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# Inclusion and Exclusion of Literary Elements in Mastūrah Kurdistānī's Ghazals

Hadi Tite\*

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\*Hadi Tite holds a PhD in Persian Language and Literature from Urmia University and is a poet, fiction writer, and researcher of contemporary literature. He previously served as the editor-in-chief of the Hakim University Persian Language and Literature Scientific Association and the director of Parnian-i Sokhan magazine.

## Introduction

Māh Sharaf Khānum Mastūrah, a nineteenth-century Iranian poet who wrote under the pen name “Mastūrah,” was born in Sanandaj (a city in the Kurdistān province) around 1220 AH/1805 CE. According to the *Majma‘ al-fusahā* (Assembly of the eloquent), Mastūrah passed away in 1263 AH/1846 CE.<sup>1</sup> In her poetry, one can observe simplicity, purity of heart, pure love, pride in virtue and chastity, delicate sentiments, and refined thoughts. While early editions of Mastūrah’s collections of poems (*dīvān*) suggest that the weak verses in her poetry are the result of alterations made by the scribes, her literary merit, along with her command of language and eloquence, remains a subject of scholarly discussion.<sup>2</sup>

By drawing on words and expressions that have become literary signs in the tradition of Persian poetry, Mastūrah has contributed something new to the literary imagery established by her predecessors. In other words, Mastūrah utilizes the artistic resources and techniques of her predecessors in the realm of signs. Literary signs pertaining to the beloved’s countenance, love, nature, convivial gatherings, and wine-drinking predominate in her ghazals. These thematic elements, entrenched in the Persian lyrical tradition, constitute the core of her poetic imagery, reflecting the conventional preoccupations of the ghazal form. In

this article, the concept of the sign aligns with Charles Peirce's definition: "a sign... is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity."<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, in Persian literature, symbols, myths, metaphors, metonyms, and paradoxes are all considered types of signs as part of rhetoric. In essence, the poet employs one word in place of another, manipulating the paradigmatic axis of words and selecting one thing to represent another. In this regard, Mastūrah uses literary signs, but does not merely employ the established ones, as doing so would result in repetition and artistic banality. She modifies these signs in two ways: by amplification and reduction. Specifically, she sometimes adds an element or depth to the pre-existing sign and, at other times, removes an element from it. The poet's manipulation of these signs serves a purpose, and according to the field of semantics (a branch of rhetoric), these modifications fulfill secondary aims.

<sup>1</sup>Majma' al-fusahā was authored by Rizā Qulī Khān Hidāyat (1800–1871), a prominent Qajar-era literary historian, administrator, and poet. Completed in 1871, shortly before his death, this monumental biographical dictionary of poets remains a key resource in Persian literary history.

<sup>2</sup>Mastūrah Kurdistānī, *Divān-i Mastūrah Kurdistānī* [Diwan of Mastūrah Kurdistānī] (Tehran: Pīshāhang-i Sukhan, 1384/2005), 3.

<sup>3</sup>Charles Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* (Harvard University Press, 1960), 228.

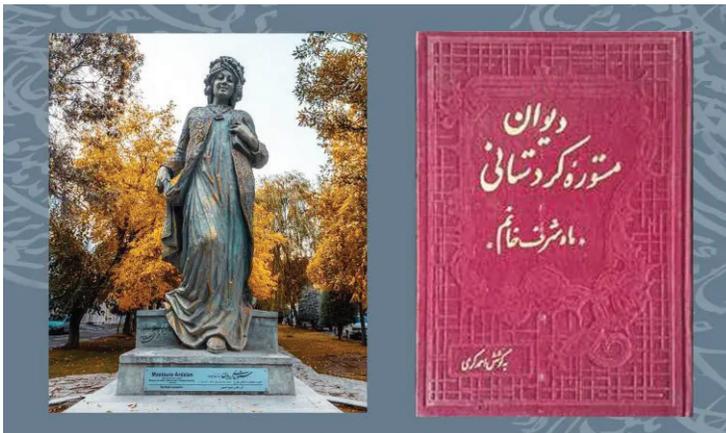


Figure 1- From left: The statue of Mastura Kurdistani on Khosrowabad Boulevard, Sanandaj, created by Hadi Ziaoddini. The cover of The book of Mastura Ardalan Kurdistani (Poetry Collection).

### Adding Elements and Depth to Literary Signs

By drawing on previously established literary signs, Mastūrah incorporates their meanings to evoke the ideas presented by past poets. In certain instances, the exact theme is repeated without

<sup>4</sup>Kurdistānī, *Dīvān*, 8.

<sup>5</sup>Jalāl al-Dīn Humāyī, *Funūn-i balāghat va sanā'āt-i adabī* [Rhetorical arts and literary techniques] (Tehran, 1367/1988), 236.

<sup>6</sup>Shams al-Dīn Muhammad Hāfiz Shirāzī, *Dīvān-i Hāfiz* [Diwan of Hāfiz] (Tehran: Zavvār, 1390/2011), 165.

the poet introducing any additional elements to the literary sign. For example, in the following couplet, Mastūrah uses the word “parrot” as a symbol of eloquence, fluency, and rhetorical mastery:

The parrot will no longer yearn for eloquent speech  
(shakar-khāyī),

If it hears the fame of your sweet words.<sup>4</sup>

Mastūrah has borrowed this linguistic sign from earlier poets and, drawing on it, has presented an implied (hidden) and comparative (preferential) simile. As Jalāl Humāyī asserts, “a preferential simile is one in which a comparison is made first, and once the comparison is established, the subject is then elevated or deemed superior to the object of comparison.”<sup>5</sup> In other words, Mastūrah gives the lover’s way of speaking and sweet words superiority over the parrot in terms of eloquence. By drawing on a pre-existing and fully developed symbol, she transforms her own speech and positions the parrot as inferior to the lover in this comparison. The word *shakar-khāyī* (literally, “yearning for sugar”), used in the above couplet, also functions as a literary sign. The parrot appears to be rubbing its beak on sugar, but poets have used this word metaphorically, considering sugar as a metaphor for sweet words and eloquent speech. The secondary aim of prioritizing the lover over the parrot in sweet speech lies in “love and affection.” With this interpretation, compared to Hāfiz’s poetry, Mastūrah adds something new to the existing literary signs. In her poem, there is an artistic rationale (poetical aetiology), where the second verse provides an additional cause, suggesting that the lover’s sweet speech is the reason the parrot ceases to speak sweet words.

O parrot, speaker of secrets,

May your beak never be without sugar.<sup>6</sup>



In this couplet, Hāfīz presents the parrot simply as an eloquent speaker of sweet words, while preserving the dual meaning of “sugar” as a literary sign, representing both its literal meaning and its metaphorical sense of sweet speech. In Hāfīz’s verse, the use of the word *minqār* (beak) evokes the literal meaning of the word “sugar.” As mentioned earlier, Mastūrah, in borrowing literary signs, sometimes incorporates both the established sign and its associated theme into her poetry.

I do not lament your cruelty, for in the lover’s faith,

A true lover is one who endures the weight of cruelty.<sup>7</sup>

In classical Persian poetry, the lover’s passion and agony for the beloved are recurring motifs found in every ghazal poet’s verses. Most poets lament their separation from the beloved; this theme is repeated so frequently, particularly in the poetry of the Iraqi school (*maktab-i ‘Irāqī*), that it becomes an artistic cliché. In the verse above, Mastūrah compares the cruelty and injustice of the beloved toward the lover to a burden that the sincere lover must endure. However, she, by reversing this concept and, by highlighting the artistic rationale, transforms the previously established meanings. In fact, in the first line, Mastūrah changes our expectations by stating, “I do not lament.” The lover’s sincerity, as a devoted figure, stands in contrast to the beloved’s cruelty as a literary sign. The same theme and literary sign are repeated in the poetry of Sa‘dī:

The value of love is not known by one who lacks sincerity,

A weak vow cannot endure the burden of agony.<sup>8</sup>

The difference between Sa‘dī’s couplet and Mastūrah’s is that Mastūrah begins by altering the audience’s expectations in the first line and then provides poetical aetiology in the second. “An excellent excuse or a beautiful causal explanation occurs when the speaker finds a conceptual connection between two

<sup>7</sup>Kurdistānī, *Dīvān*, 9.

<sup>8</sup>Muslīh ibn ‘Abd Allāh Sa‘dī Shīrāzī, *Ghazaliyyāt-i Sa‘dī* [The Ghazals of Sa‘dī] (Tehran: Fikr-i Rūz, 1380/2001), 8.

<sup>9</sup>Mirjalāl al-Dīn Kazzāzī, *Baḍī* [Rhetoric] (Tehran: Markaz, 1392/2013), 163.

<sup>10</sup>Kurdistānī, *Dīvān*, 11.

<sup>11</sup>Mirjalāl al-Dīn Kazzāzī, *Ma'ānī* [Meanings] (Tehran: Markaz, 1393/2014), 50.

phenomena and poetically presents one as the reason and justification for the other.”<sup>9</sup> The contrast between Sa‘dī’s verse and Mastūrah’s causes a shift in our interpretation of her verse. Sa‘dī characterizes a lover who cannot endure the beloved’s cruelty as lacking commitment and stability. In contrast, Mastūrah does not lament her beloved, as he has remained faithful and steadfast in his commitment.

The secondary aim of the phrase “enduring the weight of cruelty” in this verse by Mastūrah is to emphasize the themes of commitment and sincerity in love. While the lover’s commitment has long been a common theme in Persian poetry, with the emergence of Vahshī’s work, weakness, abasement, and suffering for the beloved were no longer regarded as praiseworthy or as signs of constancy in love. Considering that Mastūrah was a woman in love, and in Iranian and Kurdish culture, she would typically be expected to be the beloved whose whims are indulged, she boldly assumes the role of the lover. She fearlessly embraces love and shows no hesitation in demonstrating her steadfastness and willingness to endure the beloved’s caprices. The ultimate goal is to express love and affection, implicitly conveying to the beloved her sincerity and steadfastness. In Mastūrah’s poetry, love takes on an uplifting role. Rather than focusing on the secondary aspect of sorrow in love, the poet uses declarative statements to emphasize joy and enthusiasm:

Mastūrah has become so enamored and infatuated with love,

That she no longer distinguishes her head from her feet.<sup>10</sup>

Both hemistiches are declarative, and in terms of meaning, the secondary aim of the verse is to express joy and vitality. “The poet sometimes reveals her own happiness and joy to the audience,” to the point where they become lost and absorbed in themselves.<sup>11</sup> The meaning of the verse reflects how the poet loses herself in happiness and vitality. This vitality is also evident in the prosodic musicality of the poem, as its meter is *maf’ūl-u*



mafā'īl-u mafā'īl-u fa'ūlun, or bahr-i hazaj-i musman-i akharb-i makfūf-i mahzūm, which is known for its rhythmic and lively quality. This joyful meter is often used to express themes of joy, vitality, and good news. The artistic nuance of this verse, in relation to its literary signs, is found in the phrase “by her head” (bih sar-i khvud). If we interpret “by” (bih) as an oath, it reflects the influence of popular and oral culture, in which people swear by their head. Alternatively, the head (sar) could be a synecdoche for the poet’s eyes or intellect, suggesting that the poet is so consumed by love that she can no longer distinguish her head from her feet with her own eyes. In this sense, the “head” in Mastūrah’s poetry serves as both a metonym and a literary sign, while also serving as an oath influenced by Kurdish culture, where swearing by one’s head is common. Although the concept of “not distinguishing head from feet” appears in Abū Sa‘īd Abū al-Khayr’s quatrain, it does not carry the same multifaceted function:

Your madman did not distinguish the mountain from the desert,

The madman of your love could not tell head from feet.

Whoever found the path to you became lost to himself,

The one who recognized you did not recognize himself<sup>12</sup>

Mastūrah has drawn from Sa‘dī in describing the beloved’s face:

Is that sweat on your cheek or rosewater?

Or dewdrops forming bubbles on a flower?<sup>13</sup>

The poet compares the sweat on the lover’s face to rosewater, creating a symbolic representation of the lover’s beauty through words such as “rosewater,” “flower,” and “dew.” The distinction lies in the fact that Mastūrah expands upon the concept

<sup>12</sup>Abū Sa‘īd Abū al-Khayr, Majmū‘ah-‘i rubā‘iyyāt-i Abū Sa‘īd Abū al-Khayr [Collection of quatrains of Abū Sa‘īd Abū al-Khayr] (Hamadan: Hunar‘āfarīn, 1384/2005), 15.

<sup>13</sup>Kurdistānī, Dīvān, 13.

<sup>14</sup>Sa‘dī Shīrāzī, Ghazaliyyāt, 496.

<sup>15</sup>Kurdistānī, Divān, 13.

introduced in the first line of Sa‘dī’s couplet:

Is that sweat from your body or rosewater?

Is that breath from your mouth or ambergris?<sup>14</sup>

Mastūrah’s verse expands on the symbols of the beloved’s beauty. It is important to note the interrogative and exclamatory nature of the sentences, which are not meant to be true or false. The poet’s question employs the rhetorical device known as feigned ignorance (*tajāhul al-‘ārif*), in which the poet deliberately pretends to be unaware, posing questions based on this feigned lack of knowledge. The poet is fully aware that what flows on the lover’s face is sweat, not rosewater. However, by posing the question, she feigns ignorance, thus establishing a connection between the rose and the lover’s face. The rose becomes a sign and symbol for the beauty of the beloved’s face. In the second line, the poet compares the beloved’s breath to the fragrant ambergris.

Unlike Sa‘dī, who does not elaborate further on the beloved’s face in his verse, Mastūrah offers a more elaborate development of the imagery. She expands on two borrowed figures, establishing connections with signs in both lines. In her couplet, the face is associated with the flower, sweat with the dewdrop, and breath with ambergris. In her poetry, Mastūrah seeks union with the beloved, and in this context, she equates the day of union with spring:

How delightful is the month of Farvardīn,

With flowers, wine, the beloved, and the sound of the lute.<sup>15</sup>

In Mastūrah’s verse, Farvardīn is an allegory for spring, renewal, and freshness. Like Hāfiz in the line “(When) the rose is in the bosom, wine in the hand, and the beloved to my desire” (*gul dar bar-u may bar kaf-u ma‘shūq bih kām ast*), she longs for the



beloved and the indulgence in wine on such a day. Mastūrah's use of Farvardīn, which refers to a specific time, emphasizes both the details and the splendor of being with the beloved. On the other hand, the verse employs the rhetorical device of jam' (combination) in the second line. Wine, the beloved, and music are of different natures, yet the poet has combined them. The secondary purpose of the declarative sentences in the above verse is to express joy and vitality for the anticipated day of lover and beloved. This is similar to Hāfiz's poem, where the theme of joy from meeting the beloved is expressed:

<sup>16</sup>Hāfiz Shīrāzī, *Divān-i Hāfiz*, 338.

<sup>17</sup>Kurdistānī, *Divān*, 13.

Two clever companions, and two measures of aged wine,

Leisure, a book, and the corner of a meadow.<sup>16</sup>

Hāfiz's verse and Mastūrah's are similar in expressing joy as a secondary purpose and in using the rhetorical device of jam'. However, compared to Hāfiz, Mastūrah uses fewer literary signs, focusing on only two literary themes: "union with the beloved" and "spring." In contrast, Hāfiz expands on the image of "union with the beloved and wine indulgence."

Cruelty is one of the beloved's characteristics, and Mastūrah conveys this theme effectively in her poetry:

How long must we endure this cruelty?

Every moment, a grain of salt from your ruby, salty lips, falls upon our heart's wound<sup>17</sup>

The poet compares the ruby (la'1) to the redness of the lips, and in classical Persian literature, ruby is a symbol of the beloved's lips. The beloved pours salt on the lover's heart wound and tortures him. The word "salty" (namakīn) is interpreted both in its modern meaning of "winsome and agreeable" and in its original sense, evoking the image of salt being poured on a wound. However, the key point of this verse lies in its implicit meaning.

<sup>18</sup>Hāfiz Shīrāzī, *Divān-i Hāfiz*, 11.

<sup>19</sup>Hāfiz Shīrāzī, *Divān-i Hāfiz*, 204.

Mastūrah speaks of the torment inflicted by the beloved, and in the second line, she describes the lips “salty” with dual connotations, suggesting that she remains captivated by the beloved’s beauty despite the suffering. This usage illustrates a masochistic aspect of Mastūrah’s attitude toward love. Although, as suggested by the verse, Mastūrah seems to express a complaint about this matter through a question, her description of the beloved’s lips reveals the underlying nature of her attitude toward love. The same theme and literary motif of “pouring salt from salty lips onto the wound,” is also reflected in the Hāfiz’s poetry:

Your lips and teeth owe rights of salt

To the soul and sizzling hearts<sup>18</sup>

When we compare Mastūrah’s verse with that of Hāfiz, the lips become an allegory for speaking, while salty lips symbolize harsh and unpleasant words, alluding to biting remarks and insinuations. Thus, a concept emerges with two opposing meanings. Considering the cruelty and injustice of the beloved, it can be said that in Mastūrah’s verse, “salty” signifies harsh words. However, considering the lover’s admiration for the beloved and their beauty, it can also be interpreted that the “ruby, salty lips” allude to sweet words in a sarcastic manner. Mastūrah’s verse, in comparison with the following verse from Hāfiz, contains fewer literary signs in this regard:

My wounded heart has salt rights with your lip,

Preserve this right, for I depart, and God be with you.<sup>19</sup>

The right of “breaking bread” (*haqq-i namak-khvardagī*, literally, “the obligation incurred after sharing salt”) is a colloquial expression, referring to a moral duty that arises between two people who have shared a meal together. The idea is that a person who has eaten salt from someone’s food should, for this



reason, maintain respect and courtesy toward that person. This concept reflects an aspect of Iranian culture where one should acknowledge and repay the rights of the benefactor and the one who has provided sustenance.

<sup>20</sup>Kurdistānī, Dīvān, 16.

<sup>21</sup>Sa' dī Shīrāzī, Ghazaliyyāt, 111.

<sup>22</sup>Kurdistānī, Dīvān, 20.

In continuing the description of the beloved, the lips function as an allegory and a literary sign to mean speech. Since the lips are the instrument of speaking, it can be said that the allegory reflects the degree of affinity:

Sweeter to me than honey and sugar

Is the bitter smile from your lips.<sup>20</sup>

The bitterness of the beloved's lips' actions is sweet to her. This is because the beloved's lips are sweet both literally and allegorically, with the lips referring to sweet words. In other words, even bitter words appear sweet to the lover. Sa' dī expresses the same idea in the following verse:

Poison from you turns to healing elixirs,

Even reproach from your lips is a sweet delight<sup>21</sup>

Sa' dī explicitly uses the word "reproach" (fahsh) to describe harsh words, whereas Mastūrah alludes to them indirectly with an allegorical expression. She adds depth to the literary sign of the "lips" by emphasizing the theme of enduring the beloved's cruelty:

With the arrow of his eyelash, that unfaithful one, with a bow so taut,

My heart became sorrow's target, and my soul's bird wounded.<sup>22</sup>

Mastūrah portrays her beloved as one who frequently violates

<sup>23</sup>Sa‘dī Shīrāzī, Ghazaliyyāt, 90.

<sup>24</sup>Kurdistānī, Dīvān, 20.

their mutual vows. Through expressions such as “taut as a bow” and “arrow of the eyelash,” she underscores the power and impact of the beloved’s gaze, thereby enhancing the expressive beauty of her language. In the second line, she acknowledges the beloved’s influential power, which targets her heart and soul. She articulates even the most rudimentary concepts through literary devices such as simile, congruity, and allusion. Furthermore, her use of the verb *khastan* (to wound, to be wounded) instead of its modern equivalent demonstrates her adeptness in employing archaic verbs for literary effect.

How long will you surreptitiously launch your glance’s dart?

Reason has surrendered to your bloodthirsty arrows’ art.<sup>23</sup>

In the above distich, Sa‘dī’s expressions parallel Mastūrah’s, comparing the beloved’s eyelashes to the harshness and power of an arrow’s shaft. Sa‘dī’s distinction lies in the first line, where he asks, “How long will you surreptitiously launch your glance’s dart?” The second line displays the peak of his eloquence, as he portrays even reason (‘aql, also intellect) as defeated by the beloved’s beguiling lashes. The deployment of rhetorical devices such as simile, allusion, personification, and congruity elevates the aesthetic quality of Sa‘dī’s expression beyond that of Mastūrah.

None have witnessed the moon or the rose as fair as you,

Or the cypress in the meadow, as reputed to be so.<sup>24</sup>

Both lines can be read as declarative sentences or as rhetorical questions. If the entire couplet is read as a question, it intensifies the sense of the beloved’s superiority over the cypress or other beloveds. The secondary aim of elevating the beloved above symbols of beauty, such as the moon and the rose, is to express love and affection for the beloved. Prior to Mastūrah, poets employed the moon as a metaphor for the beautiful be-



loved and the rose as a metaphor for the beautiful face. Drawing on these earlier literary signs, Mastūrah subtly conveys her love for the beloved.

<sup>25</sup>Kurdistānī, *Dīvān*, 22.

<sup>26</sup>Hāfiz Shīrāzī, *Dīvān-i Hāfiz*, 300.

My delirium stems not solely from wine's inebriation,

But from intoxication by your eyes, O soul's consolation.<sup>25</sup>

Mastūrah, by forging a link between the beloved's eyes and the intoxicating qualities of wine (*mastī*) through imagery such as metaphor and simile, strives to ascribe her ecstasy to the beloved's eyes rather than to wine. In other words, a distance arises between being entranced by the beloved's gaze and the literal intoxication of wine, a gap that might be described as an aesthetic distance. Ultimately, the beloved's eyes fulfill the same role for the poet as wine does. Mastūrah attributes her intoxication and euphoria to the beauty and allure of the beloved's eyes, which have enraptured her. Through direct address, referring to her beloved as the "my soul's consolation," she expresses her desires explicitly. The use of rhetorical devices such as congruity, derivation, allegory (using "eyes" to denote the intoxicating gaze), and metaphor significantly enhances the aesthetic quality of her expression.

In contrast to Mastūrah, who attributes the source of her intoxication to the beloved's eyes rather than to wine drinking, Hāfiz envisions the beloved's eye as a remedy for his anguish, desiring it like wine to temporarily ease the agonizing pain of separation.

Intoxicated with those eyes, where do I find my cup?

Lovesick with the vision of those lips, of answers there's no sign.<sup>26</sup>

In the second hemistich, he employs an allegory to express his infatuation with the beloved's ruby-like lips (where "cup" met-

<sup>27</sup>Kurdistānī, *Divān*, 25.

<sup>28</sup>Kazzāzī, *Badī*, 110.

<sup>29</sup>Hāfiz Shīrāzī, *Divān-i Hāfiz*, 97.

aphorically represents wine, and “ruby” stands for the beloved’s lips). The use of rhetorical questions further accentuates the emphasis and aesthetic quality of his expression.

Mastūrah uses an allusion to a renowned romantic story of Laylā and Majnūn to convey her message in the following distich:

The chain binding Majnūn’s ravaged heart,  
Is forged from Laylā’s intricate tresses.<sup>27</sup>

An allusion (*talmīh*) is a literary device through which the speaker briefly references a story, tale, proverb, or saying, allowing for the enrichment of the semantic structure with depth and gravitas.<sup>28</sup> Mastūrah, drawing on the romantic story of Laylā and Majnūn, uses these protagonists as universal symbols of “lover” and “beloved.” In other words, in Mastūrah’s verse, Majnūn represents all lovers ensnared by their beloved’s beauty and love, while Laylā symbolizes all beloveds who captivate and mesmerize their lovers through the chains of their love.

I asked, “What’s the purpose of the beloved’s tresses in coils?”

He replied, “O Hāfiz, the frenzied heart was lodging its complaints.”<sup>29</sup>

In the above distich, Hāfiz’s use of a debate (or a dialogue) enhances the impact on the audience. In this context, he astutely employs a question-and-answer format instead of direct statement, indirectly conveying his message to elevate the reader’s level of persuasion. He likens the beloved’s curly hair to a chain that leads to madness and insanity, evoking the historical practice of restraining the insane with chains. In the second hemistich, he provides a literary (poetic) rationale, attributing the cause of the complaint to the lovers’ maddened hearts. Consequently, Hāfiz demonstrates greater proficiency in articulating the concepts and expanding upon them, whereas Mastūrah



concludes with a form of literary conciseness, employing literary devices such as poetic aetiology, metaphor, simile, and congruity.

<sup>30</sup>Kurdistānī, *Dīvān*, 40.

<sup>31</sup>Hāfiz Shīrāzī, *Dīvān-i Hāfiz*, 20.

Oh, what a revelry it was! Roses, candles, reeds, and the lute  
all convened,

The wine cup's laughter and the guffaw of the decanter re-  
sounded.<sup>30</sup>

The most prominent literary sign that Mastūrah, influenced by Hāfiz's poetry, employs, is the use of the words and phrases like qahqahah (guffaw) and khandah-'i jām (the wine cup's laughter). The term qahqahah refers to a loud and boisterous laugh. Through the rhetorical device of personification, the poet likens the sound of wine being poured into the cup to a human voice, filled with the exhilaration, intoxication, and joy characteristic of festivities and revelry. In addition to the mentioned points, Hāfiz also encapsulates the essence of a celebratory gathering in his poetry (e.g., "(When) the rose is in the bosom, wine in the hand, and the beloved to my desire"), which is reflected in the first hemistich of the couplet by Mastūrah, demonstrating an example of her emulation of Hāfiz's style of expression. The secondary aim of the declarative sentences in both Mastūrah's verse and the following verse by Hāfiz is to evoke a sense of joy and celebration:

The wine cup's laughter and the beloved's entangling curls,

How many repentances, like Hāfiz's, have been broken?<sup>31</sup>

Considering this verse, one can infer Hāfiz's influence on Mastūrah through her use of the phrase "the wine cup's laughter," However, Hāfiz, instead of repeating the previous expression, complements it with the phrase "the beloved's entangling curls," linking both elements to express his inability to maintain repentance. This suggests that the difficulty of remaining stead-

<sup>32</sup>Kurdistānī, *Divān*, 40.

<sup>33</sup>Hāfiz Shīrāzī, *Divān-i Hāfiz*, 259.

fast in the presence of the wine cup and the beloved's captivating tresses. Upon closer examination, one might even interpret this as a form of justification for failing to adhere to repentance.

With a cursory glance, one can discern that all the expressions used in the following distich by Mastūrah are characteristic of Hāfiz:

What can the Magian elder, or the ascetic take from me?

This woolen cloak and that wine-stained robe of mine.<sup>32</sup>

Hāfiz frequently uses terms such as “the Magian elder” (*pīr-i mughān*), “the ascetic” (*zāhid*) “woolen cloak” (*khirqah*) and “wine-stained robe” (*dalq-i may-ālūd*) throughout his oeuvre. In addition to these elements, the application of demonstrative pronouns “this” (*īn*) and “that” (*ān*) is characteristic of his technique and stylistic repertoire. Hāfiz's rhetorical strategy of implicating himself and the ascetic in transgression, a tactic employed to evade judgment by the rulers and religious authorities, is another hallmark of his poetic discourse. Mastūrah, in this regard, has faithfully adopted Hāfiz's approach as the cornerstone of her poetic expression. In Hāfiz's poetry, the figure of the “elder” (*pīr*) symbolizes the perfect human, the spiritual guide, and the mentor of humanity. This is palpably evident in Mastūrah's verse under consideration. On the other hand, the “wine-stained robe” subtly alludes to the hypocrisy of contemporary ascetics and their moral corruption, offering an indirect critique of religious pretension.

Let's offer the monastery's offerings and alms as the price of wine,

And cleanse hypocrisy's robe in the tavern's water (i.e., wine).<sup>33</sup>

In this distich, Hāfiz explicitly uses the term “hypocrisy” (*riyā*), but Mastūrah, unlike him, employs an indirect expression, using



the phrase “wine-stained robe” (dalq-i may-ālūd) to allude to hypocrisy. In fact, addressing the dervishes, Hāfiz exhorts them to divest themselves of the garment of hypocrisy and deceit, thereby eliminating the vestiges of duplicity and superficiality from their being. “Cleansing the robe in the tavern’s water” is one of Hāfiz’s particularly intriguing and thought-provoking expressions. In fact, one could argue that this verse evokes a kind of Qalandarī ghazal,<sup>34</sup> wherein the poet, through the (metaphorical) “tavern’s water,” purifies the ostensibly virtuous ascetics’ robe of hypocrisy, cleansing it of all impurities. Hāfiz’s expression proves more captivating than Mastūrah’s, especially due to his audacious preference for the tavern over the sanctities (particularly those of a hypocritical nature), which is noteworthy.

In the following distich, which serves to reinforce the preceding claim, Hāfiz reiterates the concept with a different, nuanced expression:

This image bears no scent of sincerity, rise!

Cleanse the Sufi’s sullied robe with pure wine.<sup>35</sup>

The act of washing “the Sufi’s sullied robe” with pure, untainted wine, coupled with the juxtaposition of “sincerity” (yakrangī) against “tainted” (ālūdah, also: sullied), subtly evokes the idea of hypocrisy and duplicity. This imagery accentuates Hāfiz’s advocacy for moral integrity, genuine intent, and the rejection of hypocritical asceticism.

I am the thrall of that Turk’s eye, who in sweet, intoxicated slumber,

Bears a face like an ornate garden, with eyebrows like a shadowy canopy.<sup>36</sup>

By using the term “Turk” for his beloved, Hāfiz enhances the

<sup>34</sup>Qalandarī ghazal (ghazal-i qalandarānah) is a type of ghazal that expresses the themes associated with Qalandars, unconventional mystical groups, many of which reject rigid religious and societal norms, embracing a free, and often rebellious approach to spirituality.

<sup>35</sup>Hāfiz Shīrāzī, *Dīvān-i Hāfiz*, 344.

<sup>36</sup>Hāfiz Shīrāzī, *Dīvān-i Hāfiz*, 285.

<sup>37</sup>Kurdistānī, *Dīvān*, 41.

beauty of his expression through the word's inherent ambiguity. The term "Turk" is significant both in its general sense, referring to a fair and beautiful person, and in its specific ethnic connotation, evoking the Turkic people. Additionally, Hāfiz perceives himself as a "servant" or a "thrall" (*ghulām*), captivated by his beloved's gaze in a state of intoxicated slumber. In the second hemistich, using the rhetorical device of simile, the poet likens the beloved's beautiful face to a garden full of intricate designs and her eyebrows to a dark canopy. In the poet's imagery, the beloved's eyes take on a drowsy appearance due to intoxication, and in this intoxicated state, she slumbers with a garden-like face adorned with intricate patterns, while the dark shadow of her eyebrows acts as a canopy casting protection over her face. The poet becomes enthralled and subservient to this captivating scene. Moreover, the use of the reversed descriptive compound further enhances the beauty of Hāfiz's expression.

In the following distich, Mastūrah uses concision and brevity to convey a theme akin to Hāfiz's, with a subtle variation:

When the intoxicated Turk sets out to capture my sorrowful heart,

With but a single glance, the entire realm of my soul falls under his sway.<sup>37</sup>

Rather than providing a description of the beloved's intoxicated state in detail, Mastūrah simply uses the adjective "intoxicated" as a literary sign, implying that the beloved intends to capture the lover's heart. In the second line, by employing an appositive simile, she likens the soul to a realm that can be conquered with a single glance by the beloved. The technique of literary brevity allows Mastūrah to reiterate Hāfiz's sentiment succinctly. A comparison between the verses of the two poets further highlights the beauty of Hāfiz's verse.

Today, O cupbearer, pour wine from the flask into the cup,



For tomorrow, our dust will be fashioned into cup and flask.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup>Kurdistānī, *Dīvān*, 41.

The prominent literary motifs that Mastūrah employs in this context to convey her message are the words “wine” (may) and “dust” (khāk). By addressing the cupbearer (sāqī), she requests that he pour wine into her cup, urging her to spend the fleeting moments of life in celebration. In the second hemistich, she elaborates further, explicitly articulating the transience of the world and the inevitable decay of everything in existence. The term “dust” serves as an allegory for the poet’s own existence, which is destined to soon fade away and be lost to oblivion. The overarching theme of the couplet emphasizes the *carpe diem* philosophy, exhorting the reader to cultivate a spirit of joviality and to cherish each moment of life. The juxtaposition of “today” and “tomorrow” is also noteworthy, with “today” signifying the present and “tomorrow” alluding to the imminent future. The consonance and congruity between the words “flask” (sabū), cup (jām), and cupbearer (sāqī) further enhances the verse’s aesthetic appeal. The secondary aims expressed in many of Mastūrah’s verses convey a sense of joy, contentment, and liberation from worldly concerns.

<sup>39</sup>Hāfiz Shīrāzī, *Dīvān-i Hāfiz*, 55.

Hāfiz, with greater eloquence and artistry than Mastūrah, addresses this theme in a much more carefree manner:

Build the hearts’ towers with wine, for this ruined world

Is poised to fashion bricks from our very dust.<sup>39</sup>

Hāfiz posits that imbibing wine can revive and rejuvenate the heart and soul. He advocates for embracing joy and contentment, for ultimately, this world seeks to transform the dust of our existence into bricks. By referring to this world and the worldly life as a “ruined world,” he crafts a beautiful metaphor. The verse, replete with personification, metonymy, allusion, and congruity echoes Mastūrah’s sentiments on seizing life’s fleeting pleasures, celebrating life, and acknowledging its ephemerality.

<sup>40</sup>Hāfiz Shīrāzī, *Divān-i Hāfiz*, 54.

<sup>41</sup>Kurdistānī, *Divān*, 50.

Building upon this idea of the impermanence of life, Hāfiz offers a poignant reflection in his verse, emphasizing the transient nature of the world and the futility of seeking constancy in the following distich:

Seek not constancy in vows from this fickle world,

For this aged crone is bride to a thousand grooms.<sup>40</sup>

Complaints and lamentations about the world have long been a staple of Persian literature, with the world often likened to “an aged crone” or “a bride” with myriad grooms. Hāfiz, using these established similes, counsels against expecting honesty and integrity from the world, as its nature and essence are inherently unreliable and base. Expecting loyalty and the fulfillment of promises from it is a futile endeavor. Hāfiz explicitly refers to the world’s betrayal of its promises and vows. In addition to using simile, the poet employs personification, and congruity to enhance the beauty of expression. The use of the number “thousand” signifies abundance.

Building on the theme of the world’s inherent unfaithfulness and its ephemeral nature, Mastūrah presents a similar sentiment, urging caution against being misled by the illusions of stability and commitment that the world may offer. In the following verse, she emphasizes the futility of seeking loyalty from a world that is fickle and transient:

Never be deceived by the world’s role as a groom,

Expect no fidelity from this husband of a hundred brides.<sup>41</sup>

The difference between Mastūrah’s and Hāfiz’s expression lies in Mastūrah’s explicit use of the word “fidelity” (*vafā*), while Hāfiz leaves its interpretation to the reader. By examining Hāfiz’s verse from the previous example, one can conclude that Mastūrah utilizes the same simile used by Hāfiz. The example



also clearly underscores the futility of expecting faithfulness from this world. A notable difference between these two couplets lies in the portrayal of the world. In Mastūrah's verse, the world is portrayed as a groom capable of marrying numerous brides, whereas in Hāfīz's verse, the world is depicted as a bride sought after by many suitors. In Mastūrah's verse, the secondary purpose of mentioning "the husband of a hundred brides," as a literary symbol, is to caution the reader. It appears that she is warning the reader against trusting or relying on the world. By describing the world as a "groom" rather than a "bride," a departure from Hāfīz's portrayal, Mastūrah introduces a new layer of meaning and depth to the preceding literary sign.

## Conclusion

In her poetry, Mastūrah Kurdistānī employs established literary signs and figures, many of which are prevalent in the works of poets such as Hāfīz and Sa' dī. She deepens these signs and figures, and strips away certain elements from them, making intentional modifications to them. This modification of pre-existing literary signs and figures is not arbitrary; rather, it is undertaken with specific intent, as any change in the form of poetry inevitably leads to a shift in meaning. Mastūrah's modifications of the signs and figures she borrows from Hāfīz and Sa' dī are thus a conscious effort to reshape their meanings. From a rhetorical perspective, particularly in terms of semantics, these modifications are driven by secondary aims, which, in the case of Mastūrah, help distinguish her poetry from that of other poets. These secondary aims include expressing joy and vitality, demonstrating commitment to and steadfastness in love, elevating and portraying the beloved's beauty, self-sacrifice in pursuit of union with the beloved, and a cautioning against relying on the ephemeral world. Among these, the expression of joy and vitality is one of the most recurring secondary aims underlying the poetic signs (such simile, metaphor, congruity, allegory, metonymy, symbols, derivation, among other literary devices and rhetorical figures) used in Mastūrah Kurdistānī's verses.

This characteristic reflects a deviation from the social norms of the Qajar period, which Mastūrah signals through her use of literary signs, marking a departure from both social and literary traditions of her time.

