyen būd va asrār-e ta ‘ayyon-e s̄ānī be-
edrāk-e māhīyat-e setūde-āyāt-ash motaḡammen – be estefāde-ye khedmat-e asāteze-ye
sorūsh-e ma ‘navī geravīd va*

[p.12]

*be estefhām-e abjad(-e) tahjī ‘enān-e tavajjoh ma ‘ḡūf gardānīd, ke malfūzāt-e nosakh-e
e ‘tebār dar e ‘dād-e īn ḡorūf dāyer ast va ma ‘lūmāt-e kotob-e emteyāz bar jāde-hā-ye īn
khoḡūḡ sāyer.*

در مبادی شهر سادسه از سال سادس والده مُفقه که حقیقت تجلی دوم از ذات قدسیه صفاتش متعین بود و اسرار
نعون ثانی با درک ماهیت ستوده آیاتش متضمن به استفاده خدمت سروش معنوی گروید و به استفهام ابجد تهجی
عنان توجه معطوف گردانید که ملفوظات نسخ اعتبار در اعداد این حروف دایر است و معلومات کتب امتیاز بر
جاده‌های این خطوط سایر.

⁵⁷ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, IV:11-13.

At the beginning of the sixth month of [my] sixth year, [my] compassionate mother⁵⁸ ([for whom it was true, as for all mothers] that the true reality of the Second Disclosure was individuated in the essence of her holy attributes, and the mysteries of the Second Determination can be discerned in her praiseworthy qualities⁵⁹) resolved upon the advantages of securing the services of masters [for me], who would be Sorūsh-like guides in spiritual matters. She turned [my] attention to the desire to learn the alphabet – for [the numerical values of] the letters of the alphabet are everpresent in the contents of reliable manuscripts, and all the knowledge contained in sophisticated volumes runs through those letters upon the paths formed by their lines.⁶⁰

Ekteśāb-ash āgāhī-ye marāteb-e vahm qeyās ast va eltezām-e ān māne ‘-e bīkārī-hā-ye shoghl-e anfās.

اكتسابش آگاهی مراتب و هم قیاس است و التزام آن مانع بی‌کاری‌های شغل انفس.

Acquiring [literacy] brings enlightened awareness of the gradations and stages of syllogism-like illusion,⁶¹ and prevents one from wasting one’s breath in idle and futile occupations.

⁵⁸ It is a striking trait of impersonally narrated autobiography, I think, that the farther it progresses, the harder it becomes to preserve the pretense of impersonality (in English, at any rate). The momentum of narration cannot but gradually invest its anonymous subject with specific qualities, which, attaining critical mass, forcibly extract – or perhaps create – a first-person persona from behind the curtain.

⁵⁹ “Second determination,” *al-ta‘ayyun al-thānī* in Arabic, is one of the stages of God’s discovery of himself through the gradual creation of the universe. Prior to this creative endeavor, God is pure essence (*dhāt*), “unconditioned reality” that cannot be described. The universe gradually unfolds into existence, meaning, and language – in distinct stages that are termed differently by different philosophers and theologians, but the basic pattern is this: the “first determination” is *al-aḥadiyya*, “oneness” or “unity” – where the names of God exist, but cannot be distinguished. The “second determination” is *al-wāḥidiyya*, “unicity” – where the names of God *can* be distinguished one from the other. For a clear exposition of this complex process (with diagrams!) according to Ibn ‘Arabī (whose model was among the most influential), see William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Doctrine of Rumi* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2005), 33-34. An alternative reading of this difficult line could be “*va ham qeyās ast*”: literacy brings enlightenment, but only by approximation and analogy.

⁶⁰ Cf. the “*dāyer*” and “*sāyer*” pairing in T4.N2 (Bīdel’s subtle point [*nokte*] on the Breath of the Merciful and the true reality of language).

⁶¹ *Qiyās*, “syllogism” in Arabic. In common use, it can mean “analogy, similitude;” in legal parlance, it denotes “analogical reasoning.” Use of the word “*eltezām*” ([logical] necessity) allows for the interpretation of “*qeyās*” in this specifically analytic-philosophical way. That is not to say that Bīdel follows Aristotle and Avicenna in their reverent views of logic, or that, like them, he takes “discovery of the middle term” to be the beautiful and virtuous telos of the human intellect. He is, however, I think appropriating the *shape* of (Avicennan) logic-based philosophy to carve out a middle-ground position between analytic philosophy in a highly restricted sense

Modda 'ā ān-ke ta mozhgān be ham nayāmade ast **tamāshā bāyad dīd** va tā kh'āb az khod naborde ast **afsāne bāyad shenīd**.

مدعا آنکه تا مژگان به هم نیامده است **تماشا باید دید** و تا خواب از خود نبرده است **افسانه باید شنید**.

The claim is this: before eyelashes come together and eyes close, **the spectacle must be seen**; before sleep carries the self away, **the tale must be heard**.

[Poem, 2 lines]

Meter: - ˘ - - | - ˘ - - | - ˘ - - | - ˘ -

(→)

Ramal-e mošamman-e sālem al-šadr va l-ḥashv va **maḥzūf** al-žarb (E.S. #2.4.15)

Fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elon

Ramal = *fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton*

First foot (šadr): *fā 'elāton* (sālem)

Second foot (ḥashv): *fā 'elāton* (sālem)

Third foot (ḥashv): *fā 'elāton* (sālem)

Fourth foot (žarb): *fā 'elāton* + ḥazf → *fā 'elon*

Qāfey: -as

Radif: ~

- 1 *fahm agar nab(o)vad shanīdan ham ghanīmat gīr o bas*
naghme-hā besyār dārad tār-e mowhūm-e nafas

فهم اگر نبود شنیدن هم غنیمت گیر و بس
نغمه‌ها بسیار دارد تار موهوم نفس

If understanding is beyond your reach,
then cling at least to listening:
The illusory strings
of the instrument of breath
have many melodies.

- 2 *dar ṭlesm-e mā vo man bīkār natvān zīstan*
showq moft-e zendegī-hā 'eshq agar nab(o)vad havas

در طلسم ما و من بیکار نتوان زیستن
شوق مفت زندگی‌ها عشق اگر نبود هوس

One cannot live without purpose, idly,
in the enchanted world

and the kind of unmoored mysticism that refuses to be grounded in systematic thought. Bīdel takes seriously the idea that this illusory phenomenal world offers us a mess of data, which, if analyzed in a systematic way, can lead to certain truth. There is a moral edge to this too, as the grammatical compulsion in the next sentence makes clear: this endeavor *must* be done.

of we-and-I:
Passion has no value
in one's lived lives – unless
low desire becomes true spiritual love.⁶²

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

Be emdād-e tarbīyat-ash haft māh taraddod-e anfās to 'am varaq-gardānī būd, va ta 'ammol-e naẓar be qadr-e este 'dād noskhe-ye savād-shenāsī mī-goshūd.

For seven months, with the assistance of her instruction,⁶³ [my] breaths continuously became fused, like Gemini, with the turning of pages, and the attentive slow reflection of [my] gaze began to peruse the vast place [/manuscript] of literacy to the best of its ability.

به امداد تربیتش هفت ماه تردد انفاس توأم ورقگردانی بود و تأمل نظر به قدر استعداد نسخه سوادشناسی می‌گشود.

Dar nehāyat-e howl-e maštūr ma 'īyat-e faẓl-e vāheb al- 'aṭayāt, zabān-e 'ajz-bayān rā be ekhtetām-e Qur 'ān-e majīd fāyez gardānīd va dīde-ye ḥayrat- 'onvān rā be āshnāyī-ye noqūsh-o-khoṭūt sorme-dārī bakhshīd.

در نهایت حول مسطور معیت فضل و اهب العطیات زبان عجز بیان را به اختتام قرآن مجید فایز گردانید و دیده حیرت عنوان را به شنای نقوش و خطوط سرمهداری بخشید.

By the end of the aforementioned year,⁶⁴ [my] communion with the grace⁶⁵ of God, Bestower of Gifts, made my tongue (itself capable of producing only the lowliest expositions) victorious in its completion of reading the glorious Qur'ān, and, through this acquaintance with letters and lines, gave [my] eyes – captioned with wonder – the capacity to hold ink-black collyrium.⁶⁶

⁶² Refrain: -as.

⁶³ It is unclear grammatically if the instruction is being given by [Bīdel's] mother or by the instructors whom [she] has enlisted to teach [Bīdel].

⁶⁴ [Bīdel's] sixth year of age.

⁶⁵ Faẓl (Arabic *faḍl*), a highly important theological term that is difficult to compress into one English word. Etymologically, it connotes *excess*, and indicates in some measure all of the following: divine bounty; God's grace (an unasked-for gift, of fortune, insight, etc.); excellence and virtue, knowledge and wisdom (all attained by humans only *through* grace). For a thorough overview of this term and its valences, see *The Qur'ān: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Oliver Leaman (London: Routledge, 2006), 201-202.

⁶⁶ I.e., “behold, take in (and comprehend) the black ink of the Qur'ān”.

Ba 'd az ān tā sāl-e 'āsher naqd-e tavajjoh mašrūf-e šarf-o-naḥv-e qavā'ed-e 'arabīyat dāšht. Āyīne-ye hūsh be emteyāz-e naẓm-o-naṣr-e marāteb-e fārsī mī-gomāšht.

بعد از آن تا سال عاشر نقد توجه مصروف صرف و نحو قواعد عربیت داشت آینه هوش به امتیاز نظم و نثر مراتب فارسی می‌گماشت.

And from that time until the age of ten, my attention was spent in this communion with divine knowledge, acquiring the rules of grammar and syntax of Arabic, and the mirror of my conscious mind was devoted to the study of verse and prose comprising the diverse, many-storied classical Persian canon.⁶⁷

[Poem, 4 lines]

Meter: - - - | - - - | - - - | - - -

(→)

Ramal-e mošamman-e sālem al-šadr va l-ḥašv va **maḥzūf** al-ẓarb (E.S. #2.4.15)

Fā'elāton fā'elāton fā'elāton fā'elon

Ramal = *fā'elāton fā'elāton fā'elāton fā'elāton*

First foot (šadr): *fā'elāton* (sālem)

Second foot (ḥašv): *fā'elāton* (sālem)

Third foot (ḥašv): *fā'elāton* (sālem)

Fourth foot (ẓarb): *fā'elāton* + ḥaẓf → *fā'elon*

Qāfeye: -ān-e

Radīf: kh'īsh rā ([acc./dat./gen.] [it]self)

- 1 *ay ke az fahm-e ḥaqāyeq dam zanī khāmūsh bāsh*
'omr-hā bāyad ke daryābī zabān-e kh'īsh rā

ای که از فهم حقایق دم زنی خاموش باش
عمرها باید که دریایی زبان خویش را

You, who speak
of understanding true realities:
stay silent!
Many lifetimes are required
to learn the language
of one's own **self**.

- 2 *rūzegār-ī dar qafā-ye vahm bāyad tākhtan*
tā dar ān sahrā be dast ārī 'enān-e kh'īsh rā

روزگاری در قفای وهم باید تاختن
تا در آن صحرا به دست آری عنان خویش

⁶⁷ This division of labour between Arabic and Persian – the former being the bearer of scholastic, rule-structured and hide-bound knowledge of grammar and the Qur'ān and Qur'ānic sciences, the latter comprising the canon of imaginative literature – is an old and established notion by Bīdel's time. Cf. for example Rūmī, whose long narrative poem *The Spiritual Verses* was known in subsequent tradition (and in the text itself) as "the Qur'ān in Persian." See Chapter 6.

It is necessary to spend an age charging
in galloping pursuit
after illusion
Before you can at last
take control
of the reins of your **self**.

- 3 *dar havā-ye bī-neshānī tā nagardī bī-neshān
sakht doshvār ast pay bordan neshān-e kh^vīsh rā*

در هوای بی‌نشانی تا نگردی بی‌نشانی
سخت دشوار است پی بردن نشان خویش را

Until you too have disappeared
without a trace,
Desiring tracelessness,
it is very hard
to track the traces of the **self**.

- 4 *moddat-ī bar-ham-zadan dārad gomāsh-e khūb-o-zesht
tā shenāsī jens-e mowhūm-e dokān-e kh^vīsh rā*

مدتی بر هم زدن دارد قماش خوب و زشت
تا شناسی جنس موهوم دکان خویش را

You should destroy the merchandise
of good and evil,
for a time –
So that you might perceive
the illusory stock
of your own store of **self**.

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

*Chūn asās-e jedd-o-jahd-e khalāyeq bar dūsh-e jam ‘īyat-e asbāb ast va bonyād-e
tavajjoh-e eshteghāl bar sobūt-e tabī‘at-e bī-enqelāb [ast], hanūz be edrāk-e ma ‘nī
bolūgh narasīde, nātavānī-ye bāzū-ye este ‘dād kamān-e kūshesh az zeh andākht va
nārasāyī-ye dastgāh-e qodrat reshte-ye amal-hā maḥkūm-e gereh sākht.*

چون اساس جد و جهد خلایق بر دوش جمعیت اسباب است و بنیاد توجه اشتغال بر ثبوت طبیعت بی‌انقلاب هنوز به
ادراک معنی بلوغ نرسیده ناتوانی بازوی استعداد کمان کوشش از زه انداخت و نارسایی دستگاه قدرت رشته امل‌ها
محکوم گره ساخت.

The effort and striving of created beings sits upon the shoulders of the
collectedness of causes, and the foundation of attentive mental occupation rests
upon the firm proof of unchanging nature. For this reason, [with my] having not
yet reached adolescence in [my] apprehension of notions, the weakness of [my]

capacity's arms threw down the bow of effort, unsuccessful in its attempt to string it: the inexperience of [my] powers had tied the string of hope into knots.

Bī-ekhteyārī nagozāsht tā dīgar kamar-e jahdī tavān bast va bī-dast-o-pāyī ravā nadāsht tā dāman-e taraddodī tavān shekast.

بی‌اختیاری نگذاشت تا دیگر کمر جهدی توان بست و بی‌دست و پایی روا نداشت تا دامن ترددی توان شکست.
The reflexive involuntariness of this defeat did not allow [me] to gird [myself] again with the belt of striving, and helplessness did not authorize [me] to roll up [my] sleeves of exertion once more.

Nāchār be moqtażā-ye Rabbu l-masākīn faḍlu llāh taslīm jozv-e ḥayṣīyat gardīd va dars tatabbo 'e aḥvāl-e mowjūdāt [gardīd] va be enshā-ye Addab-nī rabb-ī, mo 'allem fayz-e ḥaqīqī [gardīd] va sabaq tamāshā-ye badāye 'e kāyenāt [gardīd].

ناچار به مقتضای رب المساکین فضل‌الله تسلیم جزو حیثیت گردید و درس تتبع احوال موجودات و به انشای ادبى ربي معلم فیض حقیقی و سبق تماشای بدایع کاینات.

Instead, obeying perforce the dictum “*The lord of the poor is the bounty of God*,”⁶⁸ reverent prostration before one's teacher became part of [my] very quality. The lesson was how to investigate the states of existent things. In ineluctable accordance with the saying, “*My Lord was my mentor*,”⁶⁹ true divine grace became my teacher. The assignment was to carefully observe the wonders of the universe.

[Poem, 2 lines]

Meter: - - - | - - - | - - - | - - -

(→)

Ramal-e moṣamman-e sālem al-ṣadr va l-ḥashv va **maḥzūf** al-ḥarb (E.S. #2.4.15)

Fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elon

Ramal = *fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton*

First foot (ṣadr): *fā 'elāton* (sālem)

Second foot (ḥashv): *fā 'elāton* (sālem)

Third foot (ḥashv): *fā 'elāton* (sālem)

Fourth foot (ḥarb): *fā 'elāton* + ḥazf → *fā 'elon*

Qāfeye: -ān

Radīf: fāhmīdan nīst (there is no understanding; [x] is not to be understood)

1 *hūsh agar bāshad ketāb o noskhe-ī dar kār nīst
cheshm vā kardan zamīn-e āsemān fāhmīdan ast*

هوش اگر باشد کتاب و نسخه‌ای در کار نیست
چشم و ا کردن زمین آسمان فهمیدن است

⁶⁸ *Rabbu l-masākīn faḍlu l-lāh*. I have not been able to find a source for this phrase.

⁶⁹ The first part of an apparently “weak” (i.e., not fully verified) *ḥadīth*: *Addab-nī rabb-ī fa-ahṣana ta'dīb-ī*, “My Lord educated me and improved my polite conduct and knowledge.”

Wherever there is conscious mind,
there is no need
for books and manuscripts.

To **comprehend**
the grounds of the cosmos –
just open your eyes.

2 *dowr-gardī-hā-ye vahm ān sū-ye kh^višhet mī-barad*
v-ar-na har chīz-ī ke mī-bīnī hamān fahmīdan ast

دور گردی‌های وهم آن سوی خویشت می‌برد
ورنه هر چیزی که می‌بینی همان فهمیدن است

Far-flung illusions carry you away,
to the far side
of yourself.
Everything you see
is that very **comprehension**.

[Prose, 2 paragraphs]
[Paragraph 1/2]

Pas be har majma ‘-ī ke nazar bāz kard dabestān-e takmīl-e khod dīd va bar har ḥarf-ī ke
gūsh andākht hedāyat-e khod fahmīd.

پس به هر مجمعی که نظر باز کرد دبستان تکمیل خود دود و بر هر حرفی که گوش انداخت هدایت خود فهمید.

Thereafter, any assembly of persons [my] gaze chanced to fall upon was taken to be an academy for perfecting the self; every syllable that [my] ears happened to catch was understood to form words of guidance for the self.⁷⁰

Enteqāl-e ṭabī‘at-e khodādād az har noqte asrār-e ketāb-ī dar-yāft va deqqat-e edrāk-e
mowhebī az har noqte romūz-e

[p.13]

daftar-ī vā-shekāft.

انتقال طبیعت خوداداد از هر نکته اسرار کتابی در یافت و دقت ادراک موهبی از هر نقطه رموز دفتری و اشکافت.

⁷⁰ The particularly elliptical grammar here worth noting: it is not Bīdel, or an anonymous agent, or an anonymous mind – but the individual external senses of “seeing” and “hearing” that do the understanding and comprehending.

The operation of [my] God-given nature uncovered a bookful of mysteries in every dot, and the meticulous work of [my] divinely received apprehension solved a volume of riddles contained in every punctuation mark.

[Paragraph 2/2]

Az ān hangām tā ḥāl ke nafas-shomārī-ye 'omr moqāren-e sāl-e chehel o yekom ast hamān naqsh-e taslīm sar-e lowḥe-ye noskhe-ye jabīn ast va hamān naqd-e rezā' sarmāye-ye jīb-o-āstīn.

از آن هنگام تا حال که نفس‌شماری عمر مقارن سال چهل و یکم است همان نقش تسلیم سر لوحه نسخه جبین است و همان نقد رضا سرمای جیب و آستین.

From that time to the present moment – when [my] age has been tallying [my] breaths for forty-one years⁷¹ – [I have borne] that same imprint of reverent prostration upon the blank manuscript of [my] forehead, and [I have carried] that same ready cash of deferential acquiescence in [my] pockets.

[Poem fragment, 2 lines]

Meter: - - - | - - - | - - - | - -

(→)

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Third foot (ḥashv): *fā 'elāton* (sālem)

Fourth foot (ḥarb): *fā 'elāton* + ḥazf → *fā 'elon*

Qāfeye: -ast

Radīf: ~

- 1 *az ketāb-e Bīdelī yek noqṭe gar āyad be dast
noskhe-hā ātash tavān zad takhte-hā bāyad shekast*

از کتاب بیدلی یک نقطه گر آید به دست
نسخه‌ها آتش توان زد تخته‌ها باید شکست

Should even a single mark
from the book of Bīdel
come to hand,
Break all your writing tablets!
Burn all your manuscripts!

- 2 *ṣad chaman bāyad be tūfān-e taghāfol dādan-at
tā be khūn-e del tavānī ān-qadar-hā rang bast*

⁷¹ Bīdel was forty-one years old in 1684/1685. Even here, Bīdel owns his age in a highly abstracted way.

صد چمن باید به توفان تغافل دادنت
تا به خون دل توانی آنقدرها رنگ بست

You must submit
a hundred blooming gardens
to the tempest of negligence:
Only then can you dye
your heart's blood
with infinite color.⁷²

III The Fourth Element: Earth 'Onsor-e chahārom [khāk]⁷³

T1.E4.21 Bīdel's Dream: Preface⁷⁴ Ro'yā-ye Bīdel: Tahmīd

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

Mezāj-e mo 'tadel noskhe-ye faṣl(-)ī ast, ke joz mazāmīn-e ṣalāh-o-sadād az moṭāla 'e-ye roqūm-e ān be hoṣūl namī-payvandad, va savād-e taḥrīr-e ān ghayr az ma 'ānī-ye akhlāq o vaqār qābel-e ezhār namī-pasandad.

مزاج معتدل نسخه فصلی است که جز مضامین صلاح و سداد از مطالعه رقوم آن به حصول نمی‌پیوندد و سواد تحریر آن غیر از معانی اخلاق و وقاف قابل اظهار نمی‌پسندد.

⁷² Refrain: -ast.

⁷³ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, IV:227-305

⁷⁴ Recording one's own dreams has a long and illustrious history in Islamic thought. See, for instance, Ibn 'Arabī's account of his own dreams in his *Risālat al-mubashshirāt*, where, like Bīdel, he also gives an account of the mental and physical preparations required for receiving visionary dreams. In one case, preparation consists of this prayer: "O God, cause us to see things as they really are!" James Morris, "Some Dreams of Ibn 'Arabī," *Newsletter of the Muhyiddīn Ibn 'Arabī Society* (Oxford: ?, 1993), 3. On the pivotal role played by visionary dreams in the construction of Persian Sufī autobiography, see also Carl Ernst, *Rūzbihān Baqlī: Mysticism and the Rhetoric of Sainthood in Persian Sufism* (Surrey: Curzon Press), 1996.

The well-balanced⁷⁵ human temperament is season-partitioned manuscript.⁷⁶ Nothing is gleaned from the study of its characters but themes of virtue and rectitude. The rough-draft of its composition would not be worthy of existence were it not for the meanings [it contains on the subjects of] ethics and dignity.

Ramz-e mo 'ammā-yash az āsār-e gerāmī-owqāt-e anbeyā vā-shekāfte, va vozūh-e asrār-ash az ahvāl-e fayz-eshtemāl-e owleyā dar-yāfte, ke atvār-e zāher-ashān az anvār-e bāṭen ašlan kodūrat-e mobāyanat navarzīde, va noqūsh-e 'ebārāt be āyīne-dārī-ye ma 'nī hargez raqam-e mokhālefāt nagozīde.

رمز معمایش از آثار گرامی اوقات انبیا و شکافته و وضوح اسرارش از احوال فیض اشتمال اولیا در یافته که اطوار ظاهرشان از انوار باطن اصلا کدورت مابینت نورزیده و نقوش عبارات به آینه‌داری معنی هرگز رقم مخالفت نگزیده.

The secret script of its [this manuscript's / this temperament's] riddle has been deciphered by [carefully attending to] precious traces left behind from the lifetimes of prophets. Uncovering its secrets has been attained through [close scrutiny of] the states of grace of saints. Because of their inward illumination, [prophets' and saints'] outward comportment is essentially untainted by stains of distinguishability. Written records of their sayings, which are like mirrors held up to reflect true meaning, are never composed from contradictory signs.

Āhang-ī ke az īn qānūn-e tanazzoh-shogūn gol kard, joz šelā-ye hedāyat-e 'āmm napasandīd, va šefat-ī ke az īn zāvāt-e taqaddos-āyāt be zohūr āmad, ghayr az besāt-e da 'vat-e raḥmat nachīd.

آهنگی که از این قانون تنزه شگون گل کرد جز صلاهی هدایت عام نپسندید و صفتی که از این ذوات تقدس آیات به ظهور آمد غیر از بساط دعوت رحمت نچید.

The melody that arose from these instruments of purity was an invitation, offering guidance to all people. The attribute that emerged from these essences of holiness was a widespread call to partake in [divine] mercy.

⁷⁵ In the Galenic sense of “well-balanced” – where among the four humours, none of them pathologically predominates. Perhaps this is the source of the pun on “faṣl” (“season” or “chapter-partition”), with each humour corresponding to one of the four seasons.

⁷⁶ The idea that a person's *embodied lifetime* (and life's physicality is especially important for Bīdel) is like a manuscript, which needs to be interpreted – is one of the most important master metaphors in Bīdel's autobiography. A body is, literally, symmetrical “balanced.” Its physical and spiritual wellbeing requires that the four humours, and four elements, must co-exist in harmonious balance. It is tempting to impose this idea of a physical body's humoral “balance” upon its figuration as a (prosimum) manuscript in two ways: first, in the evenly metered hemistichs of couplets, and secondly, in the doubled structure of every prose sentence, which conforms to the almost required reduplications of *enshā'* (formal early modern Persian prose), where each long sentence is divided into well-balanced hemstich-like halves. Further cementing the figuration of an embodied life as a manuscript is the double meaning of *noskhe*: “manuscript,” and also “medical prescription.”

Lam 'e-ye āftāb-e hodā dar hamīn maqām āyīne-ye aḥvāl-pardāz dāde va ṭalī' e-ye ṣobḥ-e ṣedq-o-ṣāfā' ham dar īn maḥall chehre-goshā-ye aqvāl-o-af'āl oftāde.

لمعه آفتاب هدی در همین مقام آینه احوال پرداز داده و طلیعه صبح صدق و صفا هم در این محل چهره‌گشای اقوال و افعال افتاده.

In this state, the luminous brilliance of the guiding sun was a mirror reflecting polished spiritual states. And in this place, the radiant vanguard of the dawn of sincerity and purity unveiled [saints' and prophets'] words and deeds.

Be ḥokm-e e 'tedāl-e ṭabī' at kh'āb-e īn ṭāyefe monazzah ast az takallofāt-e ta 'bīr, va bīdārī mobarrā az taṣarrofāt-e shobhe-ye taghyīr.

به حکم اعتدال طبیعت خواب این طایفه منزله است از تکلفات تعبیر و بیداری مبرا از تصرفات شبیه تغییر.

Due to the well-balanced nature of their temperament, dreams experienced by this group of people [saints and prophets] have no need of interpretation. Likewise, [their] waking states are not subject to intricate vacillations of change.⁷⁷

Har gāh cheshm baste-and, 'aynak-e asrār-e bīdārī manzūr-e naẓar ast, va agar mozhegān goshūde-and, ṣayqal-e ershād-e bī-zengārī dalīl-e aṣar.

هر گاه چشم بسته‌اند عینک اسرار بیداری منظور نظر است و اگر مژگان گشوده‌اند صیقل ارشاد بی‌زنگاری دلیل اثر.

Every time they close their eyes, spectacles – through which they behold secrets of awakened knowledge – are ever modulating their gaze. And if they open their eyes, the polished mirror of good instruction – which removes all obscuring rust – is their guide through traces.

Be ta 'yīd-e qodrat-e ettefāq har ke merāt-e vefāq-eshān pardākht, bīdārī-ash nāgozīr sar-reshte-ye hamān owzā' dar dast dāshtan ast; va kh'āb-ash bī-ekhteyār sar az jīb-e hamān ro 'yā bar-afrāshstan.

به تأیید قدرت افتاق هر که مرآت وفاقشان پرداخت بیداری‌اش ناگزیر سر رشته همان اوضاع در دست داشتن است و خوابش بی‌اختیار سر از جیب همان رویا بر افراشتن.

⁷⁷ Just as the human temperament is given the figuration of a manuscript, here too the diction employed to describe temperamental change and vacillation – and obscurity requiring interpretation – are all terms of art in linguistics (*taṣarrof* – morphological and syntactic plasticity; *taghyīr* – lit. “change,” denoting the lexical evolution whereby, through usage, words add or drop letters over time; *ta 'bīr* – interpretation). In remarkably modern-sounding academic parlance, Bīdel is presenting the reader with a spiritual *grammar*.

Whoever polishes the mirror of their harmony is assisted by the power of this agreement.⁷⁸ Awakened enlightenment will, of necessity, give those very behaviours to them – so they can hold it in their own hands [as a model]. For such people, sleep must necessarily raise its head from deep within the shirt-collar of that very dream.

[Verse, 4 lines]

Meter: - ~ - - | - ~ - - | - ~ - - | - ~ -

(→)

Ramal-e moṣamman-e sālem al-ṣadr va l-ḥashv va **maḥzūf** al-ḡarb (E.S. #2.4.15)

Fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elon

Ramal = *fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton*

First foot (ṣadr): *fā 'elāton* (sālem)

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Third foot (ḥashv): *fā 'elāton* (sālem)

Fourth foot (ḡarb): *fā 'elāton* + ḥazf → *fā 'elon*

Qāfeye: -ast

Radif: ~

- 1 *har ke rā nabz-e mezāj-e mo 'tadel āmad be dast
dar benā-ye rang-e taḥqīq-ash namī-bāshad shekast*

هر که را نبض مزاج معتدل آمد به دست
در بنای رنگ تحقیقش نمی‌باشد شکست

If the pulse⁷⁹ of a well-balanced temperament
should come into your hands,
The foundation – cemented with color –
of your research into true reality
shall have no scattered fractures.

- 2 *khāme-ye 'adl az neyestān-e adab-gāh-e ḥayā-st
naqsh-e ān joz bar khaṭ(t)-e meṣṭar namī-dānad neshast*

خامه عدل از نیستان ادب‌گاه حیاست
نقش آن جز بر خط مسطر نمی‌داند نشاست

The reed-pen of justice
comes from the reed-bed

⁷⁸ I.e., people who model their comportment on that of saints and prophets will necessarily also partake of the spiritual enlightenment (in both sleeping and waking states) which has been attained by those saints and prophets. The passage will go on to say even more emphatically that such committed people will become dream-sharers, or co-experiencers of the *same visionary experiences*, with prophets and saints.

⁷⁹ Bīdel's description of a well-balanced temperament is always physically grounded. The extended metaphor of the embodied lifetime as a manuscript never loses this physical pulse.

of shame's civilities:
The marks it makes
know only how to sit
upon a ruled and dotted line.

3 *esteqāmat rabṭ-e ta`dīlī-st dar bonyād-e khalq*
ṭab`har gah monḥaref gardīd laghزش naqsh bast

استقامت ربط تعدیلی است در بنیاد خلو
طبع هر گه منحرف گردید لغزش نقش بست

Rectitude is a connected equilibrium
in creation's bedrock.
Every time one's nature turns
with slightest deviation,⁸⁰
it trips – recording its own blunder.⁸¹

4 *mowj-e īn daryā nadārad chāre az past-o-boland*
layk chūn gowhar be`arż āmad tafāvot gasht past

موج این دریا ندارد چاره از پست و بلند
لیک چون گوهر به عرض آمد تفاوت گشت پست

Waves in this ocean
cannot escape
from highs and lows.
But when a pearl⁸²
presents itself
difference is brought low.

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

⁸⁰ *Monḥaref*: one who turns away, an apostate, one who deviates from the proper path; Bīdel likely had the common phrase “*munḥarif al-mizāj*” in mind, lit. “deviating from [good] temperament], denoting someone who is “indisposed” because they have deviated away from humoral balance. The root of this word is *ḥ-r-f*, and *ḥarf* is “letter.”

⁸¹ In what is an important (Avicennan?) statement on the way in which human consciousness operates (on which, see the Prefaces to *The Four Elements*), one is simultaneously a recorder *and* an interpreter of the manuscript of one's self.

⁸² This poem explores the idea of “foundations,” both physical and philosophical; in this sense, it continues the exploration of philosophical essences (*aḏvāt* in the previous paragraph), ending in this last line with a pun on *gowhar* (“pearl,” and also “essence” – the Persian synonym of the Arabic *jawhar*, material essence): something at once philosophically abstract and physically embodied.

Ṭīnat-ī rā ke be īn jowhar-ash nesbat-e takhmīr dorost nīst, az aḥvāl-o-af‘āl-e anbeyā’ bahre-ye tatabbo’ ḥāṣel nemūdan, khelāf-e qā‘ede-ye taḥqīq ast, va bar ṭarīq-e a‘māl-o-aqvāl-e owleyā’ qadam-e eqtedār sepordan dūr az jāde-ye towfīq.

طینتی را که به این جوهرش نسبت تخمیر درست نیست از احوال و افعال انبیا بهره نتبّع حاصل نمودن خلاف قاعده تحقیق است و بر طریق اعمال و اقوال اولیا قدم اقتدار سپردن دور از جاده توفیق.

If a person has a certain disposition⁸³ which does not possess the sound attribute of a good mixture, then for them, any display of the good fortune of imitating the states and deeds of prophets goes against the rules of research into true reality [Sufism]. Were [such an underqualified person] to set out with assurance along the path forged by the works and words of saints, they would find themselves sadly far from prosperity’s highway.

Ḥarakāt-e mast o bangī ke moṭābeq-e sonan-e khavāṣṣ namī-oftad, be ‘ellat-e ān ast ke e‘tedāl az īn amjeze ramīde ast, va ghoḥbār-e bī-tamyīzī dar naẓar-e sho‘ūr dīvār keshīde.

حرکات مست و بنگی که مطابق سنن خواص نمی‌افتد به علت آن است که اعتدال از این امجزه رمیده است و غبار بی‌تمیزی در نظر شعور دیوار کشیده.

[An underqualified person] performs drunken and *bang*-intoxicated movements – which do not follow the paths paved by the elect [prophets and saints] for this reason: their temperament has no equilibrium, and dust arising from their want of discrimination forms itself into a wall that cuts off perception’s gaze.

Sa‘y-e raftār-hā az kamīn-e laghzhesh bar-āmadan nadārad, va āhang-e goftār-hā bīrūn-e parde-ye hazāyān qadam namī-afshārad.

سعی رفتارها از کمین لغزش برآمدن ندارد و آهنگ گفتارها بیرون پرده هذیان قدم نمی‌افشارد.

[This underqualified person’s] attempts to walk cannot recover from sudden attacks of falling into error; the tenor of [their] talk does not deviate by a single note from the mode of raving nonsense.

Kh‘āb-hā-yashān hamvāre bā ṣovar-e mūḥesh dochār, va bīdārī-hā payvaste āyīne-ye fasād dar kenār.

خواب‌هایشان همواره با صور موحش دچار و بیداری‌ها پیوسته آینه فساد در کنار.

Dreaming, they constantly encounter terrifying forms; in their waking states, they continually embrace a broken mirror.

⁸³ The first word of the previous paragraph was *mezāj* (temperament), and here the first word is *ṭīnat*, “clay-like given disposition.” The theme of “material essence” (*jowhar/gowhar*) is taken up from the previous poem and given an elaborate prose treatment here.

to hold the mirror:
On its own,
it's **always** bent on nothing
but kohl-blackness.

T1.E4.22 The Dream⁸⁵ Ro'yā⁸⁶

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

Ro'yat-e 'orafā' har chand be kh'āb moyassar shavad, be hoşul-e 'alāmāt-e sa'adat bālīdan dārad va be eqbāl-e dowlāt-e bīdār nāzīdan, zīrā ke dar ān hangām-e fayż-eltezām, 'adl-e ma'navī bar mezāj-e īn kas partov-e shamūl andākhte ast, va nash'e-ye taḥqīq dar demāgh-e este'dād-ayāgh besāt-e hożūr pardākhte.

رؤیت عرفا هر چند به خواب میسر شود به حصول علامات سعادت بالیدن دارد و به اقبال دولت بیدار نازیدن زیرا که در آن هنگام فیض التزام عدل معنوی بر مزاج این کس پرتو شمول انداخته است و نشئه تحقیق در دماغ استعداد ایغ بساط حضور پرداخته.

Although Sufis have visionary experiences in dreaming sleep, these must be lauded through the acquisition of auspicious [outward] signs and praised by good fortune's wakeful alertness – because during that time [of a Sufi's visionary experience], which requires divine grace, spiritual equilibrium has cast a ray of repose upon that person's temperament, and intoxication (arising from their investigation into true reality) has spread out the carpet of divine presence within their capable mind.

Agar e 'tedāl bā mezāj dast be ham namī-dād, bā ḥaqīqat-e fażl-o-ādāb moqābel namī-ofīād.

اگر اعتدال با مزاج دست به هم نمی‌داد با حقیقت فضل و آداب مقابل نمی‌افتاد.

⁸⁵ I suspect that the extensive discussion of “balance” as a “middle way” (*e 'tedāl*) from which one should not “deviate” (*enḥerāf*), in this section as elsewhere, has been adapted from the vocabulary of classical *akhlāq* (ethical) norms. On the importance of *akhlāq* literature in premodern South Asia, see Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam in India 1200-1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). Bīdel may be adapting *akhlāq* terminology for something like a “defense of the middle” – that is, the “balanced” middle (and mediating) position of the imagination. Straddling the world of dreams and the waking world, Bīdel's vision takes place on this richly ambiguous middle margin. He needs to keep both realms equally in mind in order to experience the visionary affordances of the “middle realm” of the imagination. (On the “imaginal realm,” see Chapter 4). Time and again, throughout his autobiography and in his lyric poetry, Bīdel emphasizes the beautiful, confusing, and profound quality of such “in-between” states: while there can only ever be one beginning and one end, there is an infinity of middles.

⁸⁶ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, IV:297-298.

If a temperament does not firmly clasp hands with good balance, it will never encounter the true reality of learning and of courteous civility.

Voqū‘-e īn kayfīyat bī-kh‘āst māyel-e avbāb-e raḥmat goshūdan ast, vorūd-e īn ettefāq motavajjeh-e zengār-e ṭabī‘at zedūdan.

وقوع این کیفیت بی‌خواست مایل ابواب رحمت گشودن است و رود این اتفاق متوجه زنگار طبیعت زدودن.

When this state occurs, it spontaneously inclines to opening the doors of mercy. The onset of this event begins attentively to scour one’s nature clean from rust.⁸⁷

Pas ekhtelāṭ-e johalā‘ dar hame-ye aḥvāl māye-ye āsār-e ḡalālat ast va ṣoḥbat-e komalā‘ be jamī‘-e owqāt vāseṭe-ye anvār-e hedāyat.

پس اختلاط جهلا در همه احوال مایه آثار ضلالت است و صحبت کملا به جمیع اوقات واسطه انوار هدایت.

Thus, the [dispositional, tempermental] mixture of ignorant people in all states yields only the traces of their deviation from the true path, whereas conversations with perfect ones at all times is a medium through which one may access the lights of illuminating guidance.

Pūshīde mabād ke dīdār-e ṣolahā‘ dar hīch ḥālat-ī monḥaref-e āyīn-e falāḥ moshāhade namī-tavān nemūd, va be vaḡ‘-e fosaqā‘ dar hīch ṣūrat-ī bī-ghobār-e tabāhī cheshm namī-tavān goshūd.

پوشیده مباد که دیدار صلحا در هیچ حالتی منحرف آیین فلاح مشاهده نمی‌توان نمود و به وضع فسقا در هیچ صورتی بی‌غبار تباهی چشم نمی‌توان گشود.

Let this not be concealed: in no state does one’s witnessing of pious people violate the dictates of salvation; and likewise, in no way can sinners be observed without [observers acquiring for themselves] the dust of ruin.

[Verse, 9 lines]

Meter: - ˘ - - | - ˘ - - | - ˘ - - | - ˘ -

(→)

Ramal-e moṣamman-e sālem al-ṣadr va l-ḥashv va **maḥzūf** al-ḡarb (E.S. #2.4.15)

Fā‘elāton fā‘elāton fā‘elāton fā‘elon

Ramal = *fā‘elāton fā‘elāton fā‘elāton fā‘elāton*

First foot (ṣadr): *fā‘elāton* (sālem)

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Fourth foot (ḡarb): *fā‘elāton* + ḥazf → *fā‘elon*

Qāfeye: -ār

⁸⁷ An important feature of Bīdel’s theory of visionary experience is that such experience is both spontaneous – a product of grace, a gift from God – and the result of active cultivation of the self. On a similar balance of individual effort and grace, see David Marno’s study of John Donne, *Death Be Not Proud: The Art of Holy Attention* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), especially 15-20.

Radīf: ~

[p.298]

- 1 *az havā-hā-yī ke dar ṭab ‘-e fożūl āmāde ast
bar khavāş(ş)-e fīnat-e khalq andak-ī dānesh gomār*

از هوایی کد در طبع فضول آماده است
بر خواص طینت خلق اندکی دانش گمار

From among the desires
which dominate an idle nature,
Appoint a bit of knowledge;
reflect on the qualities
of creation's disposition.

- 2 *dar bahār az jūsh-e gol [gel] tang ast jā bar dasht o dar
e ‘tedāl ast ān-ke īn āyīne dārad dar kenār*

در بهار از جوش گل تنگ است جا بر دشت و در
اعتدال است آنکه این آئینه دارد در کنار

In spring, earth roils with flowers:
deserts and plains
are pressed for space.
This is equilibrium: whatever has
this kind of mirror
at its side.

- 3 *dar khazān az bas havā bī-e ‘tedāl oftāde ast
har ṭaraf mozhgān goshāyī gerd o khāshāk ast o khār*

در خزان از بس هوا بی اعتدال افتاده است
هر طرف مژگان گشایی گرد و خاشاک و خار

In autumn, winds of ardor
cast everything
into disequilibrium:
Now everywhere you look –
there's dust,
dried branches,
thorns.

- 4 *māyel-e īn har ke āmad gasht bā kolfat ṭaraf
maḥram-e ān har ke shod gardīd bā ‘eshrat dochār*

مایل این هر که آمد گشت با کلفت طرف

محرم آن هر که شد گردید با عشرت دچار

Whoever is inclined
towards all that comes
is redirected to distress.
Whoever gravitates instead
towards all that goes
meets with delight.⁸⁸

- 5 *īn-qadar āvāre az efrāṭ o tafrīt ast khalq*
āb-e īn sar-cheshme bī-markaz namīgīrad qarār

اینقدر آواره از افراط و تفریط است خلق
آب این سرچشمه بی مرکز نمی گیرد قرار

Creation is infinitely ruined
by excesses,
by losses;
Water won't subside
within this wellspring
with no centre.⁸⁹

- 6 *sang-e 'adl ān-jā ke nap(a)sandad ṭarīq-e enḥerāf*
nīst shāhīn-e tarāzū-ye adab kheffat-shekār

سنگ عدل آنجا که نپسندد طریق انحراف
نیست شاهین ترازوی ادب خفت شکار

There, where the mass-setting stone of justice
heavily represses
all manner of deviation,
The hunting falcon, perched
atop the scales of courteous civility,

⁸⁸ This defense of autumn, and of partisans of autumn, hinges rhetorically on two ideas: (1) that the fleeting fruits of autumn are opposed, or invertedly antithetical, to the guaranteed disappointment awaiting those who long for what they think will be an eternal spring; (2) that autumn's glorious burst of color (and the joy of those who witness this) is rather amplified than dampened by foreknowledge of its disappearance. Partisans of autumn, then, are psychologically *cannier* than devotees of spring.

⁸⁹ This couplet extends the comparative meditation on the constant fluctuations in nature – the excesses of spring, the losses of autumn – which unfold in a cycle with no end. The conjured image is even less stable than Bīdel's other favorite of figuration for change without end – a pair of compasses, eternally turning – for this seasonal cycle has no “still point” at its centre.

cannot not make levity its prey.⁹⁰

- 7 *gar na jā-m-e vahm paymāyad mezāj-e monḥaref*
hīch kas rā nīst bā jahl-e jonūn-paymāne kār

گر نه جام وهم پیماید مزاج منحرف
هیچ کس را نیست با جهل جنون پیمانہ کار

Those whose temperaments
are out of balance
drink deeply from illusion's cup.
No one else
has anything to do
with such ignorant measuring of madness.

- 8 *'aql khūn shod dar 'elāj-e feṭrat-e nā-monfa 'el*
dard-e īn bīmār tūfān rīkht bar bīmār-dār

عدل خون شد در علاج فطرت نامنفع
درد این بیمار توفان ریخت بر بیماردار

Reason bled out, slain
by its attempt to cure
an arrogant given nature.
The pain of this disease
poured storms
upon the patient.

- 9 *mā be jorm-e ṭab 'e nā-sāz az ḥaqīqat ghāfel-īm*
ay khodā bī-e 'tedālī az mezāj-e mā bar-ār

ما به جرم طبع ناساز از حقیقت غافلیم
ای خدا بی اعتدالی از مزاج ما بر آر

The sin of dissonant
imbalanced nature
makes us ignorant of true reality.
O Lord, remove imbalance
from our temperament!

⁹⁰ The ethical “gravity” of having a “well-balanced” temperament not only ensures that one behaves with courteous civility (a Sufi ethical desideratum), but that this person will not fall prey to “light” or discourteous behaviour. The falcon (shāhīn) is a term for the beam of a pair of scales; therefore, if the scales are not balanced, then one side will rise beamward and thus become the falcon’s “prey.”

T1.E4.23 The Place of the Dream Makān-e ro'yā⁹¹

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

Sa 'ādat-ḥoṣūl azmene-ī ke dar balde-ye Akbarābād besāṭ-e forṣat-e tavaqqof mī-gostarānīd, va ferdows-āyīn owqāt-ī ke be sayr-e īn gol-e zamīn separī mī-gardīd.

سعادت‌حصول ازمنه‌ای که در بلده اکبرآباد بساط فرصت توقف می‌گسترانید و فردوس‌آیین اوقاتی که به سیر این گل زمین سپری می‌گردید.

Blessed were those moments which offered [me] an opportune time to halt in the city of Akbarabad [Agra]; like paradise were those hours which brought [my] travels throughout this region [of northern India] to a conclusion.

Ṣobḥ-ī rū namī-nemūd ke jalā-ye kayfeyāt-e af'āl-o-āṣār nūr-e ḥozūrī az merāt-e ḥayrat-e shohūd-am bar-nayangīzād, va shām-ī gīsū namī-goshūd ke ravāyeh-e sonbolestān-e asrār, nash'e-ye ehtezāzī(-ī) bar demāgh-e mastī sorāgh narīzād.

صبحی رو نمی‌نمود که جلای کیفیات افعال و آثار نور حضوری از مرآت حیرت شهودم بر نینگیزد و شامی گیسو نمی‌گشود که روایح سنبلستان اسرار نشئه اهتزازی بر دماغ مستی سراغ نریزد.

Each morning showed its beautiful face, drawing out the unveiled qualities of actions and effects wrought by the light of [divine] presence from the mirror of my wonder at witnessing [this presence]. Each evening let down its long dark hair, every curl containing the pleasant breezes of hyacinth-gardens full of secrets; these breezes stirred up joyously agitated tremors as they dispersed a potent and intoxicating fragrance upon the very mind of drunkenness.⁹²

Bī-ta 'ammolī-hā-ye hojūm-e khavāṭer bīrūn-e besāṭ-e jabr-o-ekhteyār qor'e-ye vorūd-e showq mī-andākht, moṭlaq- 'enānī-hā-ye tag-o-tāz-e anfās bī-parvā-ye tavahhom-e qayd-o-āzādī 'arṣe-ye jowlān-e nāz mī-pardākht.

بی‌تأملی‌های هجوم خواطر بیرون بساط جبر و اختیار قرعه ورود شوق می‌انداخت مطلق عنانی‌ها تگ و تاز انفاس بی‌روای توهم قید و آزادی عرصه جولان ناز می‌پرداخت.

⁹¹ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, IV:298.

⁹² These well-balanced descriptions of morning and evening set the stage for the imminent blending of opposites which Bīdel is about to experience – the remarkable freedom of the in-between, being neither awake nor asleep, during a liminal hour between night and morning. Opposites are presented here with stark clarity, perhaps to emphasize how – very soon – temporal opposites (night and day), theological opposites (predestination and free will), and philosophical opposites (the body and the soul) are about to be plunged into ambiguity.

Sudden onrushes of thought, which did not admit attentive slow reflection, cast the die of passion outside the gameboard of predestination and free will. Galloping frantically searching breaths, which could not be reined in, charged into the open field of amorous expression, boldly disregarding all illusory imaginings of captivity and freedom.

Na kh'āb-am be moqtażā-ye bī-ta 'ayyonī tokhm-e ta 'bīr-ī mī-kāsht tā khūshe-ye aşar tavān dorūd, va na bīdārī be ĥokm-e bī-ta 'alloqī şodā '-e takallof mī-anbākht, tā afsāne-ye 'Amr o Zayd bāyad shenūd.

نه خوابم به مقتضای بی‌تعینی تخم تعبیری می‌کاشت تا خوشه اثر توان درود و نه بیداری به حکم بی‌تعلقی صداع تکلف می‌انباخت تا افسانه عمر و زید باید شنود.

By removing all particularities, my dreaming sleep did not sow the seeds of any dream-interpretation; thus, no harvest of signs had to be reaped. By removing all attachments, [my] waking enlightenment was not filled with vexation's headache at having to hear the tale of this or that person.⁹³

Anjoman-ī dar khayāl mī-ārāstam fāregh az zīr-o-bam-e hangāme-ye mā-vo-man, va majles-ī dar andīshe mī-afrūkhtam bī-eĥteyāj-e sham '-o-lagan.

انجمنی در خیال می‌آراستم فارغ از زیر و بم هنگامه ما و من و مجلسی در اندیشه می‌افروختم بی‌احتیاج شمع و لگن.

I arranged a **gathering in [my] imagination** that was free from the loud modulations of the rowdy assembly of I-and-we, and I illuminated a gathering in [my] thoughts that required no candles or candle-holders.⁹⁴

[Ghazal, 5 lines]

Meter: - ˘ - - | - ˘ - - | - ˘ - - | - ˘ -

(→)

Ramal-e moşamman-e sālem al-şadr va l-ĥashv va **maĥzūf** al-żarb (E.S. #2.4.15)

Fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elon

Ramal = *fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton*

First foot (şadr): *fā 'elāton* (sālem)

Second foot (ĥashv): *fā 'elāton* (sālem)

Third foot (ĥashv): *fā 'elāton* (sālem)

Fourth foot (żarb): *fā 'elāton* + ĥazf → *fā 'elon*

Qāfeye: -ākhtam

Radīf: ~ (but supererogatory repeated refrain of *mī-* as prefix to verbs in the rhyme position)

1 *tarĥ-e taslīm-ī be bazm-e showq mī-andākhtam
nard-e rang-ī dar besāţ-e bī-khodī mī-bākhtam*

⁹³ Throughout this paragraph, negatives and privative prefixes abound. This is perhaps a grammatical mirroring of the state Bīdel describes, a state devoid of attributes.

⁹⁴ For analysis of this passage, see Chapter 6.

طرح تسلیمی به بزم شوق می انداختم
نرد رنگی در بساط بی خودی می باختم

I made a rough sketch outline
of reverent prostration
in the assembly of passion.
I cast the backgammon-die of color
upon the gameboard
of no-self.

- 2 *bar sarāpā-yam taḥayyor sāye-ī afkande būd*
bar dar-e āyīne-ye del shesh jehat mī-tākhtam

بر سر اپایم تحیر سایه ای افکنده بود
بر در آئینه دل شش جهت می تاختم

Wonder cast a shadow
over my whole body,
from head to toe.
I galloped across the vast steppes
of the heart's mirror
in all six directions.

- 3 *'ālam-ī dar ḥayrat-ābād-e jonūn-am jelve dāsht*
man hamān yek khāne-ye āyīne mī-pardākhtam

عالمی در حیرت آباد جنونم جلوه داشت
من همان یک خانه آئینه می پرداختم

A world came into being
within the abode of wonder
of my madness –
And all the while, I polished
that very house of mirrors.

- 4 *dard mī-jūshīd az naqsh-ī ke mī-dādam neshān*
nāle mī-bālīd az qadd-ī ke mī-afrākhtam

درد می جوشید از نقشی که می دادم نشان
ناله می بالید از قدی که می افراختم

Pain rushed forth
from the image
I reflected of my self.
A loud lament arose
from the figure that I cut

of my own form.

- 5 *hīch kas āgāhī az kayfīyat-e ḥāl-am nadāsh*
bā ghobār-e bī-kasī ya 'nī be khod mī-sākhtam

هیچ کس آگاهی از کیفیت حالم نداشت
با غبار بی‌کسی یعنی به خود می‌ساختم

No one knew
the quality
of my ecstatic state.
I encountered⁹⁵
the dust of being-no-one
– that is, my self –
all by myself.

T1.E4.24 The Time of the Dream Zamān-e ro'yā⁹⁶

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

Shab-ī dar sane-ye yek-hazār o hashtād o yek-e hejrī ke āftāb az eqtebās-e rowshanī-hā-ye savād-ash khel'at-e bī-pardegī mī-pūshīd va nūr be eltebās-e kayfeyāt-e zolmat-ash chūn negāh az mardomak mī-jūshīd, ghonūdan-ī bar ṭab'-e majbūr hojūm-e bī-ekhteyārī āvard va sāye-ye mozhegān bar negāh-e za'īf-ī dastgāh-e gerānī kard.

شبی در سنه یک‌هزار و هشتاد و یک هجری که آفتاب از اقتباس روشنی‌های سوادش خلعت بی‌پردگی می‌پوشید و نور به التباس کیفیت ظلمتش چون نگاه از مردمک می‌جوشید غنودنی بر طبع مجبور هجوم بی‌اختیاری آورد و سایه مژگان بر نگاه ضعیفی دستگاه گرانی کرد.

One evening, in the year 1081H [1670CE], when the sun – interpolating borrowed fires from its own black-soil outskirts – was clothing itself in dishonorable robes of honor, and when light poured forth with the obscure ambiguity of its own dark quality, like rays of vision from black pupils – at this time, a sleeping state assaulted [my] nature, which was constrained by the absence of free will, and the shadow of [my own] eyelashes heavily overpowered [my] weak sight.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ “Encountered [x]” is lit. “built with [x]” (*bā X be Y sākhan*, “to keep with/see/do X by Y”) where *sākhtan* is “to build, to make.” Taken with the “abode of wonder” (*ḥayrat-ābād*), the “vast steppes of the heart’s mirror,” and the preliminary architectural sketch (*tarḥ*) of the first line, this *ghazal* cleverly rounds out this section on the *place* of the dream.

⁹⁶ Bīdel, *Kolleyāt*, IV:298-303.

⁹⁷ Here, as earlier in this dream narrative, opposites are arranged in a carefully balanced way, as if preparing for the ambiguous in-between state to come (constraint/free will, power/weakness, darkness/light).

Har chand forṣat-e tamāshā moghtanem-e āgāhī mī-angāsham, be ḥokm-e bī-khodī az bar-chīdan-e dokān-e fożūlī chāre nadāsham.

هر چند فرصت تماشا مغتنم آگاهی می‌انگاشتم به حکم بی‌خودی از بر چیدن دکان فضولی چاره نداشتم.

Although I considered the opportune moment of witnessing [a visionary experience] to be the prized reward of enlightened awareness, I lost myself – and relapsed into making fastidious arrangements within the shop of impertinent meddling.

Pīchīdegī-hā-ye tūmār-e naẓar fatīle-ī būd mosta‘edd-e sham ‘-afrūzī-ye khalvat-e taḥqīq va farāham-āvordan-e āghūsh-e mozhegān jam ‘īyat-ī dāshat mohayyā-ye shīrāze-bandī-ye noskhe-ye towfīq.

پیچیدگی‌های طومار نظر فتیله‌ای بود مستعد شمع‌افروزی خلوت تحقیق و فراهم آوردن آغوش مژگان جمعیتی داشت مهبای شیراز‌بندی نسخه توفیق

The long, twisted scroll of vision was a candlewick, standing in readiness to illuminate my solitary investigations into true reality. The tight embrace of [my] eyelashes was composedly collected, prepared thus by the manuscript-binding action of God’s grace.

Tā bel-qovve-ye ṣovar-e este ‘dād dar īn ṣūrat āyīne-ye temsālī be ṣayqal rasānd va moẓmar-e hayūlā-ye feẓrat be īn rang gol-e eẓhār-ī bīrūn damānd.

تا بالقوه صور استعداد در این صورت آئینه تمثالی به صیقل رساند و مضمهر هیولای فطرت به این رنگ گل
اظهاری بیرون دماند.

In this way, the form-reflecting mirror became polished by the power of forms generated by my own [imaginative] capacity, and all that was concealed within the prime matter of [my] given nature caused the flower of coming-into-being to bloom and breathe with these colors.⁹⁸

[Poem, 10 lines]

Meter: – – – | – – – | – – – | – –

(→)

Ramal-e moṣamman-e sālem al-ṣadr va l-ḥashv va **maḥzūf** al-ẓarb

(E.S. #2.4.15)

⁹⁸ The last causative verb here – *damāndan* – has several valences: it relates to vegetation (“to cause to grow”), and also to breath (*dam* is “breath,” *damīdan* is “to blow, to breathe” – like wind). This in turn affects the reading of the first causative verb – *rasāndan* (“to cause to arrive”), since *ras* can, among other things, signify “ripeness.” Given the reference to colors in this sentence, and the extended conceit of mind-as-manuscript in this entire section, it is tempting to hear the Sanskrit term “*rasa*” here as well – which has vegetal tones (lit. “sap”) and is also characterized by color (each *rasa* is associated with a specific hue).

Fā`elāton fā`elāton fā`elāton fā`elon
 Ramal = *fā`elāton fā`elāton fā`elāton fā`elāton*
 First foot (ṣadr): *fā`elāton* (sālem)
 Second foot (ḥashv): *fā`elāton* (sālem)
 Third foot (ḥashv): *fā`elāton* (sālem)
 Fourth foot (zarb): *fā`elāton* + ḥazf → *fā`elon*

Qāfeyeh: -ār

Radīf: ~

- 1 *moqtaẓīyāt-e vojūd az parde-ye asrār-e ghayb*
mī-konad bī-kh^vāst gol chūn gardesh-e layl-o-nahār

مقتضیات وجود از پرده اسرار غیب
 می‌کند بی‌خواست گل چون گردش لیل و نهار

The events of existence
 come from the veil of mysteries
 in the Hidden Realm.
 They bloom into being, unbidden,
 like the rotation
 of nights and days.⁹⁹

- 2 *bī-neyāzī har kojā bāshad kamand-andāz-e showq*
cheshm-e bar-ham-baste ham dām-ī-st āgāhī-shekār

بی‌نیازی هر کجا باشد کمانداز شوق
 چشم برهم بسته هم دامیست آگاهی‌شکار

Independence hunts down passion
 with a lasso,
 in every place.
 Even a closed eye
 can be a snare,
 hunting awareness.

- 3 *e`tebār-ī nīst dar bast-o-goshād-e cheshm-e khalq*
kh^vāb-o-bīdārī dar īn šūrat nadārad e`tebār

⁹⁹ This poem is full of what appears to be a purposive repetition of words from the preceding prose paragraph. Such repetition is very common throughout the prosimetrum in *The Four Elements*. Thoughts often come in prose-verse pairs: they are first stated in prose, and then elaborated, or explicated, in verse. As noted earlier, the “balanced” sentence-clause pairs of the prose neatly mirror the “balanced” hemstichs of the verse couplets. Just as each prose clause, and each hemistich, must be weighed and interpreted against the other member of its pair, on a macro-level too, each half of every prose-verse pairing must be similarly cross-interpreted. No doubt this vertiginous pairs-within-pairs structure appealed to Bīdel’s predisposition towards all things fractal.

اعتباری نیست در بست و گشاد چشم خلق
خواب و بیداری در این صورت ندارد اعتبار

No credibility is found
in the closing and opening
of creation's eyes.
In this way,
dreaming and waking
have no credibility.¹⁰⁰

- 4 *eqteżā-ye āgahī sayl-ī-st bī-parvā-kharām*
bāz-kon kh^vāhī rah-e kāshāne kh^vāhī dar bar ār

اقتضای آگهی سیلی است بی پروا خرام
باز کن خواهی ره کاشانه خواهی در بر آر

The claims of enlightened awareness
form a boldly moving flood:
If you want to,
cut a homeward path;
or, if you prefer a close embrace,
then draw it in.

- 5 *nūr-e este 'dād bakhshad ān-ke kh^vāhad maḥram-at*
dowlat-e mozhgān goshāyad ān-che mī-gardad dochār

نور استعداد بخشد آنکه خواهد محرمت
دولت مژگان گشاید آنچه می گردد دچار

Whoever seeks admission unto You
is granted light
of inner capability.
Whatever is encountered by the gaze
unlocks the fortune
hidden behind eyelashes.

- 6 *sang agar bāshī ze fayz-e tarbeyat ghāfel mabāsh*
mehr-e tābān la 'l-hā dārad be ṭab 'e kūhsār

¹⁰⁰ A strong example of anadiplosis (*radd al-'ajz 'alā l-ṣadr*): lack of “credibility” (*e'tebār*) is both the first and final word in this couplet, a semantic circularity that echoes the couplet's visual content (cycles of opening-and-closing eyes, waking-and-dreaming minds). In a very *Yogavāsiṣṭa*-like way, our inability to form credible reflections both while awake and during sleep is the only reliable datum to be gleaned from human perception. For non-Islamic narrative examples of ambivalent and complex uses of dreaming in philosophy, see Sonam Kachru, *More and Less Than Human: Life, Mind, and World in Indian Buddhism* (forthcoming), especially Chapters 2-3.

سنگ اگر باشی ز فیض تربیت غافل مباش
مهر تابان لعلها دارد به طبع کوهسار

If you are stone,
do not neglect the grace
of education:
The burning sun
can impart rubies
to rugged mountainsides.

7 *gar nabāshad sadd-e rāh-e hosh tamayyoz-e fożūl
kh^vāb bīdār-at konad bī-vahm-e jabr-o-ekhteyār*

گر نباشد سد راه هش تمیز فضول
خواب بیدارت کند بی‌وهم جبر و اختیار

If impertinent meddling
does not obstruct
the path of consciousness,
Then sleep will wake you
to enlightenment,
with no illusion
of free will or constraint.

8 *gar-che bīdārī cherāgh-e bazm-e āgāhī-st leyk
kh^vāb yek-sar doulat-e bīdār dārad dar kenār*

گرچه بیداری چراغ بزم آگاهیست لیک
خواب یکسر دولت بیدار دارد در کنار

Although wise wakefulness
is a lamp, illuminating
enlightenment's assembly, however –
All at once –
sleep sweeps up wakeful fortune
into its arms.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ The emphasis on “suddenness” is important, and foreshadows (forelights?) the spontaneous moment of visionary enlightenment which will happen to Bīdel in his dream. The term for “suddenly/all at once” here is *yek-sar*, lit. “one-head/one-end;” this is a nod, perhaps, to the imminent dream-event, which will be construed as a kind of collapse of macrocosm and microcosm. It is also worth noting this contrast between the “steady light of enlightened awareness” (achieved through a lifetime of application and hard work) and the sudden flash of insight – as though from elsewhere. These together form two sides of the same apotheosis.

- 9 *parde-ye ghaflat kamīngāh-e zohūr-e raḥmat ast
rīshe-ye kh^vābīde ghāfel nīst az ṭab^ʿ-e bahār*

پرده غفلت کمینگاه ظهور رحمت است
ریشه خوابیده غافل نیست از طبع بهار

Mercy suddenly appears
in a veil of ignorance,
like a surprise attack.
Sleeping roots
are not oblivious
to coming spring.¹⁰²

- 10 *mā hame dar sāye-ye abr-e karam kh^vābīde-īm
tā che vaqt āgah shavad feṭrat ze faẓl-e kerdegār*

ما همه در سایه ابر کرم خوابیده‌ایم
تا چو وقت آگه شود فطرت ز فضل کردگار

We all sleep, and dream
under the shadow
of a generous cloud.
At which moment
will our given nature
become enlightened
by our Lord and Maker's virtue?¹⁰³

[Prose, 3 paragraphs]
[Paragraph 1/3]

*Sā 'at-ī chand ghalabe-ye ḥokm-e jalāl maḥv-e jahān-e aḥadīyat-am dāsht tā ān-ke
nasīm-e golshan-e vefāq ya 'nī taqāzā-ye bī-neqābī-hā-ye jamāl, ḥarakat bar ajzā-ye bī-
ḥess-am gomāsht; va ān dōwrān ettefāq-ī būd az ḥozūr-e nash'e-ye e 'tedāl va zamān[-e]
āgāhī az laṭāyef-e sa 'ādat-e eqbāl.*

¹⁰² Here and elsewhere, Bīdel is careful to distinguish willful and malicious total ignorance from a gentler, milder form of unawareness – one that is still capable of some degree of knowledge, and is receptive to true enlightenment (arriving in the form of spontaneous grace).

¹⁰³ Since this poem makes a point of carefully distinguishing between what we mean by sleep and wakefulness, ignorance and enlightenment, it is significant that it ends with a question about time. At which precise *moment* (*vaqt*) – a single instant of time – will true God-given knowledge arrive? The next prose paragraph, beginning with the word “hours” (*sā 'at-ī chand*), goes on to answer this question, taking literally the subsection heading of “the time of the dream.”

ساعتی چند غلبه حکم جلال محو جهان احدیتم داشت تا آنکه نسیم گلشن وفاق یعنی تقاضای بی‌نقاب‌های جمال حرکت بر اجزای بی‌حسم گماشت و آن دوران اتفاقی بود از حضور نشئه اعتدال و زمان آگاهی از لطایف سعادت اقبال.

For several hours, I was under the sway of God's divine greatness, which kept me obliterated in a world of unity – until a breeze from the garden of harmonious coincidence (in other words, the exigencies attending God's unveiled beauty) brought movement back to my senseless limbs. That period of time was a remarkable chance occurrence, made possible by the intoxicating presence of equilibrium; that moment was a period of awareness, springing from the subtleties of destiny's good fortune.

Nokhostīn qadam-ī ke dar kār-gāh-e ta'ammol goshūdam, gardesh-e rang-e sho'unāt dāshtam tajaddod-negār-e sovar-e haqāyeq-e ashyā', va avvalīn qadam-ī ke dar rayāhīn-kade-ye takhayyol zadam, ḥarakat-e nafas-ī dīdam khorūsh-e āmāde-ye kayfeyāt-e arvāḥ o asmā'.

نخستین قدمی که در کارگاه تأمل گشودم گردش رنگ شئون‌ات داشت‌م تجدد نگار صور حقایق اشیا و اولین قدمی که در ریاحین‌کده تخیل زدم حرکت نفسی دیدم خروش آماده کیفیات ارواح و اسما.

With the first step I took in the workshop of **attentive slow reflection**, I experienced constantly changing colors of particular occasions, which limned the perpetual renewal of the outward forms taken by objects' true realities. And with the first step I took in the fragrant herb-garden of the **imagination**, I saw the movement of breath as a shrill call to make ready the qualities of souls and names.¹⁰⁴

Nāgāh forūgh-e jam īyat-e ḥavāss anjoman-e anvār-e jabarūt pardākht va ḥozūr-e hangāme-ye qovā tarḥ-e majma'-e malakūt andākht.

ناگاه فروغ جمعیت حواس انجمن انوار جبروت پرداخت و حضور هنگامه قوی طرح مجمع ملکوت انداخت.

¹⁰⁴ A highly important sentence. Here we see Bīdel explicitly aligning – through perfectly balanced syntactical parallelism – *ta'ammol* and *takhayyol*, attentive slow reflection and the work of imagination. Moreover, attentive slow reflection is a *workshop* (*kār-gāh*): a place where *craft* takes place, and of course, crafts comprise skills which must be learned through practice. On the significance of *ta'ammol*, especially with reference to the exposition of this practice in the long narrative poems, see Chapter 5. The “workshop of attention and imagination” here is vibrantly synaesthetic: vision (colors, perpetually changing), hearing (the “call to readiness”), smell (the fragrant herb-garden) are all hyper-stimulated and intermixed (one “sees” a sound).

Suddenly, the splendor of the **collectedness** of my senses adorned the gathering of lights from Jabarūt, and a divine presence in the assembly of faculties laid the foundation for **mingling**¹⁰⁵ with [the lights from] Malakūt.¹⁰⁶

[Paragraph 2/3]

Āṣār-e marāteb-e ‘oqūl az pas-e zānū-ye ta‘aqqol moshāhade kardam va asrār-e madārej-e nofūs dar savād-e manẓar-e ṭabī‘at be moṭāla‘e dar-āvordam.

آثار مراتب عقول از پس زانوی تعقل مشاهده کردم و اسرار مدارج نفوس در سواد منظر طبیعت به مطالعه در آوردم.

¹⁰⁵ “Collectedness” or “composure” (*jam‘iyat*) and “mingling” (*majma‘*) share that all-important root: *j-m-*, to bring together. “Mingling” (*majma‘*) could be a tangential reference to Dārā Shikōh’s *Majma‘ al-baḥrayn* (*The Mingling of the Two Oceans*). At any rate, as the dream narrative continues building towards its culmination – the visionary epiphany, and the appearance of Muḥammad – terms sharing this root (*j-m-*) occur with increasing frequency, escalating in morphological complexity towards final “*jām‘iyat*” in the following paragraph (“the state of being perfectly composed; collectorliness; the state of collecting together and comprising all perfect qualities”).

¹⁰⁶Traditionally, there are four distinct realms in Sufi cosmology: the three suprasensory realms of Lāhūt, Jabarūt, and Malakūt (from highest to lowest), followed by a fourth realm, which is (partially) accessible to humans: sometimes called Nāsūt, sometimes *‘alam al-mithāl*, this is the “middle” world of the imagination, and, in some formulations, the realm inhabited by the Perfect Man. For an example of this kind of Sufi cosmology, see Shahzad Bashir’s discussion of these realms in *Messianic Hopes and Mystical Visions: The Nūrbakhshīya bewteen Medieval and Modern Islam* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 113 et passim. If Dārā Shikōh’s *Majma‘ al-baḥrayn* is indeed alluded to in this passage, then it is worth noting that in this work, Dārā aligns the four Islamic realms of Lāhūt, Jabarūt, Malakūt, and Meṣāl with the four “realms” or “meditative levels” in Upanisadic Vedānta. Importantly, these four “levels” are all Sanskrit terms for sleeping, waking, and dreaming: Waking, Sleeping, Deep Sleep, and *Turiya*, or deepest *samādhi* (a state of total meditative consciousness, absorption, attention). The term for attention, *dhyāna*, is aligned by Dārā with the Sufi practice of breath control (*pās-e anfās*). On this, see Chapter 6. It is significant that in this momentous passage of his autobiography, Bidel continues to link imagination, attention, breath control, and composure.

I **witnessed** the traces of intellects' stages¹⁰⁷ from behind intellection's **knees**;¹⁰⁸ I **studied** the mysteries of souls' degrees through the blackened rough draft¹⁰⁹ of nature's pageant.¹¹⁰

Dūd-hā-ye demāgh khīme-ye eqtedār-ī bar-af-rākht, e 'tebār-e pāye-ye 'arsh-e mo 'in dīdam, va gharā 'ef-e masāmmāt sāmān-e cheshmak-ī kard, be rowshanī-ye borūj o savābet vā-rasīdam.

دودهای دماغ خیمه اقتداری برافراخت اعتبار پایه عرش معین دیدم و غرائف مسامات سامان چشمکی کرد به روشنی بروج و ثوابت و ارسیدم.

When ardent meditation pitched its high tents of authority, I saw the credibility of the highest determined station of God's Throne. And when the eye's pupils – like open chambers – were prepared, I arrived at a complete understanding of the splendor of constellations and fixed stars.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ These “stages” and “degrees” unfold gradually throughout the rest of the paragraph.

¹⁰⁸ “Behind the knees” of intellection: this phrase hints at two important concepts: first, it evokes the traditional posture of meditation, an upright fetal position where the knees are drawn up into the arms, and the forehead is placed upon the knees. Secondly, this introduction of “knees” foreshadows the crucial shared experience, the connection that is about to materialize between Bīdel and Muḥammad – with the prophet's kneecap becoming joined to Bīdel's forehead in what could be called their *joint meditation*. This image-cluster – meditation, knees, and the imaginative content that can be retrieved from the inner mental space “behind the knees” – is also taken up by Bīdel in his lyric poetry: for example, “Consolation's final destination is a journey behind the knees [lit. “from neck to knee”] / This interval – this league – from wave to pearl is not a number.”

سرمنزل تسلی سیر وفای زانوست / فرسخ شماره‌ای نیست از موج تا به گوهر

Ghazal N^o-1694, Line 4; Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, I:788-789.

¹⁰⁹ Bīdel has been carefully stage-managing his own pivotal dream experience by seeding the vocabulary of manuscripts, rough drafts, book-binding, and interpretation from the very beginning of the autobiography. If the collapse of the macrocosm-microcosm distinction is one of the main features of visionary experience, then Bīdel is about to describe his with the vocabulary of “cosmic education:” in the following sentences, the entire cosmos becomes his own private schoolhouse, grammar school, higher education.

¹¹⁰ This pairing of witnessing/experiencing and careful study (*moshāhade* and *moṭāla 'e*) reprises their first and equally significant appearance in T1.P3, the final prefatory section in which Bīdel's embodied life is first presented as a manuscript worth studying, and the world around him as a spectacle worth beholding.

¹¹¹ A difficult sentence in Persian, with no when-then markers (these have been supplied in the translation); it is more paractic in the original – enacting, perhaps, the dilation beyond time of that moment of enlightenment. The idea of the cosmos being arranged like a school may have etymological origins or resonances: cf. for example Avicenna's term for the *order* of the universe – *tadbīr* – which derives from the root *d-b-r*, related to *dabīr*, scribe.

Ṭeḡl-e dabestān-e robūbeyyat-am savād-e ma 'nī rowshan nemūd, noskhe-ye tartīb-e zoḡal be raqam [nemūd] payvast¹¹² va talāmīz-e darsgāh-e feṭrat-am jarīde-ye sabaqī be 'arż āvard, ovrāq-e kamāl-e berjīs daftar-e faẓl shīrāze-am bast.*

طفل دبستان ربوبیتیم سواد معنی روشن نمود نسخه ترتیب زحل به رقم پیوست و تلامیذ درسگاه فطرتم جریده سبقی به عرض آورد اوراق کمال برجیس دفتر فضل شیرازهم بست.

When the children in the primary school of divine lordship made the black rough-draft of meaning shine with luminous literacy for me, the manuscript of Saturn's orderly arrangements was transcribed. When the teachers at the school of given nature presented me with a book of lessons, the pages of Jupiter's perfection were bound into my volume of learning.

Jowhar-e āyīne-ye taḥqīq-am be qaṭ 'e shobohāt-e ghayr tīgh-e ma 'refat-ī āb dād, parde-ye khavāṣṣ-e Bahrām darrīd, va lam 'e-ye pīshānī-ye yaqīn-am borqa 'e ḥojob-e owhām tarf-e neqāb-ī shekast, sha 'sha 'e-ye jamāl-e mehr bīrūn tābīd, navā-ye ḥarakāt-e mowzūn-ī-yam gūsh-e este 'dād-ī be ham mālīd, zamzame-ye besāt-e Nāhīd khorūsh-e bī-pardegī angīkht, va jombesh-e nabz-e ta 'ammol-am 'eqd-e anāmel-ī vā-shomord bar mohāsebe-āhangān-e dīvān-e 'Oṭāred rīkht.

جوهر آینه تحقیق به قطع شبهات غیر تیغ معرفتی آب داد پرده خواص بهرام درید و لمعه پیشانی یقینم برقع حجب اوهام طرف نقابی شکست شعشعه جمال مهر بیرون تابید نوای حرکات موزونی ام گوش استعدادی به هم مالید زمزمه بساط ناهید خروش بی پردگی انگیخت و جنبش نبض تألم عقد اناملی و اشمرد بر محاسبه آهنگان دیوان عطارد ریخت.

By cutting off all doubt that there is anything other [than God's true reality], the lustrous essence of the mirror of my investigations into true reality lent radiance to the sword of gnosis; the veils of the attributes of Mars were cut down, radiant splendor from my forehead of certainty tore through the curtains and coverings of illusions, and the radiant rays of the Sun's beauty shone forth; the melody of my harmoniously balanced movements bent many capable ears; the rolling murmur Venus's outspread carpet raised an unruly cry; the moving pulse of my attentive slow reflection began to re-count the beads on the necklace of its fingers before the accountants of Mercury's paybook.¹¹³

¹¹² The second *nemūd* in the second clause is probably a typo; the action calls for one verb, and *be raqam pevast* neatly parallels *savād roushan nemūd*.

¹¹³ A very difficult passage. The grammatical subject and object are open to interpretation: the enclitic *-am* could be either "my" or "for me," and most of the verbs could be either transitive or intransitive. It is likely that maintaining this ambiguous balance of agency – which hovers somewhere between the outright first-personal agency of Bīdel and the distributed agency of various parts of the cosmos – has been carefully cultivated by Bīdel in order to illustrate the delirious microcosm-macrocosm collapse of this visionary moment.

Bī-parvāyī-hā-ye shakhs-e owzā 'am tā lebās-e takhayyol-ī tāze nemāyad, hay'at-e qamarī kesvat-e kam-o-kāst pūshīd. Jonūn-jowlānī-ye garmī-hā-ye showq-am tā gerd-e dāman-ī bar-afshānad, ghorūr-e 'ālam-tāzī bar khod bālīd.

بی‌پروایی‌های شخص اوضاعم تا لباس تخیلی تازه نماید هیأت قمری کسوت کم و کاست پوشید جنون جولانی کرمی‌های شوقم تا گرد دامنی بر افشانند غرور عالم‌تازی بر خود بالید.

My individual limbs lapsed into careless inattention; in order to mend the clothing of the faculty of imagination, the outward astronomical form of the moon dressed itself in the garb of waning and diminution. The warmth of my passion was given to swift movements of madness; in order to scatter the dust off of its hem, it boasted with pride about its world travels.

E'tedāl-e shūkhī-ye taqrīr-am tā be eślāḥ-e āshoftegī-ye nafas pardāzad, ṣobḥ-e eqbāl-e havā sabaq-e damīdan az-bar-kard, va sharm-e jowhar-e āgāhī-am tā be pīsh-e pā nāzar andāzad, ṣafā-ye āyīne-ye āb temsāl-e 'araḡ be 'arż āvard, va mashq-e ma'nī-ye khod-dārī-am rotbe neshastanī be ham rasānd.

اعتدال شوخی تقریرم تا به اصلاح آشفستگی نفس پردازد صبح اقبال هوا سبق دمیدن از بر کرد و شرم جوهر آگاهی‌ام تا به پیش پا نظر اندازد صفای آینه آب تمثال عرق به عرض آورد و مشق معنی خودداری‌ام رتبه نشستنی به هم رساند.

In order for the equilibrium in my mirthful compositions to be corrected from any distractedness of breath, the dawn of desire's fortune learned the lessons of correct breathing by heart; and in order for the modesty of the essence of my enlightened awareness to cast its gaze down towards its feet, the purity of water's mirror presented a reflection of sweat; my example-copy of self-restraint's inner meaning brought about the dignified occupation of rank.

Paykar-e khāk be ostokh'ān-bandī tamkīn-e jamādāt pardākht va raf'-e kolfat-e afsordegī-yam pahlū-ye ehtezāzī gardānd.

پیکر خاک به استخوان‌بندی تمکین جمادات پرداخت و رفع کلفت افسردیگی‌ام پهلوئی اهتزازی گرداند.

A form made from earth's dust achieved mineral solidity by setting its bones in order; when all encumbrance of cold stillness was removed from me, my sides began to turn and tremble with movement.

Howṣele-ye nabātāt be sāmān-e nashv-o-namā' bīrūn tākht; mādde-ye hayūlā-ye ṭabī'at rā qābel-e ershād-e ādamīyat gomān bordam, 'ālam-e ḥayvān monqād-e aḥkām-e tavahhom gardīd.

حوصله نباتات به سامان نشو ا نما بیرون تاخت ماده هیولای طبیعت را قابل ارشاد آدمیت گمان بردم علام حیوان منقاد احکام توهم گردید.

A vegetal capacity to grow and develop charged forth. I considered the matter of [my] nature's substance [now] to be worthy of being guided towards the human state. [But first, I had to pass through the evolutionary] realm of animals, whose natures became compliant with the dictates of illusion.

Bel-qovve este 'dād-e demāgh rā shāyeste-ye nash 'e-ye jāme īyat andīshīdam; haqīqat-e ensān be 'arz-e taḥqīq rasīd.

بالقوه استعداد دماغ را شایسته نشئه جامعیت اندیشیدم حقیقت انسان به عرض تحقیق رسید.

[Finally,] I considered my mental capacities *in potentia*¹¹⁴ to be worthy of receiving the intoxication of [saintly, prophetic, perfect] **composure** [*jāme īyat*].¹¹⁵ I undertook to investigate true human reality [i.e., the “truth” of the Perfect Man].¹¹⁶

[Paragraph 3/3]

Al-qeṣṣe, har chand be savād-e 'arṣe-ye tanazzol 'enān gosīkhtam, joz sejde-ye āstān-e 'ezzat-am gerd/gard(-e) āgāhī nadāsh, va har qadar be fazā-ye 'alam-e taraqqī jonūn angīkhtam, ghayr az ertefā '-e bārgāh-e ta 'zīm 'alam-e yaqīn nayafrāsh.

¹¹⁴ *Be l-qovve*, “*in potentia*,” an important term in philosophy – contrasted with *be l-fe'l*, “*in actu*.” In Avicenna, for instance, this term distinguishes, among other things, mental events (*khayāl/mowhūm*) from those in the world. On this, see Jon McGinnis, “Avicenna’s Natural Philosophy,” in *Interpreting Avicenna*, ed. Peter Adamson, 71-90 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 80 et passim. Here, the discussion of Avicenna’s use of “potentiality” is embedded within McGinnis’s analysis of Avicenna’s theory of mixture, where the four elements, once mixed (producing forms of matter on earth, e.g., blood, bone, etc.), only exist in the resulting mixture *in potentia*. On this topic, Avicenna (like Aristotle) dwells extensively on the idea of the “equilibrium” of elements in mixtures.

¹¹⁵ This is the culmination of Bīdel’s visionary cosmos-assisted “education:” he evolves (or *thinks* he has evolved) far enough to be capable of becoming a perfect human – one who has not only composure (*jam īyat*), but someone – like Muḥammad, like God – who has *direct agency* over the creation of composure, in the bringing-together and collection of elements, qualities, knowledge, etc. (*jāme īyat*). For a discussion of this paragraph, see Chapter 3.

¹¹⁶ This Sufi term of art – the Perfect Man as “true human reality”, *haqīqat-e ensān* – has a specific history in early modern South Asia. See for example Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam in India*, 87-90 for a discussion of how the concept of *haqīqat-e ensān* figured within Mughal South Asian discussions of the doctrine of the “unity of being” (*vaḥdat-e vojūd*), and especially Alam’s description of a sixteenth-century text, *Haqā'eq-e hendī* by ‘Abd al-Vāḥed Belgrāmī, which aligns Vaisnava Hindu concepts with Islamic ideas – including that of the “perfect man” (*haqīqat-e ensān*). See also Francesca Orsini’s analysis of this text. Francesca Orsini, “‘Krishna is the Truth of Man:’ Mir ‘Abdul Wahid Bilgrami’s Haqā'iq-i Hindī (Indian Truths) and the circulation of dhrupad and bishnupad,” in *Culture and Circulation*, ed. Allison Busch and Thomas de Bruijn, 222-246 (Leiden, Brill: 2014).

القصه هر چند به سواد عرصه تنزل عنان گسیختم جز سجده آستان عزتم گرد آگاهی نداشت و هر قدر به فضای عالم ترقی جنون انگیختم غیر از ارتفاع بارگاه تعظیم علم یقین نیفراشت.

In short: however much I strove, breaking the reins [while charging on horseback through] the fertile black-soiled environs of the field of cosmic-evolutionary descent, the dust of enlightened awareness held nothing for me except prostration before honor's doorstep. However much I stirred up madness throughout the environment of the world of progressive evolution, no flag of certainty unfurled, except that which sits atop the elevated court of reverence.¹¹⁷

[Verse, 9 lines]

Meter: - ˘ - - | - ˘ - - | - ˘ - - | - ˘ -

(→)

Ramal-e mošamman-e sālem al-šadr va l-ḥashv va **maḥzūf** al-żarb
(E.S. #2.4.15)

Fā'elāton fā'elāton fā'elāton fā'elon

Ramal = *fā'elāton fā'elāton fā'elāton fā'elāton*

First foot (šadr): *fā'elāton* (sālem)

Second foot (ḥashv): *fā'elāton* (sālem)

Third foot (ḥashv): *fā'elāton* (sālem)

Fourth foot (żarb): *fā'elāton* + ḥazf → *fā'elon*

Qāfeye: -ar

Radīf: nabūd [it/she/he wasn't]

- 1 *ḥayrat-ī āmad be pīsh-am z-ān tamāshā-gāh-e rāz*
k-az hazār āyīne ān kayfīyat-am bāvar nabūd

حیرتی آمد به پیشم زان تماشاگاه راز
کز هزار آئینه آن کیفیتم باور نبود

Wonder came before me
from that theater of secrets:
I could not believe
that intoxicating quality,
refracted through a thousand mirrors.

- 2 *sham 'e īn noh anjoman az jīb-e man fānūs dāsht*
bar sar-e haft āsemān joz dāman-am chād(a)r nabūd

¹¹⁷ The recurring horse and horsemanship imagery here reinforces the parallels between Muḥammad's *mi'rāj* – his ascent through the cosmos on his horse, Burāq – and Bīdel's reverse-*mi'rāj*, his descent from the outermost reaches of the universe (God's own realm), past each sphere, into the world of elements, and finally evolving from mineral to vegetal to animal and eventually to the pinnacle of human life. Importantly, unlike Muḥammad's spiritual journey, Bīdel's ends in failure – for the end simply goes back to the beginning, without enlightenment. The following poem reinforces this conclusion.

شمع این نه انجمن از جیب من فانوس داشت
بر سر هفت آسمان جز دامنم چادر نبود

The candle of these nine assemblies
took out a lantern
from my pocket;
The shining faces of the eight horizons
were veiled
by my own clothing's hem.¹¹⁸

3 *har che gol kard az savād-e manẓar-e past-o-boland
joz goshād-o-bast-e mozhgān sāz-e bām-o-dar nabūd*

هرچه گل کرد از سواد منظر پست و بلند
جز گشاد و بست مژگان ساز بام و در نبود

Everything that appeared,
blooming in the fertile black-soiled landscape
– an uneven terrain, with highs and lows –
The harmonious construction
of doors and ceilings
was but the opening and closing
of my own eyes.

4 *rang-e khold az gard-e dāmān-e takhayyol rīkhtam
gar namī-zad ārezū sāghar be khūn kowsar nabūd*

رنگ خلد از گرد دامان تخیل ریختم
گر نمی‌زد آرزو ساغر به خون کوثر نبود

I laid the colorful foundation
of paradise, using dust
collected on my imagination's hem.
Had desire not consumed
a cup of blood,
there would be no fountain in paradise.

5 *ādash-ī dīgar nayāmad dar naẓar joz vahm-e ghayr
dūzakh-ī joz khejlat-e ṭab'-e havas-parvar nabūd*

آتشی دیگر نیامد در نظر جز وهم غیر
دوزخی جز خجالت طبع هوس‌پرور نبود

The only fire [I] could see

¹¹⁸ The nine spheres, the eight horizons: only eight can be said to have “veils” at their extreme limit, because the farthest (ninth) sphere is God's throne, which has no end but God himself.

was the illusion
of what is Other [than God];
Hell was shame,
arising from [my] nature
full of lowly lust.

6 *bā hame jūsh-e jonūn sar bar-nayāvordam ze jīb
har qadar parvāz kardam joz be zīr-e par nabūd*

با همه جوش جنون سر بر نیاوردم ز جیب
هر قدر پرواز کردم جز به زیر پر نبود

Even amidst such boiling madness,
I did not raise my head
from meditation's pocket.
However far I flew,
it was all beneath
my folded wings.

7 *zarf o mazrūf-e kharābāt-e aṣar bar-ham zadam
joz hamān yek nash 'e-ye moṭlaq may o sāghar nabūd*

ظرف و مظروف خرابات اثر بر هم زدم
جز همان یک نشئه مطلق می و ساغر نبود

I shattered the container
and all that it contained
of ruins' traces.¹¹⁹
My only wine and wineglass
was that one and only
absolute intoxication.

8 *āgahī gar dāsht ghayr az man kas-ī dīgar nadāsht
maḥram-ī gar būd man būdam kas-ī dīgar nabūd*

آگاهی گر داشت غیر از من کسی دیگر نداشت
محرمی گر بود من بودم کسی دیگر نبود

No one else but me
possessed enlightenment.
No one else but me
was [God's own] confidante.

¹¹⁹ "Container" and "what is contained, contents" (*zarf* and *mazrūf*): a beautifully distilled and grammatically resonant description of the collapse of distinction between macrocosm and microcosm (subject and direct object). The increasingly solipsistic progression continues in the last two lines, from the boast of "no one else but me" to "I was a world."

- 9 *'ālam-ī būdam moḥīt-e taḥt o fowq o pīsh o pas*
ghayr-e pā-yam zīr-e pā vo joz sar-am bar sar nabūd

عالمی بودم محیط تحت و فوق و پیش و پس
 غیر پایم زیر پا و جز سرم بر سر نبود

I was a world: like an ocean I comprised
 above, below
 before, behind:
 Beneath my feet
 were just my feet;
 Above my head
 was just my head.¹²⁰

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

Dar 'ayn-e tamāshā, shakḥ-ī dīdam chūn cherāgh bar bālīn-am neshaste, va tārak-e sar-am be āyīne-ye zānū-yash naqsh-e etteṣāl baste. Fatīle-ye demāgh eqtebās-e nūr az garmī-ye ān zānū dāsht va naqqāsh-e fetrat be lam'e-ye partov-ash romūz-e īn daqāyeq mī-negāsht. Chūn vā-rasīdam jowhar-e tījād-e 'ālam o ādam būd, ya 'nī rasūl khātam ṣallā allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam.

در عین تماشا شخصی دیدم چون چراغ بر بالینم نشسته و تارک سرم به آئینه زانویش نقش اتصال بسته. فتیله دماغ اقتباس نور از گرمی آن زانو داشت و نقاش فطرت به لمعه پرتوش رموز این دقایق می‌نگاشت. چون وارسیدم جوهر ایجاد عالم و آدم بود یعنی رسول خاتم صلی الله علیه و سلم.

In the midst of this very spectacle,¹²¹ I saw a person, sitting at the head of my bed like a shining lamp. The crown of my head was joined to his kneecap.¹²² The wick of my mind borrowed light from the warmth of that knee. The painter of given nature painted the mysteries of these minute particulars using the brilliant ray of

¹²⁰ At this moment of profoundly solitary, literally embodied awareness of the universe, which would appear at first to be the desired end of his meditative efforts, Bīdel realizes that while he has attained enlightened awareness (*āgāhī*), he has not yet attained absolute certainty (*yaqīn*), the truly final end of spiritual and philosophical inquiry. At this juncture, he see the Prophet. This poem forms a tight segue into the next prose paragraph introducing Muḥammad (cf. *tamāshā* in the first line of the poem and in the first clause of the following prose paragraph).

¹²¹ There are multiple paronomastic effects in *'ayn-e tamāshā*: “that very spectacle,” “the eye of the spectacle,” “the essence of the spectacle.” Emphasis is, as before, on the visual quality of this visionary experience.

¹²² The word for “kneecap,” *āyīne-ye zānū*, is literally the “mirror of the knee.” And the word for “joined” is *etteṣāl*, related to *vaṣl*, the term in Sufism for ultimate spiritual union with God.

light coming from Him [as a paintbrush].¹²³ Then I arrived at an understanding that this [person] was the pearl of all existents – the very essence of the existence, of the world and of humanity – in other words, that this was the Prophet, the Seal [of Prophets and of Creation], *peace be upon Him*.¹²⁴

[Na‘t (praise poem), 9 lines]

Meter: - ˘ - - | - ˘ - - | - ˘ - - | - ˘ -

(→)

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Fourth foot (žarb): *fā‘elāton* + ḥazf → *fā‘elon*

Qāfeye: ū-ye

Radif: ū-st [it is He, it is His (the Prophet)]

1 *ān-ke emkān tā vojūb o vāhedīyat tā aḥad*
šūrat-e temšāl-ī az āyīne-ye zānū-ye ū-st

آنکه امکان تا وجوب و احدیت تا احد
صورت تمثالی از آئینه زانوی اوست

Everything there is –
from the possible to the necessary,¹²⁵
from Oneness to the One¹²⁶ –
Is but a form
of a reflection

¹²³ Continuing the emphasis in the previous sentence on (1) visual imagination; (2) embodied experience; and (3) spiritual *connection*, physically realized.

¹²⁴ This paragraph begins and ends with “essence”: ‘*ayn* (also “eye”) at the beginning, and “*jowhar*” (also “pearl”) at the end, as if to underscore the “joint” nature of the visionary experience: the essence of what Bīdel sees with his eyes *is* the essence of all creation. Bīdel and Muḥammad are thus physically and metaphysically connected and conjoined.

¹²⁵ This line also sets a pattern, repeated throughout the poem, of “spans”: from X, to Y – an exhaustive coverage of space, direction, conceptual range.

¹²⁶ On *vāhedīyat* and *aḥadīyat*, see Chittick, “The Perfect Man as the Prototype of the Self in the Sufism of Jāmī,” *Studia Islamica* 49 (1979), 135-157. For a discussion of *aḥad* being the transcendent undifferentiated unitary absolute (the One), and *vāhed* as the first thing that *aḥad* generates, see Samer Akkach, “Ibn ‘Arabī’s Cosmogony and the Sufi Concept of Space and Time,” in *Constructions of Time in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Carol Poster and Richard J. Utz, 115-142 (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 129.

within the mirror of **His** kneecap.¹²⁷

- 2 *rownaq-e īn haft mahfel az cherāgh-ash partov-ī
jūsh-e īn noh baḥr-e akhẓar rashḥe-ī az jū-ye ū-st*

رونق این هفت محفل از چراغش پرتوی
جوش این نه بحر اخضر رشحه‌ای از جوی اوست

The splendor of these seven gatherings¹²⁸
is formed from rays, projecting
from His lamp.
The boiling of these nine green oceans
are drops, escaping
from **His** river.

- 3 *az savād-e molk-e hastī tā shabestān-e ‘adam
har kojā mozhgān goshā’ī sāye-ye gīsū-ye ū-st*

از سواد ملک هستی تا شبستان عدم
هر کجا مژگان گشایی سایه گیسوی اوست

From the black-soiled environs
of the kingdom of being,
to the darkened sleeping quarters
of nonbeing –
Everywhere you look,
it’s all the shadows
cast by **His** dark curls.

- 4 *har che āyad az khayāl o ān-che bālad dar nāzar
yek-qalam jūsh-e bahārestān-e rang-o-bū-ye ū-st*

هر چه آید در خیال و آنچه بالاد در نظر
یک قلم جوش بهارستان رنگ و بوی اوست

¹²⁷ *Emkān* (possibility) and *vojūb* (necessity) are Avicennan metaphysical modalities. (On this, see for example, Catarina Belo, *Chance and Determinism in Avicenna and Averroes* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 100-104. Since in Islamic emanationist cosmology, all of creation comes into existence because the first Intellect (*‘aql*) *thinks itself* – Bīdel’s choice of *āyīne-ye zānū* to express this is particularly apt, not only because of the pun on “kneecap” (*āyīne-ye zānū*, the “mirror of the knee”), but because this is the physical conjunction between Bīdel’s head (his mind, his imagination) and the Prophet’s body. Bīdel – that is, the world of Bīdel, the world that he comprises, the world he brings into being through imagination – comes into being self-reflexively (and self-reflectively!) through Muḥammad’s knee.

¹²⁸ The seven climes of sublunary world geography.

All that comes
from the imagination,
and everything that grows
before your eyes –
It's all the sudden chaos
boiling over in springtime garden
of **His** fragrances and colors.

- 5 *kh^vāh mashreq vā-shomār o kh^vāh maghreb kon qeyās
har ʔaraf rū-ye-neyāz-āvorde bāshī rū-ye ū-st*

خواه مشرق و اشمار و خواه مغرب کن قیاس
هر طرف روی نیاز آورده باشی روی اوست

If you want, measure the West;
Or if you prefer – tally up the East.
Every direction you inhabit,
face turned in supplication,
you face **His** face.

- 6 *kaṣrat-ī k-az vaḥdat-ash khārej shomārī bāʔel ast
chār sū-ye shesh jehat hangāme-ye yek-sū-ye ū-st*

کثرتی کز وحدتش خارج شماری باطل است
چار سوی شش جهت هنگامه یک سوی اوست

The multiplicity you tally,
stemming from unicity,
is all in vain.
The four directions,
the six orientations –
these are all a gathering
of **His** one side.

- 7 *mowj az daryā vo rīg az dasht bīrūn-tāz nīst
har do ʔālam dar kenār-ash maḥv-e jost-o-jū-ye ū-st*

موج از دریا و ریگ از دشت بیرون تاز نیست
هر دو عالم در کنارش محو جست و جوی اوست

The wave does not escape the ocean;
grains of sand do not escape the desert.
Both worlds
by His side
are erased by searching
high and low for **Him**.

- 8 *z-āsetān-e ū sorāgh-e har che kh'āhī mī-dehad*
gar hame del dar baghal gom karde-ī dar kū-ye ū-st

ز آستان او سراغ هر چه خواهی می‌دهد
گر همه دل در بغل گم کرده‌ای در کوی اوست

His threshold
distributes signs
of everything you can imagine.
If you've lost your heart
under your own arm –
you'll find it in **His** lane.

- 9 *az man-e Bīdel che emkān dāsht fahm-e rāz-e ghayb*
shod yaqīn-am k-īn eshārat az kham-e abrū-ye ū-st

از من بیدل چه امکان داشت فهم راز غیب
شد یقینم کاین اشارت از خم ابروی اوست

From myself, my mind, Bīdel –
what possibility¹²⁹ there was
in comprehending the mystery
of the Hidden Realm!
I became certain
that this gesture of allusion
came from the movement
of **His** arched eyebrows.¹³⁰

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

Cheshm vā kardam ammā pās-e adab mahvīyat-ī bar havāss-o-qavāyem gomāsh t ke be
hīch jor 'at-ī sar az qorb-e zānū-ye mobārak-ash natavānestam bar-dāsh t.

چشم وا کردم اما پاس ادب محویتی بر حواس و قوایم گماشت که به هیچ جزآتی سر از قرب زانوی مبارکش
نتوانستم بر داشت.

¹²⁹ Following a familiar pattern, this poem begins and ends with *emkān* (possibility), a circularity which doubtless assists the evocation of the motif that “everything comes from, and goes back to, Muhammad.”

¹³⁰ This poem is also importantly interstitial: it marks a transition from enlightened awareness (*āgāhī*) to absolute certainty (*yaqīn*) – a process inseparable from Bīdel's becoming joined with Muhammad.

I opened my eyes – but the watchman of courteous civility appointed a state of obliteration [to keep watch] over my senses and limbs, so no amount of boldness allowed me to remove my head from close conjunction to His blessed knee.

*Har chand az hayā` dar khod forū raftam, mahv-e hamān kenār-e raḥmat mī-gardam,¹³¹
va har qadr az enfe`āl āb mī-shodam, dar dāman-e hamān moḥīt-e tarahḥom mī-
chekīdam.*

هر چند از حیا در خود فرو رفتم محو همان کنار رحمت می‌گردم و هر قدر از انفعال آب می‌شدم در دامن همان محیط ترحم می‌چکیدم.

However much I withdrew into myself with shame, I kept becoming obliterated in that same embrace of mercy; however much I deliquesced with ignominy, I kept trickling onto the hem of that same ocean of compassion.¹³²

*Dar har bon-e mū cheshm-ī dāshtam ḥayrat-negār-e sarāparde-ye sorūr va dar har `oẓv
āyīne-ī chīde būdam ḥayrat-kamīn-e zānū-ye ḥozūr.*

در هر بن مو چشمی داشتم حیرت‌نگار سراپرده سرور و در هر عضو آینه‌ای چیده بودم حیرت‌کمین زانو حضور.

Every hair follicle on my body became a seeing eye, painted with wonder, looking at the outer door of [God's] royal court. Every limb was a mirror I arranged to entrap wonder, placed before the knees of [divine] presence.¹³³

*Be forṣat-shomārī-ye ta`ammol selsele-ye taḥayyor reshte bar sāz-e bī-khodī bast va
nash`e-ye tamayyoz be selk-e bī-sho`ūrī moṭlaq payvast.*

به فرصت‌شماری تأمل سلسله تحیر رشته بر ساز بی‌خودی بست و نشئه تمیز به سلک بی‌شعوری مطلق پیست.

By counting the opportune moments as I practiced **attentive slow reflection**, the causal chain of bewilderment [at my own state] fastened strings upon the

¹³¹ Khalīlī's text reads "mī-gardīm" – but since all other verbs in this sentence are first-person singular, I have emended this verb to agree with the others.

¹³² This is a significant transfer of the ocean metaphor from Bīdel to Muḥammad (Bīdel was a world "comprising" everything – *moḥīt*, lit. "ocean" – in the previous section; now, he is but a few droplets, submerged within Muḥammad's ocean). Perhaps this tracks the transformation of his hubris in thinking he had attained enlightened awareness into the true humility of final certainty.

¹³³ The straightforward (non-synonymic) repetition of "wonder" (*ḥayrat*) underscores that astonished, joyous wonder is the dominant tone of this passage. Yet even as Bīdel emphasizes his complete dependence upon Muḥammad, nevertheless, some agency is gradually returns – grammatical agency ("I made" ... "I arranged") as well as metaphysical. His desire to partake actively in the visionary experience grows.

instrument of selflessness, and the intoxication of being separated [from myself]
let go of the thread of unconsciousness.¹³⁴

Pas az sâ 'at-ī be emdād-e zamān-e efāqat sar az 'ālam-e dīgar be dar āvordam va jahān-ī dīgar dar parde-ye meṣāl moshāhede kardam.

پس از ساعتی به امداد زمان افافت سر از عالم دیگر به در آوردم و جهانی دیگر در پرده مثال مشاهده کردم.

After an hour, by extending the time of my recovery,¹³⁵ I brought my head out from that other world, and I witnessed – I experienced – still another world behind the veil of forms.

Maqām-ī cheshm-e takhayyol-am āb dād ke bā bāl-afshānī-ye hemmat-e malakūt dar talāsh-e voṣūl-e sāye-ye dīvār-ash jabīn be khāk-e farsūdegī mī-mālīd, va sa 'y-e feṭrat-e basharī dar edrāk-e ghobār-e āstān-ash be chandīn 'arsh-e eftekhār mī-bālīd.

مقامی چشم تخیل آب داد که با بال افشانی همت ملکوت در تلاش وصول سایه دیوارش جبین به خاک فرسودگی می‌مالید و سعی فطرت بشری در ادراک غبار آستانش به چندین عرش افتخار می‌بالید.

This ecstatic state enlivened **the eye of my imagination**, giving it a watery lustre. I, spreading the wings of exertion in Malakūt in hope of find union with His wall's shadow, placed my forehead upon the worn-out earth. The efforts of my given human nature soared, boasting of such lofty throne-high heights as it perceived the dust upon His threshold.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ The abundance of fifth-form verbal nouns (*tafa'ul*, denoting reflexive action, action upon oneself) further signals the return of first-personal agency: *ta'ammol*, *tahayyor*, *tamayyoz*. It seems significant that attentive slow reflection – *ta'ammol* – is the main channel of the return of imaginative agency.

¹³⁵ Two fascinating and important adverbial time-clauses: on the one hand, there is one clock hour; on the other hand, this objective hour is quickly qualified as a “dilation” or “extension” of time – maybe even of a single moment (*zamān*) of recovering his senses. Perhaps Bīdel gestures here towards the well-known definition of Sufism formulated by Junayd of Baghdād (and quoted by Dāra Shikoh in his *Majma' al-bahrayn*): “Sufism means to sit for an **hour** [*sā'at-ī*], unattended.” Prince Moḥammad Dārā Shikōh, *Majma' al-bahrayn* [*The Mingling of the Two Oceans*], ed. M. Mafuz-ul-Haq (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 1998 [1929]), 89-90. The quote occurs in Chapter 7, “An Exposition of the Four Worlds” [*Bayān-e avālem-e arba'e*]. This also points to an interesting possible rereading of the previous passage in which the “watchman of courteous civility” keeps *attending* to Bīdel's body so that he cannot move.

¹³⁶ This sentence begins with *maqām-ī*, “this state” but lit. “this resting-place, this station” and the previous sentence begins with “*pas az sâ'atī*”, “after an hour.” As with the section headings, Bīdel shows consistent concern with pinning down the exact time and place of his visionary experience.

Tajallī-ye farsh-e ayvān-ī besāṭ-e naẓar pardākht ke laṭāfat-e aṭlas-falak-ī dar moshāhade-ye ṣafā-ye ān tār-o-pūd laghzhesh mī-bāft, va be lama 'āt-e parde-ye jalāl-ash sho 'ā -e āftāb joz rāh-e dīde-ye khoffāsh namī-shekāft.

تجلی فرش ایوانی بساط نظر پرداخت که لطافت اطلس فلکی در مشاهده صفای آن تار و پود لغزش می‌یافت و به لمعات پرده جلالش شعاع آفتاب جز راه دیده خفاش نمی‌شکافت.

The brilliant manifestation of the earth-green carpet leading to [God's own] palace stretched out before my eyes. Even the elegant red-satin sky, as it beheld the purity of that [green] carpet's warp and weft, was so awestruck that it kept making errors in its own weaving. Compared to the brilliant rays emitted by the veil of His glory, the sun's sharp brightness could not pierce through anything at all, and was as dull as the blind gaze of an owl.

Shīr-ī bā mohābat dar ān ayvān mostaqbel-e qeble neshaste va jamī '-e jehāt ta 'ayyon eḥrām-e negāh-e ghayrat-panāh-ash baste.

شیری با مهابت در آن ایوان مستقبل قبله نشسته و جمیع جهات تعون احرام نگاه غیرت پناه‌اش بسته.

A lion,¹³⁷ radiating great authority, sat before the *qibla* of that palace, with self-disclosures wound around himself in all directions like pilgrimage garments by his zealous gaze.

Sorūsh-e asrār-e yaqīn gūsh-e ta 'ammol-am be īn āhang goshūd va molham-e romūz-e taḥqīq āyīne-ye āgāhī-yam be īn ṣayqal zodūd ke "Janāb-e velāyat-ma'āb, 'Alī Mortazā ast, motamakken-e masnad-e besāṭ-e kebreyā."

An angel¹³⁸ disclosing the secrets of **certainty** spoke into my ear as I practiced **attentive slow reflection**. He who is inspired by the mysteries encountered in the course of investigation into true reality polished the mirror of my **enlightened awareness** with these furbishing words, saying "This is His Majesty, the Possessor of Supreme Authority: 'Alī. He resides upon the throne of this earth-colored carpet of greatness."

[Poem fragment, 9 lines]

Meter: - - - | - - - | - - - | - -

(→)

Ramal-e moṣamman-e sālem al-ṣadr va l-ḥashv va **maḥzūf** al-zarb

(E.S. #2.4.15)

Fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elon

Ramal = *fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton*

First foot (ṣadr): *fā 'elāton* (sālem)

Second foot (ḥashv): *fā 'elāton* (sālem)

Third foot (ḥashv): *fā 'elāton* (sālem)

¹³⁷ 'Alī is known as "the lion of God," *Asadullāh*.

¹³⁸ The pre-Islamic Iranian Zoroastrian angel, Sorūsh, is correlated with the Islamic angel Gabriel, through whom the Qur'ān was disclosed to Muḥammad.

Qāfeye: -an
Radif: ~

- 1 *ān-ke nat(a)vān yāft dar zāt-e jalāl āyīne-ash*
chūn kamālāt-e nabī kas rā majāl-e dam-zadan

آنکه نتوان یافت در ذات جلال آیینهاش
چون کمالات نبی کس را مجال دم زدن

He, in whose glorious essence
no mirror can be found,
Like the perfections of the Prophet,
his (perfections) also warrant description.

- 2 *ān-ke dar khalvat-sarā-ye nash'e-ye tanzīh-e zāt*
nūr-e ū bā nūr-e Aḥmad khoḥte dar yek pīrhan

آنکه در خلوت سرای نشئه تنزیه ذات
نور او با نور احمد خفته در یک پیرهن

He who abides in the place of seclusion
intoxicated by the purity of [divine] essence,
His light sleeps
next to Muḥammad's light
clothed in the same shirt.

- 3 *bar to ramz-ī mī-sarāyam hosh mī-bāyad gomāsh*
k-az velāyat tā nobovvat maḥram-at bāyad shodan

بر تو رمزی می سرایم هوش می باید گماشت
کز ولایت تا نبوت محرمت باید شدن

I present you with a riddle.
You must appoint your mind
to solve it:
From sainthood to prophethood,
you must become
a confidante.

- 4 *farq-e mowj o āb mī-kh'āhad mozhe vā-kardanī*
bī-neqāb oftāde īn-jā šūrat-e serr-o- 'alan

فرق موج و آب می خواهد مژه واکردنی
بی نقاب افتاده اینجا صورت سر و علن

To see the difference

between wave and water
requires opening one's eyes.
The form of secrets and revelations
has been unveiled
here.

5 *ghonche āghūsh-ī goshūd āyīne-ye gol rang bast
ū ta'ammol īn tabassom ū shekoftan īn chaman*

غنچه آغوشی گشود آینه گل رنگ بست
او تأمل این تبسم او شکفتن این چمن

The rosebud opened its embrace,
the rose's mirror colored.
One – is all **attentive slow reflection**;
the other – is all smiles.
One blooms,
the other is the garden.¹³⁹

6 *ū boṭūn o īn zohūr ū ḥosn o īn tūfān-e nāz
ū jalāl o īn jamāl ū khalvat o īn anjoman*

او بطون و این ظهور او حسن و این توفان ناز
او جلال و این جمال او خلوت و این انجمن

One is inward, the other – outward;
one is beauty, the other – a storm of elegance.
One is glory, the other is beauty;
one is seclusion, the other – a gathering.

7 *īn do maẓmūn karde gol az dars-gāh-e kāf-o-nūn
fāregh az vahm-e do-ī chūn lafẓ-o-ma' nī az sokhan*

این دو مضمون کرده گل از درسگاه کاف و نون
فارغ از وهم دویی چون لفظ و معنی از سخن

These two themes appeared,
blossoming forth
from the school of *kāf* and *nūn*.¹⁴⁰
They are free from all illusion of duality,
as word and meaning

¹³⁹ This line sets the “riddle” in motion: the extended comparison two figures: Muḥammad and ‘Alī.

¹⁴⁰ *Kāf* and *nūn* form the Arabic imperative *Kun*, “Be” – God’s command which brought the universe into existence.

are from discourse.

- 8 *bā 'ebārāt-e takallof chand pardāzad havas
yā 'Alī enshā' kon o dar 'elm-o-fann ātash fekan*

با عبارات تکلف چند پردازد هوس
یا علی انشا کن و در علم و فن آتش فکن

How long will lust construct
such difficult and tedious expressions?
'Alī, compose for us!
Set fire to the arts and sciences.

- 9 *īn-qadar az feṭrat-e nāqeṣ kamāl-e āgahī-st
Bīdel-am joz 'ājezī nag(o)shūd rāh-ī fekr-e man*

اینقدر از فطرت ناقص کمال آگهی است
بیدلم جز عاجزی نگشود راهی فکر من

The perfection of enlightened awareness
can arise at least this much
from an imperfect given nature:
I am Bīdel.
My thoughts
have paved no roads
except towards practicing submission.¹⁴¹

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

*Gardūn-vār kham-e hazār mo 'abbed-e taslīm be yek kāse-ye jabīn daryūze kardam tā
sejde-ī az dūr be ān āstān-e jalāl-āsheyān be jā āvordam, ammā haybat-e ḥozūr-ash band
band be godāz-e zahre anbāshte būd va larze dar banā-ye esteqāmat-am joz gard az-
ham-forū-rīkhtan nagozāshte.*

گردون‌وار خم هزار معبد تسلیم به یک کاسه جبین در یوزه کردم تا سجده‌ای از دور به آن آستان جلال آشیان به جا
آوردم اما هیبت حضورش بند بند به گداز زهره انباشته بود و لرزه در بنای استقامتم جز گرد از هم فرو ریختن
نگذاشته.

Like the crooked-spined horizon, I encased a thousand bent backs of submissive devotion within the single wine-cup of my creased forehead, which I turned into a pious begging-bowl. I did this, so that I could perform the prostration of worship from afar before that threshold which is the abode of [God's] glory. However, reverent fear of His presence had melted my courage, binding it with shackles and

¹⁴¹ The emphatic repeated stress on “I”, “my” thoughts, stating his own name – and even the active-agent Arabic form of ‘ājez (one who performs humility) – belies Bīdel’s humble assertions of submissive self-erasure.

bonds; and timid trembling and tremors in the foundation of my upright integrity left me with nothing but the dust of scattered irresolution.

Na tāqat-e bāz-gashtan ke agar gardam bīrūn-e ān bārgāh shesh jehat masdūd mī-dīdam, na yārā-ye pīsh-raftan ke bī-da 'vat-e qabūl-ash, dastgāh-e eqbāl mafqūd mī-andīshīdam.

نه طاقت بازگشتن که اگر کردم بیرون آن بارگاه شش جهت مسدود می‌دیدم نه یارای پیش رفتن که بی‌دعوت قبولش دستگاه اقبال مفقود می‌اندیشیدم.

I could not turn back, for if I were to turn away, I'd see the six orientations outside that [divine] court blocking my path. Nor did I have the courage to go forward when invited to do so by His favorable acceptance [of me]; so I considered [my] good fortune's authority to be lost.

[Quatrain]

Meter: -- ˘ ˘ - ˘ - | ˘ - - ˘ ˘ -

(→)

Hazaj-e moṣamman-e akhrab al-ṣadr va **maqḅūz** al-ḥashv va **makfūf** al-ḥashv va **majbūb** al-ḥarb (E.S. #5.1.13), a quatrain meter.

maf'ūlo mafā'elon mafā'īlo fa'al

hazaj = *mafā'ilon mafā'ilon mafā'ilon mafā'ilon*

First foot (ṣadr): *mafā'ilon + kharb* → *maf'ūlo*

Second foot (ḥashv): *mafā'ilon + qabz* → *mafā'elon*

Third foot (ḥashv): *mafā'ilon + kaff* → *mafā'īlo*

Fourth foot (ḥarb): *mafā'ilon + jabb* → *fa'al*

Qāfeye: -ang

Radīf: nabūd [it wasn't / there wasn't]

*tā nāle konam be sāz-am āhang nabūd
joz qāfeye-ye dam-zadan-am tang nabūd¹⁴²
tā pīsh ravam adab sar-e rāham dāsht
tā bar-gardam ān-qadar-am rang nabūd*

تا ناله کنم به سازم آهنگ نبود
جز قافیه دم زدنم تنگ نبود
تا پیش روم ادب سر راهم داشت
تا بر کردم آنقدرم رنگ نبود

As I lamented,
my instrument was not in tune.
My speech was not constricted
except by rhyme.
Courteous civility kept me stranded
at the road's beginning,
preventing me from going forward.
And yet I did not have

¹⁴² This hemistich does not quite conform to the meter.

enough brave colors
to turn back.

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

*Nāgāh ṣalā-ye karam dar-e raḥmat-ī bar rū-yam goshūd va be zabān-e faṣāḥat-e bayān-navāz-ash īn khaṭāb-am farmūd ke “Nazdīk-tar ā, tā be zeyārat-e īn janāb-e moqaddas, **ghobār-e tavahhom az āyīne-ye takhayyol bar-dārī va be vasīle-ye īn taqarrob-e ettefāq-ī, dāman-e jam ‘īyat-e davām az dast nagozārī.**”*

ناگاه صلاى كرم در رحمتى بر رويم گشود و به زبان فصاحت بيان نوازش اين خطابم فرمود كه نزديكتر آ تا به زيارت اين جناب مقدس غبار توهم از آيينه تخیل بر دارى و به وسيله اين تقرب اتفاقى دامن جمعيت دوام از دست مگذارى.

Suddenly, an invitation issued by divine generosity opened the doors of mercy before me, and spoke these words to me in eloquent language and soothing discourse: “Come closer, so that by undertaking pilgrimage to this, His holy place, you might remove all **dust of illusion** from **the mirror of your imagination**, and so that, through this blessed event of attaining proximity [to God], you might never let the hem of **eternal composure** fall from your hands.”

*Jazbe-ye kayfiyat-e ān khaṭāb hūshī dar man nagozāsht tā be ādāb-e emteyāz-e ‘abd-o-rabb tavānam pardākht va kashesh-e ān raḥmat chandān **mota`ammel-am ravā nadāsht ke rotbe-ye khāk az sepehr tavānam shenākht.***

جذبہ کیفیات آن خطاب هوشی در من نگذاشت تا به آداب امتیاز عبد و رب توام پرداخت و کشش آن رحمت چندان متأمل روا نداشت که رتبه خاک از سپهر توام شناخت.

The attraction [I experienced at hearing] the quality of this speech left me without a shred of consciousness; but as a result, I made an attempt to display the courteous civilities proper to distinctions in rank between Slave and Lord. The pull [I felt in experiencing] that compassionate invitation did not allow me to pause in attentive slow reflection even for a moment; however, this made me able to discriminate between the lowly station of dust from the lofty rank of the sky.

Bī-ekhteyār qadam az sar davānīdam va khod rā be sāye-ye shafaqat-pīrāye-ash rasānīdam.

بی اختیار قدم از سر دوانیدم و خود را به سایه شفقت پیرایه اش رسانیدم.

Through no will of my own, I dispatched my feet to the end of the road, and delivered myself unto His compassion-adorned shadow.

Fazl-e yektāyī-ye valā-yash be dowlāt-e etteḥād-ī moṣṣūl-am gardānīd ke pahlū-ye rāst-am az moqāranat-e pahlū-ye chap-ash fāṣele-ye doyī dar-nayāft va mo`ānaqe-ye eltefāt-e robūbiyat-ash ‘oḏv-‘oḏv-am az ān paykar-e raf`at farq-e jodāyī nashekāft.

فضل یکتایی ولایت به دولت اتحادی موصول گردانید که پهلو راستم از مقارنت پهلو چپش فاصله دویی در نیافت و معافه التفات ربوبیتش عضو عضو از آن پیکر رفات فرق جدایی نشکافت.

The virtue of the oneness of His authority joined me to the good fortune of unified friendship: my right side was in such close proximity to His left side, that there was not even the smallest interval of duality between them. The embrace of His friendly Lordship could not cleave any part of my body form that high form with even the smallest measure of separation.

Chūn ṭeḡl-ī ke dar kenār-e pedar shesh jehat-ash mobārak-bād(-e) amn rasānad, yā majrūḡ-ī ke āghūsh-e marham-ash be rāhat-ābād-e bestar-e taskīn neshānad.

چون طفلی که در کنار پدرش شش جهتش مبارکباد امن رساند یا مجروحی که آغوش مرهمش به راحتباد بستر تسکین نشاند.

I was like a child embraced by his father, caught up in the complete blessed security of that embrace on all six sides; I was like a patient who is treated to the embrace of soothing balm and then is gently placed upon the comfortable sheets of bedrest.

Narm-ī az ān pahlū eḡsās kardam ke agar tā qeyāmat āb gardam az 'ohde-ye sharm-e loṭf-ash bar-āmadan tar-ī-hā-ye 'araq bāyad-am shomord va garm-ī az ān masās mo 'āyane nemūdam ke har chand dar cheshme-ye āḡṭāb ghūṭe zanam moqābel-e tāb-e mehr-ash joz enḡe 'āl-e afsordeḡ pīsh natavānam bord.

نرمی ای از آن پاهلو احساس کردم که اگر تا قیامت آب گردم از عهده شرم لطفش بر آمدن تری های عرق بایدم شمرد و گرمی ای از آن مساس معاینه نمودم که هر چند در چشمه آفتاب غوطه زدم مقابل تاب مهرش جز انفعال افسردگی پیش نتوانم برد.

I felt a softness as I touched His side, such that even if I were to melt with shame till Judgement Day, I could not repay the debt of shame I incurred from His kindness, even were I to endlessly count the many moistures in the sweat of trying to do so. I warmth appeared to me from that touch, such that however much were I to dive into the wellspring of the sun, I could never present anything before the splendor of His brilliant love except my shame of cold disappointment.

Va har gāh be takhayyol-e ān molāyamat mī-pardāzam, sar-e mū-ī dar khod namī-yābam ke tā falak gardan bālīdan nayafrāzad va har vaqt be taṣavvor-e ān makromat vā-mī-rasam zarre-ī az ajzā-ye khod namī-bīnam ke be sīne-mālī dastgāh-e 'arsh natāzad.

و هر گاه به تخیل آن ملایمت می پردازم سر مویی در خود نمی یابم که تا فلک گردن بالیدن نیفزارد و هر وقت به تصور آن مکرمت و امرسم ذره ای از اجزای خود نمی بینم که به سینه مالی دستگاه عرش نتازد.

And every time I tried to imagine that [divine] guidance, every follicle within myself stretched its head sky-high with vain boasting; and every time I thought I had succeeded in imagining that [divine] greatness, I saw how not an atom of any

part of myself could ever reach His powerful throne – not even by enacting the lowest and humblest prostrations.

[Quatrain]

Meter _ _ _ | _ _ | _ _ | _ _ | _ _

(→)

Hazaj-e mošamman-e akhram al-šadr va ashtar al-ḥashv va makfūf al-ḥashv va majbūb al-ẓarb

(E.S.#3.3.13 (var.), a robā'ī meter)

Maf'ūlon fā'elon mafā'īlo fa'al

Hazaj = mafā'īlon mafā'īlon mafā'īlon mafā'īlon

First foot (šadr): mafā'īlon + kharm = maf'ūlon

Second foot (ḥashv): mafā'īlon + shatr = fā'elon

Third foot (ḥashv): mafā'īlon + kaff = mafā'īlo

Fourth foot (ẓarb): mafā'īlon + jabb = fā'al

Qāfeye: -owr-e

Radif: karam ast [it is... of divine generosity]

*gar ṭab'-e rasā qābel-e ghowr-e karam ast
yā maḥram kār-e faẓl o ṭowr-e karam ast
mosht-e khāk-am chaman demāgh ast emrūz
az mastī-hā mapors dowr-e karam ast*

گر طبع رسا قابل غور کرم است
یا محرم کار فضل و طور کرم است
مشت خاکم چمن دماغ است امروز
از مستی‌ها می‌پرس دور کرم است

If a capable nature is worthy
of deep contemplation of divine generosity,
O intimate companion!
This is the work of virtue,
and the style of divine generosity.
I am a handful of dust,
but today – my mind is a garden;
Don't ask about inebriated states;
it's all an intoxicating round
of divine generosity.

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

Dar ḥālat-ī ke sarāpā-ye khod rā maḥv-e ān akhlāq moshāhade kardam va bar shobohāt-e owhām-e doyī dar-e ghayrat bar-āvordam, zabān-e so'al-e jor'at-āhang moddā'ā gardīd va lab-e ḥayrat-navā āyīne-ye ezhār-e maṭlab be šayqal rasānīd ke emshab rasūl-e khodā rā šallā allāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam be kh'āb dīde-am va farq-e neyāz be zānū-ye robūbiyat-e panāh-ash mālīde.

در حالتی که سرایای خود را محو آن اخلاق مشاهده کردم و بر شبهات اوهام دویی در غیرت بر آوردم زبان سؤال جرأت آهنگ مدعا گردید و لب حیرت‌نوا آینه اظهار مطلب به صیقل رسانید که امشب رسول خدا را صلی الله علیه و سلم به خواب دیده‌ام و فرق نیاز به زانوی ربوبیت پناهش مالیده.

In that state, wherein **I experienced myself** as being erased in that [divine] nature and closed the doors to all zealous doubts raised by illusions of duality, my tongue began to formulate a bold question, and my lips, brimming with sounds of wonder, fully polished the mirror of meanings, asking: “Have I seen the Lord’s Messenger – *peace be upon Him* – in my dream tonight? Have I rubbed the crown of my humble head against his Lordship’s generous knee?”

Līken andīshe-ye ta ‘bīr-ash ātash dar banā-ye taṣavvor-am mī-andāzad ke ghayrat-e īn ro ‘yā be barāq-e hazār rang nadāmat-am mī-godāzad, ya ‘nī, anvār-e āftāb-e azal bedīn vīrāne tāft va sāye-ye tīre-rūz-e man ham-chenān zamīn-gūr-e negūn-feṭratī mānad, va be ān garmī-hā-ye āghūsh-e raḥmat bī-ḥessī-ye fīnat-am pahlū-ye afsordegī bar-nagardānad.

لیکن اندیشه تعبیرش آتش در بنای تصورم می‌اندازد که غیرت این رؤیا به برق هزار رنگ ندامتم می‌گذارد یعنی انوار آفتاب ازل بدین ویرانه تافت و سایه تیرروز من همچنان زمینگیر نگون‌فطرتی ماند و به آن گرمی‌های آغوش رحمت بی‌حسی طینتم پهلوی افسردگی بر نگرداند.

However: anxious thoughts about the correct interpretation [of this dream] kindles a fire in the very foundation of my imagination. The ardent zeal of this visionary experience melts me, striking me with the lightning of a thousand colors of regret. That is, the lights of [His] eternal sun shone upon this waste land, and my black-fated shadow still remains thus paralyzed and earth-bound by my own inverted given nature, and the senselessness of my clay-like disposition does not turn its side towards the many warmths of that compassionate embrace.¹⁴³

Be īn šūrat-e negarīstan-am gerīstan dārad va be īn mahrumī-ye dīdan-am

[p.303]

be dīde nam mī-āvarad.

به این صورت نگریستم گریستن دارد و به این محرومی دیدم به دیده نم می‌آورد.

I can only weep at this way of [not] seeing; such absence of [true] seeing brings tears to my eyes.

¹⁴³ The verbal tenses here are significant: though recounted as an event in the past, this moment brims with the vitality of a still-present-tense moment: “anxious thoughts about the correct interpretation of this dream *are still kindling* a fire.” This prefigures the trauma-like perpetual-present experience of almost-complete proximity to God, which, at the last minute, ends in the tragic perpetual estrangement from final union which is described in the remainder of the paragraph.

Zamzame-ye qānūn-e asrār taheye-ye sorūr-e jāvīd-am nemūd va farmūd: “Ta ‘bīr-e kh’āb-at īn ast ke ḥaqīqat-e moḥammadēyye hame vaqt sāye-afkan-e aḥvāl-e to-st bā ān-ke ghaflat cheshm-at nagoshāyad. Bāṭen-e novobbat hīch-gāh dāman-e tarbiyat az sar-at bar namī-gīrad har chand ādāb-e zāher az to be jā namī-āyad.”

زمزمه قانون اسرار تهیه سرور جاویدم نمود و فرمود تعبیر خوابت این است که **حقیقت محمدیه** همه وقت سایه‌افکن احوال توست با آنکه غفلت چشمت نگشاید. باطن نبوت هیچ‌گاه دامن تربیت از سرت بر نمی‌گیرد هر چند آداب ظاهر از تظ به جا نمی‌آید.

A gentle murmur from the instrument of divine mysteries prepared to impart infinite joy unto me, saying: “This is the interpretation of your dream: **Muḥammadan Reality** casts its shadow upon all your states at every moment of time, even though ignorance keeps your eyes from being opened to it. The inner content of prophethood has never removed the veil of instructive education from your head, however much your outward courteous civilities have fallen short.”¹⁴⁴

Be mojarad-e estemā’ ehtezāz-e paykar-am khorūsh-e qeyāmat angīkht va shīrāze-ye ḥavāss-o-qavāyem be ḥarakat-e mozhgān selsele-ye rabṭ gosīkht.

به مجرد استماع اهتزاز پیکرم خروش قیامت انگیخت و شیرازه حواس و قوایم به حرکت مژگان سلسله ربط گسیخت.

As soon as these words were spoken and I could no long hear anything, my physical form began to tremble and produce a lament as loud as that of Judgement Day. The manuscript-binding of my senses and limbs was torn, undone by the movements of my eyelashes.

Savād-e āgāhī ke mowqūf-e zamān-e kh’āb būd varaq-e rowshanī bar-gardānd¹⁴⁵ va ma’nī-ye ta ‘bīr-ī ke dars-e sa’ādat-e yek ‘ālam-e bīdārī dāsht moẓmar-e noskhe-ye khayāl mānd.

¹⁴⁴ Although grammatically impersonal, this direct speech is likely the voice of Muḥammad himself. The technical Sufi concept of *ḥaqīqa muḥammadiyya*, “Muḥammad’s true reality” or “the Muḥammadan reality,” is the idea that the absolute Oneness of God and the unity of being (i.e., that all creation *is God*) is best expressed through the all-encompassing, omniscient, time-transcending figure of the Perfect Man – that is, Muḥammad. On this term and its significance in Ibn ‘Arabī, and especially on its interconnections with *naḥas-e raḥmānī* and the imaginal realm, see Michel Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean Without Shore: Ibn Arabi, the Book, and the Law*, trans. David Streight (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), 43-45 and 98.

¹⁴⁵ Bīdel may have intentionally selected verbs here – *gardāndan* and *māndan* – which are impossible to interpret with certainty (beyond what can be supplied by context) as either present-tense or past-tense in the third-person singular form. I have rendered them in the present tense, to emphasize their life-long present-ness: “the meaning of this dream interpretation *still remains hidden* in the manuscript of my imagination.”

سواد آگاهی که موقوف زمان خواب بود ورق روشنی بر گرداند و معنی تعبیری که درس سعادت یک عالم بیداری داشت مضمّر نسخه خیال ماند.

The blackened rough draft of my enlightened awareness, which had been consigned to stillness during the time of the dream, now turns the page of illumination over – and **the meaning of the dream interpretation**, which contained the lesson of a whole blessed world of enlightenment, **remains hidden in the manuscript of the imaginary.**¹⁴⁶

[Poem fragment, 11 lines]

Meter: ˘ --- | ˘ --- | ˘ --- | ˘ ---

(→)

Hazaj-e mošamman-e sālem (E.S. #2.1.16)

Mafā ʿilon mafā ʿilon mafā ʿilon mafā ʿilon

Hazaj = *Mafā ʿilon mafā ʿilon mafā ʿilon mafā ʿilon*

All four feet sālem.

Qāfeye: -ā

Radīf: rā

- 1 *namī-dānam che khʿāndam z-īn dabestān-e khayāl-enshā
ke tā mozhgān goshūdam shostam ān ovrāq-e ajzā rā*

نمی‌دانم چه خواندم زین دبستان خیال انشا
که تا مزگان گشودم شستم آن اوراق اجزا را

I know not what I've read
in this grammar school
of composing by imagination.
As I opened my eyes,
I washed clean
all the scattered pages.

- 2 *che ʿālam būd yā rab(b) k-az savād-e vos ʿat-ābād-ash
be cheshm-e zarre dīdam sorme-kesh ajzā-ye ṣaḥrā rā*

چه عالم بود یا رب کز سواد وسعت آبادش
به چشم ذره دیدم سرمه‌کش اجزای صحرا را

What a world it was! O Lord,
from the blackened rough-draft
of its habitable expanse,
I saw, with the eyes of atoms,
the kohl-pen outline

¹⁴⁶ There seems to be an important contradiction here: hasn't he just reported the the dream interpretation verbatim? Stressing the word *ma ʿnī*, "inner meaning," might get us out of this interpretive tangle: while the "outward form" – the words – of the interpretation have stayed with Bīdel and are transcribed here in his account, yet their *inner meaning* is what eludes him now.

of all the corners of the desert.

- 3 *qalam k-īn-jā daqīq oftād naqb-e ganj-e taḥqīq-ash
khaṭ(t)-e pīshānī-ye shabnam nevesht amvāj-e daryā rā*

قلم کاینجا دقیق افتاد نقب گنج تحقیقش
خط پیشانی شبنم نوشت امواج دریا را

The pen, which mined the treasures
of its investigations into true reality
with elegance and subtlety,
Wrote a line along the dewdrop's forehead
and made the drop a wave
upon the ocean.

- 4 *hamīn 'ālam mohayyā dāsht az sāmān-e esteghnā
tamāsha-yī ke bar dar mī-neshānad cheshm-e bīnā rā*

همین عالم مهیا داشت از سامان استغنا
تماشایی که بر در می نشاند چشم بینا را

By arranging the apparatus
of contented sufficiency,
this very world prepared

This spectacle – which it placed
upon the threshold
of my visionary eyes.

- 5 *taḥayyor bas ke shod ṣayqal-gar-e āyīne-ye rāz-am
nakardam farq az ham-jowhar-e penhān-o-paydā rā*

تحیر بس که شد صیقلگر آینه رازم
نکردم فرق ز هم جوهر پنهان و پیدا را

My wonder polished to perfection
the mirror of mysteries
before me;
I no longer saw a difference
between the hidden and the revealed:
they share one lustrous essence.

- 6 *ke mī-gūyad laṭāfat rang-e šūrat bar-namī-dārad
beyā k-īn-jā 'eyān bīnī parī-zādān-e mīnā rā*

که می‌گوید لطافت رنگ صورت بر نمی‌دارد
بیا کاینجا عیان بینی پریشان مینا را

Who will say
that graceful elegance
will not remove the colors of forms?
Come forward! Here you'll clearly see
the fairies in the bottle.

- 7 *agar mozhgān be ham bandī nabāshī z-īn fazā ghāfel
goshād-e chesm dar aghūsh dārad tangī-ye jā rā*

اگر مژگان به هم بندی نباشی زین فضا غافل
گشاد چشم در آغوش دارد تنگی جا را

If you close your eyes,
do not be ignorant
of this envioning place:
The opening of eyes
embraces the constrictedness
of space.

- 8 *ghorūr-e sa'y-e bīdārī ze ghaflat bar-namī-āyad
nagardad kh'āb agar āyīne-dār-e āgahī mā rā*

غرور سعی بیداری ز غفلت بر نمی‌آید
نگردد خواب اگر آینه‌دار آگاهی ما را

Enlightenment's proud efforts
cannot transcend ignorance
– unless
Our dreams
hold up a mirror
to our enlightenment.

- 9 *shekast-e bāl-e tāqat bār-e parvāz-e degar dārad
şafīr-ī mī-zanad 'ajz az tanīn-e pashshe 'anqā rā*

شکست بال طاقت بار پرواز دگر دارد
صفیری می‌زند عجز از طنین پشه عنقا را

Ability's fractured wings are burdened
by a different kind of flight:
The phoenix's humility
strikes up a song
with a lowly fly's

fluttering wings.

- 10 *nabūdam qabel-e ān jelve ammā faẓl-e yektāyī*
be īn rang āb dād āyīne-ye owhām-farsā rā

نبودم قابل آن جلوه اما فضل یکتایی
به این رنگ آب داد آئینه اوهام فرسا را

I was not worthy
of this splendor; but nonetheless –
the virtue of God's Oneness
Used these colors
to wash clean
my illusion-rusted mirror.

- 11 *negah por-ghāfel ast az shūkhī-ye golzār-e bī-rangī*
magar dar kh'āb bīnad Bīdel-e mā īn tamāshā rā

نگه پر غافل است از شوخی گلزار بی‌رنگی
مگر در خواب بیند بیدل ما این تماشا را

Vision is entirely ignorant
of the colorless garden's
mirthful features;
Only through dreams
could our Bīdel behold
this spectacle.

T1.E4.25 Conclusion of the Fourth Element **Khāteme-ye 'onşor-e chahārom¹⁴⁷**

Selection: final prose paragraph and final poem

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

Tazyī '-e owqāt-e hoẓūr dar parde-ye şarīr-e qalam bī-shūr tazallom-ī nīst, khāme-vār
tā kojā be tahrīr bāyad farsūd? Noqşān-sarmāye-ye hāl dar şūrat-e ārāyesh-e qīl-o-qāl
faryād-ī ast, chūn sokhan tā chand bād-paymā-ye taqrīr bāyad būd?

تضییع اوقات حضور در پرده صریر قلم بی‌شور تظلمی نیست خامه‌وار تا کجا به تحریر باید فرسود؟ نقصان
سرمایه حال در صورت آرایش قیل و قال فریادی است چون سخن تا چند بادپیمای تقریر باید بود؟

¹⁴⁷ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, IV:303-305.

The diminuendo of present moments within the mode of the pen's song contains an oppressive clamour. How long, then, must one become worn down to nonexistence through endless writing, like a reed-pen? The insufficient supply of present instants is a loud lament masked by ornamental chatter. How long must discourse thus measure the wind, uselessly, with narrative?

'Enān-e nafas az tag-o-tāz-e bayān keshīdan vaqār-e rotbe-ye taqrīr ast, va zabān-e qalam az ḥarf-e medād pāk-kardan ṣafā-ye jowhar-e taḥrīr.

عنان نفس از تگ و تاز بیان کشیدن وقار رتبه تقریر است و زبان قلم از حرف مداد پاک کردن صفای جوهر
تحریر.

To rein in breath, to bring exposition's charging and galloping to a halt – this is oral narrative's loftiest prerogative. And to scrub the pen's tongue clean from ink-made letters – this is written composition's most essential purity.

[Poem fragment, 12 lines]

Meter: - - - - | - - - - | - - - - | - - - -

(→)

Ramal-e mošamman-e sālem al-ṣadr va l-ḥashv va **maḥzūf** al-ḥarb (E.S. #2.4.15)

Fā'elāton fā'elāton fā'elāton fā'elon

Ramal = *fā'elāton fā'elāton fā'elāton fā'elāton*

First foot (ṣadr): *fā'elāton* (sālem)

Second foot (ḥashv): *fā'elāton* (sālem)

Third foot (ḥashv): *fā'elāton* (sālem)

Fourth foot (ḥarb): *fā'elāton* + ḥazf → *fā'elon*

Qāfeye: -ār

Radīf: ~

1 *Bīdel az khejlat-navāyān-e basāt-e jor'at-am*
bā do 'ālam mā-vo-man par mī-zanam dar sorme-zār

بیدل از زجالت نوایا بساط جرّاتم
با دو عالم ما و من پر می زخم در سرمه زار

I am Bīdel, and I am one
of those who boldly sing of shame
upon this outspread earth.
As we-and-I, and with both worlds
I spread my wings and soar
throughout these fields of vision
annointed with collyrium.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ This allusion to winged flight prefigures the phoenix in the last line. *Sorme-zār*, lit. “a field where collyrium grows,” is not (to my knowledge) attested in any dictionary. With this compound, Bīdel reverses the expected order of things, for collyrium (kohl) is a product of human manufacture, an eyeliner made from a plant (*galangale*, which grows throughout Asia). This field where “dark eyeliner” grows refers perhaps to the *savād* – the fertile black-soiled regions found around the outer perimeter of towns and cities, and also meaning “rough-draft

- 2 *reshte-ye sâzī be qānūn-e taḥayyor baste-am
dar khamūshī nā-gozīr-am dar feghān bī-ekhteyār*

رشته سازی به قانون تحیر بسته‌ام
در خموشی ناگزیرم در فغان بی‌اختیار

I've strung the instrument of wonder
with well-tuned strings
of harmony and equilibrium:
I fall silent
– unintentionally.
I begin to sing laments
– without free will.

- 3 *gar khamosh gardam nafas bar ham zanad bonyād-e man
v-ar be ḥarf āyam dehad lab-hā-ye khāmūsh-am feshār*

گر خموش گردم نفس بر هم زند بنیاد من
ور به حرفت آیم دهد لب‌های خاموشم فشار

If I fall silent,
then the movements of my breath
bring down my foundations.
And if I try to speak,
then silent lips oppress me.

- 4 *chūn qalam dar vādī-ye 'ebrat rahī ṭay(y) mī-konam
sar-negūnī bār-e gardan sejde pīshānī-savār*

چون قلم در وادی عبرت رهی طی می‌کنم
سرنگونی بار گردن سجده پیشانی سوار

Like a reed-pen, I cut a path
across wide steppes of warning:
Being held upside down
is the burden on my neck;
prostration sits astride
upon my forehead.

- 5 *har qadar az jabhe-ye ṭāqat 'araq gol mī-konad
feṭrat-e nāqeṣ be vahm-e noqte mī-gardad dochār*

manuscript” (because blackened) – a theme throughout the autobiography, and especially relevant in the coda to this final fourth element (“earth”). The gist of this line is visionary illusion: as a phoenix, Bīdel – an ontologically tenuous fusion of “I” and “we” – soars through his own field of vision. The poor yield of this field’s crop is the subject of this final poem.

هر قدر از جبهه طاقت عرق گل می‌کند
فطرت ناقص به و هم نقطه می‌گردد دچار

However much the sweat of effort
blooms upon my able forehead,
My defective given nature
encounters only the illusion
of points and marks.

- 6 *khāme rā sa 'y-e negūn sharmende-ye taḥrīr kard
sejde īn-jā mī-konad khaṭ(t)-ī be pā-laghz āshekār*

خامه را سعی نگون شرمنده تحریر کرد
سجده اینجا می‌کند خطی به پالغز آشکار

The reed-pen is ashamed
of its inverted efforts
at written composition.
Here, all its prostrations show
these written lines
were made by stumbling error.

- 7 *āsemān bālīdam o āfāq gol kardam be vahm
gāh nūr-am būd jowlān-gāh-e shūkhī gāh nār*

آسمان بالیدم و آفاق گل کردم به وهم
گاه نورم بود جولانگاه شوخی گاه نار

I grew boastful, I bragged of skies.
By the power of my illusion,
I made horizons bloom.
Sometimes my mirthful battlefields
were filled with God's own light;
At other times,
they burned with hellfire.

- 8 *'ālam-ī gol kardam ammā dar nazar-gāh-e yaqīn
dāgh-e mowhūmī naraft az fīnat-e bī-nang-o- 'ār*

عالمی گل کردم اما در نظرگاه یقین
داغ موهومی نرفت از طینت بی‌ننگ و عار

I made a world appear, I made it bloom.
But, in the field of vision
of certain knowledge,

Illusion's burn-mark never left
my clay-made nature,
which has no modesty or shame.

- 9 *gar 'adam gūyam 'adam mostaghni ast az mā-vo-man
v-ar ze hasti dam zadam kū sāz-o-barg-e e 'tebār*

گر عدم گویم عدم مستغنی است از ما و من
ور ز هستی دم زدم کو ساز و برگ اعتبار

If I speak of nonexistence,
this nonexistence is free
from “we-and-I.”
And if I talk of being,
where are its provisions and supplies
of credibility?

- 10 *nā-qabul-e hasti yo ān-gāh mardūd-e 'adam
īn hesāb-e monfa 'el rā az kojā gīram shomār*

ناقبول هستی و آنگاه مردود عدم
این حساب منفعل را از کجا گیرم شمار

Sometimes, I am rejected
by existence.
At other times, I am excluded
by nonbeing.
Where¹⁴⁹ will I ever calculate
this shameful sum
into a final number?

- 11 *hīch-kas chūn man asīr-e vahm-e īn-o-ān mabād
tā nafas par mī-zanad bā khejlat oftād(e) ast kār*

هیچ کس چون من اسیر و هم این و آن مباد
تا نفس پر می زند با خجلت افتاده است کار

May no one be like me, held captive –
trapped in the illusion
of this-and-that;
So long as breath has wings and flies,

¹⁴⁹ “Where” (meaning properly “how”): this underscores the double meaning of “time” (*gāh*) in Persian (sometimes, *gāh*; at other times, at that time, *ān-gāh*) – which means *both* “time” and “place.” This ambiguity is particularly fitting in the present couplet, which talks of the two “realms” of existence and nonexistence.

it must fall in
with shame.

- 12 *bī-par-o-bālī jonūn-parvāz-e ‘anqā hemmat-ī-st*
ay Karīm īn hīch-e hīch-e hīch rā ma ‘zūr dār

بی پر و بالی جنون پرواز عنقا همتی است
ای کریم این هیچ هیچ هیچ را معذور دار

The ‘*anqā*’s wingless flight of madness
is an ambitious aim;
Generous Lord, please forgive
this nothing’s
nothing’s
nothing.¹⁵⁰

IV Concluding Poem and Chronogram¹⁵¹

- T1.C Poem Fragment, Containing the Chronogram (the Year in Which *Chahār ‘onşor* was Completed)**
Qeṭ‘e-ye tāriḵh-e khatm-e ketāb

[Poem fragment, 7 lines]

Meter: ˘ --- | ˘ --- | ˘ ---

(→)

Hazaj-e mosaddas-e sālem-e maḥzūf al-żarb (E.S. #2.1.11)

Mafā ‘ilon mafā ‘ilon fo ‘ilon

Hazaj = *Mafā ‘ilon mafā ‘ilon mafā ‘ilon*

First foot (şadr), second and third feet (ḥashvayn) = sālem

Fourth foot (żarb): *mafā ‘ilon + ḥazf = fo ‘ilon*

Qāfeye: -ā

Radīf: raft (it/she/he went/left/passed)

- 1 *be-ḥamdollāh ze khatm-e chār ‘onşor*
farah pīsh āyad o gham bar qafā raft

بحمدالله ز ختم چار عنصر

¹⁵⁰ For a discussion of these last two lines, and significance of the treble structure of Bīdel’s last signature (“nothing’s nothing’s nothing”), see Chapter 5.

¹⁵¹ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, IV:305.

فرح پیش آمد و غم بر قفا رفت

Praise be to God for
for this Conclusion
of *The Four Elements*;
Joy came forth,
and grief
was **left** behind.

- 2 *be sayr-āhangī-ye qānūn-e asrār*
ze sāz-e jahīl sāmān-e navā raft

به سیر آهنگی قانون اسرار
ز ساز جهل سامان و نوا رفت

By the far-travelling harmony
of the instrument of secrets,
Song's accoutrements **left**
well-tempered ignorance behind.

- 3 *bahār-ī daste-band-e rang-o-bū shod*
ke andūh-e khazān az bāgh-e mā raft

بهارى دستبند رنگ و بو شد
که اندوه خزان از باغ ما رفت

Spring became bouquet-bound
with colors and scents
When autumn's melancholy
departed from our garden.

- 4 *dam-ī k-andīshe-ye taḥqīq-pardāz*
be fekr-e sāl-e īn tahrīr-hā raft

دمى كاندیشه تحقيق پرداز
به فكر سال اين تحريرها رفت

The moment heavy thought,
bent on inquiring into Truth,
Left, departed in contemplation
of the year which this writing
was composed.

- 5 *do tārīkh az ḥesāb āvard bīrūn*
ke dakhīl-e shobhe khūn gasht o khaṭā raft

دو تاریخ از حساب آورد بیرون
که دخل شبیه خون گشت و خطا رفت

When once all doubt was barred from entry,
and all threat of error **was removed**,
Two dates
were brought forth
from the tally:

- 6 *nokhost afsūn-ī az e 'jāz pardākht*
ke az afrād-e har onṣor fanā raft

نخست افسونی از اعجاز پرداخت
که از افراد هر عنصر فنا رفت

The first date is a spell
wrought from this miracle:
That “annihilation” **was subtracted**
from every separate “element.”

- 7 *dovom dar ejtemā 'e chār 'onṣor*
noḥūsāt būd chūn zang az šafā raft

دوم در اجتماع چار عنصر
نحوست بود چون زنگ از صفا رفت

The second date was this:
after multiplying
the four “elements” together,
Like rust, “ill fortune”
was removed from purity.¹⁵²

¹⁵² The year per both the “first” and “second” methods of reckoning is 1116H (1704CE). Date 1 (“*nokhost*”, line 6): first, annihilation (*fanā*, 131) left (i.e., “was subtracted from”) “element” (‘*onṣor*, 410): $410 - 131 = 279$. This number is then *multiplied by 4* (to reconstitute the quartet of all “four elements” together): $279 \times 4 = 1116$. Date 2 (“*dovvom*”, line 7): by this reckoning, first the “four elements” taken together are multiplied (“*ejtemā*”, “gathered together”): ‘*onṣor*, $410 \times 4 = 1640$. Then, “ill fortune” (*noḥūsāt*, 524) is deducted from this whole comprising all four elements: $1640 - 524 = 1116$. ‘Abdollah Valīpūr gives a full account of this chronogram in “A Journey through the Wilderness of Meanings of Gazelles: Introduction to *The Four Elements: An Autobiography* by Bīdel of Delhi,” *Āyene-ye mīrās* 36 (1393SH [2014-2015CE]), 232-3. For other date-anchors in *Chahār 'onṣor*, see Alessandro Bausani, “Note su Mirzā Bidel,” *Annales de l'Institut des Etudes Orientales* 6 (1955-1956), 164 and 169-173; and see also Abdul Ghani, *Life and Works of Abdul Qadir Bedil* (Lahore: Publishers United Ltd., 1960), 250-262. For an overview of letter-values in the Persian *abjad* system, see G. Krotkoff, “Abjad,” in the *Encyclopædia Iranica*, I:2, 221-222. Available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/abjad> (accessed on 20 February 2019). Calculations can be made using Theodore Beers’ online *abjad* calculator (<https://www.abjadcalc.com>; last accessed 20 December 2018).

Translation 2 | Selected Lyric Poems by Bīdel (Ghazals | غزلیات)

T2.G1 Mirror in the Dust
Āyīne bar khāk zad ṣon ‘-e yektā | آینه بر خاک زد صنع یکتا
 Ghazal No. 14¹

Meter: --|~--|~--|~--
 (→)

Motaqāreb-e moṣamman-e aṣlam al-ṣadr va sālem al-ḥashv va l-zarb
 E.S. #1.2.11²

fe ‘lon fo ‘ūlon fo ‘ūlon fo ‘ūlon

Motaqāreb = *fo ‘ūlon fo ‘ūlon fo ‘ūlon fo ‘ūlon*

Foot 1: *fo ‘ūlon* + *ṣalm* = *fe ‘lon*

Feet 2-4: *sālem* (*fo ‘ūlon*)

Qāfeye: ~

Radīf: -ā

Notes: Attested in Sarkhūsh, *Kalemāt al-sho ‘arā’*. According to Sarkhūsh, this ghazal is modelled on the *zamīn* of *ghazal(s)* by Ḥāfez.³

14.1 *āyīne bar khāk zad ṣon ‘-e yektā*
tā vā-nemūdand kayfīyat-e mā

آینه بر خاک زد صنع یکتا
 تا و نمودند کیفیت ما

Singularity’s craft
 cast a mirror
 upon the dust
 In order that
 our qualities
 be revealed.

14.2 *bonyād-e ezhār bar rang chīdīm*
khod rā be har rang kardīm rosvā

بنیاد اظهار بر رنگ چیدیم
 خود را به هر رنگ کردیم رسوا

¹ Mīrzā ‘Abd al-Qāder Bīdel Dehlavī, *Kolleyyāt-e Abū l-Ma ‘ānī Mīrzā ‘Abd al-Qāder Bīdel Dehlavī*, ed. Khalīlollāh Khalīlī (Tehrān: Enteshārāt-e Ṭalāye, 1389SH [2010/2011CE]), I:6-7.

² Laurence Paul Elwell-Sutton, *The Persian Metres*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.

³ For analysis of this poem and the Ḥāfez poems upon which it may be based, see Chapter 5.

We constructed the foundation
of what is manifest
upon shifting colors.
We disgraced ourselves
in every tinge and hue.

14.3 *dar parde pokhtīm sowdā-ye khāmī
chandān ke khandīd āyīne bar mā*

در پرده پختیم سودای خامی
چندان که خندید آئینه بر ما

Secretly, behind a veil
we boiled the melancholy
of unripeness –
While that mirror
smiled upon us.

14.4 *az ‘ālam-e fāsh bī-parde gashīm
penhān nabūdan kardīm paydā*

از عالم فاش بی پرده گشتیم
پنهان نبودن کردیم پیدا

We became unveiled:
the revealed outward world
was removed from us:
We discovered
what it is
not to be hidden.

14.5 *mā vo ro ‘ūnat afsāne-ye kī-st
nāz-e parī bast gardan be mīnā*

ما و رعونت افسانه کیست
ناز پری بست گردن به مینا

Whose fairytale is this
that tells the tale of us
and ornamented pride?
The mirthful fairy has been captured,
stoppered,
neck-bound in glass.

14.6 *āyīne-vār-īm mahṛūm-e ‘ebrat
dādand mā rā cheshm-ī ke mag(o)shā*

آینه‌واریم محروم عبرت
دادند ما را چشمی که مگشا

Like mirrors, we are barred
from explanation.
We were given eyes,
and told:
“Keep them closed.”

14.7 *dar-hā-ye ferdows vā-būd emrūz
az bī-demāghī goftīm fardā*

درهای فردوس و ابود امروز
از بی‌دماغی گفتیم فردا

The gates of paradise
were open
today.
Thoughtlessly,
we said:
“Tomorrow.”

14.8 *gowhar gereh bast az bī-neyāzī
dast-ī ke shostīm az āb-e daryā*

گوهر گره بست از بی‌نیازی
دستی که شستیم از آب دریا

The hands we washed,
scrubbed clean
of ocean water
Tied knots of pearls
which fastened
all by themselves.

14.9 *gar jīb-e nāmūs tang-at nagīrad
dar chīn-e dāman khoft(e)-ast šāhrā*

گر جیب ناموس تنگت نگیرد
در چین دامن خفته است صهرا

If the shirt-collar of renown
does not constrict you,
A vast desert lies, asleep
concealed

in your garment's folds.

- 14.10 *ḥayrat-ṭarāz(-)ī-st nayrang-sāz(-)ī-st*
temṣāl(-e) owhām(-e) āyīne donyā

حیرت طراز یست نیرنگ ساز یست
تمثال او هام آینه دنیا

An embroidery of wonder –
a work of deception.
Image – illusion.
Mirror – world.

- 14.11 *kaṣrat nashod maḥv az sāz-e vaḥdat*
ham-chūn khayālāt az shakhṣ-e tanhā

کثرت نشد محو از ساز وحدت
همچون خیالات از شخص تنها

Multiplicity was not erased
by the apparatus
of unity –
Like figments
Imagined
by a single mind.

- 14.12 *vahm-e ta 'alloq bar khod machīnīd*
ṣaḥrā-neshīn-and īn khānemān-hā

وهم تعلق بر خود مچینید
صهرانشینند این خاتمانها

Do not assemble around yourselves
the illusion of association:
Such household possessions
are desert nomads.

- 14.13 *mowjūd nām-ī-st bāqī tavahhom*
az 'ālam-e Kheẓr row tā Masīḥā

موجود نامیست باقی توهم
از عالم خضر رو تا مسیحا

“Existent” is a word;
and all that's left –
illusory imagination.

Leave the realm of Kheẓr.
Go to the Messiah.

14.14 *z-īn ya 's-e manzel mā rā che ḥāṣel*
ham-khāne Bīdel ham-sāye 'anqā

زین یاس منزل ما را چه حاصل
همخانه بیدل همسایه عنقا

This despondent longing
for a dwelling: what profit
does it yield for us?
Bīdel dwells
under the same roof;
the phoenix shares
the neighboring shade.

T2.G2 Scattered Waves Compose the Ocean

Nafas āshofte mī-dārad cho gol jam 'īyat-e mā rā |
بفس آشفته می‌دارد چو گل جمعیت ما را
Ghazal No. 307⁴

Meter: ˘ --- | ˘ --- | ˘ --- | ˘ ---

(→)

Hazaj-e moṣamman-e sālem

E.S. #2.1.16

Mafā 'ilon mafā 'ilon mafā 'ilon mafā 'ilon

Hazaj = *Mafā 'ilon mafā 'ilon mafā 'ilon mafā 'ilon*

All four feet = sālem.

Qāfeye: -ā

Radīf: rā

Notes: Attested in Tāher Naṣrābādī, *Tazkere-ye Naṣrābādī* (1672/1673), in his brief entry on
“‘Abd al-Qāder, Bīdelī [sic] takhalloṣ; ū ham nīz az velāyat-e Lāhūr ast.”⁵

307.1 *nafas āshofte mī-dārad cho gol jam 'īyat-e mā rā*
parīshan mī-nevīsad kelk-e mowj aḥvāl-e daryā rā

بفس آشفته می‌دارد چو گل جمعیت ما را
پریشان می‌نویسد کلک موج احوال دریا را

Breath keeps my collectedness

⁴ Bīdel, *Kolleyāt*, I.139.

⁵ “‘Abd al-Qāder, whose nom de plume is “Bīdelī” [sic]. He too is from Lahore.” (Bīdel is not from Lahore.) For analysis of this biographical compendium and a discussion of the author’s frequently faulty information on poets from Kashmir/northern India, see Chapter 2.

scattered, like a rose.
Distractedly, the pen of waves composes
the ocean's states.

307.2 *dar īn vādī ke mī-bāyad gozasht az har che pīsh āyad
khosh ān rah-row ke dar dāmān-e dī pīchīd fardā rā*

در این وادی که می‌باید گذشت از هر چه پیش آید
خوش آن رهرو که در دامان دی پیچیده فردا را

In this wilderness,
where all comes before
must be overcome,
Happy is that traveller
who twists "tomorrow"
into the hem of "yesterday."

307.3 *ze dard-e maṭlab-e nāyāb ta kay gerye sar kardan
tamannā ākhar az khejlat 'araq kard ashk-e rosvā rā*

ز درد مطلب نایاب تا کی گریه سر کردن
تمنا آخر از خجالت عرق کرد اشک رسوا را

How long will this weeping continue
from the pain of elusive meaning?
In the end, desire broke into a sweat of shame,
its tears of humiliation.

307.4 *be īn forṣat mashow shīrāze-band-e noskhe-ye hastī
saḥar ham dar 'adam kh'āhad farāham kard ajzā rā*

به این فرصت مشو شیرازبند نسخه هستی
سحر هم در عدم خواهد فراهم کرد اجزا را

Do not become a bookbinder
for the manuscript of existence
during this opportune moment;
Even in its nonexistence
dawn assembles
all its scattered parts.

307.5 *godāz-e dard-e olfat fayz-e eksīr-e degar dārad
ze khūn gashtan tavān dar del gereftan jomle a 'zā rā*

گداز درد الفت فیض اکسیر دگر دارد
ز خون گشتن توان در دل گرفتن جمله اعضا را

Burning in pain for companionship
contains the grace
of an elixir of a different sort:
Through perishing,
through bleeding out –
all limbs and parts can be collected in the heart.

307.6 *be jā-ye nāle mī-khīzad ghobār-e khāksārān-at*
ṣedā gard-ī-st/gerd-ī-st yek-sar sāghar-e naqsh-e qadam-hā rā

ب جای ناله می‌خیزد غبار از خاکساران
صدا گردیست یکسر ساغر نقش قدم‌ها را

Before you, dust arises
replacing the laments
of the lowly and the earthbound.
From its beginning to its end,
this dusty echo is a wineglass
full of images of footprints.

307.7 *be āgāhī che emkān ast gardad jam ' khod-dārī*
ke bā har mowj mī-bāyad gozasht az khīsh daryā rā

به آگاهی چه امکان است گردد جمع خودداری
که با هر موج می‌باید گذشت از خویش دریا را

What possibilities
are opened through enlightenment
for mastery of self to be collected?
The ocean has to flow
outside itself
with every wave.

307.8 *dar īn golshan cho gol yek par-zadan rokhṣat namī-bāshad*
magar az rang yābī noskhe bāl-afshānī-ye mā rā

در این گلشن چو گل یک پرزدن رخصت نمی‌باشد
مگر از رنگ یابی نسخه بال‌افشانی‌ما را

In this garden, like a rose
one flight cannot mean
taking leave:
Only in *color* can you find
a manuscript
that copies my winged flight.

307.9 *falak taklīf-e jāh-at gar konad fāl-e hamāqat zan*
ke ghayr az gāv nat(a)vānad keshīdan bār-e donyā rā

فلک تکلیف جاهت گر کند فال حماقت زن
که غیر از گاو نتواند کشیدن بار دنیا را

If the horizons place the burden
of fortune upon you,
take this omen from stupidity:
None can bear
the world's load
except the cow.

307.10 *cherā majnūn-e mā rā dar parīshānī vaṭan nab(o)vad*
ke az chesm-e ghazālān khāne-bar-dūsh ast ṣaḥrā rā

چرا مجنون ما را در پریشانی وطن نبود
که از چشم غزالان خانه بر دوش است صحرا را

Why should my madman
have no homeland
in his scattered state?
Gazelles' eyes
in the desert
are a home.

307.11 *nazākat-hā-st dar āghūsh-e mīnā-khāne-ye ḥayrat*
mozhe bar-ham mazan tā nash(e)kanī rang-e tamāshā rā

نزاکت‌هاست در آغوش میناخانه حیرت
مژه برهم مزن تا نشکنی رنگ تماشا را

Many kinds of elegance
are found in the embrace
of wonder's glass-house.
Don't close your eyes –
for you might shatter
the colors of this spectacle.

307.12 *seyah-rūzī forūgh-e tīre-bakhtān bas bovad Bīdel*
ze dūd-e khīsh bāshad sorme cheshm-e dāgh-e del-hā rā

سیه‌روزی فروغ تیره‌بختان بس بود بیدل
ز دود خویش باشد سرمه چشم داغ دل‌ها را

Bīdel, a black day's work
 must serve as light
 for those with darkened fortunes.
 The eyes of burn-scars on the heart
 are contoured with the kohl
 from their own smoke.

T2.G3 The Phoenix Refrain

Tajdīd seḥr-kārī-st dar jelve-zār-e 'anqā | تجدد سحرکاریست در جلوه زار عنقا
 Ghazal No.114⁶

Meter: -- ~ | - ~ -- | -- ~ | - ~ --

(→)

Możāre 'e **moşamman**-e **akhrab** al-şadrayn

E.S. #4.7.07(2))

maf'ūlo fā 'elāton maf'ūlo fā 'elāton

Możāre ' = *mafā'ilon fā 'elāton mafā'ilon fā 'elāton*

First foot: mafā'ilon + kharb = maf'ūlo

Second foot: sālem

Third foot: mafā'ilon + kharb = maf'ūlo

Fourth foot: sālem

Qāfeye: -ār(-e)

Radīf: 'anqā (phoenix)

114.1 *tajdīd(-e) seḥr-kār(-)ī-st dar jelve-zār-e 'anqā*
şad gardesh ast o yek gol(-)rang-e bahār-e 'ānqā

تجدید سحرکاری است در جلوه زار عنقا
 صد گردش است و یک گل رنگ بهار عنقا

Renewal is the craft of magic
 in the splendor of the **phoenix**:
 The vernal colors of the **phoenix**:
 a hundred turns, a single rose.

114.2 *har chand now-bahār-īm yā jūsh-e lāle-zār-īm*
bāgh-e degar nadārīm ghayr az kenār-e 'anqā

هر چند نو بهاریم یا جوش لاله زاریم
 باغ دگر نداریم غیر از کنار عنقا

Although we are the newest spring,
 the boiling blooming of the tulip field,
 We possess no garden
 except by the side of the **phoenix**.

⁶ Ibid, I:52.

- 114.3 *setr-ī nakh'ānd feṭrat az dars-gāh-e taḥqīq
taqvīm-hā kohan kard emsāl o pār(-e) 'ānqā*

سطری نخواند فطرت از درسگاه تحقیق
تقویمها کهن کرد امسال و پار عنقا

Primordial nature did not read a single line
at the institute for the study
of true reality.
This year, next year, last year
of the **phoenix**
wore out calendars.

- 114.4 *āyīne joz taḥayyor īn-jā che naqsh bandad
az rang sharm dārad šūrat-negār-e 'anqā*

آینه جز تحیر اینجا چه نقش بندد
از رنگ شرم دارد صورت نگار عنقا

In this place, what image
can the mirror show
but wonder at the self?
The painter of the **phoenix**
colors with shame.

- 114.5 *taslīm-e 'eshq būdan moft ast har che bāshad
mā rā che kār o kū bār dar kār-o-bār-e 'anqā*

تسلیم عشق بودن مفت است هر چه باشد
ما را چه کار و کو بار در کار و بار عنقا

It costs nothing to prostrate
before passion.
Whatever may transpire
In the affairs and matters
of the **phoenix**,
What does it matter to us?
What affair is it of ours?

- 114.6 *shohrat-parastī-ye vahm tā chand bāyad īn-jā
naqsh-e nagīn rahā kon ay nām-dār-e 'anqā*

شهرتپرستی وهم تا چند باید اینجا
نقش نگین رها کن ای نامدار عنقا

How long must the fame-worship

of illusion continue here?
O name-bearer of the **phoenix**, release
the impression of the signet ring!

114.7 *ham-šoḥbat-īm o mā rā az yek-degar khabar nīst*
‘anqā che vā-nemāyad gar shod dochār-e ‘anqā

همصحبتم و ما را از یک دگر خبر نیست
عنقا چه وانماید گر شد دچار عنقا

We are partners in conversation,
yet we know nothing
of each other.
What is re-revealed
in the encounter, face to face,
between phoenix and **phoenix**?

114.8 *nāyābī-ye maṭāleb ma ‘dūm kard mā rā*
dīgar kas-ī che yābad dar enteẓār-e ‘anqā

نایابی مطالب معدوم کرد ما را
دیگر کسی چه یابد در انتظار عنقا

The unattainableness of meanings
rendered us nonexistent.
What else can one attain,
waiting for the **phoenix**?

114.9 *marg ast ākher-e kār ‘ebrat-nemā-ye hastī*
ghayr az ‘adam ke khandad bar rūzegār-e ‘anqā

مرگ است آخر کار عبرت‌نمای هستی
غیر از عدم که خندد بر روزگار عنقا

Death is the end of all matters,
the mysterious warning
issued to being.
What smiles upon the days
of the **phoenix**
but nonexistence?

114.10 *zīr-e parand-e gardūn ros-vā-st khalq-e majnūn*
‘oryānī-ye ke pūshad īn jāme-vār ‘anqā

زیر پرند گردون رسواست خلق مجنون
عریانی که پوشد این جامه‌وار عنقا

Beneath the painted silk horizon
 creation went insane, disgraced.
 Whose naked shame
 is covered up
 by this brightly tailored **phoenix**?

114.11 *goftīm bī-neshānī rang-ī be jelve ārad*
mā rā nemūd bar mā āyīne-dār-e ‘anqā

گفتیم بینشانی رنگی به جلوه آرد
 ما را نمود بر ما آینه‌دار عنقا

We said: That which has no trace
 brings color
 into splendid being.
 We were displayed
 before ourselves
 by the mirror-holding **phoenix**.

114.12 *dar khāk-dān-e ‘ebrat ghayr az nafas che dārīm*
por rowshan-ast Bīdel sham ‘-e mazār-e ‘anqā

در خاکدان عبرت غیر از نفس چه داریم
 پر روشن است بیدل شمع مزار عنقا

In the dustbowl of this world,
 what sign of danger
 do we have, but breath?
 The graveside candle
 of the **phoenix**
 is a luminous wingful of light.

T2.G4

The Phoenix Decoded

Vaz ‘-e tartīb-e adab dar ‘arṣe-gāh-e lāf nīst |
 وضع ترتیب ادب در عرصه‌گاه لاف نیست
 Ghazal No.848⁷

Meter: - ˘ - - | - ˘ - - | - ˘ - - | - ˘ -

(→)

Ramal-e moṣamman-e maḥzūf

E.S #2.4.15

Fā ‘elāton fā ‘elāton fā ‘elāton fā ‘elon

First, second, third feet: sālem

Fourth foot: fā ‘elāton + ḥazf = fā ‘elon

⁷ Ibid, I:393.

Qāfeye: -āf

Radīf: nīst (“is not”)

Notes: This poem is likely an indirect response to a poem by Hāfez. See Chapter 5, Footnote 55.

848.1 *vāz ‘-e tartīb-e adab dar ‘arše-gāh-e lāf nīst
qābel-e īn zeh kamān-e qabže-ye naddāf nīst*

وضع ترتیب ادب در عرصه‌گاه لاف نیست
قابل این زه کمان قبضه نداف نیست

Position established by civility’s arrangements
does not fit within the scope of vain self-praise.
The bow gripped by a dim-witted weaver
cannot be strung by such a bowstring.

848.2 *az ‘adam mī-jūshad īn afsāne-hā-ye mā vo man
gar be ma ‘nī vā-rasī joz khāmoshī ḥarrāf nīst*

از عدم می‌جوشد این افسانه‌های ما و من
گر به معنی و اراسی جز خامشی حراف نیست

These tales of I-and-we
boil and surge forth from nonexistence;
If you arrive at meaning,
only silence is eloquently clever.

848.3 *ghaflat-e del-hā jahān-ī rā moshavvash vā-nemūd
hīch jā mūhesh-tar az āyīne-ye nā-ṣāf nīst*

غفلت دلها جهانی را مشوش وانمود
هیچ جا موحش‌تر از آئینه ناصاف نیست

The negligence of hearts revealed
a world scattered and disturbed.
No place is emptier and full of dread
than an impure mirror.

848.4 *rāyej o qalb-e dokān-e vahm bī-andāze ast
bā che pardāzad demāgh-e nā-tavān ṣarrāf nīst*

رایج و قلب دکان وهم بی‌اندازه است
با چه پردازد دماغ ناتوان صراف نیست

Current coins and counterfeits
are beyond count
in the shop of illusion.
What funds can be drawn on

by a weak mind?
It is no syntax expert.

848.5 *kh'āb-e rāḥat modda 'ā-ye mon 'em ast ammā che sūd
makḥmal-ī joz būreyā-ye faqr(-e) taskān-bāf nīst*

خواب راحت مدعای منعم است اما چه سود
مخملی جز بوربای فقر تسکین باف نیست

Dreams of repose
are a generous offer:
but what is gained?
Velvet cushions
are mere consolation-woven
beggars' mats.

848.6 *har ke rā dīdam dar īn mashhad do nīm-ash karde-and
tīgh-e qātel ham bar īn taqdīr bī-enṣāf nīst*

هر که را دیدم در این مشهد دو نیمش کرده‌اند
تیغ قاتل هم بر این تقدیر بی‌انصاف نیست

In this assembly of buried martyrs
everyone I saw
was cloven in two.
By this measure,
even murdering sword
delivers even-handed justice.

848.7 *ān-so-ye khowf o rejā' khold-e yaqīn paydā konīd
v-ar-na īmān-ī ke mashhūr ast joz a 'rāf nīst*

آنسوی خوف و رجا خلد یقین پیدا کنید
ورنه ایمانی که مشهور است جز اعراف نیست

Discover the paradise of certain knowledge
beyond the boundary of hope,
on the other side of fear:
If you do not, then the renowned religion
is nothing but a high wall
dividing heaven and hell.

848.8 *naqsh-e īn daftar ka-mā-hī kashf-e ṭab 'e mā nashod
'aynak-e feṭrat dar īn-jā ān-qadar shaffāf nīst*

نقش این دفتر کماهی کشف طبع ما نشد

عینک فطرت در اینجا آنقدر شفاف نیست

What is printed in this volume
about things as they truly are
did not uncover our imprinted nature.
The glasses of our given nature
are not transparent enough here.

848.9 *bū l-fożūl-e jūd bāsh īn bazm(-e) ekrām ast o bas
har qadar bakhshad kas-ī āb az moḥīṭ esrāf nīst*

بوالفضول جود باش این بزم اکرام است و بس
هر قدر بخشد کسی آب از محیط اسراف نیست

Be an idle talker; prattle away
about generosity. This celebration
is an empty formality of honor, nothing more;
However much one doles out water
from the ocean, it is no lavish excess.

848.10 *'arsh-e farsh īn-jā moḥāṭ-e vos 'at-ābād-e del ast
ka 'be-ye mā rā savād-e tang-ī az aṭrāf nīst*

عرش فرش اینجا محاط وسعت آباد دل است
کعبه ما را سواد تنگی از اطراف نیست

The highest throne here
on the outspread ground is encircled
by the spacious habitation of the heart.
Our Ka'ba is not confined
by narrow surroundings
encroaching from all sides.

848.11 *ṭāleb-e fahm-e mosammā-yī 'eyār-e esm gīr
ṣūrat-e 'anqā hamīn joz 'ayn o nūn o qāf nīst*

طالب فهم مسمایی عیار اسم گیر
صورت عنقا همین جز عین و نون و قاف نیست

If you seek to understand
the meaning of the signified,
put the signifier to the test:
The form of "phoenix" is nothing
but "PH" and "OE,"
the "N" of now,
the essence of the seeing "I",

the fabled alpine homeward “X.”

848.12 *qayd-e del Bīdel ghobār-e nang-(e)feṭrat-hā mabād*
tā ze mīnā nag(o)zarad dord ast īn may sāf nīst

فید دل بیدل غبار ننگ فطرت‌ها مباد
تا ز مینا نگذرد درد است این می صاف نیست

Bīdel, let not the dust of shame of given nature
form the settled prison of the heart:
As long as dregs remain
within the bottled blue horizon,
this wine cannot run pure.

T2.G5 The Sohravardī Ghazal

Payvastegī be ḥaq(q) ze do ‘ālam borīdan-ast |
پیوستگی به حق ز دو عالم بریدن است
Ghazal No.510⁸

Meter: --˘| - ˘-˘| ˘--˘| -˘-
(→)

Možāre‘-e **mošamman-e akhrab** al-šadr va **makfūf** al-ḥashvayn va **maḥzūf** al- zarb
E.S. #4.7.14, see passim too)

maf’ūlo fā’elāto mafā’īlo fā’elon

možāre’ = *mafā’ilon fā’elāton mafā’ilon fā’elāton*

First foot (šadr): *mafā’ilon + kharb* → *maf’ūlo*

Second foot (ḥashv): *fā’elāton + kaff* → *fā’elāto*

Third foot (ḥashv): *mafā’ilon + kaff* → *mafā’īlo*

Fourth foot (zarb): *fā’elāton + ḥazf* → *fā’elon*

Qāfeye: -īdan

Radīf: ast (“is”)

510.1 *payvastegī be ḥaq(q) ze do ‘ālam borīdan-ast*
dīdār-e dūst hastī-ye khod rā nadīdan-ast

پیوستگی به حق ز دو عالم بریدن است
دیدار دوست هیستی خود را ندیدنست

Union with Truth
is to oneself cut off
from the two worlds.
Vision of the Friend
is to not see
one’s own existence.

⁸ Ibid, I:234-5.

510.2 *āzādegī k-az-ū-st mobāhāt(-e) 'āfeyat*
del rā ze hokm-e herṣ o havā vā-kharīdan ast

آزادگی کزوست بهاهات عافیت
دل را ز حکم حرص و هوا واخریدن است

Freedom, which yields the proper pride
of salvation,
Is to purchase back the heart
from commanding greed and lust.

510.3 *parvāz-e sāye joz be sar-e bām(-e) mehr nīst*
az-khod-ramīdan-e to be haq(q) āramīdan ast

پرواز سایه جز به سر بام مهر نیست
از خود رمیدن تو به حق آرمیدن است

The shadow's flight is directed nowhere
but the rooftop of the warm sun;
Your fleeing from yourself
is to find repose in Truth.

510.4 *chūn mowj kūshesh-e nafas-e mā dar īn moḥīt*
rakht-e shekast-e kh^vīsh be sāḥel keshīdan ast

چون موج کوشش نفس ما در این محیط
رخت شکست خویش به ساحل کشیدن است

Wavelike, the striving of our breaths
in this encircling ocean
Is to haul the bundle
of the breaking of the self
shoreward.

510.5 *pā-māl-e ghārat-e nafas-e sard(-e) ya 's nīst*
ṣobḥ-e morād-e mā ke gol-ash nā-damīdan ast

پامال غارت نفس سرد یأس نیست
صبح مراد ما که گلش نادمیدن است

To be trampled by the plundering march
of cold breaths is no hopeless state:
It is the dawn of our desired end,
the dawn whose rose
is not to breathe
not to bloom

not to break.

510.6 *bar har-che dāde vā-konī az kh^vīsh rafte gīr*
afṣāne-vār dīdan-e ālam shanīdan ast

بر هرچه دیده واکنی از خویش رفته گیر
افسانه‌وار دیدن عالم شنیدن است

Everything you see with open eyes:
take it as leaving,
as passing from itself.
Like a tale, the beholding of the world
must be heard.

510.7 *tā herṣ āb o dāne be dām-at nayafkanad*
‘anqā-ṣefat be qāf-e qanā ‘at khazīdan ast

تا حرص آب و دانه به دامت نیفکند
عنقاصفت به قاف قناعت خزیدن است

Lest cunning greed place water
and luring seeds
into its snares for you,
Like a phoenix you must crawl
to Mount Qāf,
contentment’s fabled peak.

510.8 *gar Bū l-Havas be bazm-e khamūshān nafas keshad*
ham-chūn khorūs-e bī-maḥel(l)-ash sar borīdan ast

گر بو الهوس به بزم خموشان نفس کشد
همچون خروس بی‌محلش سر بریدن است

If a Desiring Fool draws breath
to chatter at a gathering
of silent ones,
He must be killed – his head cut off
like a rooster
who crows out of turn.

510.9 *emshab ze bas ke harze-zabān ast sham ‘-e āh*
kār-am cho gāz tā be saḥar lab gazīdan ast

امشب ز بس که هرزه‌زبان است شمع آه
کارم چو گاز تا به سحر لب گزیدن است

Since tonight the sighing candle
flickers so, nonsense
on its tongue,
I must bite my lip
– like candlewick scissors –
all night till dawn.

510.10 *ārām dar ʔarīqat-e mā nīst ghayr-e marg*
hangāme garm sāz nafas-hā tapīdan ast

آرام در طریقت ما نیست غیر مرگ
هنگامه گرم ساز نفس‌ها تپیدن است

There is no rest
on our Path
but death.
Strike up a warm gathering:
hot and agitated breaths
must be caught.

510.11 *mā rā be rang-e sham ' dar-e 'āfeyat zadan*
az cheshm-e khod hamīn do se ashk-ī chakīdan ast

ما را به رنگ شمع در عاقبت زدن
از چشم خود همین دو سه اشکی چکیدن است

We must knock on salvation's door
with candle color:
These two-three tears must fall,
dripping from our own eyes.

510.12 *sa 'y-e qadam kojā vo ʔarīq-e fanā kojā*
Bīdel be khenjar-e nafas īn rah borīdan ast

سعی قدم کجا و طریق فنا کجا
بیدل به خنجر نفس این ره بریدن است

How different, how far apart
are striving human steps
and the Path to death of self:
Bīdel: you must cut this path,
clear it
with the blade of breath.

T2.G6**Phoenix: The Mark without a Trace***Nazībad parde-ye fānūs dīgar sham '(-e) sowdā rā |*

نزیبد پرده فانوس دیگر شمع سودا را

Ghazal No.300⁹

Meter: ˘ --- | ˘ --- | ˘ --- | ˘ --- |

(→)

Hazaj-e moṣamman-e sālem (E.S. #2.1.16)*Mafā 'ilon mafā 'ilon mafā 'ilon mafā 'ilon*Hazaj = *Mafā 'ilon mafā 'ilon mafā 'ilon mafā 'ilon*

All four feet = sālem.

Qāfeye: -ā

Radif: rā (dative/accusative/genitive postposition)

300.1 *nazībad parde-ye fānūs dīgar sham '(-e) sowdā rā*
*magar dar āb chūn yāqūt gīrand ātash-e mā rā*نزیبد پرده فانوس دیگر شمع سودا را
مگر در آب چون یاقوت گیرند آتش ما راA lantern's veil
only suits
the melancholy candle
When our fire is captured,
trapped in water
like a ruby.300.2 *del-e āsūde-ye mā shūr-e emkān dar qafas dārad*
*gohar dozdīde-ast īn-jā 'enān-e mowj(-e) daryā rā*دل آسوده ما شور امکان در قفس دارد
گهر دزدیده است اینجا عنان موج دریا راOur reposing hearts contain
possibility's chaos
in a cage:
Here, the jewel has been stolen,
snatched by the reins of waves
for the ocean.300.3 *behesht-e 'āfeyat rang-e jahān-e āb(e)rū bāshī*
*dar āghūsh-e nafas gar khūn konī 'arż-e tamannā rā*بهشت عاقبت رنگ جهان آبرو باشی
در آغوش نفس گر خون کنی عرض تمنا را⁹ Ibid, I:136-137.

If you spill blood
in breath's embrace
for the sake of lustful desire,
May you attain compassion's Paradise,
colored by a world
of shimmering honor.

300.4 *ghobār-e eḥteyāj ān-jā ke dāmān-e ṭalab gīrad*
ravān ast āb(e)rū har gah be raftār āvarī pā rā

غبار احتیاج آنجا که دامان طلب گیرد
روان است آبرو هر گاه به رفتار آوری پا را

There, where dust of need
clutches the hem
of searching inquiry,
Honor flows like water
every time you stir
your feet to motion.

300.5 *be 'arż-e bī-khodī-hā garm kon hangāme-ye mashrab*
ke may nāmīde-and īn-jā shekast-e rang-e mīnā rā

به عرض بیخودی‌ها گرم کن هنگامه مشرب
که می نامیده‌اند اینجا شکست رنگ مینا را

In the name of losses of self,
heat up the gathering
of the religion of drink:
for here, the fracture
of glass-bottle color
is called wine.

300.6 *forūgh-e īn shabestān joz ram-e barq-ī namī-bāshad*
cherāghān karde-and az cheshm-e āhū kūh o ṣaḥrā rā

فروغ این شبستان جز رم برقی نمی‌باشد
چراغان کرده‌اند از چشم آهو کوه و صحرا را

May the bright splendor
of this night chamber
be but the startled flight of lightning;
Gazelles' eyes have become
lanterns, illuminating
the mountains and the desert.

300.7 *dar-īn mahfel parīshān jelve-ast ān ḥosn-e yektāyī
shekast-ī kū ke pardāzī dehad āyīne-ye mā rā*

درین محفل پریشان جلوه است آن حسن یکتایی
شکستی کو که پردازی دهد آینه ما را

That beauty of oneness
is a scattered splendor
in this gathering;
Where is that fracture
that would complete
our mirror's polish?

300.8 *sabok-tāz ast showq ammā man ān sang-e zamīn-gīr-am
ke dar rang-e sharar az kh^vīsh khālī mī-konam jā rā*

سبکتاز است شوق اما من آن سنگ زمینگیرم
که در رنگ شرر از خویش خالی می‌کنم جا را

Passion is a light, swift rider –
but I am a stone,
paralyzed, earthbound;
I vacate my place
from myself
in a spark of color.

300.9 *be dāgh-e bī-negāhī raft az īn mahfel cherāgh-e man
shekast āyīne-ye rangī ke gom kardam tamāshā rā*

به داغ بینگاهی رفت از این محفل چراغ من
شکست آینه رنگی که گم کردم تماشا را

My lantern has gone out
from this social gathering,
a black blind burn-scar:
When I broke my gaze, and lost
sight of the spectacle –
the color-mirror shattered.

300.10 *havas chūn nā-rasā shod nesye naqd-e ḥāl mī-gardad
amal rā reshte kūtah sāz o 'oqbā gīr donyā rā*

هوس چون نارسا شد نسبه نقد حال می‌گردد
امل را رشته کوتاه ساز و عقبی گیر دنیا را

When lust failed, didn't hit the mark,

oblivion became the current
 coin of present state:
 Shorten the span of hope,
 and take this world
 for the future end.

300.11 *ze shūr-e bī-neshānī bī-neshānī shod neshān Bīdel*
ke gom gashtan ze gom gashtan borūn āvard ‘anqā rā

ز شور بی‌نشانی بی‌نشانی شد نشان بیدل
 که گم گشتن ز گم گشتن برون آورد عنقا را

In the chaos of tracelessness,
 tracelessness
 left a mark,
 became a trace:
 By getting lost,
 getting lost
 produced
 a phoenix.

T2.G7

You are a Creature Defined by Breath

To khod shakhṣ-e nafās-khyī-ī ke bā del nīst payvand-at
 Ghazal No.531¹⁰

Meter: ~ - - - | ~ - - - | ~ - - - | ~ - - - |
 (→)

Hazaj-e moṣamman-e sālem

E.S. #2.1.16

Mafā ‘ilon mafā ‘ilon mafā ‘ilon mafā ‘ilon

Hazaj = *Mafā ‘ilon mafā ‘ilon mafā ‘ilon mafā ‘ilon*

All four feet sālem.

Qāfeye: -and

Radīf: -at

531.1 *to khod shakhṣ-e nafas-kh(ū)yī-ī ke bā del nīst payvand-at*
kodām afsūn ze nayrang-e havas afkand dar band-at

تو خود شخص نفس‌خویی که با دل نیست پیوندت
 کدام افسون ز نیرنگ هوس افکند در بندت

You are a creature defined by breath:
 no bonds of the heart
 confine you;
 Which tale, then –

¹⁰ Ibid, I:244.

of lust, deception –
has fettered you?

531.2 *dar īn vīrāne-ye ‘ebrat be rang-ī bī-ta ‘alloq zī*
ke khāk-at nam nagīrad gar hame dar āb afkand-at

در این ویرانه عبرت به رنگی بی‌تعلق زی
که خاکت نم‌نگیرد گر همه در آب افکندت

Live,
in this dire, warning wilderness
with no properties
but color:
Your dust draws in no moisture
if you be drowned whole
in water.

531.3 *nadānam az kojā del-baste-ye īn khāk-dān gashtī*
danā’at rīshe-ī dārī ke natvān az zamīn kand-at

ندانم از کجا دل‌بسته این خاکدان گشتی
دنانت ریشه‌ای داری که نتوان از زمین کندت

I do not know
whence you became heart-bound
to this dust-bowl.
Your low-world nature roots you:
you cannot be extracted
from the earth.

531.4 *nadārad daftar-e ‘anqā savād-e mā-vo-man enshā*
konad dīvāne-ye hastī khayālāt-e ‘adam chand-at

ندارد دفتر عنقا سواد ماومن انشا
کند دیوانه هستی خیالات آدم چندت

The volume of the phoenix
is not composed of any early draft
of “we-and-I.”
How long will imagined nonexistents
collect you, bookbind you
mad with existence?

531.5 *ghobār-e kolfat-e kh^vīsh-ī nāzar-band-e pas-o-pīsh-ī*
be ghayr az khod namī-bāshad ‘eyāl o māl o farzand-at

غبار کلفت خویشی نظر بند پس و پیشی
به غیر از خود نمی باشد عیال و مال و فرزندان

You are the dust of distress of self;
you are vision-bound
to what is past and future, fore and aft.
May you have no wife, domestics,
property, or issue
except your self.

531.6 *be har dasht o dar az khod mī-ravī o bāz mī-āyī*
to qāṣed nīstī tā 'arṣe-hā har sū davānand-at

نه هر دشت و در از خود می‌روی و باز می‌آیی
تو قاصد نیستی تا عرصه‌ها هر سو دوانندت

In every wilderness and checkered wasteland,
you leave your self
you make your play
and you come back again.
You are no errant messenger, benighted,
made to move in each direction,
traversing many squares and spaces.

531.7 *ze khod gar yek-qalam jastī ze vahm-e jozv-o-kol(l) rastī*
ta 'alloq-hā nafas-vār-ī-st kāsh az del bar-ārand-at

ز خود گر یک قلم جستی ز وهم جزو و کل رستی
تعلق‌ها نفسواری است کاش از دل بر آرندت

Were you to leap out of your self,
in a single penstroke, all at once –
you would free yourself from all
illusion of part-and-whole.
Properties, accidents: these are given,
the state of things like breath:
if only you were carried out, removed
from your own heart!

531.8 *demāgh-e forṣat īn meqdār bālīdan namī-kh^vāhad*
be gardūn borde-ast az yek nafas seḥr-e saḥar-khand-at

دماغ فرصت این مقدار بالیدن نمی‌خواهد
به گردون برده‌است از یک نفس سحر سحر خندت

A mind bent

on the opportune moment
will not boast this much of growth:
Dawn's sorcery, breaking into a smile,
bore you up to the turning skies
in a single breath.

531.9 *zamīngīrī be rang-e sāye bāyad moghtanam dīdan*
che kh'āhī dīd agar dar khāne-ye khorshīd kh'ānand-at

زمینگیری به رنگ سایه باید مغتنم دیدن
چه خواهی دید اگر در خانه خورشید خوانندت

Earthbound paralysis, worn out
by shadows' color,
must be seen as valuable;
For what can you see
if you are summoned
to the blinding house of the sun?

531.10 *ze dast-e nīstī joz nīstī chīz-ī namī-āyad*
kojā-ī chīst-ī ākhar ke āgāhī dehad pand-at?

ز دست نیستی جز نیستی چیزی نمی آید
کجایی چیستی آخر که آگاهی دهد پندت

Nothing but nonexistence
will come from the hands
of nonexistence.
Where are you?
What thing, what essence are you?
In the end, what sage advice
does wisdom give you?

531.11 *kharābāt-e ta'ayyon bar ḥobāb-at khande-hā dārad*
sabū bar dūsh-e owhām(-)ī havā por karde āvand-at

خرابات تعین بر حبابت خنده‌ها دارد
سبو بر دوش اوهامی هوا پر کرده آوندت

The ruin-tavern of self-determination
breaks into laughter
at the bubble of you:
The pitcher carried on illusions' shoulders
has filled your crude glass brim-high
with desire's empty air.

531.12 *be ḥarf o ṣowt momken nīst temṣāl-at neshān dādan*
nafas gīrad do ‘ālam tā be pīsh āyīne dārand-at

به حرف و صوت ممکن نیست تمثالت نشان دادن
نفس گیرد دو عالم تا به پیش آینه دارندت

It is impossible
to trace your likeness
with lettered speech, with voice:
Both worlds, silent,
hold their breath –
to keep a mirror held
before you.

531.13 *be ma ‘nī gar sharīk-e ma ‘nī-at paydā nashod Bīdel*
jahān gashtam be ṣūrat nīz natvān yāft mānand-at

به معنی گر شریک معنیات پیدا نشد بیدل
جهان گشتم به صورت نیز نتوان یافت مانندت

Since, Bīdel, no equal partner
in your meaning
could be found in meaning,
I turned the world
upside down, looking –
but neither in outward form
could your like be found.

T2.G8

As Water Conquers Arid Rock

Ghazal No.965¹¹

*Agar be afvāj ‘azm-e shāhān savād-e rūm o farang gīrad*¹¹

Meter: ˘ – ˘ – – | ˘ – ˘ – – | ˘ – ˘ – – | ˘ – ˘ – – |

(→)

Rajaz-e moṣamman-e makhbūn-e moraffāl

E.S. #4.1.05(4)

mafā ‘elāton mafā ‘elāton mafā ‘elāton mafā ‘elāton

Rajaz = *mostaf‘elon mostaf‘elon mostaf‘elon mostaf‘elon*

All four feet: *mostaf‘elon* + *khabn* = *mafā‘elon* + *tarfil* = *mafā‘elāton*

Qāfeye: -ang

Radīf: *gīrad* (“[it] takes, conquers”)

Notes: This poem is a “quasi-response” to Ḥafez’s famous ghazal, “Agar ān Tork-e Shīrāzī...”

965.1 *agar be afvāj(-e) ‘azm-e shāhān savād-e rūm o farang gīrad*

¹¹ Ibid, I:451..

shokūh-e darvīsh(-e) har do ‘ālam be yek del-e jam ‘ tang gīrad

اگر به افواج عزم شاهان سواد روم و فرنگ گیرد
شکوه درویش هر دو عالم به یک دل جمع تنگ گیرد

If emperors can conquer
Byzantium and Europe
with armies made of resolution,
The majesty dervishes
in both worlds will be oppressed:
their hearts, which beat as one, will be constrained.

965.2 *cho sham ‘ kāsh az khayāl-e showkat ṭabī‘at-e ghāfel āb gardad
ke sar farāzad be owj-e gardūn o rāh-e kām-e nehāng gīrad*

چو شمع کاش از خیال شوکت طبیعت غافل آب گردد
که سر فرازد به اوج گردون و راه کام نهنگ گیرد

If only, like a candle, forgetful nature
would deliquesce with shame
from its imagined grandeur;
It raises its head high – to the zenith of the sky –
and all the while, walk straight
into the water monster’s maw.

965.3 *ze maktab-e e‘tebār-e donyā varāq seyah kardan ast o raftan
dar īn kham-e nīl jāme-ye kas be-joz seyāhī che rang gīrad*

ز مکتب اعتبار دنیا ورق سیاه کردن است و رفتن
در این خم نیل جامه کس بجز سیاهی چه رنگ گیرد

One must blacken the page and leave
this school of credible reflection in the world.
Beneath this blue curved sky,
the only color garments can acquire
is blackness.

965.4 *gohar neyam tā dar īn mohīṭ-am bovad be ‘arz-e vaqār sowdā
ḥobāb-e ma ‘zūr-e bād-sanj-am tarāzū-ye man che sang gīrad*

گهر نیم تا در این محیطم بود به عرض وقار سودا
حباب معذور بادسجم ترازوی من چه سنگ گیرد

I am not a pearl in the ocean
while my melancholic madness for grandeur persists.
I am a helpless bubble, weighing wind;

what stones can my scales hold?

965.5 *ze khejlat-e e`tebār-e bātel agar gozashtam ze man che ḥāṣel
kojā-st dāman-e forṣat īnjā ke bā to gūyam derang gīrad*

ز خجالت اعتبار باطل اگر مذشتتم ز من چه حاصل
کجاست دامن فرصت اینجا که با تو گویم درنگ گیرد

Were I to overcome the shame
of vain reflections, what profit will I have?
Where here is the moment's hem?
As I speak these very words to you,
delay conquers.

965.6 *ze ḥarf-e ṭāqat godāz-e la`l-at damī be jor`at dochār gardam
ke hamcho yāqūtam āb o ātash `enān-e parvāz-e rang gīrad*

ز حرف طاقت گداز لعنت دمی به جرأت دچار کردم
که همچو یاقوتم آب و آتش عنان پرواز رنگ گیرد

I suddenly encounter courage for a moment:
I take it from the words of power
melting from your ruby lips;
Like a ruby, in my mouth,
fire and water
seize the reins of color's flight.

965.7 *be pās-e del tā kojā kh`orad khūn bahār-e nāzī ke az laṭāfat
ḥenā-ye dast-ash seyāhī ārad cho sham `agar gol be chang gīrad*

به پاس دل تا کجا خورد خون بهار نازی که از لطافت
حنای دستش سیاهی آرد چو شمع اگر گل به چنگ گیرد

How long will springtime flirt,
leading to bloodshed – while it pretends
to guard the heart with elegant grace?
The colored henna of its hand
brings blackness –
like a candle if it plucks a rose.

965.8 *ze chang-e āfat kamīn-e gardūn kojā ravad kas che chāreh sāzad
pay-ye ramīdan gom ast ānjā ke rāh-e āhū palang gīrad*

ز چنگ آفت کمین گردون کجا رود کس چه چاره سازد
پی رمیدن گم است آنجا راه آهو پلنگ گیرد

Where can one go,
what remedy can one devise
against misfortune's grip,
against the ambush of the skies?
All traces of fleeing in terror are lost.
The leopard blocks the path
of the gazelle.

965.9 *ze tīreh-ṭab 'ān vaqt bogsal makh'āh nang-e vabāl bar del
az īn ke bīnī noqūsh-e bāṭel khosh ast āyīne zang gīrad*

ز تیر مطبعان وقت بگسل مخواه ننگ و بال بر دل
از این که بینی نقوش باطل خوش است آینه زنگ گیرد

Don't waste your time on those
with blackened natures.
Don't let your heart take on their shame.
Blessed is that mirror, clothed in rust –
for it won't let you see
vain images.

965.10 *dar īn jonūn-zār(-e) fetne-sāmān be sho 'leh-kārān(-e) kez̄b o bohtān
majūsh chandān ke 'ālam-ī ra nafas be dūd-e tofang gīrad*

در این جنون زار فتنه سامان به شعله کاران کذب و بهتان
مجوش چندان که عالمی را نفس به دود تفنگ گیرد

In this realm of madness,
where order is disorder,
don't warm to lamplighters
whose wagging tongues spark lies and slander.
Don't boil so much: the world
will be conquered by a breath –
the smoke of muskets.

965.11 *madam be ṭab '-e dorosht-e zālem fosūn-e ta'ṣīr-e mehr Bīdel
hazār ātash nafas godāzad ke āb khoshkī ze sang gīrad*

مدم به طبع درشت ظالم فسون تاثیر مهر بیدل
هزار آتش نفس گدازد که آب خشکی ز سنگ گیرد

Don't breathe enchanting influence
of sun and love on the tyrant's coarse nature.
A thousand fires
melt down breath –
as water conquers arid rock.

T2.G9 The Barzakh Poem

Nasezad be vaż 'e fesordegī ze bahār-e del mozhe bastan-at |

نسزد به وضع فسردگی ز بهار دل مژه بستنت

Ghazal No.824¹²

Meter: ˘˘˘˘-|˘˘˘˘-|˘˘˘˘-|˘˘˘˘-

(→)

Kāmel-e moṣamman-e sālem

E.S. #5.3.5(4)

motaḡā 'elon motaḡā 'elon motaḡā 'elon motaḡā 'elon

Kāmel = *motaḡā 'elon motaḡā 'elon motaḡā 'elon motaḡā 'elon*

First foot (ṣadr): *motaḡā 'elon* (sālem)

Second foot (ḡashv): *motaḡā 'elon* (sālem)

Third foot (ḡashv): *motaḡā 'elon* (sālem)

Fourth foot (żarb): *motaḡā 'elon* (sālem)

Qāfeye: -astan

Radīf: -at (you/for you/of you)

824.1 *nasezad be vaż 'e fesordegī ze bahār-e del mozhe bastan-at*
ke godākht jowhar-e rang o bū be feshār-e ghonche neshastan-at

نسزد به وضع فسردگی ز بهار دل مژه بستنت
که گداخت جوهر رنگ و بو به فشار غنچه نشستنت

To bar your eyelashes against despair
from the vernal desires of the heart does not suit you;
The essence of color and fragrance has thawed,
wrung out by your unsprung, unblossomed pose.

824.2 *makesh ay ḡobāb-e baqā-havas alam-e setamgarī-ye nafas*
che-qadar gereh be del afkanad kham-o-pīch-e reshte gosastan-at

مکش ای حباب بقا هوس الم ستمگری نفس
چقدر گره به دل افکند خم و پیچ رشته گسستنت

Bubble, bent on persistence: do not draw out
grief over the cruelty of breath.
The purl and twist of your trail of lace, tearing:
how many knots it knits into the heart.

824.3 *be takallof-e qadaḡ-e havas sar-o-barg-e howṣele bākhtī*
narasīde nash 'e-ye hemmatī ze tarang-e zowq-e shekastan-at

به تکلف قدح هوس سر و برگ هوصله باختی
نرسیده نشئه همتی ز ترنگ ذوق شکستنت

¹² Ibid, I:382.

You gambled away the last token of your patience
on the formalities of the cup of desire;
The clang and quiver of your broken enthusiasm
dampened your intoxicated striving.

824.4 *che nemūd forṣat-e bīsh-o-kam ke ramīdī az chaman-e 'adam
naneshast rang-e ta 'ammolī cho sharār-e barzakh-e jastan-at*

چه نمود فرصت بیش و کم که رمیدی از چمن عدم
ننشست رنگ تأملی چو شرار برزخ جستنت

What did the split second of less-and-more divulge
that you bolted in horror from the garden of nonexistence?
Your attentive slow reflection did not acquire definite color,
like sparks from the imagined interval of your leap.

824.5 *to navā-ye maḥmel-e ghayrat-ī ze che rū fesorde-ye ghaflat-ī
nafas-ī ke zakhme be tār zad ke nabūd eshāre-ye rastan-est*

تو نوای محمل غیرتی ز چه رو فسرده غفلتی
نفسی که زخمه به تار زد که نبود اشاره رستنت

You are the singing-voice of this elite gathering;
why be disheartened by forgetfulness?
In that breath, as the plectrum struck the string,
why did that not signal your release?

824.6 *hame dam ze qolzom-e kebreyā tab-e showq mī-zanad īn ṣalā
ke farīb-e mowj-e gohar makhor ze do-rūze ābele bastan-at*

همه دم ز قلزم کبریا تب شوق میزند این صلا
که فریب موج گهر مخور ز دوروزه آبله بستنت

In the vast Red Sea, at every cataclysmic moment
thirst's fever pulses with this summons:
Swallow not the false charms of pearl-bearing waves
to soothe your too-fast blistering.

824.7 *che vafā-st Bīdel-e sakht-jān ke dam-e jodāyī-ye dūstān
jegar-e setam-zade khūn shavad ze ḥayā-ye sīne nakhastan-at*

چه وفاست بیدل سختجان که دم جدایی دوستان
جگر ستمزده خون شود ز حیای سینه نخستنت

Heavy-souled Bīdel: what faith is there
that, at the moment of the sundering of friends,

The harrowed liver blooms with blood
for shame of the unscarred, unscoured chest?

T2.G10 This Gathering

Īn anjoman afsāne-ye rāz-e dahan-ī būd |

این انجمن افسانه راز دهنی بود

Ghazal No.986¹³

Meter: -- ~ | ~ -- ~ | ~ -- ~ | ~ --

(→)

Hazaj-e mošamman-e akhrab al-šadr va **makfūf** al-ḥashv va **maḥzūf** al-żarb (E.S. #3.3.14)

Maḥ'ūlo maḥā'īlo maḥā'īlo fo'ūlon

Hazaj = *maḥā'īlon maḥā'īlon maḥā'īlon maḥā'īlon*

First foot (šadr): = *maḥā'īlon* + *kharb* = *maḥ'ūlo*

Second foot (ḥashv): *maḥā'īlon* + *kaff* = *maḥā'īlo*

Third foot (ḥashv): *maḥā'īlon* + *kaff* = *maḥā'īlo*

Fourth foot (żarb): *maḥā'īlon* + *ḥazf* = *fo'ūlon*

Qāfeye: -anī

Radif: -būd (she/he/it was)

986.1 *īn anjoman afsāne-ye rāz-e dahan-ī būd*
har jelve ke dīdam nashenīdan sokhan-ī būd

این انجمن افسانه راز دهنی بود
هر جلوه که دیدم نشنیدن سخنی بود

This gathering
was
a tale
of the secret
of the mouth.
Every manifestation I saw
was
the unheard Word.

986.2 *īn forṣat-e hastī ke nafas keshmakesh-e ū-st*
hangāme-ye bītāb-e gosastan rasan-ī būd

این فرصت هستی که نفس کشمکش اوست
هنگامه بیتاب گسستن رسنی بود

This opportune moment of existence,
pulled this way
and that way
by breath,
was

¹³ Ibid, I:461.

a frayed gathering
of broken rope.

986.3 *tā pāk bar-āyīm ze garmābe-ye owhām*
qaṭ ‘-e nafas az har man-o-mā jāme-kanī būd

تا پاک بر آیم ز گرمابه او هام
قطع نفس از هر من و ما جامه کنی بود

The severing of breath
from all I-and-we
was
the undressing room
of the bathhouse,
Letting us rise, purified,
from the warm bath
of delusion.

986.4 *jam ‘iyat-e sar-baste-ye har ghonche dar īn bāgh*
z-ān pīsh ke gol dar naẓar āyad chaman-ī būd

جمعیت سر بسته هر غنچه در این باغ
زان پیش که گل در نظر آید چمنی بود

The concealed collectedness
of every rosebud
in this garden
was
a garden,
blooming before
the roses blossom into view.

986.5 *tekrār-e nafas shod sabab-e mabḥaṣ-e azdād*
emrūz to-vo-mā-st k-az- īn pīsh man-ī būd.

تکرار نفس شد سبب مبحث اعداد
امروز تو و ماست کزین پیش منی بود

Repetition of breath
caused the dispute
of opposites.
Today, it is you and we;
before,
was
the mind's I.

986.6 *dar bī-kasī-yam kheffat-e ham-cheshmī-ye kas nīst*
ay bī-khabarān ‘ālam-e ghorbat vaṭan-ī būd

در بیکسیم خفت هم چشمی کس نیست
ای بیخبران عالم غربت وطنی بود

In my solitude
there are no slights
from anyone's companionship.
O ignorant ones!
the world of exile
was
homeland.

986.7 *emrūz jonūn-e tab-e ‘eshq-e to nadāram*
ṣobḥ-e azal-am pāmbe-ye dāgh-e kohan-ī būd

امروز جنون تب عشق تو ندارم
صبح ازلم پنبه داغ کهنی بود

Today I have no delirium
from the fever of passion for you.
The dawn of eternity-without-beginning
was
gauze on an old scar
for me.

986.8 *mā rā be ‘adam nīz hamān qayd-e vojūd ast*
z-ān zolf-e gereh-gīr be har-jā shekanī būd

ما را به عدم نیز همان قید وجود است
زان زلف گره گیر به هر جا شکنی بود

Even in our not-existing
there too is the same
cage of being.
Knots
of that tangled hair
were
everywhere.

986.9 *afsūs ke del rā be jalā-yī naranāndīm*
ṣobḥ-e chaman āyīne-ye ṣayqal-zadanī būd

افسوس که دل را به جلایی نرساندیم
صبح چمن آئینه صیقل زدنی بود

What a shame
that we were not able
to illuminate the heart.
Dawn in the garden
was
a mirror
worth polishing.

986.10 *z-īn reshte ke dar kārgah-e mūy-e sefīd ast
jūlāh-e amal selsele-bāf-e kafan-ī būd*

زین رشته که در کارگه موی سفید است
جولاه امل سلسله باف کفنی بود

With this thread
from the workshop of white hair
The weaver of hope
was
weaving
a winding shroud.

986.11 *ākhar be tapes̄h mordam o āgāh nagashtam
ān chāh ke zendānī-ye ū-yam zāqan-ī būd*

آخر به تپش مردم و آگاه نگشتم
آن چاه که زندانی اویم ذقنی بود

In the end, I died –
heart beating –
and did not become wise.
That well
where I dwell, imprisoned,
was
a deep-dimpled chin.

986.12 *fardā shavī āgāh ze parvāz-e ghobār-am
k-īn khel 'at-e nāzok be bar-e gol/gel-badan-ī būd*

فردا شوی آگاه ز پرواز غبارم
کین خلعت نازک به بر گل بدنی بود

Tomorrow
the flight of my dust
will make you wise.
This delicate robe of honor

was
draped over
a clay-flower body.

986.13 *Bīdel falak az ṣābet o sayyār(-e) kavākeb*
fānūs-e khayāl-e man-o-mā anjoman-ī būd

بیدل فلک از ثابت و سیار کواکب
فانوس خیال من و ما انجمنی بود

Bīdel
firmament
with fixed stars
and roaming planets
a turning lantern
of the imaginary
of I
and we
was
a gathering.

Translation 3 | Selections from Bidel’s Narrative Poems:
Mount Sinai of Enlightenment (Ṭūr-e ma ‘refat) and
The Enchanted World of Wonder (Ṭelesm-e ḥayrat)

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- T3.M2.1 From section 8B, “A Description of Temperament” (*Dar şefat-e mezāj*)
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T3.M2.4 From section 14A, Untitled Preface

I

Selections from *Mount Sinai of Enlightenment*¹

Ṭūr-e maʿrefat | طور معرفت
(composed in 1688/1689)

Genre: long narrative poem (*maṣnavī*), rhyming couplets: AA BB CC...

Meter: ~ - - - | ~ - - - | ~ - -

(→)

mafā ʿilon mafā ʿilon fa ʿilon

Hazaj-e mosaddas-e maḥzūf al-żarb (E.S.#2.1.11)

Hazaj = *mafā ʿilon mafā ʿilon mafā ʿilon*

First foot (şadr): sālem

Second foot (ḥashv): sālem

Third foot (żarb): *mafā ʿilon* + ḥazf = *fa ʿilon*

T3.M1.1 From Section, “**The Beginning of the Tale of Travels through the Bayrāt Mountains, and an Investigation into the True Reality Contained within Its Divine Environs**”²

Āghāz-e bayān-e sayr-e Bayrāt / taḥqīq-e savād-e qodrat-āyat

tapesh-farsūd showq-e nāle-tamşāl
ze taḥrīk-e nafas vā mī-konad bāl

14567

¹ Mīrzā ʿAbd al-Qāder Bīdel Dehlavī, *Kolleyyāt-e Abū l-Maʿānī Mīrzā ʿAbd al-Qāder Bīdel Dehlavī*, edited by Khalīlollāh Khalīlī (Tehrān: Enteshārāt-e Ṭalāye, 1389SH [2010/2011CE]), III:405-537.

² Ibid, III:541-547.

تپش فرسود شوق ناله تمثال
ز تحریک نفس وا می‌کند بال

Like a lament worn out
by agitation – passion
Begins to beat its wings
to the movement of breaths:

ke khāmūshī navā-sāz ast emrūz 14568
ghobār-e sorme āvāz ast emrūz

که خاموشی نواساز است امروز
غبار سرمه آواز است امروز

Today, silence
sings.
Today, the black dust of kohl
finds a voice.

ze Ṭūr-e ma`refat ma`nī sarāyam 14569
be chandīn kūh mī-nāzad ṣedā-yam

ز طور معرفت معنی سرایم
به چندین کوه می‌نازد صدایم

With this poem,
Moint Sinai of Enlightenment,
I create meaning.
My voice
takes on the airs
of countless mountains.

ze Golgasht-e ḥaqīqat tar-zabān-am 14570
be ṣad menqār mī-bālad bayān-am

ز گلگشت حقیقت ترزبانم
به صد منقار می‌بالد بیانم

Eloquence flows off my tongue
as I compose
*The Garden of True Reality.*³

³ Along with *Ṭūr-e ma`refat* (*Mount Sinai of Enlightenment*), *Golgasht-e ḥaqīqat* (*The Garden of True Reality*) appears to be another viable title for the poem. For an example of *Golgasht-e ḥaqīqat* being taken as the primary title of the poem, see Sprenger's *Catalogue*, which describes a partial manuscript of this poem – also beginning with the same first line, “*Tapesh-farsūd showq-e nāle-tamṣāl.*” See Aloys Sprenger, *A Catalogue of the Arabic, Persian, and Hindustany*

My exposition trills
from a hundred beaks.

*4

mo 'ammā-ye mo 'ammā '-ye mo 'ammā 14603
agar kh^vāhī goshūdan cheshm bog(o)shā

معمای معمای معما
اگر خواهی گشودن چشم بگشا

If you wish to unlock
the riddle
of riddles
of riddles –
Open it
with your own eyes.⁵

kas-ī k-az ma 'refat yek shīveh bog(o)zīd 14604
jahān-e bī-nehāyat monḥaṣer dīd

کسی کز معرفت یک شیوه بگزید
جهان بی‌نهایت منحصر دید

Anyone who chooses
but one style
of enlightenment,
Will find their vision
of a boundless world
restricted.

zeh-ī vāzhūnī-ye bakht-e ḥobāb-at 14605
ke bād āmad be sāghar jā-ye āb-at

زهی واژونی بخت حبابت
که باد آمد به ساغر جای آبت

How wondrous

Manuscripts of the Libraries of the King of Oudh (Calcutta: J. Thomas, 1854), I.380. Bīdel himself refers to the completion of this poem in Letter N^o108, (“On the Completion of *Mount Sinai of Wonder*”). For a translation and transcription of this letter, see, T4.L1.

⁴ Since Bīdel’s narrative poems are quite long, it is often not possible to translate them here in their entirety. Throughout this translation, interruptions in the continuity of couplets are represented by an asterisk (*).

⁵ For this treble structure, see Chapter 5, Footnote 73.

is the inverted fortune
of your bubble!
Your wineglass brims
with empty air
instead of water.

cherāgh-e āgahī khalvat-gozīn nīst 14606
forūgh-e mehr dar zīr-e zamīn nīst

چراغ آگهی خلوت گزین نیست
فروغ مهر در زیر زمین نیست

The lamp of enlightenment
does not thrive in seclusion:
The illumination of love
is not concealed beneath the earth.

kamāl ān ast k-az khod bāshī āgāh 14607
che dar ṣaḥrā che dar khalvat che dar chāh

کمال آن است کز خود باشی آگاه
چه در صحرا چه در خلوت چه در چاه

The perfect human is one
who is enlightened
about themselves;
It matters not if they are in a desert,
or in seclusion,
or down a well.

*

valī īn-jā ghobār-ī par-feshān ast 14612
ke maḥmel nīz chūn Laylī nehān ast

ولی اینجا غاری پرفشان است
که محمل نیز چون لیلی نهان است

However: here,
one has to scatter dust
by spreading wings:
Both Laylī and the palanquin
concealing her
are hidden.

navā-ye sāz-e ḥayrat ḥayrat-āvā-st 14613
cho ‘anqā nām-e ‘anqā nīz anqā-st

نوای ساز حیرت حیرت‌آوست
چو عنقا نام عنقا نیز عنقا است

The song produced
by wonder's instrument
is attuned to wonder.
Like the phoenix,
the very name of "phoenix" too
is wondrous and phoenix-rare.

*

sabaq-hā-ye khayāl-e khām tā chand 14654
varaḡ-gardānī-ye owhām ta chand

سبق‌های خیال خام تا چند
ورق گردانی اوهم تا چند

How long will you struggle
to learn your lessons
with untrained imagination?
How long will you flip through
the pages of illusion
with careless haste?

agar hosh āshenā-ye dars-e ma 'nī-st 14655
jahān yek noskhe-ye Majnūn o Laylī-st

اگر هوش آشنای درس معنی است
جهان یک نسخه مجنون و لیلی است

If your intelligence
has come to know
the lesson of "meaning,"
Then all the world
becomes a manuscript
of *Laylī and Majnūn*.

khayāl-e shūr-e Laylī mokhtaṣar kon 14656
tamāshā-hā-st sāmān-e naẓar kon

خیال شور لیلی مختصر کن
تماشاهاست سامان نظر کن

Abridge what you imagine
of Laylī's agitation.
There are many things
worth seeing.

Prepare your gaze.

*

*hame az 'ālam-e bang-at khayāl-and
hojūm-e naqsh-e taṣvīr-e moḥāl-and*

14667

همه از عالم بنگت خیالند
هجوم نقش تصویر محالند

Everything before you is imaginary –
a world conjured into being
by cannabis;
Everything is but an onslaught
of images
and empty pictures.

*

*Badakhshān gar be rāh-at afkanad sang
nagardī ghāfel az ashk-e jegar-rang*

14678

بدخشان گر به راهت افکند سنگ
نگردی غافل از اشک جگر رنگ

If Badakhshān
should throw a stone
to block your path,
You will not soon forget
your flowing tears
the color of blood.

*cherā dar ḥasrat-e kān-e Neshāpūr
shavad rakht-at kabūd az mātām-e sūr*

14679

چرا در حسرت کان نشاپور
شود رختت کبود از ماتم سور

And why, in longing
for the mines of Nīshāpūr,
Should your garments be dyed blue
because of lacerating grief
for wine-red joy?

*be dūrān gar rasīdan-hā-st moshkel
ze nazdīkān nabāyad būd ghāfel*

14680

به دوران گر رسیدن هاست مشکل
ز نزدیکیان نباید بود غافل

It's difficult to reach
those who are far away;
You must not neglect
those who are close to home.

agar taḥqīq-e ma 'nī noskhe-ārā-st
be har jā chesm vā gardad tamāshā-st

14681

اگر تحقیق معنی نسخه‌آر است
به هر جا چشم وا گردد تماشا است

If one way of illuminating manuscripts
is by research into meaning's
true reality,
Then every place you look
with open eyes
has much that is worth seeing.

konūn dar kūh-e Bayrāt āb-o-rang-ī-st
ke har sang-ash be del bordan farang-ī-st

14682

کنون در کوه بیرات آب و رنگی است
که هر سنگش به دل بردن فرنگی است

The Bayrāt Mountains
glisten now
with freshness, color, moisture;
Every stone entices
like a beautiful European.

T3.M1.2 From section, “**Description of Springtime and the Monsoon Rains at the Bayrāt Mountains, and How the Fresh Dew of Its Perfection Scatters Like Flowers**”⁶

Towṣīf-e bahār o barshakāl-ash / golrīzī-ye rashḥe-ye kamāl-ash

dar īn manzel ke joz āb o havā nīst
kas-ī bā ātash o khāk āshenā nīst

14754

در این منزل که جز آب و هوا نیست
کسی با آتش و خاک آشنا نیست

In this place,
the environment

⁶ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, III:547-550.

is all air and water:
None here are acquainted
with fire or earth.

zamīn o āsemān-ash yek ḥobāb ast 14755
ke har sū mī-kharāmī bād o āb ast

زمین و آسمانش یک حباب است
که هر سو می خرامی باد و آب است

Here, earth and sky
together form a single bubble:
Wherever you direct your delicate steps,
all you'll find
is air and water.

robā 'ī-gū-ye maẓmūn-e 'anāṣer 14756
be rabṭ-e vazn-e ta 'dīl ast qāṣer

رباعی گوی مضمون عناصر
به ربط وزن تعدیل است قاصر

Any poet who composes quatrains
whose theme is the four elements,
Falls short by half:
their meter
is not rightly weighted.

ze bas āb o havā īn-jā zeyād ast 14757
be har meṣra 'do 'onṣor mostazād ast

ز بس آب و هوا اینجا زیاد است
به هر مصرع دو عنصر مستزاد است

There is here so much air and water
that there's a surplus:
In every hemistich,
two elements of four
are supererogatory.⁷

agar az 'Onṣorī-kh'ānī saḥāb-ī-st 14758
samandar tā nevīsī morgh-e āb-ī-st

اگر از عنصری خوانی سحابی است

⁷ "Fire" and "earth" are not necessary, because the environment of these poems is sufficiently described by only "air" and "water."

سمندر تا نویسی مرغ آبی است

If you recite the poems of ‘Onṣorī,⁸
you get a veritable compendium
of thunderclouds:
Before you finish writing
the fiery name of “salamander,”
it turns into a water-fowl.

be rang-ī ma ‘nī-ye khāk ast nāyāb
ke shod gerd-e yatīm-ī dar gohar āb

14759

به رنگی معنی خاک است نایاب
که شد گرد یتیمی در گهر آب

The meaning found in “earth”
cannot be grasped by colors;
The circles on a single pearl
are all submerged
in shining water.

cho gūyī khāk bād-ash borde bāshad
v-agar ātash be āb aḥsorde bāshad

14760

چو گویی خاک بادش برده باشد
وگر آتش به آب افسرده باشد

No sooner do you speak of “dust,”
than it is borne away
by “wind.”
And should you utter “fire,”
the very word

⁸ ‘Onṣorī (d.1039) is a renowned classical Persian poet, famous for working in references to all four elements into his poetry, especially extempore quatrains. Indeed, his name means “The Elemental One” (“*onṣor*” is “element”). For an account of ‘Onṣorī’s improvisational brilliance, illustrated in an anecdote describing how the Ghaznavid ruler Maḥmūd filled ‘Onṣorī’s mouth with precious stones – thrice – in payment for a pleasing quatrain, see narrative 3 in Neẓāmī ‘Arūzī’s twelfth-century account of the craft of poetry in his *Chahār maqāle*. Neẓāmī ‘Arūzī, *Chahār maqāle (The Four Discourses)*, ed. Moḥammad Qazvīnī and Moḥammad Mo‘īn (Tehran: Ketābforūshī-ye Zavvār, 1327SH [1948/1949CE]), 53-57. For the poet Farrokhī’s ability to distribute the four elements across each hemistich of a quatrain in a similar way, see narrative 4 (ibid, 57-64); and the poet Mo‘ezzi’s accomplishments in the same category, see narrative 5 (ibid, 64-68). For an overview of the motif of elements, and elements used in refrains, see Franklin Lewis, “The Rise and Fall of a Refrain: The Radif *Ātash u Āb*,” in *Reorientations: Arabic and Persian Poetry*, edited by Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, 199-226 (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1994).

is quenched by “water.”

ze jūsh-e abr o fayż-e rashḥe-kār-ī 14761
moyassar nīst īn-jā khāksār-ī

ز جوش ابر و فیض رشحه‌کاری
میسر نیست اینجا خاکساری

The roiling clouds
with all their dew-dispersing grace
Have made it so that here –
there’s no one to be found
who humbly dwells in dust.

dar-īn mowsem ze bas ṭūfān-kamīnī 14762
zamīn-gīrī bovad keshṭī-neshīnī

در این موسم ز بس طوفان کمینی
زمین‌گیری بود کشتی‌نشینی

In this season, there are so many
storms and monsoon rains
That no one sits upon the ground:
they board a ship.

*

be vaşf-ash gar nemāyad khāme eqbāl 14773
nagardad khoshk taḥrīr-ash be şad sāl

به وصفش گر نماید خامه اقبال
نگردد خشک تحریرش به صد سال

If a pen is destined to describe
these mountains and the monsoon rain,
Its composition won’t run dry
for at least a hundred years.

ze sīrābī-sh gar ḥarf-ī neveshtī 14774
tavān dar jū-ye meşar rānd keshṭī

ز سیرابیش گر حرفی نوشتی
توان در جوی مسطر راند کشتی

Were you to write a single letter
in description of this moisture,
A ship could sail
along the channel

of that page's running lines.

*

tarashshoḥ gar konad shūkhī be īn rang 14781
shavad āb ātash-e yāqūt dar sang

ترشح گر کند شوخی به این رنگ
شود آب آتش یاقوت در سنگ

If sprinkling rain should frolic
in this colorful way,
The ruby's fire melts to water,
shimmering within the stone.

T3.M1.3 From Section, "Description of Clouds"⁹
Ṣefat-e abr

nagūyam abr mastī-nash'e fīl-ī 14830
be gardūn mowj-zan daryā-ye nīl-ī

نگویم ابر مستی نشئه فیلی
به گردون موج زن دریای نیلی

I do not say the clouds are drunk,
enraged like elephants,
Stamping waves upon the sky
as though it were the Nile –

valī fīl-ī ke tā jūshīd mayl-ash 14831
bepīchad kūh rā kharṭūm-e sayl-ash

ولی فیلی که تا جوشید میلش
بپیچد کوه را خرطوم سیلش

But rather this: these clouds are elephants
who overboil with impulsive inclination;
Their trunks can spew out such a flood
that drenches mountains.

chenān fīl-ī ke tā shod fetne-māyel 14832
falak-hā rā cho kaf rīzad be sāhel

چنان فیلی که تا شد فتنه مایل
فلکها را چو کف ریزد به ساحل

⁹ Bīdel, *Kolleyāt*, III:550-551.

Were any elephant inclined
to stir up this kind of chaos,
It would pour down the skies themselves
like froth upon a shore.

'araq bāshad govāh-e mastī-ye fīl 14833
tamavvoj-hā dalīl-e shūresh-e nīl

عرق باشد گواه مستی فیل
تموجها دلیل شورش نیل

As sweat bears witness
to the elephant's madness,
So clashing waves bespeak
the Nile's inner chaos.

T3.M1.4 From Section, "Description of Bubbles"¹⁰
Ṣefat-e ḥobāb

zeh-ī važ 'e ḥobāb-e bī-sar-o-pā 14881
ke ḥayrānī ze naqsh-e ū-st paydā

زهی وضع حباب بیسروپا
که حیرانی ز نقش اوست پیدا

How wondrous is the bubble's state:
no head, no feet –
all helpless.
This bubble's image
is Wonder's very portrait.

nafas dar dāman-e del pā shekaste 14882
negah bā sharm 'aqd-e dāde baste

نفس در دامن دل پا شکسته
نگه با شرم عقد دیده بسته

Breath broke its feet
against the outskirts
of the heart.
Vision drew up a contract,
binding eyes to shame.

del o zabṭ-e nafas dāmān o pā-yesh 14883

¹⁰ Ibid, III:552-553.

negāh o cheshm-e tar rūy o qafā-yesh

دل و ضبط نفس دامان و پایش
نگاه و چشم تر روی و قفایش

One heart, one breath held fast –
these are the bubble's
hem and feet.
Vision and a watery eye:
these are the bubble's
face and neck.

agar cheshm ast dar ghayr-ash nāzar nīst
v-agar pā az khod-ash bīrūn safar nīst

14884

اگر چشم است در غیرش نظر نیست
وگر پا از خودش بیرون سفر نیست

Though it has eyes,
it can see nothing
that is not itself;
Though it has feet,
they cannot take
a single outward step.

*

be fānūs-ash nafas mī-sūzad o bas
khayāl-e maḥẓ mī-afrūzad o bas

14898

به فانوسش نفس می‌سوزد و بس
خیال محض می‌افروزد و بس

Its Chinese lantern
turns, propelled by burning breath –
and nothing more.
It glows, lit up
with pure imagination –
and nothing more.

cho ṣobḥ-ash dar qafas ghayr az nafas nīst
valī tā par zanad sāz-e qafas nīst

14899

چو صبحش در قفس غیر از نفس نیست
ولی تا پر زند ساز قفس نیست

Like dawn, the bubble's cage
can capture

only rising breath.
But while it beats its wings,
the cage is rattled,
discomposed.

mo 'ammā-i chenīn 'ālam nadārad 14900
ke tā besh(e)kāft nām-i ham nadārad

معمایی چنون عالم ندارد
که تا بشکافت نامی هم ندارد

And so, this riddle
is not so world-great:
When unravelled,
the very name
dissolves.¹¹

telesm-e hayrat-i gol karde az āb 14901
jahān z-īn rang dar jūsh ast daryāb

طلسم حیرتی گل کرده از آب
جهان زین رنگ در جوش است دریاب

The Enchanted World of Wonder
has blossomed into being
out of water.
Know this: the whole world boils
with these colors!

maporsīd az tamāshā-ye hobāb-am 14902
ke man ham gar be khod andīsham āb-am

میرسید از تماشای حبابم
که من هم گر به خود اندیشم آبم

Do not inquire
to see the bubble
of my self:
For when I too
consider my own self,
I liquify with shame.

¹¹ Perhaps a reference to how the word *hobāb* (“bubble”) ends with *āb* (“water”).

T3.M1.5 From Section, “Description of the Rainbow”¹²
Ṣefat-e qows-e qozaḥ

mo ‘ayyan shod be ṭab ‘-e ma ‘nī-andīsh 14957
ke sayr-e khalq bīrūn nīst az kh’īsh

معین شد به طبع معنی اندیش
که سیر خلق بیرون نیست از خویش

This is disclosed
unto that mind which is disposed
to ponder meaning:
To travel through creation
is to journey inward,
through the self.

hamīn yek nāle z-īn kohsār paydā-st 14958
ke bar mā ān-che mī-āyad ham az mā-st

همین یک ناله زین کهسار پیدااست
که بر ما آنچه می‌آید هم از ماست

The very same lament is heard,
resounding through
this mountain range:
“Everything that befalls us
originates from us.”

T3.M1.6 From Section, “On the Clouds and Colors of the Bayrāt Mountains, A Wineglass Brimming with of Brilliant Manifestations”¹³
Kayfīyat-e abr o rang-e kohsār / paymāne-ye jelve-hā-ye sarshār

beyā ey nāle-ye pargār-e jowlān 14960
ke anjām-e to shod āghāz-sāmān

بیا ای ناله پرگار جولان
که انجام تو شد آغاز سامان

Come forth,
o lamentation
of the turning compass!
Your end
has turned into

¹² Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, III:554-555.

¹³ Ibid, III:555-556.

your beginning.

*

*nadārad khālvat-e har jozv az īn koll
cherāgh-e ma 'refat ghayr az ta 'ammol*

14976

ندارد خلوت هر جزو از این کل
چراغ معرفت غیر از تأمل

Each part (belonging to this whole)
sits in retreat,
secluded –
With only this illuminating lamp:
the gnostic knowledge
of attentive slow reflection.

*agar dars-e ta 'ammol-hā ravān ast
del-e shab ṣafḥe-ye khorshīd-kh'ān ast*

14977

اگر درس تأمل‌ها روان است
دل شب صفحه خورشید خوان است

If the lessons
of attentive slow reflection
come easily,
The very heart of night
will read
the pages of the sun.

*ta 'ammol har kojā āyīne gardīd
be ṭab 'e qaṭre gowhar mī-tavān dīd*

14978

تأمل هر کجا آئینه گردید
به طبع قطره گوهر می‌توان دید

Attentive slow reflection
became a mirror,
everywhere:
In this way, one can look
into a water droplet's nature
and see within – a pearl.

*be har jā deqqat-ash bā feṭrat āmīkht
ze gerd-e āh ṭūfān-e del angīkht*

14979

به هر جا دقتش با فطرت آمیخت
ز گرد آه طوفان دل انگیخت

Attentive slow reflection's minute care
 has mixed in every place
 with given nature:
 It conjures
 from an echoing lament
 a tempest of the heart.

ta`ammol az namī baḥr-āfarīn ast 14980
jahān-ī k-ash nehāyat nīst īn ast

تأمل از نمی بحر آفرین است
 جهانی کش نهایت نیست این است

Attentive slow reflection
 fashions oceans
 from mere moisture:
 If you seek a world
 without end –
 this is it.

khosh ān k-az deqqat-e sāz-e ta`ammol 14981
barī bū-ye gol az āvāz-e bolbol

خوش آن کز دقت ساز تأمل
 بری بوی گل از آواز بلبل

Fortunate are they
 who can apply the minute care
 of attentive slow reflection!
 Through it, one feels
 the rose's fragrance
 in the nightingale's voice.

*

Eshārat [Allusion]

saḥar āyīne-am pardāz-e del yāft 14985
ṣafā-ye emteyāz-e āb-o-gel yāft

سحر آینه‌ام پرداز دل یافت
 صفای امتیاز آب و گل یافت

My mirror's heart
 is dawn-polished
 and dawn-perfected:
 It comprehended pure distinctions
 in these human matters

of water and clay.

nokhostīn k-az taḥaqqoq kardam āghāz 14986
be ramz-e āb-o-khāk-am cheshm shod bāz

نخستین کز تحقق کردم آغاز
به رمز آب و خاکم چشم شد باز

When I began my search for certainty
in matters of true reality,
the first truths
I discovered were when my eyes
were opened to the secrets
of water and clay.

ta`ammol ṣarf-e kār-e īn-o-ān shod 14987
cherāgh-e khalvat-e har yek `eyān shod

تأمل صرف کار این و آن شد
چراغ خلوت هر یک عیان شد

Attentive slow reflection
began to spend its efforts
differentiating “this” from “that:”
I began to clearly see
the burning lantern of seclusion
for each one.

nehāl az khāk golshan dar qafas dāsht 14988
ḥobāb az āb jūshad tā nafas dāsht

نهال از خاک گلشن در قفس داشت
حباب از آب جوشد تا نفس داشت

A young tree
trapped a garden in itself
out of the earth;
A bubble formed
by frothing forth from water
while it held its breath.

yaqīn-am shod ke dar har qaṭre jān-ī-st 14989
nehān dar har kaf-e khākī jahān-ī-st

یقینم شد که در هر قطره جانیمست
نهان در هر کف خاکی جهانیمست

Finally, I reached
this certain knowledge:
every drop of water is a life,
And every handful of earth
contains within itself
a hidden world.

ta`ammol z-īn adā şad jelve dārad 14990
ḥaq(q) o bāṭel ta`ammol mī-negārad

تأمل زین ادا صد جلوه دارد
حق و باطل تأمل می‌نگارد

Attentive slow reflection
yields these brilliant manifestations
by the hundreds;
Both vanity and true reality
adorn – and are created by –
attentive slow reflection.

ta`ammol `eynak-e taḥqīq-e ashyā-st 14991
agar bāshad ta`ammol jelve az mā-st

تأمل عینک تحقیق اشیاست
اگر باشد تأمل جلوه از ماست

Like spectacles,
attentive slow reflection
looks to see the truth of things.
If we practice attentive slow reflection,
its brilliant disclosures
come from our selves.

T3.M1.7 From Section, “Description of Dawn”¹⁴
Şefat-e shafaq

be ṭab`-e qodrat-āgāhān yaqīn ast 15054
ke naqqāsh-e jahān rā la`l īn ast

به طبع قدرت آگاهان یقین است
که نقاش جهان را لعل این است

Those whose natures

¹⁴ Ibid, III:558-559.

are enlightened
have this certain knowledge:
The Painter of the world
has this ruby –
dawn.

taṣavvor-hā be yād-ash jannat-eḥrām 15055
khayāl az rang-e taṣvīr-ash gol-andām

تصورها به یادش جنت احرام
خیال از رنگ تصویرش گل اندام

The concepts
He imagines
are draped with paradise;
Imagination blooms
in roselike form
with colors of His painting.

T3.M1.8 From Section, “Description of the Mountain”¹⁵
Ṣefat-e kūh

ze jor`at kī-st bar owj-ash bar-āyad 15085
hame gar nāle ast az pā dar-āyad

ز جرأت کیست بر او جش بر آید
همه گر ناله است از پا در آید

Who has the courage to ascend
the mountain's
highest peak?
Even upward-echoing laments
will trip and fall before they reach
the summit.

*

be ḥayrat-gāh-e īn me`rāj(-e) qodrat 15087
nadārad hīch ṭāyer bāl-e jor`at

به حیرتگاه این معراج قدرت
ندارد هیچ طایر بال جرأت

No kind of bird has wings
sufficiently courageous
Which could attain

¹⁵ Ibid, III:559-561.

that lofty place of wonder!

magar dar hasrat-e owj āsheyān-ī 15088
konad taslīm-e ‘anqā par-feshānī

مگر در حسرت اوج آشیانی
کند تسلیم عنقا پرفشانی

However: there is a nest
within despairing longing
for that peak
Where winged freedom
greet the phoenix
in salutation.

be ‘azm-e sayr-ash ān kas dārad eqbāl 15089
ke shod chūn nāle yek parvāz-e bī-bāl

به عزم سیرش آن کس دارد اقبال
که شد چون ناله یک پرواز بی‌بال

It is the fate of those
who undertake a wingless, rising
voice-like flight
To reach
the end-point
of this craggy journey.

ze rāh-ash gar neshān porsī neshān kū 15090
be owj-e qaṣr-e gardūn nardobān kū

ز راهش گر نشان پرسی نشان کو
به اوج قصر گردون نردبان کو

If you seek traces
of its path,
where are such traces?
Where is a ladder
to the highest tower
of the castle in the sky?

be deqqat har ke paydā kard rāh-ash 15091
benāzad mū-shekāfī bar negāh-ash

به دقت هر که پیدا کرد راهش
بنازد موشکافی بر نگاهش

Whoever has discovered
the summit's path
through scrupulous, minute attention,
Nuance and hair-fine subtlety
will dance
before their eyes.

*

kas-ī rā gar bar-īn kohsār rāh ast
cho hemmat jāde-ash madd-e negāh ast

15096

کسی را گر بر این کهسار راه است
چو همت جاده‌اش مد نگاه است

If anyone can find a path
that cuts through to the peak
of this high range,
That road lies at the limit
of their vision –
strenuous, ambitious, straining.

ze owj-ash gar tavānī sar keshīdan
falak gardī be andāz-e khamīdan

15097

ز اوجش گر توانی سر کشیدن
فلک گردی به انداز خمیدن

If you can pull yourself away
and redirect your gaze
away from this high peak,
The curving, world-spanning motion
this requires will make you turn
into the sky itself.

be har jā dar kamar-gāh-ash neshastī
kolāh-e mehr bar zānū shekastī

15098

به هر جا در کمرگاهش نشستنی
کلاه مهر بر زانو شکستی

If you should sit and rest
at any place
along the mountain's waist,
The cap of sunny love
will bend and break

against your knees.¹⁶

nāzar z-īn-jā be khāk afkan havā-bīn 15099
bolandī khatm kardī zīr-e pā bīn

نظر زینجا به خاک افکن هوا بین
بلندی ختم کردی زیر پا بین

O you, desiring to behold thin air:
turn your gaze away,
look towards the ground.
You've had enough of lofty heights.
Now look – and see what lies
at your own feet.

T3.M1.9 From Section, “Description of the Mountain Range”¹⁷
Ṣefat-e kūhestān

be zang ārāstan āyīne-ye kh'īsh 15157
forū raftan be dāgh-e kīne-ye kh'īsh

به زنگ آراستن آینه خویش
فرو رفتن به داغ کینه خویش

To adorn the mirror of your self
with rust
Is to be pinned
beneath the burning brand
of your own rage.

zeh-ī sangīnī-ye gard-e taghāfol 15158
ke zad bar sang mīnā-ye ta 'ammol

زهی سنگینی گرد تغافل
که زد بر سنگ مینای تأمل

How wondrous
is the heavy burden of a mind
coated with dust of negligence –
When attentive slow reflection

¹⁶ This line likely alludes to the traditional pose of meditation, where one placing the head upon the knees while sitting down on the ground. The image here seems to be of someone sitting on the mountain, which is so elevated that the sun itself (*mehr*, also the word for “love”) bends down, hat first, in reverent meditation.

¹⁷ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, III:561-563,

shatters
like glass against a rock.

negāh-e yek jahān āgāhī-ye to 15159
rag-e kh^vābī shod az kūtāhī-ye to

نگاه یک جهان آگاهی تو
رگ خوابی شد از کوتاهی تو

Your enlightened vision
of the whole world
of your self
Falls short:
a mere thin streak
of insubstantial dreams.

naraftī az tabī'at yek qadam pīsh 15160
be ḥabs-e jādovān vā-māndī az kh^vīsh

نرفتی از طبیعت یک قدم پیش
به حبس جادوان و ماندی از خویش

You have not gone
a single step
outpacing your own nature:
Held captive by magicians,
you stay behind, away
from your own self.

agar yek parde bar-dārī az īn sang 15161
shavad āyīne pāk az tohmat-e zang

اگر یک پرده بر داری از این سنگ
شود آئینه پاک از تهمت زنگ

If you can lift a single veil
from this rock,
The mirror is absolved
of any guilt of rust.

negah rā bā ta'ammol āshenā kon 15162
ze har sang-ī dahān-e shīshe vā-kon

نگه را با تأمل آشنا کن
ز هر سنگی دهان شیشه و کن

Acquaint your vision
with attentive slow reflection.
Open mouths of glass, concealed
in every stone.

ke naqsh-e sang nā-paydā-st īn-jā 15163
doroshī panbe-ye mīnā-st īn-jā

که نقش سنگ ناپیداست اینجا
درشتی پنبه میناست اینجا

For here, no images
of stone
are to be found.
Here, all brute solidity
is cotton-soft –
gauze for fine glass.

zamān-ī 'oqde-ye sang-at shavad ḥall 15164
ke shūkhī bā 'araq gardad mobaddal

زمانی عقده سنگت شود حل
که شوخی با عرق گردد مبدل

For a moment,
stone-hard knots
will come untied for you,
As mirthful joy
replaces
labour's sweat.

*

del-e sangīn godāz o shīshe bar-dār 15177
v-agar-na dahr-e kohsār ast kohsār

دل سنگین گداز و شیشه بر دار
وگر نه دهر کهسار است کهسار

Dissolve your stone-hard heart,
take up a wineglass!
For if you don't, the mountain's temporal calamity
will always loom before you,
mountain-high.

T3.M1.10 From Section, “Description of Discovering a Deep Well within the Jewel Mine”¹⁸

Dar şefat-e yāftan-e chāh-e ma‘dan

shab-ī bar chāh-e ma‘dan rāh-am oftād 15369
khayāl-ī dar del-e āgāh-am oftād

شبى بر چاه معدن راهم افتاد
خيالى در دل آگاهم افتاد

One night, I chanced upon a path
into the deepest mine-pit,
And this conceit of the imagination
entered my enlightened heart:

ke donyā shāhed-e rū-ye zamīn ast 15370
zanakh-dān-ī agar dārad hamīn ast

که دنیا شاهد روی زمین است
ذنخدانی اگر دارد همین است

The world is a witness
to the beauty
of the earth’s surface;
And if that face
has any dimple in its chin –
it is this mine.

*

agar dar fekr-e jāh-ī rafte bashī 15380
to ham ākhar be chāh-ī rafte bāshī

اگر در فکر جاهى رفته باشى
تظ هم آخر به چاهى رفته باشى

If you bend your thoughts
on worldly fame,
You’ll find yourself thrown
deep into a mine-pit
in the end.

mokarrar shod ḥadīs-e jān-kanī-hā 15381
shanīdan gīr yek-sar dīdanī-hā

مکرر شد حدیث جانکنىها

¹⁸ Ibid, III:571.

شنیدن گیر یکسر دیدنی‌ها

The wrenching tale
of the mined extraction of the soul
is oft-repeated;
Take heed, and listen closely:
these are things worth seeing.

zar(r)-o-sīm-e to nī donyā na dīn ast 15382
*hamīn ast o hamīn ast o hamīn ast*¹⁹

زر و سیم تو نی دنیا نه دین است
همین است و همین است و همین است

Your riches, gold and silver,
are not politics,
nor religion;
Know that your truest treasure
is this,
is this,
is this.²⁰

T3.M1.11 From Section, “**The Garden of the True Reality of Springtime in the Bayrāt Mountains, and the Conclusion of the Arduous Search for Credible Reflections about It**”²¹
Golgasht-e ḥaqīqat-e bahār-ash / khatm-e tag-o-pū-ye e ‘tebār-ash

ta`ammol tā neqāb-e rāz besh(e)kāft 15516
ze qānūn-e del īn āvāz besh(e)kāft

تأمل تا نقاب راز بشکافت
ز قانون دل این آواز بشکافت

In order to unveil secrets,
attentive slow reflection

¹⁹ This hemistich echoes Amīr Khosrow’s famous observation of Kashmīr, that “If there is any paradise on earth / It is this, it is this, it is this.” See Sunil Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia: Persian Literature in an Indian Court* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2017), 107. See also the discussion of tripled words in second hemistichs of couplets in narrative poems, see Chapter 5, Footnote 73.

²⁰ “This” being, perhaps, practicing attentive slow reflection upon all the things “worth seeing” in this world (Line 15381).

²¹ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, III:576-577.

Struck up this melody
with the instrument
of the heart:

ke ay ghāfel bahār-e jūsh-e gol-hā-st 15517
vedā 'e kh'āb kon ṣobḥ-e tamāshā-st

که ای غافل بهار جوش گل هاست
وداع خواب کن صبح تماشااست

“O forgetful one, it’s springtime!
Flowers boil over
as they bloom.
Bid your slumbering dreams farewell:
The dawn of vernal spectatorship
is here!

par-afshān mī-ravad 'aysh az golestān 15518
to ham dāmān-e mozhgānī bar-afshān

پر افشان می‌رود عیش از گلستان
تو هم دامان مژگانی بر افشان

“Mirthful enjoyment
spreads its wings
and leaves the garden;
So too must you
cast wide
your gaze’s eyelashed hem.

mashow nazzāre-ye cheshm-e taghāfol 15519
ke āghūsh-and yek-sar lāle-yo-gol

مشو نظاره چشم تغافل
که آغوشند یکسر لاله و گل

“Do not bear witness
with forgetful eyes;
Behold the rose and tulip –
see how they merge their forms
in mutual embrace.

valī āghūsh tamhīd-e vedā 'and 15520
ramīdan māye-ye vaḥshat metā 'and

ولی آغوش تمهید وداعند

رمیدن مایه وحشت متاعند

“However: this embrace of spring
foreshadows
imminent departure;
Fleeing is this desert wasteland’s
stock in trade; and they –
the tulip and the rose –
its scattered wares.

sorāgh-e kārevān-e showq bar-gīr
az-īn vaḥshat-metā ‘ān ham khabar gīr

15521

سراغ کاروان شوق برگیر
ازین وحشت متاعان هم خبر گیر

“Follow the traces left behind
by passion’s caravan;
try to understand them.
Seek to find out all you can
about these desert-wasteland wares.”

*

konūn vaqt ast agar cheshm-ī konī bāz
ke naqsh-e āsheyān bast(e)-ast parvāz

15527

کنون وقت است اگر چشمی کنی باز
که نقش آشیان بسته است پرواز

Now is the time –
if you have open eyes –
When winged flight will paint
those long-sought nests
into existence.

degar īn golshan o īn rang-o-bū kū
hamān dasht ast o bas chūn raft āhū

15528

دگر این گلشن و این رنگ و بو کو
همان دشت است و بس چون رفت آهو

What more is there
besides this garden,
these colors, these aromas?
Only that wasteland,
with no gazelles –
and nothing more.

nadārad 'omr-e forṣat dastgāh-ī 15529
tamāshā bār mī-bandad negāh-ī

ندارد عمر فرصت دستگاهی
تماشا بار می‌بندد نگاهی

The lifespan of a favorable moment
has no durable authority:
In one mere blink
the spectacle
packs up and leaves.

be har kam-forṣatī-hā fayḏ-e ṣoḥbat 15530
ghanīmat dān ghanīmat dān ghanīmat

به هر کم فرصتی‌ها فیض صحبت
غنیمت دان غنیمت دان غنیمت

Understand this,
understand this,
understand:
For every insufficiency
of fleeting golden moments,
the grace of friendly fellowship
is an abundant treasure.²²

*

che gūyam z-īn ṣafā-kīshān-e yek-del 15548
ke dar vaḥdat bovad te 'dād-e moshkel

چه گویم زین صفاکیشان یکدل
که در وحدت بود تعداد مشکل

What can I say
about these pure-religioned
sharers of one heart?²³
God's own unity
may hold within itself
infinities of difficulty.

²² For this treble structure, see Chapter 5, Footnote 73.

²³ It is possible that Bīdel is referring to reclusive ascetics he has encountered who live in the Bayrāt mountains.

T3.M1.12 From Section, “Description of the Garden”²⁴
Dar šefat-e bāgh

che gozār āyat-e šon ‘-e elāhī 15573
ḥozūr-e ‘ālam-e ‘erfān negāh-ī

چه گلزار آیت صنع الهی
حضور عالم عرفان نگاهی

What a garden! It’s a sign
of God’s own craft.
Look closely: a whole world
of gnostic knowledge
is present here.

tajallī-gāh-e barq-e ṭūr-e e ‘jāz 15574
forūgh-ābād-e sham ‘-e khalvat-e rāz

تجلی گاه برق طور اعجاز
فروغ آباد شمع خلوت راز

A place where Sinai’s lightning
manifests its miracles,
Splendor’s abode, wherein there dwells
a candle, burning
with seclusion’s secrets.

*

nashīman-hā hame āyīne-ta ‘mīr 15591
ze ‘aks-e lāle-yo-gol šobḥ-e Kashmīr

نشیمین ها همه آئینه تعمیر
ز عکس لاله و گل صبح کشمیر

Its nests are panelled
all around
with mirrors:
Tulips and roses reflect
a brilliant Kashmiri dawn:

*

behesht-e ettefāq-e ārezū-hā 15621
farangestān-e ḥosn-e rang-o-bū-hā

بهشت اتفاق آرزوها
فرنگستان حسن رنگ و بوها

²⁴ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, III:578-580.

It is a paradise –
a meeting-place
of all desires;
It is a Europe
full of beauties –
colorful, perfumed.

T3.M1.13 From Section, “Description of the Flowers in the Garden”²⁵
Dar şefat-e gol-hā-ye bāgh

ṭarāvāt show be rū-ye sabze ben(e)shīn 15624
ze pīshānī gereh bog(o)shā vo gol chīn

طراوت شو ب روی سبزه بنشین
ز پیشانی ره بگشا و گل چین

Become like moisture: rest
upon the cheek of verdure.
Unfrown your knotted brow,
and pick some flowers.

mazan dar kolbe-ye jam īyat ātash 15625
be pā-ye gol dam-ī chūn sāye vā-kash
مزن در کلبه جمعیت آتش
به پای گل دمی چون سایه واکش

Do not strike up a fire
within composure’s cell:
Instead, extend yourself a moment
at flowers’ feet
like shadow.

khaṭ(t)-e ḥayrat savād-e sonbolestān 15626
goshūde nāme-ye asrār-e ‘erfān

خطی حیرت سواد سنبلستان
گشوده نامه اسرار عرفان

The manuscript of secret knowledge
begins like this –
With dark-green vine-like lines of wonder
scrawled on hyacinth rough drafts.

*

²⁵ Ibid, III:580-581.

nafas rā harze-tāz-e vahm map(a)sand 15629
zamān-ī ghonche showdel dar gereh band

نفس را هرزه‌تاز و هم میسند
زمانی غنچه شو دل در گره بند

Breath does not brook
illusion's useless sallies.
Become a rosebud,
for a moment –
bind your heart into a knot.

havas tā bāl mī-zad dar bahār-ash 15630
payām-ī mī-shanīd az lāle-zār-ash

هوس تا بال می‌زد در بهارش
پیامی می‌شنید از لاله زارش

While lust still beats its wings
within His springtime,
You will still hear the message
from His tulip garden:

ke mī-kh'āhad ta 'ammol sayr-e īn bāgh 15631
jegar farsh ast gar ben(e)shīnī ay dāgh

که می‌خواهد تأمل سیر این باغ
جگر فرش است گر بنشیننی ای داغ

“Attentive slow reflection strives
to compass and to know this garden.
But your impatient, ardent passion
is a dangerous carpet: should you sit down,
what burns you'll suffer!”

T3.M1.14 From Section, “**On the Burning of Jasmine**”²⁶
Dar sūkhtegī-ye saman

nagardīdam ze ḥosn-e khod khabar-dār 15695
be 'eshq-e dīgarān gashtam gereftār

نگردیدم ز حسن خود خبردار
به عشق دیگران گشتم گرفتار

I did not become aware

²⁶ Ibid, III:582-583.

of my own beauty.
Instead, I stayed enthralled
by love of others.

*

negāh-am ān sū-ye khod karde parvāz 15714
ke mānd āyīne-am maḥrūm-e pardāz

نگاهم آن سوی خود کرده پرواز
که ماند آینهام محروم پرداز

My vision spread its wings
and flew straight through me:
The mirror of my self
remained unpolished.

agar bar kh^vish cheshm-am bāz mī-shod 15715
sarāpā-yam ṭelesm-e nāz mī-shod

اگر بر خویش چشمم باز می‌شد
سر اپایم طلسم ناز می‌شد

If I should train my gaze
upon myself
with open eyes,
All of my self,
from head to toe,
becomes a tempting, spell-bound world.

konūn bā sūkhtan mī-bāyad-am sākht 15716
sezā-ye ān-ke qadr-e kh^vish nash(e)nākht

کنون با سوختن می‌بایدم ساخت
سزای آنکه قدر خویش نشناخت

And now, I must resolve
within myself
to burn:
For this befits all those
who know not
their own worth.

T3.M1.15 From Section, “Abandoning Anxious Thoughts of Free Will”²⁷
Tark-e andīshe-ye ekhteyār

²⁷ Ibid, III:584-585.

beyā Bīdel ke 'eshq-at enfe 'āl ast 15718
maḥabbat nīz dar vaḥdat vabāl ast

بیا بیدل که عشقت انفعال است
محبت نیز در وحدت وبال است

Come now, Bidel – your passion
falls with shame!
For when it comes to unity of God,
even love grows heavy.

do-ī mī-kh'āhad īn da 'vá ḥazar kon 15719
'adam bāshī o maṭlab mokhtaṣar kon

دویی می خواهد این دعوی حذر کن
عدم باشی و مطلب مختصر کن

Duality extends these invitations.
Beware!
Abide in nonexistence,
and abridge your thoughts.

ze hastī har che andīshī foẓūlī-st 15720
zar-anjām-e foẓūlī nā-qabūlī-st

ز هستی هر چه اندیشی فضولی است
سر انجام فضولی ناقبولی است

Whatever thoughts you have
of this existence –
they all unpleasantly obtude.
An end to rude obtrusions
is to reject them.

kas-ī z-īn shoghī-e nowmīdī che varzad 15721
ke chīdan-hā be har chīdan nayarzad

کسی زین شغل نومیدی چه ورزد
که چیدن ها به هر چیدن میرزد

Engrossed in this performance of despair,
what endeavors can a person undertake?
Collection and arrangement
are not worth the effort
of collecting and arranging.

ghobār-e khod be dāmān-e ‘adam zan 15722
ke mī-gūyad jamāl āyīne besh(e)kan

غبار خود به دامان عدم زن
که می‌گوید جمال آئینه بشکن

Scatter the dust of your own self
to the outskirts of nonexistence.
It is as Beauty always says:
“Shatter your mirrors.”

sar-e ān ʔorre gar kh‘āhī goshūdan 15723
ḥazar kon az khayāl-e shāne būdan

سر آن طره گر خواهی گشودن
حذر کن از خیال شانه بودن

If you intend to pry apart
the knotted ends
of locks of hair,
Beware – lest you become
a mere imagined comb.

doyī bar šāfi-ye ān jelve rang ast 15724
toyī dar ‘ālam-e man sakht nang ast

دویی بر صافی آن جلوه رنگ است
تویی در عالم من سخت ننگ است

Duality is a stain of color
upon that brilliant pure radiance.
“You” is full of shame
within the world of “I.”

man-o-mā-ye to ḥarf-e shakhṣ-e yektā-st 15725
zabān-e mowj-hā dar kām-e daryā-st

من و مای تو حرف شخص یکتاست
زبان موج‌ها در کام دریاست

Your “I-and-we” –
mere words, uttered
by a single figure.
The flowing tongue of waves
resides within
the ocean’s mouth.

be chandīn mowj yektāyī-st dar jūsh 15726
doyī fahmīdanī dārad ke khāmūsh

به چندین موج یکتایی است در جوش
دویی فهمیدنی دارد که خاموش

Just as unicity is made to boil
with countless waves,
Duality must understand
one single thing:
“Be silent.”

doyī ḥarf ast o mā tamṣāl-e ḥarf-īm 15727
ke dar ṣad maṭlab-e nāyāb ṣarfīm

دویی حرف است و ما تمثال حرفیم
که در صد مطلب نایاب صرفیم

Duality is speech, and we
are figures of that speech;
We're spent
upon a hundred rare and distant meanings
beyond our reach.

dar-īn tamṣāl-hā shakhṣ-ī-st mowjūd 15728
ke ṣad tamṣāl paydā kard o nan(e)mūd

در این تمثال‌ها شخصی است موجود
که صد تمثال پیدا کرد و ننمود

One individual exists
among these figures, these reflections:
They can uncover a hundred figures,
and still that One
is undiscovered.

lebās-e jelve bīrūn az qeyās ast 15729
do 'ālam shūkhī-ye rang-e lebās ast

لباس جلوه بیرون از قیاس است
دو عالم شوخی رنگ لباس است

The garb of brilliant manifestation
is beyond compare.
Both worlds are the mirthful play of color

on these external garments.

kas-ī k-āshūb-e ḥosn-e mā-vo-man dīd 15730
hamān Yūsuf ze bū-ye pīrhan dīd

کسی کاشوب حسن ما و من دید
همان یوسف ز بوی پیرهن دید

Whoever has beheld the wild unrest
of beauty in this “we-and-I” –
They’ve managed to discern
that very Yūsuf
by the perfume of his clothes.

tajaddod kesvat-e shān-e vojūd ast 15731
hamīn ast ān-che sāmān-e nemūd ast

تجدد کسوت شان وجود است
همین است آنچه سامان نمود است

Perpetual self-renewal is the garment,
the outward disposition of existence.
It is just like those wares and household objects
that are spread out for sale,
outwardly displayed.

chaman bī-rang o mā rang-āshenāyīm 15732
jahān khāmūsh o mā mast-e navāyīm

چمن بی‌رنگ و ما رنگ‌آشناایم
جهان خاموش و ما مست نوایم

The garden has no color, but we –
we’re color’s connoisseurs.
The world is still and silent, but we –
we’re drunk with melody and song.

dar īn golshan hazārān rang bālīd 15733
az īn qānūn hazār āhang nālīd

در این گلشن هزاران رنگ بالید
از این قانون هزار آهنگ نالید

Colors grew by thousands
in this garden.
This instrument released

a thousand modes of song

*

khayāl-ī z-ān navā-hā shūkhī angīkht 15739
feghān gasht o be rū-ye sāz-e mā rīkht

خیالی زان نواها شوخی انگیخت
فغان گشت و به روی ساز ما ریخت

Imagination
stirred up mirthful joy
from all those melodies.
Lament departed, flowed away
dispersed by harmony
from our instrument.

tag-o-pū-ye nafas tā dārad eqbāl 15740
bahār-ī o khazān-ī mī-zanad bāl

تگ و پوی نفس تا دارد اقبال
بهارى و خزانی میزند بال

So long as breath
is fated thus
to seek and search,
Springs and autumns
will continue
to spread their wings.

nafas āhang-e bī-tekrār dārad 15741
tajaddod z-īn navā besyār dārad

نفس آهنگ بی تکرار دارد
تجدد زین نوا بسیار دارد

But breath can also have a mode that's free
from repetition:
So much perpetual renewal
is in this song.

be-sāmān ast bī-sāz-e taraddod 15742
be har mozhgān zadan chandīn tajaddod

به سامان است بی ساز تردد
به هر مژگان زدن چندین تجدد

How tranquil can it be

when instruments don't waver
back and forth with sameness!
How many new renewals
are in every opening
and closing of the eyes!

bahār-ī o khazān-ī nīst manzūr 15743
sokhan paymāne-ī dārad ke bar-shūr

بهارى و خزانى ميست منظور
سخن ميمانه‌اى دارد كه بر شور

Make neither spring nor autumn
the object of your sight.
Discourse takes the measure of things correctly:
take up its glass,
and drink it all!

man īn-jā dar sokhan bī-ekhteyār-am 15744
nafas sarmāye-yam īn ast kār-am

من اينجا در سخن بى اختيارم
نفس سرمايه‌ام اين است كارم

Here, am I steeped in discourse –
not of my own free will.
I am a creature
whose worth is breath,
whose work is discourse.

valī tā dam zanam sāz-am khamūshī-st 15745
va-gar khāmūsh gardam nāle-jūshī-st

ولى تا دم زنم سازم خموشى است
وگر خاموش گردم ناله‌جوشى است

While I draw breath and speak,
my instrument is silence.
But if I should fall silent,
I boil with loud lament.

varaḡ-gardānī-ī dārad khayāl-am 15746
ke man ham gar konam tekrār lāl-am

ورق‌گردانيى دارد خيالم
كه من هم گر كنم تكرر لالم

My imagination
briskly flips through pages –
But if I should lapse into repetition,
I'd fall mute.

ketāb-e jelve tekrār-ash moḥāl ast 15747
taṣavvor bī-khabar forṣat khayāl ast

کتاب جلوه تکرارش محال است
تصور بی‌خبر فرصت خیال است

It is impossible:
the book of splendor
contains no repetition.
Human imagination is ill informed,
and opportunities –
are mere imagined moments.

naḥas tā bāl zad maṭlab sar-āmad 15748
gol-ī raft o bahār-ī dīgar āmad

نفس تا بال زد مطلب سرآمد
گلی رفت و بهاری دیگر آمد

While breath still beat its wings,
discourse's meanings ceased:
Roses faded,
another spring arrived.

nashod forṣat dar īn vīrāne paydā 15749
v-agar-na del che-hā mī-kard enshā

نشد فرصت در این ویرانه پیدا
وگرنه دل چه‌ها می‌کرد انشا

No opportune time can be found
here in this wasteland.
Had it been at hand, what wonders
the heart could have inscribed!

ta`ammol-hā agar māndī be yek ḥāl 15750
namī-gardīd rang-e man be ṣad sāl

تأمل‌ها اگر ماندی به یک حال
نمی‌گردید رنگ من به صد سال

Had you remained, contained
 within one momentary state
 by practicing attentive slow reflection,
 The colors of the “I” of self
 would not have changed
 for a hundred years.

kam-e man bīsh-e har besyār mī-būd 15751
khaṭ(t)-e man ‘arż-e šad tūmār mī-būd

کم من بیش هر بسیار می بود
 خط من عرض صد طومار می بود

This little quantity of my self
 outnumbered all things
 great and many.
 These lines composed by me
 outstripped a hundred scrolls.

gar az barg-e khazānī mī-neveshtam 15752
cho rang-e khod jahān-ī mī-neveshtam

گر از برگ خزانی می نوشتم
 چو رنگ خود جهانی می نوشتم

I composed
 of autumn leaves and petals:
 Thus I composed a world, colored
 like the colors of my self.

be har kam-forṣatī dar bāgh-e nayrang 15753
pay-ī afshānde-am bārī be īn rang

به هر کمفرصتی در باغ نیرنگ
 پیی افشاندۀ ام باری به این رنگ

In this deceptive colored garden,
 with every fleeting moment,
 I left my footprints – once –
 upon these colors.

be vaḥshat yāftam mosht-e ghobār-ī 15754
ke dādam ‘arż-e ta ‘mīr-e bahār-ī

به وحشت یافتم مشت غباری

که دادم عرض تعمیر بهاری

I seized a handful of dust
in this wild desert –
And with it, gave the order
for the construction
of another spring.

ze rang-e rafte-ye khod yād kardam
ke īn faṣl-e khazān bonyād kardam

15755

ز رنگ رفته خود یاد کردم
که این فصل خزان بنیاد کردم

I remembered
the faded colors
of my self;
I poured them out –
as a foundation
for this season of autumn.

be-ḥamdollāh sar-o-barg-am doyī nīst
man-e man ṣūrat-e ‘aks-e toyī nīst

15756

بحمد الله سر و برگم دویی نیست
من من صورت عکس تویی نیست

Praise be to God! My flowering nature
has no duality.
My “I” does not take shape
by mirroring a “you.”

chaman naqsh-e par-e parvāz-e man būd
khazān shūr-e shekast-e sāz-e man būd

15757

چمن نقش پر پرواز من بود
خزان شور شکست ساز من بود

The garden was an image
of my brilliant winged
flight of mind.
And autumn
was the chaos of the fracture
of my well-tempered faculties.

bahār-ī az kenār-e kh^vīsh chīdam

15758

khazān ham dar ghobār-e kh^vīsh dādam

بهارى از کنار خويش چيدم
خزان هم در غبار خويش ديدم

I gathered springtime
from materials
drawn from my self.
And autumn too:
I saw it all
within the dust of my own self.

dam-ī bar khod naẓar kardam chaman shod 15759
taghāfol zad del ān shūkhī kohan shod

دمى بر خود نظر كردم چمن شد
تغافل زد دل آن شوخى كهن شد

I looked upon myself –
one breath, one instant –
and it became a garden.
And when my heart became forgetful,
that mirthful joy
grew old and faded too.

ghobār-ī az tapesh-hā-ye del-am būd 15760
che gol kū rang khūn-e besmel-am būd

غبارى از تپش‌هاى دلم بود
چه گل كو رنگ خون بسملم بود

The palpitations of my heart
brought forth this dust.
What use are flowers? Where are colors?
It was all
my martyred blood.

namī-dānam bahār-am yā khazān-am 15761
be har rang-ī ke kh^vāhī gol-feshān-am

نمى دانم بهارم يا خزانم
به هر رنگى كه خواهى گل فشانم

I know not if I am
a springtime
or an autumn.

Select whatever colors that you will –
and I'll construe and scatter them
like flowers.

T3.M1.16 From Section, “**The Allure of Silence**”²⁸
Targhīb-e khamūshī

beyā ey bolbol-e maḥrūmī-āhang 15762
bezan az khāmoshī meẓrāb bar chang

بیا ای بلبل محرومی آهنگ
بزن از خاموشی مضراب بر چنگ

Come, nightingale – sing
a melody of disappointment.
Take up the plectrum
in this silence –
apply it to the lute.

*

bas ast īn nāle-hā ham emteḥān būd 15769
nafas yek chand moshtāq-e feghān būd

بس است این ناله‌ها هم امتحان بود
نفس یک چند مشتاق فغان بود

Enough! Even these songs
were heavy trials.
Breath desired to lament –
but only for a while.

ṭarab kh'āhī dam-ī zabṭ-e nafas kon 15770
zabān rā bolbol-e rāḥat qafas kon

طرب خواهی دمی ضبط نفس کن
زبان را بلبل راحت قفس کن

If you seek happiness,
then hold your breath
a moment;
Encage your tongue,
which rivals nightingales;
let it rest.

sokhan tā hast āsāyesh moḥāl ast 15771

²⁸ Ibid, III:585-586.

ḥaqīqat mī-tapad tā qīl-o-qāl ast

سخن تا هست آسایش محال است
حقیقت می‌تپد تا قیل و قال است

While there is speech,
repose is vain.
True reality
is restless and unsettled
while there is so much speech.

be ṣad lab bāyad-at khāmosh neshastan 15772
ze shākh-o-barg naqsh-e tokhm bastan

به صد لب بایدت خامش نشستن
ز شاخ و برگ نقش تخم بستن

You have to sit in silence,
the silence of a hundred speechless lips.
You must paint
the images of seeds
with leaves and branches.

Eshārat [Allusion]

shab-ī sar-garm-e 'eburat shod negāh-am 15773
be bazm-e khāmoshān dādand rāh-am

شبی سرگرم عبرت شد نگاهم
به بزم خامشان دادند راهم

One night, my sight became absorbed
in spiritual lessons:
I was admitted
into a gathering
of the Silent.

ze sham 'ī koshte dūd-ī būd bar-jā 15774
be arbāb-e naẓar mī-kard īmā

ز شمعی کشته دودی بود بر جا
به ارباب نظر می‌کرد ایما

A line of smoke still rose,
immovable, from a spent candle:
This was a sign

for those whose vision
could discern it.

ke bī-qaṭ‘-e nafas īman shodan nīst
v-agar-na khāmoshī ham bī-sokhan nīst

15775

که بی قطع نفس ایمن شدن نیست
وگر نه خامشی هم بی سخن نیست

There is no safety for the soul
without the severance of breath.
Silence too
need not be
inarticulate.

T3.M1.17 From Section, “**Conclusion**”²⁹
Khāteme

‘aṣā-ye man dar īn golgasht maqṣūd
nasīm-e fayz-e Shokrollāh Khān būd

15780

عصای من در این گلگشت مقصود
نسیم فیض شکر الله خان بود

The pleasant breeze
of Shokrollāh Khān’s grace
Was my support
throughout this Garden.³⁰

v-agar-na man kojā kū par-feshānī
sereshk-ī būdam ān ham bī-ravānī

15781

وگر نه من کجا کو پرفشانی
سرشکی بودم آن هم بیروانی

Without it, where am I –
and all my winged hopes?
Without his grace, no words,
not even tears of mine
would flow.

²⁹ Ibid, III:586.

³⁰ Referring to Shokrollāh Khān’s patronage of Bīdel during the composition of this poem, whose second title is *Golgasht-e haqīqat*. See supra, Line 14570 in T3.M1.1.

dar-īn golshan kharāmī dāsht kelk-ash 15782
ke payvastam man-e Bīdel be selk-ash

در این گلشن خرامی داشت کلکش
که پیوستم من بیدل به سلکش

It was His pen that moved
with delicate and suble grace
throughout this Garden;
And I – was merely bound
to follow on His path.³¹

kalām-ash gasht sar-mashq-e khayāl-am 15783
az ān sar-cheshme jūshīd īn zolāl-am

کلامش گشت سرمشق خیالم
از آن سرچشمه جوشید این ز لالم

His speech became a template
for my imagination's practice;
All my pure water flowed
from that original spring.

do rūz-ī dar pas-e zānū neshastam 15784
khayāl-ī rā bahār-ī naqsh bastam

دو روزی در پس زانو نشستم
خیالی را بهاری نقش کردم

For two brief fleeting days
I sat –
head pressed against my knees:
I painted
all that I imagined
into a springtime.

be yomn-ash ākhar īn maktūb-e manzūm 15785
be Tūr-e ma 'refat gardīd mousūm

به یمنش آخر این مکتوب منظوم
به طور معرفت گردید موسوم

And finally, through His felicity,

³¹ Bīdel's conclusion subtly shifts from praising his patron in the third person to praising God. It is possible that the dual meaning of "him/Him" (Shokrollāh Khān / God) is sustained throughout all the subsequent lines.

these written verses
Came to be called
Mount Sinai of Enlightenment.

zeh-ī sar-cheshme-ye fayz-e elāhī 15786
ke sīrāb-am az ū chandān-ke kh'āhī

زهی سرچشمه فیض الهی
که سیرابم از او چندانکه خواهی

Blessed be that wellspring
of God's grace!
My thirst is quenched by Him
more than you know.

agar lafz ast az ū parvāz dārad 15787
v-agar ma'nī be ṭab'-ash nāz dārad

اگر لفظ است از او پرواز دارد
وگر معنی به طبعش ناز دارد

If there are words,
they fly on wings from Him.
If there are meanings,
they all pirouette
around His nature.

*

kamālāt-ash che-sān yek yek shomāram 15794
zabān-e mowj-e daryā ham nadāram

کمالاتش چسان یک یک شمارم
زبان موج دریا هم ندارم

How can I tally His perfections
one by one?
For I can't even speak
the language of the ocean's waves.

taṣānno' rā che dakhil o kū taṣarrof 15795
ḥaqīqat mī-sarāyam bī-takallof

تصنع را چه دخل و کو تصرف
حقیقت می سرایم بی تکلف

What use is specious rhetoric,
what good is artificial art?

I need them not:
I conster true reality
without embellishment.

be maẓmūn-e kamāl-e ū naẓar kon 15796
cho fahmīdī 'ebārat mokhtaṣar kon

به مضمون کمال او نظر کن
چو فهمیدی عبارت مختصر کن

Look closely at the theme
of His perfection:
And when you understand –
abridge your speech.

ke har kas lab be nām-ash āshenā kard 15797
ḥoqūq-e ne 'mat-e īzad adā kard

که هر کس لب بن نامش آشنا کرد
حقوق نعمت ایزد ادا کرد

All those who have acquainted
their lips with His name,
Have thus expressed in full
the treasures of God's riches.

sokhan bī-kh^vāst dar vaṣf-ash ravān ast 15798
che sāz-e del maḥabbat par-feshān ast

سخن بی‌خواست در وصفش روان است
چه ساز دل محبت پرفشان است

Unbidden, speech will flow
describing Him,
As love, that harmony of the heart,
will spread its wings.

bahār-e lafẓ vaqf-e medḥat-ash bād 15799
gol-e ma 'nī neṣār-e feṭrat-ash bād

بهار لفظ وقف مدحتش باد
گل معنی نثار فطرتش باد

Always may the springtime
of our words
consecrate His praise.

And always may it be
that inner meaning's roses
be strewn upon His nature.

II
Selections from
The Enchanted World of Wonder³²
Ṭelesm-e ḥayrat | طلسم حیرت
(composed in 1669)

Genre: long narrative poem (*maṣnavī*), rhyming couplets: AA BB CC...

Meter: ˘ --- | ˘ --- | ˘ ---

(→)

mafā 'ilon mafā 'ilon fa 'ūlon

Hazaj-e mosaddas-e maḥzūf al-ḥarb (E.S.#2.1.11)

Hazaj = *mafā 'ilon mafā 'ilon mafā 'ilon*

First foot (ṣadr): sālem

Second foot (ḥashv): sālem

Third foot (ḥarb): *mafā 'ilon* + ḥazf = *fa 'ūlon*

T3.M2.1 From section 8B, “A Description of Temperament”³³

Dar ṣefat-e mezāj

valī ān chār ṭab 'e mokhtalef-qesm
k-az īshān būd rokn-e dowlat-e jesm

11654

ولی آن چار طبع مختلف قسم
کز ایشان بود رکن دولت جسم

Those four Galenic natures,

³² Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, III:405-537.

³³ Ibid, III:428-429.

each different from the other,
Formed the pillars
of the kingdom
of the body.

*

be 'elm-e nā-tavānī har yek ostād 11658
ze dām-e ekhteyār-e kh^vīsh āzād

به علم ناتوانی هر یک استاد
ز دام اختیار خویش آزاد

Every humour was a master
in the science of powerlessness:
Each one was free, untrapped
by free will's snare.

*

ṭelesm-e emtezāj-e rang-o-bū-hā 11664
golestān-e farīb-e ārezū-hā

طلسم امتزاج رنگ و بوها
گلستان فریب آرزوها

The enchanted world
of this Galenic mixture
of scents and colors
Is a bewitching garden
of desires.

jamāl-e zendegī rā ghāze-ye nāz 11665
ketāb-e 'omr rā shīrāze-ye nāz

جمال زندگی را غازه ناز
کتاب عمر را شیرازه ناز

It is the mirthful rouge
upon the beauty of life's cheeks,
It is the binding thread
that holds together the book of life.

vojūd āyīne-jūsh-ye ertebāṭ-ash 11666
'adam tamhīd-e barg-e ekhtelāṭ-ash

وجود آینه جوش ارتباطش
عدم تمهید برگ اختلاطش

Existence boils over,
mirroring interconnections
between Galenic humours;
Nonexistence is a preface
to their mixture.

*

mezāj-ash nām o dar ma 'nī yegāne
sarāpā kh'īsh o arkān-ash bahāne

11668

مزاجش نام و در معنی یگانه
سراپا خویش و ارکانش بهانه

Its name is “temperament,”
its meaning is unique.
In itself, it is complete and unified;
its separate “pillars”
are mere convention.

ze nayrang-e qazā dar keshvar-e tan
cho shod khorshīd-e 'ezzat partov-afkan

11669

ز نیرنگ قضا در کشور تن
چو شد خورشید عزت پرتو افکن

Within the kingdom of the body,
arising from deceptive chance occasions
Just like a glorious sun,
it shines with brilliant rays.

demāgh-e raghbat-ash bū-yī havas kard
havā-yī rā gereft o dar qafas kard

11670

دماغ رغبتش بویی هوس کرد
هوایی را گرفت و در قفس کرد

The mind, full of desire,
is tinged with lust;
It's seized by lust –
and trapped within a cage.

tamāshā-ye mezāj-ash dām-e rah shod
tahayyor reshte-ye bāl-e negah shod

11671

تماشای مزاجش دام ره شد
تحیر رشته بال نگه شد

Seeing one's own temperament
became a trap along the road;
Wonder at one's self
extends its vision
into winged flight.

maḥabbat chīd dām-e ekhtelāt-ī
ta 'alloq bast naqsh-e ertebāt-ī

11672

محبت چید دام اختلاطی
تعلق بست نقش ارتباطی

Love set a trap
with this Galenic mixture;
Connected attributes created
a set of binding ties.

tapīdan gasht mowj-e gowhar-e del
be ṭūfān zad khorūsh-e sāghar-e del

11673

تپیدن گشت موج گوهر دل
به طوفان زد خروش ساغر دل

Waves upon the pearl-essence
of the heart
began to swirl and agitate;
The howling ocean
of the heart
was racked with storms:

*

shah-e qodsī-neshān-e fayz-manzel
mohayyā-ye kenār-ash yāft chūn del

11683

شه قدسی نشان فیض منزل
مهیای کنارش یافت چون دل

The sacred king
of blessed station
Discovered his own heart
within his chest.

ze naqsh-e dāne-ye nayrang-e nāsūt
qafas shod maskan-e 'anqā-ye lāhūt

11684

ز نقش دانه نیرنگ ناسوت
قفس شد مسکن عنقای لاهوت

The phoenix
from the realm of the divine
became encaged
By images: tempting bait
that lured it
to the lower world.

gereft āyīne-yesh olfat be zang-ī 11685
gel-ī oftād dar gerdāb-e rang-ī

گرفت آیینهاش الفت به زنگی
گلی افتاد در گرداب رنگی

His mirror grew attached
to rust.
Dirt was admixed
into the whirlpool of color.

zohūr-e eltefāt-e takht-o-tāj-ash 11686
mohayyā shod be tazvīj-e mezāj-ash

ظهور التفات تخت و تاجش
مهیا شد به تزویج مزاجش

The appearance of attentive courtesy
of his throne and crown
Became prepared to join
with his (Galenic) temperament.

mezāj as gowhar-ash tā shod nazār-yāb 11687
qadam bar kh^vīsh zad chūn mowj bar āb

مزاج از گوهرش تا شد نظریاب
قدم بر خویش زد چون موج بر آب

And, so that this temperament
could gaze upon its essence,
It turned its steps into itself –
like waves upon the water.

shekoftan rīkht golshan dar kenār-ash 11688
damīdan kard yek ālam bahār-ash

شکفتن ریخت گلشن در کنارش
دمیدن کرد یک عالم بهارش

A garden blossomed,
pouring forth in his own chest.
Its springtime breathed
and bloomed into a world.

T3.M2.2 From section 8C, “A Description of Love”³⁴
Dar şefat-e maḥabbat

man o to būd moddat-hā ham-āhang 11695
tah-e yek pīrhan chūn bade vo rang

من و تو بود مدت‌ها هماهنگ
ته یک پیرهن چون باده و رنگ

“You” and “I” were,
for a time,
in harmony:
Warp and weft, we wove together –
like wine and color.

zohūr-e nash'e-yī nāgah qadam zad 11696
ke bar lowḥ-ash qazā şoḥbat raqam zad

ظهور نشئه‌ای ناگه قدم زد
که بر لوحش قضا صحبت رقم زد

Suddenly, a world of intoxication
came into being,
And Fate began inscribing
conversations on its tablet.

ṭarab-hā kard gol az maqdam-e ū 11697
bahār āmad be ṭowf-e shabnam-e ū

طرب‌ها کرد گل از مقدم او
بهار آمد به طوف شب‌نم او

Delights bloomed forth
from its arrival;
Spring arrived,
in pious circumambulation
of its drops of dew.

*

³⁴ Ibid, III:429-430.

*nah vaḥdat ‘ayn-e vaḥdat jelve-ārā-st
doyī tohmat-kesh-e chandīn tamāshā-st*

11702

نه وحدت عین وحدت جلوہ آراست
دویی تهمت کش چندین تماشاست

Unity cannot be
the ornament of unity itself.
Duality is guilty
of so many tempting sights!

*konūn solṭān-e bī-rangī tajammol
be ‘arz-e jelve kūshīd az taghāfol*

11703

کنون سلطان بی رنگی تجمل
به عرض جلوہ کوشید از تغافل

And now, the King
(whose truest splendor
is beyond all color)
Strove carelessly
to manifest himself
in brilliant and varied hues.

*mezāj-e soḥbat-ī āmad be dām-ash
ze mowj-e may be khod bālīd jā-m-ash*

11704

مزاج صحبتی آمد به دامش
ز موج می به خود بالید جامش

The temperament of conversation
fell in his trap:
His wineglass boasted of itself
with waves of wine.

*sharāb-ash az ṣafā-ye shīshe-ye kh^vīsh
namī-gonjīd dar andīshe-ye kh^vīsh*

11705

شرابش از صفای شیشه خویش
نمی گنجید در اندیشه خویش

Such was the purity
of his own glass
That wine could no more be contained
within his thought.

jodā mī-tākht parvāz az par-o-bāl 11706
borūn mī-rīkht az āyīne tamṣāl

جدا می‌تاخت پرواز از پروبال
برون می‌ریخت از آئینه تمثال

Wingless flight rushed forth,
moving towards separation.
Reflected images overflowed,
spilled out beyond the mirror –

cho gardad bū-ye gol bālīdan-andīsh 11707
shavad pīrāhan-e pīrāhan-e kh'īsh

چو گردد بوی گل بالیدن اندیش
شود پیراهن پیراهن خویش

Like when a rose's fragrance
bends its thoughts on growth,
And thus becomes the clothing
of the clothing
of its own self;

*

cho baḥr az kh'īsh bīrūn mī-tarāvīd 11710
be chandīn mowj 'arṣ-e jelve mī-dīd

چو بحر از خویش بیرون می‌تراوید
به چندین موج عرض جلوه می‌دید

Or like an ocean:
when it flows outside itself,
It sees itself
through countless waves.

dar īn maktab-sarā ān noqte-ye zāt 11711
farāham dīd e 'rāb-e kamālāt

در این مکتب‌سرا آن نقطه ذات
فراهم دید اعراب کمالات

Thus, in this schoolhouse,
a single orthographic dot
denoting God's own essence
Was able to collect together
in its sight
all diacritics of perfection.

che s̄ān kh'āhad gol az golshan jodāyī 11712
nadārad ma 'nī az šūrat rahāyī

چه سان خواهد گل از گلشن جدایی
ندارد معنی از صورت رهایی

How can a rose
detach itself
from its own garden?

Meaning
cannot escape
from form.

*

'adam sar-cheshme-ye ezhār gardīd 11715
khazān-e rang-o-bū golzār gardīd

عدم سرچشمه اظهار گردید
خزان رنگ و بو گلزار گردید

Nonbeing became the wellspring
of existence;
An autumn, full of color and fragrance,
became a blooming springtime garden.

ghobār-e nīstī jūsh-e baqā yāft 11716
telesm-e khāmoshī nabz-e šedā yāft

غبار نیستی جوش بقا یافت
طلسم خامشی نبض صدا یافت

The dust of nonexistence
began to boil with enduring being.
The enchanted world of silence
began to pulse with voice.

ze āb āyīne sar tā pā nazar shod 11717
'araz dar rang-e jowhar jelve-gar shod

ز آب آینه سر تا پا نظر شد
عرض در رنگ جوهر جلوهرگر شد

The mirror's watery lustre
turned entirely into vision,
head to toe:

And accidental attributes
began to manifest themselves
within the color of essence.

namī-āmad khom-e afsorde dar jūsh 11718
ṣadaf gardīd bā gohar ham-āghūsh

نمی آمد خم افسرده در جوش
صدف گریدید با گوهر هم آغوش

A wine-cask chilled with melancholy
cannot be brought to boil;
The oyster and the pearl
must embrace as one.

T3.M2.3 From section 13D, “The Consolation of the Imaginary”³⁵
Tasallī-ye khayāl

zabān-e ḥāl-e ‘eshq az ezṭerāb-ash 13510
mohayyā shod be sāmān-e javāb-ash

زبان حال عشق از اضطرابش
مهیا شد به سامان جوابش

Love prepared to answer
the King’s questions
With agitated recourse
to symbolic language:

ke ay kown-o-makān ḥayrān-e zowq-at 13511
jahān āyīne-ye tamṣāl-e showq-at

که ای کون و مکان حیران ذوق
جهان آینه تمثال شوق

“O universe, bewildered
by your own delight!
The world is a mirror
reflecting your own passion.

to rā az fetne-ye dowrān khabar nīst 13512
az īn tūfān-e nayrang-at aṣar nīst

³⁵ Ibid, III:497-498.

تو را از فتنه دوران خیر نیست
از این طوفان نیرنگت اثر نیست

“You are most ignorant
of the calamity of time.
You know no trace
of this deceptive storm.

ṣalāḥ-andīsh(-e) dowlat kon qeyas-am
gharaḥ ālūde map(a)sand eltemās-am

13513

صلاح‌اندیش دولت کن قیاسم
غرض آلوده میسند التماسم

“Consider me to be concerned
with the welfare of your state,
And do not misinterpret me
as being tinged with bias.

be tamkīn kūsh ay daryā-ye ārām
ze bītābī makesh bar rū-ye khod dām

13514

به تمکین کوش ای دریای آرام
ز بیتابی مکش بر روی خود دام

“O ocean of repose! Strive to inhabit
your own authority.
Do not entangle yourself
in weakness.

gereh dar reshte naqd-e pīch-o-tāb ast
ḥobāb-ārāyī-ye mowj eẓṭerāb ast

13515

گره در رشته نقد پیچ و تاب است
حباب آرایی موج اضطراب است

“Knots in a thread
are the dividends
of twists and turns.
When waves become adorned
and fringed with bubbles,
– this is agitation.

gar az showq-e tamāshā bī-qarār-ī
be ḥokm-e ārezū bī-ekhteyār-ī

13516

گر از شوق تماشا بی‌قراری
به حکم آرزو بی‌اختیاری

“If you are rendered restless
by passionate desire
to see this spectacle –
You’re powerless,
and subject to the tyranny
of lust’s commands.

khayāl-at bande-ye khedmat-parast ast
ke dar šūrat-garī āyīne-dast ast

13517

خیالت بنده خدمت‌پرست است
که در صورت‌گری آینه دست است

“Your imagination is a slave
that worships servitude:
In the art of fashioning forms,
it a mere attendant
holding up the mirror.

befarmā tā az īn majmū‘e-ye rāz
be lowḥ-e ḥefẓ gardad noskhe-pardāz

13518

بفرما تا از این مجموعه راز
به لوح حفظ گردد نسخه‌پرداز

“Command yourself:
so your imagination can compose
A manuscript copy
of this compendium of mysteries
from memory’s divine tablet.

to bī-vahm-e reyā vo khowf-e tazvīr
naṣīb-e ārezū z-ān noskhe bar-gīr

13519

تو بی‌وهم ریا و خوف تزویر
نصیب آرزو زان نسخه برگیر

“Hold no illusion of affectation,
have no fear of falsehood;
Accept the fate of your desire –
take up that manuscript.

na zangī cheshm bar āyīne dūzad

13520

na showq az dāgh-e maḥrūmī besūzad

نه زنگی چشم بر آینه دوزد
نه شوق از داغ محرومی بسوزد

“Thus rust will not affix its stare
upon the mirror,
Passion will not burn,
scarred by disappointment.

*dar īn šūrat tavānad gashtan āsān
be cheshm-e baste sayr-e šad golestān*

13521

در این صورت تواند گشتن آسان
به چشم بسته سیر صد گلستان

“This way, it can become
an easy feat –
To travel through a hundred gardens
with your eyes closed.”

*ze dars-e kārevān-e maqšad-āgāh
be ‘elm-e ‘āfeyat bord āgahī rāh*

13522

ز درس کاروان مقصد آگاه
به علم عاقبت برد آگهی راه

The King now understood the lesson
conveyed to him by this caravan
that knew so well its final destination.
Enlightened, he embarked
upon the path
towards knowledge of prosperity.

*tafakkor ma ‘nī-ye asrār fahmīd
ta ‘ammol posht-o-rū-ye kār fahmīd*

13523

تفکر معنی اسرار فهمید
تامل پشت وری کار فهمید

Through rational reflection,
he grasped
the meaning of mysteries.
Through attentive slow reflection,
he understood
the recto and verso of every matter.

erādat k-az pe-ye ān maṣlahat rānd 13524
cho shekl-e nīm-rokh bar yek jehat mānd

ارادت کز پی آن مصلحت راند
چو شکل نیمرخ بر یک جهت ماند

The inclination he dispatched
in pursuit of Love's advice
Remained before him, one side turned –
like a portrait in profile.

ṣalā zad showq bar eḥzār-e naqqāsh 13525
karāmat mozhde-hā dād-ash be pādāsh

صلا زد شوق بر احضار نقاش
کرامت مژدهها دادش ب پاداش

Passion issued an invitation
summoning the Painter,
And miracles bestowed glad tidings
in return:

tavajjoh naqsh-e kh^vāhesh vā-nemūd-ash 13526
ke rang-e sho 'le rīzad kelk-e dūd-ash

توجه نقش خواهش وامنودش
که رنگ شعله ریزد کلک دوشش

Attention showed him
paintings of desire,
Like when a brasier
full of smoke brims over
with flame's colors.

khayāl az fekr-e ān taṣvīr mū shod 13527
ke ākhar khāme-ye pardāz-e ū shod

خیال از فکر آن تصویر مو شد
که آخر خامه پرداز او شد

As he contemplated that painting,
all he imagined
became as subtle as a single hair.
And in the end, his own imagination
became the paintbrush.

be chandīn bī-khodī ān Mānī-āhang 13528
bahār-ī kard naqsh-e parde-ye rang

به چندین بی خودی آن مانی آهنگ
بهارى کرد نقش پرده رنگ

With countless ecstasies
his Mani-like imagination
Painted images
in veils of color
that blossomed into springtime.

do ‘ālam rang-e hayrat rīkht bar-ham 13529
ke shod naqqāsh-e ān nayrang ‘ālam

دو عالم رنگ حیرت ریخت برهم
که شد نقاش آن نیرنگ عالم

The colorful foundations
of both outward worlds
were ruined, brought down by wonder:
The painter of those colorful,
deceptive sketches
became a world.

pas az tartīb-e showq ān golshan-ījād 13530
be cheshm-e shāh ‘arz-e jelve-yash dād

پس از ترتیب شوق آن گلشن ایجاد
به چشم شاه عرض جلوهاش داد

After passion had performed
these first arrangements,
a garden came into existence –
Appearing in brilliant manifestation
before the King’s own eyes.

tamāshā tā be sayr-ash dīde bog(o)shūd 13531
hamān şūrat be- ‘ayn-eh jelve-gar būd

تماشا تا به سیرش دیده بگشود
همان صورت بعینه جلو مگر بود

While vision gazed with open eyes
upon this garden,

That very form
in its own visionary essence
stayed manifest.

tapīdan bā tasallī gasht ham-dūsh 13532
nadāmat kard nowmīdī farāmūsh

تپیدن با تسلی گشت هم‌دوش
ندامت کرد نومیدی فراموش

Restless agitation
befriended consolation;
Contrition forgot
hopeless despair.

be taṣvīr-e khayāl az vahm shod pāk 13533
nemūd āyīne rā taslīm(-e) edrāk

به تصویر خیال از وهم شد پاک
نمود آئینه را تسلیم ادراک

Through this painting of imagination,
the king was purified
of false illusions.
Perception bowed,
respectfully obedient,
before the mirror.

nayābad shobhe tā rāh-e khayānat 13534
bar ān āyīne zad mōhr-e amānat

نیابد شبهه تا راه خیانت
بر آن آئینه زد مهر امانت

The King does not suspect
that treachery
awaits him on this path.
Treachery has stamped that mirror
with a seal of false security.

konūn naqsh-e khayāl-ash dām gardīd 13535
may-ash showq o taṣavvor jāṃ gardīd

کنون نقش خیالش دام گردید
میش شوق و تصور جام گردید

And now, imagination's images
have trapped the king:
Passion has become his wine,
imagination – his wineglass.

*qanā 'at tā khayāl-ī kard o tan zad
gol-ī chīd az khod o jā-m-e chaman zad*

13536

قناعت تا خیالی کرد و تن زد
گلی چید از خود و جام چمن زد

While he was content,
experiencing
his silent world of imagination,
He gathered roses from his self,
drank from the wineglass
of the garden.

*jonūn gar shūresh-ī mī-kard bonyād
hamān naqsh-e tasallī 'arže mī-dād*

13537

جنون گر شورشی می کرد بنیاد
همان نقش تسلی عرضه می داد

And any time that madness
began to sow rebellion,
That painting
of imagination's consolation
would show itself.

*khayāl-ābād(-e) šad ḥasrat-garī būd
zeyārat-gāh-e šad mīnā parī būd*

13538

خیال آباد صد حسرت گری بود
زیارت گاه صد مینا پری بود

It was a world populated by imagination,
yet with a hundred disappointments;
It was a fairy's pilgrimage –
but only through
a hundred stoppered jars.

*del-ī az naqsh-e ḥasrat shād mī-kard
jahān-ī az khayāl ābād mī-kard*

13539

دلی از نقش حسرت شاد می کرد

جهانی از خیال آباد می‌کرد

Imagination soothed the heart
from all these images
of disappointment.
It populated a whole world
with that which is imaginary.

havas şad gol tamannā dāsht dar dast 13540
negah şad parde hayrat naqsh mī-bast

هوس صد گل تمنا داشت در دست
نگه صد پرده حیرت نقش می‌بست

If lowly lust
clutched in its hands
a hundred flowers of base desire,
Vision would conjure
painted images of wonder
in a hundred veils.

ke yā rabb ān ke taşvīr-ash chenīn ast 13541
hożūr-ash tā che āfat dar kamīn ast

که یا رب آن که تصویرش چنین است
حضورش تا چه آفت در کمین است

O Lord! Whoever has imagination
that paints this way,
What trials and calamities
can lie in store for them!

khayāl-ash gar chenīn dārad kharābī 13542
che kh^vāhad kard ākhar bī-neqābī

خیالش گر چنین دارد خرابی
چه خواهد کرد آخر بی‌نقابی

If their imagination
has this flaw,
In the end,
will the unveiled truth
do any good?

nam-e baħr-ī ke īn tūfān forūshad 13543
salāmat kū agar nāgah bejūshad

نم بحری که این طوفان فروشد
سلامت کو اگر ناگه بجوشد

This storm [of untrained imagination]
offers to sell
an ocean's worth of moisture;
But where is the guarantee of safety,
were it all suddenly
to come to boil?

T3.M2.4 From section 14A, **Untitled Preface**³⁶

kojā-yī ay ze khod gardāde ghāfel 13606
be rāh oftāde dar āghūsh-e manzel

کجایی ای ز خود گردیده غافل
به راه افتاده در آغوش منزل

Where are you? You,
who have forgotten
your own self?
You've fallen on the road
into a way-station's embrace.

che jādū bast cheshm-e ḥosn-bīn-at 13607
che pastī kard pā-māl-e zamīn-at

چه جادو بست چشم حسن بینت
چه پستی کرد پامال زمینت

Your eyes, beholding beauty –
what sorcery have they wrought?
What baseness
left you trampled
by the earth?

robūd ākhar kodāmīn ghūl-at az rāh 13608
kodāmīn kūrī-yet afkand dar chāh

ربود آخر کدامین غولت از راه
کدامین کوریت افکند در چاه

And in the end, what demon
lured you from the path?

³⁶ Ibid, III:501-502.

What blindness
cast you down
into a well?

*

taṣavvor rang mī-rīzad jahān chī-st
khayāl-at owj dārad āsemān kī-st

13612

تصور رنگ می‌ریزد جهان چیست
خیالت اوج دارد آسمان کیست

Imagination is an architect of color:
it pours its own foundations.
How can the world compare?
The world you imagine
has a lofty summit.
How can the skies compare?

*

ze sayr-e vahmī-ye emkān che dārī
be joz vaḥshat az īn ṭūfān che dārī

13621

ز سیر و همی امکان چه داری
به جز وحشت از این طوفان چه داری

What did you gain
from your inward travels
through illusion of what is possible?
What's left for you
after this storm
besides a solitary wasteland?

be del rū kon golestān-e to īn ast
be khod mī-pīch jowlān-e to īn ast

13622

به دل رو کن گلستان تو این است
به خود می‌پیچ جولان تو این است

Turn towards your heart.
Your garden
is here.
Swerve into yourself.
Your vast plains
are here.

nafas rā jāde-ye dasht-e ṭalab kon
ta`ammol chūn dalīl-at shod ṭarab kon

13623

نفس را جاده دشت طلب کن

تامل چون دليلت شد طرب كن

Make breath a road
that takes you searching
through the wilderness.
And when attentive slow reflection
becomes your guide –
rejoice.

*

ze jīb-e kh^vīsh bīrūn nīst rāh-ī
negāh-ī kon negāh-ī kon negāh-ī

13629

ز جيب خویش بويرن نيست راهی
نگاهی کن نگاهی کن نگاهی

There is no path
outside
of your own pocket.
Look.
Look.
Look.

Translation 4 | Selected Subtle Points (*Nekāt*), Letters, and Quatrains

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I Subtle Points (*Nekāt* | نکات)

- T4.N1 Subtle Point (Nokte) N^o32: On Homeland and Exile
T4.N2 Subtle Point (Nokte) N^o25: On the Breath of the Merciful and the True Reality of Language

II Letters (*Roqa'āt* | رقعات)

- T4.L1 Letter N^o108: On the Completion of *Mount Sinai of Wonder*
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III Quatrains (*Robā'eyyāt* | رباعیات)

- T4.Q1, T4.Q2, T4.Q3, T4.Q4, T4.Q5, T4.Q6, T4.Q7, T4.Q8
-

I Subtle Points¹ *Nekāt* | نکات

T4.N1 Subtle Point N^o32: On Homeland and Exile²

[Prose Paragraph]

Ādam-ī be 'ellat-e afsūn-e amal, dar jamī'-e aḥvāl došman-e āsāyesh-e khod ast.

آدمی به علت افسون امل در جمیع احوال دشمن آسایش خود است.

Human beings in all their states, deceived by hope, are enemies of their own repose.

¹ Mīrzā 'Abd al-Qāder Bīdel Dehlavī, *Kolleyyāt-e Abū l-Ma'ānī Mīrzā 'Abd al-Qāder Bīdel Dehlavī*, ed. Khalīlollāh Khalīlī (Tehrān: Enteshārāt-e Ṭalāye, 1389SH [2010/2011CE]), IV:439-577.

² Ibid, IV:498-500.

Agar dar manzel ast, fożülī-ye havā-ye safar-ash beyābān-marg-e dūrī-ye vaṭan mī-dārad va agar dar safar ast khār-khār-e soddā-ye vaṭan dāman-ash namī-gožārad.

اگر در منزل است فضولی هوای سفرش بیابان مرگ دوری وطن می‌دارد و اگر در سفر است خار خار سودای وطن دامنش نمی‌گذارد.

If they are at a way-station, obsessive wanderlust keeps them slain in a desert far from homeland; and if they travel, the piercing anguish of mad longing for homeland snags their hem and keeps them ensnared.

Na dar şūrat-e safar bahre-yāb-e keyfeyat-e safar ast va na dar ḥālat-e vaṭan bā-khabar-e jam 'īyat-e vaṭan.

نه در صورت سفر بهر هیاب کیفیت سفر است و نه در حالت وطن باخبر جمعیت وطن.

In the state of wandering, he does not partake of travel's intoxications; and in the state of being-at-home, he knows nothing of the tranquility of homeland.

'Ālam-ī dar talāsh-e bī-ḥāṣel-ī nafas godākhte va mī-godāzad va khalq-ī be taraddod bī-fāyede rang-e hastī bākhte va mī-bāzad.

عالمی در تلاش بی‌حاصلی نفس گداخته و می‌گدازد و خلقی به تردد بی‌فایده رنگ هستی باخته و می‌بازد.

The world wastes its breaths – and ever will keep wasting them – on fruitless effort; people waver, in pointless irresolution, as they gamble and lose – and ever will keep gambling and losing – the colors of their existence.

Naqd-e 'āfeyat moft-e qadr-dān-ī: ke har jā jā-yī garm kard, az moghtanamāt-e zowq-e vaṭan shomord, va har kojā pahlū gožāsh, qadam-e khorsandī be maskan-e ma 'lūf afshord.

نقد عافیت مفت قدردانی که هر جا جایی گرم کرد از مغتنامات ذوق وطن شمرد و هر کجا پهلو گذاشت قدم خرسندی به مسکن مألوف افشرد.

Wise ones freely understand this worth of health and safety: every place where someone feels comfortable, they consider that place to have the pleasant blessings of homeland; and wherever they sleep, they enter that accustomed abode with contented feet.

[Verse fragment, 2 lines]

Meter: - ˘ - - | - ˘ - - | - ˘ - - | - ˘ -

(→)

Ramal-e moşamman-e sālem al-şadr va l-ḥashv va **maḥzūf** al-zarb (E.S.

#2.4.15)

Fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elon

Ramal = fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton

First foot (şadr): *fā'elāton* (sālem)
 Second foot (ḥashv): *fā'elāton* (sālem)
 Third foot (ḥashv): *fā'elāton* (sālem)
 Fourth foot (zarb): *fā'elāton* + ḥazf → *fā'elon*

Qāfeye: -el
 Radīf: ast (**is**)

- 1 *maqşad ārām ast ay kūshesh makon āzār-e mā
 bī-demāghān-e ṭalab rā jāde ham sar-manzel ast*

مقصد آرام است ای کوشش مکن آزار ما
 بی‌دماغان طلب را جاده هم سرمنزل است

The destination is repose.
 O striving, do not torment me!
 For those who've lost their minds,
 impatient in their search
 the road too **is** a way-station.

- 2 *sho'le-kārān rā be khākestar qanā'at kardan ast
 har kojā 'eshq ast dehqān sūkhtan ham ḥāşel ast*

شعله‌کاران را به خاکستر قناعت کردن است
 هر کجا عشق است دهقان سوختن هم حاصل است

Lamplighters must find contentment
 in the ashes of a fire.
 Wherever there **is** ardent love,
 a farmer burns –
 then reaps his crop.

[Mokhammas,³ 10 stanzas]

Meter: --˘ | - ˘-˘ | ˘--˘ | -˘-

(→)

Możāre'-e moşamman-e akhrab al-şadr va **makfūf** al-ḥashvayn va
maḥzūf al- zarb (E.S. #4.7.14, see passim too)

maf'ūlo fā'elāto mafā'īlo fā'elon

możāre' = *mafā'īlon fā'elāton mafā'īlon fā'elāton*

First foot (şadr): *mafā'īlon* + kharb → *maf'ūlo*
 Second foot (ḥashv): *fā'elāton* + kaff → *fā'elāto*
 Third foot (ḥashv): *mafā'īlon* + kaff → *mafā'īlo*
 Fourth foot (zarb): *fā'elāton* + ḥazf → *fā'elon*

Qāfeye: -ād
 Radīf: mī-konam (**I do [x]**)

³ *Mokhammas*: a stanzaic poem comprizing several five-line stanzas. The fifth line of each stanza shares a rhyme and refrain.

1 *nī zar(r)-garī na pīshe-ye ḥaddād mī-konam
nī bām-o-dar na karr-o-far(r) ījād mī-konam
taẓmīn-e meṣra ‘-ī ke khosh oftād mī-konam
ḥarf-ī az ān dahān-o-meyān yād mī-konam*

bār-ī be hīch khāṭer-e khod shād mī-konam

نی زرگری نه پیشه حداد می‌کنم
نی بام و در نه کر و فر ایجاد می‌کنم
تضمین مصرعی که خوش افتاد می‌کنم
حرفی از آن دهان و میان یاد می‌کنم

باری به هیچ خاطر خود شاد می‌کنم

I am no goldsmith, nor an ironworker;
I bring into existence neither rooves and doors,
nor instruments of war and grandeur;
I interpolate a hemistich that happily has come to mind:
I remember a letter – whose very form is like that mouth, that waist;

For once, **my thoughts are gladdened** by “nothing.”⁴

2 *z-īn golshan-am na olfat-e sarv-ī na soḡbol-ī-st
nī eltefāt-e qomrī yo nī yād-e bolbol-ī-st
rūz-ī do dar bahār-e khayāl-am ta`mmol-ī-st
āghūsh-e dām o chāk-e qafas ghonche-vo-gol-ī-st*

seyr-e chaman ṭarāzī-ye ṣayyād mī-konam

زین گلشنم نه الفت سروی نه سنبلی است
نی التفات قمری و نی یاد بلبلی است
روزی دو در بهار خیالم تأملی است
آغوش دام و چاک قفس غنچه و گلی است

سیر چمن طرازی صیاد می‌کنم

This garden affords me no companionship:

⁴ I have not been able to identify which hemistich is interpolated here, nor to whom it originally belongs; the trope, however, is a common one in the early modern period. Ṣā`eb, among others, was fond of this pairing and its attendant imagery: see for example Ghazal N^o616, Line 2: *Chenān godākht marā fekr-e ān dahān o meyān* (“How much do thoughts of that mouth and waistline melt me!”); Ṣā`eb, *Dīvān-e Ṣā`eb-e Tabrīzī*, ed. Moḥammad Qahraman (Tehrān: Chāpkhāne-ye Sherkat-e Enteshārāt-e Adabī va Farhangī, 1985), I:301-302. For the theological significance of *mīm*, see Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 419 and Footnote 21 in T1 (*The Four Elements: An Autobiography* [Chahār ‘onṣor]).

not with any tall and slender cypress tree,
 nor with curly-haired jasmine;
 I hold no turtledove in high esteem,
 I have no fond memories
 of any nightingale.
 What I have is this: a fleeting day or two
 in the springtime of my imagination,
 through careful slow attention:
 The hunting net's embrace,
 a narrow crack in the cage –
 such are the rosebud and the rose.

I wander through the garden,
 and adorn it like a hunter.

3 *khalq-ī be zowq-e forṣat o hangāme-ye havas*
dārad ze shoghl-e jān-kanī ārāyesh-e qafas
man nīstam moqallad-e aḥvāl-e hīch kas
jahd-am hamīn bas ast ke īn ṭāyer-e nafas

chandān ke bal mī-zanad āzād mī-konam

خلقى به ذوق فرصت و هنگامه هوس
 دارد ز شغل جانکنی آرایش قفس
 من نیستم مقلد احوال هیچ کس
 جهدم همین بس است که این طایر نفس

چندان که بال میزند آزاد می‌کنم

Caught up in the taste of the opportune moment,
 in the commotion of desire,
 Creation adorns its cage with these practices
 that uproot the soul.
 I am not an imitator, I am not bound
 to the spiritual states of anyone:
 The winged bird of breath is all
 that constitutes my intellectual endeavor:

However much it beats its wings and flies,
 so much do **I set it free**.

4 *ṣobḥ-e nafas sepehr-kamand-ī namī-konad*
shakhs-e `adam ghorūr-pasand-ī namī-konad
del dāgh-chīnī ast sepand-ī namī-konad
az khāk joz ghobār bolandī namī-konad

bālāde-ast sorme ke faryād mī-konam

صبح نفس سپهر کمندی نمی‌کند
شخص عدم غرور پسندی نمی‌کند
دل داغ چینی است پسندی نمی‌کند
از خاک جز غبار بلندی نمی‌کند
بالیده‌است سرمه که فریاد می‌کنم

The dawn of breath does not prepare
to cast forth the lasso of the sky;
A person who is nonexistent
cannot love to boast;
The heart acquires and arranges burn-scars;
it does not burn wild rue instead for good luck.
Only dust can attain great noble heights
from this lowly earth.

Black collyrium grows boastful
as **I lengthen** my lament.

5 *tā kay baram be dasht payām-e ram-e ghazāl*
tā kay shavam be baḥr 'araq-rīz-e enḡe 'āl
z-īn shoghl-hā-ye ghaflat-e bī-hāṣelī-maāl
dāman be sham '-e del zade-am bas ke dar khayāl

pendāram ātash ast o man-ash bād mī-konam

تا کی برم به دشت پیام رم غزال
تا کی شوم به بحر عرق‌ریز انفعال
زین شغل‌های غفلت بی‌حاصلی مال
دامن به شمع دل زده‌ام بس که در خیال
پندارم آتش است و منش باد می‌کنم

How long will I wander through this desert wasteland
bearing the message of the gazelles' startled flight?
How long will I sweat with shame
immersed in the ocean?
After all these practices, which only yield
useless ignorant negligence,
I spread my garments wide, I give them air –
and thus blow out the candle of my heart:
for I take it

That there's a fire burning
in my imagination, and **I turn it into wind.**

6 *goftam dar īn havas-kade-ye mā-vo-man savād
chand-ī be sar baram be khayālāt ṭab '-e shād
kār-am be sayr-e 'ebrat-e aḥvāl-e khod fetād
del dād-e dastgāh-e tamannā-ye man nadād*

āyīne-khāne-ye degar ījād mī-konam

گفتم در این هوس کده ما و من سواد
چندی به سر برم به خیالات طبع شاد
کارم به سیر عبرت احوال خود فتاد
دل داد دستگاه تمنای من نداد

آینه‌خانه دگر ایجاد می‌کنم

I spoke, and thus composed a black rough draft
in this tavern of desires of we-and-I.
How long will I explore my happy nature
through objects of imagination?
It has befallen me to wander now
among the admonitions of my own states;
My heart did not act justly
on the authority of my own desires;

Instead, **I bring into existence**
a different mirror-house.

7 *ākhar khamūshī-am be khorūsh-e jonūn keshīd
tā ās(e)mān ghobār-e del-am dām-e nāle chīd
z-īn bīsh hīch kas setam-e khānegī nadīd
dī bū-ye gol be parde-ye sāz-am namī-rasīd*

emrūz kār-e tīshe-ye Farhād mī-konam

آخر کموشی‌ام به خروش جنون کشید
تا آسمان غبار دلم دام ناله چید
زین بیش هیچ کس ستم خانگی ندید
دی بوی گل به پرده سازم نمی‌رسید

امروز کار تیشه فرهاد می‌کنم

In the end, silence dragged from me
a loud cry of madness;
The dust of my heart set bird-traps

of lament, sky-high.
No one more than I has seen
such cruelty in wanton sparrows.
Yesterday, the roses' fragrance
did not arrive to mingle
with the melody of my harp.

And so instead
today **I carry out**
the rough axe-labour of Farhad.

8 *rang-e bahār ātash-e ya`s-am keshīd pīsh
bū-ye saman-barī namak-am kard vaqf-e rīsh
az lāle dāgh mī-kesham az sabze zakhm-e nīsh
yā rab(b) dar īn chaman che-qadar rafte-am ze kh^vīsh*

khod rā be har gol-ī ke rasam yād mī-konam

رنگ بهار آتش یاسم کشید پیش
بوی سمنبری نمک کرد وقف ریش
از لاله داغ می‌کشم از سبزه زخم نیش
یارب در این چمن چقدر رفته‌ام ز خویش

خود را به هر گلی که رسم یاد می‌کنم

The colors of spring brought forth
the fires of my discontent.
Jasmine scents bequeathed to me
salt upon my wounds.
I am scarred by the petal-burned tulip,
I am pricked by thorns in the verdure;
O Lord! How far have I escaped
from my own self
within this garden!

Every rose that I approach
Reminds me of myself.

9 *‘omr-ī-st gharq-e mowj-e parīshānī-ye khod-am
maḥv-e shekast-e zowraq-e tūfānī-ye khod-am
ṣobḥ-e nafas ghobār-e parīshānī-ye khod-am
ḥayrān-e seḥr-kārī-ye vīrānī-ye khod-am*

ma`mūre-ye khayāl ke ābād mī-konam

عمریست غرق موج پریشانی خودم

محو شکست زورق توفانی خودم
صبح نفس غبار پریشانی خودم
حیران سحرکاری ویرانی خودم

معموره خیال که آباد می‌کنم

I've been submerged for a lifetime
beneath the waves **of my own**
scattered confusion;
I am erased in the wreckage
of the storm-tossed ship **of myself**;
At the daybreak of breath, **I am**
the dust of **my own**
scattered confusion;
I am astonished by the sorcery
of my own desolation.

How wondrous: **I cultivate and populate**
the habitable region
of the imagination!

10 *Bīdel, moqallad-e shakk-o-eqrār nīstam*
z-īn bāgh shobhe-chīn-e gol-o-khār nīstam
bīgāne-ye marāteb-e ezhār nīstam
nā-qadr-dān-e ma 'nī-ye asrār nīstam

bar har che cheshm mī-fekanam šād mī-konam

بیدل مقلد شک و اقرار نیستم
زین باغ شبهه چین گل و خار نیستم
بیگانه مراتب اظهار نیستم
ناقدردان معنی اسرار نیستم

بر هر چه چشم می‌فکنم صاد می‌کنم

I, Bīdel, am no imitator;
I am not fettered by old scholastic practices
of doubt and affirmation.
I am no skeptical gatherer
of roses and thorns
in this garden.
I am no stranger
to the stages
of manifestation.
I am no undervaluer

of the inner meaning
of secret knowledge:

I annotate everything
upon which I cast my gaze
with the approving letter ص.⁵

T4.N2 Subtle Point N^o25: On the Breath of the Merciful and the True Reality of Language⁶

[Prose Paragraph]

Nafas-e raḥmānī ke eṣṭelāḥ [ast] ahl-e taḥqīq-e⁷ mansha`-e elāhī kollī-yash nāmīde-and va maṣdar-e ḥaqāyeq-e mowjūdāt-e kollī-va-jozvī mo`ayyan gardānīde, fī l-ḥaqīqat ḥaqīqat-e sokhan ast dar ghayb.

نفس رحمانی که اصطلاح اهل تحقیق منشأ الهی کلیش نامیده‌اند و مصدر حقایق موجودات کلی و جزوی معین گردانیده فی الحقیقت حقیقت سخن است در غیب.

⁵ Bīdel plays on two well-known allusions contained within the letter *ṣād*. First, *ṣād* graphically resembles the almond shape of an eye: ص. Hence, probably, the reference to Bīdel’s “approving gaze.” (On the visual symbolism of the Arabic alphabet and *ṣād* in particular, see Annemarie Schimmel, *A Two-Colored Brocade*, 236). Secondly, letter *ṣād* is premodern editorial shorthand for “*ṣaḥīḥ*,” an approving marginal comment noted down by a teacher tasked with checking and correcting the verses of a student (a process called *eṣṭelāḥ*, “correction” or “reform”). For a description of the practice of *iṣṭelāḥ* in the Urdu tradition, see Frances Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness*, 81; Pritchett notes that Ghālīb (d.1869) would write a *ṣād* next to students’ couplets which he found to be satisfactory, and would strike through couplets which failed to meet his standards.

⁶ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, IV:483-484.

⁷ For a general discussion of the concept of *nafas al-raḥmān* (Arabic) or *nafas-e raḥmānī* (Persian), see for example Titus Burckhardt, *Introduction to Sufi Doctrine*, 61. On the importance of this term in the thought of Ibn ‘Arabī, see Michael Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean Without Shore: Ibn ‘Arabī, The Book and the Law*, trans. David Streight (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), 5-6. This concept became especially central in the Ibn ‘Arabī-influenced South Asian Cheshtī sufi tradition; it is thought that the great master of the Cheshtī order, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Cheshtī (FL.17th c.) composed a treatise devoted solely to the idea of God’s Breath of the Merciful, entitled *Nafas-e raḥmānī*. See K.A. Nizami, *The Life and Times of Shaikh Farid u’d-Din Ganj-i-Shakar* (Delhi: Idāra-yi Adabiyāt-i Dillī, 1973, 1955), 7). For an important discussion of the specific relevance of the idea of the divine “Breath of the Merciful” in Bīdel’s thought, especially in conjunction with the Hindu concept of *ātman*, see Prashant Keshavmurthy, *Building an Ark*, 108 and 164.

The “Breath of the Merciful” [God’s Breath] is a technical [Sufi] term of art; those who investigate the truth of divine origins [Sufis] use it to denote “that which is Universal,” i.e., that which is appointed [by God] to be the source of the true realities of all existent things, both particular and universal. In truth, [this Breath of the Merciful] is the true reality of language [as it exists] in the Hidden Realm.⁸

Arvāh o amṣāl o ashbāh ke ‘anāṣer-e zohūr-e kayfīyat-e ū-st dāyer, va lā yazāl dar har martabe be e‘tebār-ī khāṣṣ, shūkhī-hā-ye ta‘ayyon-ash sāyer.

ارواح و امثال و اشباح که عناصر ظهور کیفیت اوست دایر و لایزال در هر مرتبه به اعتباری خاص شوخی‌های تعینش سایر.

Souls and likenesses and objects, which are elements of the quality of His [God’s, or the Breath’s] outward manifestation, form an [endlessly revolving] circle. Their mirthful individuations wander eternally throughout every stratum [of the created world] with special authority.

‘Ālam-e ghayb-ash be manzale-ye jozv nār-ī-st be anvār-e hoveyyat moṭlaq peyvaste ke modreke rā dar estefhām-e ān kayfīyat-ī maḥẓ tavahhom kardan ast; va arvāh ya ‘nī jozv-e havāyī-yash, ma ‘nī-ye basīṭ be eḥāṭe-ye ta‘aqqol āvordan [ast].

عالم غیبش به منزله جزو ناراست به انوار هویت مطلق پیوسته که مدرکه را در استقهام آن کیفیتی محض توهم کردن است و ارواح یعنی جزو هواپیش معنی بسیط به احاطه تعقل آوردن.

Its [God’s, or the Breath’s] Hidden Realm takes the form of a fire at that stage [of creation which is populated with] particulars, a fire fundamentally connected to the lights of ipseity.⁹ Thus, [human] perceivers must draw upon the resources of pure imagination in order to understand that [divine] quality for themselves. Souls – in others words, those particulars which are formed from [God’s, or the Breath’s] air – must use their powers of intellection in order to understand the meanings contained in the expanse [of God’s creation / of the Breath of the Merciful].

Dar meṣāl: be ḥokm-e jozv-e māyī, afsāne-ye amvāj ‘ebārāt shanīdan [ast], va dar ashbāh be ghalabe-ye jozv-tarābī noqūsh-e kamāhī-yash maḥsūs dīdan [ast];

⁸ The *ghayb* or *al-ghayb*: the “Hidden World,” God’s divine realm, which remains veiled from direct human understanding; cf. Ḥāfez’s title, “*lesān al-ghayb*,” or “the tongue from the Hidden World” – a translator of secrets contained in this Hidden World, which are beyond language, into human speech.

⁹ *Huwiyya* (Ar.) or *hoveyyat* (Pers.): sometimes translated into English as “ipseity” or “it-ness,” this technical term in Islamic philosophy refers to the “existence” or “identity” of things; it is an abstract noun deriving from the third-person singular pronoun *huwa* (it/he).

در مثال به حکم جزو مایی افسانه امواج عبارات شنیدن و در اشباح به غلبه جزو ترابی نقوش کماهیست محسوس دیدن.

For example: due to the particularity of “we”-ness, the tale of the waves is a linguistic expression that must be heard [i.e., must be perceived aurally], and images of [God’s or the Breath’s] quality must be discerned [i.e., perceived visually] in [various] likenesses, due to the prevailing overflow of particularity.¹⁰

Be talāsh-e shakhs zohūr-ash dar har maqām-ī ke qadam-e showq mī-sāyad be qadr-e tavahhom marāteb-e khod rā be esm-ī vā mī-setāyī, che ajsām o che ‘anāsher o che ajrām.

به تلاش شخص ظهورش در هر مقامی که قدم شوق می‌ساید به قدر توهم مراتب خود را به اسمی و می‌ستایی چه اجسام و چه عناصر و چه اجرام.

In your individual [spiritual] quest, at any stage where desire sets foot – impelled by the power of imagination – you praise your own levels [i.e., the levels of creation which are available to imperfect human understanding] with various nouns, calling them corporeal bodies, or physical elements, or celestial spheres.¹¹

[Quatrain]

Quatrain meter: -- ˘ ˘ ˘ - ˘ - | ˘ - - ˘ ˘ -
(→)

Hazaj-e moşamman-e akhrab al-şadr va **maqbuż** al-ḥashv va **makfūf** al-ḥashv va **majbūb** al-żarb (E.S. #5.1.13), a quatrain meter.

maf’ūlo mafā’elon mafā’īlo fa’al

hazaj = *mafā’ilon mafā’ilon mafā’ilon mafā’ilon*

First foot (şadr): *mafā’ilon + kharb → maf’ūlo*

Second foot (ḥashv): *mafā’ilon + qabz → mafā’elon*

Third foot (ḥashv): *mafā’ilon + kaff → mafā’īlo*

Fourth foot (żarb): *mafā’ilon + jabb → fa’al*

Qāfeye: -āz

Radif: -

*ān naghme-ye bī-neshānī-ye parde-ye rāz
k-ensān ze navā-ye ū-st makhraj-pardāz*

¹⁰ In other words, because this created human world is full of particulars – which are *like* universals, but not universals themselves – the best we can hope for, as humans with human faculties of perception, is to see and hear *resemblances* or *likenesses* of universals (like the Breath of the Merciful) in the multifarious particulars that make up our world which are available to our senses.

¹¹ Paraphrase: all of creation, in various ways (see the quatrain below) articulates God’s praise, each creature doing so in a mode of expression most suitable and appropriate to its capacities and faculties. All creatures – humans, animals, plants, and minerals – are thus on a spiritual journey of discovery, which is facilitated by verbal (or quasi-verbal, or even nonverbal) expression.

dar āyene-ye jamād mowj-e rang ast
dar ṭab‘-e nabāt būy o ḥayvān āvāz

آن نغمه بی‌نشانی پرده راز
کانسان ز نوای اوست مخرج پرداز
در آینه جماد موج رنگ است
در طبع نبات بوی و حیوان آواز

That traceless melody
emerging
from the curtain of secrets:
Humans ornament this tune
with language,
Minerals reflect it
with wavefuls of color,
Vegetal life – with fragrance,
and animals with voices.¹²

[Allegorical narrative, in rhyming couplets (*masnavī*); 11 lines]

Meter: ˘ – – | ˘ – – | ˘ – – | ˘ –
(→)

Motaqāreb-e moṣamman-e sālem al-ṣadr va l-ḥashvayn va maḥzūf al-żarb (E.S.
#1.1.11)

fo ‘ūlon fo ‘ūlon fo ‘ūlon fo ‘ūl

Motaqāreb = *fo ‘ūlon fo ‘ūlon fo ‘ūlon fo ‘ūlon*

First, second, third feet: sālem

Fourth foot: *fo ‘ūlon + ḥazf* = *fo ‘ul*

1 *yek-ī bar dar-e āshenā-yī rasīd*
cho mozhgān be cheshm-e khod-ash baste dīd

یکی بر در آشنایی رسید
چو مژگان به چشم خودش بسته دید

A person arrived at a wise man's door;
He saw it was closed, like eyelash-barred eyes.

2 *be khāk-ash cho ashk az adab sar nehād*
be nabz-e tamannā-sh taḥrīk dād

به خاکش چو اشک از ادب سر نهاد
به نبض تمناش تحریک داد

¹² In other words, every form or stratum of life in creation, by its unique capacity of imagination, reflects the Breath of the Merciful, or is able to draw upon the all-permeating power of this Breath in order to produce some form of expression: language (humans), nonlinguistic vocal utterance (animals), fragrance (plants), and even coruscating waves of color (minerals).

When well-bred civility caused tears to fall
upon the doorstep dust,
The quick pulse of desire
made them flow.

- 3 *nedā āmad az khalvat-e āshenā*
ke pā-ye ke dārad bar īn dar šedā?

ندا آمد از خلوت آشنا
که پای که دارد بر این در صدا

A voice came from inside
the wise man's abode:
"Whose feet make this noise
at my door?"

- 4 *ṭalab-pīshe-ye showq goftā man-am*
ke sham 'e vafā-ye to rā dāman-am

طلب پیشه شوق گفتا منم
که شمع وفای تو را دامنم

The man said, "By profession
I am an ardent seeker of passion.
I am a billowing garment, striving to sustain
the candle-flame of faith in you.

- 5 *rafiq-e gham-o- 'aysh-e dīrīne-am*
agar gol v-agar dāgh āyīne-am

رفیق غم و عیش دیرینه‌ام
اگر گل و گر داغ آینه‌ام

"I am an old friend,
in grief and in mirth;
I am a mirror, reflecting
both roses and burn-scars."

- 6 *degar bār az ān khalvat āmad šedā*
ke ay modda 'ī bog(o)zar az mājarā

دگر بار از آن خلوت آمد صدا
که ای مدعی بگذر از ماجرا

Once more came a voice

from within that abode:
“O plaintiff!
Abandon your case.

- 7 *‘abaṣ kh’īsh rā ṣayd-e zaḥmat masāz
nakh’āhad shodan dar be rū-ye to bāz*

عبث خویش را صید زحمت مساز
نخواهد شدن در بع روی تو باز

“Do not vainly pursue
such toil for yourself;
The door will not open
before you this way.

- 8 *dar īn parde yek naqsh agar shod fozūn
cho lafz az ma ‘ānī neshīnad borūn*

در این پرده یک نقش اگر شد فزون
چو لفظ از معانی نشیند برون

“If images should multiply – even by one –
beyond this veil,
It’s like a word,
which sits outside
the realm of meanings.

- 9 *be vaḥdat-sarā vahm dar kār nīst
be merāt-e ḥaq(q) ‘aks rā bār nīst*

به وحدت‌سرا وهم در کار نیست
به مرآت حق عکس را بار نیست

“There’s no place for illusion
in Unity’s realm.
Reflections gain no admittance
before God’s mirror.

- 10 *be jā-yī ke tamṣāl vahm ast o bas
be āyīne-dārī mapaymā havas*

به جایی که تمثال وهم است و بس
به آینه‌داری مپیمما هوس

“This is because all reflections
are mere illusions;

Do not desire
to be a mirror-holder.

- 11 *tavahhom mokhālef navā-ye do-yī-st*
to man bāsh yā man to īn har do chī-st?

تو هم مخالف نوای دویی است
تو من باش یا من تو این هر دو چیست

“The faculty of illusory imagination
produces discord;
it is duality’s melody.
Let you – be me, or I – be you;
what are either of these?”

[Allegorical narrative, in rhyming couplets (*masnavī*); 19 lines]

Meter: ˘ – – | ˘ – – | ˘ – – | ˘ –

(→)

Motaqāreb-e moṣamman-e sālem al-ṣadr va l-ḥashvayn va maḥzūf al-ḡarb (E.S.
#1.1.11)

fo ‘ūlon fo ‘ūlon fo ‘ūlon fo ‘ūl

Motaqāreb = *fo ‘ūlon fo ‘ūlon fo ‘ūlon fo ‘ūlon*

First, second, third feet: sālem

Fourth foot: fo ‘ūlon + ḥazf = fo ‘ul

- 1 *be bāzār shod ablah-ī bī-khabar*
kadū-hā-ye khoshk āmad-ash dar nāzar

به بازار شد ابلهی بیخبر
کدوهای خشک آمدش در نظر

An ignorant fool went to the market,
And saw some dried gourds.¹³

- 2 *ze baqqāl porsīd k-ay ūstād*
begū tā che chīz īn-chenīn bīze dād?

ز بقال پرسید کای اوستاد
بگو تا چه چیز اینچنین بیضه داد

He asked the grocer: “Excuse me, sir –

¹³ Dried gourds would be hollow (the seedy insides having been removed), and therefore are a proverbial allusion to someone whose head is likewise empty or “brainless.”

Can you tell me which creature produces such eggs?

- 3 *hamānā ke īn bīze-hā-ye sotorg*
ze ajnās-e fīl ast yā qesm-e gorg?

همانا که این بیضه‌های سترگ
ز اجناس فیل است یا قسم گرگ

“Surely such large eggs
Must belong to some species of elephant,
or to a kind of wolf?”

- 4 *bekhandād baqqāl k-ay bī-kherad*
dar īn parde ḥads-e to goh mī-khorad

بخندید بقال کای بی‌خرد
در این پرده حدس تو گه می‌خورد

The grocer laughed, and replied: “You fool;
In this matter, your powers of deduction eat dirt!”¹⁴

- 5 *na fīl ast o nī gorg tokhm-e khar ast*
ke chūn besh(e)kanad jomle bāl-o-par ast

نه فیل است و نی گرگ تخم خر است
که چون بشکند جمله بال و پر است

“They’re not from an elephant, nor from a wolf –
these are a donkey’s eggs!
If one of them breaks,
it bursts into feathers.

- 6 *qazā kard dar bīze-ye khar nehān*
hojūm-e par-afshānī-ye tūṭeyān

قضا کرد در بیضه خر نهان
هجوم پر افشانی طوطیان

“For it so happens that inside these donkey’s eggs
A stash of parrot feathers is hidden.”

¹⁴ A vulgar oath: lit. “will eat excrement.” The word for “reasoning” here is highly technical: it is, notably, Avicenna’s term for “correctly guessing the middle term of an axiom.” For a discussion of the importance of this to Avicenna’s rational epistemology, see Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition: Introduction to Reading Avicenna’s Philosophical Works* (Leiden: Brill, 2014, 1988), 179 et passim.

- 7 *del-e ablah az ḥarf-ash āmad be shūr*
be tokhm-e kadū-yash vaṭan kard mūr

دل ابله از حرفش آمد به شور
به تخم کدویش وطن کرد مور

The fool's heart was stirred by such words;
A worm made its home in the seeds of the gourd.¹⁵

- 8 *sar-e khoshk-maghz-ash be soddā keshīd*
kadū-ī be ṣad nerkh gowhar kharīd

سر خشک مغزش به سودا کشید
کدویی به صد نرخ گوهر خرید

He took his dried shell [his own head; himself] to the market,
And bought a dried gourd at an inflated price of a hundred pearls.

- 9 *nehāl-e havas tā shavad gol-feshān*
be shākh-e boland-ī-sh bast āsheyān

نهال هوس تا شود گل فشان
به شاخ بلندیش بست آشیان

In order for this small shoot of desire to flower,
He built a nest atop its highest branch.

- 10 *shetāb-e havas gasht khāk-e derang*
na bū-yī par afshānd az ān-jā na rang

شتاب هوس گشت خاک درنگ
نه بویی پر افشاند از آنجا نه رنگ

Desire's hurry turned into dust of delay;
Neither fragrance nor color
emerged from that [gourd, nested on his branch of hope].

- 11 *valī ham-chenīn mī-keshīd entezār*
ke tokhm-e khar-ash ṭūṭī ārad be bār

ولی همچنین می‌کشید انتظار
که تخم خرش طوطی آرد به بار

¹⁵ In other words, this false idea became firmly “planted” and in the feeble, empty mind of the fool.

However, the fool kept tending to it, and watching,
And waiting for his donkey egg bring forth a parrot.

- 12 *saḥar-gāh-ī az eqtezā-ye shegeft*
nasīm-ī be tondī vazīdan gereft

سحرگاهی از اقتضای شگفت
نسیمی به تندى وزیدن گرفت

One morning, a wondrous event occurred:
A breeze¹⁶ began to blow, swiftly and forcefully.

- 13 *kadū-ye mo‘allaq az ān tond bād*
sabū-vār az dūsh-e shākh ūftād

کدوى معلق از آن تند باد
سببوار از دوش شاخ اوفتاد

That strong wind knocked the suspended gourd to the ground,
And it fell off the branch, shattering like a pitcher.

- 14 *qazā rā yek-ī tūtī-ye khosh-navā*
dar ān sar-zamīn dāsht sayr-e havā

قضا را یکی طوطى خوشنوا
در آن سرزمین داشت سیر هوا

It chanced to happen that at that moment,
a mellifluous parrot
Was flying through the air in that very spot.

- 15 *cho shūr-e shekast-e kadū sāz shod*
par-afshānī-ye tūtī āghāz shod

چو شور شکست کدو ساز شد
پر افشانی طوطى آغاز شد

At the same moment when the gourd
fell with a clamour,
The parrot began to beat its wings.

- 16 *be yek-bāregī ablah az kh^vīsh raft*
del-o-dast-ash az yek-degar pīsh raft

¹⁶ This is likely a reference to the Breath of the Merciful, which acts in this anecdote as the invisible underlying force responsible for the “miraculous” causal chain of events that follows.

به یکبارگی ابله از خویش رفت
دل و دستش از یک دگر پیش رفت

The fool nearly his senses
In utter astonishment.

- 17 *gomān-ash yaqīn shod ke az tokhm-e khar
ram-e tūteyān mī-keshad bāl-o-par*

گمانش یقین شد که از تخم خر
رم طوطیان می‌کشد بال و پر

All his reasonable doubt turned to certainty:
now he knew that donkeys' eggs
Bring forth parrots' winged flights.

- 18 *qeyās-ash neqāb-e tasallī goshūd
valī 'aql dānad ke ḥāṣel che būd*

قیاسش نقاب تسلی گشود
ولی عقل داند که حاصل چه بود

His analogical reasoning
removed the veils of consolation;
But [our] logical reasoning
reveals the outcome:

- 19 *qeyās-e kharān nīz bar mī-dehad
be īn rang 'arż-e aṣar mī-dehad*

قیاس خران نیز بر می‌دهد
به این رنگ عرض اثر می‌دهد

The analogical reasoning of asses
can also be fruitful:
In this colorful way,
it produces effects.¹⁷

¹⁷ Much of the humour in this narrative comes from the jarring co-presence of philosophical terms for reasoning, logic, and deduction (which are recognizably Avicennan-Aristotelian) and vulgar marketplace vocabulary, which are set within the low-brow tenor of the tale itself. Philosophical terms include *ḥads*, “correctly guessing the middle term of an axiom;” the distinction between *gomān* and *yaqīn* (conjecture and certainty); *'aql* and *qeyās* (logical reasoning and analogical reasoning); and even *ḥāṣel* and *aṣar* (results and effects). Insofar as this story is about a person trying to work out the truth about *causal origins* (lit., eggs) – both empirically, and on the strength of “received report” (maliciously fallible, in this case) – it would appear that Bīdel is

II
Letters¹⁸
رقعات | Roqa'āt

T4.L1 Letter N^o108: To Shokrollāh Khān, on the Completion of *Mount Sinai of Wonder*¹⁹

Be Shokrollāh Khān, dar 'arz-e anjām-e noskhe-ye Tūr-e ma 'refat
به شکرالله خان در عرض انجام نسخه طور معرفت

[Prose Paragraph]

Neyāz-ī ke dar ma 'bad-e andīshe bā ma 'nī taslīm mī-sakht, emrūz dar šūrat-e khaṭṭ jobhe-sā-st; va do 'ā-yī ke dar parde-ye nafas ḥasrat tapīdan mī-keshad, be kesvat-e nāme bāl-goshā [ast].

نیازی که در معبد اندیشه با معنی تسلیم می‌ساخت امروز در صورت خط جبهه‌ساست و دعایی که در پرده نفس حسرت تبیدن می‌کشد به کسوت نامه بال‌گشا.

Today, this indigent one [I, Bīdel] whose practice it is to salute inner meaning in the place of worship of his own thought, rubs his forehead in supplication upon the form of a letter's written lines; and [today] [my/Bīdel's] prayer, which usually agitates in inward disappointment behind the veil of breaths, spreads its wings, clothed in the form of a letter.

indulging in a parody of rational philosophical inquiry. And yet: he does not dismiss the fool. Indeed, the fool's "proof" demonstrates how misguided rational philosophers can be, because something wondrous did in fact occur: a brilliantly plumed parrot *did* burst forth from a donkey's egg – *from the perspective of the fool who witnessed and interpreted this event*. It is as though the supernatural, rare, and beautiful quality of this extraordinary coincidence is itself worth marvelling at; therefore, the fool's assumption that he has attained certain knowledge of true causality is, in an important metaphysical sense, *not wrong*: his reaction – astonishment, happy wonder – is the correct one, even though it does not spring from any direct knowledge of divine intervention (again, the literal "breeze," or Breath of the Merciful, which knocks the gourd off the branch). This story proves (as it were) Bīdel's "subtle point" that just as minerals, plants, animals, and humans all have their own species-specific capacities for imagining their way into truth, so do fools among humans. This account supports, and is supported by, Bīdel's lifelong preoccupation with demonstrating that it is the *imagination* more than any other faculty or rational capacity which allows us to arrive at certain truth.

¹⁸ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, IV:307-438.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, IV:352-353.

Ābele-pāyān-e vādī-ye maqṣūd rā kayfīyat-e ṭalab ham paymāne-ye jam 'īyat-e veṣāl ast; va 'ājez-negāhān-e maḥfel-e shohūd rā khayāl-e dowlāt-e dīdār nīz āyīne-dār-e hoẓūr-e jamāl [ast].

آبله پایان وادی مقصود را کیفیت طلب هم پیمانه جمعیت وصال است و عاجزنگاهان محفل شهود را خیال دولت دیدار نیز آینه‌دار حضور جمال.

For those who wander, blister-footed, through the desert in search of their goal [of union with God], the quality of the search itself too is a goblet brimming with composure found through union; and for those of modest, abject vision who attend the assembly of witnessing [divine truth], *imagining* the blessed state of beholding [God, the beautiful beloved] is also a way of holding up a mirror to the presence of [divine] Beauty.²⁰

[Verse fragment, 2 lines]

Meter: - ˘ - - | - ˘ - - | - ˘ - - | - ˘ -

(→)

Ramal-e moṣamman-e sālem al-ṣadr va l-ḥashv va **maḥzūf** al-ẓarb (E.S. #2.4.15)

Fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elon

Ramal = *fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton fā 'elāton*

First foot (ṣadr): *fā 'elāton* (sālem)

Second foot (ḥashv): *fā 'elāton* (sālem)

Third foot (ḥashv): *fā 'elāton* (sālem)

Fourth foot (ẓarb): *fā 'elāton* + ḥazf → *fā 'elon*

Qāfeye: -ānī-hā-ye

Radīf: khaṭṭ (line of writing; letter, epistolary correspondence)

1 *tā hoẓūr-e vaṣl-e to dar dīde-ye moshtāq būd
del farāghī dāsht az rowshan-bayānī-hā-ye khaṭṭ*

تا حضور وصل تو در دیده مشتاق بود
دل فراغی داشت از روشن‌بینی‌های خط

As long as my desiring eye
beheld the presence of union with you,
My heart remained joyously unconstrained
by the brilliant expositions
of **epistolary correspondence**.

2 *īn zamān k-az golshan-e dīdār dūr oftāde-īm
mī-ravīm az khod be dūsh-e nā-tavānī-hā-ye khaṭṭ*

این زمان کز گلشن دیدار دور افتاده‌ایم
می‌رویم از خود به دوش ناتوانی‌های خط

²⁰ In other words, the spiritual journey can be as fulfilling as the destination.

But now, as I am far away
 from the garden
 of seeing you in person,
 I leave myself; and for support I'm forced to lean
 upon the weak shoulders
 of **epistolary correspondence**.

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

Ma 'nī-navāzā, Tūr-e ma 'refat az hojūm-e dīde-ye enteẓār sāmān-e yek 'ālam-e cherāghān ast, va be havā-ye neṣar-e ān kalīm-e ayman-e ḥaqīqat, ṣad hazār gowhar-e ma 'nī be dāmān [ast].

معنی نوازا طور معرفت از هجوم دیده انتظار سامان یک عالم چراغان است و به هوای نثار آن کلیم ایمن حقیقت صد هزار گوهر معنی به دامان.

O nurturer and patron of inner meaning! *Mount Sinai of Enlightenment* has sprung forth from my longing eyes. Within it are the contents of a whole world of illumination. A hundred thousand pearls of inner meaning are collected within its garment folds, ready to be scattered through the air by that Kalīm [Moses; lit. “one who speaks with God”] who is secure in his [knowledge of] true reality.

L-ellāhi l-ḥamdu tavajjoh-e zāt-e ma 'nī-ye āyāt dar ān samt yad-e bayzā-yī nagoshūde va 'aṣā-ye qodrat-ī nanemūde ke āl-e Fer 'ūn ya 'nī zomre-ye ṭāgheyān-ī ke gharqe-ye Nīl adbār-and, tā qeyāmat sar az āb-e tīgh bar-ārand.

الله الحمد توجه ذات معنی آیات در آن سمت ید بیضایی نگشوده و عسای قدرتی ننموده که آل فرعون یعنی زمره طاغیان که غرقه نیل ادبارند تا قیامت سر از آب تیغ برآرند.

Praise be to God that attention to the essence of inner meaning's signs in that way did not uncover a miraculous white hand, nor display the rod of power – for the Pharaoh's people (that seditious tribe, drowned in a Nile of disloyalty) would have to deliver up their heads before the shimmering lustre of punishment's sword until Judgement Day.²¹

²¹ In the Islamic tradition, Moses (*Kalīm*), having seen God's manifested atop Mount Sinai (*Tūr*) in the form of a fire, performs miracles in Egypt in order to prove his prophethood and distinguish himself from false magicians. The two most oft-cited of these miracles include throwing down his rod, which turns into a snake; and showing the palm of his hand, which has become gleaming white. The gist of these two sentences, long glosses on the poem's title as *Mount Sinai of Enlightenment*, seem to suggest that the poem has brought into the world – has scattered – pearls of eloquent meaning whose origin is in that “world of illumination” (i.e., the fire of Sinai, or God's own “speech”). He then both does and does not align himself with Moses' status as a prophet: for while he does describe himself as one who “converses with God” (“*Kalīm*,” a traditional name for Moses), he professes gratitude that no further outward miraculous signs were there to proclaim him a prophet. It is as though Bīdel approaches the threshold of prophecy, yet doesn't go beyond and simply lingers suggestively there, without openly crossing over into heretical territory.

Dar īn vaqt ārzū-ye bī-tāb-e havā-parast īn tamannā-st ke rābeṭ-e ajzā-ye tafreḡe-ye emkān ovrāḡ-e entezār-e Bīdelān rā bar-gardānad; va dīde-ye moshtāḡ rā ham-cheshm-e naqsh-e pā be moṭāle‘e-ye qadam-būs rasānad.

در این وقت آرزوی بی‌تاب هواپرست این تمناست که رابط اجزای تفرقه امکان اوراق انتظار بیدلان را بر گرداند و دیده مشتاق را همچشم نقش پا به مطالعه قدم بوس رساند.

At the present time, the impatient yearning of this worshipper of desire [Bīdel], is this wish: that the binder of the scattered parts of this contingent world [you, Shokrollāh Khān] might flip through these pages, which record what all those whose hearts have been stolen [lit. “Bīdels”] have anxiously awaited; and that he bring [my] eager eyes to level with [his] footprints [in grateful supplication] through [his] careful study of what [I, Bīdel], who kiss your feet, have composed.

[Verse fragment, 2 lines]

Meter: - ˘ - - | ˘ - ˘ - | - -

(→)

Khafīf-e mosaddas-e sālem va makhbūn va ašlam (E.S. #4.5.11)

Fā‘elāton maḡā‘elon fe‘lon

Khafīf = *Fā‘elāton mostaf‘elon fā‘elāton*

First foot: *sālem*

Second foot: *mostaf‘elon + khabn → maḡā‘elon*

Third foot: *fā‘elāton + šalm → fe‘lon*

Qāfeye: -ā-ye

Radīf: to būd (you were; was yours)

- 1 *kh‘āstam maḡlab-ī konam enshā
tā nafas gol konad do‘ā-ye to būd*

خواستم مطلبی کنم انشا
تا نفس گل کند دعای تو بود

I wanted to set down in words
my desired purpose.
I prayed to you, so that my eloquent breath
would appear, blossoming forth.

- 2 *shod yaqīn-am konūn ke šafḡe-ye del
noskhe-ye ma‘nī-e šanā-ye to būd*

شد یقینم کنون که صفحه دل
نسخه معنی ثنای تو بود

Now, I am certain:
the pages of the heart
Were a manuscript

containing the inner meaning
of your praise.

T4.L2 Letter N^o210: To Shokrollāh Khān, on the Rainy Season²²
*Be Shokrollāh Khān, dar tamhīd-e barsāt ke mow'ūd-e dowlāt-e
dīdār būd*

[Prose, 2 paragraphs]

[Paragraph 1]

*Ārāyesh-e anjoman-e zohūr dar ṭabī'at-e havā vadī'at-ī-st azalī, va pardāz-e besāṭ-e
sorūr dar mezāj-e saḥāb zakhīre-ī lam yazāl-ī[-ast].*

آرایش انجمن ظهور در طبیعت هوا ودیعی است ازلی و پرداز بساط سرور در مزاج سحاب ذخیره لم یزالی.

Ornamentation on the gathering of manifest reality is a burden of trust placed upon the nature of air since pre-eternity. And the decoration upon all outspread joy is a treasury full of “*That which is eternal*” contained within the nature of rainclouds.²³

*Emrūz ke fazā-ye dasht o dar nā-gozīr āyīne az ghobār zodūdan ast, va cheshm-e gol tā
mozhgān-e sabze, bī-ekhteyār āghūsh-e showq goshūdan, āsār-e da'vat-e bahārestān
dīdār ast, va 'alāmāt-e qorb-e ḥaqīqat kenār [ast].*

امروز که فضای دشت و در ناگزیر آئینه از غبار زدودن است و چشم گل تا مژگان سبزه بی‌اختیار آغوش شوق
گشودن آثار دعوت بهارستان دیدار است و علامات قرب حقیقت کنار.

Today, as the climate of the dry desert wasteland spontaneously turns to polishing mirrors clean of dust, and as the eyes of flowers and eyelashes of verdure involuntarily open into an embrace of passion – such indications being invited into a world of the springtime are a vision of the beloved, and such signs of close approach to true reality are an embrace of lovers.

²² Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, IV:397-398.

²³ Although this letter is ostensibly concerned with the real-world event of the arrival of the monsoon rains, Bīdel quickly subordinates the historical reality of the rainy season to metaphysical concerns, using the monsoon as a springboard from which to meditate on the efflorescent powers of human and divine imagination. On this phenomenon, see Prashant Keshavmurthy, “Inscribing the Eternal into the Everyday: Voice in Bīdil’s *Ruqa ‘āt*” (forthcoming).

Ba 'd-e chandīn entezār kh^vān-e ekrām mī-gostarand tā zalle-keshān-e mā'ede-ye faẓl rā maḥrūm-e qesmat nagozārānd, va pas az dīrī be īn šefat šalā-ye raḥmat-e 'ām mī-konand tā ma'yūsān-e zāveye-ye bī-bazā 'atī nīz naṣībe-ī bar-dārānd.

بعد چندین انتظار خوان اکرام می‌گسترند تا زله‌کشان مانده فضل را محروم قسمت نگذارند و پس از دیری به این صفت صلاهی رحمت عام می‌کنند تا مأیوسان زاویه بی‌بضاعتی نیز نصیبه‌ای بر دارند.

After a long and anxious anticipation, the banquet of full of favors is finally spread out, so that those who this abundant table with arms full of victuals are not barred from their share of good fortune. Following so long a delay, the merciful general invitation to all is finally announced, so that even those who have grown melancholy in the hermitage of poverty may also partake of this good lot.

[Paragraph 2]

Hazār sabze be kh^vāb-e 'adam pā mī-zanand tā yek mozhe bīdār-am gardānānd; va hazār gol dīde be ḥayrat bāz mī-konand tā yek negāh mozhde-ye hoẓūr-am rasānānd.

هزار سبزه به خواب عدم پا می‌زنند تا یک مژه بیدارم گردانند و هزار گل دیده به حیرت باز می‌کنند تا یک نگاه مژده حضورم رسانند.

A thousand green plants march a long way through the deep slumber of nonexistence – in order to wake me up, enlightened by a single eyelash. A thousand flowers open their eyes in wonder – so as to send me glad tidings of divine presence with a single glance.

Ya 'nī Bīdelān dar īn-šūrat bar tajallī-ye kamāhī cheshm goshāyānd, va be īn kayfīyat az dar-e ferdows-e yaqīn dar-mī-āyānd.

یعنی بیدلان در اینصورت بر تجلی کماهی چشم گشایند و به این کیفیت از در فردوس یقین در می‌آیند.

In short: thus it is that those whose hearts are stolen [lit. “Bīdels”] open their eyes and gaze upon the brilliant manifestation of things-as-they-are; and in this state, they are able to pass through the doors, entering a paradise of certain knowledge.

[Couplet]

Meter: ˘ ˘ – | ˘ ˘ – | ˘ ˘ – | ˘ ˘ –
(→)

Mojtass-e moṣamman-e makhbūn-e maḥzūf (E.S. #4.1.15)

Mafā'elon fa'elāton mafā'elon fe'lon / fa'elon

Mojtass = mostaf'elon fā'elāton mostaf'elon fā'elāton

First foot: mostaf'elon + khabn = mafā'elon

Second foot: fā'elāton + khabn = fa'elāton

Third foot: mostaf'elon + khabn = mafā'elon

Fourth foot: fā'elāton + khabn + ḥazf = fa'elon

na bāgh dānam o nī khold īn-qadar dānam

ke gerd-e rāh-e khayāl-e to rang-hā dārad

نه باغ دانم و نی خلد اینقدر دانم
که گرد راه خیال تو رنگها دارد

I know not gardens, nor paradise.
This much I know:
That the dust on the road
of your imaginary
contains many colors.

T4.L3 Letter N^o-258, On Lyric Style²⁴

Dar qabāḥat-e alfāz-ī ke akṣar dar ash 'ār yāfte shavad

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

Ṣāḥeb- 'eyār-e dār-al-emtehān-e afkār-e salāmat, qodrat-enshāyān-e dīvān-e balāghat rā dar sharāyeṭ-e eblāgh-e faṣāḥat ghowr-e naqṣ-o-kamāl-e alfāz žarūrī-st, va bī-parvāyī-ye tavajjoh be soqm-o-ṣeḥḥat-e taqrīr-o-tahrīr, az nash 'e-ye ḥaqīqat-edrāk dūrī [ast].

صاحب عیار دارالامتحان افکار سلامت قدرت انشایان دیوان بلاغت را در شرایط ابلاغ فصاحت غور نقص و کمال الفاظ ضروریست و بی پروایی توجه به سقم و صحت تقریر و تحریر از نشئه حقیقت ادراک دوری.

O Lord of Discernment in this perilous abode of trial! All capable composers of articulate poetry, as a requirement for achieving eloquence, *must* reflect deeply upon the defects and perfections of language. Careless inattention to the well-being of written and oral discourse – its good or ill health – must always be kept at bay, far from [these poets'] intoxicated state of perceiving true reality.

Jam 'ī dar khetāb-e mamdūḥ sāghar-e madḥ-ī mī-paymāyand, ke qadaḥ dar barābar-e ān shīshe bar tāq-e enfe 'āl mī-gožārad; va jam 'ī dar 'arż-e kamāl-e khod tamhīd-e vaqār-ī bar-mī-tarāshand, ke khāme-ye afhām dar raqam-e ta 'ammol-ash joz ḥaqīqat-e kheffat-e sho 'ūr namī-negārad.

جمعی در خطاب ممدوح ساغر مدحی می پیمایند که قدح در برابر آن شیشه بر طاق انفعال می گذارد و جمعی در عرض کمال خود تمهید وقار بر می تراشند که خامه افهام در رقم تأملش جز حقیقت خفت شعور نمی نگارد.

Some poets drink so deeply from the cup of praise as they compose panegyrics that they disdain the [ordinary] wineglass in comparison with this [exalted] vessel. Other poets, as they display their own perfections, etch such grand prefaces upon page's surface that the pens of their understanding – although they record the product of these poets' careful slow attention – reveal nothing but the true reality of the weakness of their perception.

²⁴ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, IV:421-423.

Dar īn-šūrat har tāyefe rā be vos ‘-e este ‘dād taftīsh-e afkār-e khod bāyad nemūdan, tā mostahsan-e zabān-dānān-e ān ṭarīq bar-āyad, va har ferqe rā be qadr-e maqdūr cheshm-e ta ‘ammol bar marāteb-e bayān goshūdan, tā shāyestegī-ye tahsīn-e laṭāyef-shenāsān hāṣel nemāyad.

در اینصورت هر طائفه را به وسع استعداد تفتیش افکار خود باید نمودن تا مستحسن زبانان آن طریق بر آید و هر فرقه را به قدر مقدور چشم تأمل بر مراتب بیان گشودن تا شایستگی تحسین لطایف شناسان حاصل نماید.

Thus, every tribe must scrutinize its own [poetic] thoughts, each according to their capacities, in order to win the approval of connoisseurs of that style. Every group must open their eyes to gaze however much they can, with careful slow attention, upon the various levels of clear expression, so as to become worthy of approval in the eyes of experts in delicate discourse.

Be anmūzej-ī az īn ‘ālam bayt-ī chand ‘ebrat-shāmel-e arbāb-e khebrat ast va tanbīh-māyel-e aṣḥāb-e ghaflat:

به انموجی از این عالم بیستی چند عبرت شامل ارباب خبرت است و تنبیه مایل اصحاب غفلت:

By way of example, [below are given] several couplets full of caution and warning for both well informed and ill informed poets alike:

[Couplet]

Meter: ˘ --- | ˘ --- | ˘ --

(→)

Hazaj-e mosaddas-e sālem-e maḥzūf al-zarb (E.S. #2.1.11)

Mafā ‘ilon mafā ‘ilon fo ‘ulon

Hazaj = *Mafā ‘ilon mafā ‘ilon mafā ‘ilon*

First foot (ṣadr) and second foot (ḥashv) = sālem

Third foot (zārb): *mafā ‘ilon* + ḥazf = *fo ‘ulon*

*ṭalab kon yār-e jān-ī tā tavānī
gorīzān bāsh az yārān-e nānī²⁵*

طلب کن یار جانی تا توانی
گریزان باش از یاران نانی

Search for a true soulmate, friend,
as much as you can;
Stay away from selfish friends
who only want to eat your bread.

²⁵ “*Yār-e jānī*” and “*yār-e nānī*” are known antonyms, attested in Dehkhodā (“*nānī*” entry): a “*yār-e nānī*” is a false and selfish friend whose only interest in the friendship lies in their being able to secure something for themselves – of “bread” or other benefits.

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

Qobḥ-e īn ershād bar ṭab 'e Hendeyān chūn ḥaqīqat-e īshān bī-ezhār hovaydā-st; va ṭab 'e 'Erāqeyān rā dar īn maqām be ḥokm-e ma'zūrī-ye bī-nesbatī pā-ye tavahhom bar havā.

قبح این ارشاد بر طبع هندیان چون حقیقت ایشان بی‌اظهار هویداست و طبع عراقیان را در این مقام به حکم معذوری بی‌نسبتی پای توهم بر هوا.

The poetic disposition of Indian poets perceives the infelicity of this [couplet] as clear truth, without need of demonstration. But because the poetic disposition of Iraqi poets is prone to excuse unconnectedness, they are given to vain imaginings and interpretations.²⁶

[Couplet* – although the meter is that of quatrains; see below:]

Quatrain meter: -- ˘ ˘ - ˘ - | ˘ - - ˘ ˘ -
(→)

Hazaj-e mošamman-e akhrab al-šadr va **maqḥūz** al-ḥashv va **makfūf** al-ḥashv va **majbūb** al-žarb (E.S. #5.1.13), a quatrain meter.

maf'ūlo mafā'elon mafā'ilo fa'al

hazaj = *mafā'ilon mafā'ilon mafā'ilon mafā'ilon*

First foot (šadr): *mafā'ilon* + *kharb* → *maf'ūlo*

Second foot (ḥashv): *mafā'ilon* + *qabz* → *mafā'elon*

Third foot (ḥashv): *mafā'ilon* + *kaff* → *mafā'ilo*

Fourth foot (žarb): *mafā'ilon* + *jabb* → *fa'al*

*ay ān-ke ze ṭowr-e khalq bar ham khordī
bīhūde ze važ 'e har yek-ī ram khordī*

ای آنکه ز طور خلق بر هم خوردی
بیهوده ز وضع هر یکی رم خوردی

O you, who are broken up
by the ways of the world:
Vainly do you flee
from the state of every one.

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

Ḥosn-e īn 'ebārāt be mazāq-e ahl-e Fārs por-nāgovār ast; va taqrīr-āhangān-e zabān-e dīgar rā bī-khabarī-ye qabāḥat ezhār.

حسن این عبارات به مذاق اهل فارس پرنایگوار است و تقریر آهنگان زبان دیگر را بی‌خبری قباحات اظهار.

²⁶ And thus find this couplet admissible, whereas Indians do not.

The felicity of these expressions is unpalatable to the Iranians' taste [lit. the people of Fārs]; but as for those poets composing in other languages, their ignorance of [such] infelicity is evident.

[Couplet]

Meter: ˘--|˘--|˘--|˘-
(→)

Motaqāreb-e moṣamman-e sālem al-ṣadr va l-ḥashvayn va maḥzūf al-żarb (E.S. #1.1.11)

fo 'ūlon fo 'ūlon fo 'ūlon fo 'ūl

Motaqāreb = *fo 'ūlon fo 'ūlon fo 'ūlon fo 'ūlon*

First, second, third feet: sālem

Fourth foot: fo 'ūlon + ḥazf = fo 'ul

gar ādam-sereshṭī magū zīnhār
ke afsār-e khar rā be dast-am sepār

گر آدم سرشتی مگو زینهار
که افسار خر را به دستم سپار

If your nature is human,
do not speak – “Beware,”
Lest you place a donkey's crupper
in my hand.²⁷

[Couplet]

Meter: --˘|˘--˘|˘--
(→)

Hazaj-e mosaddas-e akhrab al-ṣadr va **makfūf** al-ḥashv va **maḥzūf** al-żarb (E.S. #3.3.10)

maf'ūlo mafā'ilo fo 'ūlon

Hazaj = *mafā'ilon mafā'ilon mafā'ilon*

First foot (ṣadr): *mafā'ilon* + kharb = *maf'ūlo*

Second foot (ḥashv): *mafā'ilon* + kaff = *mafā'ilo*

Third foot (żarb): *mafā'ilon* + ḥazf = *fo 'ūlon*

āvard samand-e barq-dav rā
*beg(e)refte be dast-e khod jelow rā*²⁸

²⁷ Possibly the wit here is to be found in the approximation of the sound of the word *zīnhār* to the braying of a donkey.

²⁸ (The emphasis is my own.) The point of debate concerns the pronunciation – and therefore the rhyme – of *dav* / *dow* (from the verb *davīdan*, “to run”) and *jelow*. The hardness – or consonant/vowel status – of the *v* is in question: it appears that the Indian pronunciation is limited to *dav* (thus nullifying the rhyme with *jelow*), whereas the Iranian pronunciation admits a softening into *dow* to rhyme with *jelow*.

آورد سمند برق دو را
بگرفته به دست خود جلو را

He summoned his horse,
swift as lightning –
And took the reins
in his own hands.

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

Har chand sokhanvarān-e Fārs īn now‘-e talaffoẓ rā tafākhōr shomārand, va zabān-āvarān-e Hend, ghayr az dast-āvīz-e tamaskhor va rosvāyī namī-pendārand.

هر چند سخنوران فارس این نوع تلفظ را تفاخر شمارند و زبان‌آوران هند غیر از دست‌آویز تمسخر و رسوایی نمی‌پندارند.

Although poets of Fārs [Iranians] consider this type of pronunciation to be boast-worthy, poets of India do not consider it to be good for anything – except as a small souvenir to be passed around for the purpose of ridicule and shame.²⁹

[Couplet* – although, again, this is a quatrain meter]

Quatrain meter: -- ˘ ˘ – ˘ – | ˘ – – ˘ ˘ –
(→)

Hazaj-e moṣamman-e akhrab al-ṣadr va **maqḅūz** al-ḥashv va **makfūf** al-ḥashv va **majbūb** al-ḥarb (E.S. #5.1.13), a quatrain meter.

maf‘ūlo mafā‘elon mafā‘īlo fa‘al

hazaj = *mafā‘īlon mafā‘īlon mafā‘īlon mafā‘īlon*

First foot (ṣadr): *mafā‘īlon + kharb* → *maf‘ūlo*

Second foot (ḥashv): *mafā‘īlon + qabz* → *mafā‘elon*

Third

foot (ḥashv): *mafā‘īlon + kaff* → *mafā‘īlo*

Fourth foot (ḥarb): *mafā‘īlon + jabb* → *fa‘al*

‘omr-ī-st be jāde-ye khaṭā mī-pūyī
yek rah be rah-e ṣavāb kū nīst to-yī / tūyī

عمریست به جاده خطا می‌پویی
یک ره به ره صواب کو نیست تویی

All your life, you wander and search
along a path of error;

²⁹ An interesting comparison may be made here with Ḥazīn’s description of the aesthetic worthlessness of Persian poetry in the Indian style – specifically that of Nāṣer ‘Alī Serhendī and Bīdel – whose only value, he says, is as a gag souvenir: “if the opportunity to return to Iran were to present itself, no souvenir would be better than [their works] – to lampoon at a gathering of friends” (see Chapter 2). It is not impossible that Ḥazīn had this *nokte* by Bīdel in mind, which caused him to invest his words with specific allusive mordancy.

If there be anyone who goes
along a righteous and true path –
it is not you.

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

Khaṭā-ye īn ʔowr šavāb bar ʔab ' -e 'Erāqeyān rowshan, va kheffat-e kayfīyat-e īn va 'z bar
jamī ' -e ahl-e samā ' mobarhan.

خطای این طور صواب بر طبع عراقیان روشن و خفت کیفیت این و عظم بر جمیع اهل سماع مبرهن.

It is clear that the Iraqi poets are disposed to consider errors of this type to be correct; however, for poets possessed of authoritative hearing, the insubstantiality of [this verse's] quality is proven beyond doubt.

[Couplet]

Meter: ˘ --- | ˘ --- | ˘ ---

(→)

Hazaj-e mosaddas-e sālem-e mahzūf al-żarb (E.S. #2.1.11)

Mafā 'ilon mafā 'ilon fo 'ulon

Hazaj = *Mafā 'ilon mafā 'ilon mafā 'ilon*

First foot (şadr), second and third feet (hashvayn) = sālem

Fourth foot (żarb): *mafā 'ilon* + *ħazf* = *fo 'ulon*

be sayr-ī dam mazan bīhūde az faqr
ke ħarf-e bātel-o-pūch ast bī-vaqr

به سیری دم مزن بیهوده از فقر
که حرف باطل و پوچ است بی وقر

Do not talk uselessly of poverty
along your spiritual journey;
Empty and vain speech
is a flimsy and ignoble burden.

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

Fārsī-gū rā dar jor 'at-e īn eżhār zabṭ-e nafas az eḫteyāṭāt żarūrī-st, tā sar-reshte-ye
vaqār az dast naravad, va ʔabī 'at monfa 'el-e bī-şarfe-gūyī nashavad.

فارسی‌گو را در جرأت این اظهار ضبط نفس از احتیاطات ضروریست تا سر رشته و قار از دست نرود و طبیعت
منفعل بی‌صرفه‌گویی نشود.

It is clear that in this display of boldness, Fārsī speakers must scrupulously bate their breath, lest the thread of grave authority slip from their hands and their natures decline from such pointless talk.³⁰

[Couplet]

Meter: ˘ --- | ˘ --- | ˘ --

(→)

Hazaj-e mosaddas-e sālem-e maḥzūf al-żarb (E.S. #2.1.11)

Maḥzūf al-żarb maḥzūf al-żarb maḥzūf al-żarb

Hazaj = *Maḥzūf al-żarb maḥzūf al-żarb maḥzūf al-żarb*

First foot (şadr) and second foot (hashv) = sālem

Third foot (żarb): *maḥzūf al-żarb* + *ḥazf* = *fo ʿūlon*

ḥarīf-e bad-qomārī-hā-ye to kī-st
cho dāv-e mā nadādī chāre-ī nīst

حریف بدقماری‌های تو کیست
چو داو ما ندادی چاره‌ای نیست

Who is your rival
in ill-tempered bad dice-throws?
You did not throw a perfect roll;
there's no way out!

[Prose, 1 paragraph]

Az tashnī ʿ-e īn towr bayān-hā ṭab ʿ-ye Fārseyān āzād ast, līken nāmūs-e qabīle-ye
Hendeyān yek-qalam bar-bād.

از تشنیه این طور بیان‌ها طبع فارسیان آزاد است لیکن ناموس قبیله هندیان یک قلم بر باد.

The [poetic] disposition of Iranian poets is free from such reprehensible discourse; however, [on this point] the honor of the Indian tribe of poets is utterly thrown to the wind in a single penstroke.

Bar īn taqdīr, sho ʿarā-ye Fārs rā dar akṣar-e maqām az ṭa ʿn-e ʿebārāt fāregh bāyad
andīshīd va sho ʿarā-ye Hend rā ham-chenān dar da ʿvā-ye zabān-e Fārsī mā ʿzūr bāyad
fahmīd;

بر این تقدیر شعرای فارس را در اکثر مقام از طعن عبارات فارغ باید اندیشید و شعرای هند را همچنان در دعوی زبان فارسی معذور باید فهمید؛

³⁰ Here, as in the brief comments on previous couplets, Bīdel picks up on a word or image in the couplet itself to drive the point home: “empty, vain speech” in the couplet repeated by Bīdel, with the added grammatical pun on *şarf* in *bī-şarfe-gūyī* (pointless talk), where *şarf* is an Arabic-grammatical term of art denoting “morphology”, or the art of “declining” words correctly. IN his comment on the previous couplet, “rah-e şavāb”, the “correct/righteous path” reappears as “tour” (way) and “şavāb” (correct/righteous).

On this supposition, the poets of Fārs [Iranians] must be deemed free from reproach-worthy discourse – most of the time; likewise, the poets of India must be understood as being excused from invited participation in the Persian language.

Ammā qāfeye-ye sokhan-pardāzī-ye sho 'arā-ye Hend bī-tatabbo 'e nazm-o-nasr-e Fārsī be 'ellat-e ehteyāt-e qabāhat-e ʔarafayn, tang-ī tamām dārad; va ma 'nī-tarāzī az īn ʔāyefe be molāḥaḥe-ye aqsām-e laghzeš az nash 'e-ye deqqat-e ʔab 'āsān sar bar namī-ārad.

اما قافیه سخن‌پردازی شعرای هند بی‌تتابع نظم و نثر فارسی به علت احتیاط قیاحت طرفین تنگی تمام دارد؛ و معنی‌طرزی از این طایفه به ملاحظه اقسام لغزش از نشئه دقت طبع آسان سر بر نمی‌آرد.

Moreover, the poetry³¹ composed by poets from India (who are desirous of avoiding imperfections on both sides,³² while at the same time not slavishly following [the style of non-Indian] Fārsī poetry) is completely constricted. This group's [Indian Persian poets'] poetic craft does not easily achieve greatness, because of the scrupulous care [Indian] poets must take to avoid various kinds of slip-ups.

III Quatrains³³ *Robā 'eyyāt*

Quatrain meter (for all subsequent quatrains except T4.Q3 and T4.Q8):

-- ˘ ˘ ˘ - ˘ - | ˘ - - ˘ ˘ -
(→)

Hazaj-e moṣamman-e akhrab al-ṣadr va **maqḥūz** al-ḥashv va **makfūf** al-ḥashv va **majbūb** al- ʔarb (E.S. #5.1.13), a quatrain meter.

maf'ūlo mafā'elon mafā'īlo fa'al

hazaj = *mafā'ilon mafā'ilon mafā'ilon mafā'ilon*

First foot (ṣadr): *mafā'ilon* + *kharb* → *maf'ūlo*

Second foot (ḥashv): *mafā'ilon* + *qabz* → *mafā'elon*

Third foot (ḥashv): *mafā'ilon* + *kaff* → *mafā'īlo*

Fourth foot (ʔarb): *mafā'ilon* + *jabb* → *fa'al*

³¹ The word for poetry, “*qāfeye*” (lit. “rhyme”, and metonymically denoting “poetry more generally), underscores Bīdel’s specific concern here with “correct” pronunciation especially as it bears on the rhyme-words (for missteps in rhyme, see the examples given in the earlier couplets).

³² “Both sides” is ambiguous: Bīdel could be referring to poetic errors commonly found either (1) on both their own (Indian) side and the non-Indian (Iranian and Iraqi) side; or (2) on both “other” sides (Iranian and Iraqi).

³³ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, II:231-639.

T4.Q1³⁴

Qāfeye: -ān

Radif: forūd āmade ast (has come down)

*she 'r-am ke be šad zabān forūd āmade ast
dar chandīn vaqt ān forūd āmade ast
Tūrāt nabūd tā begūyam ke hame
yek-bār ze āsmān forūd āmade ast*

شعرم که به صد زبان فرود آمده است
در چندین وقت آن فرود آن فرود آمده است
تورات نبود تا بگویم که همه
یکبار ز آسمان فرود آمده است

My poetry **has descended**
in a hundred tongues.
It **has** it **descended** in so many
individual moments of time!
My poetry is no Torah,
that I could say of it
That it **has descended**
all together, all at once.

T4.Q2³⁵

Qāfeye: -ar

Radif: -

*dar 'ālam-e e 'tebār-e taghyīr-ašar
har šām ke dīdīm o damānīd sahar
Hendū pas-e marg sūkhtan kard tjad
anjām zogāl ast tah-e khākestar*

در عالم اعتبار تغییر آثار
هر شام که دیدیم و دمانید سحر
هندو پس مرگ سوختن کرد ایجاد
انجام زغال است ته خاکستر

In this world of credible reflection,
marked by constant change,
As soon as we beheld an evening –
then came the break of dawn.

³⁴ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, II:319.

³⁵ *Ibid*, II:447.

Hindus, after burning death,
bring life into existence:
The end
is a glowing ember
under ashes.

T4.Q3³⁶

Meter: -- ˘ ˘ ˘ -- ˘ | ˘ -- ˘ ˘ ˘ --
 (→)

Hazaj-e moṣamman-e akhrab al-ṣadr va **makfūf** al-ḥashvayn va **majbūb** al- zarb (E.S. #3.3.13), a quatrain meter.

maf'ūlo mafā'īlo mafā'īlo fa'al

hazaj = *mafā'īlon mafā'īlon mafā'īlon mafā'īlon*

First foot (ṣadr): *mafā'īlon* + *kharb* → *maf'ūlo*

Second foot (ḥashv): *mafā'īlon* + *kaff* → *mafā'īlo*

Third foot (ḥashv): *mafā'īlon* + *kaff* → *mafā'īlo*

Fourth foot (zarb): *mafā'īlon* + *jabb* → *fa'al*

Qāfeye: -ūr

Radīf: -

dar nakhlestān-e e 'tebārāt-e sho 'ūr
khalq-ī-st tavahhom-ṣamar-e 'ajz o ghorūr
gol-chīnī-ye asrār-e yaqīn āsān nīst
rang-ī-st dar-īn bāgh ze khūn-e Manṣūr

در نخلستان اعتبارات شعور
خلقیست توهم ثمر عجز و غرور
گلچینی اسرار یقین آسان نیست
رنگیست در این باغ ز خون منصور

In this palm-tree plantation of credible reflections
rooted in sense-perception,
Creatures blossom with fruits of vain imaginings,
both lofty and low-born.
To gather flowers
of the mysteries
of certain knowledge
is no easy task:
This garden is tinged with color
from Manṣūr's blood.³⁷

³⁶ Ibid, II:447.

³⁷ Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (executed in 922), famous Sufi and poet condemned to die for revealing – probably too directly for orthodox comfort – the “mystery” of certain theological knowledge, when he publicly declared, “I am God” (*Anā l-ḥaqq*). For an introduction to Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj's thought and poetry, see al-Ḥusayn b. Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj, *Hallaj: Poems of a Sufi Martyr*, transl. Carl W. Ernst (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2018), 1-44.

T4.Q4³⁸

Qāfeye: -ar

Radif: -

*dar raghm-e barāhem(e) ast ke advār-e šovar
tā nash'e-ye āgahī-st tashvīsh-e bashar
paydā-st kas-ī ke ma 'refat hāṣel kard
fahmīd ke rafte bāz n-āyad dīgar*

در رخم بر ا همه است که ادوار صور
تا نشئه آگهیست تشویش بشر
پیداست کسی که معرفت حاصل کرد
فهمید که رفته باز ناید دیگر

*Pace the Brahmins, who believe
that cycles of illusionary images
Keep humanity ensnared
in restless chaos and confusion
until they reach the world of enlightenment –
Thus it is revealed:
all who attain true gnostic knowledge
Have understood
that those who pass away
will not come back again.*

T4.Q5³⁹

Qāfeye: -ū

Radif: nāzok-tar (more subtle)

*rang-ī gel karde-am ze bū nāzok-tar
naqsh-ī ze khaṭṭ-e meyān-e ū nāzok-tar
taṣvīr-e man andak-ī ta 'ammol dārad
ey kelk-e khayāl-e yek do mū nāzok-tar*

رنگی گل کرده‌ام ز بو نازک تر
نقشی ز خط میان او نازک تر
تصویر من اندکی تأمل دارد
ای کلک خیال یک دو مو نازک تر

I have mixed a color **more subtle**
than a flowering scent;

³⁸ Bīdel, *Kolleyyāt*, II:448.

³⁹ Ibid.

I have composed an image **more subtle**
 than a graceful waistline.
 My painting requires
 attentive slow reflection:
 O paintbrush of the imaginary!
 It is **more subtle**
 than single brush-hair.

T4.Q6⁴⁰

Qāfeye: -ān
 Radīf: -ash

*az markaz-e Hend tā khaṭṭ-e Moltān-ash
 az ḥadd-e ‘Erāq o Yazd tā Kāshān-ash
 bar har ma ‘mūre-ī ke kardīm gozar
 dīdīm avval savād-e gūrestān-ash*

از مرکز هند تا خط ملتانش
 از حد عراق و یزد تا کاشانش
 بر هر معموره‌ای که کردیم گذر
 دیدیم اول سواد گورستانش

From central India
 to the margins of Moltan,
 From the borders of Iraq and Yazd
 all the way to Kashan:
 In every inhabited region
 through which I’ve passed
 What first I saw was this:
 the lush black-soil suburbs
 of their graveyards.

T4.Q7⁴¹

Qāfeye: -ar
 Radīf: vā-kon (open, unbind [imp.])

*Bīdel gereh-e fesordan az sar vā-kon
 forṣat chaman ast dīde-ye tar vā-kon
 āyīne be-pardāz che ghaflat-naẓar-ī-st
 mehmān nā-kām mī-ravad dar vā-kon*

⁴⁰ Ibid, II:466.

⁴¹ II:539-540.

بیدل گره فسردن از سر واکن
 فرصت چمن است دیده تر واکن
 آینه بپرداز چه غفلت نظریست
 مهمان ناکام می‌رود در واکن

Bīdel: **unbind** once more
 your mind's cold knots of sadness.
 The opportune moment is a garden.
Open your tear-filled eyes!
 Polish the mirror; what use is there
 in negligently clouded vision!
 A disappointed guest is coming.
Open your doors.

T4.Q8⁴²

Meter: -- ˘ ˘ ˘ -- ˘ | ˘ -- ˘ ˘ ˘ --
 (→)

Hazaj-e mošamman-e akhrab al-šadr va **makfūf** al-ḥashvayn va **majbūb** al- zarb (E.S. #3.3.13), a quatrain meter.

maf'ūlo mafā'ilo mafā'ilo fa'al

hazaj = *mafā'ilon mafā'ilon mafā'ilon mafā'ilon*

First foot (šadr): *mafā'ilon* + *kharb* → *maf'ūlo*

Second foot (ḥashv): *mafā'ilon* + *kaff* → *mafā'ilo*

Third foot (ḥashv): *mafā'ilon* + *kaff* → *mafā'ilo*

Fourth foot (zarb): *mafā'ilon* + *jabb* → *fa'al*

Qāfeye: -āsh

Radif: -

ay showq(-e) to dar kasb-e fonūn garm-talāsh
chandān havas āmāde-ye har noskhe mabāsh
dar sayr-e robā '(ey)yāt-e Bīdel moft ast
*dard o 'ebrat o solūk o taḥqīq o ma'āsh*⁴³

ای شوق تو در کسب فنون گرم تلاش
 چندان هوس آماده هر نسخه مباحث
 در سیر رباعیات بیدل مفت است
 درد و عبرت و سلوک و تحقیق و معاش

⁴² Ibid, II:466.

⁴³ The first half of the fourth hemistich (“*Dard o 'ebrat o solūk*”) does not scan properly according to the meter. Attempts to re-parse and re-read this line do not yield any obvious solutions – an exercise that perhaps lends weight to the admonition in the second hemistich: “Do not dwell in endless scrutiny of every manuscript.”

How ardently and passionately you seek
to learn the sciences!
How many low desires there are!
Do not dwell in endless scrutiny
of every manuscript.
Take a turn instead
through Bīdel's quatrains –
where these are freely found:
Pain and counsel,
the Sufi Path and Research into True Reality,
a means of living.

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