Seeing God: The use of theories of vision in Jāmī's *Yūsuf va Zulaykhā*

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Abstract

In this study, I will argue that the difference between profane love and sacred love, as examined in Jāmī's *masnavī Yūsuf va Zulaykhā*, can be conceptualized through vision and narrative planning. Jami's tale centers on Zulaykhā's love for Yusuf and her subsequent conversion to monotheism. The text makes extensive use of the sense of sight, especially through the trope of *jelvah-i maḥbūb*, the blinding hierophany of the beloved, to create meaning and to illustrate the transformation of Zulaykhā's profane love into sacred love. This transformation occurs in several stages, each of which conveys philosophical and mystical doctrines from Ibn 'Arabī.

Résumé

Lors de cette étude, nous argumenterons que la différence entre l'amour profane et l'amour sacré, tel que présentée par Jāmī dans le *masnavī Yūsuf va Zulaykhā*, peut s'exprimer par la vision et la répartition du récit. Le récit de Jāmī se concentre autour de l'amour de Zulaykhā pour Yūsuf et sa conséquente conversion au monothéisme. Le texte utilise le sens de la vue , surtout à travers la figure de style *jelvah-i maḥbūb*, la hiérophanie éblouissante du bien-aimé, afin d'illustrer et de donner un sens à la transformation de l'amour profane de Zulaykhā en amour sacré. Cette transformation a lieu en plusieurs étapes, chacune communiquant des doctrines mystiques et philosophiques d'Ibn 'Arabī.

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Notes on Transliteration

The transliteration system used in this study is the IJMES transliteration for Persian and Arabic. Though exceptions were made in Persian when a word began with the letter *alif*: a long vowel was transliterated as *ā* but a short vowel sound was transliterated as *a*. Also the *waw* was kept in words where it is silent such as *khwāb* and *khwīsh*. In citations, such as article titles, where another transliteration system is used by the author, that system has been maintained.

Introduction

The story begins with the creation of light. This light is as much physical as it is metaphorical. The Qur'ān contains approximately fifty references to light and it did not go unnoticed by Islamic thinkers. They expanded upon the trope of light in Qur'ānic verses through their *tafsīr*s, in particular concentrating on the Light verse[1]. But the Qur'ān was not the only source of intellectual discussion, they also inherited neo-Platonic concepts of light[2]. Many studies containing such concepts emerged by philosophers and theologians the most famous of which are Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037 CE), Abū Ḥamīd al-Ghazālī (d. 1111 CE), Ibn 'Arabī (d. 1240 CE) and Mulla Sadra (d. 1640 CE). The ideas contained in such studies spread to various social groups and influenced many thinkers and poets, including Nūr ad-Dīn 'Abd ar-Raḥmān Jāmī (1414-1492 CE). This study argues that, in his *masnavī*, *Yūsuf va Zulaykhā*, Jāmī presents an interpretation of the metaphysics of light inherited from his predecessors. Incorporating such ideas in poetic form allows Jāmī to provide his readers with a model of how to overcome physical sensorial information to perceive the spiritual truth present in the world around them.

Jāmī's works have often been studied for their mystical content and most of the studies concentrate on his theological writings, often relating them to Ibn 'Arabī's theology. Examples include W. C. Chittick's article "The Perfect Man as the Prototype of the Self in the Sufism of

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[1] Sūrat al-Nūr 24, Ayat 35: *Allahu nūru as-samawati wa al-arḍi mathalu nūrihi kamishkatin fīhā miṣbāhun al-miṣbāhu fī zujājatin az-zujājatu ka'annaha kawkabun durriyyun yūqadu min shajaratin mubarakatin zaytūnatin lā sharqiyyatin walā gharbiyyatin yakādu zaytuha yudī'u wa law lam tamsashu nārun nūrun 'ala nūrin yahdī Allahu linūrihi man yashā'u wa yaḍribu Allahu al-amthala linnāsi wa Allahu bikulli shay'in 'alīm*
Saḥiḥ International Translation: "Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp, the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light. Allah guides to His light whom He wills. And Allah presents examples for the people, and Allah is Knowing of all things." ("Surat An-Nūr" Quran.com <http://quran.com/24#0> accessed December 6, 2013)

[2] For further information on neo-Platonic concepts of light in the Western tradition see Blumenberg, Hans "Light as a Metaphor for Truth: At the Preliminary Stage of Philosophical Concept Formation" in *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision* ed. D. M. Levin, (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 30 – 62. Unfortunately there is no corresponding study for the evolution of the neo-Platonic concepts of light in the Eastern tradition. But the aforementioned article provides a good introduction to the topic and contains concepts equally valid in the Islamic tradition.

Jāmī" and S. Rizvi's "The Existential Breath of al-Raḥmān and the Munificent Grace of al-Raḥīm: the Tafsīr Sūrat al-Fātiḥa of Jāmī and the School of Ibn ʿArabī" and S. Āl-i Rasūl's *Irfān-i Jāmī dar majmūʻah-i āsārash = The gnosticism of Jåmi in his corpus* and her article "Love in Islamic Mysticism According to 'Abd ar-Rahman Jāmī" (*'Eshq dar 'Irfān-i Islāmī az didgāh-i 'Abd ar-Raḥman-i Jāmī*). Additional studies include *Chinese Gleams of Sufi Light* by Sachiko Murata dealing with the subject of Jāmī's influence in the Far East through his theological writings, R. S. Bhatnagar's "Jami's Concept of God in the *Lawa'ih*"; J. Haar's ""Wondrous caravan leaders who take the caravan to the sanctuary through a hidden path" The Naqshbandī order according to ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī"; and "Jami's Perspective on Ibn al-'Arabī and Mawlana" (*Ibn 'Arabī va Mawlānā az manzar-i Jāmī*) by Dr. 'Abbās Gūwharī. These studies establish Jāmī's participation in the institutions and circulatory networks of Sufism and authorize readings of his poetic texts as illustrations of his Sufi theology. However, this merely illustrative reading of his poetic corpus is insufficient and limiting in that it does not do justice to his poetry nor to the theological ideas conveyed through various literary media. One of the aims of this study is to show that through the narrative planning and visual metaphors in his *masnavī, Yūsuf va Zulaykhā*, Jāmī attempts to transform his readers' understanding of narrative and visuality.

Furthermore, many studies are devoted to quantitative and qualitative analyses of manuscripts of Jāmī's works in order to asses the expanse and spread of his works. These studies include the work of Akimushkin "A manuscript of Yūsuf wa Zulaykhā by Jāmī in the collection of the St. Petersburg branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies"; Ashrafi *Sixteenth Century Miniatures Illustrating Manuscript Copies of the Works of Jami from the USSR Collection* published in 1966; Erkinov "Manuscripts of the works by classical Persian authors (Ḥāfiẓ, Jāmī, Bīdil): quantitative analysis of 17th-19th c. Central Asian copies"; Ḥāj-Seyyed-J̌avādī, Kamāl

"La présence de Khayyām et de Jāmi en Inde"; Ismailova "Miniatyury dvukh pozdnikh sredneaziatskikh spiskov "Yusufa i Zuleĭkhi" Dzhami"; Martinovitch "A Djāmī's manuscript in the Lafayette College Library"; Naficy "Some illustrations in a Mughal manuscript of Jāmī's Yusof and Zoleykha"; Speziale "Due codici persiani miniati (Xamsa di Niẓāmī, Yūsuf u Zalīxā di Jāmī) della Fondazione Giorgio Cini di Venezia" and F. Richard's "Un cas de "succès littéraire": la diffusion des œuvres poétiques de Djami de Hérat à travers tout le Proche-Orient" in *Le livre persan*.

These studies illustrate the international fame Jāmī's works had and hint at his influence over a multitude of social and regional spheres. They contain a number of images of manuscript pages or miniatures from the various manuscripts. A qualitative analysis of these elements present scholars with clues as to the social circles in which these texts circulated. Some manuscripts seem to have circulated among the cultural and literary elite because of the quality of their conservation and sublime illustrations whereas others, such as the manuscripts contained in McGill University's Rare Books Collection and which have not been examined qualitatively, appear to have emerged from a lower social sphere. In addition to the quality of the manuscript itself, analytical examination of the miniatures and their symbolism can give further evidence of the social setting in which the text was circulating and possible interpretations of the text over time[3]. Thus, it has been established that Jami's literary texts circulated widely and therefore played a significant role in spreading the theological concepts they contained.

Recently, there has been renewed interest in Jāmī in Western academia as witnessed by H. Algar's recently published book *Jāmī, Makers of Islamic Civilization* and by the international project *A Worldwide Literature: Jāmī (1414 – 1492) in the Dar al-Islam and Beyond*. This

[3] El-Murr, Leila. "Zulaykha's Banquet Interpreted Through the Lens of Vision" Paper presented at SAGSC X Conference at the University of Chicago on April 4, 2013.

project includes studies on Jāmī's literary works, their translations, and their reception through history. Although many of these study the translations of Jāmī's *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā* into various languages, few studies exist of the original Persian text. One important study is C.-C. Kappler's "Voile et devoilement dans *Yusof-o Zoleykha* de Jāmī" which discusses the importance of clothing in the text while calling for a more in-depth study of the use of vision. An earlier study devoted to Yūsuf's literary character in Judeo-Christian literature and in the Islamo-Persian tradition, concentrating on Jāmī's text, is S. Arbab-Shirani's unpublished PhD dissertation *Shapes of a Myth: Literary Transformations of the Joseph Figure*. While other studies include a discussion of Jāmī's work, they often use his work as an example to further an argument and do not deal exclusively or minutely with the text[4].

The following study presents a close reading of Jāmī's *Yūsuf va Zulaykhā* and examines the narrative planning and visual metaphors. The narrative planning reveals that certain events in a lifetime occur twice and gain a greater degree of reality in the second occurrence. Zulaykhā marries twice, goes blind twice, Yūsuf goes underground and rises to fame twice, Zulaykhā's life is played out twice, once as herself and the second time through Bāzighah, and finally the castle with seven rooms is built twice, once for sin and the second time for piety. This double narrative suggests that the author is presenting idolatry as proleptic[5] to experiences of God. Thus the first experience is false but, upon correction, becomes real the second time.

Through the visual metaphors various elements related to light and cognizance are developed: vision, the nature and power of images seen, the nature of perceived light, and the nature of organs of sight. Chapter one begins with the trope of falling in love with an image and

[4] Such is the case with Firuza Abdellueva's forthcoming article "From Zulaykha to Zuleika Dobson: The femme fatale and her ordeals in Persian literature and beyond" and G.K. Maguerian's and A. Najmabadi's article "Zulaykha and Yusuf: Whose "best Story"?" (*IJMES*, 1997)

[5] Term defined by Gerard Genette in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* meaning referring to events which are yet to occur.

the search for its meaning. The trope is expanded to the search for meaning behind the beautiful form of Yūsuf through its perception by external and then internal senses. The second chapter provides two categories for the meanings of images, deceptive and salvational, and discusses their effects on the mind. In the third chapter, the tension between these two categories is explored as they culminate in an opposition between sacred and profane. In the fourth and final chapter, this study concludes with the triumph of the sacred over the profane. This victory comes after many trials and tribulations that train the protagonist's soul to see God in preparation for Paradise.

Before we begin our study, it is important to present a brief synopsis of this *masnavī.*

Plot synopsis:

The tale of Yūsuf and Zulaykhā is an ancient one. It is a spinoff from the Biblical and Qu'rānic versions of the story of the prophet Yūsuf (Joseph). In the Arabic and Persian traditions, the Egyptian vizier's wife is known as Zulaykhā and she is the focus of Jāmī's retelling of the tale. In Jāmī's version Zulaykhā undergoes many challenges and tribulations that bring about changes in her character while many of the passages relating to Yūsuf are often shortened.

The *masnavī* begins with several chapters in eulogy to God, the prophets and the local ruler of Herat. After such opening passages, the narrative begins with the story of creation and in particular the creation of Yūsuf's beauty. After describing Yūsuf and his prophetic lineage from Adam through Abraham the story shifts and introduces Zulaykhā, the beautiful princess of a kingdom in north-west Africa who loved Yūsuf even before creation. While still a young girl she sees Yūsuf in a dream causing her to fall in love with him. Her love consumes her and causes madness such that she must be bound with locks of gold to prevent her from injury. She repeats

the dream and by the third time she learns that her journey to finding Yūsuf will lead her to Egypt. Zulaykhā, believing Yūsuf to be the Vizier of the kingdom, happily betroths the Vizier of Egypt and departs with her nursemaid for that faraway land.

Upon arriving in Egypt, Zulaykhā, burning with desire to reunite with her beloved, seeks to see him and discovers that the Vizier is in fact not Yūsuf. Upon hearing Zulaykhā's lament at her mistake, the angel Gabriel appears to console her and reassure her that through her position as wife of the Vizier she will reach Yūsuf.

The story line cuts to Canaan where we encounter Yūsuf and his brothers. His brothers are jealous of the attention he receives from his father and they devise a plan to take Yūsuf to the fields and leave him to die. Yūsuf is put into a well, described as a dark place but his saintly presence illuminates it and makes the foul air sweet. The angel Gabriel comes down to keep Yūsuf company and places upon Yūsuf Abraham's shirt after his brothers took his shirt, tore it and covered it with animal blood. Jacob, Yūsuf's father, is stricken with such grief over the loss of his son that he also looses his eyesight. Meanwhile Yūsuf has been rescued from the well by a stray caravan on its way to Egypt. Yūsuf travels with them to Egypt where rumors of his beauty precede him and catch the attention of the king who sends his Vizier to meet Yūsuf.

Zulaykhā returning from a trip to the countryside catches a glimpse of Yūsuf at the market where he is for sale. She loses consciousness upon seeing him and then proceeds to bid the highest amount for Yūsuf's purchase. Yūsuf then enters her household as a slave where she lavishes him with attention and care and treats him as a son.

At this point the narrative is interrupted by the story of Bāzighah, a high-ranking princess of Egypt. Upon hearing descriptions of Yūsuf's beauty she too falls in love with him and sets out to find him. When she encounters Yūsuf, she loses consciousness. Once she awakes, she begins

to question Yūsuf about his Creator. Yūsuf instructs her in the worship of God. She departs and then settles in a small reed hut known as her house of worship and scatters her riches among the poor and needy. She remains in that small hut worshiping God until her death.

As Yūsuf ages Zulaykhā's desire for him increases and her attempts to seduce him increase. First directly, then she sends Yūsuf to the garden with her most beautiful maidens hoping he will chose one for the night and she might take her place and finally, by her nursemaid's counsel, she builds a palace of love with seven chambers, each one more intimate than the other and each one containing more erotic images than the other. Zulaykhā entices Yūsuf into the seventh chamber where she attempts to seduce him but Yūsuf escapes.

Zulaykhā fearing repercussions from her husband accuses Yūsuf of seduction but a speaking infant provides the Vizier with the proof of Yūsuf's innocence. In spite of attempts to keep this incident private, the ladies of Egypt learn of Zulaykhā's attempted and failed seductions of Yūsuf and begin to reproach her for it. Zulaykhā then decides to organize a banquet that the ladies may see Yūsuf's blinding beauty for themselves. During the banquet, the ladies, overwhelmed by Yūsuf's beauty, cut their fingers instead of the oranges that they are holding. All the ladies then attempt to seduce Yūsuf, threatening him with prison if he does not give into their desires but Yūsuf resists the ladies.

Zulaykhā, to save face, then sends him to prison where, similarly to the pit, his pure essence illuminates the foul air. During his time in prison, Zulaykhā goes to the prison secretly at night to watch Yūsuf pray and preach to the other prisoners. She also sends him baskets of food. Zulaykhā spends her days regretting her decision to send Yūsuf to prison.

In prison, Yūsuf correctly interprets the dreams of two other prisoners. Later when the king of Egypt has two incomprehensible dreams, he hears of Yūsuf's ability to interpret dreams

and summons him. Yūsuf refuses to appear before the king before his name is cleared and the women confess to their conniving plot to attempt to seduce him. The king then orders Yūsuf's release from prison and the two meet. Yūsuf accurately interprets the king's dream and becomes the vizier of Egypt while the former Vizier dies of grief and dishonor.

Zulaykhā is left a widow and spends her fortune on whomever relates to her tales of Yūsuf. This activity leads to her ruin and her grief over the loss of Yūsuf leads to her wretchedness. Zulaykhā now lives in a small reed hut on the side of the road listening to Yūsuf and his garrison pass by. She grows old, weak and blind. One day, after praying to her idol and wailing on the side of the road in the hope that Yūsuf will be merciful towards her, she shatters her idol and prays to God. With her conversion to the monotheistic religion, the tides turn in Zulaykhā's favor. She goes out to the side of the road as Yūsuf passes and rather than lamenting her state she praises God thus catching Yūsuf's attention who orders her to be brought to his palace that he may show her mercy.

Zulaykhā is brought to Yūsuf's palace where he finally recognizes her and prays to restore her beauty and sight. Zulaykhā then asks to become his companion. Yūsuf, not knowing what to answer, receives God's blessings for their union through the angel Gabriel who says that their union had been preordained in heaven. Yūsuf and Zulaykhā are married and live a happy and fruitful life together. Yūsuf, paralleling Zulaykhā's palace of love, builds a palace of worship for Zulaykhā containing seven chambers each more beautiful than the next and each exalting God.

Old age overcomes Yūsuf and Zulaykhā and the day comes when Yūsuf dreams of his parents calling him to heaven. Yūsuf departs from the world and Zulaykhā greives his death. She loses consciousness for three days thrice upon the news of his death. When she finally regains

consciousness she proceeds to his tomb where she plucks out her eyes and casts them upon his grave before falling over and dying. Zulaykhā is then buried beside her beloved.

Later it is told that Yūsuf's body was moved and thrown into the depths of the Nile. Even in death, Zulaykhā is separated from her beloved.

The *masnavī* ends with praise of God for his mercy and generosity before extending advice and moral counsel to Jāmī and by extension the audience and local rulers.

Chapter 1: Seeing with the Inner Eye

In the *masnavi* there are several instances where sight occurs without the character's physical eyes. Zulaykhā first sees Yūsuf in a dream when her physical eye is closed. Later Bāzighah falls in love with Yūsuf after hearing descriptions of him and, finally, when Zulaykhā is blind she continues to see Yūsuf's image with her heart. Sight with the inner eye occurs through different internal senses[1]: in the first case through vision processed by sensuscommunis and in the second case the image is constructed by the imagination from sound[2], using the internal sense of "imagination" or *khiyāl*. When Zulaykhā first dreams of Yūsuf she sees an image of him perceiving it by her internal sense of sensuscommunis. Whereas, Bāzighah constructs the image from tales she hears of Yūsuf, in which case she is using *takhayyul*, the sense which combines images in the memory to create new ones. When Zulaykhā is blind and can no longer see Yūsuf, she emulates Bāzighah and must content herself with narratives of travelers to evoke the image of Yūsuf in her heart but she uses a different internal sense, imagination or *khiyāl*[3], closer to memory. These different sensorial stimuli result in different effects upon the viewer and evoke the common literary theme of falling in love with an image[4]. After love is established in the heart of the lover, he learns that images have neither soul nor body and are therefore unworthy of such love. They are merely representations of real persons that are then sought out and become the true object of their affections. This pattern is valid also

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[1] The distinction between the five senses is inherited from Avicenna. Sensuscommunis, the first of the five senses, fuses information from sensorial input to construct an object of precept. The second sense, imagination or *khiyāl*, contains the image of the object after the object has been removed from perception. *Takhayyul* combines or separates images in the memory so as to form another. *Wahm*, estimatio, is the internal sense which perceives inner meanings of things being perceived. (F. Rahman "Avicenna vi. Psychology," *Encylopaedia Iranica*, III/1, pp. 83-84; available online at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/avicenna-vi (accessed on 14 September 2013)).

[2] Elaine Scarry in her book *Dreaming by the Book* discusses the process of mental image construction from sound.

[3] Jāmī uses this exact term, *khiyāl*, to describe Yūsuf as perceived by Zulaykhā (*girift az qāmatash dar dil khiyālī*, 627; and *khiyāl-i rūy-i Yūsuf yār-i aū būd*, 3237; and again 3246-7).

[4] Common examples of this are Bahrām from the Shāhnāmih who falls in love with the portraits of seven princesses whom he is to marry and Shīrīn who first falls in love with the portrait of Khusrū. There is also the case of Zāl and Rudābih who fall in love with each other after hearing descriptions of the other.

for Zulaykhā. She understands that the image she sees in her dream represents a real person but she does not understand that this real person is but a representation of a higher order of reality thus evoking the necessity for her to use the internal sense of estimatio, *wahm*, which perceives the inner meaning of a thing.

1. Seeing through an image

This chapter describes Zulaykhā's first dream of Yūsuf. Zulaykhā is sleeping peacefully in her bed when a 'spirit' (*jānī*) appears in her dream, more beautiful than anything human. This spirit is in fact Yūsuf whose image remains engraved in Zulaykhā's heart and drives her mad. Her madness is only appeased in a later chapter when she has a third dream of him in which he leads her to Egypt. The three narrative sections of this chapter play with different aspects of vision to create a dichotomy of sight imported from Ibn 'Arabī.

The narrator begins with extensive descriptions of the setting all emphasizing the absence of vision as a way to convey the notion of unconsciousness. Then Yūsuf's appearance is described as sublime, through the trope of *jelvah-i maḥbūb*. This description reveals the presence of light with rays. This kind of light negatively affects or compromises the lover's perception due to its blinding property. Finally we encounter Zulaykhā's vision of Yūsuf through the eye of her heart but as the text shows, Zulaykhā does not see beyond the "beautiful form"[5] (*ḥusn ṣūrat*). We thus become conscious of the defective nature of sight when it can only perceive forms in the phenomenal world. The narrator then indicates that there is another type of sight that involves the perception of the form's meaning.

[5] Nur ad-Dīn Abd ar-Raḥmān Jāmī, *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā,* in *Haft Owrang* (Tehran: Daftar-i Nashr-i Mīrāṯ-i Maktūb, 1378/1999), line 626.

A. A sightless setting

In the opening lines of the chapter, the setting describes various characters, humans and animals, as having their eyes closed. The "garden [is] full of spectators [yet] / None but the eyes of the stars remain open" (*darīn bustānsirāy pur naẓārih / namāndih bāz juz chishm-i sitārih*, 597). Even the minstrel, the night watch man, can "scarcely open his sleepy eye" (*chū ḥāriṣ dīdih shikl kūkinārī*, 601) and has "no strength to keep his watch" (*bih bīdārī namūndih dīgar tāb*, 602). Zulaykhā herself is a victim of this mysterious slumber that "befell her narcissus eyes" (*shudih bar nargisash shīrīn shikar khwāb*, 605). The narcissus in the Persian literary tradition is conventionally used to describe the tired or drunken eyes of the beloved. But in this case, its use emphasizes the fact that Zulaykhā's eyes are closed and she is asleep. It is no ordinary slumber as the sleepers of the night lay on "beds of negligence" (*firāsh-i ghaflat*, 604) and the guards are robbed of their senses (*rubūdih duzd shab hūsh-i 'asas rā*, 598). This implies a certain kind of unconsciousness of their surroundings, the kind that reflects an unawareness of meaning beyond form. Such unawareness signals the lack of reason, the distinguishing faculty of the human soul[6], among the sleeping characters and consequently reflects Zulaykhā's state of mind that she shares with those around her. This creates a foreboding mood as it reflects a vulnerability experienced by the sleepers.[7]

[6] There are three souls in Jāmī's Aristotelian psychology: the vegetative soul, the animal soul and the human soul. The vegetative soul is the most primitive and characterizes plants. The animal soul is distinguished from the vegetative soul by the addition of growth and the human soul has a rational faculty in addition.
[7] Arbab-Shirani also reaches a similar conclusion in Sa'id Arbab-Shirani, *Shapes of a Myth: Literary Transformations of the Joseph Figure* (Unpublished PhD dissertation Princeton University, 1975), 127.

As a consequence of this deep sleep arise silence and stillness. Such a description is premonitory of what will befall Zulaykhā in a few lines while her "form seeing eye slumbered" (*bih khwābash chishm-i ṣūrat bīn ghunūdih*, 608), meaning her physical eye was closed.

B. The blinding Yūsuf

The text progresses through descriptions of Yūsuf focusing on his head and face. It makes use of the common literary trope of *jelvah-i maḥbūb*, "the blinding hierophany of the beloved", eroticizing in particular the eyes of the beloved but the significance lies in the extensive use of the trope emphasizing Yūsuf's capacity to scatter light that renders his lover(s) mad. His description anticipates Zulaykhā's reaction to her dream but also reveals an adherence to Ibn 'Arabī's conception of 'light with rays'.

Yūsuf is first characterized as a 'youth' but then the narrator corrects himself by calling him a 'spirit' (*jānī*, 609). It is important to note that spirits do not have physical bodies but rather luminescent ones. Calling Yūsuf a spirit implies that light is an intrinsic part of his nature. This concept is further developed by the ensuing descriptions of Yūsuf which continue with "a blessed face from the world of light" (*humāyūn paykarī az 'ālam-i nūr*, 610) who has "resplendent rays of light emanating from his forehead" (*furūzān lam'ih-i nūr az jabīnash*, 614) and eyebrows that become bows (*zi ābrū kardih ān mah khānih dar qaws*, 616) from whence arrows are shot into the livers of his beloveds (*zi mujgān bar jigarhā nāvak andāz*, 617) consequently making them go mad. Furthermore, he is the one who scatters the light of the Pleiades with his smile (*bih khandih az surayā nūr mī rīkht*, 620). About half of the verses dedicated to his description comprise light imagery emanating from Yūsuf.

This emanating light is not illuminating or clarifying but rather blinding. This evokes an ideological element which, keeping in mind the author's Sufi affiliation, can be traced back to Ibn 'Arabī. This theologian presents an interesting classification of light in his work *Futuhat al-Makkiyya* that is relevant to the current context. He says that each thing carries a light in itself. This light originates from the ultimate source of light, the light of God. This light is reflected in His creation and is known as God's self-disclosure. But Ibn 'Arabī goes further and distinguishes two kinds of light: "a light having no rays and radiant light"[8]. The rays of light "take away sight and prevent perception of Him [God] from whom the rays derive" [9]. Zulaykhā, who sees Yūsuf through this light, is then unable to perceive the meaning lying behind him and therefore is not "among those who have arrived [to Truth]" (*yekī az vāṣilān-i rāh,* 637) as the narrator reminds us. This imagery is used not only for descriptive purposes but also as a proleptic[10] reference to Zulaykhā's reaction in the following lines.

C. Zulaykhā's reaction

As established above, Zulaykhā's sleep is one of unconsciousness of her human soul. Thus her perception of Yūsuf will occur through her animal soul which is solely concerned with the phenomenal world. Consequently her perception will be defective and she will be unable to attain the Truth until she has learnt to see with her human rational using the internal sense of *wahm*. Yūsuf's description also foretells Zulaykhā's inadequate perception of his figure which

[8] William C. Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn Al-'arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press, 1989), 217.
[9] Ibid. Alternatively, it is also possible that rather than two different kinds of light, the strength of Zulaykhā's visual organs is insufficient for perceiving the light of God. This concept appears in Shabestarī's *Gulshan-i Rāz*, with the metaphor of the bat that is unable to see during the day due to its weak eyes (see Shabestarī, *The Secret Rose Garden of Sa'd ud din Mahmud Shabestari,* trans. F. Lederer (Lahore: Sh. M. Ashraf, 1960), 22).
[10] Term defined by Gerard Genette in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* meaning referring to events which are yet to occur.

reflects her lack of 'imagination' or *khiyāl*, a term defined by Ibn 'Arabī. Thus she is unable to reconcile contradictions and loses herself in the overwhelming light rays hence maintaining her ignorance of God.

The concept of imagination[11], in Ibn 'Arabī's writings, is preceded by a definition of dreaming. Dreaming is seen as a function of the imagination in which one sees a corporeal thing that is not a corporeal thing[12]. Thus dreaming is an act containing an apparent contradiction, seeing something which is not something. One in fact witnesses an image which dwells in the imaginal world, in the soul[13]. Thus imagination, one of the faculties of the soul, is needed to reconcile the discrepancy between the meaning of the image and its sensory form. It allows humans to 'cross the bridge of appearances'[14] and to arrive at its meaning[15].

Zulaykhā's imagination is unable to cross this bridge of appearances that is Yūsuf to reach God. Upon "[catching] a glimpse of his face" (*Zulaykhā chūn bih rūyash dīdih bugshād*, 624) she becomes his captive (*asīrash shud*, 626) and "imprint[s] an image of his stature in her heart" (*girift az qāmatash dar dil khiyālī*, 627). The text emphasizes Zulaykhā's attachement to Yūsuf's form. This emphasis is reiterated with the words used to describe Yūsuf who is a "beautiful image" (*zībā ṣūratī*, 635) and a "beautiful form" (*ḥusn-i ṣūrat*, 626) and also through Zulaykhā's desire for him expressed by descriptions of his body which mirrors Yūsuf's earlier description (629-632).

[11] It is important to note that the term 'imagination' has multiple definitions in Ibn 'Arabī's writings. Here the relevant definition is drawn from the *Futuhat al-Makkiyya* and is that of 'imagination' as one of the four faculties of the soul, the others being: reason, reflection and memory. Chittick, *SPK*, 115. In addition, this term refers to one of the internal senses according to Avicennan psychology. It is the sense that contains the image of an object after that object has been removed from direct perception. Rahman, "Avicenna iv. Psychology", *E. Iranica*.
[12] Chittick, *SPK*, 115.
[13] Ibid.
[14] In Ibn 'Arabī's works this bridge between two worlds is known as the *barzakh*.
[15] Keeping in mind the influence of Avicennan psychology, imagination is not sufficient in itself and requires other internal senses, in particular *wahm.*

As a consequence of her attachement to his form, Zulaykhā loses herself as a fire is lit in her breast (*zi rūyash ātish dar sīnih afrūkht*, 628), and "she [sits] upon the fire" (*nishast az vay sipand āsaīr ātish*, 633) and sees "the calamity of the soul in the dimple of his chin" (*zi sīb-i ghabghabash āsīb-i jān dīd*, 634). This imagery reflects her passionate desires for him as well as her inability to contain them, to the point where she "[runs] away from being Zulaykhā" (*Zulaykhā az Zulaykhāīī rumīdih*, 636). We could infer the two Zulaykhā refer each to one aspect of her soul, the rational and the animal. Accordingly, it appears her animal soul has become predominant rather than her rational soul, fixing her in the phenomenal world where "her eyes [sleep] in blood" (*chishmash gharaq khūn guft*, 630) and she can only "find the meaning of rest through that shape" (*azān ṣūrat bih ma'nī āramīdih*, 636) which is Yūsuf.

Zulaykhā's madness is a consequence of her attachment to Yūsuf's form and her inability to go beyond it to attain its meaning. This inability reflects the state of her heart, the organ containing the faculty of imagination. Thus her undeveloped imagination prevents her from being "aware of that meaning" and arriving at Truth (*az ān ma'nī agar āgāh būdī / yekī az vāṣilān-i rāh būdī*, 637) as the narrator reminds the audience. After the narrative section of the text, the narrator provides a few didactic comments that guide the reader in his understanding of the text. He reminds his audience that Zulaykhā "was captivated by the outward form/ [and] was not aware of the meaning" (*chūn būd dar ṣūrat giriftār / nashud az aval az ma'ni khabardār*, 638). He then cautions the reader that he too is like Zulaykhā and "remain[s] in the world of appearances" (*bih ṣūrathā giriftārīm māndih*, 639). These additions by the narrator advance the notion of a duality between appearance and inner meaning that can be accessed by two different ways of seeing.

2. Seeing through sound

Zulaykhā is now among those on the path seeking Truth but her fixation with the phenomenal world will be a hindrance in her quest until she can train her inner eye to see the meaning behind the form[16]. When Bāzighah sees with her inner eye she does so properly and thus serves as a model for the heroine. Zulaykhā is only able to train her eye after many hardships resulting in the loss of her eyesight and in her forced contentment with hearing tales about Yūsuf and eventually with only the sound of his garrison.

A. Bāzighah's love

When Bāzighah hears the tale of Yūsuf she forms an image of him in her heart with her inner eye. This is implied by the narrator's comment claiming "hearing is this seed of seeing" (*bāshad shinīdan tukhm-i dīdan*, 1704)[17]. She is able to hear descriptions then imagine a form corresponding to such descriptions. She falls in love with the image she sees with her inner eye, calling it a "beautiful face" (*māh-i rūy-i aū*, 1702). The beautiful face is derived from her own imagination, using the internal sense of *takhayyul*, and reflects the state of her heart, a receptive state. Bāzighah's encounter with Yūsuf is therefore not focused on his physical form but rather on "what she heard" (*az shinīdan*, 1704) and the image she constructed. Her love for Yūsuf is strengthened by gossip (*chū shud gūft va shinīd payāpay / shud az ān andīshih muḥkam dar dil-i vay*, 1703), be it gossip of his beauty or gossip about her love for him. Considering the surrounding verses, the gossip could be understood as being about his beauty. On the other hand,

[16] She is also learning to use her internal sense of *wahm*.
[17] In the Islamic tradition there exists a precedence of hearing over seeing as a consequence of the way in which the Quran was revealed.

keeping in mind Bāzighah's role as a model for Zulaykhā, the gossip could be understood as being about her love for Yūsuf and thus mirror the experience of Zulaykhā with the ladies of Egypt who gossip about the heroine's love for her Hebrew slave. Regardless of whichever kind of gossip, it serves to reinforce the binding of Yūsuf's image in Bāzighah's heart. This evokes the Naqshabandi Sufi practice of the adept binding the image of his master to his heart in order to guide him along the path of love[18]. The adept would keep an image of his master near at hand and contemplate it with the aim of perpetually seeing God's self disclosure through it or he would repeat the same exercise by remembering the face of his master. This exercise was meant to guide the Sufi adept in the practice of remembering God and in perceiving Him. Bāzighah's perception of Yūsuf with her inner eye therefore leads to the perception of God's self-disclosure and the recognition of Yūsuf as a theophany.

B. Zulaykhā's blindness

Zulaykhā's experience of hardships culminates in her loss of sight and her only comfort becomes the image of Yūsuf that she is able to maintain in her heart. Her grief over the separation from her beloved is expressed in the text through extensive color imagery that progresses until she is overcome with blindness[19]. Her physical state then becomes a reflection of her inner state.

As her state deteriorates, so does her visual relationship to the beloved until the only comfort remaining for Zulaykhā is Yūsuf's image in her heart. She used to see "his beauty every day a hundred times" (*jamālash dīdamī har rūz ṣad bār*, 3241) but then Yūsuf goes to prison and

[18] Naqsh-bandi literally means image-binding, reflecting the fundamental importance of this practice among its adherents.
[19] This color imagery is discussed in Chapter 4, Section 2.1: Zulaykhā is blind.

she would go secretly at night to "look at that moon-like face" (*tamāshā kardamī ān rūy chūn māh*, 3243) and finally it reached the point where she has "nothing left of him except an image in [her] heart" (*nadāram zū bijuz dar dil khiyyālī*, 3246). This image is her most precious possession as she can no longer perceive him visually and must continuously reconstruct his image from her memories of him. She has failed to perceive his meaning through the faculty of estimatio or *wahm* and now must content herself with *khiyyāl*, the memory-like faculty that contains the image of an object after it has been removed from sight. This is reminiscent of the first time she had encountered the image of Yūsuf when she was left with only the brand of "a beautiful image" in her heart (*zībā ṣūratī*, 635). But it differs significantly as she is using different internal senses and, having progressed along the spiritual path, is in a more receptive state.

The narrator repeatedly emphasizes that only "the dream of Yūsuf's face was her companion" (*khiyyāl-i rūy-i Yūsuf yār-i aū būd*, 3237) and without his image she does not envision herself surviving in this world because "in [her] body his image is [her] soul" (*kih dar qālib khiyyāl-i aūst jānam*, 3247). She has bound the image to her heart and thus like Bāzighah before her and the Sufi adept uses it as a guiding light. This imprinting of her heart establishes her as an adept along the spiritual path toward God, the ultimate Beloved. Her quest for union with the beloved involves contemplating his image with her inner eye and learning to see it properly as she was unable to see the Truth reflected through Yūsuf's image the first time. Although she cannot yet comprehend the Truth she has progressed along the path and in the next section of the narrative undergoes a spiritual conversion[20]. As she sculpts only "the image of the beloved with her soul" (*zi jān juz naqsh-i jānān mī kirāshīd*, 3260), she is slowly able to take on the beloved's attributes which leads to her being compared with Abraham during her conversion.

[20] Discussed in further detail in chapter 4.

Zulaykhā's real progress occurs in that she is able to perceive Yūsuf's image with more developed internal senses and is thus able to cross the *barzakh* of appearances to reach meaning. This refinement of her internal senses occurs through her inability to see resulting in the substitution of the sense of sight by the sense of sound[21]. Like Bāzighah who only first heard Yūsuf's description, Zulaykhā is able to progress along the path by using *khiyāl* and *wahm* to construct an image of Yūsuf from her memories, the descriptions of others and the sounds she hears. When the women see with their inner eye through sound, the emphasis is removed from the physical appearance of the image, the form, and it is placed on its symbolic referent, the meaning. Thus a beautiful image is not intrinsically beautiful but rather its beauty is derived from its symbolic meaning that, in this case, is the self-disclosure of God.

[21] In the Islamic tradition, revelation occurred through sound as the Prophet did not see God but rather heard him. This signals a priority of hearing over seeing, in accordance with Zulaykhā's experience.

Chapter 2: The Dual Nature of Vision

In this chapter of the *masnavī*, Zulaykhā has enticed Yūsuf into the seventh chamber of her palace[1]. This is the most intimate room where only lovers are permitted to enter. She confesses her love to him and attempts to seduce him. Her seduction involves forcing Yūsuf to see images of the two of them in an embrace. This has powerful effects on him and awakens a desire for Zulaykhā in him. As they begin to engage in sexual activity Yūsuf notices Zulaykhā's attempt at hiding the idol she worships so that it may not 'see' them. Yūsuf then escapes from Zulaykhā's clutches but not before she tears his shirt from behind.[2]

Here we notice two main aspects of vision as used in this context, one deceptive and the other salvational. The images in the palace are powerful and influential when 'held' in one's gaze, when one's intention is directed towards them. They lead Yūsuf to desire for Zulaykhā in addition to reflecting the heroine's state of mind: she is stuck in the phenomenal world[3] of beautiful appearances. But when Zulaykhā attempts to hide her impious act from the gaze of the idol, Yūsuf remembers that he may not hide himself from the gaze of the All-Seeing. By this blinding of the idol, the veil of the phenomenal world is removed from Yūsuf's sight and he can 'see' the meaning (*ma'anī*) behind forms (*sūrat*).

1. A visual seduction

Zulaykhā's seduction brings Yūsuf down to her level of vision: the phenomenal world. She uses various visual elements to carry it out, first Yūsuf seeing the images and then him

[1] The number seven here is symbolic because the *Haft Owrang* translates to the *Seven Thrones* and so Zulaykhā's palace acts as a miniature representation of the entire work. *Haft Owrang* is also one of the names of the constellation of the Pleiades thus giving cosmological significance to the work. So the seventh chamber acts as a *mise en abyme* for the cosmos, providing the reader with a microcosmic representation of the macrocosm several times removed due to the multiple layers each representing an order of reality. Additionally, the concept of *mise en abyme* is related to Ibn 'Arabī's theology of *waḥdat al-wujūd* and its visual representation in art as well as poetry. See Gregory Minissale, *Images of Thought: Visuality in Islamic India, 1550-1750,* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2007), 230-237.

[2] For a further discussion of the torn shirt see Claude-Claire Kappler "Voile et dévoilement dans Yusof-o Zoleykha de Jami," *Actes Actes de deux colloques internationaux sur: 'Abd al-Rahman Jami, Farid al-Din 'Attar, Omar Khayyam*, edited by Hossein Beikgaghban, (Tehran: Markaz-i Nashr-i Danishgahi, 1381/2002), 18-40.

[3] The phenomenal world was discussed in the previous chapter as the "world of appearances".

seeing her. The images act as surrogates for the couple and they affect Yūsuf's mind and hinder his 'imagination'[4] (*khiyāl*) so that he looks at Zulaykhā. Finally when he looks at Zulaykhā she succeeds in seducing him. But only with threats is she able to force him into action.

Images in the Persian literary tradition have a dual nature and Zulaykhā's seduction points to its deceptive nature. The theme of deceptive images is present in many literary works[5], such as Firdowsi's *Shāhnāmih* or Nizami's *Khamsah,* and is often associated with Mani, the founder of Manichaeism. Mani's power lies in his painting skills which are so great that he can give the illusion of motion and life to his painted images; skills that lead to Mani's characterization as a heretical prophet in the *Shāhnāmih*[6] because of his attempt to imitate God with his art. His paintings connote heretical meanings in that they do not lead the viewer to a perception of God as the true creator of these images and the world. Thus they ensnare the viewers in an illusion which eventually leads away from God and toward idolatry.

Similarly, the depiction of Yūsuf and Zulaykhā in an embrace has no metaphorical meaning and remains merely a sensuous scene seducing the senses. Zulaykhā built her palace to entice Yūsuf to look at her and gratify her desires. At the beginning of the passage, Yūsuf refuses to look at Zulaykhā. This causes Zulaykhā such grief that she implores him to "cast [a] gracious eye upon [her]" (*bih chishm-i luṭf sūy-i man guẕar kun*, 2368) but he "close[s] [his] merciful eyes at [her] face" (*chishm-i raḥmat az rūyam bibandī*, 2370). Zulaykhā first attempts to entice Yūsuf by evoking a powerful visual metaphor ranking the beauty of her face above both moon and sun. This is reminiscent of Yūsuf's description at the moment of his creation by God. Yūsuf though remains steadfast in his refusal to look at her, "[keeping] his gaze to himself" (*Yūsuf naẓar bā*

[4] As the term is defined in the previous chapter: a faculty of the soul.
[5] It has also been the subject of studies such as Christopher Bürgel, "Chapter 5: "Love on sight of pictures": a case study in the magic of the pictoral art", *The Feather of Simurgh: the "licit magic" of the arts in medieval Islam,* (New York, New York University Press, 1988), pp. 119-137.
[6] Priscilla Soucek, "Nizami on Painters and Paintings," in *Islamic Art at the Metropolitan Museum,* ed. Richard Ettinghausen (New York, NY, 1972), 9-21. pp. 10-11.

khwīsh mī dāsht, 2372) but when he bows his head, on the carpet he sees "a picture illuminated with his face" (*muṣauvir dīd bā aū ṣūrat-i khwīsh*, 2373) and in an embrace with Zulaykhā. The image, serving as a surrogate for Zulaykhā, forces Yūsuf to behold her in his sight. He sees the same scene repeatedly on the door, the wall, and even the ceiling. This painting has a potent effect upon him as "it increased his desire for Zulaykhā" such that he "bestowed a glance upon [her] face" (*fuzūdash mayl azān sūy-i Zulaykhā / naẓar bugshād bar rūy-i Zulaykhā*, 2377). This glance gives Zulaykhā, and the audience, the impression that Yūsuf desires her or is willing to engage in a sexual relation. This is later confirmed when Yūsuf implores her to be patient for she "shall see prosperity from [him] quickly" (*bizūdī kāmgārī bibīnī az man*, 2410) meaning she "will achieve [her] desire for his pleasing lips" (*zi la'l-i jān fazāyam kām yābī*, 2411). Yūsuf thus is willing to comply with her desires but he wishes to do it within the proper setting, when it becomes licit or sanctioned by God. From such statements it can be concluded that Zulaykhā's visual seduction was indeed successful.[7]

The images of the two lovers in an amorous embrace created the illusion of its occurrence and also its desirability. This illustrates the extent of the power of images and how they affect the mind of the observer, in this case Yūsuf. This particular image has no deeper meaning and thus leads Yūsuf into the phenomenal world. He sees, with his physical eye, their embrace and desires it rather than seeing with his ethical eye, the one that rejects the seduction of sensuous viewing[8]. Thus Yūsuf becomes entangled in the world of illusions although through his prophetic nature he is able to resist acting upon such desires. Even when Zulaykhā makes "her soul a target before his arrow" (*bih payash nāvakash jān rā hadaf sākht*, 2461), "his heart wanted to [go through

[7] Such statements must also be understood within the greater context of Jami's version of the narrative: the two are destined to be lovers. And so Yusuf's promise to accomplish Zulaykhā's desire for his pleasing lips reflects his predestined love for her.
[8] Gregory Minissale, *Images of Thought: Visuality in Islamic India, 1550-1750*, (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2007), 13-14.

with it] but his mandate of innocence prevented him" (*dilash mī khwāst dur suftan bih almās / valī mī dāsht ḥukm-i ʻṣmatash pās*, 2463). Thus Yūsuf is a man who can be seduced but is distinguished as a prophet by his ability to resist acting upon the sensuous, non-licit desires of his heart.

The complexity of the term *khiyāl* deserves further examination. In the previous chapter *khiyāl*, imagination, was defined as one of the five internal senses as well as one of the faculties of the soul. But *khiyāl* literally means "mental image". This then begs the question of where does this mental image occur, whose mind contains this mental image. Keeping in mind that this work is presented as a poetic interpretation of Ibn ʻArabī, one can put forward that the answer is God's mind. When God created humans in His own image, He is depicting Himself to Himself through them. It is the human's duty to contemplate God and recall his origin in God. This is done through the contemplation phenomenal images, *khiyāl*, of God. So, *khiyāl* becomes an intermediary between God Himself and the human mind attempting to contemplate God. It can thus be glossed as the Persian poetic interpretation of Ibn ʻArabī's *barzakh*. The *barzakh* is an isthmus between the two worlds: the physical world and the spiritual world. It is like a bridge connecting two contrasting states while belonging to neither of them. Thus when a human attempts to contemplate God with these "mental images" or *khiyāl*, it is a defective but unavoidable recourse in order to eventually overcome it and learn to see God Himself.

2. A visual salvation

As much as Yūsuf's seduction was visual, his salvation also comes from a vision revealing the true state of affairs. This vision reveals an alternate nature of vision which can lead to God.

Zulaykhā recognizes that their sexual union in this seventh chamber represents the sin of fornication, an "unreligious ritual" (*āyīn-i bīdīnī*, 2472). But she seems to feel that if none see this sin then it can become licit.[9] She therefore attempts to dissimulate her sin from her god, an idol, by preventing its eyes made of jewels from seeing her. Zulaykhā blinds the idol by simply covering it with a golden curtain. This idol made of gold is impotent and deficient, especially in its sight for it cannot see once its eyes are covered although they are made of jewels, a precious commodity meant to reflect the idol's power. This blind idol represents Zulaykhā's blindness as she persists in the phenomenal world, an idolator[10] deceived by the object she worships, and attempts to draw in Yūsuf.

Upon seeing the idol covered by the curtain, Yūsuf "arose awake from that blissful sleeping place" (*vaz ān khūsh khwābgah bīdār bar khāst*, 2476). The veiled idol acts as a reflection of the veils covering Yūsuf's mind[11]. This implies that Yūsuf had fallen into a state of unconsciousness, but this one differs from the one experienced by Sufis who enter a state of *bīkhūdī* while experiencing God. The one experienced by Sufis comes with annihilation of the 'self' – *nafs* – and leads to union with the Divine beloved. On the other hand, Yūsuf's sleep is that of his human, rational soul, leaving his animal soul awake.[12] The animal soul is deceived by the admiration of Zulaykhā's beautiful face without recognizing that, like all things in the world, it is part of God's self-disclosure[13]. In this way, Yūsuf no longer embodies the Perfect Man but rather he becomes an "animal human being"[14] who is conscious only of his bodily desires and

[9] Arbab-Shirani, *Shapes of Myth*, 138
[10] An idolator is one who has been deceived by the forms of illusionism or by the deceptive visual beauty of the world. Minissale, *Images of Thought*, 13.
[11] In this situation, visual metaphors intersect with clothing metaphors and the Sufi concept of removing the veils from one's mind in order to perceive the Reality of God, or His Self-disclosures, is brought forth. See C.-C. Kappler "Voile et dévoilement dans Yusof-o Zoleykha de Jami".
[12] Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 286.
[13] Jāmī, *Yūsuf u Zulaykhā*, line 2406. "Seen and unseen worlds, all are His emanation" (*burūnhā chūn darūnhā ṣūrat-i aūst*)
[14] Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 366.

heedless of his "mandate of innocence" (*ḥukm-i 'iṣmatash*, 2462) while being easily deceived by the beauty of the world around him.

Upon his awakening from this state of sleep and unconsciousness, it is as if Zulaykhā's veiling of the idol removed a veil from Yūsuf's eyes. Yūsuf transcends the phenomenal world by asking "Who sits [hidden] behind the curtain?" (*dar ān pardih nishastih pardigī kīst*, 2467). Yusuf asks this question related to the idol but it also forces him to seek out the meaning behind the forms of the images in the chamber and even of Zulaykhā's beautiful face. The answer reveals that it was all a deception; none of these sights or his actions led to God but rather to an idol. Yūsuf then finds himself reminded of God's omnipresence even in this innermost sanctuary which none could access. With the veil of sensuous seductions removed from his mind, Yūsuf becomes mindful of God and reminds himself of His attributes: all-seeing, all-knowing, everlasting and mighty (*dānāyī bīnā / qīyūm tavānā*, 2474). This contrast with the description of the idol which concentrates on its physical characteristics: golden body, eyes of jewels, and a smell of musk (2467).Consequently an opposition is created between Zulaykhā's idol and God. The monotheistic God does not have eyes made of jewels yet, for this same reason, it is more powerful and cannot be blinded by a curtain. This contrast between the idol and God is the continuation of the tension between appearances and the Truth, which, as we shall see in the next chapter, culminates as a struggle between the sacred, and the profane reflected by Yūsuf resisting the ladies of the banquet.

Chapter 3: The Blinding Light of God

Zulaykhā organizes a banquet for the ladies of Egypt who are gossiping about her love for a Hebrew slave, namely Yūsuf. At this banquet, upon seeing Yūsuf, the ladies cut their hands rather than the orange they are holding and many even lose "their control [and] their volition" (*zamām-e ikhtiyār az dastishān raft*, 2684). We will examine how common literary tropes, continuing the tension between the two kinds of vision established in the previous chapters, culminate in a tension between the sacred and the profane. This opposition fashions Yūsuf as a representation of the sacred and thus as a hierophany, a physical manifestation of God.

The trope of *nāz*, the haughtiness of the beloved, defines Yūsuf's position as beloved. Then the trope of *jelvah-i maḥbūb*, the blinding hierophany of the beloved, makes extensive use of the extramissive theory of vision to continue the theme of Yūsuf as a body emanating light. And finally, the opposition of sacred versus profane reflects the interaction between lover and beloved and leads to Yūsuf's being fashioned into the physical manifestation of God, he thus becomes a theophany.

1. *Nāz*

The trope of *nāz*, the haughtiness of the beloved, appears in the beginning of the section with the women's discussion of Yūsuf's refusal to cast a sight upon Zulaykhā. "He doesn't [even] look at her" (*nah gāhī mīkonad dar vay nigāhī*, 2616) and "Wherever that one [namely Zulaykhā] draws the veil from her face / This one [Yūsuf] nails his eyes shut with his eyelashes" (*bih har jā ān kishad burq' zi rukhsār / Zanad īn az muzhih bar dīdah mismār*, 2618). This trope, *maẓmun*, is repeated in two consecutive distiches emphasizing Yūsuf's attempts to distance himself from Zulaykhā. Yūsuf has no need for Zulaykhā's love and is self-sufficient in that

regard. Thus the beloved's haughtiness reflects his self-sufficiency with respect to the lover's love and furthermore the ultimate self-sufficient is God.

Another aspect of *nāz* is its cause of great suffering to the lover. Zulaykhā suffers greatly throughout the narrative from the "grief of love" (*gham-i 'ishq*, 2605) due to Yūsuf's rejection. In addition, that the women are holding "an orange[1] giving cheer" (*turanjī shādī angīz*, 2646) as Yūsuf enters is symbolic of their suffering at the hands of the beloved. It seems the orange is implied as a remedy for the melancholy they will suffer, melancholy being the illness of unrequited lovers. Yūsuf is fashioned into the prototypical beloved and Zulaykhā is his lover.

2. *Jelvah-i maḥbūb*

As a beloved, Yūsuf's beauty is blinding and causes pain to the ladies. This is known as the trope of *jelvah-i maḥbūb*, the blinding hierophany of the beloved. The text exploits the extramissive theory of vision to develop this trope and characterize Yūsuf as a physical manifestation of God. Zulaykhā addresses Yūsuf as "light of my two eyes" (*nūr-i dū dīdah*, 2662). This implies that light emanates from Yūsuf to enter Zulaykhā's eyes thus allowing her to see through him. Further in the text, Zulaykhā accepts her position as "wretched in [Yūsuf's] eyes" (*dar chishm-i tū khwāram*, 2665). Again we notice a play on vision in which Zulaykhā's light enter Yūsuf's eyes but it is not illuminating. Combining the concept of light expressed in the above quotations[2], one can infer that light emanates from Yūsuf and allows those around him to see by his light. A ray can be traced from Yūsuf's eyes entering Zulaykhā, and a ray from Zulaykhā to Yūsuf. The image he sees is not her physical appearance but rather the contents of

[1] For simplicity it has been translated as orange but in fact it is a *citrus medica* which as the Latin name designates is believed to have originated in the land of Medes in Persia.
[2] This combination is possible because they are drawn from the same speech act which Zulaykha utters to convince Yusuf to appear before the women.

her inner being, her (moral) character. Zulaykhā therefore appears 'wretched' not for her lack of physical beauty but rather for her lack of inner light, faith. Zulaykhā's inability to recognize the source of Yūsuf's light causes her to be blind.

Adding to the light emanating from his body is Yūsuf's clothing which reflects his inner state. Yūsuf is ornamented with countless jewels and precious commodities all meant to enhance his beauty. Zulaykhā clothes him in a new green garment (*ḥullih-i sabzash*, 2670), scatters amber on his locks (*furū āvīkhtah gīsūy-i mu'anbar*, 2671), places a golden belt full of jewels and precious rubies on his waist (*zi zarrīn manṭaqih zīvargarī kard // zi chandān gūhar va la'l-i girānsang*, 2673-4) and a crown ornamented with jewels on his head (*bih sar tāj muraṣṣa' az jawāhir*, 2675), and she places "shoes full of rubies and jewels" bound to his feet by strings of pearls (*bih pā na'līn az la'l va guhar pur / bar aū bastih davāl az rishtih-i dur*, 2676). She adds to this opulence another silk robe on which, continuing the trope of *jelvah-i maḥbūb*, a hundred souls and a hundred hearts are bound (*radāyī az qasab kardih ḥamāyil / bih har tārash girih ṣad jān va ṣad dil*, 2677). Finally, Yūsuf is made to carry a golden ewer and followed by a slave girl with gold-embroidered cloth and a silver washbasin (*bih dastash dād zarrīn āftābih / ganīzī az payash zarkish 'aṣābih // yikī ṭashtash bih kaf az nuqrih-i jām / bih sān sāyih aū rā gām bar gām*, 2678-9). The washbasin, as the narrator specifies, is so that those overwhelmed by Yūsuf's beauty may "wash their hands of this sweet life" (*az jān-i shīrīn dast-i khūd shust*, 2680). The presence of the washbasin proleptically announces the ladies' reactions. It is important to note that Yūsuf is still but a slave and such opulent clothing serves as an analeptic reference to his royal and prophetic heritage. In addition to his own clothing, Yūsuf is ornamented by a slave girl, herself also ornamented. When considering the above description allegorically, one can speculate that the slave girl is a symbol for Zulaykhā herself, coming after Yūsuf and not being

affected in the same way as the other women. Thus the narrator pushes the limits of his description to include even those around Yūsuf and makes use of hyperboles to emphasize the character's beauty that overflows and affects others. This also serves to further the dichotomy between outer appearance (*sūrat*) and meaning (*ma'anī*). Zulaykhā perceives herself as enhancing Yūsuf's physical beauty when she is in fact giving a visual representation of his inner character.

Another expression of the *jelvah-i maḥbūb* trope is the women's reaction to Yūsuf's appearance. "They lost their volition" with only "one glance" (*bih yik dīdār kār az dastishān raft / zamām-i ikhtiyār az dastishān raft*, 2684) The ladies are overwhelmed by his beauty and enter a state of unconsciousness in which they are unaware of their actions, becoming "soulless bodies" (*tan-i bījān*, 2685) astonished by Yūsuf's "beautiful form" (*zi zībā shikl-i aū*, ibid.) They cut their hands rather than the orange because they "did not distinguish orange from [their] own hand" (*nadānistih turanj az dast-i khūd bāz*, 2687) illustrating the extent to which they were blinded by Yūsuf's beauty. The ladies' reaction reveals an extramissive theory of vision. Yūsuf's rays emanate from him and overpowering the ladies' sight rays enter their eyes and reach their brains, the seat of the mind. They are blinded in that they are not able to 'see' or distinguish the orange from their own hand. When the ladies have recovered, Zulaykhā mentions how they cut their palms "by the blade of his [Yūsuf's] light" (*zi tīgh-i mihr-i aū kafhā burīdīd*, 2717). This reinforces the concept of light rays emanating from Yūsuf. These light rays provide sight for Yūsuf but blind the women who are not strong enough to withstand them. As we shall see in the next section, their weakness stems from a lack of faith and religion.

The ladies' loss of consciousness is reminiscent to the story of Moses who wishes to see God. But before that God stipulates that the mountain will have the opportunity to see Him and if

the mountain does not shatter then Moses will also be granted a glance of God. But the mountain shatters immediately upon the sight of God and Moses loses consciousness, overwhelmed by the light emanating from God (Q 7:143). Similarly, the ladies lose consciousness due to the overwhelming light of God shining through Yūsuf. In addition, they lose their bodily integrity when cutting their palms just as the mountain lost its bodily integrity when it exploded into atoms. The evocation of this story furthers Yūsuf's characterization as a theophany.

Finally, the ladies themselves turn toward Yūsuf in an attempt to overpower his mind and to seduce him. In turn we see the trope of *jelvah-i maḥbūb* inverted as the ladies are now trying to send their light rays into Yūsuf's mind so that he may be blinded by their beauty. They call themselves "beauties without equal" (*mā har yik bih khūbī bī naẓīrīm*, 2759) and "shining moons"(*māh-i munīrīm*, ibid.). The moon is a common poetic metaphor for the beloved and in the Persian tradition Yusuf is known as the moon of Canaan for his beauty. Thus the women are attempting to position themselves as beloveds of the same caliber as Yūsuf. By becoming his beloved, their sight rays would then overpower him. But Yūsuf refuses to listen to "their incantations" (*afsūnarīshān*, 2762) and "turn[s] his face away" (*bigardānīd rūy az rūy-i aīshān*, 2764). By turning away, Yūsuf is refusing their position as beloveds and thus denying access to their sight rays into his mind. He then turns toward God in "supplication" (*bahr-i munājāt*, 2765).

The terms used to describe the actions of each reveal how Yūsuf's turning away from the ladies is a pious deed whereas their attempts to seduce him are sinful. Yūsuf immediately turns to God and prays while the "incantations" (*afsūnarīshān*, 2762) of the ladies imply deceit and fraud. This is further reinforced by "their waywardness on religion's road" (*guzashtan az rah-i dīn*, 2763). These two descriptors of the ladies fashion them as people who have strayed from the

path of God, as disbelievers. Keeping in mind the context in which this narrative was composed, we can infer that 'the path of God' is monotheism. Yūsuf's ability to resist the temptation of the women and to turn toward God reinforces his prophetic nature and elevates him above the ordinary beloved.

3. Sacred versus Profane[3]

Yūsuf's position as a beloved is firmly established and the text molds him into a representation of the sacred while simultaneously characterizing the ladies' love for him as profane. There is a tension in the text created by the juxtaposition of words from the same semantic field but yielding opposite connotations. The tension in the text reflects the tension between the characters as the ladies attempt to seduce Yūsuf and he struggles to remain faithful.

In the ladies' address to Yūsuf, there are many contrasting elements. Two verses in close proximity use clothing with opposite connotations. First, we are reminded of Yūsuf's "shirt [torn] in righteousness" (*darīdih pīrahan dar nīknāmī*, 2729) and immediately following the ladies call upon Yūsuf to "cast [his] skirts" over Zulaykhā (*hamī kish gah gahī dāman bar aīn khāk*, 2733). The first instance is a proleptic reference to the incident in the palace Zulaykhā built for Yūsuf where she tried to seduce him[4]. He remained faithful to his religion and the proof of his innocence was his shirt torn from the back. Here clothing is an extension of Yūsuf's character and signals modesty and moral virtue. But in the second instance, the ladies are attempting to convince Yūsuf to submit to Zulaykhā's desires. They are using a common idiom to convey their message. But its juxtaposition with the previous clothing reference emphasizes the profanity of their message.

[3] The concepts of sacred and profane discussed here are derived from Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. by Willard R. Track (New York: A Harvest Book, 1959).
[4] Kappler in her article "Voile et dévoilement" discusses this scene extensively.

Later in their address, they repeat the phrase that Yūsuf "[does] not see beauty in [Zulaykhā]" (*chandānash nimī bīnī jamālī*, 2757) while calling themselves "beauties without equal" (*khūbī bī naẓīrīm*, 2759). The term beauty in the first phrase is being used to refer to piety and virtue and its repetition allows the audience to recall the beginning of the scene when the ladies use the same phrase in censure. In the second use of the term 'beauty' it is referring to external, physical beauty. This contrast is revelatory of the Sufi distinction of *zāhir* and *bātin*, meaning outward and inward respectively. The women understand the term 'beauty' in its *zāhir* meaning but they are incapable to grasping its metaphorical, inner meaning relating to virtue and moral character.

In the same breath, the ladies call themselves "shining moons" (*māh-i munīrīm*, 2759). In the Persian literary tradition, Yūsuf is commonly known as the "moon of Canaan" (*māh-i kan'ān*). By using this metaphor for the ladies, their external beauty is emphasized and a tension is created because this does not correspond to their internal characters. And so the ladies, unlike Yūsuf, are only externally beautiful and the beauty of God is not reflected through them. These appositions create an opposition between Yūsuf and the ladies.

Yūsuf's symbolism is emphasized by a religious allusion. When Yūsuf appears before the ladies, the text states "that hidden treasure // Emerged" (*ān ganj nahuftih // birūn āmad*, 2682). This phrase is reminiscent of a famous hadith in which God calls himself a hidden treasure who created the world so that He may be known[5]. This particular hadith is especially prevalent in the Sufi context, in particular among the Naqshabandis, the group to which Jami adhered[6]. Conscious of the cultural context and the importance of this hadith in the Sufi traditions, we can infer that Yūsuf shares in God's sacred nature.

[5] Quoted by Ibn 'Arabī in his *Futuhat al-Makkiyya* II 399.28, in Chittick, *SPK*, 391.
[6] For more information on Jami's theological affiliations see Hamid Algar, "Chapter 5: Naqshabandi-Akbari: Jami and Sufi Tradition" in *Jami. Makers of Islamic Civilization*, (USA: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 87-107.

In addition to the religious allusion, the women assert that Yūsuf is "the emperor of the soul's clime" (*Yūsuf khusrū-i aqlīm-i jān ast,* 2721). In medieval medicine it is commonly accepted that a person is composed of three elements, the body, the mind, and the soul. The soul is the highest of those in the hierarchy because it is eternal whereas the body dies and with it the mind. That the women ascribe Yūsuf to the soul implies that his true identity lies beyond the physical realm, or the phenomenal world. Furthermre, the ladies continue in saying that "his command holds sway over that clime, [namely the soul's]" (*bar ān aqlīm ḥukm-i aū ravān ast*, 2721). Thus Yūsuf's physical appearance is simply a physical manifestation of divine nature, a theophany.

Once Yūsuf has been established as a theophany, the poem continues with the ladies turning toward him and attempting to seduce him. Yūsuf turns his face away from them to avoid sinning. He prays "Better that I should dwell a hundred years in prison / Than witness their faces even for a moment!" (*bih az ṣad sāl dar zindān nishīnam / kih yikdam ṭal'at-i aīnān bibīnam*, 2769). This verse contains an internal contrast between the duration of time for the two actions. But the real contrast is between punishment in this life and punishment in the hereafter. Prison is punishment inflicted by the ladies upon Yūsuf and therefore it must come to an end, be it at his death. On the other hand, witnessing the ladies' faces implies committing the greatest sin in Islam, associating others with God or idolatry. Thus Yūsuf's punishment for such a sin will be inflicted by God and it will be eternal. This verse presents the ladies' seduction as having disastrous consequences and thus it is sacrilegious. Yūsuf's struggle to resist the ladies' seduction is one with high stakes, opposing the sacred and the sacrilegious.

As has been explored in the above analysis, there is a crescendo of tropes used to describe Yūsuf. First his position as beloved is established, then his overwhelming beauty is

emphasized to finally qualify him as a theophany, embodying God. This is made possible primarily through the use of theories of vision and certain other medical concepts contemporary to the author's time. These ideas are used to express the mystical concept of God's perpetual self-disclosure through His creation derived from Ibn 'Arabī's *Futuhat al-Makkiyya*.

Chapter 4: Zulaykhā's transformations

1. Zulaykhā's inner transformation

Zulaykhā's conversion to monotheism occurs through the presentation of two parallel situations in which she prays to the idol and then to God. These two situations represent her conversion from idol worshiping to a monotheistic religion. The two major themes which are developed in the text are the way in which she goes about pursuing her desires and the consequences of her pursuits. When she is an idolater, she depends upon herself to attempt to achieve her goal which is Yūsuf himself. She is pursuing desires in the present world rather than those of the afterlife. Consequently she remains "invisible" and "afflicted". Whereas, when she becomes a monotheist she pursues the desires of the world to come and becomes dependent upon God to help her achieve this goal. Her goal no longer becomes Yūsuf himself but rather the God who created Yūsuf and discloses Himself through him. This renders her "luminous" and engenders a comparison with Abraham.

The two invocations differ in tone. Zulaykhā uses the imperative when addressing the idol, ordering it to "look at [her] disrepute" (*bibīn rusvāyīm rā*, 3369), to "return [her] sight" (*bih chishmam bāz dih bīnāyīm rā*, 3369-70) and to relieve her of her misfortune (*dar aīn jān sukhtiyyam mapasand chandīn / bidīn bad bakhtiyyam mapasand chandīn*, 3373). Zulaykhā is more audacious and adamant in her requests revealing an attitude of self-reliance. In contrast, in her prayer to God she assumes a more submissive tone. She begins by recognizing the error of her ways (*agar rū dar but āvardam khudā yā / bar ān bar khūd jafā kardam khudā yā*, 3399) and begging for forgiveness (*jafā-ī man bipāmurz*, 3400). Then she says "When/because You cast away that dust of sin from me/ Give me back that which you took away from me" (*chū ān gard-i*

khaṭā az man fishāndī / bih man dih bāz ānch az man sitāndī, 3402). The term *chū* is ambiguous, due to the presence of two simultaneously relevant meanings, and indicates both temporality and causality. Consequently it can be understood as "When You cast away that dust of sin …" or "Because You cast away the dust of sin …" The temporal meaning infers that God has already cast away the dust of sin from Zulaykhā and thus she is in a receptive state for whatever He may do next. The causal meaning infers that her sight can only be returned because of God's mercy and forgiveness that will be discussed below. Zulaykhā continues by expressing humbly what she wants, "to pluck a tulip from Yūsuf's garden" (*bichīnam lālih-aī az bāgh-i Yūsuf*, 3403). Therefore, Zulaykhā is no longer relying on herself to achieve her desires but rather on God[1]. The different tones of the supplications indicate Zulaykhā's changed attitude toward reaching her desires.

At the beginning of the chapter, the narrator informs the audience that she desires *dīdār* (3365). In Persian this term can mean both a glance and an encounter between intimates thus introducing ambiguity by the presence of two simultaneously relevant meanings. When Zulaykhā addresses prayers to God or the idol they differ such that different aims are reflected. Zulaykhā first addresses the idol, asking for her sight "that [she] may see him [Yūsuf] from afar" (*kih rūyash bīnam az dūr*, 3370) claiming that she never desired "anything but seeing Yūsuf" (*bijuz dīdār-i Yūsuf nīst kāmī*, 3371) and that granting her request will relieve her from her "suffering state" and "misery" (*jān sukhtiyyam; bad bakhtiyyam*, 3373). Zulaykhā focuses on the immediate and superficial sensory pleasure derived from glancing at Yūsuf. Thus *dīdār* can be understood as a glance in this case. On the other hand, when she addresses God her invocation is different. She first recognizes that God "took back the jewel of sight from [her]" (*sitāndī gūhar-i bīnāī az*

[1] Another indication of Zulaykhā's dependence on God occurs when she goes out on the path of Yūsuf lamenting and, rather than addressing Yūsuf himself, addresses God (3405), depending on this prayer to convey her message.

man, 3401) and then asks for the return of "that which [He] took away from [her]" (*ānch az man sitāndī*, 3402). Her request is ambiguous; keeping in mind the previous verse it can be assumed she is asking for her sight but when considering the following verses in which she asks "to pluck a tulip from Yūsuf's garden" (*bichīnam lālih-aī az bāgh-i Yūsuf*, 3403), her request can be understood as referring to a renewed relationship with the beloved. Thus she invokes the alternate meaning of *dīdār*, an encounter between intimates. Textual ambiguity reveals a shift in the content of Zulaykhā's invocations thus reflecting an inner shift.

This inner shift reflects a change from her pursuit of pleasures in the phenomenal world to her pursuit of the desires of the unseen world. When Zulaykhā addresses the idol, she is seeking to obtain the fulfillment of her desire but this desire is a very superficial one, it is the sight of Yūsuf for instantaneous gratification. Yet, in a later address, she recognizes that the idol is a "barrier" (*sang-i rāham*, 3386) along the path of her desires and that in worshiping the idol she led herself "to the path of difficulty" (*bih sar rāh-i vabāl*, 3388). In addition, the heroine now recognizes the superficiality of her desires claiming that "every desire [she] sought from the idol" in this world was taking her further away from the desires she might have sought in the afterworld (*bih giryih az tū har kāmī kih justam / zi kām har dū 'ālam dast shustam*, 3389). She seems to be implying that to achieve the pleasures of the present world, it is better for one to seek the pleasures of the next world. Seeking the pleasures of the next world involves worshipping God and praising Him in the hope that He will reward the worshipper with pleasures and desires of the present world.

The consequences of her pursuits before and after her conversion are significantly different. When Zulaykhā comes along the side of the road to see Yūsuf pass, she is "like a beggar" (*Zulaykhā chūn gidāyī*, 3377) and resembles "a plaintiff […] implor[ing] for justice"

(*bih rasm-i dādkhwāhān dād bardāsht*, 3378). The cries and moans of her heart were unsuccessful in moving her audience. "She was in such a state that none saw her" (*bih ḥālī shud kih aū rā kas mabīnad*, 3381) thus she is invisible. Zulaykhā is presented as an afflicted, invisible, and unsuccessful orator as a result of her idolatry. After her conversion, Zulaykhā's characterization changes. When she returns along the path of Yūsuf, she is still lamenting but her lamentation is addressed to God, not Yūsuf. Although she does not address him directly, Yūsuf is deeply affected by her eulogy to the point that he "[loses] consciousness in awe" (*biraft az haybat-i ān hūsh Yūsuf*, 3407) and she becomes a successful orator. It is important to remember that "God created the world by speaking it"[2] and that three books are created from God's speech: the universe, the human self, and scripture. The Quran enjoins its audience to read the book of their souls through which they may recognize God's signs in the other two books[3]. Prophets set an example for humans as how to read their books and also how to speak imitating God's speech. Thus Zulaykhā's oratorical abilities can be understood in relation to a prophet assuming divine traits, namely divine speech. In addition, she is a "true plaintiff" (*ṣādiq dādkhwān*, 3414) from whom "the light of honesty" (*furūgh-i ṣidq*, 3414) radiates and reaches the "understanding king" (*daryābandih shāhī*, 3413). In contrast to her previous state of invisibility, she becomes luminous.

Finally, rather than being afflicted, Zulaykhā becomes an idol breaker "like Abraham" (*khalīl-āsā*, 3391). This comparison to Abraham is significant because it is the third reference to Abraham in the text. Abraham is first discussed in the introduction when the narrator evokes the Quranic story of his discovery of God by refusing to worship that which sets such as the sun and

[2] William Chittick, *Ibn 'Arabi: Heir to the Prophets*, (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005), p. 57.
[3] Chittick, *Heir to the Prophets*, 57-58. This is also present in Niẓāmī's *Laylī va Majnūn*, "Sighing he [Majnun] crouched under the rocks and read page after page from the book of his life". Niẓāmī Ganjavī, trans. Rudolph Gelpke, *The story of Layla and Majnun*, (Oxford: Cassirer, 1966), 71.

the stars[4]. By invoking Abraham in the introduction, the narrator establishes him as a model for Zulaykhā. This is actualized by the comparison when Zulaykhā shatters the idol with a granite stone Abraham-like (*khalīl-āsā*, 3391). The second reference to Abraham occurs when Yūsuf is dropped in the well after being stripped of his multicolored garment. The angel Gabriel descends and removes the shirt of Abraham from an amulet around Yūsuf's arm. This shirt was gifted to Abraham by God when he was thrown into the fire and protected him from it. It serves the same purpose when Yūsuf is in the pit, to protect him from the darkness and foulness of the pit. Yūsuf is a descendent of Abraham and is seen as having inherited his prophetic nature. Zulaykhā on the other hand is not related to Abraham yet she too inherits his prophetic qualities. As Zulaykhā undergoes her inner transformation, she progressively takes on the attributes of the beloved and is fashioned as an inheritor of the Abrahamic prophetic nature. Consequently, it can be argued that Zulaykhā becomes prophetic[5].

Zulaykhā's conversion is presented through contrasts, between her prayers, between her lamentations along Yūsuf's path, and between her characterizations. These contrasts reveal the various roles attributed to Zulaykhā: lover, orator, beggar, idol worshiper, monotheist, and finally prophet-like. This analysis reveals that Zulaykhā's character undergoes much more than a simple conversion from idolatry to monotheism. Rather, she undergoes a complete transformation of character reflected especially by her adopting divine speech and her new-found prophetic character. Her characterization as such is in preparation for her union with the beloved that is discussed in the following section.

[4] Quran, Sura 6, Ayat 76-79. And lines 56-57 of the masnavi: *'unān tā kay bih dast-i shak sipārī / bih har yek rūī "hadhā rabbī" ārī // khalīl-āsā dar malk-i yaqīn zan / navāī "lā 'uḥib al-āfilīn" zan*.

[5] Zulaykhā becomes more and more prophet-like, or prophetic, to the point where she teaches Yūsuf about love in the same way he taught others about God.

2. Reconcilling the outer condition with the inner state

Zulaykhā, on the path to spiritual enlightenment, experiences physical changes thrice and each time it creates a correspondence between her inner state and her outward condition. Zualaykha, failing to see the meaning behind Yūsuf's form, is effectively blind and so she loses her eyesight to reflect this. Later, after she experiences a spiritual transformation, she is reborn by the grace of God invoked by Yūsuf and it reflects the state of her pure heart. Finally, before her death Zulaykhā becomes blind again.

A. Zulaykhā is blind

Zulaykhā's blindness is preceeded by grief, grief felt by the lover over separation from the beloved expressed through the use of the color imagery beginning with red. As a consequence of this grief, Zulaykhā cries extensively until her eyes shed blood rather than tears (*khūn-i nāb mī rīkht,* 3253). This is the first of six evocations of the color red over the following seven verses. Such repetition emphasizes her grief and the extent to which it overwhelms her. Her tears cause her to become "red-faced" (*surkh-rūyī*, 3255) or "rose-colored" (*gulgūn*, 3258) and they also become "blush for her cheeks" (*zān khūnābih rumj rā ghāzih kardī*, 3256). The blood flowing from her eyes is the "blood of her liver" (*khūn-i jigar*, 3257) and fills her eyes which become "inkwell[s] from redness" (*zi surkhī har yekī būdī davātī,* 3259). The blood of the liver is a reference to the common idiom of 'eating the blood of one's liver' meaning experiencing extreme grief. The color imagery fashions Zulaykhā as suffering from overwhelming grief that causes changes in her physical state.

This change is expressed by the transformation of all that is black into white[6]. Zulaykhā's black hair becomes the color of milk (*bih rang-i shir shud mūyī chū qayrish*, 3270) and camphor, a white substance, is shed over "her dark world" (*bih mushkistān aū kāfūr bārīd*, 3271). This dichotomy continues until her black eyes themselves also become white (*siyyāhī rā sar shak az nargisash shust / zi nargis-zar chishmash yāsimīn rust*, 3274). This change in color of her pupil signals that her affliction is the illness of lovers that causes the loss of eyesight. Zulaykhā's blindness is not just any blindness, it is a blindness that mirrors her state when she first saw Yūsuf as it is her "world-seeing eye" (*chishm-i jahān bīn*, 3275) which becomes sightless. This specification forces the audience to recall a previously established distinction between sight with the physical eye and sight with the inner eye. One sees forms and the other is meant to see the meaning behind those forms. Zulaykhā's inner eye was incapable of seeing meaning when she first saw the image of Yūsuf as a young girl, so she was effectively blind. Now her physical blindness becomes a reflection of the state of her inner blindness as she continues to seek Yūsuf rather than the theophany he embodies.

B. Zulaykhā is blessed

When Yūsuf has become the vizier and summons Zulaykhā, her spiritual state has changed a great deal. She enters his presence dancing like a particle of light (*hamchūn ẕarrih raqqāṣ*, 3429), happily, and she smiles "like the rose" and blooms "like the bud" (*chū gul khandān shud*

[6] The text includes a brief remark about antecedents for Zulaykhā's situation. This remark opens the way for discussions about cultural identity and heritage. The narrator, Jāmī, after establishing the prevalence of white as the color of mourning in the protagonist's eyes, questions where this tradition emerged. He claims that maybe antecedents originated in India as Indians do everything in reverse (3277). One can note the importance of adhering to tradition and mention of India implies that cultural ties between the two were strong enough that migration of antecedents from one geographical location to another was feasible. In India white is the color of mourning whereas in Iran it is black so the text also refers literally to a difference in tradition. Though, the narrator may be making the remark ironically assuming the audience will recognize the real antecedent for this tradition lies in Jacob in the Quran who goes blind from crying over his lost son Yūsuf (Surat 12).

va chūn ghunchih bishgift, 3430). Her attitude astonishes Yūsuf because it reflects a happy inner state while physically she appears wretched. A discrepancy exists between the inner and outer states. Zulaykhā identifies herself and upon recognizing her, Yūsuf weeps from sorrow and pity (*taraḥḥam kard va bar vay zār bigirist*, 3436). This expression of sorrow in the first sign of the mercy she is to receive. Yūsuf's sorrow also marks a shift in Yūsuf's position from haughty beloved to merciful prophet and lover. His mercy has such a strong effect on Zulaykhā that when he calls out her name in pity she loses consciousness from joy (*chū Yūsuf guft bā vay āy Zulaykhā / fitād az pā Zulaykhā bi Zulaykhā // sharāb-i bīkhūdī zad az dilash jūsh / biraft az lizzat-i āvāzash az hūsh*, 3438-9). This unconsciousness, unlike on previous occasions, is a positive one. As she is unconscious, wine ferments in her heart (*sharāb-i bikhūdī zad az dilash jūsh*, 3439), a process during which raw materials are slowly refined into a delectable drink. This fermentation refers to Zulaykhā's slow transformation that occurred throughout the entire narrative resulting in her refined spiritual state. Thus we witness the extent of her progress along the path toward God.

The concept of stages along the path is further reiterated by the answers Zulaykhā provides to Yūsuf's questions. She recognizes the ultimate goal to be union with the beloved but before union she undergoes "separation that melts the soul" (*az bār hijr jāngudāzat*, 3442). Melting is also a slow and difficult process that involves a large amount of heat and energy to transform a crude object into a refined item. By the end of her speech, Zulaykhā recognizes that nothing is left in her possession but "the treasury of love" in her heart (*ganj-i 'ishq*, 3448). The text uses two strong metaphors to illustrate the process undergone by the heroine. Wine making and metal melting are two metaphors which, in the Persian literary tradition, carry connotations of violence in transformation. In Rudaki's *khammriyya*, or wine-ode, he describes how wine is

made by tearing the grape from its mother, the vine, and beaten in a barrel in order to be reborn as wine and drunk at the court. Similarly, smelting first occurs in the *Shāhnāmih* when Hushang accidentally discovers fire by hurling a stone at a snake. The two processes are part of the royal husbanding of natural resources. Thus Zulaykhā's transformation must be understood in the context of these processes as a violent discovery of her true Self.

After Yūsuf is able to see Zulaykhā in her state of old age and blindness but also as bearing a receptive heart, he swears to be her guarantor, swearing by God and also by his ancestor Abraham. This reference to Abraham is significant because it strengthens the bond between Yūsuf and Zulaykhā by linking both of them to Abraham. Zulaykhā, as previously discussed is compared to Abraham and undergoes a similar conversion process. Yūsuf is also closely tied to Abraham as he is his descendent and inherits his prophetic mission. The reference to Abraham occurs through a clothing metaphor, evoking the shirt God gives him and which he wears in the fire. This shirt, a "clothing of kindness from God" (*libās-i khullat az yazdān risīdash*, 3454), indicates that Zulaykhā will also partake in that kindness from God which will result in her rebirth a few lines later. The same shirt is also present when Yūsuf is cast into the well. Yūsuf's descent into the well and later reemergence are symbolic of death and rebirth[7]. Zulaykhā, undergoing a similar process, also experiences a rebirth. Through these allusions there is an escalation of Zulaykhā's characterization as a prophet-like.

Once it has been established that Zulaykhā is worthy to partake in God's kindness, she undergoes a physical transformation. The narrator, to signal Zulaykhā's regained sight, reverses the order of the color imagery discussed above: camphor, a white substance, turns to black Tartar musk (*zi kāfūrbar āmad mushk-i tārtār*, 3461); "the whiteness of wretchedness is driven away from her locks" (*sipīdī shud zi mashkīn ṭurrih-āsh dūr*, 3462); her eyes become black again and

[7] Kappler, 32

perceive light (*dar āmad dar savād-i nargisash nūr*, 3462). The previous color scheme represented death and this reversal of colors indicates a rebirth which is only possible by the grace of God.

Furthermore, Zulaykhā's rebirth is surrounded by water imagery referring to the Spring of Life, *āb-i hayāt*, or as it is known in the Western tradition, Fountain of Youth. During her rebirth we can see "the water of life" flowing from Yūsuf's lips toward Zulaykhā (*ravān kard az dū lab āb-i baqā rā*, 3458) that "renew[s] her dead beauty" (*jamāl murdih-āsh rā zindigī dād*, 3459) and "return[s] the departed water to the stream" (*bih jūy raftih bāz āvard ābash*, 3460). Zulaykhā's rebirth is only complete when she has achieved union with the beloved and can "give water from the spring of friendship to her withered and dead crop" (*bih kisht-i khūd kih pajmurdih-st va dirham / daham az chishmih-i sār ṣuḥbatat nam*, 3471). She drinks water from the "spring of friendship" which for Zulaykhā replaces the spring of life. In the Persian literary tradition, the spring of life is a common metaphor for the mouth of the beloved. Mythically, it restores beauty and youth and provides the drinker with a long or eternal life and gives happiness. But the spring of life is in an eternally dark desert such that all those who search for it get lost and are unable to find it.[8] Zulaykhā, similarly to those searching for the spring of life, could not find union with the beloved except by the grace of God. And once found, she regains her youth and beauty and achieves a long and happy life in union with her beloved. Zulaykhā's rebirth occurs as she partakes in God's kindness and it allows for her physical condition to reflect her inner state that is no longer wretched but rather blessed. Zulaykhā is worthy of experiencing union with the beloved because when she looks upon Yūsuf in addition

[8] "Āb-e Hayāt" in *The Great Islamic Encyclopedia*, ed. Kazem Musavi Bojnurdi, Tehran 1996, 1st ed., The Centre for the Great Islamic Encyclopaedia, v.1, pp 36-38. See also "al-Khadir (al-Khidr)" in EI^2.

to seeing him physically, she also sees God's self-disclosure. Thus she has actualized her love for God through her love for Yūsuf.

C. The eye of Zulaykhā's soul

Upon Yūsuf's death, Zulaykhā grieves and enters a state of wretchedness as a consequence of this grief. She loses herself for nine days as "the shining light of her mind [leaves] her body" (*furūgh-i nayyar-i hūshash zi tan raft,* 3662) and her heart burns from the brand of love. This is reminiscent of when Zulaykhā's first saw Yūsuf in a dream in a state of unconsciousness and first felt the sting of the brand of love in her heart. But she has come a long way since then and now she understands that she has lost more than the ability to see a mere beautiful image, she has lost the ability to witness God's self-disclosure through the beautiful form of the beloved. Thus her grief and misery are greater than before.

In her lamentations she calls for the "desired one of [her] heart" (*kām-i jān*, 3690) to cast a glance upon her with the hope of experiencing mercy. The "desired one of [her] heart" is ambiguous. In the following verses she seems to be addressing Yūsuf and to be calling upon him to look at her from heaven or she could be calling out to God whom she encountered through Yūsuf. As discussed above, it is through God that she experiences an encounter with the beloved and here she laments: "You did not even please me with a [final] encounter" (*bih dīdārī zi khūd shādam nakardī,* 3696), supporting the idea that God could be the one to whom she is crying out. Zulaykhā's lamentations are followed by descriptions of her grieving at Yūsuf's grave again reflected through red color imagery that transforms into black. Zulaykhā is compared to the sun (*ān khūrshīd; chū khūr,* 3705-6) and she sheds rubies from her eyes (*zi āshk la'l dar gūhar giriftash*, 3706). As Yūsuf is buried like a root she remains above ground "like the blossomed

branch of the rose" (*bih bālā man chū shākh-i gul shiguftih*, 3708). Her grief grows to the point that her dreams of Yūsuf are "like waves of blood" (*khiyālat mauj-i khūn bar khāk-i man zad*, 3711) upon her and this causes a fire to rise in her (*zadī ātash bih khāshāk vujūdam / azān pīchān ravad bar charkh dūdam*, 3712). This fire causes smoke, a black smoke. As the color imagery transitions from red to black, as had occurred previously, Zulaykhā experiences another blinding. This time, she "draws out two narcissi from the narcissus vase" (*dū nargis rā zi nargisdān bar āvard*, 3716) with her own fingers. She plucks out her own eyes because she is "separated from [Yūsuf's] flower face" (*chū bāshad az gul-i rūyat judā*, 3718) and thus sees no purpose for them. When her vision had been restored, it was to allow her to experience an encounter with the beloved and to perceive God's self-disclosure through him. Now that Yūsuf is deceased she can no longer perceive him or God in this way so to reflect her state of separation from her beloved "she casts [her] two black almonds[9] upon his grave" (*dū bādām siyah bar khākash afshānd*, 3720) before herself also dying.

The narrator ends his narrative by describing the state of Zulaykhā's valiant heart. She is a "lion-woman" (*shīr-zan*) more manly (*mardānegī*) than any man (3747). *Mardānegī* is a term that combines the meanings of chivalry and valiance, attributes usually associated with men who are comparable to lions. Zulaykhā is the second woman to be given these attributes, Bāzighah being the first. In the following verse, the narrator pursues an explanation of his attribution of manliness to Zulaykhā: "she plucked her eyes from the other beloveds" (*nakhast az ghayr jānān dīdih bar konad*, 3744). In Persian "plucking the eyes from something" is a euphemism for ignoring something, the same way Zulaykhā ignores all worldly pursuits. So this plucking is both metaphorical in referring to her life devoted entirely to loving Yūsuf and physical just prior to

[9] In the Persian tradition, the eroticized eyes of the beloved are often compared to almonds.

her death. In addition, "she casts her soul upon his grave" (*naqd-i jān bar khākash afkand*, 3744) spending her life devoted to him to the extent of following him in death.

Finally, the narrator prays for mercy and blessings upon Zulaykhā that "the eye of her soul may be lit by the beloved" (*hizārān fayż bar jān ū tanash bād / bih jānān dīdih-i jān rūshanash bād*, 3749), whether it be Yūsuf or God. After physical death, only the soul remains and consequently so does the eye of the soul, the inner eye, which is the Truth-seeing eye. After a lifetime of suffering resulting in the training of her inner eye, Zulaykhā's soul can continue to see God's beautiful self-disclosure even in death.

Conclusion

The story of Yūsuf and Zulaykhā is not just a love story but rather, as Jāmī has shown through his *masnavi*, it is a poetic interpretation of mystical theology, in particular that of Ibn ʻArabī (d. 1240 CE). Zulaykhā has become more than just the heroine of the story: she is a model for the reader. She embodies a person searching for meaning in life and who has actualized his or her potential by becoming prophet-like. The author incorporates theological concepts as well as manipulating the narrative planning and visual metaphors to challenge his audience's understanding of these elements.

In the first chapter, the preeminence of sound is established while creating a distinction between seeing with the physical eye versus the inner eye which is the Truth-seeing eye. The second chapter presents a discussion of images and their dual nature, either leading toward God or toward heresy. The climax of this opposition between sacred and sacrilegious is presented in chapter three. The final chapter presents the victory of sacrality over sacrilege. This victory results in a second life for the heroine living out her potential as a prophet who teaches about love. In manipulating the visual metaphors and utilizing a double narrative, the author challenges the audience to consider idolatry as a prolepsis to belief in God.

This study can be further developed and expanded. One way might be to incorporate a more thorough discussion of the clothing metaphors, in particular those related to the Sufi idea of removing the veil from one's mind to perceive God, as discussed by C.-C. Kappler in her paper "Voile et devoilement dans *Yusof-o Zoleykha* de Jāmī". Kappler herself proposes that clothing and visual metaphors in this narrative are connected and could be studied in relation to one another[56].

[56] Kappler, 30.

Furthermore, it might be of interest to study the visual interpretations of this text in order to further understand its reception in various social circles and geographical locations. This particular text could serve as a frame for the study of the evolution of artistic representations and its interaction with text. Miniature illustrations are a good resource for such a study as they are located within a text and often illustrate it. In addition the verses contained in a text box around the miniature can influence the reading of the illustration as much as the illustration can influence the reading of those verses. Such interactions could provide insightful clues as to the evolution of the favored meaning of the text as well as contribute to the field of art history.

Finally, another way to enrich this study would be to examine poetic interpretations of Ibn ʻArabī preceding Jāmī, in particular Ibn al-Fāriż (d. 1235) and Fakhr ad-Dīn ʻIrāqī (d. 1289), and Jami's commentaries on their works. This could lead to a deeper understanding of the particularities of Jāmī's poetic interpretation. Each of the aforementioned poets uses different poetic traditions and different poetic genres to present their poetic interpretation, Ibn al-Fāriż wrote in Arabic whereas the other two in Persian. This choice provides the author with different tools to compliment his poetic interpretation and to express himself.

As this thesis has shown, it is important to keep in mind that, in the Persian literary tradition, texts may be read as more than a simple narrative. They may be understood as a guide along the Sufi path toward God and therefore the characters serve as a model to follow through the various Sufi states (*aḥwāl*). Or, the texts may be understood as indicative of theological concepts which the author deliberates, examines, interprets, and finally presents to his audience.

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