

Sung with melodious tunes: Performance context as described in the *ghazals* of Jahān-Malik Khātūn

Dominic Parviz Brookshaw

وآنجه میگوئی به نزد عاشقان با ساز گوی
در سرایستان تو با دستان خوش آواز گوی
مطربا در ساز کن عود و نی و چنگ و ربای
گر بخوانی یک دو بیتی دلپذیر از شعر من

O minstrel! Play the lute, the flute, the harp and the rebeck
And whatever you say to the lovers, accompany it with music
If you sing a pleasing verse or two of my poetry in your garden,
Sing them with melodious tunes
(*ghazal* 1383: lines 8-9).

Introduction

Medieval Persian poetry was shaped by and, consequently, reflects the real context within which it was performed, or, at the very least, presents an image of the ideal performance context. Therefore, alongside contemporary histories and *adab* works, poetry is a valuable source of information for those who wish to try to reconstruct, as far as is possible, the physical setting and social context of poetry performance. Until recently, scholars have mostly looked to panegyric *qaṣīda* poetry for clues on performance, considering *ghazal* poetry too formulaic to be able to provide sufficient useful information on the matter. In this paper, I hope to show how the *ghazal* poetry of just one 14th century Persian poet, Jahān-Malik Khātūn, can help to shed light on the major performance context of the medieval Persianate world: the *majlis*.¹

Jahān-Malik Khātūn, her life and poetry:

In the medieval period, few women were taught to read and write as many believed that literacy, in the case of women, could lead to perversion and moral laxity. The composition and performance of poetry was also commonly considered to be improper for women. In most periods, however, a number of women, who were ac-

¹ It is also possible to read the second half of Jahān's given name as "Malak" ("angel"), or "Mulk" ("dominion"), although "Malik" ("king") seems a more plausible reading. I am most grateful to Julie Scott Meisami and Homa Katouzian for their comments on an earlier draft of this article.

tively engaged in the affairs of court, were taught to read and write both Persian and Arabic. In some cases these women produced poetry which rivaled that of their male contemporaries in eloquence and complexity. Jahān-Malik Khātūn was one such woman.²

Jahān-Malik Khātūn was an Īnjūid princess who lived in Shīrāz at the same time as Hāfiẓ (d. c. 791/1389) and ‘Ubayd-i Zākānī (d.772/1371).³ She was the granddaughter of Sharaf al-Dīn Maḥmūd Shāh (d.736/1336) the founder of the Īnjūid dynasty. Her father, Maṣ‘ūd Shāh (d. 743/1342), was the eldest brother of Shaykh Abū Ishāq (d.758/1357), who was the last Īnjūid to rule Shīrāz. Shaykh Abū Ishāq was praised as a generous ruler-patron by Hāfiẓ and other Shīrāzī poets during his lifetime and after his death.⁴ On her mother’s side, Jahān-Malik was descended from the Chūbānids of Adharbāyjān and the great Ilkhānid vizier and historian, Rashīd al-Dīn Fadlallāh. Jahān-Malik was born some time after 725/1324, and she married Amīn al-Dīn Jahrūmī, Shaykh Abū Ishāq’s boon companion or *nadīm*. Her *takhallus* or penname (which she uses most eloquently in her poetry) is “Jahān”, or “world”.⁵

After her father was killed, Jahān-Malik’s uncle, Shaykh Abū Ishāq, took control of Shīrāz. Shaykh Abū Ishāq’s passion for poetry is well documented in contemporary sources, and it is not unreasonable to suggest that he commissioned his niece to compose poetry for performance at his court. Shīrāz was conquered by the Muzaffarids in 754/1353 and Shaykh Abū Ishāq was killed four years later.⁶ After the conquest of Shīrāz by the Muzaffarids, Jahān-Malik appears to have stayed in the city and lived alongside her family’s enemies, which cannot have been easy for her. Jahān-Malik mocks Mubāriz al-Dīn in her poetry (see *ghazal* 1321) and, in contrast, praises Shah Shujā‘, Mubāriz al-Dīn’s eldest son and successor, who was much more inclined to poetry and worldly pleasures than his late father. It seems that Jahān-Malik lived at least until 784/1382, since in her poetry she also praises the Jalāyirid prince, Ahmad Bahādur b. Shaykh Uvays, who ruled in Iṣfahān from that year.⁷

² On women’s literature in the medieval Islamic world, see Hammond 2003. For more examples of pre-modern Persian poetry penned by women, see Mihrabī 2003 and Makhfi 2002.

³ Jahān-Malik Khātūn seems to have been acquainted with ‘Ubayd-i Zākānī, see Dawlatshāh 1900: 289-290 for disparaging and vulgar remarks made by ‘Ubayd-i Zākānī against Jahān-Malik Khātūn. References to Jahān-Malik and her poetry are also to be found in other poetry anthologies, such as Muhammad Dhihnī’s *Tadhkirat al-Khavātīn*, see Massé 1972: 4. Dhihnī praises Jahān-Malik’s refinement and says that the literati of the age took part in her *majālis*.

⁴ See Jahān-Malik Khātūn 1995: 7-8, for a poem in praise of Shāh Shujā‘, and Hāfiẓ 2001: 683-685, for a *qasīda* in praise of Shaykh Abū Ishāq and ibid: 687-688, for a *qasīda* praising Shāh Shujā‘. See ‘Ubayd-i Zākānī: 1999 for numerous poems in praise of Shaykh Abū Ishāq, Shāh Shujā‘, and their viziers.

⁵ For further biographical details on the princess, see Jahān-Malik Khātūn 1995: iii-x; Nafisi 1965: 216 and ibid. 1968: 369-372; Massé 1972: 1-8; and Ṣafā 1999: 1045-1056.

⁶ On the Muzaffarids, see Jackson 1993 and Al-i Davud 1995. For more information on the Īnjūids, see Āl-i Dāvūd 2001 and Boyle 1971.

⁷ See Ṣafā 1999: 1047.

The published edition of Jahān-Malik's *dīvān* comprises four *qasīdas*, one *tarjī-band*, a lengthy *marthīya*, 12 *muqatta*'s, 357 *rubā'īs* and 1,413 *ghazals*, and is the largest known *dīvān* to have survived from any woman poet of pre-modern Iran. Like Hāfiẓ, Jahān-Malik Khātūn primarily composed *ghazals*. Her *dīvān* contains almost three times as many *ghazals* as that of Hāfiẓ; the large volume of Jahān-Malik's *ghazals* suggests that she wrote poetry throughout her life, and that, when compiling her *dīvān* (most likely near the end of her life), she did not substantially edit or revise them. If she had done so, she would most likely have discarded (or at least amalgamated) those poems with considerable overlap, whether in terms of content or form (or both). Jahān-Malik's *dīvān* contains a large number of *rubā'īs*, which she may have written for performance at intimate, private wine parties. Contemporary sources suggest that a number of Īnjūid women played an active role in the political and cultural life of 14th century Shīrāz, most notably Tāshī Khātūn, Shaykh Abū Ishāq's influential mother, whose cultural and religious activities included the founding of a *madrasa*, the expansion of the Shāh Chirāgh shrine complex, and the regular attendance of public theological *majālis*.⁸ Just like several Salghurid princesses before them, some Īnjūid women were directly involved in political matters.⁹ Given that a number of royal women were actively involved in the political life of Shīrāz in the 13th and 14th centuries, it is not unreasonable to contend that Jahān-Malik Khātūn was a visible participant in the literary salons of Shīrāz, although explicit evidence detailing the literary activities of women in this period is, at best, scant.

Jahān-Malik's *dīvān* was first published just a decade ago in Tehran in 1374/1995. This would partly explain why her poetry has remained largely unstudied, whether in Iran or elsewhere. This edition is based on three manuscripts of Jahān-Malik's poetry. The most complete manuscript used by the editors is in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (no. 1580). It contains more than 14,000 *bayts* of poetry, appears to date from the poet's lifetime, and is dedicated to Ahmad Bahādur b. Shaykh Uvays.¹⁰ The second most complete manuscript used is in the Topkapı Palace Li-

⁸ Limbert 2004: 59 and 102.

⁹ Limbert 2004: 41 and 76: Khān Sultān, Jahān-Malik's cousin, secretly supported her Muzafrādī brother-in-law, Shāh Shujā', against her husband, his brother, Shāh Mahmūd. For details on the activities of the Salghurid *atābak* Abish Khātūn (d. 1286) and her daughter, Kur-dūjin, see Limbert 2004: 14, 18-22 and 25.

¹⁰ Blochet 1928: 222: "Cet exemplaire est l'original du diwan de Djihan, qui avait laissé des places en blanc pour des compositions qu'elle avait l'intention de faire, dont quelques unes ont été remplies par l'un des possesseurs du livre". Nafisi 1968: 369 says that the fact that many of the *ghazals* in this manuscript are preceded by, "dāmat [sic.] *baqā' u-hā*" ("may her existence continue") suggests that this copy of Jahān-Malik's *dīvān* was either written in her lifetime, or else copied from a *dīvān* written whilst she was still alive. Massé 1972: 4-5 also proposes that, given the fine nature of the *tadhhīb*, this manuscript of Jahān's *dīvān* may in fact be the copy originally presented to Ahmad b. Shaykh Uvays.

brary in Istanbul (H.867) and is dated Rajab 840/1437.¹¹ The editors also made use of a third, much shorter manuscript, which contains just 500 *bayts* of Jahān-Malik's poetry and is dated to c.1028/1618. This manuscript opens with a preface in praise of Shāh Shujā', and was bought by E.G. Browne and is in the University Library in Cambridge (V.32 (6)).¹² In addition to these three manuscripts, there is another manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (no. 1581), which contains a selection of around 1,300 *bayts* of Jahān-Malik's poetry and which is bound together with a similar number of *ghazals* by another (possibly female) poet with the *takhallus* "Bī-nishān".¹³ To date, no manuscript copy of Jahān-Malik's *dīvān* has been located in the major libraries of Iran. The small number of extant manuscripts of Jahān-Malik's *dīvān* would suggest that her poetry was not widely disseminated, whether during her lifetime or after her death. Like the *ghazals* of other poets of 14th century Iran, Jahān-Malik's poetry has been overshadowed by that of Hāfiẓ, perhaps even more so in her case because she was a woman.

From a close reading of Jahān-Malik's *dīvān*, it seems that the poet was influenced by the 13th century Shīrāzī poet, Sa'di (d.691/1292), to whom she refers directly at least once (*ghazal* 230). Many more of her *ghazals*, however, bear a striking similarity to those of Hāfiẓ.¹⁴ Given that both Hāfiẓ and Jahān-Malik were active at the Īnjūid and Muẓaffarid courts, it is not unreasonable to assume that they may have influenced each other's poetry, in terms of both content and style. It should be noted, however, that Jahān-Malik's *ghazals* have less mystical content (whether covert or overt) than those of Hāfiẓ.

As to whether we can detect a specifically female voice in the poetry of Jahān-Malik Khātūn, I would argue that, for the most part, it is impossible to tell that the poems were written by a woman. Unsurprisingly, Jahān-Malik adopted the language and style of her male contemporaries and succeeded in producing poetry of a comparable standard. Few of Jahān-Malik's *ghazals* could be considered confessional or personal in any substantive way, although the profuse use of her *takhallus*, "Jahān", in her poetry (not just in the final verse, but often throughout a given poem) gives the sense that one is reading about the poet herself. In some of Jahān-Malik's poetry, however, she appears to provide the listener with glimpses of her personal predicament. We learn, for example, that she has lost everything (*az dast raft sāmān-i ma*:

¹¹ See Karatay 1961: 215. Karatay dates the Topkapı manuscript to 840/1437, which means it was copied around four to five decades after Jahān-Malik's death. This manuscript contains approximately 5,000 *bayts*.

¹² See Browne 1932: 237-238 and *ibid.* 1951: 233.

¹³ Blochet 1928: 223 suggests that this abridged version of Jahān-Malik's *dīvān* may have been copied at Herat in the mid-15th century.

¹⁴ Although this similarity is not the focus of this paper, it is interesting to note that a noticeable degree of overlap in rhyme, metre and content does exist between the *ghazals* of Hāfiẓ and Jahān-Malik Khātūn. More research is needed, though, to ascertain who is drawing on whom. For preliminary views on the similarities between the *ghazals* of these contemporaries, see Dawlatābādī 1988, Nafisi 1968: 371-372 and Massé 1972: 6.

39), that she has been ruined (*kharāb*: 54, 56, 57), that she seeks no crown or throne (*nazar bā-jānib-i tāj u sarīr nīst*: 293), has given up her standing in society (*sar u sāmān u 'ird u nām u nang-am bi-dādām jumla az 'ishq-i tu bar bād*: 416), and has lost her riches and hereditary possessions (*khān u mān*: 1394).

The poetic voice in Jahān-Malik's *dīvān* is certainly more chaste than that of her male contemporaries, especially 'Ubayd-i Zākānī and Khājū-yi Kirmānī, and she makes fewer references to wine and the libertine life of the *kharabat* (wine taverns). This chaste modesty is in itself, perhaps, an indication that we are reading the poetry of a woman. The fact that we know Jahān-Malik is a woman makes it interesting to see how she employs the standard male, homoerotic imagery when describing the beauty of her male beloved, especially when describing his long, disheveled hair, silvery chest, or beard.¹⁵ However, the fact that – for the most part – we cannot detect a female voice in Jahān-Malik's poetry is a testament to her poetic skill.¹⁶

Jahān-Malik Khātūn prefaced her *dīvān* with a most revealing and eloquent introduction.¹⁷ In this introduction, Jahān-Malik explains why she decided to commit her poetry to writing. She says that she composed poems in her free time, and that, at first, she was reluctant to compile her poetry, thinking that it was not suitable for a woman of her standing to do so, but that when she learned that both Arab and Persian noblewomen of the past had composed poetry, she wrote down her verses. In this introduction, she laments that so few women of Iran have written poetry, although she does mention the Qutlugh-Khānid princess Pādishāh Khātūn (d. 1295), and a certain "Qutlugh Shāh Khātūn" (possibly Pādishāh Khātūn's mother, Qutlugh Turkān Khātūn (d. 681/1282)). Pādishāh Khātūn and her mother wielded considerable political power in the late 7th/13th century and both wrote poetry, a small amount of which has survived.¹⁸ In her preface, Jahān-Malik also quotes two *rubā'īs* by a woman poet called 'Ā'isha Muqrīya.¹⁹ She does not mention Mahsātī, perhaps deliberately because of the sexual overtones in her verses.²⁰ This introduction to the *dīvān* is significant in that it proves that Jahān-Malik was both familiar

¹⁵ I have not found any suggestion that Jahān-Malik is writing about a female beloved.

¹⁶ If Jahān-Malik had written poetry with a distinctly female voice, she would have been looked down upon by her male counterparts. Massé 1972: 6, surprisingly states that one *can* detect a distinctly female voice in Jahān-Malik's poetry, his evidence being that, he says, that her poetry describes human rather than divine love (although it remains unclear why, even if this is true, it indicates that the author is a woman).

¹⁷ See Jahān-Malik Khātūn 1995: 1-4.

¹⁸ Pādishāh Khātūn ruled Kirmān 690-694/1291-1295. Pādishāh Khātūn's mother, Qutlugh Turkān Khātūn, ruled Kirmān 655-681/1257-1282. See Gulshani 2000; Mernissi: 1993: 100-104; Munshī Kirmānī 1983: 70-79; Minorsky 1986; and Massé 1972: 5. It is also important to note that both these women were of Turkish descent and, therefore, may have been freer to compose poetry and to be politically active than their Persian counterparts.

¹⁹ Jahān-Malik Khātūn 1995: 3-4. See also Mushīr Salīmī 1956: 323-324.

²⁰ See Mihrābī 2003: *passim*.

with the poetry of other women, and that she was conscious that others might criticize her for recording her poetry in writing.²¹

The majlis as performance context:

The term *majlis* (pl. *majālis*), is derived from the Arabic verb *jalasa* (to sit), and in Persian denotes an assembly hosted by a prominent, wealthy individual (e.g., a king, vizier, judge) where scholarly questions of law, jurisprudence or doctrine were debated, or else where guests engaged in wine-drinking and feasting and enjoyed entertainment provided by poets, singers, musicians and other performers.²² These less formal gatherings (variously referred to in medieval Persian texts as *majlis-i sharāb*, *majlis-i uns*, *majlis-i bazm*, *majlis-i 'ishrat*, *nashāt-i sharāb*, *'aysh u nūsh*, *mahfil*, *mihmānī* and *anjuman*) served as the primary forum for the performance of poetry and music in the Iranian world throughout the medieval period.²³ This indulgent *majlis* setting had a direct impact on the style and content of the poetry performed.²⁴

Such gatherings formed a regular part of the routine (whether daily or weekly) of many rulers. Medieval Iranian kings and princes surrounded themselves with a small band of boon companions (sing. *nadīm*) with whom they would engage in these entertainment and wine-drinking sessions. These *nadīms*, who were hand-picked and who enjoyed a privileged status at court, often included the patron's favourite poets, musicians and singers. Participants' positions at the *majlis*, which would often be dictated by the patron-host, were generally allotted according to social rank. Some participants might be seated (e.g. dignitaries, military officers and musicians), while others (e.g. *ghulāms* and wine-servers) usually stood throughout.²⁵

Rulers offered rewards to their entertainers who praised them in song and verse, and the size of the reward (and the manner in which it was bestowed) constituted an important element of the *majlis*. Rewards were often given with much pomp and ceremony, as kings took the opportunity to make a public display of their generosity. Poets who failed to sufficiently flatter or entertain their patrons, though, risked for-

²¹ See also Massé 1972: 5.

²² For references to scholarly *majālis* in medieval Shīrāz and Yazd, see Ibn Zarkūb 1932: 111, 126 and 155; Yazdī 1947: 50 and 77; and, Kutubī 1956: 8 and 49.

²³ For preliminary studies on the convivial *majlis* in the Iranian world, see Clinton 1972; Lewis 1995: 69-92; and Brookshaw 2003.

²⁴ See De Bruijn 1983: 158: "There is no genre of Persian poetry which has been more impregnated by the atmosphere of these drinking-bouts than the poetry of love. All the elements which constitute the thematical complex of *taghazzul* are in one way or another related to this real background, whether they are meant in a profane or in a religious sense."

²⁵ For descriptions of wine and poetry parties in medieval Persian prose and poetry, see Bayhaqī 1971: 86, 152, 192, 310-312, 329, 460 and 570-571; Farrukhī Sīstānī 1999: 37-38 and 53-55; Manūchihrī Dāmghānī 1996: 101-105 and 179-181; Niẓāmī 'Arūdī 1920: 29-30, 35, 44 and 47; Kay-Kā'ūs 1951: 110, 118-119 and 135; Niẓām al-Mulk 1956: 95-97; and Niẓāmī Ganjavī 1954: 94, 194 and 356.

feiting their financial rewards and their position at court. For aspiring poets, admission to the privileged circle of the courtly *majlis* was essential, in that it provided the ideal forum within which they could demonstrate their skill and solicit patronage.

Majālis hosted by the royal court were either held in the audience halls of urban palaces, in garden kiosks constructed specifically for the staging of such gatherings, or else in extramural gardens. During the more temperate spring and autumn months, these parties were also often held in meadows, beside riverbanks, and in hunting lodges. It is this royal *majlis* setting that is reflected in the *ghazals* of Jahān-Malik Khātūn. The references found in medieval Persian *ghazal* poetry to the performance context are most likely not real descriptions of actual courtly *majālis*, but rather depictions of ideal (or idealized) gatherings, and, as such tell us much about the characteristics of the perfect *majlis*, as understood by the poet and her audience.

Local rulers usually maintained a number of extra-mural gardens or garden residences (sing. *bāgh*),²⁶ and, as I have argued elsewhere, the primary setting for courtly *majālis* in medieval Iran was the garden.²⁷ This garden setting for *majālis* is reflected throughout 14th century Persian *ghazal* poetry. It can be argued that the garden described in medieval Persian poetry, especially *ghazal* poetry, is intended to represent a microcosm of the world.²⁸ This could also be argued in the case of Jahān-Malik's poetry, although the skilful manner in which she uses her *takhalluṣ*, "Jahān" ("world"), allows the poet to refer to the "world garden", to her own, private garden, or, perhaps, a garden in Shīrāz or elsewhere named the Bāgh-i Jahān (or, indeed, all three simultaneously):²⁹

گر به باغ جهان دوش کردم و دیدم
که با وجود قدش سرو سر نمی افراحت

Yesterday I passed by the Bāgh-i Jahān and saw
That despite his stature, the cypress did not hold his head high
(71:7)

We know from Clavijo's contemporary account of early 15th century Samarqand, that Tīmūrid women owned private *bāghs* to which they invited guests and in which the hosted wine parties and other celebrations, both formal and informal.³⁰ Could the situation have been similar in Īnjūid and Muzaffarid Shīrāz? Although

²⁶ For descriptions of contemporary 14th century gardens, see Ibn Zarkūb 1932: 28, 72-73, 93 and 132; Yazdī 1947: 18 and 105-106; and, Hāfiẓ Abrū 1999: 255. For details of Büyid, Ghaznavid and Tīmūrid gardens, see Brookshaw 2003: 203-204.

²⁷ Brookshaw 2003: 202-203.

²⁸ See Meisami 1995: 257.

²⁹ It is interesting to note that in Jahān-Malik's poetry, she often refers to the garden using the word *sarābustān*, a word normally used to denote a small garden adjacent to a palace (*sarāb*; see *ghazals* 289 and 1192); the garden most likely to be used by the women of the royal harem.

³⁰ See Clavijo 1928: 242-245, 258, and 260-261. Marefat 1993: 29 shows that royal Tīmūrid women accrued wealth and property, commissioned the construction of buildings and gardens, patronized the arts, and asserted influence on the court.

they were not Turks, the Īnjūids and Mużaffarids were descended from families who had long been in the employ of the Īl-Khāns, and who had intermarried with local Turkic dynasties. It is therefore likely that they were influenced by Turco-Mongol attitudes regarding royal women, which are believed by some to have been relatively liberal.³¹

Descriptions of verdant gardens abound in medieval Persian poetry and, I would argue, reflect the fact that gardens and extra-mural parks were used frequently for poetry and wine parties, especially in the most temperate months of the year, and primarily in springtime. This use of gardens for *majālis* during the spring is reflected in the panegyric poems of the Ghaznavid period, many of which open with a lengthy and detailed description of the ruler's garden at the start of the Iranian year.³² Spring, and the New Year festival of Nawrūz, symbolize rebirth and renewal, and, in the poetry of Jahān-Malik Khātūn, also serve as metaphors for periods of political stability and peace. Spring on the Iranian plateau is a transitory, brief season, and references to the lush, vernal garden are sometimes employed to warn the audience of the fleeting nature of the good life and the harshness which, just as spring and summer are followed by autumn and winter, will inevitably follow. In this *ghazal*, Jahān-Malik paints a picture of the ideal venue for a Nawrūz *majlis*:

بے باغستان جان گلها به بارست	جهانی سر به سر چون نویهارت
همه صحرا ز گل نهش و نگارست	زمن همچون زمرد سبز گشته
هزاران بلبل اندر شاخصارست	همه بستان پر از گلها رنگین
درخت ارغوان بس پیشمارست	لب جو سر به سر خیری و سوسن
فغان بلبل و بانگ هزارست	رعشق گل میان بوستانها
چو میدانی که عالم در گذارست	بیا یک دم که با هم خوش برآیم
نصیب خاطر ما جله خارست	چرا از بوستان وصلت ای جان

The world, all around, is like the first days of spring
 In the garden of the soul, the roses are in bloom
 The ground has become green like emeralds
 Every plain is painted with flowers
 Every garden is filled with colorful roses
 Thousands of nightingales are perched on the branches
 Beside the stream, *khīrī* flowers and lilies are dotted around
 The *arghavān* trees are too numerous to count
 Out of love for the rose, the gardens are filled

³¹ For information on women in the Īnjūid period, see Limbert 2004: 30, 41, 59, 75-76 and 102. For women in the the Ghaznavid period, see Meisami 2003: 81-82. Meisami argues that Ghaznavid royal women, although housed in secluded, harem quarters, owned property and were politically active. For similar information on Seljuk women see Hillenbrand 2003, and on the importance of the public role played by Timūrid women in politics, see Manz 2003.

³² See Manūchihrī 1996: 1, 3, 17, 22, 29, 31 and 43; and Farrukhī 1999: 13, 53, 60 and 82.

With the cries of the *bulbuls* and nightingales
 Come for one moment so we can enjoy together
 For you know that the world is a transient place
 Why, o soul, from the garden of reunion
 Is our share no more than a thorn?
 (165: 1-7)

Spring is, therefore, synonymous with the “season of merriment” (*mawsim-i ‘aysh*); parties could be held within the confines of formal, private gardens, or outside the city and its environs in the countryside:

رسید بی بھار و دمید سبزه جوی
 بیا که موسم عیش و رواج گلزار است
 به عمر نیست بسی اعتماد تا دانی
 مباش غرہ بدان کم رزست و دینارت

The scent of spring has arrived and by the stream the grass has sprouted
 Come, for it is the season for merriment and the time for the rose-garden
 You know that one cannot rely too much on life
 Be not deceived by it; it's miserly
 (169:7-8)

Parties might be held on the plains before and/or after hunting outings to provide entertainment for the participants, or else, more specifically, to celebrate the blossoming of the desert in springtime. The Muṣallā meadow, located just outside Shīrāz, was, in Jahān-Malik’s time, popular with Shīrāzīs who sought to escape the city and its associated restrictions.³³ Private gardens or meadows outside of town provided a measure of seclusion for the performance of music and the drinking of wine, and would have been a less hazardous option than taverns within the city limits, which would have fallen foul of the inspector of public morality, the *muhtasib*:

بستان و ماهتاب و لب آب بس خوشت
 بر بانگ ببلان سحر خواب بس خوشت
 خون دم چو چشم دلارام پر ز جوش
 از لعل دوست شربت عناب بس خوشت

The garden, the moonlight and the riverbank are so sweet
 To sleep to the warbling of the nightingales at dawn, is so sweet
 The blood in my heart, like the eyes of my beloved, is boiling
 Jujube juice, drunk from the ruby lips of the friend, is so sweet
 (176:1-2)

In a similar vein, Jahān-Malik says:

نغمہ عود و لب رود و چمن وقت بھار
 پیش ما با رخ آن یار مدامست هنوز

The melody of the lute, the riverbank and the lawn at springtime
 Remains continually with us with this beloved’s face
 (794:9)

³³ For praise of the Muṣallā meadow and the Ruknābād canal, see Ibn Zarkūb 1932: 5-6, 20 and 22-24. Hāfiẓ was buried in the Muṣallā meadow.

Whether it be in the garden or in the open countryside, it seems the spot chosen for a *majlis* would often be beside a stream or river, most likely for the cooling and soothing properties of the water and, more practically, for the provision of fresh water. Having spent the night in a garden or meadow, beside a river or stream, the revelers might start their day with a morning draught (*sabūh*). This is echoed in the opening lines of *ghazal* 750:

ساقیا برخیز و زود آن باده گلگون بیار
شکم در انتظار آن نگار غمکسار

خوش نسیمی می وزد در صبح از بیوی بهار
تا خمار روز هجرانزا به آب سرخ می

At dawn a sweet breeze blows with the scent of spring
O saqi! Arise and swiftly bring that rose-coloured wine
So that, with crimson wine, I might break the hangover of the separation day
In anticipation of that grief-repelling beauty
(750; 1-2)

Jahān implores her audience to seize the day and make merry before the physical (or, indeed, political) climate changes. This *carpe diem* attitude resonates through much of her poetry and reflects the political upheavals she witnessed during her lifetime. In the 14th century, a series of competing local dynasties (the Īnjūids, Muzaffarids, and Jalāyirids), linked by marriage and divided by blood feuds, vied for control of Shīrāz. These military conflicts caused considerable upheaval in the everyday life of people living in the city. Too much depended on the whim of the ruler, and often radical changes came into effect when the rule passed from father to son (as in the case of the accession of the more liberal Shāh Shujā‘, following the deposition of his reputedly much more conservative father, Mubāriz al-Dīn). In Jahān-Malik’s city the future was uncertain, and many of her poems reflect the pessimistic and troubled mood of the age in which she lived:

شادمان انکس که اورا در جهان
پنهان ماند جان انکس کاو مدام
گوشه باغ و لب جامیش هست
در میان محلس ار خامیش هست

Happy is he who, in this world
Has the corner of a garden, and the lip of a cup
Sound is the soul of he who continually,
In the *majlis* has a glass of wine
(236:6-8)

And·

سایها و غنیمت شم بکه، امروز که را امید بقا ای عزیز به فرداست

Come, come! Treasure this one day
Who, o beloved, has hope of existence tomorrow?
(85:6)

Gardens in medieval Iran served as forums for the pursuit of worldly pleasures (drinking, feasting, singing, etc.) and, as such, were considered dens of iniquity by more pious members of society. Jahān-Malik Khātūn, by describing the garden in very similar terms to those used in the Qur’ān to describe Paradise – where inmates consume wine served to them by beautiful young women and men – manages to distance herself from activities which were not strictly considered lawful in this earthly life, especially for women:³⁴

مثُلْ تُوَّاِيْ نُورْ چَشْمِ يَكْ حُورْ نِيَسْتْ در سرابستان جنت بلکه در فردوس نیز

In the garden of heaven, nay in Paradise too
Like you, o light of my eyes, there is not one *hūrī*
(289:4)

وَانْدَرْ كَهَارْ حُورْ پَرِيزَادْ بَسْ خَوْشَسْتْ وَهُوَ چَهْ خَوْشْ بُودْ بَهْ صَبُوحِيْ مِيَانْ بَاغْ

Oh, how pleasing it was to take a morning draught in the garden
And seated beside an angel-born *hūrī*, it is so fine
(177:6)

بَهْشَتْسَتْ آَنْ وَ طَوْبِيْ بَرْ لَبْ جَوْسْتْ نَهْ سَرْوَسْتْ وَ نَهْ بَالَا وَ نَهْ بَسْتَانْ

That's not a cypress, nor stature, nor a garden
It's Paradise and that's the Tuba tree beside the stream
(227: 2)

As has been said, Jahān-Malik’s poetry is, on the whole, more chaste and restrained than that of her male contemporaries. There are, however, in her poetry occasional bursts of more sensuous verse where she alludes to more earthly, physical pleasures. In the opening lines to *ghazal* 902, Jahān-Malik skillfully puns on the word *kām*, which can convey at least three distinct meanings: “desire”, “satisfaction”, and “palate”:

بَهْ كَامْ دَلْ نَشَستْ بَا دَلْ آَرَامْ چَهْ خَوْشْ باشْدْ شَرَابْ وَصَلْ دَرْ جَامْ
بَدَهْ كَامْ كَهْ شَيْرِينْ گَرَدَدْ كَامْ مَرَا كَامْ دَلْ ازْ هَجَرْ تَوْ تَلَخَسْتْ

How sweet it is, with the wine of reunion in the cup
To sit with your heart’s satisfaction with the beloved
The palate of my heart is bitter from your separation
Give me my desire, so that my palate may be sweetened
(902: 1-2)

³⁴ In 14th century poetry and prose, the Ruknābād stream is often likened to rivers in Heaven and Muṣallā is equated with the Garden of Paradise, see Ibn Zarkūb 1932: 5-6 and 22.

In another *ghazal*, Jahān-Malik describes a night *majlis* (the nocturnal setting is emphasized by the *radīf*, “*imshab*”, “tonight”). In this heady atmosphere of wine-drinking and flirtation, Jahān-Malik addresses the drunken slave-*sāqī* and entreats him to provide her with the (possibly sexual) gratification she seeks. The *majlis* setting is further emphasized through the mention of the minstrel (*muṭrib*), wine-server (*sāqī*) and boon companion (*nadīm*). It should be remembered that Jahān-Malik’s husband was the chief *nadīm* of her uncle, the Īnjūid ruler Shaykh Abū Ishāq:

هر قدر لطف که فرمود تماست امشب	کرچه آن ماه تمام ز لبس کام نداد
که مرا با رخ تو خواب حرامست امشب	خواب در دیده ما نیست نگارا شب وصل
چون تو سرمستی و انعام تو عامت امشب	به یکی بوسه دل خسته ما را بنواز
لب جوی و رخ دلدار مدامست امشب	دارم از دولت تو مطرب و ساقی و ندیم
...	
کام دل ده که مرا نوبت کامست امشب	
کتمش تا به کی این صبر که تلخم شد کام	

Even though that full moon of mine did not give satisfaction from his lips
 However much kindness he gives is perfect, tonight
 On this night of reunion, O beauty! There is no sleep in my eyes
 For to sleep whilst gazing on your face is forbidden to me, tonight
 With just one kiss soothe our weary heart
 For you are drunk and your favours are free for all, tonight
 From your good fortune, I have a minstrel, a wine-server and a companion
 Beside the stream, and the face of the beloved is constantly with me, tonight
 ...
 I said to him, “How long must I wait, for my palate has turned bitter?”
 Give me my heart’s desire. It’s my turn to be satisfied, tonight
 (67:3-6 and 9)³⁵

The expression of sexual desire for the beloved is a common theme of Persian *ghazal* poetry, and the advances of the frustrated lover and the rejection on the part of the beloved are often characterized by harshness, and even violence. In the opening lines of the following poem, Jahān-Malik desires to take hold of the boy by his hair and force him to kiss her, although she is aware of his deadly gaze:

ویا ز زلف تو تاری گرم به شست آید	مرا چو دامن وصلت شی به دست آید
اگرچه غمزه خونیز یار مست آید	ز لعل تو بربایم به حیله بوسی چند
یقین شدم که از آن باده می پرست آید	هرانکه چشم تورا دید و آن لب میگون

If one night I grasp the hem of reunion with you
 Or as I grab hold of one strand of your locks

³⁵ There are two further *ghazals* in the *dīvān* with the same *radīf*. Both poems describe a similar nocturnal setting, where the poet-lover entreats her beloved to stay with her for the night.

I will steal from your ruby lips, by some ruse, a few kisses
 Even though the blood-thirsty glance of my beloved seems drunk
 Anyone who has seen your eyes and those wine-coloured lips
 I am certain, will turn into a worshipper of wine through that wine
 (688:1-3)

The garden setting of the *majlis* also permeates the language with which Jahān-Malik chooses to portray sexuality and the manner in which she describes the beauty of her beloved.³⁶ Just as the beloved is described as a newly opened rose, Jahān-Malik depicts herself as a swelling bud, eager to bloom:

بی باد هوای تو شکفتن تو نام من غنچه شوقم به تن باغ ارادت

I am a bud of ecstasy in the body of the garden of desire
 Without the breeze of your love, I cannot bloom
 (1034:3)

In another poem, Jahān-Malik uses gardening metaphors to describe the brutality with which the beloved has rejected her:

ز جانت بنده گشته شاوم شاد	به بستان جهان ای سرو آزاد
ز چشم افتاد ما را سرو و شمشاد	از آن تا قد رعنای تو دیدم
درخت مهریانی را ز بیناد	چرا کردی ز بستان امیدم

In the garden of the world, o noble cypress,
 I have devoted myself to you, in order to be happy
 When I saw your entrancing stature
 I no longer looked at the cypress and the box tree
 Why have you torn, from the garden of my hope,
 The tree of love by its root?
 (416: 1-3)

It would be a mistake, though, as with most medieval Persian court poetry, to read these as confessional, autobiographical statements on the part of the poet. In medieval Persian *ghazals*, poets hide behind their first person poetic *persona* when describing more bacchic and erotic imagery. If we accept that Jahān-Malik is speaking through her poetic persona, then it is not surprising that there is little (if any) clear indication in her poetry to the fact that she is a woman. 14th Persian *ghazals* were generally written by male poets in praise of male beloveds, so we can assume that her poetic persona is intended to be read as male. This does not detract from the fact that those listening to or reading Jahān-Malik's poetry most probably knew

³⁶ Similar garden-related language was also used by historians to describe the beauty of the ruler-patron, see Yazdī 1947: 11 and Kutubī 1956: 61-62 on the beauty of Shāh Shujā'. On the interplay of nature imagery and sexuality in medieval Persian poetry, see Meisami 1995.

the poet was a woman, and, consequently, may have interpreted her poems in a different light due to her gender.

The use of nature imagery to describe the beauty of the beloved is by no means unique to Jahān-Malik, but its all-pervasiveness makes it worthy of mention. The beloved's stature is commonly likened to that of the cypress or box tree, his cheeks to the tulip or rose, his eyes to narcissi and his perfumed, jet locks to the hyacinth. The beloved rivals (nay, shames) the garden with his perfect beauty; the flowers and trees prostrate themselves in awe:

ای به قد چون سرونازی صد هزاران آفرین
در سرائبستان جان سروی نزوید این چنین

ای به قد چون سرونازی صد هزاران آفرین

...

دل رودن نیک می دانی هزاران آفرین
دل رودن نیک می دانی هزاران آفرین

ای سهی سرو گل اندامم به نام ایزد ز ما

...

خاک پایت را بساید ارغوان و یاسین
گر چو طوبی بگذری در باغ جان ما روان

خاک پایت را بساید ارغوان و یاسین

...

بر من مسکین چرا یاری دگر کردی گرین
من تو را بگزینده ام از جمله خوبان جهان

بر من مسکین چرا یاری دگر کردی گرین

...

A thousand blessings upon you, o cypress-statured one
In the garden of the soul, no cypress has ever grown thus

...

O my erect, rose-limbed cypress! By the name of God
You think it fit to steal our heart, a thousand blessings upon you!

...

If you glide through the garden of our heart like the Tūbā tree
The *arghavān* and the jasmine will smooth the dust beneath your feet

...

I have chosen you from all the beauties of the world
Why have you chosen another beloved over wretched me?
(1192: 1, 4, 8 and 11)

Also, in the closing lines of the following *ghazal*:

حمل بر آب کد تشنہ بیچاره سراب	گل نو دیدم و گتم که مگر عارض نست
از حیا آب شود پیش لب لعل مذاب	دلبرا گل لب لعلت به لب جام نهی
راست مانده کان ز فروغ مهتاب	گل رخ خوب تو را دید و فرو ریخت ز شرم
آه آن نرگس مستت که جهان کرد خراب	چشم جادوی تو دیدم دم از دست برفت

I saw a new rose and wondered if it was your cheek
It is the thought of water that causes the thirsty man to see a mirage
O beloved! If you place your ruby lips on the lip of the cup
Out of embarrassment the water will, before your lips, turn to liquid ruby
The rose saw your fair face and wilted out of shame
Just like thread of linen in the light of the moon

I saw your magical eyes and I lost my heart
 Alas! Your drunken narcissus eyes have destroyed Jahān.
 (63: 6-9)

Again:

رویست یا رب یا سمن بویست یا خود یاسمن
 ای خوشتراز سرو چمن بالای بغدادی پسر

Is it a face, O Lord, or a jasmine flower? A scent or jasmine itself?
 Oh how much sweeter than the garden's cypress is the stature of the Baghdādī boy!
 (762:3)

And, also:

بستان و گلستان و گل اندر جهان بسیست
 بر روی چون گل تو چو من عندلیب نیست
 لیکن ز گلستان گل وصلت ای صنم
 جز خار روز هجر تو ما را نصیب نیست

There are many orchards and rose-gardens and roses in the world
 But for your rose-like face there is no nightingale quite like me
 But, from the garden and rose of reunion with you, o idol,
 We have no share save the thorn of your separation day
 (272:2-3)

But, however perfect the spring garden is as a setting for merry-making, without the beloved, there is no possibility of enjoyment:

اگرچه باغ و بهارست و سبزه خرم
 به جان دوست که این جمله بی شما خوش نیست
 ز دیده گچه شدی دور در دو دیده من
 به غیر خاک که پات توینا خوش نیست
 مگر که نیست خوشی در بهار و طرف چمن
 اگر خوش است خدارا مرا چرا خوش نیست
 پیا که بی تو جهان ناخوش است بر دل من

Even though it is the garden and spring and the grass is verdant
 By the life of the beloved, all of this, without you, is not pleasing
 Even though you are far from sight, for my eyes
 No collyrium save the dust beneath your feet will do
 Is there no joy at springtime and around the lawn?
 If there is joy, o God, why am I not happy?
 Come, for without you, the world lies sad on my heart
 Even if you are happy without Jahān, I am not happy
 (299: 6-9)

In addition to descriptions of the garden – the primary setting for the courtly *majlis* – in her poems, Jahān-Malik also alludes to a wide range of activities - wine drinking, feasting, playing board games, listening to music and poetry, and flirting with the *sāqīs* - that may have formed part of any given *majlis*. Many critics favour a mystical interpretation of references in *ghazal* poetry to wine, although frequently in her poems (as in the poetry of her contemporaries such as Hāfiẓ), Jahān-Malik

appears to be referring to real, intoxicating wine, rather than employing wine as a metaphor for the love of God:

من خورم خون و دیگران می ناب	شرط نبود که در مسلمانی
دلب بی وفا و ما به سراب	در سر آب خوش نشسته به عیش

It was not stipulated in Islam that
I should drink blood while others drink pure wine
By the banks of a river, in gay merriment,
My unfaithful beloved sits, and I in a mirage
(64:4-5)

Although here Jahān-Malik does seem to refer to real wine, she skillfully distances herself from the drinking of it by saying she is “drinking blood” (suffering heart-break), while others are drinking wine.

Given the performance context of Persian *ghazal* poetry, it is not surprising that puns on terms connected to wine drinking and associated paraphernalia are a common feature of this genre. In the following verse, for example, Jahān-Malik puns delicately on the words “*paymān*” (“covenant”) and “*paymāna*” (“wine cup”):

باده شوق تؤام در دل جامست هنوز	گر چو پیمانه شکستی همه پیمان مرا
--------------------------------	----------------------------------

Even though you have broken all your promises to me, like a cup
My heart remains a goblet for the wine of your desire
(794:7)

With drinking, comes feasting. Frequently in Jahān-Malik’s poems, we find references to wine (*sharāb*) and roasted meat (*kabāb*). Although the primary function of such references may be metaphorical, they also reflect the reality of a *majlis* feast:

هر دم از دیده شراب آرم و از سینه کباب	گر شبی خیل خیال تو بود مهمانم
---------------------------------------	-------------------------------

If one night, the cavalry of your apparition were my guest
At every moment I would provide wine from my eyes and *kabāb* from my chest
(63:4)

And, similarly:

آرم برای بزم خیالت شرابها	مهمان دیده است همه شب خیال تو
اندر پیاله وز جگر خود کبابها	خون دل از دو دیده مهجر میکنم

Your apparition, every night, is my eye’s guest
And for your vision’s banquet I provide much wine
The blood of my heart, from my two forsaken eyes, I pour
Into the cup, and from my own liver I make *kabābs*
(47:2-3)

And:

ای دیده گشته در غم هجر تو چون شراب
و ای دل بر آتش غم عشقست شده کباب

...

بر آتش رخت جگر ما کباب شد
وز خون دیده رفت به جام دم شراب

O you who has turned my eyes to wine through the woe of separation from you
And, O heart! Kabābed on the fire of the pain of your love

...

One the fire of your cheeks, our liver has been kabābed
And from the blood of our eyes, wine has poured into the cup of my heart
(55: 1and 3)

Board games such as chess (*shatranj*) and, in particular, backgammon (*nard*), were played by guests at *majālis*. Again, the verses that contain images related to board games are, on the whole, intended to be understood metaphorically, but, on a secondary level, they tell us something about the popularity of these games at the time Jahān-Malik was writing. In this verse, Jahān-Malik describes the lover as one who has lost her heart in the game of joy (*nard-i tarab*):

جان ما در ششدر عشقست باند
با تو نا نزد طرب را باخمه

Our soul remained on the square of your love
Until it lost the game of joy
(1225:8)

References (again, primarily metaphorical) to the two great royal sports of hunting (*shikar*) and polo (*chawgān*) abound in *ghazal* poetry of this period, and Jahān-Malik's poetry is no exception. We know from prose sources that a wine party might either precede or follow a polo match or a hunting expedition. A standard image employed is the lover (or the lover's heart) as a polo ball (*gūy*), struck by the beloved's polo stick (variously, his arched eyebrow or curved forelock).³⁷

Alongside eating, drinking, board games and sports, music performance (normally as an accompaniment to singing or the recitation of poetry) was an important component of entertainment at a *majlis*. Jahān-Malik frequently makes mention of musical instruments, thereby giving us an idea of what constituted a standard contemporary *majlis* ensemble:

بوستان پر غلغل چنگکست و عود و نای و رود
موسم کل در سرایستان یکی مسیور نیست

The garden is filled with the melodies of the harp, lute, flute and rebeck
During the season of the rose in the garden, no one is chaste
(289: 9)

³⁷ See for example 344, 575 and 724.

In the opening lines of the following poem, Jahān-Malik presents herself as a musical instrument in the hands of a harsh beloved, the strings of which are struck mercilessly, causing her to cry out in pain. This image of the musician striking the harp's strings, although used to represent the poet-lover suffering at the hands of the beloved, also serves to mirror the performance of the minstrel (*mutrib*) at the *majlis*:

در فراق خود مرا بنشاند بر آتش چو عود	دل بر از شوخي و عيارى دل از دستم ربود
میدهد هر دم به هجران کوشالم همچو عود	همچو چنگم میزند لیکن نوازش کمترست
چون رسیدم جان به لب زین ناله زار چه سود	نی صفت مینام از دست جفای هر خسی

The beloved, through playfulness and villainy, has stolen from me my heart
 In his absence, he placed me on the fire, like aloes
 He strikes me like a harp, although his strokes are less
 He pounds me at every moment with separation, like a lute
 I cry out like a reed flute from the harsh hand of every mean man
 Since I am now near to death, what use is there in this wretched wailing?
 (683:1-3)

And similarly:

چون چنگ در خروشم و چون نی زناله زار
 در راه عشق تو اسرارها زدیم

I am warbling like a harp, and like a flute, I am hoarse from crying out
 In the path of your love we have experienced many mysteries
 (1084:6)

Instrumental music was also employed in a *majlis* to accompany performances by dancing boys or girls. In the following verse, Jahān-Malik seems to allude to a dancing boy. Her use of the term *samā'* may (although not necessarily) indicate that she is referring to a *Šūfi majlis*:

گر در سمع آید قدش جان را بر اشتمام براو
 چون بشنود گوش دم هبهاي بغدادي پسر

If his slender form begins to sway with the music, I will offer up my life to him
 When the ear of my heart hears the cries of the Baghdad boy
 (762:8)

As mentioned above, music was also played as an accompaniment to poetry, especially when performed as songs by minstrels. It is not clear in what context Jahān-Malik's *ghazals* would have been performed, but from the following lines, it seems that she also intended her poetry to be sung by professional *mutribs* at wine parties, and not just to be performed within the confines of the royal harem, whether by her or a by a female musician. She instructs the minstrel how best to perform her verses:

مطربا در ساز کن عود و نی و چنگ و رباب
و آنچه میگوئی به نزد عاشقان با ساز کوی
که بخوانی یک دو بیتی دلپذیر از شعر من
در سرایستان تو با دستان خوش آواز کوی

O minstrel! Play the lute, the flute, the harp and the rebeck
And whatever you say to the lovers, accompany it with music
If you sing a pleasing verse or two from my poems in the garden,
Sing them with pleasing melodies
(1383:8-9)

As discussed above, there are clues as to the composition of Jahān-Malik's poetry in the introduction she penned to her *dīvān*, and, occasionally, in her *ghazals*, there are passing references to the composition of her poetry. Taken on a literal level, the opening lines of the following poem suggest that Jahān-Malik composed some of her poetry in its most likely performance setting: the garden:

مرا به صبحدمی در چمن گذار افتاد
ز بوی گل به مشام خیال یار افتاد
کدشت یک دو سه بیتی به خاطرم به هوس
چواز هوا نظرم سوی آن نگار افتاد

I passed through the garden one dawn
The scent of the rose in my nostrils set me contemplating the beloved
Two to three verses passed through my mind on love
When out of desire my eye fell on that beauty
(410:1-2)

Conclusion

This is not an exhaustive study of references to the performance context in the *ghazals* of Jahān-Malik Khātūn, nor is it an exhaustive study of such references in Persian *ghazal* poetry on the whole, which are relatively commonplace. What this brief study does show is that there are sufficient clues contained within such references which can help the modern-day reader to construct an image of the contemporary performance context. Given the abstract nature of the genre, it is difficult to argue that these references describe actual, one-time, historical *majālis*. What they do convey to us, however, is the contemporary perception of what made a good *majlis*, or put quite simply: what the most favored settings and contexts for the performance of *ghazals* in the 14th century were.

It is clear that more work needs to be done to examine the function of these references in Persian *ghazal* poetry. One preliminary hypothesis is that such references work as aide memoirs, reminding the audience of either the joys of spring (if the poem was originally composed for performance in the autumn or winter, for example) or else helping the listeners to recall better times; times of stability and ease, thereby raising their morale. Some of the examples cited above could also be seen as asides or instructions to the various participants at the *majlis* (especially the

minstrels and the *sāqīs*), telling them how to sing the poet's verses, or when to serve the wine.

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