



HAFEZ XII. HAFEZ AND THE VISUAL ARTS

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The extensive scholarship devoted to the poetry of Hafez has not yet extended to a systematic consideration of the impact of his *Divān* on the visual arts. Manuscripts of his poetry have been considered primarily as sources for textual criticism but those same manuscripts could yield information about the ways his verses were understood and used in various places and periods. Even the manuscripts' chronological and geographical distribution could provide an index for the extent and growth of his popularity. Copies with elaborate decoration or illustrations may reveal how his verses were understood. Sporadic reference has been made to the transcription of his poetry on objects, but a more systematic investigation could be undertaken. His verses have also been used by painters working in the 19th and 20th centuries as a resource for the creation of "word pictures" that provide an alternative to figural representations.

The earliest Hafez manuscripts. The need for a critical edition of Hafez's *Divān* prompted scholars to undertake a systematic examination of public and private collections to identify manuscripts that were both early and carefully written. The identification of such copies allowed scholars, notably



Moḥammad Qazvini, Parviz Nātel Kānlari and more recently Rašid Ayvaži, to use them as the basis of their editions. The edition of Ayvaži utilized nine manuscripts dated between 813/1410 and 827/ 1423. Those copies are now scattered from Istanbul and Tehran to Dushanbe and Hyderabad, but most of the examples illustrated by Ayvaži appear to have been produced in Shiraz. These manuscripts underscore the fact that during the first three decades of the 9th/15th century Hafez's verses were both excerpted for *jongs* and *safinas* (anthologies of rectangular or oblong format) and collected as an independent *Divān* of over 400 ghazals (Hafez, *Divān*, ed. Rašid Ayvaži, Tehran, 1376, preface pp. 68-73 and unnumbered plates). The high quality of calligraphy and illumination found in these same manuscripts also demonstrates that within a few decades of his death his works were being replicated by professional calligraphers and illuminators for highly placed patrons.

Despite the existence of several early manuscripts containing virtually the entire corpus of his work known today, luxury manuscripts of Hafez's poetry are extremely varied in their scope. Some contain only a few poems, others his entire *Divān*. When his poetry is illustrated those pictures are also diverse in subject and form; in some cases this variety may reflect different interpretations given to his work. Among the earliest such manuscripts are a pair of *safinas* (oblong anthologies) now in Paris. One, Mss. or. Suppl. persan 1798, a manuscript of ca. 1450, has pages containing a pair of *bayts* written diagonally and wide borders stenciled with vegetal and figural designs (Richard, 1997, no. 49, p.83). In the other, Mss. or. Suppl. persan 1425, 19b-20a, Hafez's text is illustrated by a pair of paintings, one showing a woman with a young child, the other a couple under a flowering tree (Richard, 1997, no. 55, pp. 86-87, 100; see [PLATE I](#)).

The verses of Hafez on metalwork. Metalwork vessels inscribed with the verses of Hafez provide another index of his popularity. Those from the fifteenth century are particularly significant because they were mainly produced in Khorasan, possibly in Herat, and thus testify to the widening geographic scope of his audience. His verses are found on several kinds of objects, such as pen-boxes and candlesticks, but above all on several types of drinking vessels, where the *bayts* cited usually refer to the act of drinking. The earliest known example is a *mašraba* (jug) completed in 866/1461-62, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum (943-1886). Its neck has the usual wishes for its anonymous owner, but the vessel's body is ringed by four inscription bands that cite two complete ghazals by Hafez. The upper and lower ones bear the text of Kānlari



no. 172, with 1-4 on the top and 5-8 on the bottom. The two middle bands cite *Ḳānlari* no. 66 (Melikian-Chirvani, 1982, no. 109, p. 249, see [PLATE II](#); Komaroff, 1992, no. 4, pp. 156-58). Another fine example is a *bādiā* (wine bowl) in the Hermitage Collection (IR-2173) made for a certain Emāmḡoli Kiāni ca. 900/1494 inscribed on its interior rim with the first three *bayts* of *Ḳānlari* no. 388, verses that are cited on many later vessels including several made for Armenian patrons, probably in Isfahan during the 17th century. The Hermitage bowl's exterior rim carries references to the magical cup of Jamšid (*Ḳānlari* no. 137:1-3, 10); the cartouches on its body are inscribed with verses that praise wine drinking (*Ḳānlari*, no. 383:1-2, 4; Komaroff, 1992, no. 29, pp. 216-17; Melikian-Chirvani, 1982, nos. 161-163, pp. 344-48).

Poetry of Hafez in 16th-century manuscripts. The 16th century constitutes the apex in production for illustrated copies of Hafez's *Divān*; they were made in several places for a range of patrons (Soudavar, 1992, no. 77, pp. 208-9; E. Grube, 1968, no. 60, p. 195). The most celebrated of these copies is dedicated to Sām Mirzā, the son of Shah Esmā'il and a famous biographer of poets, and contains four paintings, two signed by Solṡān-Moḡammad 'Erāqi and another with the signature of Šayḡ-zāda, a combination that suggests that some of the illustrations were executed in Herat and others in Tabriz. Most scholars have accepted the dating of ca. 934/1527 for this manuscript, proposed by Stuart Cary Welch. Formerly in the Cartier Collection, it is presently divided between two private collections, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Harvard University Art Museum. Scholars are unanimous in their praise of its paintings, and those signed by Solṡān-Moḡammad 'Erāqi, usually described as "The Feast of 'Eid Begins" (fol. 86a) and "Worldly and Other-Worldly Drunkenness" (fol. 135a), have been published repeatedly (I. Stchoukine, 1959, no. 12, pp. 60-62; S. C. Welch, 1976, pp. 20-21, 62-69, pls. 15-18; A. Soudavar, 1992, no. 59, pp. 159-61, see [PLATE III](#)). All of its paintings were clearly intended to provide a visual rendering of specific aspects of Hafez's text, but some may also have been intended to convey more personal messages to the manuscript's patron.

The largest group of the illustrated Hafez manuscripts was produced in Shiraz, the most impressive among them dating to the 970s/1580s (Uluḡ, 2000, pp. 473-76). Although clearly produced for persons of means, none is dedicated to a specific patron, so that they are usually described as commercial products. Some of their illustrations, such as frontispieces and finispieces, are probably generic, but paintings situated in the body of the text probably have a



connection with themes in Hafez's poetry. Since similar topics are treated in many ghazals, the seemingly generic scenes of gatherings in mosques or taverns illustrating individual manuscripts must be catalogued before general conclusions can be drawn about the way Shiraz painters interpreted Hafez's text (Richard, 1997, nos. 134, 136, 140, pp. 196, 198, 200; see [PLATE IV](#)). One published tavern scene in Paris, BN Suppl. persan 1477, situated just after lines describing how the tavern keeper hands Hafez the "cup of Jamšid," appears quite literal in its interpretation of the text: *Ķānlari* no. 136: 3a-b, 4a (Richard, 1997, no. 134, p. 196). The painting of a mosque where a sermon is being delivered, in a manuscript belonging to the Sackler Museum, Smithsonian Institution (S86.0048, fol. 140b), appears to illustrate only the preceding verse that describes such a sermon rather than the poem's more general theme. It is situated after *Ķānlari*, 344: 3a-b (Lowry & Beach, 1988, no. 160, fol. 140b, pp. 128-29). There are also several notable examples in the collections of university libraries in Britain, which have been described and catalogued by Basil W. Robinson in his separate surveys. Among several examples, one may cite a manuscript of the *Divān* from Shiraz circa 1580 (Ryl Pers. 945 in the John Rylands Library, Manchester; see B. W. Robinson, *Persian Paintings in the John Rylands Library*, London, 1980, p. 221, four plates, pp. 222-23, with quotations from the *Divān*, *Ķānlari* 133, 655 and 380). In the Bodleian library, Oxford, the Ms. Ousley 20 (Ethé 819), dated Rabi' I, 956/1549 contains interesting illustrations, some of which have been marred by very clumsy retouching (B. W. Robinson, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Persian Paintings in the Bodleian Library*, Oxford, 1958, p. 94).

Illustration of Hafez in the 17th century. Most 17th-century illustrated Hafez manuscripts remain unpublished, but comments about them in catalogues suggest that illustrators turned their attention from creating narrative images such as those found in 16th-century copies to the production of studies, often lightly tinted drawings, involving couples—often a mature man and a youth. The most dramatic examples of this type are two manuscripts probably dating to the 1070s/1660s, one now in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (P. 299) and the other, H. 1010, in the Topkapi Saray Museum, Istanbul (Arberry, Robinson et al., 1962, no. 299, p. 68; Karatay, 1961, no. 645, p. 221; I. Stchoukine, 1964, pp.152-53). The Dublin copy contains 490 tinted drawings in 500 folios, the Istanbul one has 558 illustrations on 578 folios. In each case the books approximate the appearance of a *muraqqa'* or album in which calligraphic specimens alternate with paintings. It is probable that Hafez's poetry appears frequently in albums, but few of these have been studied or published (Welch



et al., 1987, nos. 43, 61, pp. 170, 206).

Illustration of Hafez during the 18th and 19th centuries. Kashmir emerged as a major center for manuscript production during the late 18th century and manuscripts continued to be produced there well into 19th century. Together with other classics of Persian literature, Kashmiri workshops produced a number of illustrated copies of Hafez's *Divān*. Although their illustrations were often executed in a rather summary fashion, Kashmiri painters had an original approach to the illustration of Hafez, exploiting the fact that the ghazal is, in a sense, a recital of shared knowledge, mythical or historical, between the poet and his audience and often merely alludes to a person or an incident described at length in the long and leisurely tomes of narrative poetry. Their compositions thus usually have two levels: the lower one shows a seated, bearded man who appears to be speaking, who is usually understood to depict the poet himself reciting his own verses. The painting's upper level contains a separate composition that is usually linked to themes mentioned in the associated verse. Many depict well known personages made famous by other poets and only mentioned in passing by Hafez, such as Yusof, Jamšid, Farhād (q.v.) or Širin (Adamova & Grek, 1975, nos. 4-7, 15, pp. 73-76, 81-82, pl. 31-48, 68-69; see also Norah M. Titley, *Miniatures from Persian Manuscripts: A Catalogue and Subject Index of Paintings from Persia, India and Turkey in the British Library and the British Museum*, London, 1977, which lists the subject matter of the Kashmiri manuscripts in the London collection, pp. 56-61).

Illustration of Hafez in the 20th century. The poetry of Hafez continues to inspire Persian artists, but the scanty publication of their works makes it difficult to generalize about their creations. Here one such example will be noted, the paintings executed by Ḥosayn Zendarudi to accompany a short anthology of Hafez's poetry in both the original Persian and an English translation entitled *Dance of Life*, published in 1988. Zendarudi created a "word picture" to accompany each of the twelve ghazals included in this book. All contain several layers of calligraphy superimposed on each other, but some also employ geometric shapes or symbols such as the crescent moon. Although all are calligraphic, not all of Zendarudi's creations are easily read. Most appear to have been created for an audience that knows by heart every word of every Hafez verse. The recognition of any phrase permits such persons to recall an entire ghazal so that the verses need not be cited in their usual order, though the *maṭla'*, or opening hemistich, is usually given a prominent place in the composition (Hafez, 1988, passim).



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