Interdisciplinary Readings of Näsīmī's Turkic Ghazals

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0.1. Introduction

Literary studies of Oriental texts are quite often executed separately from the linguistic, philological and historical disciplines. This may well be justified if the existing division and the separate traditions of these academic traditions are considered. However, the ghazal with its inherently polysemic and multi-layered nature seems to be a good example for a literary genre which bridges all these (as well as some other) fields of research.

The following article provides some examples from Turkic ghazals that illustrate how crisscrossing the lines of academic disciplines and combining the later can help to deepen our understanding of Oriental literature.

The material basis of the present contribution is the Turkic divan of 'İmād äd-Dīn Näsīmī (fl. around 1400). His Persian poems, on the other hand, were not considered. It contains the transcribed texts and translations of three Turkic Näsīmī ghazals. Readers not familiar with the linguistic background may in each case skip the transcription sections and start to read the translations immediately. Notwithstanding, the inclusion of the transcription texts is essential, since the given interpretations of the ghazals directly refer to them.

0.2. Note on transcription

The system used for transcribing Näsīmī's Turkic poems is essentially the transcription system proposed for Ottoman Turkish by Richard F. Kreutel in Kreutel 1965: XIV. However, *ä* is used to represent the open counterpart of the "closed *e*" (which is represented by *ė*). Also, Kreutel's *q* is replaced by the symbol *ḳ*.

In addition, a colon is used to indicate secondary, i.e. metrical, lengthening of a vowel. The symbol ᵛ represents *Nīm-Fatḥa* (a short vowel that is supplied in order to fulfil the demands of the metre).

Unless stated otherwise, footnotes to the transcription text refer to the word to which the footnote number is attached. If a footnote refers to more than one word, the whole phrase will be quoted in the footnote text.

1. On Näsīmī's biography

Before starting to analyse the text of Näsīmī's Turkic divan, a few words about the vita of this great mystical poet seems to be in place, even if not much is known about him[1].

His lifetime can be established only approximatively. That Näsīmī must have been born well before the year 1400 results from his personal acquaintance with Faḍlallāh Astarābādī (about 1340-1393[2]). Faḍlallāh was the founder of the Ḥurūfī religion, and Näsīmī was both a prominent pupil and a profound admirer of his, as is attested by the whole of Näsīmī's poems. Therefore, at the time of Faḍlallāh's execution on the orders of Timur, Näsīmī must have been no longer a little boy. This seems to be the reason behind Näsīmī's year of birth being placed at 1373 by Soviet Azerbaijani authorities. However, there is no direct source proof for Näsīmī's being actually born that year. Equally uncertain is the year of Näsīmī's death. Both the medieval sources and the modern researchers disagree about it, and the estimates range from as early as 1404 to as late as 1436. Again, there is no certainty as to when Näsīmī died.

However, there is complete agreement in all sources about the place where he died, namely the city of Aleppo. There, he is said to have been flayed alive on the orders of the local Mamlūk authorities, after a congregation of *'ulemā* issued a *fatwā* accusing Näsīmī of heresy. Apart from Aleppo, Näsīmī is said to have visited many petty princedoms of Anatolia during his lifetime in order to propagate the Ḥurūfic creed. For instance, he mentions the city of Mar'aš in his Turkic divan[3].

Although the hard facts about the life of Näsīmī are very scarce, the broad outlines of it are sufficiently reflected both in his own work and the notes of secondary sources. On meeting Faḍlallāh, he was so inspired by this prophet that from that point onward he devoted his whole life to the spreading of the Ḥurūfī creed, traveling incessantly and creating a large divan of poems in Arabic, Persian and Turkic to this end. With the invasions of Timur into Iran, Iraq, Azerbaijan and Syria (1393-1400), the Ḥurūfis suffered prosecution at the hands of Timur. The direct negative impact on Timur's campaign is best illustrated by the fact that Faḍlallāh was killed by Timur's son Mīrānšāh's own hands in 1393[4]. It was for this reason that this son of the despot was later on nicknamed *Mārānšāh* or "Shah of Snakes" by the Ḥurūfis[5].

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[1] The following summary is based, among others, on Ayan 1990: 11-16, Begdeli 1970: 193-198, Çiftçi 1997: 21-27, Divshali/ Luft 1980: VII-XI and 18-30, Guluzade 1973: 5-30, Kürkçüoğlu 1985: I-XXVI, Roemer 1989: 80-90 and Şıxıyeva 1999.

[2] See page 222 (with footnote 102) for a brief discussion of the details of Faḍlallāh's lifetime.

[3] Kürkçüoğlu 1985: XVI.

[4] Roemer 1989: 80.

[5] Divshali/Luft 1980: 18.

The unspeakable fate that Näsīmī had to suffer at the hands of barbaric Islamic authorities has earned him a prominent place as religious martyr among heterodox communities of Turkey and Azerbaijan to this day. Even if Ḥurūfism disappeared as an organized form of religion shortly after 1440, many Alevis in Turkey, for instance, can still recite his poems by heart[6].

2. Establishing the text of Näsīmī's divan

There is no autograph of Näsīmī's poems. Neither is there a single manuscript that would be accepted to be the most ancient or closest to a presumed original or originals. As a consequence of this situation, the analysis of Näsīmī's poetical work can be based on either (1) a single manuscript or (2) a selection of manuscripts that are critically compared to each other. In the ideal case the selection of (2) would include all known manuscripts of Näsīmī's Turkic divan.

There has been (and probably will be for quite a long time) no attempt at uniting *all* Näsīmī manuscripts in one edition. And such an attempt would have by far exceeded the means that were available for carrying out the research underlying this article.

On the other hand, both methods, (1) and (2), have been used in the history of "Näsīmology" (*Näsimişünaslıq*, as it is called by experts from Azerbaijan). Burril 1972 is an example for (1), Gährämanov 1973 for (2). Gährämanov 1973 is by far the most comprehensive critical edition of Näsīmī's Turkic poems ever realized, but it is avowedly not always true to the manuscripts it is based upon. From this follows that it cannot be accepted as a scientific edition and is of only very limited use for critical purposes. Therefore, a new transcription has been created especially for the present article. This transcription is not only based exclusively on direct manuscript evidence without any kind of standardization, unreferred to changes of the text, being added to it, but it also uses a selection of manuscripts that differs in scope from the selection used by Gährämanov or any previous Näsīmī researcher. Notably, manuscripts from Turkey are included in it that were not available to Gährämanov who had to work behind the Iron Curtain. Therefore, the texts as presented below are new not only under methodological considerations, but also for the unique and broad constellation of manuscripts on which they are based.

3. A peculiar hermeneutical situation

For any researcher or reader who bases his reading of Näsīmī's poems on more than one manuscript, a peculiar hermeneutical situation obtains. This results from the fact that the age and the provenience of the manuscripts can be determined at

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6 On the reception of Näsīmī by modern Alevi-Bektashi circles in Turkey see, for instance Çiftçi 1997: 27.

best approximatively. We know only where one of the manuscripts used for the present investigation was copied: according to the colophon, manuscript D was finished in Constantiople. And we do not know the exact dates at which most of the other manuscripts were written. For some of them, there is not even the slightest hint at the time of their being copied.

For instance, of the manuscripts from which the *ghazal*s presented in this article were extracted, B was copied in 893 A. H. (i.e., between December 17, 1487 and December 4, 1488)[7]. D was copied in 909 A. H. (that is, between June 26, 1503 and June 13, 1504)[8]. H was copied on a Thursday in the first third of the month Rabī' II A. H. 1024, which can only be Thursday, April 30, 1615 or Thursday, May 7, 1615 (according to the Gregorian calendar)[9]. The years in which the manuscripts A and C were written out cannot be established. But A was copied between 1464 and 1562 A. D., and C between 1414 and 1492 A. D.[10] The date when E was copied, is unknown altogether.

A reader of Näsīmī's Turkic poems must therefore keep in mind that, technically, his reading cannot be a one-way hermeneutical interpretation. Such an interpretation could, for instance, start with reading the text. Then one would proceed to gathering information about its historical background, the person of its author, the motives of its creation etc., finally arriving at an interpretation. In such a unidirectional mode of interpretation the text, together with peripherical information, only forms the source, but not the object of investigation.

However, in the case of Näsīmī, there is no firmly established accepted text, but only a changeable number of concurring manuscripts of uncertain affiliation and age. If we read a *ghazal* by Näsīmī, we will find that there are enormous differences between the readings in the manuscripts, not rarely amounting even to substantial differences in meaning.

There are two interesting consequences of this situation. Firstly, as readers, we are in a position not only to determine (and change, if necessary) the *result* of our lecture, but also its *object*. Secondly, it is easy to imagine that the medieval copists, especially in centuries distant from Näsīmī's lifetime (which was around 1400), were in a similar situation than we are in today. To them, Näsīmī's divan was both the source and the product of their work, too. The divans they produced as copies are likely to have been different from the divans that served as their model. This must have been especially true whenever more than one model copy was used. It could be an explanation for at least part of the large amount of incoherent forms

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[7]   MS B, fol. 163a.
[8]   MS D, fol. 241a.
[9]   MS H, fol. 154a.
[10]   These figures are the result of calculations which combine dates from the manuscripts themselves with an anaylsis of the Islamic calendar. It would exceed the limits of this article to present this calculations in detail here. Hopefully, they will be published separately.

even within one and the same manuscript, which has been observed by many scholars, not only as regards Näsīmī[11].

Maybe the exact relationship between the manuscripts of Näsīmī's Turkic divan will one day be understood fully. Then, perhaps, a final, "representative" edition will be created, ending the phase of the bidirectional interpretation that we find ourselves in today, and opening the path to a "classical" one-way hermeneutical situation. But up to now, this remains a hope for the future. Reading Näsīmī means creating both the text *and* its interpretation.

It is perhaps some solace to stress that at least as far as medieval Turkic literatures are concerned, the textual situation depicted above is by no means an exceptional one.

4. Two ghazals by ʿİmād äd-Dīn Näsīmī

In this section, two *ghazal*s will be presented that give the material basis for the interpretations made in the subsequent sections.

Of the manuscripts that serve as the text basis, two (A and E) are fully vocalized. The other manuscripts (B, D, H) have non-vocalized text.

In some cases, manuscript E contains notes by a later copist. This copist will be referred to as "E, second hand".

4.1. ʿAhda väfā ḳilmadï: yār-i väfā-dārimüz (G1)

Five manuscripts have been used in order to establish the text of this ghazal: A, B, D, E and H[12]. The metre of the *ghahal* is *munsariḥ* (– v v – / – v – /– v v – /– v –)[13].

The text of the ghazal is as follows:

1 *ʿAhda väfā ḳilmadï:*[14] *yār-i väfā-dārimüz*
   Yārilä gör kim niǧä: düšdi ʿaǧäb kārimüz
2 *ʿAšk-ï*[15] *ǧämālüŋ bäni:*[16] *kändüyä*[17] *maḥv èylädi:*
   Oldï tämām ušbu käz[18] *yärilä*[19] *bāzārimüz*

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[11] See, for instance, Doerfer 1985: 7 on Old Ottoman texts.
[12] The key to the abbreviations for the manuscripts can be found at the end of the article. – The ghazal can be found on the following leaves of the manuscripts: A (basic text) 43r-43v, B 64r, D 140v-141r, E 74r and H 63v.
[13] See Kürkçüoğlu 1985: 401, 61, 148.
[14] (E) *èylädi:* (E, second hand) *ètmädi:*.
[15] (A) *Ḥüsn-i*, (B) *Ḥüsn ü*.
[16] (H) *bizi*.
[17] (B) and (E): *kändüdä*.
[18] (D) *kär*. – Instead of *ušbu käz*: (B) *uš bu gün* or *uš bugün*, (E) and (H) *uš bugün*.
[19] (E, second hand) and (H) *ʿašḳilä*.

3   *Ġamzälärüŋ sïrrïnï: ḫanda*[20] *dėdüm gizläyäm*[21]
    Dašra bïraḫdï: göŋül pärdädän äsrārimüz

4   *'Ašḳa 'ilāġ istämä: därdinä*[22] *ṣabr ėylädur*
    Gör ki nä därmān ḳïlur šāh-i[23] *dil-āzārimüz*

5   *Kim yüzüŋi: görmädi: vaṣluŋa*[24] *ğān vėrmädi:*
    Yoḳ dur anuŋ ḥaḳḳïna: zärräġä iḳrārimuz

6   *Zāhid ägär 'āšïḳa: münkir olur*[25] *ġam dägül*[26]
    Ḥaḳ bizä: oldï: 'ayān ḳalmadï inkārimüz

7   *'Ahda*[27] *väfā ėylä gäl*[28] *tā dėmäsün müdda'ī*
    Ḳavl u ḳarār üstinä: durmadï dil-dārimüz

8   *Bāṭina kār ėylädi: 'ašḳ-i ruḫuŋ šöylä kim*
    Ṭa'nä urur[29] *altunuŋ*[30] *ränginä*[31] *ruḫsārimüz*

9   *Gärči Näsīmī sözi:*[32] *da:dïnï vėrdi: välī*
    Da:da gätürdi: anï:[33] *nuṭḳ-i*[34] *šäkär-bārimüz*[35]

A rough translation into English could be like this:

1   Our faithful Friend has not kept[36] faith to the spirit of the age,
    See how our fate has fallen with our Friend!

2   I was annihilated by the love of your beauty[37] to become myself[38]
    It is then[39] that accounts were settled between me and the Friend[40].

3   I said: 'Where shall I conceal the secret of your coquettish glances?'[41]
    For my heart has thrown all my secrets through the curtain to the outside.

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20   (B), (E), (H) *ğānda*.
21   (E) and (H) *saḳlayam*.
22   (D) *därdilä*.
23   (E) and (H): *yār-i*.
24   Instead of *Kim yüzüŋi: görmädi: vaṣluŋa* : (E) and (H) *Kimki säni: sävmädi: 'ašḳuŋa*.
25   (D) *ola*.
26   Instead of *ġam dägül*: (H) *ol bilür.*
27   (A) *'Ahd u*.
28   Instead of *ėylä gäl*: (E) *ėylägil*. In the other manuscripts both *ėylä gäl* and *ėylägil* can be read.
29   (E) *ėdär*.
30   (E) *altuna:*.
31   (E) *rängilä*.
32   (D) and (H) *sözüŋ*.
33   (B) *anuŋ*.
34   (E) *naḳṭ-ï* or *naḳṭï* (mistake). – (H) *la'l-i*.
35   Statt *nuṭḳ-i šäkär-bārimüz*: (B) *ṭab'ï kähVrbārimüz* (v = short vowel), where *kähVrbārimüz* must be read for **käh-rübārimüz* (etc.) for metrical reasons.
36   Instead of "has not kept": (E) "has kept".
37   Instead of "love of your beauty": (A) and (B) "grace of your beauty" or "grace and beauty". However, since "grace" (*ḥüsn*) and "beauty" (*ğämāl*) are close synonyms in Turkic, this alternative reading of (A) and (B) is perhaps not original.
38   In (B) and (E) this hemistich is as follows: "I was annihilated in myself by the love (B: grace) of your love".
39   (B), (E) and (H): "on that day".
40   In (E, note by a second hand) and (H), "between me and the Friend" can either be read as "between me and Love" or the whole hemistich can be interpreted as "It is then (or: on that day) that our accounts were settled with love (i.e., lovingly)".

4   Do not search for medicine against love, put up with your pain!
    See what kind of remedy that heart-rending King[42] of ours procures!

5   Whoever did not see your face nor gave his life to unite with you[43]
    Does not earn our slightest respect for his self-styled godly truth.

6   Who cares if the fundamentalists renounce the loving poet![44]
    God has become manifest for us, so there is no renouncement anymore!

7   Keep your faith to the spirit of the age[45], so the defamers cannot say
    That our Darling did not keep his word and promise!

8   The love to your cheeks has penetrated so far into the inmost,
    That our Cheeked One puts shame on the colour of gold[46].

9   Although Nāsīmī's word has produced a good taste[47]
    It was the sermon[48] of our Sweetmeat that brought him[49] to taste.[50]

4.2. ʿÄgärči: ğānda san ğāndan nihān san (G2)

The ghazal is handed down in the manuscripts A, B, C, D, E and H[51]. Its metre is *hazağ* (v − − − / v − − − / v − −).

1   *Ägärči: ğānda san ğāndan[52] nihān san*
    Dägülsän[53] ğāndan ayru: bälki[54] ğān san
2   *Kiši[55] vėrmäz nišān sändän[56] ägärči:[57]*
    Yėr ü: gök toptolu: küllī[58] nišān san
3   *Niğä: gizlü: dėyäm bändän säni: čün[59]*
    Näyä: kim[60] ba:ḳaram anda: ʿayān san

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41 In (B), (E) and (H), this hemistich has the meaning: "I said: 'I shall conceal the secret of your coquettish glances in my soul' " or "I said: 'Shall I conceal the secret of your coquettish glances in my soul?' ".
42 (E) and (H): "Friend".
43 In (E) and (H), this verse has the wording "Whoever did not love you for your own sake (or: for love) nor give his life" or "Whoever did not love you nor give his life for your own sake (or: for love)".
44 (H): "If the fundamentalists renounce the loving poet, they must know what they are doing!"
45 Instead of "Keep your faith to the spirit of the age": (A) "Keep firm your faith".
46 Instead of "puts shame on the colour of gold": (E) "with his colour puts shame on gold".
47 In (D) and (H), this hemistich is slightly different, namely: "Although your word, Nāsīmī, has produced a good taste".
48 (H) "ruby" (which can be used as a synonym of "sermon").
49 Or: "it".
50 This hemistich is different in (B): "But our amber brought his character to taste".
51 A (basic text) 65v, B 89v-90r, C 80r, D 175v-176r, E 113r-113v, H 95v.
52 (E) *ğānda:*.
53 (A) and (D): *Ki*.
54 (A) and (D): *yoḫsan bälki*.
55 (A) *Kimä:*, (D) *Kim* (against the metre).
56 (A) *sändäk*.
57 This hemistich runs as as follows in (B): *Nišān sändän ägärči: kimsä vėrmäz*.
58 (A) und (D) *ğümlä:* .
59 (C), (E) and (H): *kim*; (D) *sän*.
60 (D) *ki*. – Instead of *Näyä: kim*: (E) *Nä: yaŋa:*.

4 *Ḫağil èylär ruḫuŋ ḥüsniylä a:yï:*
  Mägär sän fitnä-yi: āḫir zamān san

5 *ʿArabnuŋ*[61] *nuṭḳï baġlandï:*[62] *dilüŋdän*[63]
  Säni: kim dür dèyän kim Türkᵛmān san

6 *Ğanï:*[64] *ṭarḥ èylädüm*[65] *vèrdüm ğihānï:*[66]
  Säni: buldum[67] *ki ğāniylä: ğihān san*

7 *Görän sän sän göri:nän sän gözümdä:*[68]
  Nä var söylä:mäsäŋ[69] *küll-i:*[70] *lisān*[71] *san*

8 *Ḥaḳīḳat*[72] *vaḥy-i muṭlaḳ dur bu sözlär*[73]
  Bu sözi: bil ki[74] *andan*[75] *tärğümān san*

9 *Ètä:güŋ silk (v)ü äl*[76] *yu:*[77] *bu: ğihāndan*[78]
  Nä āḫir zübdä-i: kävn ü: mäkān san

10 *Näsīmī čün bugün dävrān sänüŋ dür*[79]
  ʿAğäb[80] *ḫüsräv*[81] *ʿağäb*[82] *ṣāḥib-ḳirān*[83] *san*

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[61] This is one possible reading of (C) and (D). Over all the other possible readings it has the advantage that it conforms with the metre. On the other hand it is problematic, because it includes a *–nuŋ* genitive form which does not occur in the Oghuz dialects of Turkic, to which the language of Näsīmī belongs. (A) has *ʿArabuŋ*, (B), (E) and (H) have (with corresponding different readings in the rest of the hemistich) *ʿArab*.

[62] (B), (H) *dutulmïšdur*, (E) *dutuldï*.

[63] (A) *Dilindän*, (E) *dillärüŋdän*.

[64] *Ğanï:* Obviously it is treated as a Turkic word in (A), (B), (D) and (H). Otherwise, the short vowel of the first syllable of the Persian word *ğān* would be extraordinary. – (C) *Rävān*, (E) *Ğihānï:*.

[65] Can perhaps also be read as *èyläräm* in (C). – (E) *èdüb*.

[66] Instead of *vèrdüm ğihānï:* : (B), (C) *bäzdüm ğihāndan*, (D) *bozdum ğihānï:*, (E) and (H) *ḳačdum ğihāndan*.

[67] (E) *bildim*.

[68] In the other manuscripts, this hemistich has a different wording: (B) *Görän sän sän gözümdän gö:rinän sän*, (H) *Görän sän gö:rinän sän sän gözümdä:*. – Even more strongly deviating are (A) *Görü:nän sän gäzän sän sän gözindä:* and (D) *Görü:nän sän gäzän sän sän gözümdä*.

[69] Instead of *Nä var söylä:mäsäŋ*: (B) *Nä ġam söylä:mäsün* or *Nä ġam söylä:mäsän* (conditional mood). – Still farther deviating: (A) *Söylänmäzsän välī* (not conform with the metre) and (D) *Söylänmäz välī* (not conform with the metre).

[70] (B), (C) and *küllī* or (lectio minor) *küll-i:*.

[71] (D) *ʿl-lisān*.

[72] (A), (D) *İ ʿārif*.

[73] (D) *güftār*. – This hemistich is: *Vaḥy-i muṭlaḳ dur i: ʿārif bu sözlär* in (D), but this is not conform with the metre.

[74] (C) *kim*.

[75] (H) *anda:*.

[76] (B), (E) *älüŋ*.

[77] This word is absent from (B). – (E) *čäk*, (H) *bu:*.

[78] Instead of *bu: ğihāndan* : (E), (H) *kün fä-kāndan*.

[79] There is a slightly different form of this hemistich in (A): *Bugün dävrān sänüŋ dür ī Näsīmī*, (B) *Bugün rävān sänüŋ dür ī Näsīmī* and (D) *Näsīmīyā bugün dävrān sänüŋ dür*.

[80] (C), (E) and (H) *Ğihānda:*.

[81] (B) *ḫüsräv vü/vä/ü(:)* (probably by mistake); (C) and (E) *ḫüsräv-i:*; (H) *ḫüsräv-i:* (probably to be read as >*ḫüsräv-i:*); (D) *nä: ḫüsräv-i:*.

[82] Absent from (C), (D) and (H).

A prose translation into English could be as follows:

1. Although You are inside the soul you are hidden from[84] the soul.
   You are not separate from the soul[85], but instead You are the soul!
2. Although no man does give a sign of You[86],
   You are all the signs that fill heaven and earth up to the brim.
3. Why should I say that You are kept secret from me, since
   Whereever I may look You are so plain to see?
4. Due to its beauty, Your cheek makes even the moon feel ashamed.
   Indeed, You bring about the sedition of the Day of Judgement.
5. The Arabs find no words due to Your[87] tongue,
   So who dares to say that You are only a Turcoman?
6. I have rejected[88] the soul[89] and given away the world[90],
   I have found[91] You, who is the soul *and* the world!
7. You are both the One that sees[92] and the One that appears before[93] my[94] eye,
   Even if You do not tell me what exists, You contain every language.
8. Truth and[95] absolute revelation are these words,
   Keep these words in mind, for you are their translator!
9. Retire from this filthy world[96], do not meddle with it!
   For in the end, you are the *crème de la crème* of Being and Universe!
10. Näsīmī, the whole spinning world[97] is yours today,
    One wonders if you are a Caesar[98] or the mightiest ruler[99].

5. Levels of interpretation

Basically, five levels of interpretation can be distinguished for a ghazal: a) the graphical evidence, b) linguistics, c) poetic form, d) text-inherent interpretation and e)

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[83] Instead of *ṣāḥib-ḳirān*: (D) *āḫir zamān*, (H) *ṣāḥib-zamān*.

[84] (E) "in".

[85] Instead of "You are not separate from the soul", the versions of (A) and (D) are to be translated as "You do not exist separately from the soul."

[86] Instead of "of You" : (A) "like You".

[87] (A) "His" (= the Friend's, God's) or "their", (E) "their".

[88] Instead of "I have rejected", the text of (C) can perhaps also be read as "I reject".

[89] (E) "world".

[90] Instead of "given away the world": (B) and (C) "become weary of the world", (D) "destroyed the world", (E) and (H) "escaped from the world".

[91] Instead of "I have found": (E) "I have come to know".

[92] (A) and (D) "wanders".

[93] Or "in". – Instead of "appears before": (B) "can be seen from".

[94] (A) "his".

[95] Instead of "Truth and": (A) and (D) "Oh mystic!".

[96] (E) and (H) "created cosmos".

[97] Instead of "the whole spinning world": (B) "the soul".

[98] Instead of "One wonders if you are a Ceasar": (C), (E) and (H): "You are Caesar in the world".

[99] Instead of "the mightiest ruler": (D) "the ruler of the Day of Judgement", (H) "the ruler who controls the time".

history. This is perhaps no complete enumeration and it does not preclude any o-verlappings between two or more of these levels. But this broad distinction will help to illustrate the main point of this article.

In the above enumeration, I have avoided the use of the term "philology" since it is usually meant to include elements of both linguistics and text-inherent interpretation (as well as possibly others, too). "History" comprises not only the history of events but all kinds of historical information, including, for instance, the history of ideas and the history of religions.

The graphical level has been excluded for it would have necessitated the use of a transliteration system that would have been much more complicated than the transcription system actually in use. Moreover, the conclusions drawn from such graphical features as the use of decorative dots, use of *matres lectionis* and joint versus separate spelling are not rarely equivocal and quite frequently also marginal. The transcription system used here shows only differences that imply semantic variations.

But the intertwining of the other four levels can be illustrated with the two *ghazal*s quoted above.

6. The interface between text interpretation and text history

The first line of G1 contains only one word which is subject to different readings. All manuscripts besides (E) and (E, second hand) have *ḳïlmadï:*. Moreover, the reading of the second hand of (E) is not problematic for the text interpretation, because it is synonymous with *ḳïlmadï:*. Both *ėtmädi:* and *ḳïlmadï:* are negative forms meaning "he/she/it did not". Only (E) has *ėylädi:*, which has an opposite meaning ("he/she/it did").

The different readings of this one word tell us that *ėylädi:* is less likely to be an original form, because it occurs in only one out of five manuscripts. Also, there are other and perhaps more important arguments against its being accepted as an authentic form.

In all manuscripts save (E), the first hemistich of G1 forms an oxymoron: the true Friend (God) is at the same time accused to be a breaker of treaties. A similar contrast can be found in 4b[100], where the "King", while being described as a tormentor on one hand, is at the same time the one from whom healing is to be asked. Through the reading *ėylädi:*, this paradoxical meaning is removed, which gives as a result the rather flat statement that the true friend has been true to the treaty (or the spirit of the age, etc.).

Given the oyxmoron in 4b and supplementing the general knowledge that Näsï-mï's poems, as a rule, carry their rhetorical means to extremes, the form *ėylädi:* be-

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[100] The small letters a and b indicate the first and second hemistich (*miṣrāʾ*) of a verse (*bayt*), respectively.

longs even less likely to Näsīmī's original way of expressing himself. The reading *ėylädi:* can be explained as the result of the copyist musing over the verse and finally preferring the semantically less complicated form. The copyist of (E) thus would be a man who was not very in on the contents of what he copied. This in turn points to a comparatively young date at which (E) was actually copied.

It is clear that such a single argument cannot serve as a means of classification for the manuscripts of Näsīmī's divan. However, it shows how the internal interpretation of a text fragment can be used to draw conclusions about text history. Incidentally, there are other reasons as well (which shall not be discussed here) for the attribution of a comparatively late date of copying to (E).

7. The importance of poetic form

Poetry is frequently treated as a special kind of discourse in modern linguistics. It is generally held that normal grammatical rules are not or at least not fully observed in poetical texts.

It is true that in the case of Näsīmī's Turkic divan, many of its linguistic traits are determined by the poetical form. For instance, an alternative form to *yüzüŋi:* (G1, 5a) exists: **yüzüŋ*. Both forms mean "your face" (in the accusative case). There is no difference in meaning between these forms, since in the Turkic divan of Näsīmī, **yüzüŋ* can also have definite reference. But **yüzüŋ* cannot replace *yüzüŋi:* in 5a without further changes, for this would destroy the metrical form. Therefore, the opposition **yüzüŋ*: *yüzüŋi:* must not be interpreted linguistically or at least not exclusively so. The same is true for the construction *Näsīmī sözi:* "Näsīmī's word" in G1, 9a. Again, a synonymous alternative construction exists: **Näsīmīnüŋ sözi:*. This alternative would disrupt the metre, too. Therefore, the motivation of the actual form *Näsīmī sözi:* must not be interpreted in purely linguistic terms.

Whereas this aspect of the metrical structure of a ghazal represents a restriction to the interpretation, metric structure also has some positive aspects. Perhaps most importantly, it allows to recognize dubious forms. For instance, *Söylänmäzsän välī* (MS A) and *Söylänmäz välī* (MS D) in G2, 7b do not conform to the metric structure. As can be seen in the vast majority of Näsīmī's poems with sound mansucript basis, metrical faults are rare in Näsīmī's Turkic divan. Therefore, one has to raise the question as to why the special readings of A and D came into being. This may lead to the recognition of a break in the tradition.

To sum up, metric structure is another example for the usefulness of an interdisciplinary approach. Although it is possible to investigate poems under purely linguistic aspects, the combination with an analysis of the metric structure clearly adds to the results.

8. The role of the historical background

Certainly one of the most difficult aspects of divan poetry is its relation to histori-
cal facts. In the case of Näsīmī, the usually scarce historical contents of *ghazal*s are
made even thinner due to the special character of Näsīmī's poems. The main pur-
pose that Näsīmī pursued with his *ghazal*s was to spread propaganda for the Ḥurūfī
religion[101]. Due to this, it is not surprising that there are only very few references to
unique historical events, concrete persons or even autobiographical features in Nä-
sīmī's poems. They are conceived as summaries of Ḥurūfic doctrines, and as such
are of course far more powerful when they are abstract.

For this reason, a historical and/ or biographical interpretation of Näsīmī's *gha-
zal*s is only possible with great limitations. In most cases, one has to content one-
self with indirect assumptions about the possible meaning and motivation of certain
words and phrases that might have a concrete historical cause behind it.

In this respect, G2 is a rather extraordinary example for a Näsīmī *ghazal*. For it
contains at least a number of words that are likely to refer to the actual situation
Näsīmī lived in rather than to merely abstract notions. There is, for instance, no
single aspect of the other *ghazal*, G1, that can be associated with real features of
Näsīmī's time with certitude, with the exception of *zāhid* "fundamentalist" (6a).
But the mention of *zāhid* in G1 is only hypothetical, and we cannot learn much
from it besides the presumable existence of certain enemies of the Ḥurūfic creed.

Like in all of Näsīmī's ghazals, the mystical dimension is the most important a-
spect in G2, too. However, verse 5 is surprisingly concrete. The sense of its first
part is obscure: there are diverging readings in the manuscripts and it would seem
that this variety of readings also reflects a degree of uncertainty on the part of the
copyists. Nonetheless, we can state positively that this first half of verse 5 is about
Arabs and their language. Whether it means that the Arabs have lost their tongue or
whether a different interpretation could be more appropriate, must and can be left
open here. In order to understand the second half of the verse, we must remember
that in the Ḥurūfic religion God, Man in general and the founder of the faith, Faḍ-
lallāh Astarābādī (about 1340-1393[102]), in particular, are identical. Thus "You" in
5b may refer to God, to Man, to any particular man and, of course, to Faḍlallāh or
Näsīmī themselves. What is interesting about 5b is the word *Türkmān*. This word is
hich is etymologically linked to the English word "Turcoman" and also to the self-
designation of the Türkmen people of Central Asia and other regions, such as Iraq.
But since the ethnical constitution of the modern Türkmens lies at least two centu-

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[101] Bellér-Hann 1995: 39.
[102] There are differing opinions as to the year of his death, but 1393 is frequently assumed, thus
for instance by Divshali/ Luft 1980: 18 and Roemer 1989: 80. But compare Divshali/Luft
1980: 23 for an alternative tradition (giving 1397 as the year in which Faḍlallāh was execu-
ted).

ries after the time of Näsīmī (who was killed by his enemies not too long after 1400 A. D.), *Türkmān* can not have the modern technical meaning.

To further illustrate the interpretation of ethnonyms in the *ghazal*s of Näsīmī, let us take a look at another example.

8.1. *ʿAġabā bu ḥūrᵛ yüzlü: mäh-i bädrᵛ yā pärī mi:* (G3)

In the ghazal (G3)[103], ethnonyms are mentioned, too. The text of the *ghazal* is as follows:

1 *ʿAġabā bu ḥūrᵛ yüzlü: mäh-i bädrᵛ[104] yā pärī mi:*
   Boyï särv-i būsᵛtānī[105] yaŋaġï: gül-i: ṭarī[106] mi:

2 *Läb-i ǧān-fizā-yï laʿlï: urar[107] āb-ï Ḫiżra ṭaʿnä:*
   Bu šäkär dudaġlu yaʿnī sözi šöylä šäkkärī mi:

3 *Düšäräm oda: göri:ǧäk bu mäläk-nižādᵛ ḥūrï:*
   ʿAġabā bu čīn bütinüŋ yüzi naḳši Āzärī mi:

3' *Ėridän[108] ḥayā[109] suyïndan šäkärin Širīn gibi:[110] dür*
   Ḫaġil ängäbīn[111] gülābï: gül-i ʿāriż-ï: tärī:[112] mi:

4 *Geġälär gözi: ḥayāli: gätürür baŋa: šäbi:ḫūn*
   Bu gözi: harāmī ǧādū ḳašï ya:yïlu:[113] čäri: mi:

5 *Bu täsälsül i:lä[114] dävri: düšärä:[115] mäh-i: tämāmä:*
   Šäb-i ḳadrᵛ gölgäsi:[116] yā[117] iki zülf-i čänbärī mi:

6 *Gözi[118] ḳa:šï[119] zülfï[120] ḫāli: bu ǧihānī ta:ladï:lar*
   Ḳamu ol[121] ämīr-i ḥüsnüŋ sipähi: vü läškäri: mi:

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[103] To be found in the following manuscripts: A 94v (basic text, fully vocalized), B 132r-132v and D 199r, E Bl. 153r (fully vocalized).

[104] Instead of *mäh-i bädrᵛ*: (E) *mähīn mi dür*.

[105] The epenthetic vowel is written out with *kesre* in (E): *būsⁱtānī*.

[106] (E) *Ṭabarī* (not in accordance with the metre).

[107] Absent from E; this absence results in a violation of the metre.

[108] (D) *Aradan*.

[109] (D) *Ṣabā*.

[110] In (A) possibly, in (D) definitely readable as *läbi:*.

[111] (D) *äl-mübīn*.

[112] In (D), this word can also be read as *dürī* (from **dürrī*) "belonging to pearls" or *düri:* (from **dürri:*) "his pearl(s)" or *diri:* "living (etc.)".

[113] (D) *yay ilän*.

[114] Instead of *Bu täsälsül i:lä* : (E) has *Büt sälāsilsäŋ ki*. This reading does not match the metre, is semantically questionable and probably even ungrammatical. Therefore it is not represented in the translation or the footnotes to it.

[115] (B) *düšürür*, (E) *düšürän*.

[116] (E) *gė:ǧäsi:* .

[117] (E) *dür*.

[118] (D) *göz ü*, (E) *gözi* or *göz ü*.

[119] (D) *ḳa:š u*.

[120] (D) *zülf ü*, (E) *zülfi* or *zülf ü*.

[121] (E) *bir*.

7 *Dökülür sözä: gäli:ğäk dür*[122] *ü lu'lu' läblärindän*
  Ṣadäfindä dürr ağizlu:[123] *diši naẓmï ğävhärī*[124] *mi:*

8 *Sačï ayla*[125] *hämdäm olmïš*[126] *bu šikästä-dil Näsīmī*
  Gäl ägär inanmaz i:säŋ dämi gör ki 'anbärī mi:[127]

The translation is as follows:

1 Is this houri-faced One the full moon[128] or a fairy
   With His stature of a garden-bred cypress and His cheeks resembling fresh roses[129]?

2 His rubin-coloured and life-donating lips make the Water of Life envious,
   Can it be true that the word of this sugar-lipped One is so sugary?

3 Seeing this houri of angelic traits I tumble into hell's fire,
   Are the decorations in the face of this Chinese idol indeed from Azerbaijan?

3'[130] He is like Shirin who melted her sugar in the liquid of her shame[131],
   Is His shameful rose and honey water the rose of a fresh[132] cheek?[133]

4 At night the hallucination of His eyes carry out night attacks against me
   Is He an army with his eyes of thugs and witches and with His brows like bows?

5 He precipitates the whole world into the full moon with His endless curling –
   Is it the shadow[134] of the Night of Revelation[135] or two arched curls?

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[122] (E) *dürr* (breaks the metre).

[123] Instead of *Ṣadäfindä dürr ağizlu:* : (E) *'Ağäb ol šäkär dähānuŋ*.

[124] Can also be read as *ğävhäri:* .

[125] In manuscripts (B) and (D), this form is also readable as *i:lä*, in (E) only so. Taking into account only the graphic appearance of the letters, one could read this form also as *ėylä* "so" in (A), (B) and (D). But as regards semantics, the alternative form to *ayla* hardly seems to be acceptable.

[126] (E) *oldï*.

[127] Vers 8b lautet in (E) : *Gär inanmaz i:säŋ uš gördümi misk-i 'anbärī mi:* . Die Form *gördümi* ist möglicherweise ein vom Kopisten erfundenes Ghostword, da die 3. Person des *di*-Präteritums üblicherweise illabiale Vokalisierung aufweist. Denkbar ist, daß in der Vorlage für (E) die beiden Worte *dämi gör* (wie in (A), (B) und (D) überliefert) vertauscht waren (*gör dämi*), was bei unvokalisiertem Text zumindest graphisch die Lesung von (E) zuläßt (KWR DMY > *gördümi*). Abgesehen von der morphologsichen Bedenklichkeit und der Möglichkeit einer graphsischen Uminterpretation ist die Lesung von (E) auch aus semantischen Gründen fragwürdig, da sie zwischen Protasis und Apodosis einen Wechsel von der zweiten in die dritte Person voraussetzt, der schwer verständlich wäre.

[128] Instead of "the full moon", (E) has "despicable". This is very probably a misreading, because a negative statement about the Ḥurūfī God it would be extremely uncommon for a poem by Näsīmī.

[129] Instead of "fresh roses": (E) "roses from Tabarestan".

[130] The sense of this verse is obscure, and it is perhaps not authentic.

[131] According to manuscript (D), the whole hemistich can be approximately translated as "His sugary sweet lips (or: his sugary lips like those of Shirin) are from the morning zephyr." However, the whole hemistich does not make a good sense in (D).

[132] The reading "fresh" is not sure. In some manuscript, the text is possibly readable as "living" or "pearl-like".

[133] In (D), this hemistich is obscure. An approximate translation may be: "Is her rose-water, which is ashamed of the Manifest, the rose of a fresh cheek?".

[134] (E) "night" (a semantically questionable reading because of the repetition of the word "night").

6   His eye, His brows, His curls, His birthmark have pillaged this world,
    Is everything nothing more than the cavallery and army of this prince of beauty[136]?
7   As soon as he starts to speak, all kinds of precious pearls fall dancing from His lips,
    Is the arrangement of His teeth in that mouth, which resembles pearls in their mother-of-pearl[137], a piece of jewellery?
8   The hair of this broken-hearted Näsīmī equals the moon's breath –
    If you do not believe it, come an see for yourself whether his breath is perfumed!

In verse 3 of this *ghazal*, we encounter the adjective *āzārī* "Azerbaijanian"'. The interpretation of the signifigance of this adjective requires an understanding of the meaning and poetic structure of the whole *ghazal*.

In G2, Näsīmī allows several possibilities of identifying the addressee (Man, Näsīmī, or Faḍlallāh). There can be no doubt that this poetical device is consciously chosen in order to express the fundamental identity relationship between Man in general, Faḍlallāh and also Näsīmī in the Ḥurūfic theological system. Accordingly, we do not quite know in every instance whether the narrator of G3 is identical with the addresse or not. This is especially true where the addressee is identified with "soul" (hemistichs 1b and 6b).

By contrast, G3 is written in a frontal perspective. In verse 3, a situation is depicted in which the narrator is *not* (at least on the visual level of the imagined situation) identical with the addressee. As the former blushes as he *sees* the angel-like figure of the other, there seems to be some spatial distance between the two if we read the verse as depicting a realistic situation.

The crucial point is that the addressee of G3 can probably identified with Faḍlallāh, at least as far as the realistic level is concerned. If this interpretation is valid, the adjective *Āzārī* must of course also refer to him.

Some additional support for this hypothesis comes from the alternative reading *Ṭabarī* in G3, 1b. As we have seen above, alternative readings in (E) must generally not be trusted blindly. As regards *Ṭabarī*, this is especially true because the form *Ṭabarī* does not fit in with the metrical structure of G3. For this reason, it is definitely not an authentic form, and we must see in it a further proof for the lack of training on the part of the copyist of (E). Nonwithstanding, it shows that the wording *Ṭabarī* was at some point in the history of the text tradition considered to be an at least partly meaningful alternative to *ṭarī*.

As can be checked out in dictionaries, *Ṭabarī* means "coming from or pertaining to Ṭabaristān". Ṭabaristān is another designation for the Persian region of Māzandarān on the southern shore of the Caspian Sea. And this is precisely the region where Astarābād lies, Faḍlallāh's native village according to the majority of sour-

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[135] I. e., the night in which, according to Muslim tradition, the first part of the Koran was revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad.
[136] Instead of "of this prince of beauty": (E) "of one prince of beauty".
[137] Instead of "mouth, which resembles pearls in their mother-of-pearl": (E) "that mouth, sweet as sugar".

ces[138]. Hence, the reading *Ṭabarī* in (E) can be read as a direct allusion to the founder of the Ḥurūfi religion. Even though this allusion is hardly dating back to Näsīmī, it did circulate at least at some point of time in the process of text tradition.

Finally, verse 3 provides yet another argument that speaks in favour of a possible identification of the addressee of G3 with Faḍlallāh. For there is probably a semantical parallelism between *oda:* "into the fire" (3a) and *naḳšï Āzärī* "his decoration from Azerbaijan" (3b). As a rule, "fire" and anything red (such as rubins and roses) can refer *per analogiam* to the mouth of God (i.e., of Faḍlallāh). Alone for this reason, 3a is easily to be read as a reference to Faḍlallāh. Note that also in the alternative reading of verse 1a in (E), Faḍlallāh is identified with something red: a rose.

We may continue by linking the interpretation of G3 to that of G2. If *Türkmān* in G2 does not or not only refer to Man in general, it very likely refers to either Näsīmī or Faḍlallāh or to both of them. Together, G2 and G3 point at some (ethnic or geographic) relation between *Türkmān* (Turks of some sort) and Azerbaijan on the one and Näsīmī and/or Faḍlallāh on the other hand, which could be used as secondary historical evidence for Näsīmī's and/or Faḍlallāh's links to that region.

To sum up this chapter, even a historical interpretation of the *ghazal* seems to be possible sometimes, although the results seem to be achievable only by a throrough and careful interpretation of the text and our background knowledge.

9. Discovering possible layers of interpretation

9.1. The semantic layers of a ghazal

The preceding section has illustrated some of the numerous semantic interpretations that even a single *ghazal* verse may give birth to. For instance, *gül* "rose" (G3 1a) is on the primary (or direct) level just a "rose", while on the metaphorical level it may stand for anything red, particularly the mouth, hence the mouth of Faḍlallāh, and finally the divine Ḥurūfic revelation in general. It is part of the game of writing and reciting Ḥurūfic *ghazal*s (as well as most other *ghazal*s) that no word ever has only *one* meaning. Polysemy, homonomy and all kinds of ambiguities are fully intended by the poet, and the higher their number the greater the esteem for his art. At the same time, there are no fixed interpretations, and there are not meant to be. In this respect, Näsīmī's Ḥurūfic poetry may perfectly well serve to illustrate the famous poetic principle *ut pictura poesis*. For not only the contents of his poems contain the message, but also already their formal shape.

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[138] On the identification of Ṭabaristān and Māzandarān see Redhouse 1987: 1656, s.v. Māzenderān. On the position of Astarābād in this region see Steingass 1930: 51, s.v. Astarābād. On Faḍlallāh's provenience from this town see Halm 1988: 99, Kürkçüoğlu 1985: VII and Savory 1987: 191. However, this provenience is contested by the Soviet researchers Gulamhüseyn Begdeli and Mirzağa Guluzade (see Begdeli 1970: 194 and Guluzade 1973: 13f.).

In the limited space of this article, light can be shed only upon a few of the semantic layers that play their role in Näsīmī's *ghazal* poetry. For instance, among the messages transmitted by Näsīmī's poems are: a) mockery of bigots (called *zāhid*, G1 6a) and b) the emphasis on the human self as a source of independent knowledge and divine revelation.

Of course, both of these ideas run diametrically contrary to most of what has been orthodox Islamic doctrine even before Näsīmī. Orthodox Islam postulates that there is only one way of interpreting the Koran and the traditions correctly (it goes without saying that this is imagined to be the orthodox interpretation). No room is left for the discussion of alternative interpretations. Against this backdrop, a discourse mode that is inherently based on ambiguity, such as Islamic mysticism and within it the Ḥurūfīya used it, must appear as a militant challenge to orthodoxy simply because of its form. Already the polysemic shape of mystic ghazals such as Näsīmī's is absolute heresy in the eyes of the *zāhid*s.

It is evident, then, that these *ghazal*s cannot be interpreted in any way that resembles orthodox Islamic exegesis of, for instance, the Koran. Since the content of the *ghazal* changes according to the number of allusions, metaphors and semantic layers discovered by its reader, a distinction between "right" and "wrong" interpretations is impossible.

The above sketched characteristics of Näsīmī's (but not only his) *ghazal*s entail two things for his modern reader community. Firstly, the readers must never stop in their search for new allusions and interpretations. Secondly, they can never be sure whether what they alreday read into the *ghazal* was really meant to be read into it by the author, because the distinction between author and reader has partly disappeared and part of the author's intention is the openness of the interpretation to the reader's imagination. Not surprisingly, this directly reflects another mystical tenet of the Ḥurūfīya (and other Islamic mystics before them): the identity of "you" and "me", of Man and God. For since the reader of a Ḥurūfic *ghazal* (consciously or unconsciously) assumes the same function as its author (i.e. that of a creator of a world of interpretations and references), he confirms this central Ḥurūfic dogma already by the mere act of reading a *ghazal*.

9.2. Näsīmī and the concept of the transmigration of souls

In the final section of this article, a concrete example will serve to illustrate how far the search for layers of interpretation can be stretched, leaving the modern *ghazal* reader with hypotheses than can sometimes be difficult to evaluate.

The starting point for this illustration is the word *dävrān* in G2 10a. The basic meaning of this word is "act of turning, circulation". But, as in the case of its Latin counterpart *orbis*, *dävrān* is very often used to transmit the notion of "world". Thus, *dävrān* can also have the meaning "*orbis terrarum*, our world, the world at

its present stage". As a consequence, one of the most obvious readings of G2 10a is that Näsīmī speaks about himself as the owner of the world.

However, in a Ḥurūfic context, round or turning objects can be used as a metaphor for the curly hair (*zülf*) of the Beloved (i.e., Faḍlallāḥ, God, or Man). Therefore, verse 10a can just as easily be understood to express Näsīmī's ownership of or identification with the curls of God (=Faḍlallāḥ etc.).

Both of the above interpretations are not extraordinary in a Ḥurūfic context, and numerous similar examples can be found in the divan of Näsīmī.

But there is yet another possible interpretation of *dävrān* in G2 10a. This interpretation becomes evident if we take a look at the grammatical system of the Arabic words that have passed as loanwords into the Turkic dialect of Näsīmī, changing some of their properties (for example, phonetic ones) in this process. That Näsīmī was perfectly familiar with Arabic grammar goes not only without saying for any great medieval Turkic poet, but is also attested impressively by his poems in Arabic language. The word *dävrān* belongs to those Arabic words which had passed into the Turkic language of Näsīmī. Formally, *dävrān* is a grammatical cognate of the Arabic word *dawr* (with its Turkic reading *dävr*). It denotes, among other things, the concept of the transmigration of souls[139]. That this concept may indeed be reflected in the poems of Näsīmī has been stated explicitly in the literature[140]. Besides, there are many other places in Näsīmī's divan that are liable of an intepretation according to the concept of the transmigration of souls. In the following verse, *fitne-i devrān* (= *fitnä-yi dävrān* according to Kreutel's transcription system) can be understood both as "the sedition of the world" (pointing to the amount of sedition that exists in the present world) and "the sedition of the transmigration of the world" (i.e., the sedition which ensues if people believe in the transmigration of souls):

"*Âlemî dutdı bu gün husn-ı ruhün destânı;
Âferîn husnüne ey fitne-i devrān, berü gel!*"[141]

"The epic poem told by the beauty of your cheek has conquered the world,
Well done for your beauty, o sedition of the world, now come here!"

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[139] See, for instance, Pala 1998: 106, s.v. *devr* and Ciopiński 1988: 73f. On the presence of this notion in Muslim Sufi literature in general, see Massignon/Radke 1998-1999: 315f.

[140] In his comment on Näsīmī's verse *Bu kader mekamı giçdüm ki bü cism câna geldüm* ("I migrated through so many places until I came into this body and soul"), Kemâl Edip Kürkçüoğlu writes: "This verse also expresses the famous concept of the Transmigration of Souls, which was inspired rather by Buddhism." (*Bu beytte de daha çok Budizm'den mülhem olan meşhur Devr anlayışı mazmûnlaştırılmaktadır*. Kürkçüoğlu 1985: 163). The quoted verse is given in Kürkçüoğlu 1985: 162; the English translation is by M. H.),

[141] Kürkçüoğlu 1985: 125 (Kürkçüoğlu's transcription has not been altered). I have not found the *ghazal* to which this verse belongs in any of the Näsīmī manuscripts I was able to see. However, it can be found in the Ottoman printed edition by Meḥmed Sa'īd (Meḥmed Sa'īd 1844, p. 65 of the Turkish text).

The fact that *devrān* in the second hemistich forms an obvious antithesis with *ʿālem*, which seems to be used in the concrete meaning of "world", does of course not mean that all other besides the concrete meanings may be discarded for *devrān* in this verse.

The transmigration of souls is, of course, not at all compatible with orthodox Sunni Islam[142]. Therefore, both G2 10a and the second verse containing *dävrān* can be seen as good illustrations of the subversive character of Näsīmī's Ḥurūfic *ghazal* poetry. There is no overt attack against orthodox Sunni Islam in these verses, but the reader can easily supply it with one. Thus, the (in the eyes of the adherents of orthodoxism) "criminal" act of believing in the theory of the transmigration of souls is accomplished only with the help of the reader. For an orthodox critic of the hidden meaning of these verses this has the unpleasant consequence that he can only criticize the allegedly "heretic" interpretation if he refers to it and thus acknowledges it. One can imagine that such rhetorical devices both increased the fury of the keepers of orthodox Islamic faith and established a sense of close collaboration and community between those who read Näsīmī's verses, especially if they were able to decode such a deeper meaning of *dävrān*.

A similar interpretation can also be given to other terms denoting "roundness" or "turning" that occur in the Turkic divan of Näsīmī. For instance, in G3 5a Näsīmī again uses the word *täsälsül*. It is a verbal noun meaning "being linked together like the links of a chain" and grammatically related to the word *silsilä* "chain". Of course, *täsälsül* can again be read as a reference to the shape of the Beloved One's (i.e., God's, Faḍlallāh's, Man's etc.) curly hair, as above. This interpretation is especially viable in view of the "curl" (*zülf*) being explicitly mentioned in the completing hemistich 5b. What is more, verse 5 is adorned with other words denoting circular objects or the quality of being round, which can just as easily be supposed to be references to God's curly hair: "circle, circulation" (*dävr*), "full moon" (*māh-i tämām*) and "forming a ring" (*čänbärī*).

However, if we once more recall the extremely polysemic character of Näsīmī's *ghazal*s, these are quite unlikely to be the only possible interpretations of *täsälsül* in 5a. Also, a more direct hint at an intended additional semantic layer can be found in the semantics of the word *täsälsül* itself. Besides its basic meaning ("being linked together like the links of a chain"), this word can, for instance in Ottoman, which is a very close cognate of Näsīmī's language, have a special philosophical meaning that is related to the concept of the transmigration of souls. For the Ottoman equivalent of *täsälsül* has among its meanings "an uninterrupted occurrence of events, or existence of successive things, without beginning or end"[143]. Clearly, this is not the same as "transmigration of souls". But the two philosophical concepts *dävr* and *täsälsül* refer to the same philosophical context, and they even have sha-

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[142] Pala 1998: 106, s.v. *devr*.

[143] This definition is taken from Redhouse 1987: 546, s.v. *teselsul* the special diacritics used in the transcriptions of Redhouse are eliminated thtoughout this article.

red semantic spheres. But perhaps most importantly, they refer to concepts that are totally unacceptable to orthodox Sunni Muslims[144]. According to orthodox opinion, the cosmos of course definitely *has* a beginning (God's act of creating it) and an end (its being destroyed at the time of the Last Judgement). Consequently, there can be neither an "endless chain of repeated events" (*täsälsül*) nor its special case of "souls being reborn again and again" (which is one of the possible interpretations of *dävr* and *dävrān*). As Kürkçüoğlu rightly points out[145], this concept is more characteristic of Buddhism than of Islam[146].

The list of Näsīmī's verses which both contain references to the notions of "turning" or "roundness" and may refer to concepts outside of what is allowed by the Sunni orthodoxy can easily prolonged. I want to conclude with an example from a *ghazal* that is reproduced from Kürkçüoğlu's adaptation of Näsīmī's Turkic divan. There, we read the verse:

"*Felek aksine dönmüşdür;*
  meger Âhir Zemân oldı?"[147]

"The heavens have begun to turn in their opposite direction;
Could it be that the Day of Judgement is at hand?"

On one hand, this verse has a reading that is perfectly harmless from the viewpoint of orthodox Islam. This interpretation is to understand "heavens" as a purely astronomical term. For the turning of the heavenly spheres is a concept that does not run contrary to orthodox Islamic theology. But if *felek* is understood as not only referring to astrononomy but assuming its metaphorial meaning of "fortune, fate, destiny"[148], then this verse can refer to a cosmological conception where the "fate of the cosmos" can be turned around, i. e. repeated. And therefore it can be linked to the philosophical meanings of *dävr* and *täsälsül*.

The above examples for the intergration of the concept of the transmigration of souls has shown that a thorough linguistic and literary analysis of Näsīmī's *ghazal*s is essential for the judgement even of their religious context.

10. Conclusion

This short contribution has illustrated how the linguistic, formal, historical and the manifold semantical layers of Näsīmī's ghazals interlace. The nature of these poems strongly recommends a mode of analyzing them that does not limit itself to

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[144] On the unacceptability of Näsīmī's Ḥurūfic beliefs for orthodox Muslims, see Ciopiński 1988: 74.
[145] See footnote 140.
[146] On the Buddhist concept see, for instance, the article Samsāra in Fischer-Schreiber et al. 1995: 317.
[147] Kürkçüoğlu 1985: 335. The text including its diacritics and orthography is Kürkçüoğlu's.
[148] Redhouse 1987: 1396, s.v. *felek.*

only one aspect. Linguists, historians, and researchers in literary studies must be ready to cross the borders of their disciplines even if they want to arrive at a thorough analysis of Näsīmī's poems in their own respective fields.

By excluding the various disciplines from or including them into the analysis not only the scope, but also the results of the research is bound to change. Even if it will not always be possible to uncover all dimensions of a *ghazal by* Näsīmī, one should always bear in mind that there are many of them.

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