

The *Wajdiyyāt* of ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadānī: Youthful Passions of a Sufi in the Making¹

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‘Ayn al-Quḍāt Abū al-Ma‘ālī ‘Abdullāh b. Muḥammad al-Miyānjī al-Hamadānī was born in Hamadān in 492/1098 and executed by hanging in the same city thirty three years later in 525/1131, having been accused of holding heretical beliefs by the Seljuq-supported religious establishment.²

Since the early thirties of the twentieth century, when modern scholarly studies on ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadānī began, he has been introduced and treated as a Sufi figure with philosophical inclinations.³ His first mystical writing – *Ghāyat al-Baḥth ‘an Ma’nā al-Ba’tḥ* – was composed in 511/1117, when he was nineteen years old.⁴ His earliest work, however, was *Nuzhat al-‘Ushshāq wa-Nuhzat al-Mushtāq* – “The Pleasure Excursion of Lovers and the Opportunity of the Passionate” –⁵ which falls within a category different from the rest of his succeeding books and epistles. Although this work is dedicated entirely to *ghazal*, and described as *wajdiyyāt*,⁶ its imaginary and imitative treatment of passionate love affairs does not contain any trace of mystical themes. In other words, this collection of *ghazal* by a

¹ This essay does not intend to get into detailed thematic or stylistic aspects of the work under consideration. It rather aims at providing a general introduction to the work, which is currently being prepared for publication.

² For a comprehensive biography of ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, see Bowering 1989.

³ In *Journal Asiatique* (January – March 1930 and April – June 1930) the Tunisian scholar Mohammed Ben Abd el-Jalil published the Arabic text of *Shakwā al-Gharīb* by ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt (in the January – March issue) with a French translation of the work (in the April – June issue). H. Dabashi expresses his opinion on this issue by saying the following: “By far the most damaging aspect of the Orientalist mode of reading our intellectual history is the arbitrary isolation of the so-called “mystics” from “theologians”, and all of them from the poets, the literati, the scientists, etc. The moment we begin to read ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, or any other medieval intellectual for that matter, we realize that there is an integral life to the world of ideas that the Orientalists never cared to detect... In prose and poetry, theology and jurisprudence, philosophy and mysticism, science and politics, ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt demonstrates a remarkable mastery of all crucial claims to knowledge in his time”. See Dabashi 1999: 42.

⁴ The other mystical works of ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt consist of *Zubdat al-Ḥaqā’iq*, *Tamhīdāt* and *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, and his well-known apologia which was composed in 523/1129, almost two years before he was executed. In addition to these, he composed a relatively large number of epistles in different periods of his life, all of which deal with mystical themes.

⁵ H. Dabashi says: “Lest we are tempted to conclude from ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s surviving texts, or the titles of some that have been lost, that he was principally concerned with theological, philosophical, or “mystical” issues, it would be good to remember that he wrote, as he tells us very specifically, 1000 erotic verses which he called *Nuzhat al-‘Ushshāq wa Nuhzat al-Mushtāq* [sic]”. Dabashi 1999: 82, 83.

⁶ This is according to a note at the end of the manuscript of *Nuzhat al-‘Ushshāq*. *Wajdiyyāt* comes from *wajd*, which means passionate love.

“Sufi Martyr”, as he was described by A. J. Arberry, does not fall within that type of *ghazal* that H. Dabashi calls “theo-erotic”.⁷ This implies that ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt did not, actually, start his literary career by writing on mystical or philosophical themes but rather by composing a collection of sensual, and even erotic, love poetry in Arabic.

Nuzhat al-‘Ushshāq, however, was listed among the lost works of ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt⁸ until a manuscript copy of the work was discovered two decades ago in the Iranian city of Qum.⁹ So far, no other manuscript copy of the work has come to light anywhere else. The reason behind the apparent lack of concern for this non-mystical work of ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt may lie in the fact that it was ignored by early biographers, who preferred to focus on his mystical or philosophical character and career.¹⁰ His non-mystical love poems in Arabic were, therefore, neglected. This neglect of *Nuzhat al-‘Ushshāq* may have reduced interest in making copies of it, causing it gradually to become one of the lost works of the author.

‘Ayn al-Quḍāt was sixteen years old when he became engaged in reading the works of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī (d. 505/1112), five years before he met Aḥmad al-Ghazzālī (d. 520/1126), Abū Ḥāmid’s younger brother and a radical Sufi with whom ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt had extensive correspondence until the death of the former five years before the death of the latter.¹¹ The influence of the two Ghazzālī brothers on the young Hamadānī seems to have driven him towards mysticism.

In his apologia, *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt explicitly mentions his composition of *Nuzhat al-‘Ushshāq*, quoting one piece of *ghazal* from that work as a sample.¹² He says:

⁷ See Dabashi 1996: 397.

⁸ A. J. Arberry lists 16 works by ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt in addition to 3 works ascribed to him. Out of the 16 works, 11 are identified as “lost”, among which *Nuzhat al-‘Ushshāq* is mentioned. See Arberry 1969: 12f.

⁹ The manuscript copy of *Nuzhat al-‘Ushshāq* (transcribed in 8 Shaban 641/ 12 January 1244) was discovered, in 1986, by Dr. ‘Alī Naqī Munzavī in the library of Āyatullāh Mar’ashī in Qum (Collection no. 4047, Book VI, folios 122-155). Munzavī announced this in an article he published in *Chīstā* journal (see Munzavī 1376 [1997]: 630). Following that, the first brief description of the work was done in Munzavī’s introduction to the 3rd volume of the letters of ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt (Munzavī 1377 [1998]: 28f.). A relatively more detailed presentation is found in an article by Dr. Muṣṭafā Mūsavī of Tehran University (Musavi 1998). Apart from the poet’s own reference to *Nuzhat al-‘Ushshāq* in *Shakwā al-Gharīb* no other work or article mentions anything about it other than saying that it is a lost work of *ghazal* by ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt.

¹⁰ In his contemporary biography of ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, ‘Imād al-Dīn Iṣfahānī quotes the first three verses of *Nuzhat al-‘Ushshāq* as a sample of his poetry but without mentioning the *Nuzhat*. See Iṣfahānī 1999: 138.

¹¹ The letters exchanged between Aḥmad al-Ghazzālī and ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt were published by N. Pourjavadi (Pourjavadi 1977).

¹² This piece of *ghazal* is No. 30 in the manuscript of *Nuzhat al-Ushshaq*.

ومن مولات خاطري ألفُ بيت في التسيب سَمَحَ بها الخاطرُ في عشرة أيام وهي مجموعة في صحيفة تُعرف بـ "نزهة العشاق ونهزة المشتاق"، وهذه الأرجوزة منها:

وغادة من سلفي معدّ
تُعزّي إلى خير أب وجدّ
يكفها ججاجح كالأسد
تغزو العدى على جياذٍ جرد
بكل صمصامٍ صقيل الحدّ
وذابل من الزّماح الملدّ
زارت وصحيّ هُجّع بنجد
في خفّراتٍ من غواني سعد
وطش هامات الرّبي والوهّد
إلى رحيب الباع واري الرّند
يلبسن بوبّي كرمٍ ومجد
فبتن في عيشٍ لذيّ رعد
وبتُ جذلان وهندٌ عندي
ألثمها مَسْحًا بالرّند
وأجتني باللثم ورد الحنْد¹³

"Amongst the offspring of my thoughts are a thousand erotic verses which I was inspired to compose in ten days; these are collected together in a sheet known as *Nuzhat al-'ush-shāq wa-nahzat* [sic] *al-mushṭāq* ('The pleasure of lovers and opportunity of the passionate'). The following lines occur there:

Ah, the maiden of Ma'add descent
On either side, the best of ancestry,
Guarded by warriors powerful as lions
Who raid the foe on noble, short-haired steeds,
Furnished with tempered swords of polished steel
And eke with slender lances, true and long!
She came, whilst my companions slept abed,
Escorted by her modest maids of Sa'd;
They trod the heights of hillocks and the vales
To visit a generous and mighty man;
Clad in the robes of glory and renown,
They passed the night in soft, delightful ease,
And I right cheerful, Hind being by my side,

¹³ Hamadānī 1962: 40, 41.

Kissing her, mantled in sweet perfumery,
And culling with my lips the rose of her cheeks.”¹⁴

Nuzhat al-‘Ushshāq, consists entirely of love poetry and is a homogeneous collection of pieces of poems arranged and introduced by the poet himself. In the introduction he explains the circumstances and occasion which led to the composition of the work:

...فقد كنتُ وإخواني بهمدان تتناشد فنون الشعر، وأسماعنا تسترقص بكلمات أَرْضَعَتْ بَابِلَ دَرَّةَ السَّحَرِ، حَتَّى أَفْضَتِ الْحَالُ بِنَا إِلَى النَّسِيبِ، فَتَرَنَمُوا بِأَبْيَاتٍ تَسْعِيرُ الْغَنَجَ مِنْهَا مَلَأَ الْفَتَيَاتُ، وَلَوْلَاهَا لَمَاتِ الْعَشَّاقُ. فَقَدْ عَيِيَ عَلَيَّ مِثْلُهَا مَاءُ الْحَيَاةِ، فَأَنْشَدْتُهُمْ شِعْرَ أَخِي قَرِشٍ وَغِيلَانَ بْنِ عَقْبَةَ بْنِ بَهْشِشٍ، وَأَسْمَعْتُهُمْ قَوْلَ شَاعِرٍ عَذْرَةٍ، فَلَمْ يَعْجِبْهُمْ إِلَّا بَيْتَ قَالَهُ أَبُو حَرْزَةَ:

إِنَّ الْعَيُونَ الَّتِي فِي طَرْفِهَا مَرَضٌ قَتَلْنَا ثُمَّ لَمْ يَحْيَيْنِ قَتْلَانَا

ولله در شاعر يسمح بمثل هذا خاطره ويحوم عليه ضمائره، ولقد صدق عليه حيث قال لبعض ولده إن أباك قد نحر الشعر نحرًا، ثم مع هذا يتنجب غير عضايه لعلمه بأن جيد الشعر يبلغ بصاحبه إلى أقصى مراتبه، ولو لم يكن فيه فضيلة، إلا أنه يغير الفحولة من الشعراء حتى يغيرون على شعر الغير، أكله شرفًا...

فاقترحوا علي أن أجمع مما قلته في هذا الفن أبياتًا يهز لها من يرويها ويكرر مطمح نظره فيها. فأعلمتهم أن الشاعر الحاذق لا يعني بذلك من لم توله الأربعون أذنابها، ولا يدرع من ستين بروض فيها أبيات ألقوا في جلبابها، وأنا بعد يافع ولأخلاف العشرين راضع، فأبوا إلا الإصرار على سؤا لهم ولم يكن بد من تحقيق أقوالهم، فأودعت هذه المجلدة الموسومة بنزهة العشاق ونهضة المشاق ألف بيت مما صنعت في هذه الأيام دون ما فاحت به في سائر الشهور والأعوام...

“I was reciting with my friends in Hamadan various types of poetry, our ears dancing with the effect of words milked by magic Babylonian wine. Soon after, we ended up with female love poetry (*nasīb*), and my friends recited verses from which beautiful girls borrow charm and without which lovers would have perished. In fact, the water of life could not match those verses. Thereafter, I recited to them the poetry of the brother of Quraysh,¹⁵ and that of *Ghaylan b. ‘Uqbah b. Bahīsh*,¹⁶ and I let them hear the utterance of the poet of ‘Uḍrah.¹⁷ None of that, however, pleased them save one verse by Abū Ḥirza¹⁸ that says:

The eyes that have ailing in their gaze
Have killed us, and did not resurrect our dead afterwards.

May God bless a poet whose mind produces such poetry and whose heart circles around it. It is true indeed what was said to one of his sons: Your father has completely slaughtered poetry [i.e. no one after him could compose]. In spite of this, he takes poetry from other poets and passes them off as his own because he knows that good poetry makes the poet

¹⁴ Arberry 1969: 71.

¹⁵ An indication to ‘Umar b. Abī Rabī‘ah (d. 93/711).

¹⁶ This is the name of *Dhū al-Rummah* (d. 117/735).

¹⁷ An indication to Jamīl b. Ma‘mar known as Jamīl Buḥaynah (d. 82/701).

¹⁸ This is the nickname of Jarīr b. ‘Aṭīyyah (d. 114/732).

reach the climax of poetic standards. If he had no merit other than making outstanding poets so jealous enough that they raided the poetry of their counterparts, that would have been sufficient honor for him...

Therefore, my friends suggested to me that, from what I have said in this art, I should compile some verses that could shake by ecstasy whoever recounts them, and would generate in him the desire to recite them over and over. I told them that the skilled poet does not undertake such an endeavor before crossing the age of forty, and without protecting himself at the age of sixty with a garden whose garment is the blossoms of rhymes. However, I am still an adolescent, and in the same generation of milk-sucking of those who precede the age of twenty. They refused my excuses, however, and insisted on their request. As a result, I had no choice but to fulfill their wish. So, I have included in this volume, which I have named *Nuzhat al-‘Ushshāq wa-Nuhzat al-Mushtāq*, one thousand verses of what I have composed in these days without including anything from what other months and years have foreordained...”

From the above introduction, the following four points can be concluded:

1. *Nuzhat al-‘Ushshāq* was composed in Hamadān at a social occasion. According to what ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt mentions in *Shakwā al-Ḡharīb*, the composition was accomplished in a period of ten days.¹⁹
2. The model of love poetry on which the participants based their poetic endeavor was that of the Umayyad tradition. However, the recitations made from the love poetry of that tradition did not fully satisfy the taste of ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s friends.
3. ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt does not see the adoption of poetry by outstanding poets as a sign of inferiority. It is, in his opinion, a common practice among skilled poets, which gives credit to both the original poet and the borrower.
4. The poetry in *Nuzhat al-‘Ushshāq* was composed during the social occasion mentioned by the poet, and he refrained from incorporating any of his preceding poetry into that collection.

By examining each of these points in some detail, we can make several new conclusions. First, it is almost certain that ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt composed *Nuzhat al-‘Ushshāq* prior to his turn towards mysticism following his contact with Aḥmad al-Ḡhazzālī. This happened in 516/1122, when ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt was twenty-four years old, which suggests that the poet was younger than at the age when he composed his erotic Arabic love poems.²⁰

Secondly, it can also be concluded from the introduction above that the “*nasīb*” [i.e. female love poetry]²¹ he and his companions in Hamadān considered to be the model for the composition of *ghazal*, was that of the Umayyad poets such as ‘Umar

¹⁹ Arberry 1969: 71.

²⁰ This point shall be elaborated more precisely when the relation between ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt and Abīvardī is analyzed.

²¹ “Arabic love poetry in the classical period,” according to R. Jacobi, “whether *nasīb* or *ghazal*, is based on a common heritage, a reservoir of formulas, motifs and images from the Bedouin past. As a result, the two genres present certain similarities and have often been treated together without differentiation” (Jacobi 1993).

b. Abī Rabī‘ah, *Dhū* al-Rummah, Jamīl Buthaynah and Jarīr, who are, especially the second and the third, outstanding representatives of the ‘*Udhri*’ love poetry that evolved in the Umayyad age and was concentrated in the Hijaz and the surrounding desert regions, mainly Najd.²²

The ‘*Udhri ghazal*’ in the Umayyad period was a continuation of the traditions of pre-Islamic love poetry, which is often referred to as *nasīb*. Although ‘Umar b. Abī Rabī‘a’s *ghazal* is described as being ‘urban’ and, thus, excluded from the category of ‘*Udhri ghazal*’, it does not significantly vary, in style as well as in modes of expression, from the love poetry of the Bedouins. The main difference, however, between the Bedouin ‘*Udhri ghazal*’ and the urban *ghazal* in the Umayyad period is the ethical values which were upheld by each party.²³ The fact that ‘Ayn al-Qudāt refers to the love poetry of the Bedouin and urban Umayyad poets in his introduction suggests that in *Nuzhat al-‘Ushshāq* he intended to make use of ‘*Udhri*’ modes of expression, without distancing the adventures that he describes in his *ghazal* from the urban practices in love affairs. In other words, *Nuzhat al-‘Ushshāq* may be described as a collection of love poetry that imitates ‘*Udhri*’ style of composition, and depicts a Bedouin milieu where, in this particular case, urban characters practice love.

Many poets of the Abbasid era attempted to imitate this ‘*Udhri*’ model when composing *ghazal*. This type of *ghazal* in the Abbasid era is often known as *hijāziyyāt* or *najdiyyāt* in which a poet in Iran or Egypt would compose love poetry that portrays the Arabian milieu of Hijaz or Najd, with its tribes, girls and social values and practices. *Nuzhat al-‘Ushshāq* can be categorized precisely among this type of Iranian Arabic *ghazal*.

The reader of ‘Ayn al-Qudāt’s preface gets the impression that the poet considered the adoption of poetry from eminent poets as a poetic skill and not as an act of plagiarism. For him, “if [the eminent poet] had no merit other than making outstanding poets so jealous that they raided the poetry of their counterparts, that would have been a sufficient honor for him”. Therefore, it is fully acceptable for ‘Ayn al-Qudāt that a poet should raid the poetry of other poets in order to achieve a sufficiently high standard of composition. This is, in fact, what the young ‘Ayn al-Qudāt does in his composition of *Nuzhat al-‘Ushshāq*.

When ‘Ayn al-Qudāt was around the age of ten, shortly after the year 495/1101-02, Abū al-Muzaffar Muḥammad Abīvardī – a prominent poet from *Khurāsān* in the 5th century – was invited to Hamadān by its governor to be in charge of a

²² According to S. Jayyusi, “the concentration of love poetry in Hijaz [in the Umayyad age], however, remains a phenomenon to be explained. This can be done in terms of several of its salient features. Firstly, Hijaz was socially a fairly settled region. It was comparatively free from the direct involvement with the tribes asserting their position and prestige in new surroundings, as was the case in Iraq, Persia and in the vicinity of Damascus. Hijaz had more leisure than the new provinces and could more happily turn its attention to poetry on the topic of love and women” (Jayyusi 1983: 420).

²³ Jacobi 2000.

school that the latter intended to establish in that city. Abīvardī actually spent several years in Hamadān, until around 498/1104-05,²⁴ before departing to Iṣfahān, where he was ultimately poisoned for political reasons in 507/1113.²⁵ At that time ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt was already fifteen years old. One year later, ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt started his *sufi* journey with the two Ghazzālī brothers, as mentioned earlier. Therefore, it is likely that his non-mystical *ghazal* was composed around this time, which means he was between the ages of fifteen and twenty.

The *Dīwān* of Abīvardī consists of two parts; the first is named *‘Irāqīyyāt* and the second *Najdiyyāt*.²⁶ What concerns the study of *Nuzhat al-‘Ushshāq* is the second part of Abīvardī’s *Dīwān*. This part – *Najdiyyāt* – consists entirely of love poetry and is, like the *Nuzhat al-‘Ushshāq*, a homogeneous collection of pieces of poems arranged and given an explanatory introduction by the poet himself. This introduction mentions, in detail, the circumstances and the occasion which led to the composition of the work. A careful comparison of the two works, Abīvardī’s *Najdiyyāt* and ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s *Nuzhat al-‘Ushshāq*, demonstrates an identical pattern, style and content. In fact, the occasion Abīvardī mentions in his introduction as leading to the composition of the *Najdiyyāt* is almost the same occasion, with the same circumstances, that ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt mentions in his introduction. In addition to this, both poets mention, in their respective introductions, that their work comprises “one thousand” verses.²⁷ Furthermore, the *Najdiyyāt* of Abīvardī is also named the “*Wajdiyyāt*” (love poems).²⁸ At the end of the manuscript of *Nuzhat al-‘Ushshāq*, the following statement closes the collection: *tammāt al-alfīyyāt al-mawsūma bil-wajdiyyāt* “the thousand [verses] named the love poems end”, which indicates that, in fact, the work of ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt had the same subtitle as Abīvardī’s work.

One final and amusing observation that can be gleaned from a careful look at the *Nuzhat al-‘Ushshāq*’s introduction is the fact that ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt defends the practice of poets raiding the verses of their fellow poets. This attitude of ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt is no surprise, for a thorough comparison of Abīvardī’s and ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s works leaves no doubt that the latter was doing precisely that – raiding – when he composed the *Nuzhat al-‘Ushshāq*. Before one condemns ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s originality, however, it ought to be remembered that both poets were, of course, imitating the ‘Udhri poets of the Umayyad age, and successfully copying the themes and expressions of *ghazal* or *nasīb* that the early Arabs of Hijaz and Najd left for posterity.

²⁴ Abīvardī refers to his stay in Hamadān in his poetry. See Abīvardī 1987, vol. 2.: 64, 158.

²⁵ For a comprehensive biography of Abīvardī, see Giffen 1989 and Farihi 1994.

²⁶ Abīvardī 1987.

²⁷ Ibid., vol. 2: 171.

²⁸ Ibid., vol. 2: 167.

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