

## Jalāl al-Dīn Davānī's Interpretation of Ḥāfiẓ

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One of the perennial debates about the poetry of Ḥāfiẓ has revolved around the interpretation of his poetry, whether it should properly be considered part of the secular tradition of Persian court poetry, or whether it should be interpreted in some kind of mystical or allegorical sense in relation to Sufism. This question has been discussed since the very dawn of European Orientalist scholarship, having formed a significant part of the labors of Sir William Jones and his successors. Without attempting to summarize the details of this extensive debate, we can take a recent example as an indication of how hotly this question can be argued; I have in mind the overview to the multi-authored article on Ḥāfiẓ in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, penned by the distinguished scholar and editor of the *Encyclopaedia*, Dr. Ehsan Yarshater. He writes:

It was only natural that a Sufistic interpretation should be applied to the poems of Hafez, ignoring in the process many indications to the contrary. Some commentators and even some Western translators of Hafez, notably Wilberforce Clarke, a translator of the *Divān* (London, 1974), satisfied themselves, to the point of utter absurdity, that every single word written by Hafez had a mystical meaning and no line of Hafez actually meant what it

said. The reading of Hafez as codified poetry implying an esoteric meaning for each line or word propounded the view that his ghazals can be read at two levels, one apparent, the other hidden—the latter representing the intended meaning. Deciphering Hafez’s underlying meaning grew into an esoteric art, not dissimilar to the explanations offered by the addicts of “conspiracy theories” (q.v.) in political affairs....

Then, acknowledging some ambiguity in the application of the term *‘arīf* (gnostic) to Ḥāfīz, Dr. Yarshater makes it quite clear that he rejects any significant association of the poet with institutional Sufism:

On the other hand, if by *‘āref* is meant a “mystic,” that is, a person who believes in the theory and practice of Sufism, is attached to a certain Order or the circle of a Sufi mentor (*ṣūfī*) or a *kānaqāh*, or allows the clarity of his mind to be clouded by the irrational and obfuscated by the woolly thinking of some Sufis and their belief in miraculous deeds ascribed to their saints, then the epithet is a misnomer.<sup>1</sup>

The *Encyclopaedia* is not of one mind on this matter; the section by Franklin Lewis on the image of the rogue (*rīnd*) in Ḥāfīz is considerably more nuanced in balancing the denunciation of religious hypocrisy with the symbolism of spiritual authenticity.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ehsan Yarshater, “Hafez. i. An Overview,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.

<sup>2</sup> Franklin Lewis, “Hafez. viii. Hafez and Rendi,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.

Be that as it may, in this article I will not attempt to decide whether Ḥāfiẓ is by intention a secular or mystical poet, since the question as posed may in fact be badly framed. Instead, I would like to examine the case of one of the very earliest formal commentators on the poetry of Ḥāfiẓ, Jalāl al-Dīn Davānī (d. 908/1502), the eminent philosopher and scholar of Shiraz.<sup>3</sup> Davānī is credited with half a dozen short untitled texts commenting on various verses by Ḥāfiẓ. Although these are generally undated, in one of these writings the author refers to the near completion of another of his works (the *Shawākil al-ḥūr*, dated 872/1468); thus we can conclude that Davānī is certainly one of the earliest, if not the very first, to write a separate commentary on Ḥāfiẓ. The fact that Davānī lived in Shiraz not long after the death of Ḥāfiẓ gives his interpretations a special significance for the likely reader reception of his poetry by at least some contemporary audiences.<sup>4</sup> Three of these commentaries by Davānī have been collected together in a convenient edition by Ḥusayn Mu'allim, entitled *Naqd-i niyāzī*, and as

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<sup>3</sup> A useful overview of the metaphysical views of Davani was provided in an early article by Mehmed Ali Ayni, "Note sur l'idéalisme de Djelaleddin Davani," *Revue Neo-scholastique de Philosophie*, new series, 8 (1931), pp. 236-240.

<sup>4</sup> Reza Pourjavady, "Kitāb-shināsi-i āthār-i Jalāl al-Dīn Davānī," *Ma'ārif* 15/1-2 (1377/1998), pp. 81-139; see especially items numbered 8-14, pp. 90-94, and the author's remarks on p. 91. One of these commentaries (Pourjavady, no. 8) has also been discussed by Terry Graham, "Hafiz and His Master," *Sufi* 42 (Summer 1999), pp. 35-40.

representative samples, these will constitute the basis for the following observations.<sup>5</sup>

The first of Davānī's commentaries on Ḥāfiẓ focuses on the well-known verse *dūsh dīdam ki malāyik dar-i maykhāna zadand / gil-i Ādam bi-sirishtand u bi-paymānah zadand*, "Last night I saw the angels knocking on the tavern door; / they mixed the clay of Adam and threw it as a cup." In the opening pages, he describes his aim as follows:

The purpose of this introduction is that certain of the sincere lovers, in the times of conversation and the hours of closeness, asked about the commentary on a verse by 'the tongue of the moment,' Master Shams al-Millat wal-Dīn Muḥammad Ḥāfiẓ.... After fulfilling that request, two or three words were speedily written down to the taste of the unitarians and the path of the Sufis. On completion, that document was lost. Once more they began to ask, and with the help of time, it was formed in our way with correct composition and written with a verified description. Its basis was established in the path of the unitarians, the Sufis, and the sages, since to each of these groups on this subject there is a perspective and a reflection, and in accordance with the grasp of every soul there is a condition of recollection. Beware not to get lost in "every tribe knew its drinking place (*mashrab*)" (Q 2:60). Every person in this knowledge is associated with a path. One may have achieved eternal happiness, while another is stuck at the beginning of the alphabet. One person takes pleasure in ecstasy and listening to music, while another finds peace in dancing. Most sought textual confirmation [for their path] from the verses of the poet referred to, so that their objectives

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<sup>5</sup> Jalāl al-Dīn Davānī Kāzarūnī, *Naqd-i niyāzī, dar sharḥ-i do bayt u yik ghazal az Khwājah Ḥāfiẓ*, ed. Ḥusayn Mu'allim (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1373/1995).

would also become illuminated [by his poetry], and the sorrowful soul would find fresh fragrances from the breeze of that garden.<sup>6</sup>

It is important to underline the extent to which multiple interpretations of the verse of Ḥāfiẓ are assumed to be normal. Davānī's procedure in this particular text is, on the surface at least, systematic. He undertakes to explore the verse from three different perspectives: first, the unitarians; second, the Sufis; and third, the Peripatetic and Illuminationist sages (*ḥukamā*). Davānī does not precisely indicate who these groups are or how they differ from one another – there is certainly at this time a fair amount of overlap between the concerns of philosophers and Sufis, for example. His category of unitarians is similar to the use of that term by 'Azīz al-Dīn Nasafī, to describe a kind of philosophical mystic.<sup>7</sup> In any case, for Davānī it seems to be an important methodological principle to acknowledge these different perspectives, which he likens to the different “drinking places” found by each of the twelve Israelite tribes in the Qur'ānic text, playing upon the alternate meaning of this word (*mashrab*) as a school or teaching. It is also noteworthy that Davānī applies an oracular epithet to Ḥāfiẓ, calling him “the tongue of the moment” (*lisān al-waqt*). His approach is not literary

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<sup>6</sup> *Naqd*, p. 44.

<sup>7</sup> See the comments on the *ahl-e waḥdat* (“monists”) in Herman Landolt, “Nasafī, 'Azīz b. Moḥammad,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica* <[http://www.iranica.com/newsite/articles/unicode/sup/Nasafi\\_Aziz.html](http://www.iranica.com/newsite/articles/unicode/sup/Nasafi_Aziz.html)>.

in the ordinary sense, but exegetical, even as it acknowledges that all readers are likely to find their own perspectives confirmed by the poetry of Ḥāfiẓ.

The discussion of the unitarians is the longest, and it is divided into six separate sections or “observations” (entitled *mashhad*), each devoted to the interpretation of a particular symbol or aspect of the verse: 1) last night; 2) the speaker of the verse; 3) the angels; 4) the tavern; 5) the clay of Adam; 6) the meaning of throwing the clay of Adam in the form of a cup. Davānī defends this focus on individual images with the following justification:

The subtle *qalandars* and realized great ones are of the view that, in order that the brides of meaning should remain hidden from the unworthy and should not be pawed by the worldly, the realities of gnosis have been displayed in the cloak of similitudes, and spiritual meanings in the forms of perceptible things. They have taken their inspiration from this verse: “These are the similitudes that We coin for the people, and none understands except the wise” (Q 29:43). Verse: “When you hear the name spoken, run towards the thing that is named; / otherwise the speech of ecstasies remains a riddle.” Necessarily, whenever the people of the heart tell a secret, they reveal their aims by the method of metonymy (*kināyat*), so that the people of interpretation (*ta’wīl*) may understand the goals of those melodies through experiential proofs.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *Naqd*, pp. 44-45.

So Davānī's method depends upon reading individual words and coded symbols that metaphorically represent unstated realities.<sup>9</sup> This is a robust hermeneutic that he applies without hesitation, while still locating the exercise aesthetically in the realm of poetry framed in performance with musical melody (*tarāna*).

When Davānī implements his interpretation of the symbols employed by Ḥāfiẓ, he does so in this section with a highly technical philosophical vocabulary that is presumed to furnish a categorical explanation. It is, moreover, framed in a highly ornate style drawing on arcane vocabulary and expressed with the artifices of rhyming prose. There are frequent citations of anonymous lines of Persian poetry (which I will skip for reasons of brevity), as well as Arabic verses from the Qur'ān, and the occasional deployment of hadith. This may be seen in his exploration of the meaning of "last night" according to the unitarians:

Know that existence has a substance and a determination. From the perspective of substance, this demands that in a purely absolute fashion it should be freed from every limitation and denuded of all relationships. Pure being, which does not set foot in manifestation, and transcendence, which is no companion to relationship, they call the absolutely hidden presence and the reality in truth.... Necessarily, from this degree, by a path that is absolutely required and by necessary volition, the nightingales of that garden [i.e., the unitarians] express the absolute substance with the phrase "clear day."... Likewise, the determination of existence, which is the source of the emanation of providence, from the perspective of the understanding of those

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<sup>9</sup> See Ch. Pellat, "Kināya," EI<sup>2</sup>, vol. 5, pp. 116-18

who are near perceptible things, is expressed by the phrase “dark day,” because the degrees of determination have hidden the beauty of reality. The people of spiritual meaning have called that the veil of the two worlds. And the tress is the allusion, and the lock of hair and the mole are the expression, for the same thing.... Thus according to those who are perfumed by this fresh breeze, the metonyms for the divine reality and the degree of determination are morning and night.... The first they call the hidden divine identity, and the second they say is the degree of unity; this is an example of the melody of the unitarians.

Then, observing that, in reality, there is no night and day for God, Davānī reverses the symbolism.

Yes, but the times of pre-eternity and post-eternity are joined in the point of now, even if the intellect says that that situation is impossible. In short, the Muḥammadan faqirs call the period of the extension of reality “perpetual time” (*waqt-i sarmadī*) and by way of deceiving the unworthy and clouding the sight of those lost in the desert of ignorance, they call that “last night.”... And the period of the extension of determination and existence, which requires manifestation and disclosure, in their parlance is called duration (*dahr*). By metonymy, they call that “today.”<sup>10</sup>

The method employed in this interpretation is notable both for its assumption of the Neoplatonic-Avicennan cosmology and metaphysics typical of Davānī’s age, and for the characteristic equivalency that he posits between philosophical concepts and poetic images. A notable expression of this way of reading symbols

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<sup>10</sup> *Naqd*, pp. 45-47.

in Persian literature from a Sufi perspective was the *Gulshan-i rāz* of Maḥmūd Shabistarī (d. after 740/1340), a work doubtless known to Ḥāfiẓ as well as Davānī.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the concept of an esoteric methodology is deeply rooted in Davānī's approach to symbolism both as an obstacle for the unworthy and a key for the initiate.

Skipping over the remainder of the section on the unitarians (which is the longest section in his treatise), we can contrast Davānī's treatment of the way that the Sufis understand the symbolism of "last night."

Know that the chivalrous Sufi youths have an eternity from annihilation in God, and a progression from the ascensions of sanctity. From the contents of this verse, they understand a different secret, by reason of the fact that they are the world-revealing cup.... First, one should know what "last night" is in their parlance, and why the tress and mole are its likeness, since they are an expression for the grain and the trap. Yes, realizing that requires an introduction.<sup>12</sup>

Here too, Davānī provides a cosmology, but this time it is much more psychological and dramatic, as Sufi dervishes enact the cosmic unfoldment from divine latency to phenomenal reality in their response to the call of divine love. Sufi authorities such as 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, Ḥallāj, Ibn Khaffī, and Rūzbihān are

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<sup>11</sup> Hāfez de Chiraz, *Le Divān*, trans. Charles-Henri de Fouchécour (Paris : Verdier, 2006), pp. 19-20, 113-4, 160.

<sup>12</sup> *Naqd*, p. 64.

invoked and quoted. On the symbolism of “last night,” Davānī explains, “altogether, the group of Sufis expresses the period of this travel from the realm of nonexistence [to] essential and compulsory possibility, with the help of spiritual love and the overpowering of spiritual longing, as ‘last night.’ In that situation, sobriety was produced from intoxication and attainment [from] the root of existence.”<sup>13</sup> Summarizing the sense of the first half of the verse, he writes, “In the period of the travel of existing things, I turned around the folds and orbits, and I saw the degrees of each attainment. In their midst, however much the angels were praising the sea of divine isolation, and had no impurity within the veil of chastity, they still did not have the adornment of being wounded by love.”<sup>14</sup> In conclusion, he observes, “this was a sample of commentary on the verse by the experience of the Sufis, who annihilate multiplicity in unity, and at the time of intoxication speak in the manner of the people of sobriety.”<sup>15</sup> So while there is some parallel between the views of the unitarians and the Sufis on this verse, insofar as both groups see it as symbolizing the cosmogonic process of God’s creation of the world, they nevertheless express it in very different terms.

Davānī begins the section on the sages by commenting sarcastically that, while the philosophical sage is close to the Sufi, his sight has been darkened by

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<sup>13</sup> *Naqd*, p. 67.

<sup>14</sup> *Naqd*, p. 68.

<sup>15</sup> *Naqd*, p. 71.

the overturning of intellect mixed with imagination. Intellect and logic, as Rūmī points out, are poor supports. Davānī continues, “Altogether, ‘last night’ in the technical language of the philosophical sages is the time of the release of the rational soul from the control of the body by contemplation of its superior origins, for the intellect, because of being veiled with the coverings of the body, has no portion either of the wine or of the cask, and it is excluded by the proximity of nature from witnessing the sources of emanation.”<sup>16</sup> Davānī then goes into an explanation of the union of the rational soul with the Active Intellect according to the theories of the Illuminationist and Peripatetic schools of philosophy. He explains that Ḥāfiẓ wishes to portray the ascending soul as saying something like the following:

With the eye of realization I gazed upon the forms of existence from above and below, I saw the separate intellects, which transcend acceptance and rejection, who by contemplating their own perfection in the fields of possibility were knocking on the door of the tavern of universal creation and their own luminous perfection. This is an expression for the comprehensive Adamic presence.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Naqd*, p. 72.

<sup>17</sup> *Naqd*, p. 74.

While the tone of this explanation has a mocking character, it is quite technical and thoroughly immersed in one of the chief academic discourses of premodern Islamic thought.

Finally, it may come as no surprise that some of the companions of Davānī had requested that he provide a very brief commentary on this verse; evidently some of them had simply gotten lost in the intricate gyrations of the preceding three sections. Here is how he responded:

Know that the gist of the verse is that when burning love – may it be ever fortunate and victorious – with the aid of the momentary inspiration (*waqt*) went forth in the form of its own display and became the mirror of the pure condition of every beauty in the clear moment during that journey of a victorious king, it brought the degrees of its own perfection into view in the forms that are present. It witnessed its own essential and potential spiritual faculties, which went in search of the tavern and the wine-selling master with shouts and cries. If they were joined in presence with some of the active degrees which they call "immutable entities" (*a'yān-i thābita*) and were free from a general measure of spiritual suffering, yet since their power of longing was still in action, they searched for the most perfect of the lights of manifestation and the limit of adornment. Then with complete effort they knocked on the door the tavern of love, for they had the remainder of creation on their heads. If they had a crown of stability on the head of ambition and sought that universal existence, these degrees have a limit: it is the master of the merciful breath (*naḥās-i raḥmānī*), Isrāfīl<sup>18</sup> and his trumpet. Necessarily from his mixed clay, which the dervishes say is the elemental human power

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<sup>18</sup> In the Islamic tradition, Isrāfīl figures as an angel of death, and in particular, the angel who blows the trumpet on the Day of Resurrection.

and the upright body, they expressed it as a cup, and they trained him to the limits of all ways. Thus here they call the “immutable entities” persons. There, the first love sees itself as the last, and it finds its own beauty to be exceedingly glorious in the completeness of its perfection. This is on the principle that for anything to see itself in itself is like seeing itself in a mirror, but the latter form of seeing is superior and more perfect; therefore the first seeing [gazing at oneself] is [only] a likeness, and the second seeing [in a mirror] is [true] reflections of beauty.<sup>19</sup>

Whether Davānī’s associates found any additional clarity in this concluding passage, with its dense language drawing upon the vocabulary of Ibn ‘Arabī, can best be imagined.

The second treatise on Ḥāfiẓ by Davānī has a much more literary bent than the first, focusing as it does upon an entire poem, the *ghazal* beginning *dar hama dayr-i mughān nīst chū man shaydā’ī*. “In all this temple of the Magi no one is as wild as me.” The ostensibly literary character of this commentary is further enhanced by the quotation of numerous other verses by Ḥāfiẓ, cited to substantiate a consistent point of view ascribed to the author. Nevertheless,

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<sup>19</sup> *Naqd*, p. 76. The last sentence paraphrases the famous opening lines of the first chapter of Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*: “The Reality wanted to see the essence of His Most Beautiful Names or, to put it in another way, to see His own Essence, in an all-inclusive object encompassing the whole [divine] Command, which, qualified by existence, would reveal to Him His own mystery. For the seeing of a thing, itself by itself, is not the same as it seeing itself in another, as it were in a mirror; for it appears to itself in a form that is invested by the location of the vision by that which would only appear to it given the existence of the location and its [the location’s] self-disclosure to it” (Ibn al-‘Arabī, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, trans. R. W. J. Austin [Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1980], p. 50).

Davānī maintains here a consistent hermeneutic that assumes a deep structure of concealing and revealing the divine mysteries as the operative principle behind all serious literature. Once again, he confers oracular titles upon Ḥāfiẓ, calling him this time “the tongue of the moment and the interpreter of time” (*lisān al-waqt, tarjumān al-zamān*). As before, Davānī is responding to the importunities of his friends who sought a solution to the mysteries of Ḥāfiẓ, and he apologizes for the delay in hopes that his work will be appreciated by connoisseurs. He begins the treatise with an introduction<sup>20</sup> in which he lays out his strategy of interpretation, drawing explicitly on images and figures associated with martyrdom for having revealed the secret, such as Ḥallāj and ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī.

The jealousy of love’s power demands that the subtle secrets of its effects should be hidden in the privacy of inner sanctums and the retreats of the hidden essence. The loveliness of that holy beauty should not have its veil polluted by the gaze of impure worldlings, who are by no means cleansed of the abandonment of poverty and the impurities of connections to existing things.

(Arabic verse): We, the men of the tribe, say the charms of Layla  
should be seen when the stars arise, / for how should Layla be seen  
with an eye that sees others and is not cleansed with tears?

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<sup>20</sup> *Naqd*, pp. 172-175.

(Persian verse): I performed ablutions with tears, as the men of the path say; / first be pure yourself, and then cast your eyes on the pure one. [Ḥāfiz]<sup>21</sup>

It is for this reason that the illustrious divine way (*sunnat*) has been ordered in this fashion, the fundamentals of the explanation of which are based upon the categorical principles of the sign that “you shall not find any change in the way (*sunnah*) of God” (Qur’ān 33:62). This is because some of the people of realities are hidden from the eyes of ignorant formalists by the clothing of conventional forms, and they lose themselves in the midst of the generality of people by sharing their remaining customs. This is the path of the people of soundness.

(Persian verse): I am a rogue, and the people call me a Sufi; / see this nice name that I have discovered!

And some, having fled from the affairs of the ignorant mob to the cave of the abiding darkness of nonexistence, have wagered the cash of the two worlds in the dice house of isolation and asceticism with a single throw, and have cast themselves beyond the sight of men, on account of being uprooted from the forms of customary conventions. This is the style of the audacious ones of the corner of blame.

(Persian verse): My heart’s upset with the monastery and the stained cloak. /Where is the temple of the Magi, and where’s the pure wine?  
[Ḥāfiz]<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> This verse can be found in *Dīwān-i Ḥāfiz*, ed. Parvīz Nātil Khānlārī (Tehran: Khwārazmī 1362 A.Hsh./1983), ghazal 258, v. 7.

<sup>22</sup> *Dīwān-i Ḥāfiz*, ed. Khānlārī, ghazal 2, v. 3.

Even though in the path there may be a group between these two positions, the aim of both factions is the concealment of realities, for in the law of love, for the intoxicated lover revealing secrets is a crime. Even though gradually the wine-bearer of ecstasy gives them another swallow of the wine of realities in the goblet of time, and every moment from the arrival of the cups of satisfaction with the manifestations of majesty and glory they have another increase, continually the voice of divine power gives the cry that:

(Persian verse): It is the Sultan's feast, so don't get drunk; / have a cup of wine, and then shut up!

And if occasionally the hopeless lover gives off some smoke from the overwhelming flames of the fires of love, and like an incense-burner releases sighs from within, he keeps them concealed and imprisoned at the bottom of his skirt of infamy, for [as the hadith states] "My friends are underneath my domes; no one knows them except me." And if from the overwhelming force of intoxication he utters a word of the secrets of love, they take him to the gallows of blame.

(Arabic verse): By the secret, if they are effaced, their blood is shed; / thus it is that the blood of lovers may be shed. [ʿAyn al-Quḍāt]

(Persian verse): For the helpless one who spills the secret of love, / tell him to scratch his face with the fingers of blame.

That friend by whom the gallows was ennobled – / his crime was this: he made the secrets public. [Ḥāfiẓ]<sup>23</sup>

It is for this reason that if any of the children of the path of longing has an appropriately delicate relationship with this group from his original nature, he may be worthy of the inheritance of those great ones by reason of that

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<sup>23</sup> *Dīwān-i Ḥāfiẓ*, ed. Khānlārī, ghazal 136, v. 6.

spiritual proximity, by reason of “We joined to them their seed” (Qur’ān 52:21). Or they may fall under the suspicion of belonging to the group of the mob who are “like beasts” (Qur’ān 7:179). This is because the lustful ones of delicate temperament, whose intended prayer direction is the acceptance of the masses, are rebuffed by those ferocious attacks from concentrating on the sacred target of love.

(Persian verse): Sufi, pass us by in safety, for this red wine / steals heart  
and religion from you in a manner that – don’t ask!<sup>24</sup> [Ḥāfīz]  
My friends, haul back your reins from the tavern road; / because Ḥāfīz  
traveled by this path, and now he’s poor.<sup>25</sup>

And despite the fact that deceptive and fickle love demands the concealing of secrets from the perspective of God’s essential power, from the perspective of the perfection of the beloved it demands manifestation and revealing. Every moment in a visual and visionary location she is displayed in a different way to the heart and eye of the astonished lover. With glances mixed with elegance and looks most exciting, she places the words describing her own beauty on the tongue of that silent one, and then with the tongue of the assault of divine wrath, she begins to reproach and interrogate that unfortunate wretch. It is here that the cry arises from the lovers’ disposition:

(Persian verse): She showed her face, and herself described her face; /  
since things are so, why does it hurt my heart?

Throughout this introduction, Davānī assumes that these two perspectives – the concealment of the secret of love, and its revelation – frame the character of

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<sup>24</sup> *Dīwān-i Ḥāfīz*, ed. Khānlārī, ghazal 266, v. 4 (reading *zāhid* instead of *ṣūfī*).

<sup>25</sup> *Dīwān-i Ḥāfīz*, ed. Khānlārī, ghazal 163, v. 8.

poetry around the interaction of the lover and the beloved. He adduces additional proof from the hadith of the Prophet, particularly the well-known saying “I was a hidden treasure, and I longed to be known,” which makes the manifestation of the universe the result of the divine self-disclosure.

Davānī then inserts another digression which he calls a reminder (*tadhkira*), devoted to the concept of love as that which joins together extremes and unites opposites. Love achieves these goals both by concealing secrets and by giving indications that remove veils. He explains these ambiguities as usual with illustrative verses:

(Persian verse): His eyebrow says no, but his eyes say yes!

(Persian verse): That longing is worth a hundred souls when the lover / says  
“I don’t want to,” but wants to with a hundred souls.

Davānī goes on, in a passage dense with allusions to Sufi doctrines, to describe how this cosmic role of love encompasses the unfolding emanation of the different levels of existence, and their perfection which is attained through the Seal of the Prophets, that is, Muḥammad. This passage links the cosmic role of the Prophet Muḥammad with his experience of heavenly ascension described in the Qur’ān (53:9) as approaching “two bows’ lengths or nearer” to the divine

presence. Davānī qualifies the two arcs (*qaws*) of the “bows’ lengths” as comprising the prophetic role in cosmic manifestation (*zuhūr*) and the saintly degree of consciousness (*shu‘ūr*). This permits him to connect the notion of gradual manifestation and unveiling with “the Seal of the Saints,” the esoteric figure whose advent had been proclaimed by al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī and whose role was claimed by Ibn ‘Arabī. Davānī is fully aware of the messianic implications of this linkage, citing in support the well-known prophetic hadith on the coming of one who shall “fill the earth with justice and equity as it is now filled with oppression and injustice.” The approach of the apocalypse means that overflowing revelation is available everywhere, including in poetry.

Since the time of the manifestation of that holy one draws near, the annunciation of those lights increase daily in display and manifestation, and the proofs of the truth of this claim are established on the page of time’s conditions, if anyone with an insightful glance looks closely. For the grace of flowing geniuses and the close capacity of most of the children of the time is advanced in relation to their fathers, and their ambitions likewise by the same relation, again by the benefits of the approaching time of the revered inheritor and master of time [i.e., the expected messiah], as the saying goes (Arabic verse): “the Earth has a portion of the cup of generosity.” The secrets of gnosis are pronounced on every tongue, and the shout is raised of the original aim of reality, in accordance with the voices of differing capabilities.

The secret of God, which the gnostic traveler tells to no one –/ I am amazed where the wine sellers heard it from.<sup>26</sup> [Hāfiz]

And since the perfection of consciousness [*ish'ār*, a pun on *ash'ār*, “verses”] is from the special characteristics of the creation of the Seal [of the Saints], those who resort to the deserts of annihilation in explanation of the realities of joy, having taken the path of poetic similitudes, express sublime intentions with the customary images of rogues with shameless cheeks.<sup>27</sup>

To demonstrate his point that poetry is the expression of mystical truths, Davānī then quotes in support two verses from the famous wine ode (*al-Khamriyya*) of the master of Arabic mystical poetry, Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 1235). As with his other quotations, Davānī does not bother to provide the author’s name, assuming that the reader will be familiar with it.

At this point Davānī shifts into a quick allegorical exposition of the frequently appearing images of non-Muslim religious groups (“infidels”) that appear so often in Persian poetry.<sup>28</sup>

The wayfarer at the beginning of the path, who is concerned with the perfection of the soul, has both himself and God in view. From this

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<sup>26</sup> *Dīwān-i Hāfiz*, ed. Khānlarī, ghazal 238, v. 8.

<sup>27</sup> *Naqd*, p. 178.

<sup>28</sup> On which, see Alessandro Bausani, *Storia della letteratura persiana* (Milano: Nuova Accademia, 1960), pp. 247, 263-9; Leonard Lewisohn, “Sufi Symbolism and the Persian Hermeneutic Tradition: Reconstructing the Pagoda of Attar’s Esoteric Poetics,” in *Attār and the Persian Sufi Tradition: The Art of Spiritual Flight*, eds. Leonard Lewisohn and Christopher Shackle (London: I.B. Tauris & the Institute for Ismaili Studies 2007), pp. 255-308.

perspective, whoever wants to bring himself to God in this way has a relationship with the Magi (*majūs*), who believe in light and darkness. Both himself and the light of God are his contemplation, and by the very same expression, they call the seeker a Zoroastrian (*gabr*), as is the case in the poetry of Mawlana Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī. Like this expression, sometimes they call him a Christian, since he affirms the reality of himself, God, and his own seeking and concentration, just as the Christians believe in the Trinity. And they call the station of love the tavern, considering that in this degree the constraint of dividing into self and the other is removed from the character of the gnostic...<sup>29</sup>

Having established this principle of poetic symbolism, Davānī goes on to comment on the image of the cup that represents the heart, adding several other Persian verses by Ḥāfiẓ in support, and referring explicitly to the poetry of Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Irāqī as an example of the same symbolic principle. This remark concludes the “reminder” passage, after which the commentary proper can begin.

It is apparent that this second treatise by Davānī is based on a more thoroughgoing hermeneutical framework than the first treatise, in which he had simply outlined the possibilities of three complementary perspectives on a particular verse by Ḥāfiẓ. To be sure, the first treatise is also firm in insisting on the principle of metonymy, in which a term used in a poem is considered to be a symbol for an underlying spiritual reality. The metaphysical assumptions

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<sup>29</sup> *Naqd*, p. 179.

underlying the second text are more technical and indeed esoteric, relying upon long traditions of philosophical and mystical reflection and inter-textual reference. It is noteworthy that Davānī here asserts that poetry must be read, not only in terms of the dialectic of secrecy and disclosure, but also in relation to mystical teachings about the consciousness of the Prophet Muḥammad, the esoteric figure of the Seal of the Saints, and the universal impact of the coming advent of the expected messiah. This is of course the very same hermeneutic that Davānī would bring to bear on any other text, including the Qur’ān.

Enough has been said so far to make it clear how Davānī approaches the poetry of Ḥāfiẓ, and for reasons of space I will not attempt to go through his exposition of the details of the lyric that is explored in the second treatise, fascinating though these interpretations are. Nor will I linger on the third treatise in the anthology of Davānī’s writings on Ḥāfiẓ, which is extremely short and basically uses a single verse as a springboard for arguing the doctrine of predestination.<sup>30</sup> Instead, I would like to turn briefly to an issue of historical or narrative interpretation that is also offered by Davānī, who clearly assumes that the verses of Ḥāfiẓ were written “in the form of describing his own state (*bi-ṣūrat-i vaṣf al-ḥāl-i khwud*).”

While commenting on a variation of the saying attributed to Jesus, that one should not present wisdom before the unworthy, Davānī recalls the story that he

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<sup>30</sup> *Naqd*, pp. 266-274.

heard from a dervish who maintained that Ḥāfiẓ was a disciple of a Sufi master. The name of the master is given as Shaykh Maḥmūd ‘Aṭṭār, who is described as an outstanding Sufi of his time. The same source maintained that, during a visit to the shrine of Shaykh Ibn Khafīf in Shiraz, he encountered a master there who was deeply immersed in the teachings of Shaykh Rūzbihān Baqlī. When the narrator described Shaykh Maḥmūd ‘Aṭṭār, his interlocutor replied that that was his own master. Davānī concludes that this is the justification for commentators to explain the poetry of Ḥāfiẓ in terms of his spiritual states. Most modern scholars have focused on this account as a piece of historical evidence to be considered in deciding upon the facticity of Ḥāfiẓ’s connection to Sufism, or else its refutation.<sup>31</sup> Frequent attempts have been made to link the poetry of Ḥāfiẓ with the Sufi teachings of Rūzbihān.<sup>32</sup>

Yet it is interesting to see the accompanying hermeneutical argument that Davānī adds alongside this ostensibly historical account:

Secondly, there is that which most of the literati say about some of the states of the author [Ḥāfiẓ], which are on the lips of the people. ‘And God has insight into the conditions of his servants.’ They have understood his words in the same external meanings that no intellectual would consider it legitimate to

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<sup>31</sup> Akbar Sobūt, “Pīr-i Gol-rang,” *Encyclopedia of the World of Islam*, 5:381, accessed online at <<http://www.encyclopaediaislamica.com/>>, March 24, 2007.

<sup>32</sup> For a recent attempt to link Hafiz to Ruzbihan, see the useful article by ‘Alī Shaṛīat Kāshānī, “La prééternité et la pérennité de l’amour et de la beauté en littérature mystique persane de Rūzbehān à Ḥāfeẓ,” *Luqmān* 17/2 (2001), pp. 25-54.

restrict to those suppositions. They have placed the finger of astonishment on the teeth of thought from the interpretation of [his verses] by the likes of these spiritual realities. They are completely ignorant of the contents of ‘Don’t look at who speaks, look at what is spoken,’ and the meaning of ‘Know the man by the truth, not the truth by the man.’<sup>33</sup> And if it is assumed that the intelligent person has in no way even a glimmering of truth in relation to this meaning, the derivation of these meanings from him is the ultimate manifestation and distinction, and the source of insight. The possessor of a spiritual state has spiritual states as a result of that. If someone charges himself, he knows without a hint of doubt or imagination that from [the vendor’s cry of] ‘Country thyme!’ (*sa‘tar barrī*) he hears, ‘Open up and see my piety’ (*as‘a tara birrī*).<sup>34</sup> For that reason, he is overwhelmed with ecstasy, by the latter path, for which parallel meanings may be discovered for the likes of these sayings.<sup>35</sup>

While the argument is a trifle convoluted, I take this to mean that, first of all, ordinary people have understood the verses of Ḥāfiẓ in the most external and literal sense. Yet if someone knows nothing of the spiritual meanings of such

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<sup>33</sup> Two sayings commonly attributed to ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.

<sup>34</sup> For this celebrated example of the Sufi doctrine of listening (*samā*), which befell Abū Ḥulmān in Baghdad, see Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj al-Ṭūsī, *Kitāb al-luma’ fi’l-taṣawwuf*, ed. R. A. Nicholson, E. J. W. Gibb Memorial series, 22 (London: Luzac & Company Ltd., 1914; reprint edition, 1963), p. 289, line 9; Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn* (4 vols., Cairo: Dār al-Shu‘ab, n.d.), Book 18.3, p. 1145 (in this edition, the second expression erroneously repeats the first); Duncan Black MacDonald, “Emotional Religion in Islam as affected by Music and Singing, being a translation of the *Ihya’ ‘Ulum ad-Din* of al-Ghazzali with Analysis, Annotation, and Appendices,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (1901), pp. 195-252, citing p. 238. Ghazālī states the underlying principle as follows: “meanings that predominate in the heart precede in the understanding, despite the words.” Further on this theme see Leonard Lewisohn, “The Sacred Music of Islam: *Samā’* in the Persian Sufi Tradition,” *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 6 (1997), pp. 1-33, esp. pp. 18-19.

<sup>35</sup> *Naqd*, p. 193.

expressions, and yet nevertheless discovers them through accidental similarity, this is in reality a genuine source of insight and indeed ecstasy. There are numerous examples of such “accidental” discoveries in Sufi lore. Yet the implication is that the legitimacy of the mystical interpretation of Ḥāfiẓ does not in fact rest upon the argument from authority, which asserts the historical connection of Ḥāfiẓ with the Sufi tradition through actual initiation. It rather rests upon the adventitious and even serendipitous discovery of inner meanings, which by their very nature point to the insight of the listener rather than being dependent upon the intention of the writer.

I have suggested elsewhere that Sufi poetry is not defined by the author so much as by the audience.<sup>36</sup> For a reader such as Davānī, the poetry of Ḥāfiẓ exists on a continuum that ranges from Sufis like Ḥallāj and ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt to the philosopher Ibn Sīnā<sup>37</sup> and the profane Abbasid court poet Abu Nuwās.<sup>38</sup> For him, it was just as natural and inevitable to employ a Sufi hermeneutic for the poetry of Ḥāfiẓ as it was for Sa‘īd al-Dīn Farghānī (d. 1301), Ṣadr al-Dīn Qunawī (d. 1351), or ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī to write detailed mystical commentaries on the Arabic poems of Ibn al-Farid.<sup>39</sup> Davānī is clearly an advocate of the

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<sup>36</sup> Carl W. Ernst, *Guide to Sufism* (Boston: Shambhala Publications 1997), chapter 6.

<sup>37</sup> *Naqd*, pp. 216-7.

<sup>38</sup> *Naqd*, p. 81.

<sup>39</sup> Dāwūd ibn Maḥmūd Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ Ṭā’iyyat Ibn al-Fāriḍ al-kubrā*, ed. Aḥmad ibn Fāriḍ ibn Aḥmad Mazīdī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2004); *Ṭā’iyyah-i ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī*:

systematic interpretation of poetry by a metaphysical system of correspondences based on writers such as Ibn 'Arabī and Suhrawardī, and for this he has been criticized for not respecting the clear sense of the text of Ḥāfiẓ.<sup>40</sup> Whether or not Ḥāfiẓ would have appreciated or approved the philosophical and mystical interpretations which have been brought to his verses, the testimony of Davānī makes it abundantly clear that such interpretations have been present among the readers of Ḥāfiẓ from a very early date.

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*tarjumah-i Ṭā'īyyah-i Ibn Fāriḍ, bi-inḍimām-i sharḥ-i Maḥmūd Qayṣārī bar Ṭā'īyyah-i Ibn Fāriḍ* (Tehran: Nuqtah, 1997); Sa'īd al-Dīn ibn Aḥmad Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-ḍararī: sharḥ-i Ṭā'īyyah-i Ibn Fāriḍ*, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī ([Mashhad: s.n.], 1978); Emile Dermenghem, trans., *L'éloge du vin (Al khamriya): poème mystique de 'Omar ibn al Faridh, et son commentaire par 'Abd al Ghani an Nabolosi* (Paris, Les Éditions Véga, 1980). Davānī quotes Ibn al-Fāriḍ in *Naqd*, p. 71 (see note, p. 93), p. 178 (see note, p. 216).

<sup>40</sup> Fouchécour, *Le Divân*, p. 20.