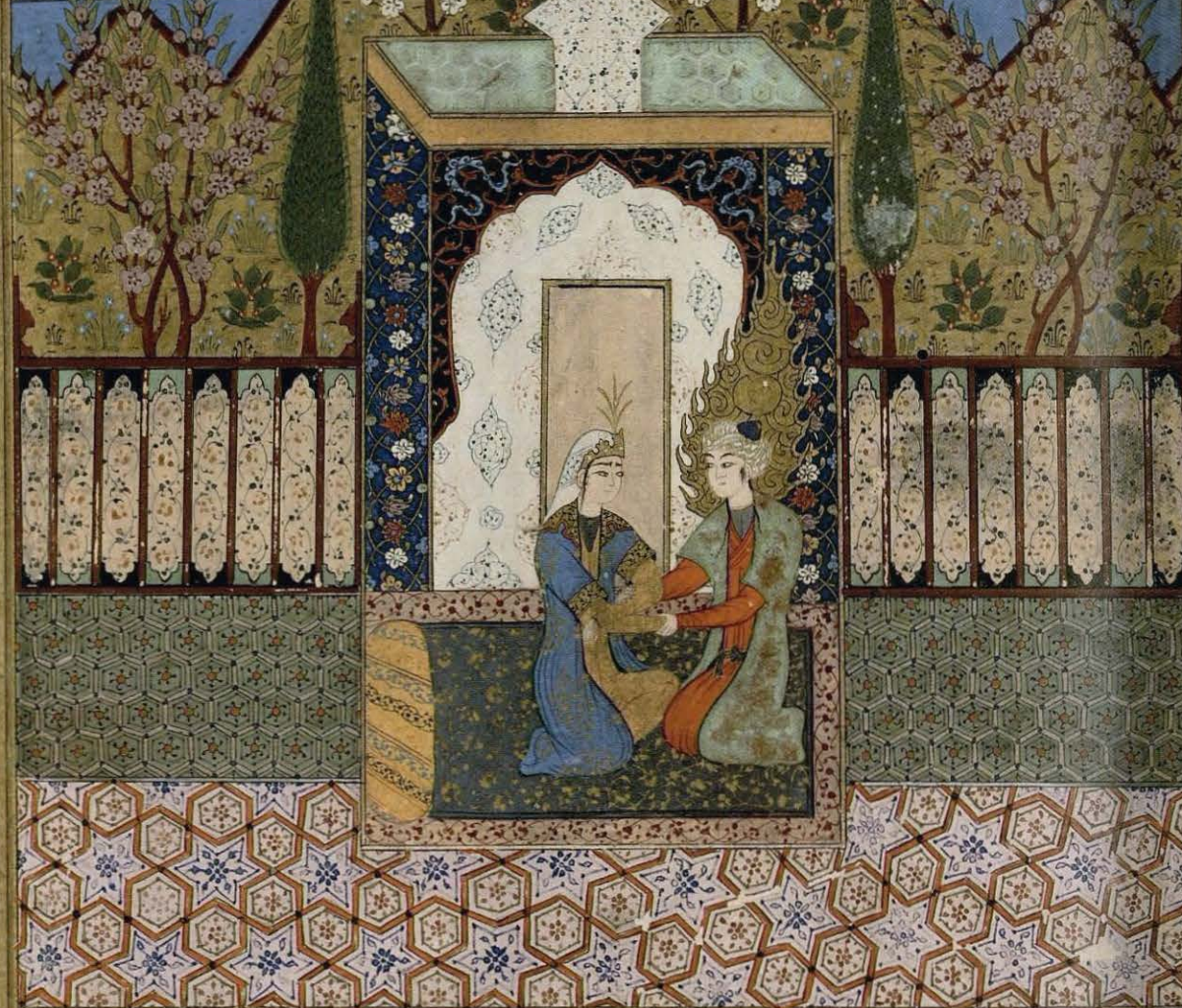


بپ بوسید شیرین شکرش را / بدندان کند غناب ترش را / جو بود از بهر آن فرخنده همان / دلب بر خوان وصل او کند آن

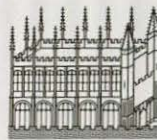
از او کرد اول بوسه دینا / نمک بخون بر شوقش پیش کرد / که بر خوان از نمک به باشد غاز / دو پیاسعد در میان او کرد



نشان یافت از میاید کنی	میان بسته طلب پاکت حوت	نماندش پیش آن سرو گل نام	بزیر آن کمر نبرده رسته
مفضل هست از شرفه نام	نه خازن ده پیوی خنده پستی	کمانه خنده از یاقوت تر پشت	نهادش پیش آن سرو گل نام
کمانه خنده از یاقوت تر پشت	کیشش کام زرد در عرصه مشک	جو نفس پر کش اول تپش کنی	ز پس آمد شدن شد عاقبت بیک
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برون آمد بجای نوشین جوش	دو پنجه از دو کلبین در سینه		ز باد صبح با هم در سینه

LOVE AND DEVOTION FROM PERSIA AND BEYOND

Edited by Susan Scollay



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آفتاب در روشن سپیدی آیش
کو را چوب کور را ویدایلی آیش
کرا ویکاکیر ماک بود و در باش ادرو
پلور حیرت و شوق جانید ما
آچلناج ایسیک او یکا کیرین یوب
قیلیب بی تکل لوقانی خراب



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چون رو او را که بسدگان او در آتش بسوزند حضرت رسالت صلی الله علیه و آله وسلم
رقت فرمودند در آن اثنا شخصی خبر آورد که آن دردمند که مدکور شده که شیفته دجیه الکلبی بود
فوت شد این حدیث را در آن محل فرمودند و بهر آن درویش رفت و حالت او را اظهار فرموده
دجیه الکلبی را امر کرده اند که آب بر او ریخت و دفن کردند و درین آخر خدمت مولانا محمد شاره
شیفته درویش محمدنایی بودند و در مجلس سماع پطافعی بسیار میکردند و بدن با سع



EARTHLY AND SPIRITUAL LOVE IN SUFISM

Ibn 'Arabi and the Poetry of Rumi

Süleyman Derin



MAHABBA, the Arabic word for love, is used to convey both earthly and spiritual love. Linguists and classical Sufi authors have produced various etymologies for the word. Ibn Qayyim suggests that *mahabba* derives from the word *hubab* meaning purity. Ibn al-Manzur, author of the largest encyclopedic Arabic dictionary, writes that *mahabba* comes from *hubab*, which are the bubbles that form on the surface of water during a strong rainstorm, so love is the bubbling up of the heart when it thirsts and is desperate to meet the Beloved. Al-Hujwiri says that *mahabba* is said to be derived from *hibbat*, which are seeds that fall to the earth in the desert. The name *hubb* (love) was given to such desert seeds, because love is the source of life just as seeds are the origin of plants.¹ When love becomes excessive and ardent it is called *'ishq*. These two terms are used both for divine as well as spiritual love, although the latter has produced controversy since it is not mentioned in the Qur'an. It is also interesting to note that the terminology of profane love is also used in conveying the feelings of divine love. As Schimmel rightly states, Sufis express their love for God by symbols taken from human love.²

As a term, love has been described in many ways by different disciplines. Literature considers love as the driving force behind the finest poetry; medieval medical science perceives it as a kind of disease; theology sees it as a way of approaching and nearness to God; and in philosophy it is the desire of the imperfect to attain perfection.³ Among influential Sufi writers, al-Ghazali (1058–1111) comes very close to a psychological analysis of love's origins and its gradual development. He describes love as 'an inclination towards a thing, which gives pleasure'.⁴ According to al-Ghazali, in the early stage, a child's love is directed exclusively towards the mother. As children develop, their love starts to explore different avenues, games and toys. It further expands to include friends in its ambit. When the children reach adolescence, they start experiencing a natural inclination towards the opposite sex. The love of the opposite sex in the early stages of adulthood turns into the love of health and status in later ages. This process eventually culminates in the love of God.⁵ According to al-Ghazali, there is a progression along a continuum: from the concrete, such as mother, toys and friends, to the abstract, completely non-material being, Allah.

بنو حنی دل خسرو سنور خواهی خست کسی گفت ترا این جفا چرا کردی فی الحال در جواب
 شیخ گفته من العلم الی العین لتحصیل الطرفین یعنی از علم می آیم تا عین از برای حاصل طرفین از عالم
 بی زکی می آیم بعالم زکیم تا زخم شیشه دل بر ننگ بجهت این جواب تمام شنیفته



شده بود و ماند و از کار زفته اشعار عربی در آن آتشکی دارند بعد از آن کلمات حضرت شیخ
 سرفراز کردید و رسید از خدمت با علی درجه معرفت و دید آنچه دید حضرت شیخ کایت

Al-Ghazali thought that love should be experienced through all these stages, and that the gradual transition in material loves prepares the heart for the reception of non-material love: the love of God.⁶ This line of thinking did not conflict with Qur'anic teachings, since Sufi authors found examples of divine love that began initially as human love. Among these is the story of Zulaykha's love for Yusuf, the Prophet Joseph; how she passionately loved him in the beginning but later her love transformed into a love of God.⁷

Although Sufis have produced many different paradigms of love, two Sufis in particular – Ibn 'Arabi and Rumi – have gone a step beyond: the former in prose, the latter in poetry. Muhammad Ibn 'Ali Ibn 'Arabi (1165–1240) was born in Murcia in southern Spain. Ibn 'Arabi lived in the far western end of the Muslim world of his time. He grew up in an atmosphere steeped in the most important ideas – scientific, religious and philosophical – of his day. Distinguished from other Sufis by his huge output of writings, Ibn 'Arabi is described by Brockelmann as a writer of 'colossal fecundity'.⁸

Most Sufi authors had either disdained profane love or they saw it as a stepping stone to divine love. Resulting from his ontology, however, Ibn 'Arabi, the renowned Shaykh al-Akbar or the greatest Sufi master, introduced a completely new dimension to the relationship between divine and earthly love. Ibn 'Arabi suggested that there is only One Being and all existence is nothing but the manifestation or outward radiance of that One Being. Hence, everything other than the One Being, that is, the whole cosmos in all its spatial and temporal extension, is non-existent in itself. Only through the self-existent Being can it be considered to exist.⁹

The natural consequence of this teaching is that, essentially, it is not possible to love something exclusive of God. Since God is hidden in all objects manifest in the universe, loving any created object automatically entails loving God. Concisely put, as there is only One Being in reality, there can really be only one Beloved, and that is God. Proceeding from this, Ibn 'Arabi's view of *wahdat al-wujud* ('the oneness of being') can be more accurately described as *wahdat al-hubb*, that is, 'the oneness of love'. Therefore, whatever it may be that we love, we love God 'in it'. Objects of love are but veils between humanity and God; in the words of

Ibn 'Arabi: 'In reality, everybody only loves the Creator but God is veiled by Zainab, Suad, Hind, money or position.'¹⁰

That Ibn 'Arabi was unique in his use of metaphors of profane love to explain divine love speaks for itself. In his book *Tarjuman al-Ashwaq*, ('Interpreter of Desire') in particular, the Shaykh depicts Lady Nizam as the manifestation of divine beauty.¹¹ Unable to understand his delicate philosophy, many felt scandalised by the apparently erotic and sensuous imagery of his writings, compelling him to write a commentary on his own works in self-defence.¹² Alluding to the difficulty of making out the style in which the work was penned, Nicholson raises the question, 'Is this a love poem disguised as a mystical ode, or a mystical ode expressed in the language of human love?'¹³ It may well be said that it is both, since Ibn 'Arabi's paradigm of love holds all kinds of love to be divine. But this love needs to be brought to consciousness, because if one is ignorant of God's existence in the earthly beloved, one's love is not directed towards God.

To arrive at a better understanding, we can perhaps compare Ibn 'Arabi with al-Ghazali. Al-Ghazali strove to persuade people that God is the only being that deserves our love by arguing that it is God alone who fulfils all the causes of love in perfection. Ibn 'Arabi, on the other hand, believed that all lovers already love God in different manifestations, without the least power to exclude Him from their love. They only need to be awakened to the fact that God is present everywhere and in everything.

Ibn 'Arabi made much use of the famous prophetic saying, 'God created Adam in His own form'¹⁴ to explain how earthly love delivers one to the love of God. It is from this perspective that Ibn 'Arabi defined profane love; the love between man and woman is a direct consequence of their divine forms. This idea is in stark contrast to the general view that explains the love of the opposite sex as an outcome of contemplating beauty in the other. In Ibn 'Arabi's view, the essential basis of this love is the divine form in which men and women were created, a fact that relegates beauty to a secondary role. Moreover, Ibn 'Arabi believed that human love is fully satisfied only when the object of love is God. Thus, a love whose object is another human being may never experience complete fulfilment, the reason being that there is a much stronger

Figure 5.1 (page 54)

Maulana Muhammad Tabadkhani and other dervishes dancing. From a manuscript of a work attributed to Gazurgahi, *Majalis al-'Usbsbaq*, dated 959 (1552). Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS. Ouseley Add. 24, fol. 119r.

Figure 5.2 (opposite)

Ibn 'Arabi riding towards two young men. From a manuscript of a work attributed to Gazurgahi, *Majalis al-'Usbsbaq*, dated 959 (1552). Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS. Ouseley Add. 24, fol. 69r.

similitude between God and humans than there is between opposite sexes.¹⁵ In a sense, Ibn 'Arabi implied that if we think in human terms, God is the original form whereas humankind is a copy of this form. Hence, loving another from the opposite sex without realising the divine form in him or her will diminish the full satisfaction of love.

Unlike most Sufis such as the early female poet and thinker Rabi'a, Ibn 'Arabi did not reprimand elemental love as a necessary evil. He even suggested that for the true gnostic (*arif*) it is necessary for men to love women. Compared to early Sufis who despised the world and saw marriage as an obstacle on the spiritual path, this is quite revolutionary to say the least. For Ibn 'Arabi, the real gnostic loved women because the Prophet himself declared that he did so in a *hadith*. Ibn 'Arabi's argument was that the Prophet would not love someone or something that would distance him from God. Therefore the idea that 'Marriage or love of women in general are the cause of separation from God' is an error entirely inconsistent with the Prophetic paradigm of love.¹⁶

In the commentary of the *Tarjuman*, Ibn 'Arabi further stated that the nature of earthly love is the same as divine love, that is, the love with which we love God. The difference is only that in earthly or elemental love the lover is infatuated with a phenomenon (*kawn*), whereas in divine love the lover is enamoured by the essential, the real (*asl*). Elemental love itself has always provided the most excellent cases of an ecstatic, rapturous lover losing consciousness and reasoning over the love of the beloved.¹⁷ Therefore, claimants to God's love, Ibn 'Arabi suggested, should love God no less than those whose object of love is another human being.

In so far as lovers of the elemental level may easily be directed to the real object nonetheless, Ibn 'Arabi favours a lover to someone who does not love anything, be it divine or earthly. Loving another almost complements attaining divine love, since it serves as a kind of training for the lover, with God manifested in the highest form in the beloved. One cannot love *Maula* (God) without first loving *Layla* (woman). Still, emphasised Ibn 'Arabi, a man who loves a woman only for sexual desires is heedless and gravely ignorant about the nature of women, unable to discern the divine manifestation in them.¹⁸

But the candle of Love is not like that
(external) candle:

it is radiance, in radiance, in radiance.¹⁹

It was not only Ibn 'Arabi from the west who exerted a great influence on the development of Sufism and shaping of the conception of love theories; Rumi, from the east, was another writer who had a similar impact. Rumi (d. 1273), the mystic of divine love and rapture who lived in the 13th century, was born in the far east of the Persian lands in Balkh. Compared to other Sufis like al-Ghazali, the works of Rumi do not present a philosophical system as such, and the poetic and discursive nature of his idiosyncratic style makes it difficult to abstract a systematic conception of love.²⁰ However, his two main works, the *Masnavi* and the *Divan al-Kabir* famously referred to as the *Divan of the Lovers*²¹ offer plenty of verses on love, divulging for us the main characteristics of his conception of love.

In Rumi, love is the reason behind the creation of the Universe, compliant with a *hadith* often quoted by Sufis, in which God says, 'I loved to be known, so I created the world'. Love is hence God's initial act in His approach to creation, a creative affection through which love is manifested in the entire creation. In the poetic and fiery language of Rumi, love flows through the world's arteries and is the origin of all movement and activity.

The creatures are set in motion by Love,
Love by Eternity without beginning;
the wind dances because of the spheres, the
trees because of the wind.²²

The postulate that God created humanity 'in love' necessitates humanity to return to Him 'in love'. Early Sufis like Hasan of Basra (d. 728 AD) and Ibrahim bin Adham (d. 777 AD) had emphasised the concept of fear in their relationship to God. As opposed to these early Sufis who had championed the fear of God, Rumi instead placed his accent on love as the unique way of approaching God.²³ Not by loveless austerities and sheer asceticism centred on the fear of God may the base faculties of humans, the *nafs*, be fully conquered, but by love. Running a comparison between the ascetic and the lover of God, Rumi said (*Masnavi* V, 2092-3):

The timorous ascetic runs on foot; the lovers
of God fly more quickly than the
lightning and the wind. (cont. p. 62)

Figure 5.3 (opposite)

Rumi at the blacksmith's shop.
From a manuscript of a work
attributed to Gazurgahi,
Majalis al-'Usbsbaq, dated 959
(1552).

Bodleian Library, University of
Oxford, MS. Ouseley Add. 24,
fol.78v.

Figure 5.4 (pages 60-61)

Illuminated pages with opening
lines of Book I. From a manu-
script of Rumi, *Masnavi*, copied
before 1465.

Bodleian Library, University of
Oxford, MS. Elliott 251, fols.
3v-4r.

بلاوفته و غوغای من ز فرقت او پست
 کی مدام و دووم چید و سیوم سرجا



مدام و چید و سرجا ز عشق او شد هم
 غیب و عاشق و رسوا چنان شدم که شنید
 کی غریب و دووم عاشق و سیوم سرجا
 کی چو پشرو و دووم و امن و سیوم عذرا
 کی چو پشرو و امن و عذر از من بانوید
 کی فغان و دویم ناله و سیوم سودا

چون شیخ صلاح الدین بجوار حق سویت عشق بازی نماید کشت و چلی حسام الدین با ایشان

انسان است این بانگ نای و نسبت
آتش عشقت کاند زنی فناد
نی حرف هر که از یاری براید
هیچونی زهری و تر باقی کردید
نی حدیث ز راه پر خون میگذرد
بحریم این هوش جز بهوش نیست
در عمق ما روزهای گاه شد
روزها گرفت کور و بالک است

هر که این آتش ندارد نیست یاد
جوشش عشقت کاند زنی فناد
پردها اش برده های مادرید
بجز در دست ساز و مشتاقی کردید
نصای عشق همچون سبکد
مرزبانان شتری جز کون نیست
روزها اسوزها همراه شد
نوبتان ای آنکه جز عیال نیست



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

بشنو از زنی جوان حکایت میکند	که نیشنان نام را برینک آید
از نقیمم مرد و زن نالیده آید	سینه خواهم شرحه شرحه از
تا بگویم شرح درد اشیتاق	هر کسی کور و ماندا را وصل خویش
باز جوید روزگار وصل خویش	من بهر معیبتی الان شدم
جفت بد حالان و خوش حالان	هر کسی از ظن خود شد یار من
از درون من نخست اسرار من	سر من از ناله من دور نیست
لک چشم و گوش را آن نور نیست	ز زبجان و جان نذر مستور نیست
لک کس را بد جان مستور نیست	

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Figure 5.5 (below)

A scene from the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife. From a German-language Bible, Genesis 39. Nuremberg, Anton Koberger, 1483. State Library of Victoria, RARESEF 093 C833K, vol. 1, fol. 23v.

The Persian tale of Yusuf and Zulaykha has its roots in the Qur'an, which in turn drew on Biblical accounts of Joseph and Potiphar's wife.

Figure 5.6 (opposite)

The interpretation of Zulaykha's dream. From a manuscript of Jami, Yusuf u Zulaykha, dated 940 (1533). Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS. Hyde 10, fol. 39v.

How should those fearful ones overtake Love?
For love's passion makes the (lofty)
heaven its carpet.

For Rumi, love is the fastest way to reach God. The following verses (*Divan*, 6922-3) are so clear that they barely need an explanation:

Mount upon Love and think not about
the way.
For the horse of Love is very sure-footed.
Though the path be uneven,
in a single bound it will take you the
way station.

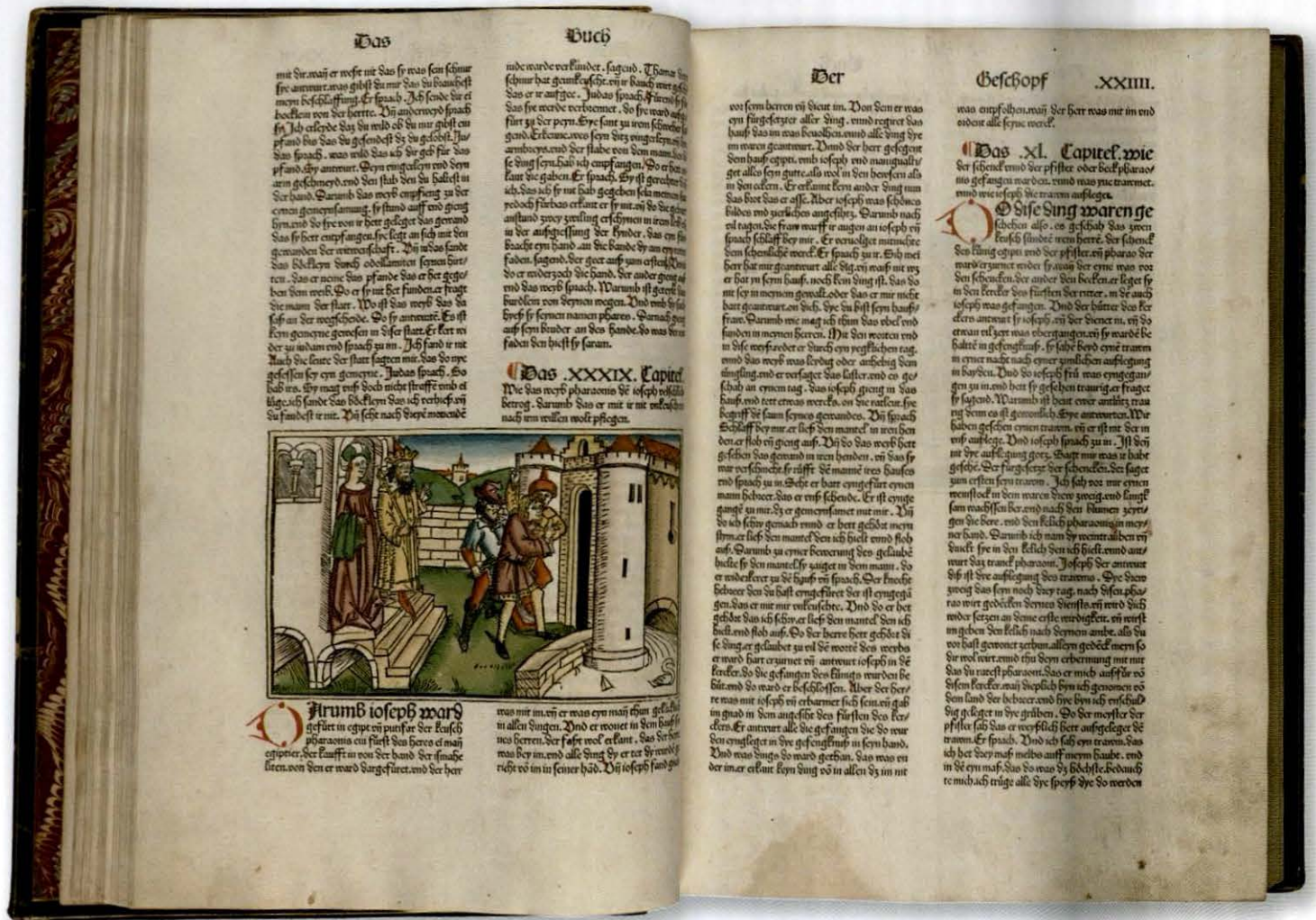
Rumi divided human love into two: true love (*'ishq-i haqiqi*), or love of God; and metaphorical love (*'ishq-i majazi*), or love of anything else other than God. Yet since whatever exists is God's reflection or shadow,²⁴ all love is in fact love of God. The difference between these two types of love transpires in the approach of both types of lovers: some know that only God truly exists and thus direct their love only towards Him,

while others believe in the independent existence of various objects of desire and so direct their love to them. He explains this notion in the following verses: (*Masnavi* VI, 3181)

Beautiful faces are in fact mirrors of
His beauty
Loving them is in fact the reflection of
searching for Him.

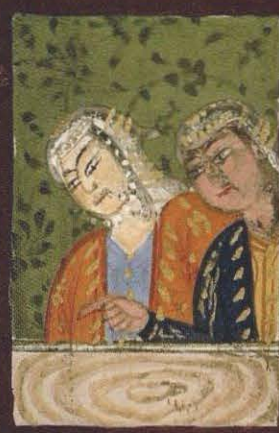
Hence all material beauties, be they one's lover, a rose or whatever else, borrow their beauty from God. Rumi uses a similar language to that of al-Ghazali in this respect. Like him, Rumi also insists that we need spiritual insight to see divine beauty in creation.

Rumi's philosophy affords a positive relationship between profane love and divine love, in so far as all love has a divine origin and love eventually takes the lover to the real beloved – the Divine – whether the beloved is earthly or not. This conception approximates Rumi to Ibn 'Arabi, who also thought that one first needed to love another before loving God. However,



بزرگین تاج کردندش سرافراز
همه پروانه آن شمع گشتند

نشاندش بر فراز مندنماز
پری رویان زمر جا بستند



جو طوطی لعل او شکر گشتی
ز مرشدهی سخن آغاز کردی

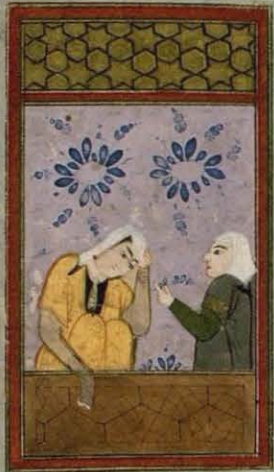
بمزدان جو در مجلس نشستی
سردج حکایت باز کردی

مهر و ناز چنان ماری از زرد
ز لب بود که غول آری
هر پای دل اندر عشق نیت

که با شام مرده داران لعل و گوهر
بود سر کج رانا چار مار سی
سمان نبدم ازین عالم سپید

سیسین ساقش آن مار کمر کج
چو زین مار زیر دامنش
سبک و پستی جنج عمر فرسای

در آمد حلقه زن چون مار کج
ز دیده مهره می باید و میگفت
بهین بندم چرا ساز و کران پاک



مرا خودت پای منماند
فروفت پای سرو در گل
سیای دلبری ز رخسیر باید

بدن آمدن در این نمائند
ره جنبش بر گوشتت مشکل
که در کلنجیله شوش من رباید

بدین بند کران پاستم پست
چه حکمت باغبان بند درین باب
نباشد در نظر چند آن درکش

بهین جنج اول خستیم پست
که ز پنجهش بندیر پای از آب
که نیم سیر روی لاله درکش



Detail from Figure 5.6

Rumi believed that the love of physical beauty quickly faded away, requiring one to ascend from earthly love to a love divine. A Sufi therefore had to turn his face to divine beauty and seek to go further than the earthly beloved. In Rumi, it is thus imperative for one to elevate one's love from human beings to the Creator, to God (*Masnavi* I, 219):

Choose the love of the Living One who is
everlasting, who gives thee to drink
of the wine that increases life.

Not only did Rumi promulgate an elevation of earthly love to divine love, he also brought forth examples of those who had achieved this feat, the most prominent of which is perhaps the story of the prophet Yusuf (Joseph) and Zulaykha. Despite Zulaykha's immense love for Yusuf, when the latter does not reciprocate, she has him put in prison.²⁵ Zulaykha's love, however, is finally transformed to divine love; after all, 'the metaphor is the bridge to reality'.

Among instances of profane love that lead humans to divine love, Rumi also referred to the legendary story of Layla and Majnun. He depicted Majnun as a gnostic who, in the final reckoning, finds *Maula* (God) through *Layla* (woman). When those ignorant of the transforming power of love criticised Majnun for loving an unattractive woman like Layla, whose sheer appearance, they held, did not merit a love of such calibre, he answers (*Masnavi* V, 3288):

The outward form is a pot, and beauty is the
wine: God is giving me wine from
her form,

He gave you vinegar from her pot. Lest love
should pull you by the ears.

In another place in the *Masnavi*, Rumi wrote that a burning candle can light the fire of a thousand other candles. To become a lover of God, one therefore needs to accompany other lovers of God. Rumi himself became a lover only by initially accompanying another

Figure 5.7 (opposite)

Zulaykha, having seen Yusuf in a dream, is mad with love for him. Leaf from a disbound manuscript of Jami, *Haft Aurang*, copied c. 1570. Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS. Elliott 149, fol. 179r.



پای از دست زر تراش
بمنز لکاه صد بدره رسانند

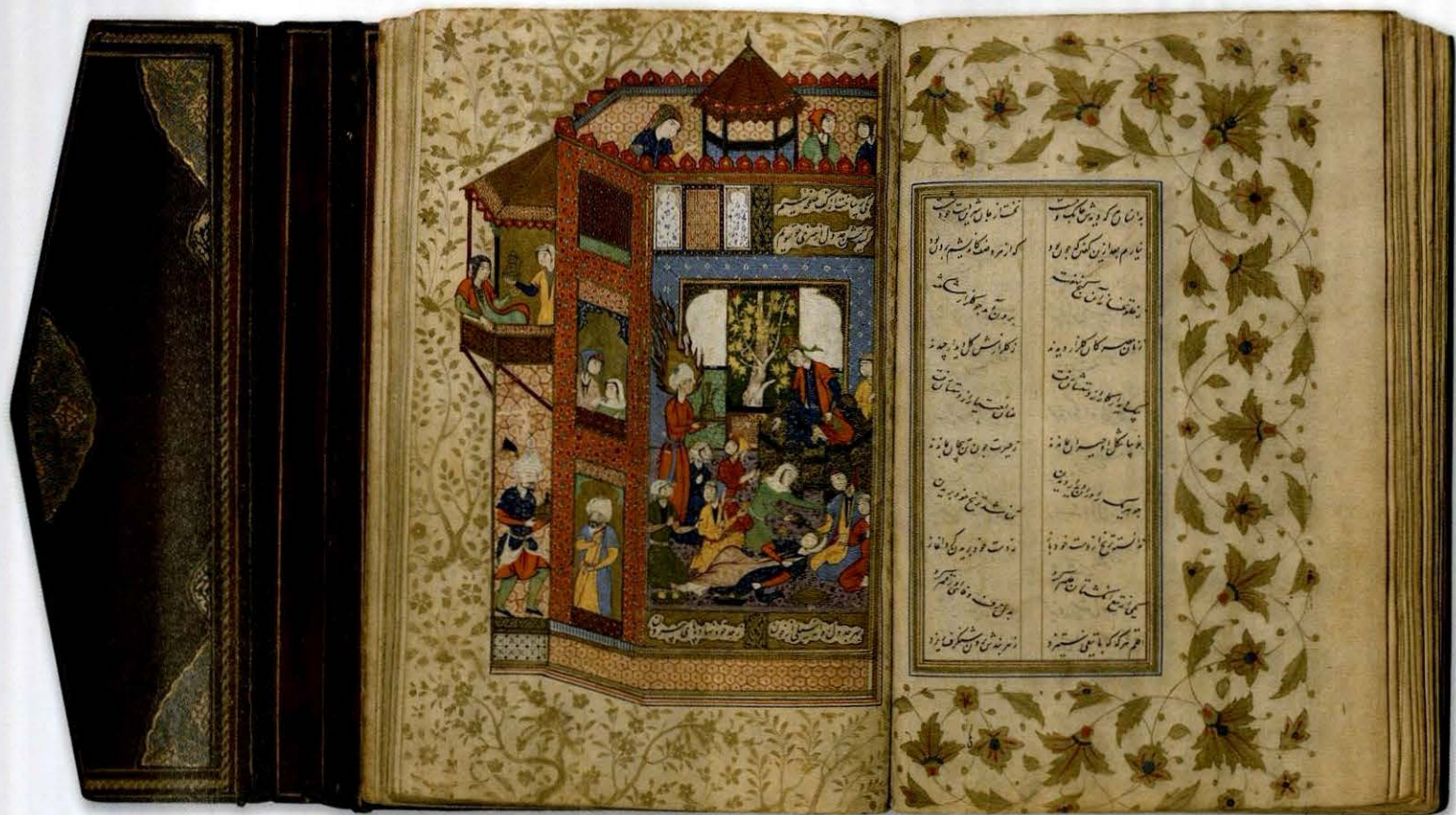
از ان بدره که چون خواهی شمارش
خریدارین و بیکر خوش رانند



بقدر وزن یوسف مسک افز
بران دانی و بیکر ساخت افز

بران افزود و دولت مند دیگر
بوزنش لعل ناب و در مکنون





of God; with this mindset, he invited others to join him on this path (*Divan*, 29050–1):

Someone asked ‘What is love?’ I replied
 ‘Ask not about these meanings.
 When you become like me, then you will
 know. When he calls you, you will
 recite its tale.

Profane love therefore has an evident capacity to take humans to divine love. Could we perhaps further invert this proposition and ask if divine love leads one to the love of humanity? The basis of a human relationship with God is not merely an issue of theological interest. Its consequences have an enormous bearing on the life of humankind. When the relationship between humans and God depends on love, the resultant relationships

between human beings become infused with love, characterised by mercy and benevolence. In this regard, one cannot help but completely agree with Nicholson’s conclusion, where comparing the famous Christian poet Dante with Rumi, he decides that Dante ‘falls far below the level of charity and tolerance’ advocated and practised by Rumi.²⁶ In the words of Rumi, ‘lovely birds fall into Love’s trap, except some bird like the owl that refuses to look at the sun and is content to remain among the ruins.’²⁷

The path of our Prophet is love
 We are the children of love,
 Our mother is love.

(*Ruba’i*, 18)

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Figure 5.8 (opposite)

Yusuf sold as a slave. From a manuscript of Jami, *Yusuf u Zulaykha*, dated 940 (1533). Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS. Hyde 10, fol. 72v.

Figure 5.9 (above and detail p. 68)

Zulaykha’s maids overcome by the beauty of Yusuf. From a manuscript of Jami, *Yusuf u Zulaykha*, dated 977 (1569). Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS. Greaves 1, fols. 103v–104r.

Figure 5.10 (page 69)

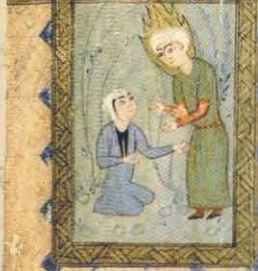
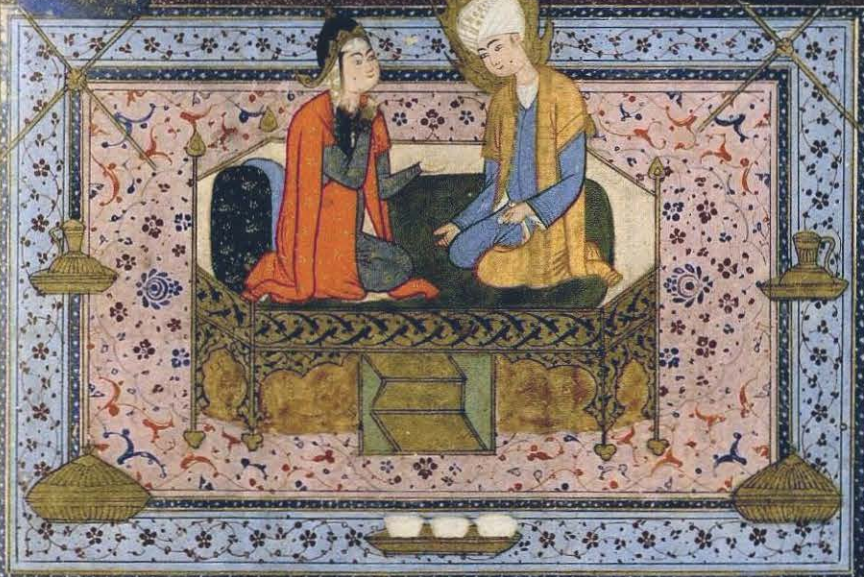
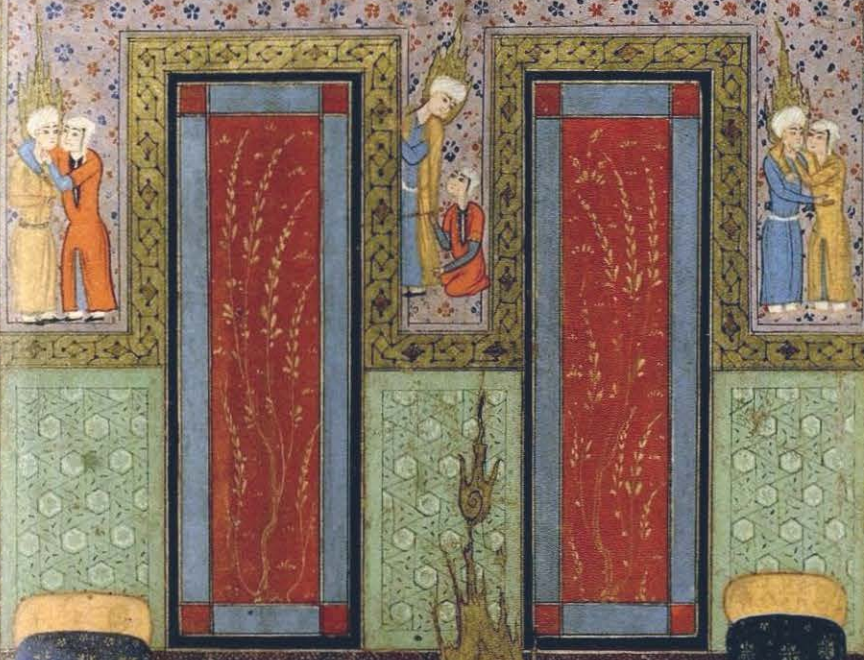
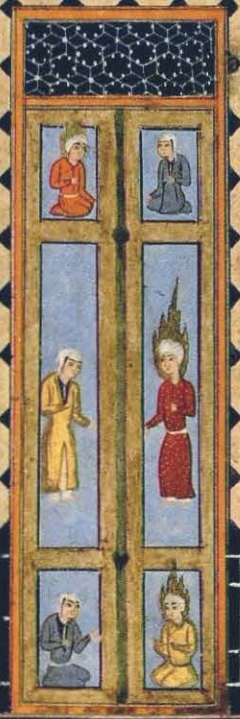
Yusuf tempted by Zulaykha. Leaf from a disbound manuscript of Jami, *Haft Aurang*, copied c. 1570. Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS. Elliott 149, fol. 199v.



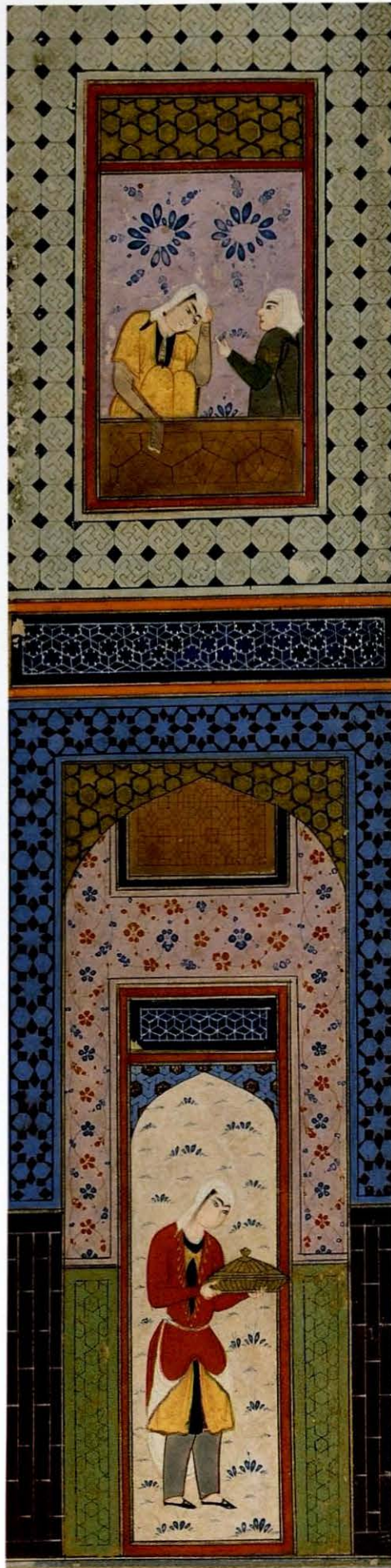
یکی ریاضت از کف صورت
کشیدن چو دل از سرخی خونوم

بهر جد دل و دل سپیدی از خون
ز حد خود نهاد پای سپید

به میان درود بسیار میکرد
 بنفش خانه سرافکنده در پیش
 از آن صورت روان صرف نظر کرد
 میوسف شوق خود اظهار میکرد
 مصور دید با او صورت خویش
 نظر گاه خود از جای بیگانه کرد
 ولی یوسف نظریا خویش میداشت
 زویا و حزیرا فکنده بپست
 اگر در را و کرد بویا رسید
 ز چشم سینه سر در پیش میداشت
 گرفته یکدگر را شک در
 بهم خفت آن دو کل خناریه



رخ خود درند ای آسمان که
 دنیا زان نظر شد تازه آینه
 که ای خود کام کام من و کن
 بوسف اندر تماشای همان کرد
 که تا به بروی آن تابنده خورشید
 بوصل خویش در دم راد و کن
 فرودش میل از آن سوی زینجا
 باه و ناله و زاری در آمد
 منم شنه تو آب زندگانی
 نظر بکش و بر روی زینجا
 ز چشم دل نوحه خناری در آمد
 منم شنه تو جان چا و روانی



Notes:

- 1 Ibn Qayyim, *Madarij al-Salikin*, vol. 3, 6; al-Qushayri, *al-Risalah*, 328; Ibn al-Manzur, *Lisan al-'Arab*, ha-ba-ba entry; al-Hujwiri, *Kashf*, 305–6.
- 2 Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 5.
- 3 The scientific view is in Mas'udi, *Muru' al-Dhahab* (Beirut: Dar al-Andalus, vol. 3, 1965–66), 370–5; Ibn al-Khatib, *Rawdat al-Ta'rif bi Hubb al-Sharif* (Beirut: Dar al-Saqafah, 1970), 341, provides a theological view.
- 4 Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1992), vol. 4, 312; for more details see Süleyman Derin, *Love in Sufism: From Rabia to Ibn al-Farid* (Istanbul: Insan Publications, 2008), 131–63.
- 5 Ibn al-Khatib, *Rawdat* vol. 4, 326
- 6 M. Ozak, *The Unveiling of Love*, trans. Muhtar Holland (London and the Hague: East West Publications, 1981), 27; for the definition of the different stages of love see Mir Valiuddin, *Love of God, the Sufi Approach* (Lahore, 1979), 2–3.
- 7 Makki, Abu Talib, *Qut al-Qulub*, vol. 2, 52
- 8 Abu al-'Ala Afifi, *The Mystical Philosophy of Ibn 'Arabi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939), 21.
- 9 W. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), 79.
- 10 'A. Hifni, *al-Mawzu'ah al-Sufiyyah* (Cairo: Dar al-Irshad, 1992), 290.
- 11 R. W. J. Austin, 'The Lady Nizam – an image of love and knowledge', *Journal of the Mubayyidin Ibn Arabi Society* 7 (1988): 35–48.
- 12 Ibn 'Arabi, *Zakhair al-'Alaq Sharb Tarjuman al-'Ashwaaq*, ed. M. A. Karwi, 4–5.
- 13 Ibn 'Arabi, *Tarjuman al-'Ashwaaq*, ed. and trans. by R. A. Nicholson (London: Theosophical Publishing House, 1978), 7.
- 14 Bukhari, *al-Sahih Isti'zan*, n5759; Ibn 'Arabi, *al-Futubat* (Yahya ed.), vol. 2, 490.
- 15 Ibn 'Arabi, *al-Futubat* (Yahya ed.), vol. 14, 64.
- 16 Ibn 'Arabi, *al-Futubat*, vol. 14, 67–8.
- 17 Ibn 'Arabi, *Zakhair al-'Alaq Sharb*, 51; *Tarjuman al-'Ashwaaq*, trans. Nicholson, 69–70.
- 18 Austin, 'The Lady Nizam', 35–48.
- 19 *Masnawi*, III, 3921. The translation of the verses of *Masnawi* are taken from Reynold Nicholson's works unless otherwise stated.
- 20 Ibn 'Arabi and al-Ghazali have separate chapters on love, where they give a detailed and organised view of their take on the nature of the concept. For a comparison, see al-Ghazali, *Ihya'* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1992), vol. 4, 311–81; Ibn 'Arabi, *al-Futubat al-Makkiyyah* (Beirut: 1998), vol. II.
- 21 Abdülkerim Suruş, 'Teblig no:1', *Mevlânâ Güldestesi* (Konya: 1996), 13.
- 22 *Divan*, 5001. All translations of the verses quoted from Rumi's *Divan* belong to W. Chittick, unless otherwise stated.
- 23 Abdülbâki Gölpınarlı, *Mevlânâ Celâleddin* (Istanbul: 1985), 209; Derin, *Love in Sufism*.
- 24 W. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1983).
- 25 (*Divan*, 21305) The story can be read in varying detail in the Bible, Genesis 39:1–23; in Jewish commentaries on the Hebrew Scriptures; and in the Qur'an, 12: 23–35. It was also retold by various Persian poets in addition to Rumi. The most prominent of these was Jami. See also pp. 41, 74, 91, 201 and Figure 8.2.
- 26 R. A. Nicholson, *Mystics of Islam* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1914; reprinted London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 100.
- 27 Annemarie Schimmel, *I Am Wind You Are Fire: The Life and Work of Rumi* (Boston: Shambala, 1996), 182.

left: Detail from Figure 5.7
opposite: Detail from page iv



نصفه بی کجه

کبرک رآز سنبل مشکین نقاب کن
نصاع عرق ز چهره و اطراف باغ را
ایام گل جو عمر گرفت و شتاب کرد
سایه بدو ر باد کله کلوں شتاب کن

یعنی که رخ بپوش و جهانی خراب کن
جوش شیشهای دیده ما پر کلاب کن



بوی نغشته بشنو و زلف نکار کن
بگذر بک لاله و عزم شراب کن

SELECTION OF POETRY

FIRDAUSI (d. circa 1020)



I shall not die, these seeds I've sown will save
My name and reputation from the grave,
And men of sense and wisdom will proclaim,
When I have gone, my praises and my fame.

Closing lines of the *Shabnama*,
trans. Dick Davis, New York:
Penguin Books, 2007, p. 854.

NIZAMI (d. 1209)



One night desperate Majnun prayed tearfully,
'O Lord of mine who has abandoned me,
Why hast Thou 'Majnun' called me?
Why hast Thou made a lover of Leila of me?
Thou hast made me a pillow of wild thorns,
Made me roam day and night without a home.
What dost Thou want from my imprisonment?
O Lord of mine, listen to my plea!'

The Lord replied, 'O lost man,
With Leila's love I have your heart filled;
Your Love of Leila is my will.
The Beauty of Leila that you see
Is just another reflection of me.'

From *Khamsa*, trans. Mahmood
Jamal, *Islamic Mystical Poetry*,
Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin
Books, 2009, p. 65.

'ATTAR (d. circa 1221)



My love is for the rose; I bow to her;
From her dear presence I could never stir.
If she should disappear the nightingale
Would lose his reason and his song would fail,
And though my grief is one that no bird knows,
One being understands my heart – the rose.

Another bird spoke up: 'I live for love,
For Him and for the glorious world above –
For Him I've cut myself from everything;
My life's one song of love to our great king.
I've seen the world's inhabitants, and know
I could not worship any here below;
My ardent love's for Him alone; how few
Can manage to adore Him as I do!'

The Conference of the Birds, trans.
Afkham Darbandi and Dick Davis,
Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin
Books, 1984, pp. 36, 144.

IBN 'ARABI (d. 1240)



I follow the religion of Love: whatever way Love's
camels take, that is my religion and my faith.

Trans. R. A. Nicholson, in
Mahmood Jamal, *Islamic Mystical
Poetry*, Harmondsworth, UK:
Penguin Books, 2009, p. 110.

JALAL AL-DIN RUMI (d. 1273)



Listen to the reed how it tells a tale, complaining of separations –
 Saying, 'Ever since I was parted from the reed-bed, my lament hath caused man and woman to moan.
 I want a bosom torn by severance, that I may unfold (to such a one) the pain of love-desire.
 Every one who is left far from his source wishes back the time when he was united with it.
 In every company I uttered my wailful notes, I consorted with the unhappy and with them that rejoice.
 Every one became my friend from his own opinion; none sought out my secrets from within me.
 My secret is not far from my plaint, but ear and eye lack the light (whereby it should be apprehended).
 Body is not veiled from reed, nor soul from body, yet none is permitted to see the soul.
 This noise of the reed is fire, it is not wind: whoso hath not this fire, may he be naught!
 'Tis the fire of Love that is in the reed, 'tis the fervour of Love that is in the wine.'

Masnavi 1: lines 1–10. The Mathnawi of Jalalu'ddin Rumi,
 trans. Reynold A. Nicholson, London: Luzac and Co., 1926, vol. 2, p. 5.



JAMI (d. 1492)



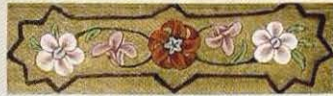
In days of yore
 Thy robe from off thy body once I tore.
 Thou hast my garment now from off me torn,
 And I my crime's just punishment have borne.
 Of right and wrong I now no longer fear;
 In tearing robes we both stand equal here.

Epilogue, Yusuf and Zulaykha,
 trans. Ralph T. G. Griffith and
 Alexander Rogers, in John D.
 Yohannan, *Joseph and Potiphar's
 Wife in World Literature*, New
 York: New Directions Books,
 1968, p. 220.

page 72: Young man and a girl seated in a landscape holding hands.
 From a manuscript of Hafiz, *Divan*, dated 945 (1538).
 Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS. Ouseley Add. 26, fol. 117r.

left: A young prince with attendants. From a collection of verse in
ghazal form, copied c. late 15th century (detail).
 Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS. Elliott 329, fol. 120r.

HAFIZ (d. 1390)



Beauty radiated in eternity
With its light;
Love was born
And set the worlds alight.

It revealed itself to angels
Who knew not how to love;
It turned shyly towards man
And set fire to his heart.

Trans. Mahmood Jamal, *Islamic Mystical Poetry*,
Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 2009, p. 233.

DANTE ALIGHIERI (d. 1321)



I saw rain over her such ecstasy
Brought in the sacred minds that with it glowed –
Created through the heavenly height to fly –
That all I had seen on all the way I had trod
Held me not in such breathless marvelling
Nor so great likeness vouched to me of God.

La Divina Commedia, 'Paradiso', Canto XXXII,
lines 88–93. *Dante's Paradiso*, trans. Laurence
Binyon, London: Macmillan and Co., 1943, p. 379.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (d. 1616)



Wilt thou be gone? It is not yet near day.
It was the nightingale, and not the lark,
That pierced the fearful hollow of thine ear.
Nightly she sings on yond pomegranate tree,
Believe me, love, it was the nightingale.

Romeo and Juliet, Act III, Scene 5, lines 1–5, ed.
T. J. B. Spencer, Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin
Books, 1967.

LORD BYRON (d. 1824)



Know ye the land of the cedar and vine?
Where the flowers ever blossom, the beams ever shine,
Where the light wings of Zephyr, oppressed with perfume,
Wax faint o'er the gardens of Gúl in her bloom;
Where the citron and olive are fairest of fruit,
And the voice of the nightingale never is mute;

There lingered we, beguiled too long
With Mejnoun's tale, or Sadi's song;
Till I, who heard the deep tambour
Beat thy Divan's approaching hour –
To thee and to my duty true,
Warn'd by the sound, to greet thee flew:

The Bride of Abydos: A Turkish Tale, Canto I,
part I, lines 5–10 and part III, lines 71–6,
London: John Murray, 1813.

JOHANN WOLFGANG
VON GOETHE

(d. 1832)



The man who loves will never go astray,
Though shadows close around him and above,
Leila and Medschnun, if they rose to-day,
From me might understand the path of love.

Is it possible, sweet love, I hold thee close!
Hear the divine voice pealing, musical!
Always impossible doth seem the rose,
And inconceivable the nightingale.

West-Eastern Divan (West-östlicher Divan), Book
of Zuleika, VI & VII, trans. Edward Dowden,
London: J. M. Dent, 1914, pp. 100–1.

وان پان از سر بیان کرده

عشق منطبق در بیان کرده

خلوه در کسوت بدیع عجیب

و رباعیات غریب شتمن بر

عشق را وصف کرده در اطوار

را اختلاف تعاقب بسیار



با عشق روان شد از عدم مرکب با

نهایت عشق در آن کتاب درج فرموده و این چند رباعی از آن جمله است

تا زور ابد حسگ نیابی لب ما

زان می که حرام نیست در مدیا

روشن شرب وصل و ام شبها

چند که زخت حس بند بر حسن

جز روی خوش نیدرود و در عشق

دل کرد بسی نگاه در دفتر عشق

MEETINGS OF LOVERS

The Bodleian Majalis al-'Ushshaq, MS. Ouseley, Add. 24

Lâle Uluç



AROUND the middle of the 16th century, illustrated copies of the *Majalis al-'Ushshaq* ('Meetings of Lovers'), a work compiled at the Timurid court of Sultan Husayn at Herat (r. 1470–1506), began to be produced in the Safavid city of Shiraz.¹ Its introduction treated mystic love as typified by the story of Yusuf and Zulaykha, followed by episodes from the lives of seventy-six famous religious or royal personages, such as Ahmad al-Ghazali (1058–1111), the widely revered Islamic theologian and mystic.

Its theme is the need to cross the bridge of material love in ecstasy before attaining ideal love. The *Majalis* is mainly romantic accounts of the worldly love of famous mystics, legendary lovers and royalty, which led Babur, the founder of the Mughal empire, to condemn it as 'a miserable production, mostly lies, and insipid and impertinent lies to boot, some of which raise a suspicion of heresy'. He also said that the author 'attributes carnal loves to many prophets and saints, inventing for each of them a paramour'.²

Although the preface of the Bodleian Library's *Majalis al-'Ushshaq* manuscript identifies Sultan Husayn himself as the author, contemporary writers Babur Mirza and Khwandamir ascribed it to Kamal al-Din Husayn Gazurgahi, a religious official

who was Sultan Husayn's intimate companion, and for the most part modern scholarship agrees.³ The attribution of its authorship to the Timurid sultan Husayn Bayqara must have contributed to its popularity among members of the Ottoman elite, who were keen to collect works stemming from his court. Ottoman sources contain frequent references indicating the Ottoman idealisation of Sultan Husayn, his court and especially his companion, Mir 'Ali Shir, known as Nava'i, who wrote primarily in Chaghatay Turkish. Chaghatay dictionaries were prepared in Istanbul to help his readers understand both his works and the *Divan* of Sultan Husayn, which was also written in Chaghatay. The *Majalis al-'Ushshaq*, which was thought to have been another work by the Timurid sultan, is one of the most common titles found in the Ottoman archival book lists.⁴

Copies of the *Majalis al-'Ushshaq* were systematically illustrated at Shiraz from the second half of the 16th century onwards. The Oxford volume is the earliest known dated and illustrated Shiraz copy, carrying the date 959 (1552). Many of its seventy-five illustrations are the earliest examples of the compositions newly formulated for this text, which became popular in the 1570s and 1580s.



Detail from Figure 7.2

Figure 7.1 (page 82)

The mystic Ahmad al-Ghazali conversing with a young man in a landscape.

From a manuscript of a work attributed to Gazurgahi, *Majalis al-'Usbsbaq*, dated 959 (1552).

Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS. Ouseley Add. 24, fol. 42r.

Figure 7.2 (opposite)

Solomon tricks Bilqis into wading into a simulated stream made of glass. From a manuscript of a work attributed to Gazurgahi, *Majalis al-'Usbsbaq*, dated 959 (1552).

Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS. Ouseley Add. 24, fol. 127v.

The illustrations of the Oxford copy of 1552 often provided models for later compositions depicting the same subjects, though some in a considerably modified form. The illustration from the section on King Solomon is a case in point.⁵ The incident depicted is found in many sources including the Qur'an. In the story, one of Solomon's demon servants tells him that since Bilqis, the Queen of Sheba, was mothered by a female *jinn* (spirit), she had hairy legs. To prove it the demon constructed a pavilion with a double-tiered glass floor and put fish between the layers of glass to give the impression of a stream. When Bilqis entered this room, she lifted her skirts in order to wade in the water and thus Solomon saw her hairy legs (Figure 7.2). A depilatory was later invented by another demon from the lime that accumulated in the pipes of a bathhouse so that Solomon could have his heart's desire and wed Bilqis with her stripped legs.⁶

The importance of the *Majalis al-'Usbsbaq* manuscripts lies in the urban settings used to depict episodes from the lives of famous mystics. When the illustrative cycle in the *Majalis* manuscripts was being developed, in the illustrations for which there were precedents, such as court scenes, scholarly meetings or incidents from well-known mythical stories like that of 'Yusuf and Zulaikha', 'Layla and Majnun' or 'Farhad and Shirin', the compositions simply continued earlier traditions. When the incident described could not be depicted by adaptations of earlier compositions, new ones closely following the text had to be formulated. Many of the incidents chosen for representation were meetings, which often occurred in the street or the bazaar, between the protagonist of the tale in each section and his 'beloved.' Since there were no precedents or models for such scenes, they were original images providing a rare glimpse of street life in Shiraz in this period.

One example depicts an incident from the life of Hakim Sana'i, the renowned 12th-century court poet, who was enamoured of a fine-looking butcher boy. When the boy asked Hakim Sana'i to show his love by giving him 500 goats, he had to settle for the mystic's much-mended shoes, but soon afterwards the governor of Khurasan presented Sana'i with a gift of 500 goats, which he immediately brought to the butcher boy.⁷ The Oxford copy of 1552 shows Hakim Sana'i and the boy in front of the butcher's shop (Figure 7.3).⁸ The

در آن آب رنجید چنانکه مردم که در آن میدان در آمدندی خیال کردند که آبست جامه خود را
 بالاکشیدندی و این کار برای آن کرد که نه پند آنچه دیوان بلقیس گفته بودند چنان است یا نه

چون بلقیس بگریه سلیمان رسید



در آن شب دیدند که آبست جامه های خود را بالاکشیدند چنانکه سلیمان ساقهای او را دید

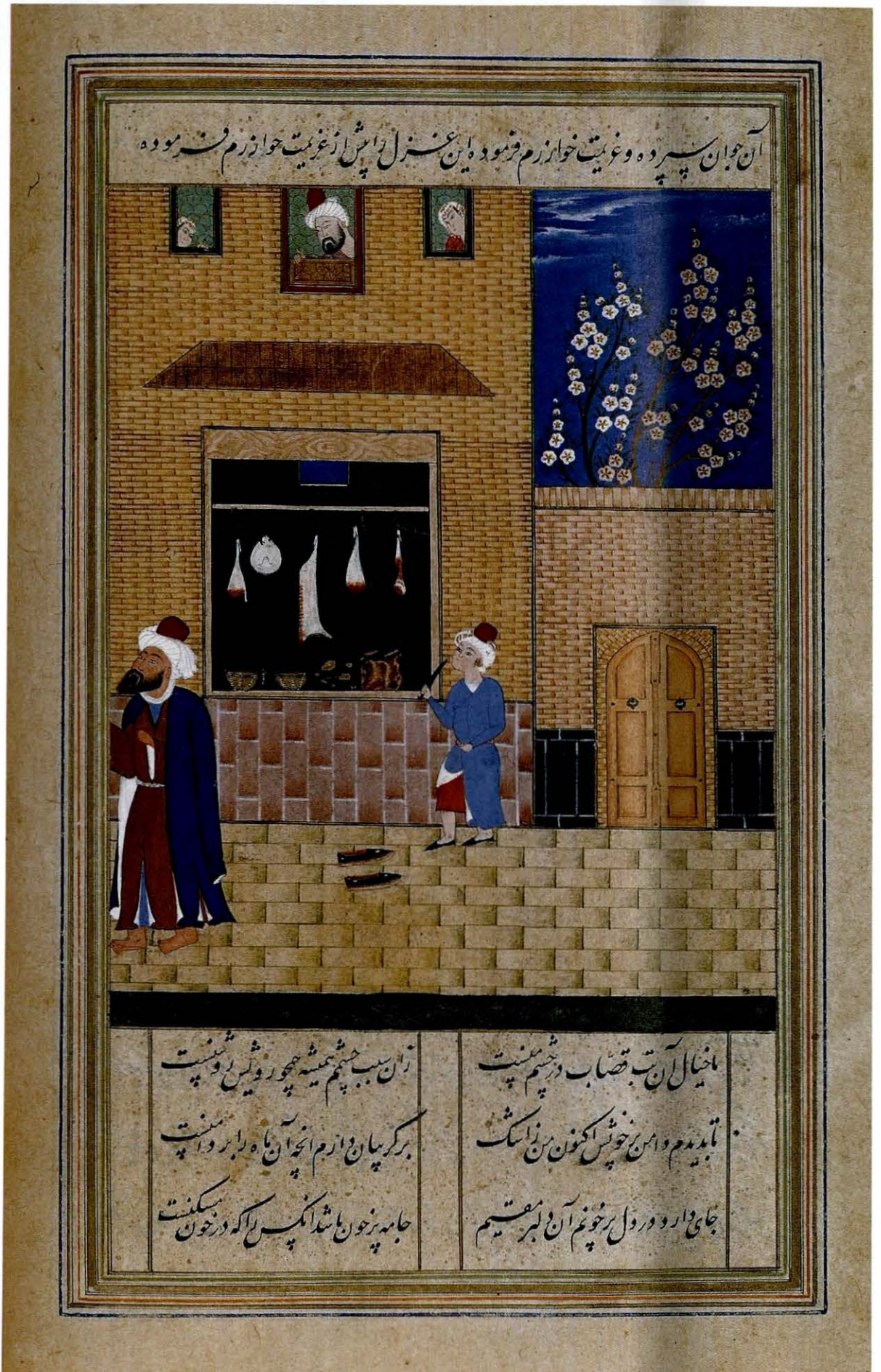


Figure 7.3

Hakim Sana'i leaves his shoes with the butcher boy. From a manuscript of a work attributed to Gazurgahi, *Majalis al-'Usbsbaq*, dated 959 (1552). Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS. Ouseley Add. 24, fol. 44v.

Figure 7.4 (opposite)

Hakim Sana'i brings goats to the butcher boy. From a manuscript of a work attributed to Gazurgahi, *Majalis al-'Usbsbaq*, copied c. 1580. Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, H.829, fol. 50v.

حکیم بن مجازم رسیده عالم آنجا اعزاز و اکرام نمود و پانصد که سفید اعلی
 که ز این دو آن جوان تر همین عدد و کوی سفید طلبیده بود چون کوی سفید را بطلب
 رسانید گفتش خود را طلبیده آن جوان همان روز اول گفتش را گم کرده بود بعضی



که برینست که پروای آن دارد که امانت را با طلبیده یا نه او خود پروای سمرند است
 جمعی عاید آن با حکیم گفته کسی گفتش را که بغایت مختصر است نگاه داشت
 دلی که صد برابر بجز و برست چون نگاه خواهد داشت در جواب ایشان گفت

boy holds a large butcher's knife; a pair of shoes sits on the ground in front of the shop. The c. 1580 copy from the Topkapi Palace Museum in Istanbul illustrates the second stage of the story and shows the barefooted Sana'i with the 500 goats that would have allowed him to reclaim his shoes (Figure 7.4).

Even though Edward Browne was critical of the literary merit of the *Majalis al-'Ushshaq*, saying that it

'hardly deserves to be mentioned as a serious biographical work',⁹ it was evidently very popular. The abundance of illustrations in most *Majalis* manuscripts from the 1580s must have contributed to its popularity. Most had a picture every two or three pages, as well as the interesting or entertaining details found in the images, including urban scenes never before seen in Persian classical texts.

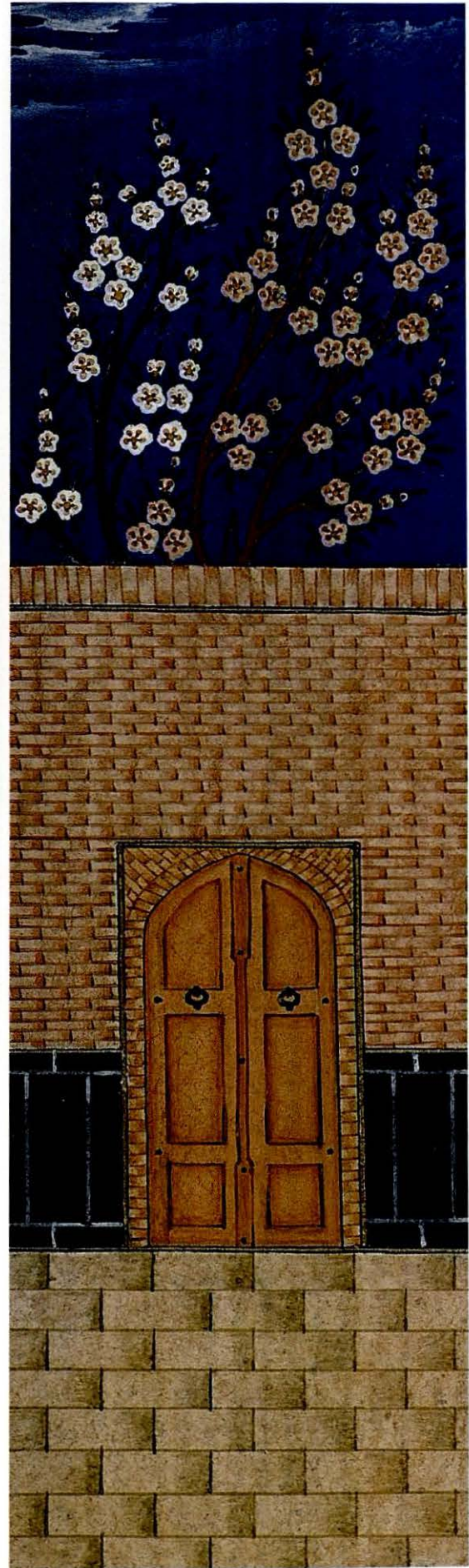
Lâle Uluç completed her PhD in 2000 at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, and is currently teaching at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul. Her publications include 'Selling to the Court: Late Sixteenth Century Shiraz Manuscripts', *Muqarnas* 17 (2000) and *Turkman Governors, Shiraz Artisans and Ottoman Collectors: Arts of the Book in 16th Century Shiraz* (2006).



Detail from Figure 7.1

Notes:

- 1 Charles Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 3 vols & supplement (London: British Museum, 1879–95), 1: 351–53; Edward G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, 4 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928), 4: 439–40; Charles A. Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey*, 2 vols and supps (London: Luzac, 1927–58), 2: 959–62; Kamal al-Din Husain Gazurgahi, *Majalis al-'Usbsbaq*, ed. G. R. Tabataba'i (Tabriz: Intisharat-i Zerrin, 1375 [1997]).
- 2 Babur Mirza, *Baburnama*, ed. and trans. Wheeler M. Thackston (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, 1993), 366–7, cited by Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. 4, 439–40.
- 3 Babur Mirza, *Baburnama*, 366–7; Khwandamir, *Habibu's-siyar*, vol. 3, ed. and trans. Wheeler M. Thackston (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, 1994), 513. Storey, *Persian Literature*, 2: 960 and n1; Jan Rypka, 'Persian Literature to the Beginning of the Twentieth Century', in *History of Iranian Literature*, ed. Jan Rypka (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1968), 289; Felix Tauer, 'Persian Learned Literature from Its Beginnings up to the End of the 18th Century' in *History of Iranian Literature*, ed. Rypka, 452–3. The 16th-century chronicler Sam Mirza, *Tubfa'-i Sami* (957 [1549]), ed. V. Dastgirdi (Tehran, Armaghan, 1314 [1935–36]), 15, on the other hand, attributes it to Husayn Mirza. Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts*, 351–2, accepts this attribution, as does Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. 4, 439–40.
- 4 Lâle Uluç, *Turkman Governors, Shiraz Artisans, and Ottoman Collectors: Arts of the Book in 16th Century Shiraz* (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2006), 500–3; also see Lâle Uluç, 'Majalis al-'Usbsbaq: Written in Herat, Copied in Shiraz and Read in Istanbul', in *M. Uğur Derman 65 Yaş Armağanı/65th Birthday Festschrift*, ed. Irvin C. Schick (Istanbul: Sabanci University, 2000), 569–603; also published in *Proceedings of the 11th International Congress of Turkish Art, Utrecht, The Netherlands, August 23–28, 1999*, ed. M. Kiel, N. Landman & H. Theunissen, *Electronic Journal of Oriental Studies* 4, no. 54 (2001), 1–34, <http://www.let.uu.nl/EJOS>.
- 5 Thomas Arnold, *Painting in Islam* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928), pl. XXXIII, facing 110; Uluç, *Turkman Governors*, 190, figs 134 and 135.
- 6 Priscilla Soucek, 'Solomon's Throne/Solomon's Bath: Model or Metaphor?' *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993): 115; Arnold, *Painting in Islam*, 108, cites the Qur'anic verse (27.44): 'It was said to her "Enter the palace"; and when she saw it, she thought it was a lake of water and bared her legs. He said, "Lo! it is a palace smoothly paved with glass." This was later elaborated by commentators.
- 7 The word used in the text is *gusfand* (Kamal al-Din Husayn Gazurgahi, *Majalis al-'Usbsbaq*, fol. 93), which can mean either a sheep or a goat. I prefer goat, because the illustrations of this incident in some of the *Majalis al-'Usbsbaq* manuscripts depict goats.
- 8 Basil W. Robinson, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Persian Paintings in the Bodleian Library* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), pl. XIV, cat. no. 763; Uluç, *Turkman Governors*, 202, fig. 144.
- 9 Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. 4, 439–40.



Detail from Figure 7.3