Inquiries into Proto-World Literatures: The Challenging "Literary Fate" of the Quatrain across the Persian and Arabic Literary Tradition

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Western studies on Persian metrical system debate the linguistic origins of quatrains, (Per. *robāʿiyyāt* - Ar. *rubāʿiyyāt*) in Arabic, and regard prosodic Persian schemes independently of Arabic counterparts, despite reciprocally influenced metrical patterns. Attempts to dismantle Arabo-centric critical inferences about Persian metres are largely prosodic observations of the robāʿi/rubāʿī, thus neglecting their ontological evolution from a metrical scheme into an aesthetically experimental frame in Persian and Arabic poetry. This study closely investigates the spread of robāʿī/rubāʿī from Persian to Arabic literature employing a holistic culturally embedded methodology to re-read their linkages in global terms, as an example of an inherited "Proto-World Literature".

Keywords: Persian and Arabic Literatures, Rhetorical and Metrical Studies, Comparative Philology, Quatrains, Rubāʿiyyāt, World literature.

Modern studies in Persian prosody frequently debate the origin of the quatrain (Per. *robāʿī* - Ar. *rubāʿī*)[1] as a metrical form which clearly arose in an indigenous lyrical tradition. This identifies quatrains as the entry point to claim Persian prosodic patterns as having an independent origin from the Arabic ones. However, late 20th century scholarship relies on a response-approach to the matter, and is essentially grounded in dismantling Arabo-centric prosodic categorization - i.e. founded on the Khalīlian prosodic model[2] - which gathers both traditions since the 9th century, rather than on overcoming the Khalīlian framework as a self-evident late feature within the earlier Persian lyrical tradition.

Recent studies of comparative prosody among Arabic-Persian-Urdu and Turkish works (e.g. Ashwini and Kiparsky 147-173) broaden Prince and Paoli's approach to generative prosody across Middle Eastern languages, yet the analysis of the quatrain is still essentially founded on metrical observations. This partial perspective may be insufficient to describe a stratified literary phenomenon whose in-depth exploration - especially if in a comparative cross-temporal perspective – is instead concerned with a broader grasp of methodological literary tools, such as those of poetics, rhetoric, formal and thematic con-

ceptualization, and etymological and philological inquiries.

Moreover, as claimed by Ďurišin the modern notion of "World Literature" is often – erroneously - conceived inseparably from comparative literatures (20-22; Tötösy de Zepetnek and Mukherjee 12). However, more important in his vision is that comparative literatures and world literature sometimes show an inherent axiomatic perception of cultural boundaries, often understood as tied to modern national distinctions or influenced by Eurocentric perspectives. According to Franco Moretti's implementations to Ďurišin's intellectual agenda, this is a paradoxical approach, considering that world literature actually aimed to overstep these as limitations (54). The evaluation of interliterary processes rather than mere differences/similarities becomes more compelling in the case of cross temporal inquiry on Persian and Arabic quatrains. Their literary fate cut across a historical and cultural context where clear boundaries have not already been traced, e.g. the Islamic culture between the 9th and 14th centuries (Utas, "The Literary Expression"), and proceeds, even according to significant transformations, across the new national contexts of 19th and 20th centuries.

This inquiry assumes these considerations as a methodological premise, and draws upon numerous scholarly approaches besides the metrical one (e.g. etymological, philological, formal, thematic, socioliterary), to focus on three critical unexplored areas within the copious literature on the Persian or Arabic quatrain:

a) the terminological and semantic obscurity of the terms rubāʿi and *dūbayt* within Arabic literary corpora; b) the ontological shift that led to a different literary conceptualization of robāʿī/rubāʿī' within Persian and Arabic literary traditions; c) the complex modern conceptualization of the Persian and Arabic rubāʿiyyāt as a literary trend or a non-technical genre.

Overcoming the impasse of an alleged integral systemic approach to world literature which, nonetheless, sometimes appears woven into a modern discourse on modernity and unidirectional hegemonic influences (Moretti 56), this critical analysis instead aims to uncover the specific ontologies to which the quatrain alternatively refers within the "grey-zone" of a pre-modern translocal literary continuum. All this, highlighting how the more indepth exploration of Persian and Arabic studies in this case, might help shed light on the "constellation of poetries and poetics and a consortium of ideas" (al-Musawi 36) which grew up within a secular hybrid space of linguistic and cultural encountering - hence a "Proto-World-Literature" - independently from sectarian Persian or Arabic inquiries.

Rubāʿi and Dūbayt within Arabic Literary Corpora: a Terminological and Semantic Obscurity

The quatrain is a well-defined lyrical model of Persian origin, which was originally accompanied by music and tied to a specific group of lyrical compositions structured in four lines, hence similar but different from the dūbaytī lyrical form (Persian compound noun: *dū* 'two'; *bayt* 'verse'). As well recalled by Elwell-Sutton ("The Rūbāʿī in Early Persian Literature" 634-635), since Khalīlian prosodic analysis is concerned with the hemistich (Per. *meṣrāʿ* - Ar. *shaṭr*) as a unit and not the verse, the respective Persian and Arabic terms robāʿī/rubāʿī - which mean "composed by four elements" - stress attention on the specific rhyming and prosodic rules related to the four hemistiches within the couple of verses.

To begin with, it is worth noting the deceptive homonymy between dūbayt and rubāʿī within the Arabic literary tradition once these forms were introduced from Persian models, between approximately 9th and 10th centuries. In fact, according to Persianists such as Thiesen, the dūbaytī[3] generically indicates a "two-couplet

poem" composed in different meters, which "can be considered as the two initial lines of any lyric composition (*ghazal* or *qaṣīda*)"[4] and follows a number of rhyming patterns (172).[5] Hence within Persian tradition, the term *dūbaytī* refers to the specific lyrical composition that is clearly independent from the robāʿī verse.

In comparison, early references to the introduction of Persian *dūbaytī* in written form within Arabic literary tradition conventionally date back to al-Bākharzī (d. 1075 – Talib, "Dūbayt in Arabic", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* online), whilst also previous references are quoted by al-Anbārī, al Iṣfahānī and at-Tanūkhī (fl. 9th-10th century) as recalled in al-Jawharī (d. 1003). It was al-Jawharī, in fact, who noted "the dūbayt also called rubāʿī" was introduced into the Arabic literary tradition during this time period (422). Other early reference includes an acknowledgement in an anecdote of at-Tanūkhī who refers that Abū Aḥmad ʿAbd Allah Ibn ʿUmar al-Ḥārithū encountered an anonymous Persian mystic who "started to sing something similar to rubāʿiyyāt not finding, however, a great interest in his listener" (qtd. in al-Ibshihī, 199-200).

Moreover, in the already quoted passage, al-Jawharī states that ad-dūbayt/rubāʿī is a typology of "poetry accompanied by music" (*shiʿr ghināʾī*) in couplets which, he

states, was already known among Arabs tribes under the name *muthannāt* (allographic of *muthannā*, ʿdoubled'), a typology of composition considered to be a form of popular – and hence oral – poetry. Drawing upon the modern work of Shawqī Ḍayf, it is actually possible to propose a more plausible reconstruction of relations between *dūbaytī* and *muthannāt* than that provided by al-Jawharī. The muthannāt is quoted as a composition related to the pre-Islamic Arabic genre of *hazaj* (192), which is also a prosodic metre in both Persian and Arabic classic traditions, and - with specific variations - also the typical metre of the quatrain. In the same passage, quoting the ancient poet al-Mufaḍḍal aḍ-Ḍabbī (d. 780), Ḍayf reports that the pre-Islamic Arabic genre of hazaj was among the three categories of lyrics most employed in amusement poetry and also the one more suitable to the adaptation of lyrical forms borrowed from Persian tradition. The other two are called *an-naṣb* and *as-sinād*. While the first typology concerned religious and elegiac forms of mourning poetry, the second typology, adds Ḍayf, was maybe a typology of panegyric poetry concerned with serious content (193).[6] Thus, Ḍayf, also referencing the great musician al-Mawṣilī (d. 850), noted that contact between Persians and the Arab tribes who had already settled in the

Ḥijāz peninsula had been conceivably established already during the pre-Islamic period, as attested by the introduction of Persian musical instruments and forms of chanted poetry thanks to the sought-after Persian and Byzantine brides brought from Lakhmid and Ghassanid kingdoms (194-196). For his part, the Persianist Elwell-Sutton, observed that the Persian *dūbaytī* prior to the 9th-10th centuries "has arguably been employed mostly as a form of oral folk-poetry" ("The Rūbāʿī in Early Persian Literature" 635). Given this, the lack of direct sources about the pre-Islamic Persian *dūbaytī* and Arabic muthannāt leads only to the supposition of a nexus of multiple connections between these folk poetry forms.

Within the link traced by ancient Arab scholars between the hazaj and folk poetry accompanied by music, the term *dūbayt* seems to emerge more consistently with respect to early sources, during the 14th and 15th century and within the works of al-Ḥillī (d. 1339), Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406) and al-Ibshīhī (d. 1448). According to Hoenerbach (7-24), al-Ḥillī, in his work *Kitāb al-ʿĀṭil* included the dūbayt among the seven poetic folk arts, in particular the three "Arabized ones" (*al-muʿarraba*): dūbayt; *qarīḍ*; *muwashshaḥ*.[7] Furthermore, al-Ibshīhī adds that the term dūbayt was more often substituted by "its synonym

rubāʿī" during the late Abbasid period (199-200). In contrast, Ibn Khaldūn agrees that dūbayt is a Persian compound name synonym of rubāʿī introduced in the 10th century but specifies that this last type of composition is marked by specific rules which tie its four hemistiches (*aghṣān*).[8] Moreover, he states that it was extremely popular amongst folk poetry patterns in Baghdad and especially in Kaẓimiyya and from there later became wide-spread in Cairo, where poets were experimenting with the introduction of rhetorical devices and different styles (349) as also recently confirmed by al-Musawi's extensive reconstruction of 14th-15th centuries Cairene street poetry (262-264).

If apart from Ibn Khaldūn's statement about the diffusion of rubāʿī in Egypt, which may be understood as a reference to the mystic rubāʿiyyāt composed by Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 1234) and al-Bahāʾ az-Zuhayr (d. 1258) during the Ayyubid regency (fl. 12th-14th century), then Ibn Khaldūn's references to folk poetry that were very popular in Baghdad's Kaẓimiyya referred not to the dūbayt, but arguably to *al-murabbaʿ al-Baghdādī*, a folk poetical composition in couplets, also just as popular in Abbasid Baghdad, which has been already investigated by Thāmir ʿAbd al-Ḥasan al-ʿĀmirī's modern study (52-54).

This latter case, as well as quoted linkages between Persian dūbaytī and pre-Islamic Arabic muthannāt betray a sort of Arab scholars' misleading extension of the term dūbayt - and arbitrarily also rubāʿī - to a contemporary Arabic lyrical folk-tradition which had scarcely been considered before and was only later more closely evaluated by Arabic scholars of the 14th and 15th centuries. Thus, whilst classical Arab scholarship acknowledged the Persian contribution to the realization of original Arabic literary corpora between the 10th and the 15th century, Arabic scholars may have also tried to evaluate a later attested Arabic folk-tradition by consciously employing exotic, rather unclear definitions, and at the same time - not recognizing in clear terms the Persian contribution.

Nonetheless, putting aside the more clumsy ideologically-oriented etymological reconstructions of al-Ḥillī about *mawālīya* (specific form of sung poetry) and dūbayt, according to which the first term derives from the Arabic *mawālī-nā* (our masters) and the second from *ʿubūdiyya* (slavery), from the first non-Arab performers of these lyrical forms (Jawwād 367),[9] it is more surprising to find historically more imaginative readings about the introduction of dūbayt within Arabic tradi-

tion in some 20th century-works of literary criticism, such as with ar-Rāfiʿ (172).[10] Moreover, modern Western scholarship's inquiries still provide evidence of the die-hard legacy of an Arabized reading of the dūbayt's introduction within Arabic corpora, notably, reporting the alleged prosodic patterns customarily referred to in the Arabic dūbayt. For instance, and building on classic sources, Adam Talib states that "the metre of the Arabic dūbayt (*faʿlun, mutafāʿilun, faʿūlun, faʿilun*) takes three forms" ("Dūbayt in Arabic", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* online), whilst Stoetzer explains that the same pattern "is more often used for a quatrain of a particular metre" ("Rubāʿī", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* online). Yet, drawing upon the interesting work of Nājī (161-165), Arabic prosodists debated at length on the metre of the dūbayt, acknowledging its non-Arab origin, hence defining it as arguably built as an irregular "unique" metre (*farīd*) but never reaching an agreement about its fixed prosodic pattern(s). Three versions were therefore suggested respectively by al-Qarṭājannī (d. 1284) (*mustafʿilatun, mustafʿilun, mustafʿilun*),[11] AbūʿAbd Allāh ad-Darrāj (d. 1294) (*faʿlun, faʿlun mustafʿilun, mustafʿilun*), and al-Qalalawsī (fl. 12th – 13th century)[12] (*faʿlun, mutafāʿilun, faʿūlun, faʿilun*). Thus, this third became the most accredited one, probably since it is

the closest to the four-footed Persian metres al-hazaj and ar-robāʿī as well as the most frequently found in poetry. However, two considerations are due: first, the three patterns indicated by the quoted scholars are not conceived as three varieties, but rather as the three different possible correct versions of the pattern, and each one of them questions the other two.[13] Second, according to Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 1200), despite the fact that al-Qalalawsī was engaged in providing thirteen possible derived variations for the *tafʿīlāt* (s. *tafʿīla* , 'metrical foot') that were indicated by his metrical pattern, sixty-nine possible *aḍrāb* (one metre's variations) and another sixteen are not entirely compatible (*ghayr ʿalā al-qiyās*) so as to justify several inconsistencies among dūbayt compositions, there is still evidence of several dūbayt verses which do not correspond to the alleged pattern, such as the one given in the example below:

<div dir="rtl">

من يرحمني ومن يطفي حرقي

من بعدهم وسهري وأرقي فقد جعل في الصدر

عسى أنستْ لبينهم بالأرق

فالجفن بدمعه أسير الغرق

</div>

(Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Mudhish* 18)

Who has pity on me? Who turns off my fire?
So great is their distance,

Who calms my insomnia and the anguish that has already entered my chest?
Perhaps insomnia made me believe I was among them
And so, the eye is a prisoner, drowned in its tears.
(Translated by the author)

The first hemistich shows an anomalous sequence (*faʿlun, mutafāʿilun, faʿlun, faʿilun* – 0/// 0/0/ 0//0/// 0/0/)[14] with the third *tafʿīla as* "*faʿlun* – 0/0/" instead of "*faʿū*"lun 0/0//" which is the correct one according to al-Qalalawsī (19). This variation, evidently, could not be justified according to the Arabic prosodic rules since they prevent the occurrence of "low-impact" metrical variations (*ziḥāfāt*) for specific groups of sounds such as *al-awtād* (e.g. 0//; /0/).[15] The second hemistich, in turn, is also irregular with a sequence (*faʿlun, mutafāʿilu, faʿūlu, faʿilun*) with two alleged examples of *ziḥāf mufrad* (simple "low-impact" metrical variation, i.e. *al-qabḍ* and *al-kaff*)[16] in order to justify the changes that occurred respectively at *tafʿīla* no. 3 and 4. Lastly, the third hemistich shows a very puzzling prosodic sequence where the possible solutions devised by Ibn al-Jawzī do not contribute in clarifying its prosody, whilst the fourth hemistich is regular according to the pattern provided by al-Qalalawsī (*faʿlun, mutafāʿilun, faʿūlun, faʿilun*). It is

interesting to observe that a metrical analysis of the same dūbayt that matches instead with al-Qarṭājannī's pattern was provided by ʿAbd al-Ilāh Kanafāwī in his 2008 study. Also in this last case, however, the author cannot help but underline several metrical inconsistencies.
Having said that, it is clear that the Arabic prosodists invested a great deal of effort into forcing the dūbayt to fit with the Khalīlian metrical systems, however unsuccessful this may have been. Moreover, al-Fārābī (d. 950) justifies prosodic mismatch of the dūbayt with Arabic prosodic rules, saying that "when different peoples come to perform poetry through the same language […], the rhythm (*īqāʿ*) could not be maintained without mispronunciation (*laḥn*)" (172). Thus, al-Fārābī's statement not only indicates that non-Arab people (*ʿajam*) were the first performers of a poetic frame, they also arguably introduced it as part of oral poetry. More importantly, it also leads us to recognize that lyrical rhythms (*ʾīqāʿāt*) survive for a long time through different languages and that even once the poetic frames that attempted to represent these rhythms are definitively traced, introduced and acknowledged by the target culture, their inner musicality conflicts with the new rules set to describe them. Hence, it could be stated that inconsistency of the dūbayt with Arabic prosody

was arguably the main feature that assured the preservation of its original catchy cadence, despite leading Arabic prosodists' obstinate attempts at metrical canonization into an irreversible impasse.

Returning to the compelling synonymy between dūbayt and rubāʿī in the Arabic literary tradition, thus, it arguably tells us about two relevant issues. Firstly, it reveals how much mutual bias, inspiration and cultural rivalry deeply influenced - both implicitly and explicitly - the conceptualization of literary phenomena across time and space, sometimes betraying certain, alleged unidirectional, hegemonic influences argued by recent world literature's criticism, as mostly grounded on the modern West/East-centered framework of inquiry (Schwarz 50). Secondly, it also illustrates the introduction of Persian robāʿī within Arabic, even though some prosodic features which could not be maintained within a different language such as Arabic were lost during this cultural and linguistic encounter.

All this, puzzled the possibility to ensure a clear distinction of the rubāʿī from the dūbayt, which in Arabic actually became closer to each other in meaning than within Persian tradition.

A Different Literary Conceptualization of the Quatrain within the Persian and Arabic Literary Traditions

Investigating deeper specific features of the Persian robāʿī verse, we find that robāʿī employs a specific form of al-hazaj metre, which is marked by specific prosodic sequences not employed in other poetic compositional schemes.[17] Twenty-four basic sub-variations are derived from the robāʿī pattern, often creating circular refrains within the composition.[18] This prosodic pattern and its variations within robāʿiyyāt led ancient and modern scholars such as Thiesen (168-172) to rename this variation of al-hazaj metre as "the robāʿī metre", hence the polysemous conceptualization of this term within Persian tradition (as a verse and as a metre).

In fact, Persian robāʿī can be more appropriately conceived as a typology of verse since it features other specificities besides the prosodic ones such as those related to the rhyme (qāfia), which is always accounted for among the four hemistiches. The rhyme could be – less frequently – tamām-maṭlaʿ (aaaa) or – more frequently – with the third hemistich ʿfreeʾ (fard), hence conceived as according to the ǧazal/qaṣīda model (aaba), though in every case robāʿī is considered a monorhyme composition, and as mostly impromptu composition.

Beyond this, Elwell-Sutton pointed out the typical topics of 9th-10th century robāʿī ("The Rūbāʿī in Early Persian Literature" 637) whose development is attributed to the well renowned Persian poet ar-Rūdhakī (d. 941): originally typical topics found in quatrains included the celebration of wine, a lover's complaint, satirical or gnomic short expressions and aphorisms, and later broadened to the longer and more complex philosophical reflections on life and wisdom that were deeply influenced by Sufi mysticism (De Blois, *Persian Literature* 51).[19]

Despite all these features, scholarship in Persian studies always stressed a seemingly prosodic analysis of the quatrain. Persian robāʿī, despite its quite simple structure has in fact puzzled many prosodists, mostly because it was often employed as the bone of contention in defining the similarities and differences between Persian and Arabic prosodies, vindicating their mutual independence. Both these prosodies are indeed defined through the common Khalīlian prosodic system, though more notably modeled on Arabic language and not devised or suited for metres of a very different type (such as Persian).

In fact, during the 1930s, Benveniste developed the concept of "syllabic versification" of Middle-Persian (1st century BCE -

7th century CE) and New Persian (8th/9th – 18th centuries) poetry as alternative to the quantitative (long/short vowels) Khalīlian system. He was inspired by a backwards observation of robāʿī pattern from a philological and phonological perspective. Notably, in fact, Khalīlian system, building on Arabic language specificities, formally does not acknowledge a syllabic structure, although Kiparsky and Ashwini, who more recently collected several sources from Arabic prosodists' debate on Arabic metrics' syllabic system, argued the indirect interference of a Greek prosodic system on the Khalīlian model which, in their view, could therefore be considered "weight-sensitive", hence a system within which "the contrast between ʿlightʾ and ʿheavyʾ syllables functions to mark the opposition in prominence between strong and weak metrical positions" (148).

In the 1950s, Henning boldly revisited Benveniste's theory and introduced the concept of a "stress/accentual versification" of Middle and New Persian poetry, a theme which was in turn more deeply explored by Elwell-Sutton, Thiesen and Lazard during the 1970s and the 1980s. This led to the revolutionary identification of the traditional Persian prosody as an "accent/stress-sensitive prosody" deeply influenced by the later introduction of quantitative prosodic elements borrowed from Arabic. More specifically, Elwell-Sutton and Thiesen's studies also identified rhyming and thematic features of the Persian robāʿī (Elwell-Sutton, "The Rūbāʿī in Early Persian Literature" 633-657 and "'Arūẓ", *Encyclopaedia Iranica online*; Thiesen 168-172), whilst Lazard recognized the origin of the quatrain, arguing that Arabic prosody's interference has obscured the relationship between Pahlavi poem "Āhū-ye kūhī" ("The Chamois") which arguably dates back to the Sasanian period (3rd-7th centuries),[20] and the 10th-century Persian robāʿī ("Āhū-ye kūhī" 238-244).

However, it is surprising that both Arabic and Persian scholars expressed a reciprocal lack of interest in uncovering different conceptualization of the quatrain within the other respective tradition. Only a recent comparative reading by Ashwini and Kiparsky who employed a phonological terminology, defined the Persian quatrain as a "four-moras-tetrameter with a catalectic foot" (155) as applicable to the Arabic quatrain, whilst Arabic prosodic manuals maintain the classic diction according to which each hemistich is composed by four *tafʿīlāt* (al-Hāshimī 141). Hence, in both literary traditions every hemistich is composed of four feet, the last of which involves "high impact" metrical variation (Per. *ʿelal* – Arabic *ʿilla*).[21] Of more interest is the Arabic tradition that later accepted the employment of a number of metres besides al-hazaj, such as *ar-rajaz, ar-raml, al-mutaqārib, al-basīṭ, as-sarīʿ, al-mutadārik* (Nājī 161-165).

Moreover, Persian poetry by nature is interested in limited prosodic variations, which are consistent within the whole poem, while the Arabic poetry accepts several low-impact in-hemistich metrical variations called *ziḥāfāt* (Elwell-Sutton, "'Arūẓ", *Encyclopaedia Iranica online*).[22] Drawing from al-Qarṭājannī's considerations, it could be stated that the Arabic rubāʿī is therefore conceived as a loan from the Persian tradition, written in Arabic *fuṣḥā* (classical Arabic) only[23], understood as neither a metre nor as a mere verse (243). It is a literary poetical frame based on distiches – hence, in prosodic terms it is hardly distinguishable from the dūbayt. Thus, the Arabic quatrain features specific rhyming rules (similar to those found in Persian tradition and referred to both robāʿī and dūbaytī) but also characterized by a varying *mūsīqā khārijiyya* (rhyming and prosodic rhythm) as a result of the alternation of metres together with the presence of occasional low-impact metrical variation. All this, in spite of a homogeneous and fluid *mūsīqā dākhiliyya* (euphonic rhythm), which is innovatively

done by the punctual occurrence of certain rhetorical figures of speech.

According to the canonical definition of al-Ḥāshimī (140-141), Arabic quatrains are distinguished in seven typologies: the first and the second, comparable to the Persian model, are featured by rhyming features only (*rubāʿī kāmil*, a complete quatrain and *rubāʿī khaṣiyy o al-aʿraj*, a crippled quatrain).[24] The other five: *rubāʿī khāṣṣ, r. mumanṭaq, r. muraffal, r. mardūf* and *majzuʿ ad-dūbayt* (pure quatrain, fashionable quatrain, ornate quatrain, symmetric quatrain, cropped quatrain)[25] are characterized by the specific occurrence of different typologies of *jinās*[26] (paronomasia, pun, alliteration), a rhetorical device of the branch of Arabic rhetoric (*al-balāgha*) named *ʿilm al-badīʿ* (the science of embellishments). I provide, for instance, the analysis of a canonical example of *rubāʿī muraffal*:

بدرٌ، وإذا رأَتْهُ شمسُ الأُفُقِ
كسَفَتْ، ورَقى في يومِ أحدْ
عوذْتُ جمالَهُ، بربِّ الفلَقِ
وبِما خَلَقَ منْ كلِّ أحدْ
(al-Hāshimī 141)

A full moon – which if only the sun at the horizon saw it, no doubt
it would eclipse - rises on a Sunday.
May its beauty be cursed, in the name of the Lord of the Universe

and in the name of all that He has created.
(Translated by the author)

Proceeding to the metrical analysis, the text shows the employment of the most common sequence of *tafʿīlāt* within both the Arabic dūbayt and rubāʿī, i.e., *faʿlun, mutafāʿilun, faʿūlun, faʿilun* the first and third hemistiches. Yet, the analysis of the second hemistich shows there are only three tafʿīlāt employed (faʿilun, mutafāʿilun, faʿūlun) instead of four, seemingly according to either an incorrect cropped form of the pattern (according to this rule, in fact, every hemistich of the whole composition should lack the last foot),[27] or another three-footed pattern. The fourth hemistich provides the anomalous sequence i.e. faʿilun, faʿilun, faʿlun, faʿūlun. It is interesting to note that al-Hāshimī, who does not provide a metrical analysis of this rubāʿī, vaguely states that the second hemistich "consists of three *faqarāt* (parts) which enrich its prosody" (141). Doing this, in fact, he seems to justify the occurrence of prosodic inconsistencies as an artistic embellishment rather than acknowledging ancient rubāʿiyyāt's possible inconsistencies when observed in Khalīlian terms. Besides this, however, the example shows how much euphony is given by the keen employment of jinās rather than by the prosodic structure. It is possible therefore

to recognize two *jinās nāqiṣ* (paronomasia, pun):

(a) *ufuq/falaq* (horizon/universe) - *jinās nāqiṣ nawʿ al-ḥurūf wa at-tartīb* (1st/3rd hemistiches); (b) *falaq/khalaq(a)* (universe/He has created) – *jinās nāqiṣ nawʿ al-ḥurūf* (3rd/4th hemistiches) - and one *jinās tāmm* in the 2nd and 4th hemistiches, according to which the term "aḥd" assumes different meanings (*yawm aḥd*, 'Sunday' vs. *kulli aḥd*, 'everyone'/'everything').[28]

Another interesting feature is given by the presence of *aṭ-ṭibāq al-ʾījābī* (antithesis/oxymoron)[29] between the two verbs *kasafat/raqā* (eclipses/rises), respectively referred to as the sun and the full moon, hence a rhetorical device which, together with the jinās, contributes to the realization of a vivid poetic image that celebrates universal beauty in an antiphrastic manner.

Thus, though Arabic scholars' poor accuracy neglected to clarify the difference between rubāʿī and dūbayt which semantic proximity could at least be explained, another issue seems to be now more relevant. In fact, arguably identifying the rhyming Arabic quatrains as those early introductions from Persian tradition, the other five rhetorical Arabic quatrain frames align well with the original evolution of

Persian robāʿī from a metre or a rhyming verse to a rhetorical compositional scheme within Arabic tradition (Fontana 210-214). This is a significantly different conceptualization that in other terms concerns also both Persian and Arabic quatrains in modern times.

Thematic Specificities of Quatrains and the Modern Conceptualization of Rubāʿiyyāt as a Non-technical Literary Genre

Besides the technical and formal aspects of Persian and Arabic quatrains it is now worth examining the themes that have been tied to this literary form from a cross-temporal perspective. Drawing upon Lazard's considerations of the origin of robāʿī ("Āhū-ye kūhī" 238-244), the Persian quatrain might be understood as a legacy from Middle Persian literature in Pahlavi which was acknowledged as a "courtly, elegant literary language" (Lazard, "Pahlavi, pârsi, dari" 361-362, 385; Tafaẓẓoli 158-162) as opposed to Middle Persian scholarly language (i.e. Pārsi). As well discussed by De Blois ("A Persian Poem" 82-95), literature in Pahlavi prior to its disappearance resisted different dialectal forms (among which Dari was one), and maintained only the Pahlavi script which, despite its poetic tradition, left hardly any traces, because it was essentially an oral form.

Consequently, Bo Utas argues that centuries later, between the 9th and 10th centuries, poets such as ʿAbd Allah ibn Jaʿfar Rūdakī (d. 941)[30] perhaps influenced by previous oral models such as dūbayt, robāʿī and *tarana* (regional/rural song) (Elwell-Sutton, "The Rūbāʿī in Early Persian Literature" 633), soon chose to adopt the "robāʿī as artistic form of poetry and developed traditions independently of its popular variant" ("Arabic and Iranian Elements" 143). With regard to the themes within initial forms of robāʿī[31] (9th and f.) in New Persian, de Bruijn affirms that together with the lyrical form of *qiṭʿa*[32] (brief, monothematic poem), the quatrain was originally best suited for epigrams and frequently inserted in prose texts to highlight special points in a discursive or narrative context ("The qiṭʿa and the robāʿī", *Encyclopaedia Britannica online*). Hence it may be reasoned that the themes of the earlier robāʿiyyāt i.e. gnomic sentences, aphorisms of wisdom, courtly short panegyric, love and mystical verses, were heterogeneous in so far as they were appropriate to the cohesive lyrical structure of quatrain featured by brevity "with the first three hemistiches building up to a climax and the last providing the punch line" (Elwell-Sutton, "'Arūż", *Encyclopaedia Iranica online*).

De Blois adds, however, that within the New Persian Literature of the 10th-11th centuries, this prototypical form of robāʿī suddenly broadened to become a longer and independent monorhyme poetical composition which however never enjoyed the same status as more complex rhymed-couplets poems such as *mathnawīs* (*Persian Literature* 51), and quatrains began to be tied to religious reflections on life and wisdom. According to both Utas and al-Musawi, this last thematic choice is not surprising. In fact, taking into account the cultural richness of the Islamic community which recognized Arabic as the official religious language, Persian or Persian-born *shuyūkh* (pious men) were bilingual and many of them, especially Sufi preachers from Khorasan, felt it was essential to use a language easily understood by common people who did not speak Arabic proficiently, and also easily memorized, such as poetry (Utas, "The Literary Expression" 208; al-Musawi 206-208).

Thus, beyond the original forms of Persian or Persian/Arabic Sufi *musajjaʿāt* (works in rhymed prose) such as those of al-Hujvīrī (d. 1045), which were notably, influenced by Arabic models of Abū Naṣr as-Sarrāj's (d. 988) and Qushairī (d. 1045) (Berthels

1-31), preachers' employment of lyrical forms initially included ghazal-styled religious poems and mathnawīs (8th century) as well as mystical quatrains (11th centuries). Therefore, subsequent specimens of spiritual work such as those attributed to the nebulous figure Bābā Ṭāher (1019) or others by Abū Saʿīd ibn Abi'l-Khair (d. 1049),[33] Abduʿllāh Ansārī of Herat (1089) and then great poets such as Hakīm Sanā'ī (d. 1131), Farīd ud-dīn ʿAttār (d. 1220) and Jalāl ud-dīn Rūmī (d. 1273) quoted in Utas ("Arabic and Iranian Elements" 138-139), formed the basis for the first customary association between quatrains and spiritual-religious literary topics, rather than the specific employment of Persian robā'ī verse to this literary purpose. In fact, some of the quoted authors worked chiefly in other genres, as also Gould recalled in her preface to the translation of poetess Mahsatī of Ganja's quatrains (fl. 12th century) (228).

In turn, Sufi Persian poetry deeply influenced the 12th-13th century Arabic production of religious rubā'iyyāt. According to both Western and Oriental scholarship, the first significant employment of Arabic quatrains in Sufi lyrics can be ascribed within Ibn al-Fāriḍ's (d. 1234) widely studied poems, such as in *al-Khamriyya (Wine Ode)* and within a section of his most famous Sufism treatise in verse *Diwān Ibn al-Fārīḍ (Ibn al-Fārīḍ Poems' Collection)* also called *al-Tā'iyya al-Kubra*[34] (*The Great Poem Ending with the Letter Tā*) (Scattolin 217-231). Other examples are tied to Bahā' Zuhayr (d. 1258) in which, as in the case of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *al-Khamriyya*, the interexchange and familiarity with Sufi Persian rubā'iyyāt is evident (Massignon 63-68). In mystic-religious Persian poetry, as emphasized by Utas, "the double legacy of court poetry and popular love lyrics" - such as the Middle Persian poem "Āhū-ye kūhī'" forefather' of robā'ī and the popular quatrain in Persian dialects prior to New Persian - on the one hand, and a widely prevalent mystic poetry on the other "created an intricate poetical situation in which multiple ways of expression came to interact" ("The Literary Expression" 218). The same view is shared by Scheindlin (111-112), Meisami (37-38), and al-Musawi who extends his reflection upon different topics and registers gathered under the umbrella of spiritual Sufi quatrain. They include ghazal varieties, homoerotism, agnostics and divine ecstasy embedded in the clear symptomatology of sensuous love which, however, is not always conceived as a metaphor for the divine one (170-181). All this is traced for instance in the production of famous Sufi masters such as Fakhr ad-Dīn ʿErāqī (d. 1289) and Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240) besides the others already quoted.

After centuries of changes to the model of writing quatrains (15th – 18th centuries) during which this form was essentially employed in the style of previous examples (Jayyūsī 422, 623; Elwell-Sutton, "The Rūbā'ī in Early Persian Literature" 653; Tafaẓẓoli 158-162), the habitual employment of Persian and Arabic quatrains in Sufi and religious lyrics seems not to be enough to explain the modern - mostly thematic rather than formal - perception of quatrains as a non-technical poetical literary genre, thematically featured by a mixture of mystic and philosophical issues, both religious and non-religious spirituality and a free-thinking reflection on life. This stratified perception was arguably introduced in the 19th century when both Persian and Arabic modern literary conceptualizations of robā'iyyāt/rubā'yyāt were deeply influenced by Western studies. This is illustrated in the long-lasting legacy of two excellent examples of Gnostic, philosophical quatrains, such as the Arab poet Abū al-ʿAlā al-Ma'arrī (d. 1057) and above all the Persian ʿOmar Khayyām (d. 1131) (Nicholson 71). As argued by Graves and Ali-Sha (24-27), FitzGerald's free-translation and inquiries on Khayyām's quatrains, including the spurious ones (Zhukovski 349-366) contributed to erro-

neously tying the great Persian astronomer and philosopher to the class of 11th century Sufi poets, and at the same time bringing quatrains to the fore in several studies or indirect translation within the Persian and Arab world (Seyed-Gohrab 20-22). Hence, it might be argued that some scholars' historical and literary poorly contextualized attempts "to make a good Sufi shaykh" of Khayyām or al-Ma'arrī (Simidchieva 62-67; cf. Sa'ūd 21) had a regressive influence on the modern conceptualization of Islamic mysticism itself within Western and both Arabic and Persian modern literatures, despite the existence of coeval and more accurate philological and literary inquiries on these corpora (Dashi 20-22).

This process should be viewed in the more general milieu of an ideological, social and even literary modernization which affected both Persian and Arabic modern cultures. Modernization brought, in the specific field of poetry production, a progressive refusal of prosodic constraints, and a more thematic approach to traditional literary frames (Rezaei Yazdi and Mozafari 63; Jayyūsī 162-164). It is in this new context, as well as inspired by a sort of more secular mysticism and a new conception of modern intellectual, that the father of modern Iranian literature Şādeq Hedāyat (d. 1951) dedicated himself to the

study and reprise of quatrains from a philosophical perspective in "Moqaddam bar Rubaiyat-e Khayyam (Introduction to Khayyam's Rubaiyat)".

The Egyptian experimental poet Najib Surūr (d. 1978) relied on his work *Rubā'iyyāt Najīb Surūr* (*Najīb Surūr's Quatrains*) to reflect on both the private and public dimensions of the independent intellectual in Egypt during Nasser and Sadat's regencies (1956-1970/ 1970-1981) as being constantly suspended between the political and social commitment and a frustrating sense of isolation:

يا رفيـــفي لم أخن عهد الــهوى
والهوى رغم وفائي خان عهدي
هنا انا ما بيـــن شوقي والجوى
أقطع الأيــام كــالأدغال وحـدي

(14)

Oh, my companion,
be sure that I did not betray the principles,
although the principles - despite my loyalty -
they betrayed the vow I made them!
It is me who, suspended
between my love and mad passion,
I go through my days as they were woods.
(Translated by the author)

In the example as well as within the whole work, Surūr's quatrains feature a very clear

and traditional prosodic and rhyming structure (metre: *ar-ramal at-tāmm*; rhyming scheme: abab) and use the rhetorical devices typically employed in pre-modern rubā'iyyāt (i.e., *al-jinās, al-muqābala; al-majāz* etc.).[35] More compelling, however, is Surūr's attempt to thematically renew the genre by introducing political issues and references to the modern public intellectual's demeanor.

In addition, though definitively not respecting the formal pattern of classic rubā'ī which is instead reprised by Surūr, the Palestinian poet Maḥmūd Darwīsh (d. 2008) composed his brief anthology "Rubā'iyyāt" as poetry of intimate resistance to political persecution:

أرى ما أُريدُ من السجن: أيّامَ زهرةْ
مَضَتْ من هنا كي تدلَّ غريبين فيّ
على مقعد في الحديثة، أغمضُ عينيّ:
ما أوسع الأرض! ما أجمل الأرض من ثُقْب إبرةْ

(*al-A'māl al-Kāmila* 788)

I see what I want in prison: days of flowering
that led from here to two strangers in me
seated in a garden - I close my eyes:
How spacious is the earth! How beautiful the earth
from the eye of a needle.
(Translation by Saadi Simawe and Doré Watson, *Modern Poetry in Translation*)

Lastly, also the South Mahjar poet Ilyās Farāt (*Rubāʿiyyāt Farḥāt*) and Ṣalāḥ Jahīn (d. 1986) - who even chose to write his *Rubāʿiyyāt Ṣalāḥ Jahīn* (*Ṣalāḥ Jahīn's Quatrains*) in the Egyptian Arabic variety – keenly employed this genre as a way to reflect on the relationship between intellectual and public spheres.

Adam Talib's keen reasoning about the Arabic epigram and the promiscuity of pre-modern Arabic literary genres sees in the classic Arabic quatrain a formally defined exception within that framework of literary production (*How Do you Say "Epigram"* 3). However, how could we instead read this conceptualization cross-temporally, hence, in the face of the gradual abandonment of prosodic constraints and formalistic features in writing of a rubāʿiyyāt as well as in the face of the emergence of a more global thematic approach to poetry writing among both modern Persian and Arabic literature?

I argue that Talib's valid arguments and reader-response approach clarify how the epistemological shift in readers'/critics' historicization of one literary genre (i.e. the epigrammatic one) always reflects an ontological shift in the object, hence in the conceptualization of the genre itself (*How Do you Say "Epigram"* 216; cf. Žižek 17). This, I argue, could also be applied to explain the modern conceptualization of quatrains as a mostly thematically defined-modern literary genre. In fact, even if modern authors refused some distinctive technical features of classical robāʿiyyāt/rubāʿiyyāt, they, however, felt a genuine link to the previous tradition, not with the aim to dignify/justify their literary experimentations under a well-renowned label, but mostly to indicate what the specific quatrain's legacy *means* in their own modern context, in what specific terms and thematic customary uses, and what expressive needs the quatrain both inspires and satisfies at the same time.

It should be noted, however, that the modern conceptualization of quatrains as a common new literary trend within Iranian and Arab countries' literatures should not lead to inappropriate overgeneralizations about a fully shared perception of the literary past in both modern contexts. On the contrary, the case of the quatrain emerges as an exception within both modern Persian and Arabic language speaking cultures' attempts at a literary independent self-definition which leads many scholars to look at secular mutual influences and contacts between Persian and Arabic literary legacy through the "new-born cultural and national boundaries" (Blondel Saad 32), arguably disregarding the interwoven paths of artistic expression espoused by their respective traditions throughout the long centuries of what al-Musawi defined a lively Islamic "republic" of letters (21-26).[36]

Conclusion

This philological, formal and thematic inquiry on the different ontological conceptions of the robāʿī/rubāʿī and literary conceptualizations across Persian and Arabic literary traditions has shed the light on three critical questions neglected by previous studies, and thus contributed in clarifying the interliterary process at the core of development of the quatrain within a hybrid context of cultural and linguistic encountering.

The first section showed the semantic obscurity between the terms dūbayt and rubāʿī within Arabic literary corpora, a puzzling synonymy that should be read in view of the different conceptualization of the quatrain in both literary traditions (Persian as a verse, metre or a prosodic features-grounded poetical frame; Arabic rhetorical poetical frame). Having shown that some specific features of the Persian quatrain were lost in the new Arabic conceptualization, hence the synonymy of dūbayt and rubāʿī - if not justifiable – it follows that another more general, consideration of the common context of the Persian and Arabic classical quatrain production is necessary.

In this sense, Arabic classic scholarship's lack of clarification on the synonymy between the two terms and also the Arabic and Persian scholars' mutual lack of interest in recognizing the different conceptualizations of the robāʿī/rubāʿī, which was sometimes motivated by cultural rivalry and misleading readings, arguably indicates the existence of a fluid duality of mutual inspirations, borrowings and exchanges among the two literary traditions, in particular between the 9th and 14th centuries when specific boundaries were not too rigid. Therefore, it might be argued these flowing interliterary practices were conceived as natural, in so far as they occurred in the context of the classic Islamic, culturally and linguistically heterogeneous "Proto-World Literature". Thus, the reason for suggesting this last alternative definition to "World-Literature" in this case, is grounded on the challenging applicability of modern discipline's axioms to the selected subject of inquiry. Hence, scholars such as Moretti (59) and Schwarz (50), while advoking for the employment of an integral systemic approach to world literature, arguably maintained an unidirectional hegemonic discourse about the extraneity of the alleged "subaltern" which appears grounded on the economic, political order of modern societies and which does not fully match with the joint cultural and societal flux of pre-modern Islamic world.

Moreover, the third section above showed that the diachronic overview of the themes most employed in classic Persian and Arabic quatrains as well their reciprocal influence, assumes a pivotal importance in the long-lasting legacy of quatrains in modern and contemporary Iranian and Arab world literatures. In fact, the progressive refusal of prosodic and rhyming constraints within both areas during the late 19th and 20th centuries traditions, may affirm that the quatrains also started to be conceived as a trend or a non-technical literary genre. In this regard, however, what seems more relevant to note is that in a new historical context in which clearer new-born boundaries and interactions are now outlined, both modern Iranian and Arab-countries' authors of robāʿiyyāt/rubāʿiyyāt however still draw inspirations from a compound of shared literary references and examples from a common past, though they creatively revise them in the light of new expressive urgencies tied to their respective cultural and sociopolitical contexts. This reflection, I argue, would have been of little substance without technical and close reasoning on how prosodic constraints mattered instead, in a previous era. In this sense, this study engages with combining both a "close" – hence more technical – and "distant " – i.e. more global – readings (Moretti 56-58) of the Persian and Arabic quatrain interliterary phenomenon, away from the wholly thematic approach that is mostly in vogue within contemporary world literature studies, given that it seems to be almost exclusively tailored to modern novel production.

The above overview of these compelling questions related to the challenging literary fate of quatrains across Persian and Arabic traditions would benefit from deeper and more specific exploration, especially if grounded in the sociology of literature approach. For now, this organic panorama of themes that concern both Persian and Arabic studies is welcomed in different ways: firstly, stressing the relevance of interdisciplinary approach to humanities if applied to literature and also within literary studies' branches, filling the gap between more technical philological, metrical and rhetorical inquiries and the thematic ones. Secondly, underlining how an organic analysis of interliterary processes should be pursued avoids sectarianism often tied to Islamic culture studies, including Persian and Arabic studies but also Turkish, Ottoman Turkish and Urdu, as appropriate. And thirdly, inspiring a methodological shift in approaching diachronic literary inquiries on classic Islamic poetics,

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and more in general, World Literature inquiries, avoiding the application of a retroactive conceptualization of modern, sometimes Eurocentric boundaries to past contexts.

Notes

[1] I wish to thank Professor Bo Utas and Professor Muhsin Jasim al-Musawi for their kindness in reading an earlier draft of this article and for their valuable comments and corrections. Needless to say, I alone am responsible for any of its shortcomings. Suggested transcriptions for the Persian and Arabic allographic term (رباعي) accounts for their respective pronunciations. Though many sources (Elwell-Sutton, "The rūbāʿī in Early Persian Literature") also transcribe the Persian term as rubāʿī due to customary influence of Arabic-grounded transcription system, this study provides both Persian and Arabic phonetic transcriptions for correct reference. The terms robāʿī/rubāʿī (pl. robāʿiyyāt/rubāʿiyyāt) are maintained throughout and employed as appropriate. All transcribed titles of both Persian and Arabic studies are quoted without further adaptations.

[2] Refers to the prosodic system devised by Khalīl Ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī (d. 718), later revised by al-Akhfash al-Awsaṭ (d. 830) and since the 9th century has provided formal rules for both Arabic and Persian prosodies.

[3] Difference between Persian and Arabic terms robāʿī/ rubāʿī and Persian dūbaytī and Arabic dūbayt marked in transcription. See note no. 1.

[4] Indistinguishable in form and meter from each other (Elwell-Sutton, "'Arūż", *Encyclopaedia Iranica online*).

[5] Some of which, such as (aabb) or (abab), are not allowed in robāʿī frame (Elwell-Sutton, "The Rūbāʿī in Early Persian Literature" 634).

[6] As for the sinād, aḍ-Ḍabbī only mentions that it concerns circular compositions characterized by repetitiveness *("dhū at-tarjīʿ al-kathīr an-naghamāt wa-n-nabarāt")* whilst Ḍayf adds that as-sinād was a "heavy, serious" *("thaqīl")* genre without providing more details (193-194).

[7] Other three forms of seven are called *malḥūna* - hence influence by dialectal or non-Arabic languages - and they were *az-zajal; al-kān-wa-kān; al-qawma* (al-Musawi 263-265). The form considered the most noble of them as it "follows the syntactic rules of *al-fuṣḥā* and *al-iʿrāb*" (Jawwād, 364) was known as *al-mawālīya*, which was derived the modern popular *mawwāl* (Cachia 19-39; Fontana 292-302).

[8] More canonically defined pl. *ashṭur* (s. *shaṭr*) (al-Hāshimī 6-8).

[9] According to clearly unfounded etymological reconstruction of al-Ḥillī, the term dū-bayt derives per metathesis from an alleged (erroneously compound) term > *būdhia* >*abū adhiya* "[belonging] to who offends, angers" (Fontana 282). From this, is not clear why al-Ḥillī ties this clumsy reconstruction to *ʿubūdiyyā* (slavery) if not according to an ideological intention to discredit the Persian element within contemporary society.

[10] Ignoring the previous and copious literature on the topic, ar-Rāfiʿ affirms that the dūbayt was introduced from Persian literary tradition into the Arabic one not before the 7th century AH hence the 14th century.

[11] Also Abū ʿAbd Allah at-Tilmisānī (d. 1370) agrees with this pattern (Nājī 163).

[12] His dates of birth/death are unknown. He was settled in Granada and was a contemporary of Abū Jaʿfar az-Zubayr (1230-1308) and proceeded with the organization of the possible metrical patterns of the dūbayt suggested by the poet Malik Ibn al-Muraḥḥal (Ṣayf al-Islām 167).

[13] Referring to the other two patterns, al-Qalalawsī states: *"wa-kilā al-qawlayni bāṭil – and both of them are incorrect"* (qtd. in Nāji 161).

[14] For the diagrammatical realization of prosodic patterns, here it follows the Khalīlian standard system employed in major Arabic prosody manuals (e.g. al-Hāshimī).

[15] Ar. *zihāf* s. / *ziḥāfāt* pl. is a "low-impact metrical variation" (Fontana 463-467) which concerns the shortening of specific groups of sounds (*majmūʿāt ṣawṭīyya*) called *asbāb* (e.g., //, 0/). This variation does not significantly change the realization of the metre as it is considered "*maqbūl wa-laysa ḍarūrī*" (not to be applied throughout the whole poem) (al-Hāshimī 12-28).

[16] They refer respectively to the elision either of the fifth or seventh non-vocalized letter of the *tafʿīla* (al-Hāshimī 15).

[17] The alternation of a sequence (ᴗ - ᴗ -) with (- ᴗᴗ -) is not traceable in every other Persian metre (Elwell-Sutton, "The rūbāʿī in Early Persian Literature" 633-635). For the diagrammatical realization of prosodic patterns, here it is followed the standard syllabic version of the Khalīlian system employed in major Persian prosody manuals (Thiesen 8-15; Elwell-Sutton, *The Persian Metres* 5-10).

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[18] The most common forms of robāʿī metre are the *hazaj mothamman akhrab makfūf majbūb* (- - ᴜᴜ- - - ᴜᴜ - - ᴜᴜ -) and the *hazaj mothamman akhrab maqbūz majbūb* (- - ᴜᴜ- ᴜ - ᴜ - - ᴜᴜ -), from which derives up to 126 subvariations (Elwell-Sutton, "ʿArūż", *Encyclopaedia Iranica online*).

[19] The *mathnawī* (doubled), as the etymology reveals, is the most canonical form of rhymed couplets in Persian literature, traditionally employed in very long epic, didactic, romantic or philosophical poems (Elwell-Sutton, "ʿArūż", *Encyclopaedia Iranica online*).

[20] For years the poem has been spuriously attributed to Abū Ḥafṣ Soḡdī (fl. 9th-10th centuries).

[21] Within the Arabic prosodic tradition this typology of variation (ʿilla) indicates that the last foot of a hemistich may lacks or presents an additional group of sounds (*majmūʿ ṣawṭī*), more broadly considered a ʾlightʾ or ʾheavyʾ syllabe. This phenomenon contributes in changing the realization of the metre since, according to additional rules, it should be applied consistently throughout the whole composition - hence considered *ḍarūrī* (necessary) or a "high impact metrical variation" (Fontana 469-473). The most relevant difference in the realization of this variation within Persian prosody is that the ʿelal may occur, however infrequently also in the first foot of a hemistich (al-Hāshimī 12-28; Elwell-Sutton, "ʿArūż", Encyclopaedia Iranica online).

[22] Ar. *ziḥāf s. / ziḥāfāt* pl. – Per. *zehāf s. / zehāfāt* pl. For the definition see note no 15. It should be highlighted, however, that though the definition is essentially the same within both the Arabic and Persian traditions, according to the Persian prosody the zehāf should be applied to the whole composition as the *ʿelal*. See Elwell-Sutton (Elwell-Sutton, "ʿArūż", *Encyclopaedia Iranica online*).

[23] *"Lā yajūzu fī-hi al-laḥnu muṭlaqan"*. About the rubāʿī al-Qarṭājannī also adds his personal judgment *"lā bāʾs bi-l-ʿamali ʿalay-hi, fa-inna-hu mustaẓrafun wa waḍʿu-hu mutanāsibun"* (there is nothing wrong with using it, it is nice, light and widely used) (241).

[24] The first follows the (aaaa) rhyming scheme while the second the (aaba) one (al-Hāshimī 140-142).

[25] Within my previous inquiry I have already dedicated a section to Arabic quatrains as a model reprised in contemporary Arabic poetry. I argue for the first time the acknowledgement of rhetorical typologies of rubāʿiyyāt, describing for each category quoted the specific rhyming patterns, and occurrence of jinās among the hemistiches (Fontana 185-214). For the typologies of jinās see note below.

[26] The jinās is one of the most employed euphonic beautifiers/enhancers (*balāgha >ʿilm al-badīʿ*). Its effects vary as its forms vary as in the case of *jinās tāmm* (two or more homographic terms with different meanings) or *jinās nāqiṣ*, i.e. alliteration or paronomasia between terms different in meaning which are similar in pronunciation or that even differ from each other according to the type/vocalization/number of letters or the order between them (respectively: *jinās nāqiṣ al-ḥurūf/ ash-shakl/ al-ʿadad/ at-tartīb*) (Maṭlūb 450-455).

[27] The rule quoted above is called *ṣūrat al-majzūʿ li-l-baḥr* (al-Hāshimī 12).

[28] For typologies of jinās, see the previous note.

[29] It is a specific form of asemantic beautifier/enhancer (*balāgha >ʿilm al-badīʿ*) called *ṭibāq* (antithesis/oxymoron) according to which both a term and its opposite in meaning occur in a text contiguously (Maṭlūb 522).

[30] Actually, considered the father of robāʿī in New Persian.

[31] The scarce sources about the poem "Āhū-ya kūnī" did not allow scholars to assume the poem's themes that are typical in other lost compositions with a similar structure (Lazard, "Prosody iii. Middle Persian", *Encyclopædia Iranica online*).

[32] Mostly used for satire and topical poetry.

[33] His quatrains however were collected later by his great-great-grandson Muḥammad ibn Munavvar (fl. 12th century) (Nicholson 46).

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→ 34 About the alphabetical arrangement of the Arabic and Persian poetical anthologies under rhyming letters during the 9th–15th centuries see Schimmel (33-34) and Badawī (491).

35 Translation by the author. For the metrical, rhetorical analysis and full translation of "Rubā'iyyāt Najīb Surūr'', see my critical monograph, the first in any language, on Surūr's poetry, theatre and literary criticism (Fontana).

36 As the Egyptian writer Ṭāhā Ḥusayn oddly remarked, in his introduction to the translation of the *Diwān* of Ḥafīẓ of Shirān (fl. 14th century): "Before the age of the [Arab] Renaissance, our knowledge of Persian literature was very narrow and limited. It is great that our familiarity with this literature begins with an eminent poet such as Khayyām, though it reached us through [indirect] translations" (ash-Shawārbī 6). See also Hawas (66-92).

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