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Sharon Allen

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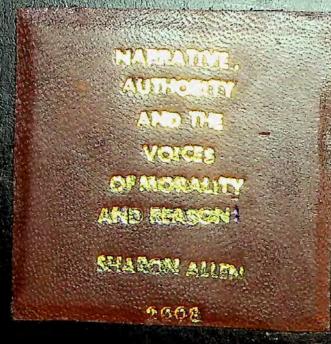
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NARRATIVE,
AUTHORITY
AND THE
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OF MORALITY
AND REASON

SHARON ALLEN

2008

The American University in Cairo

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

NARRATIVE, AUTHORITY AND THE VOICES OF MORALITY AND REASON:
AN INTERTEXTUAL EXPLORATION OF SELECT TEXTS OF *MIRROR FOR
PRINCES* LITERATURE & *THE BOOK OF THE THOUSAND NIGHTS AND ONE
NIGHT WITH SELECT SUFI LITERATURE*

A Thesis Submitted to:

The Department of Arab & Islamic Civilizations

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for

The degree of Master of Arts

By

Sharon Allen

Under the supervision of Dr. Huda Lutfi

May/ 2008

The American University in Cairo

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ABSTRACT

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Narrative, Authority, and the character of moral development: Universal themes focusing on the character development of rulers that shape moral practices which lead to just governance in rulership as reflected in Mirror for Princes

Sharon Allen

Dr. Huda Lutfi

While the study of the genre of early Arabic *adab* literature known as "Mirror for Princes" (*Mirror*) is usually limited to illuminating political ideas surrounding early leadership in Islamic societies, *The Thousand Nights and One Night* (*Nights*), in comparison to *adab* literature, is rarely considered as a source of wisdom or political insight, and yet, many maxims, aphorisms, and anecdotes can be found in both. It is my aim in this study to compare select tales in the *Nights* with various *Mirror* works both in terms of their content as well as to uncover a dialogue between two distinct voices: high discourse and low discourse. By applying an intertextual methodology to both the *Mirror* and *Nights* texts, certain features in both will illuminate not only their polarity, but also their mutuality. In an intertextual analysis of both texts, a web will be woven between the two discourses that reflect polarities of class, gender and rhetoric. The plurality of message and messenger revealed in both texts uncover a symbolic narrative that transcends authority. From this transcendence a Sufi discourse is revealed that is neither high nor low; but, often inclusive of gender, class and rhetoric.

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Chapter One

> *"Strike examples of the excellencies and shortcomings,*
> *the cunning and stupidity, generosity and avarice,*
> *and the courage and cowardice that are in men"* [1]

Introduction

    While the study of the genre of early Arabic *adab* literature known as "Mirror for

Princes" (*Mirror*) is usually limited to illuminating political ideas surrounding early

leadership in Islamic societies, *The Thousand Nights and One Night* (*Nights*), in

comparison to *adab* literature, is rarely considered as a source of wisdom or political

insight.[2] It is my aim in this study to compare the *Nights* and various *Mirror* texts both

in terms of their content as well as to uncover a dialogue between two distinct voices:

high discourse and low discourse. By applying an intertextual methodology to both the

Mirror and *Nights* texts, certain features in both will illuminate not only their polarity,

but also their mutuality. My use of the term "intertextual methodology" is limited to

the exploration of passages and stories in both the *Mirror* and *Nights* in an effort to

establish a relationship between the two in which the meaning of certain allusions and

thematic or episodic structures might be more clearly revealed. The uniqueness of both

texts is revealed in their heavy use of maxims, folklore, wisdom, piety and morality tales

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[1] Taken from a 9th century fragment of the *Nights*, see Abbott, Nabia. "A Ninth Century

Fragment of the 'Thousand Nights': New Light on the Early History of the Arabian

Nights." *Journal of Near East Studies, 8*:3, (1949),129.

[2] Critical analyses of various *Mirror* texts focus on issues ranging from an examination

of political ideas, to questions of authorship. In comparison, *Nights* scholarship usually

focuses on origins of stories, to literary styles and translation methods.

of the ancients in constructing narrative. The plurality of message and messenger in both texts allows an uncovering of the "voices" found in both works.

Books on advice and counsel to princes and rulers, or *Mirror* literature, is a genre of literature centered on themes concerning morality, justice, oppression, as well as the development of honorable characteristics in would be rulers. The subject content of early[3] *Mirror* literature focuses on character traits a "would be" ruler should nurture in an effort to develop a deeper knowledge of himself and the human condition. It was hoped this knowledge would generate stronger moral behavior, and eventually wisdom. Later examples (3rd A.H./9th C.E. and later) of Islamic *Mirror* works incorporated administrative issues and the functions of public or religious bureaucracies in addition to morality tales and a large variety of quotations from the Qur'an, and Sunna (traditions of the Prophet and Companions) used to illustrate moral and just behavior.[4]

The very nature of *Mirror* writings reinforced the moral and ethical responsibility of sovereigns to their citizens. This style of writing, with its aesthetically pleasing prose and focus on manners and proper behavior, is referred to as *adab* within Arab literary circles (*andarz* in Persian). *Adab* literature is considered a "high" or "elite" discourse. *Mirror* literature is composed for rulers or young princes, circulated exclusively within the domain of the ruling class, and usually narrated in the form of advice from an older person (sage or father figure) to a son or apprentice. The didactic

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[3] *Kalilah wa Dimnah* was translated, edited and expanded by 'Abd Allāh Ibn al-Muqaffa' in the mid 2nd A.H./8th C.E. from the Indian *Pancatantra* of the 4th century, or earlier.

[4] *Encyclopedia of Islam:* Brill Online. (2006). "Mirror for Princes" entry.

narrative style is typically meant to impart authority as well as to reflect the more

intimate nature of oral conversation between father and son, or sage and apprentice.

The ideas expressed in *Mirror* literature were not juristic or binding by law, but they did

carry a certain amount of moral worth. In Lambton's analysis of a variety of *Mirror*

contributions from the 2nd/8th centuries through the 10th/16th centuries she comments,

"these ideals, which hold an intermediary position between the theory of the jurists on

the one hand and the philosophers on the other...set forth the divine nature of ultimate

sovereignty."[5] The lofty aims of imparting to rulers the "divine nature of ultimate

sovereignty" set high expectations of the genre.

The *Mirror* discourse, for the governing elite, contains a mixture of oral tradition

that includes popular wisdom, literature and folklore, as well as various anecdotes,

aphorisms and verse. The various authors of *Mirror* works were usually bureaucrats or

learned culture[6] closely associated with the power structure. Paradoxically, although

the compilers of these elite discourses were closely associated with the center of power,

they were not considered part of the ruling elite; however, these authors aligned

themselves with a specific power structure and sought to reinforce certain political and

social policies of the time.

As an example, in Niẓām al-Mulk's (d. 474-475/1082-1083) *Siyāsat-nāma,*

written for the Sulṭan Malikshāh, the focus of Muslim kingship centers on military

might, the justness of tax collection, and early containment of usurpers. However, as

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[5] Lambton, A. K. S. *State and Government in Medieval Islam.* (Oxford, 1981), 419.

[6] The "learned culture" is defined by Shoshan as either religious scholars (*'ulamā*),

belletrists (*udaba*) or "other men of the pen," 75.

John A. Williams comments, other parts of the *Syāsat-nāma* written several years later just prior to al-Mulk's murder frantically tried to reinforce the urgency of particular threats: "Much of his earlier advice had not been heeded, and Malikshāh's favorite wife was his enemy...The elder statesman outlined the dangers that particularly threatened the Saljūq empire...[and] he was murdered by Ismā'īlī assassins in circumstances suggesting...the Sulṭān or his queen."[7] Consequently, al-Mulk sought to control enemies from without as well as from within the palace. He understood the power of Tarkān Khātūn[8] and felt threatened with what he considered an interference in the workings of the empire. He severely underestimated her power behind the throne. Often the discourse used in al-Mulk's *Mirror* to define women encouraged certain abhorrence of the gender along with what he considered were the afflictions of women. In the section titled "on the subject of those who wear the veil", Al-Mulk advises:

> The king's underlings must not be allowed to assume power...this particularly applies to women, for they...have not complete intelligence...When the king's wives begin to assume the part of rulers, they base their orders on what interested parties tell them, because they are not able to see things with their own eyes in the way that men constantly look at the affairs of the outside world...Naturally their commands are mostly the opposite of what is right, and mischief ensues; the kings' dignity suffers and the people are afflicted with trouble.[9]

In this passage it is clear that the ruling elite is the higher strata and needs to maintain the superior position. It maintains the superior position by rejecting and eliminating those considered low in status, lacking in prestige, intelligence, and morals.

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[7]Williams, John Alden. *Themes of Islamic Civilization.* (Berkeley, 1971), 103.

[8] A generic name for Seljūq queens; means "The Queen of the Turks."

[9] Ibid,, 179.

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Political uncertainty was often the motivating force behind a variety of Islamic *Mirror* works. In his translation of the *Qābūs-nāma* written by Kai Kā'ūs ibn Iskandar (475 A.H./1082 C.E.), Reuben Levy notes, "The world in which he [Kā'ūs] existed was politically in a state of flux, with life uncertain and hard."[10] The uncertainty and hardships added to the anxiety of rulership, and pushed the male ruling class further toward controlling an empire and anyone challenging rulership, often at the expense of morality and fair dealings. Williams comments, "Kay Kā'ūs is a professional member of a ruling class...[and] is very conscious that even if a king cannot have lordly morals, he must appear to have them. He knows that a king must sometimes tell lies and kill, but it is not expedient to get a name for it."[11] Rather, rulers maintained a strict social hierarchy where class and position was rigorously controlled:

> The concept of the ruler in the mirrors...operated within a definite social structure...in which each class and each man was allotted his place. The king, the representative of God upon earth, was concerned with orderly and just government...the king was the centre of the universe. The ruler of the material world by divine right, he stood between God, the macrocosm, and man, the microcosm."[12]

In comparison to *Mirror* texts, the stories in the *Nights* is a compilation of what many of the Euro-Victorian culturally elite considered as bawdy and ribald storytelling[13]; folk-lore for the middle to lower classes; or as Ghazoul has observed,

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[10] Levy, Reuben. *Qābūs-nāma*. (1951), xiv.

[11] Williams, John Alden. *Themes of Islamic Civilization*, 105.

[12] Lambton, A.K.S. *State and Government in Medieval Islam*, 421.

[13] In *Scheherezade*, A.J. Arberry referred to many of the tales as "indecent" and others containing "occasional improprieties," 9; Marzolph & Leeuwen comments, "Emerging

inversions of popular cultures of the time.[14] The *Nights* in many scholarly circles is barely considered literature. As Beaumont has commented, "[the] subject matter [of the *Nights*] could be an affront to the pious writers who always made up a considerable portion of the literary elite, men who wrote books with titles like *The Condemnation of Fun*".[15]

Just as *Mirror* literature may be seen as one of the highest forms of discourse for the ruling elite, so the *Nights* can be seen as its antithesis: low discourse, for the peasants or non-elite.[16] The non-elite or lower classes are usually defined as the result of juxtaposition to higher/ruling class elites. The world of the *Nights*, as well as the colloquial language it was often written in, was frequently condemned. Irwin comments, "Even today, with the exception of certain writers and academics, the *Nights* is regarded with disdain in the Arab world. Its stories are still regularly denounced as vulgar, improbable, childish and, above all, badly written."[17] By association therefore, anyone reading or telling stories from this collection or the classes and societies within

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from the oral folkloric traditions...the stories...recounted in a vulgar, vernacular Arabic, the TV soap-operas of their day, they would never have been considered 'cultivated' literature." *Arabian Nights Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, 2004) 26.

[14] Ghazoul, F. J. *The Arabian Nights: A Structural Analysis.* (Cairo, 1980), 128.

[15] Beaumont, D. *Slave of Desire*, (Danvers, 2002), 31.

[16] The ideas I present here in relation to high/low discourse can be found in the works of Barthes, R (1977) *Image, Music, Text*; and Bakhtin, M.M. (1993) *Rabelais and His World*, to name a few.

[17] Irwin, Robert. *The Arabian Nights: A Companion*, 82.

the stories themselves is considered ill-literate at best, and vulgar or low in status at worst.

The polarity between these two discourses can be seen as symbolic of the extremes between the two social classes they are meant to address. High discourse such as *Mirror* literature is meant not only to instruct, but it is also used to construct and define the ruling elite by separating them from the non-elite, or lower class. The polarities are constructed, usually by the group considered the ruling/elite class. As Stallybrass and White observe, "high discourses, with their lofty style, exalted aims and sublime ends, are structured in relation to the debasements and degradations of low discourse."[18] This contrast between higher and lower forms of discourse, and by association between the elite and lower classes, creates a distance where those of low discourse (and by association lower class) are to be viewed with a certain amount of contempt and pity; and yet, as it will be demonstrated, there is also a desire and draw to the lower class by the elite.

However, as severe as the polarities seem, the interesting element that emerges at the crossing of high-low discourse is the liberation of the constructs found in both. In contrast to the constructs found within high and low that seems to galvanize class and gender is the narrative found within Sufi literature. Sufism is an esoteric spirituality founded on mysticism that focuses on an inward *ṭarīqah* (path) that leads toward a union with the Divine (the Real, *al-Ḥaqīqa*). Paradoxically, Sufi stories and maxims can be found in both *Mirror* and *Nights* texts. The journey of the Sufi is a crossing over of

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[18] Stallybrass, P., & White, A. *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression.* (Ithaca, 1986), 3.

boundaries. With this crossing over, liberation becomes apparent when domains of both discourses are transgressed and a symbolic narrative is revealed that no longer polarizes class and gender. Within the liminal space of Sufi story and metaphor, there is no high and low, and unquestioned human authority is transcended.

Purpose of Study

This thesis does not deal with the dilemmas surrounding the origins, authenticity of translations, or authorship of either the *Nights* or *Mirror* literature. Instead, this study is limited to an examination of key selected narratives and anecdotes in the *Nights* and *Mirror* works, with a focus on the representation of women in the *Nights* as a symbol of a low discourse or non-elite, and the male elite in *Mirror* texts as a subject of high discourse. I will also illuminate the different "voices" found in both texts. These different "voices" are uncovered through the exploration of the various styles of writing and the rhetoric found within both *Mirror* texts and *Nights*.

Once these "voices" have been illuminated, the symbolic narratives will then be explored focusing on key Islamic mystical writings. Given the nature of mystical stories and texts, it is highly likely that the authors of both *Mirror* and *Nights* discourse were exposed to Sufi writings and visa versa. In fact, comparisons between *Nights* tales and Sufi practices is discussed by Shah, and he comments, "[The person who named The]..Thousand and One Nights...intended to convey...encoded Sufi teaching stories, descriptions of psychological processes, or enciphered lore of one kind or another."[19]

Further, a variety of political treatise often included a mix of story, morality tales, and

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[19] Shah, I. *The Sufis* 197-198.

maxims in an effort to reinforce just government and prosperity for the kingdom. Irwin comments on the use of tales to enforce political ideologies:

> The Isma'îlîs and the Muslim Neoplatonist group of Ikhwân al-Safâ ("Brethren of Purity") frequently used stories and fables to make political or moral points (Netton 89–94). Later yet, from the late twelfth century onwards, Sufi masters began to make use of the teaching tale. Moreover, the philosophers Ibn Tufayl (d. 1185), Ibn Sînâ (Avicenna; d. 1037), and Ibn al-Nafîs (d. 1288) all produced fantasies that dealt in part with political and social issues. [20]

In an intertextual analysis of selected texts, a web will first be woven between the high-low discourses that reflect polarities of class, gender and rhetoric. There are several layers of conflict within both discourses that deserve attention beyond those of gender and its usual focus on feminine disempowerment. To illustrate, within the high discourse of *Mirror* literature there is a rhetoric established by the male ruling class that seeks to demean and distance "others" through an implied subjugation of those considered "low." This subjugation is done through a historical narrative that seeks to defame; however, interestingly, with this distancing and subjugation comes a paradoxical fascination with the "other"; highly cultured medieval Muslim males were warned about the seductive allure of their "inferiors" and all that was associated with them. The rhetoric of high discourse emphasizes the importance of selecting appropriate companions, whether cup-companions (drinking companions), women, or even works of literature. The high discourse of *Mirrors* is filled with advice to the ruler regarding everything from administering justice and discipline, to training servants and choosing appropriate cup or boon companions (drinking companions, or associates).

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[20] Irwin, R. (248) " Political Thought in The Thousand and One Nights." *Marvels and Tales* (2004).

In Nizam al-Mulk's *Siyāsat-nāma* the author warns that boon-companions as well as advisors should be well bred and accomplished. Although the primary job of the boon-companion is to function as an escort and attendant for the purposes of keeping the ruler entertained, he must also have, "pure faith, be able to keep secrets and wear good clothes....He must always be a good talker and a pleasant partner...know how to play backgammon and chess...and he must always agree with the king...and further, every one of the boon-companions should have a rank and degree"[21] As this passage illustrates, al-Mulk understands the draw of lower companions, and yet he also felt it necessary to reject or eliminate those considered to have lower breeding, and by association, to be of lower class. In other words, the ruling class sought out the company of the lower classes, despite the warnings. This tension between attraction and repulsion described above is a hallmark of *Mirror* literature. Those of lower class, gender or discourse held allure for the highly cultured in Medieval Muslim culture.[22] The ruling elite were constantly admonished and warned to reject those considered inferior to them and their station.

Conversely, low discourse is defined as opposite of high. If those associated with high discourse are characterized as elite and refined, then in juxtaposition, low discourse is bawdy, ribald and therefore warned against. Low discourse like the *Nights* is often positioned in opposition to *adab*, or high discourse. Sallis has noted that the *Nights* is, "secular literature, historically not approved by the cultured literary class as

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[21] al-Mulk, N. (1092). *Siyāsat-nāma* (H. Darke, Trans.), 89-90.

[22] For a complete discussion of high and low cultural dynamics in medieval Islamic culture, see Shoshan, Boaz, "High Culture ...", pp. 67-107.

literature at all."[23] However, in the low discourse of the *Nights,* there is a distinct

dialog on aspects of morality and justice that is almost identical to that which takes

place in *Mirror* literature.

Through the exploration of select passages in both high and low discourses, we

learn about the morality of a character through the altruism which motivates their

actions toward others as well as themselves. The outward signs of a weak character can

be understood in polarity to a strong character. As it will be illustrated, character, in

part, determines both power and authority. The male ruling elites' attempt to control

others through the use of a discourse in which those that are believed to be lowly and

unworthy and as a result relegated to an inferior position does not constitute real

authority; in fact, it is actually the abuse of power which is the antithesis of order and

justice. And in both the *Nights* and *Mirror* texts, it is often the lower classes and/or

women who constantly remind male rulers that power corrupts.

Once the "voices" of both discourses are illuminated, their conflict and mutuality

will become apparent. Within this conflict of two distinct discourses a transgressive

voice that challenges hierarchy is revealed. What is this transgressive voice? How does

it challenge authority? Is this trangressive voice high or low? This challenge is

exhibited through the varied representations of women in the *Nights* as they confront

their historical displacement by the ruling male elite. As will be illustrated, the *Nights*

seems to suspend all rules enforced on women by the ruling class, while at the same time

illustrates the dependence of the ruling elite on women, the non-elite, and low discourse.

The *Nights* offers a different version of gender history than found in high discourse.

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[23] Sallis, E. *Sheherazade Through the Looking Glass,* (Richmond Surrey, 1999), 1.

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The representations of women found in *Nights* are beyond the rhetoric defined for them in high discourse. It is tempting to look at the narratives in the *Nights* as confirmation of the fears expressed by the male ruling elite and therefore justification to control women. Yet, it will be demonstrated that these expanded narratives mirror discourse often found in Sufi texts. When high and low are transgressed, the rhetoric established by high discourse that assigns value based on hierarchy is no longer relevant. Sufi discourse moves the narrative surrounding justice, authority, and rulership of a kingdom to a personal and symbolic narrative where governance and responsibility is to a Divine power. It will be demonstrated that Sufi narrative is neither high, nor low; rather, it is transcendent of the rhetoric of high, while at the same time, inclusive of discourse found in low.

Approach to Texts and Translations

As scholars have demonstrated, although versions and adaptations of the *Nights* vary considerably, there are certain structural characteristics that remain constant both in terms of overarching formation as well as individual stories. Conversely, as Sallis has summarized, textual diversity is a feature of the *Nights*.[24] Further, both Sallis and Irwin

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[24] Sallis, E. *Sheherazade….* In her analysis of various stories in the *Nights*, she uses several texts, both in terms of comparisons, as well as referring to a particular version of a story. In addition, she uses variations in texts of a specific story to illuminate certain points she is trying to make regarding a certain theme. Sallis concludes that, "Faced with a myriad of texts, all having some weaknesses and some extraordinary beauties, the stance here will be as far as possible to prefer that which pleases most for its literary

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have demonstrated that the whole of the *Nights* is not accessible through the Arabic versions alone. Therefore, for the purpose of this study my text of preference will be Burton's *Nights*, including his supplements. I will not limit my references to his translations exclusively; however, his collection of the *Nights* is the most comprehensive, and in addition, unlike many other translations, he includes the poetry. I make this preference of *Nights* text with the understanding that many scholars will take issue not only with my exclusive use of English only translations rather than Arabic script versions. All of the criticism is certainly valid, including the fact that Burton's translation seems at times archaic and his language awkward. However, my study does not focus on translation, but rather on story content. Most important, I would add nothing to the impressive list of translators of both *Mirror* texts and *Nights*. It is my position that valid scholarship on English translations can be just as important as scholarship that focuses on the initial translation. Through the reexamination of translated sources I seek to "reevaluate social roles...raise new questions about old problems...reexamine sources which we thought were exhausted...[and] focus...our attention on all socially-constructed categories, including class and ethnicity."[25] I chose Burton's translation because it is also regarded as "comprehensive... [and]...more accurate and scholarly"[26] than many of the others noted. There are dozens of stories in

qualities and for its reflection of the concerns, themes or simply the equilibrium of the frame." See pages 5, 17.

[25]Blanks, David R. "Gendering History: Europe and the Middle East," *Alif* 19 (1999) 50-51.

[26] Irwin, R. *The Arabian Nights...*, 7.

the *Nights* that I have chosen for my exploration of the representations of women. There are also many stories in the *Nights* that can be found in *Mirror* literature.

The texts chosen for *Mirror* comparisons are those that best illustrate the intertextuality of the *Mirrors* and *Nights*, especially as it relates to class and gender. For the purposes of this study, *Mirror* texts are used in juxtaposition to *Nights* tales. Therefore, I will not dwell on the categorizing of discourse, I will merely illuminate the rhetoric that seeks to separate and define. Specifically, Abu Ḥamīd al-Ghazālī's (d. 504 AH/1111 AD) *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* and Nizam al-Mulk's *Siyāsat-nāma* represent an adequate sampling of the *Mirror* genre that illustrates a melding of Islamic and Persian ideas. Within the *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* particularly are several anecdotal stories also found in the *Nights*, as well as the familiar Persian political philosophy known as "circle of justice."[27] Questions regarding authenticity of *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* author is the subject of much scholarship. Patricia Crone questions al-Ghazālī as the author of the Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk primarily due to it being, "an odd idea that al-Ghazālī should have written a *Furstenspiegel* [Mirror]: a religious scholar and ascetic hardly makes an obvious candidate for the authorship of a mirror, least of all for one which completely ignores the existence of the caliphate."[28] Part of Crone's argument focuses on her particular

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[27] The "circle of justice" is a Persian and based on the idea of mutual needs between the kingdom and the subjects. In summary, the king depends on the troops, the troops on the treasury, the treasury on the wealth of the subjects, and the wealth of the subjects contingent on the justice done them by the king.

[28] Crone, P. "Did al-Ghazālī Write a Mirror for Princes?" *Jerusalem Studies of Arabic and Islam*, 10, 1987, 168.

definition of a mirror as being a book of sensible wisdom on the art of government, versus the idea that a mirror can include "an exposition of the faith written for a prince."[29] She then proceeds to identify two parts to his *Mirror*, with the first part being a treatise most likely ascribed to Al-Ghazālī; therefore, Crone seems to focus her authenticity argument on the second part of this *Mirror*. However, as I suggest in this work, *Mirror* texts evolved over time, and although early *Mirror* works main focus was on morality and justice as part of character building, the advent of Islamic *Mirror* works often included expositions of the Muslim faith. Crone's definition of *Mirror* texts might be far too limiting.

Most scholars acknowledge two parts to this work. In his introduction to the translation of the *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk*, Bagley envisions these two distinct parts as complimentary, rather than conflicting by noting: "The work consists of two parts, of which the first is theological, setting forth and explaining, as do no other books of this kind, what are the beliefs which a pious Muslim ruler ought to hold and the religious principles on which he ought to act."[30] Bagley, like Crone, acknowledges the second part as a mirror. However, Bagley sees the second part of the book as predominately ethical, often reflecting Sufi principles. Bagley further acknowledges the scholarship surrounding authenticity; however, his scholarship leads him to acknowledging the *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* as an authentic work of al-Ghazālī's. For the purposes of this study, I am comfortable with the decision of Bagley, and will discuss the text as a whole and attributable to al-Ghazālī.

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[29] Ibid.

[30] Bagley, F.R.C. *Counsel for Kings* 1964 xv.

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I will also be using ʿAbd Allāh Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's (d. 139 AH/756 CE) *Kitāb Al-Adab al-kabīr* which has within it sections of the Persian treatise *The Testament of Ardashīr* that focus on the need for just government and the classes of kings and their resulting method of rulership.[31] These ideas can be found in the *Nights* tale of *King Omar Bin Al-Nu'uman And His Sons Sharrkan and Zau Al-Makan*, which are spoken by Nuzhat al-Zaman, thought to be a slave, but who is actually a Queen. In the *Sulwān al-Mutā* of Ibn Ẓafar as-Ṣiqillī (b. 497 AH/1104 CE) is found the tale "Miller and the Ass," which is also found in the *Nights*.

Animal fables as narrative on wisdom and justice are also prevalent in early *Mirror* works as well as the *Nights*. In animal fables, the animals display the full range of human emotions, and lessons to be learned are worked out by means of didactic themes through the personalities of the animals. With the use of animal fables, the boundaries between *Mirror* texts and *Nights* tales begin to shift. Most notably, the animal tales found in *Kalilah wa Dimnah* is one of the earliest *Mirror* translations from Pahlavi to Arabic and includes a mixture of stories taken from popular wisdom literature, folklore, aphorism and verse found in Indian morality literature. However, the morals found in these tales were meant to encourage young princes to transcend average manmade laws and seek instead to strive to become just and honorable rulers who fight oppression. These tales focused on character building rather than juristic and political elements of ruling a kingdom. One of the most popular animal fables can be found in the *Nights* as well as the epistle on the case of the animals and king of jinn by

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[31] See Irwin, R. "Political Thought in the 1001 Nights," *Marvels & Tales.* (2004), 248; and Lambton, *State and Government...*, 45.

Brethren of Purity[32] (Ikhwān al-Safā). The Ikhwān al-Safā are considered an obscure group and their writing are esoteric in nature. They were considered Arab Muslim philosophers during the 'Abbasid Caliphate even though they were not part of the Islamic court. The Ikhwān's epistles were not defined as *Mirrors* because their narratives focused on a wide range of theological material, rather than the hierarchical formation of authority. As Stanley Lane-Poole suggests: "In this Brotherhood, self is forgotten; all act by the help of each, all rely upon each for succour and advice, and if a Brother sees it will be good for another that he should sacrifice his life for him, he willingly gives it."[33] Most of their epistles elaborated on the phenomena of the nature of the outer world (macrocosm) and its relationship with the human soul, or inner world (microcosm). In the context of court literatures that focus on the qualities and habits rulers are encouraged to develop, their epistles could not be considered *Mirror* works. However, the Ikhwān were definitely considered scholars and often identified as mystics. For the purposes of this study, my focus on their work is limited to their 22nd epistle, "The Case of Animals Versus Man", and how this work is represented in the *Nights*. This work seems to deliberately avoid discussions of gender; therefore, nuances between the *Nights* version and the Ikhwāns will be illuminated.

An illustration of this cross-over or transgression of discourse is found in the writings of Ibn 'Arabi. Ibn 'Arabi's thought definitely sought a transgression of

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[32] Although there are disagreements among scholars regarding specific dates, the Encyclopedia of Islam places the composition of the Epistles approximately between 350 and 375 AH/961 and 986 CE.

[33] Lane-Poole, S. *Studies in a Mosque* 189, 199. Khayat Book & Publishing: 1883.

authority, class and gender. Many scholars see him as a Sufi extraordinaire. Several of

his works will be investigated in an effort to explore the various "voices" of narrative

found in both high and low discourses, including his works entitled *At-Tadbirat al-*

ilahiyyah fi ishah al-mamlakat al-insaniyyah (*Divine Governance of the Human*

Kingdom, heretofore referred to as *Divine Governance*), and the English translation of

Ibn 'Arabi's poems by Michael Sells titled, *Stations of Desire*. *Divine Governance* was

written around 590 AH/1194 CE in Andalusia, and approaches authority and governance

from the perspective of the human being's responsibility for their own character,

morality and soul development. *Divine Governance* uses the same format as many

Mirror works, and yet the author seeks to transcend the ideologies found in most

mainstream *Mirror* texts. This is neither strictly high discourse, nor low; this

perspective is transcendent.

Organization of Study

In chapter two, titled "Paradox and Inversions," I will examine specific

narratives in both *Nights* and *Mirrors* intertextually, comparing passages and contexts

found in both texts. I will explore questions that focus on how each of the texts

approach subjects like morality and right rulership in the narratives; what the nature of

morality is along with what contributes to right rulership in both texts. The narrative of

high discourse found embedded in the stories of low discourse offers interesting and

conflicting messages. What is the message of *Mirrors*? How is that message reflected

in the *Nights*? Do the roles of women differ in high discourse versus low discourse?

Does society reflect the restriction on roles found in high discourse? Although *Mirror*

literature on the surface seems to degrade women, several anecdotes and stories use

women to remind rulers to exhibit justice rather than oppression. Anecdotes within

Mirrors offer a slightly different perspective of women in relation to men, causing a

reexamination of the concepts of women as beguiling, and men as mere cuckolds to the

wiles of women. How is the sexual power of women reflected in both discourses? Is it

feared? And how is it entangled in male-female power dynamics?

In chapter three titled, "In the Darkness, the Path," after exposing the "voices"

of both narratives through an intertextual analysis, I speculate as to why select

narratives that focus on morality and right rulership are found in both high and low

discourse. Through the examination of both "voices" inner meanings and intensions are

explored. To assist in the illumination of intentions and meaning behind the various

texts, the philosophical concepts of *mythos* and *logos* will be explored. These concepts

provide a method of examining aspects of high/low discourse that may not be readily

apparent, as well as assist in uncovering intentions of both discourses, thereby clarifying

their distinct "voices." *Logos* can be considered a principle of logic, order, and

empirical reason; but it is also associated with a fixed timelessness, a "universal" Truth

that is never allowed to waver. In contrast, a *mythos* perspective often reveals a

metaphorical truth rather than a definite Truth. This approach seeks to explore and

uncover rather than limit and define. This is the world of mysticism. With this in mind,

I will seek to compare the works of Ibn 'Arabi, with a focus on his *Divine Governance*

as an example of transcendent narrative. Within the Sufi tradition, a man's longing for

the unrequited love of a woman is transcended with imagery that seeks the Divine inside

humanity. Questions explored in this chapter include: Why is the feminine used to

relate authority that is usually restricted to males? If and when women are in positions of power and authority, how do men receive their authority in *Nights* and *Mirrors?* What is the Sufi position on the feminine?

In chapter four titled, "Bold Expansiveness" I will summarize representations of the feminine in both discourses as well as the symbolic narrative found in Sufi literature and offer some final observations. I will demonstrate that the feminine offers different modes of thinking about morality, and although their conception of self is different than that of males, it is far from inferior. As transgressors, women often challenge the stagnation of male elite power through the opening up of fluid dialog. This imagery is best expressed through an examination of Sufi ideas of transcending desire as a response to feelings of great sexual longing. In the language of Sufi ideology, the feminine is often acknowledged as a source of wisdom and mercy which illuminates the path of the adept. In this chapter I will explore questions that include: How does mercy and relatedness reveal itself? Is external power the only viable power?

Chapter Two

PARADOX AND INVERSIONS

Text is a "multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture."—Roland Barthes, Image, Music, Text

High discourse developed within the medieval Islamic court culture as a manifestation of ideals derived from a variety of pre-Islamic societies and empires. With roots in the Persian *belle lettres* tradition, as well as antecedents in Greco-Hellenistic literature[34], *Mirrors* sought to synthesize Islamic ideas with Sassanian traditions. In the Persian theory of kingship, the ruler is divinely endowed with both justice and knowledge. His just regime is integral to the "harmonious ordering of society."[35] The writers of *Mirrors* focused on the practical application of justice and fair government, rather than on juristic rules themselves. The Islamic *Mirror* genre found its origins in the 8th century of the Common Era, with three notable secretaries: Abū 'l-'Alā' Sālim, 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Kātib (dates of death of both Sālim and al-Ḥamīd are unknown, however both lived in the 2nd century A.H./8th century C.E.), and 'Abd Allāh Ibn al-Muqaffa' (d. 139 AH/756 CE). Ibn al-Muqaffa' began his career under the Umayyads as a pupil of al Ḥamīd, who in turn had served his apprenticeship under Sālim.[36]

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[34] See Beeston, chapter 4, CHAL for a discussion of the origins and influences on prose and epistolary literature in medieval Arab lands.

[35] Lambton, A.K.S., *State and Government*, p. 419.

[36] Beeston, A.F.L., *Arabic Literature to the end of the Umayyad period*, CHAL, p. 163.

Ibn al-Muqaffaʻ and his contemporaries translated a variety of texts from Pahlavi to Arabic, and spent their entire careers studying morality and the human condition. Morality in rulership was especially important to them. For Ibn al-Muqaffaʻ and his contemporaries, a ruler should acquire a deeper understanding of his own unbridled desires and passions. This deeper understanding would allow the ruler insights into his own character, thus encouraging him to work harder at developing moral and just character traits worthy of a wise and benevolent ruler. This deeper understanding would lead to moral wisdom, which was considered the most important characteristic a ruler needed in order to rule justly. As Charles-Dominique notes in his critique of Ibn al-Muqaffa's *Adab al-kabīr (Adab)*, "The purpose of morality as proposed by Ibn al-Muqaffa' is essential to ensure the happiness of mankind here on earth: happiness which has at its foundation human dignity and respectability."[37] In this *Mirror* work, Ibn al-Muqaffa' relates that morality is developed by building certain character traits: integrity, solicitude, benevolence, generosity, courage, and mastery over the physical body. He distinguishes three kinds of kingship: "There are three types of princes, depending on how they exercise their authority: 1-a prince who rules based on religion; 2-a prince who rules judiciously; and 3-a prince who rules based on his passions and whims."[38]

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[37] Charles-Dominique, P., "Le Système éthique d'Ibn al-Muqaffa' d'après ses deux épîtres dites", *Arabica*, 45. "La morale que propose Ibn al-Muqaffa' a pour but essential d'assurer le bonheur de l'homme ici-bas: bonheur qui a pour fondement la dignité humaine."

[38] Translation is mine. see Appendix I , Kurd 'Ali, Muḥammad, *Rasa'il Al-Bulagha'*, (Misr, 1913), 63 for Arabic script.

Of the three, Ibn al-Muqaffa' regards a religious framework as the most ideal for a ruler as it assists him in the moral decision making process. He indicates that religion can also assist the ruler or prince in developing more admirable character traits, especially when a king's conscience has not. Ibn al-Muqaffa' advises that the development of basic moral ethics involves more than uttering niceties or developing proper courtly manners. Instead, a ruler should focus on attending to his own personal conduct and the development of integrity in all of his affairs. In this high discourse, Ibn al-Muqaffa' cautions against ruling based on passions and whims, considered lowly and base:

A prince who rules with religion has the religious institution as a foundation with fixed rights and duties that all subjects are familiar with and can accept with good grace. Even the most unruly are compelled to enjoin in the duties imposed on him by religion.

A Prince who establishes rulership on judiciousness and a resolute policy of his own making, finds himself without protection from criticism and attacks.

A prince who bases his rulership on the whims of his passions and desires is a slave to his cravings, and his authority will be in endless decline.[39]

The distinctions between a prince who rules justly and a prince who allows his baser nature to control him, as elaborated above, demonstrates how discourse (and human nature) can intersect between high and low or Master and slave. When a prince establishes rule on just and moral policies, his wisdom is well-known and appreciated. As Master of his domain, he administers justice based on sound and resolute practices. However, when a ruler or prince gives in to his passions and whims, his baser nature of greed, envy, and lust overtakes him. This idea of the ruler becoming a "slave" to passions and whims is illustrated in the *Nights* story titled "Tale of King Omar bin al-

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[39] Ibid., 63-64.

Nu'uman and his Sons Sharrkan and Zau al-Makan".[40] The tale of King Omar has within it the passage of Ibn al-Muqaffa's discussed above; however, instead of this sage advice coming from a male advisor, it is said by Nuzhat al-Zaman.[41]

Nuzhat al-Zaman is a female who is thought to be a slave, but is eventually discovered to be of royal lineage. She has been brought before the court to demonstrate her knowledge and wisdom. She is an intriguing female figure in the *Nights*. She was born a twin of a brother to a king who had only one older son, which is considered barrenness in the story. The barrenness of a king is often referred to in the *Nights* and is a topic I shall return to later. As often happens in the telling of a tale, God intercedes and grants Nuzhat al-Zaman's father-to-be, King Omar, twins born of a concubine. King Omar is said to be a "mighty giant…for none could warm himself at his fire…"[42] He is a ruler who often succumbs to his whims and desires. He has four wives and three hundred and sixty concubines of all nations! He encourages excessive behavior in his eldest son as well. Both he and his son Sharrkan cannot seem to quench their desires. Sharrkan spends much of his time frolicking with slender-waisted women, and King

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[40] Burton, R. Vol. II, 77.

[41] Her name means "Light of the Kingdom", or "Delight of the Age." This story is long, complicated and has several layers. This king is revealed to be her half-brother, and much of her dialogue is the standard rhetoric found in many *Mirror* discourses, including the perspective in high discourse on the wiles of the feminine; however, as it will be demonstrated, there are often conflicting messages in both high and low discourse, and this does not take away from the idea illustrated here.

[42] Burton, R., 78.

Omar, who cannot control his lust and aggression, drugs and rapes a Princess. Instead of exhibiting wisdom and control over their character traits, their greed, lust, and demand for power consumes their very nature. This consumption leads to a loss of authority, resulting in debasement and degradation of himself as well as the community he serves.

The fate of King Omar and his son Sharrkan is a cautionary tale in the *Nights* and illustrates the disastrous consequences a ruler may face when he succumbs to his passions and whims. King Omar is not only murdered by poison, but his body "with his flesh torn into strips and bits and his bones broken"[43] is eventually revenged for the crime against a young, noble, innocent girl he abused. His son Sharrkan lives to fight the young girl's father, King Afridun. When Sharrkan and King Afridun meet on the battlefield, King Afridun echoes the sentiment found in Ibn al-Muqaffa's *Adab*: "By the truth of the Messiah and the Faith which is no liar, thou art nought save a doughty rider and a stalwart fighter; but thou art fraudful and thy nature is not that of the noble. I ken thy work is other than praiseworthy nor is thy prowess that of a Prince; for thy people behave to thee as though thou wert a slave."[44] The king (and Master), young king Sharrkan is now exposed as a slave. His lack of control (giving in to his whims and desires) casts him from high to low, thus "mirroring" that which is ordinarily associated with the lowly: a slave. The ruler may still sit on the "throne" of power; however, power is nothing without ability to control. It is only a matter of time before the ruler is usurped.

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[43] Ibid., p. 185.

[44] Ibid., p. 198.

The obsessive desires of kings replace just rule, thereby reducing political power to a pursuit of petty needs and wants. Often, these petty needs and personal wants are "cloaked" in virtuous rhetoric, however, the pettiness of the ruler is eventually exposed, and when ultimate political authority is squandered, chaos results, making any "perceived" power useless. The ruler may still physically occupy a throne of power; however, even the citizens are aware of his impotence.

Nuzhat al-Zaman and her brother leave the kingdom unescorted on a pilgrimage to Mecca. Leaving unescorted is unusual, and yet there is an urgency to flee this environment of uncontrolled lusts and desires. Even though Nuzhat al-Zaman and her brother are raised in the opulence of kings, their desire to escape can be seen as behavior that indicates they abhor such excess. When Nuzhat al-Zaman becomes estranged from her brother and sold as a slave, her knowledge and wisdom is eventually discovered. In spite of the beatings and ridicule she has endured during this journey, her value as both a woman and sage is recognized. Her current lowly and debased status does not take away from her high discourse. As she tutors her audience on the justness of rulers, she warns:

> And it is said by a certain sage, 'There be three kinds of Kings, the King of the Faith, the King who protecteth things to which reverence is due, and the King of his own lusts.' The King of the Faith obligeth his subjects to follow their faith, and it behoveth he be the most faithful, for it is by him that they take pattern in the things of the Faith; and it becometh the folk to obey him in whatso he commandeth according to Divine Ordinance; but he shall hold the discontented in the same esteem as the contented, because of submission to the decrees of Destiny. As for the King who protecteth things to be reverenced, he upholdeth the things of the Faith and of the World and compelleth his folk to follow the Divine Law and to preserve the rights of humanity; and it fitteth him to unite Pen and Sword; for whoso declineth from what Pen hath written his feet slip and the King shall rectify his error with the sharp Sword and dispread his justice over all mankind. As for the King of his own lusts, he hath no religion but the following his desire and, as he feareth not the wrath of his Lord who set him on

the throne, so his Kingdom inclineth to deposition and the end of his pride is in the house of perdition.[45]

Nuzhat al-Zaman is educated in the arts of science and religion. Her elevated status as a royal daughter, from a royal concubine, allows her access to knowledge, and she is resolute in her desire to impart wisdom to the king and his court: "I am also acquainted with philosophy and medicine and the prolegomena of science and the commentaries of Galen, the physician, on the canons of Hippocrates; and I have commented him and I have read the Tazkirah and have commented the Burhan; and I have studied the Simples of Ibn Baytar, and I have something to say of the cannon of Meccah, by Avicenna."[46]

Nuzhat al-Zaman is therefore not only filled with facts and figures of knowledge, but her ability to give commentaries on these philosophers' works shows her wisdom. As the daughter of King Omar, she has intimate knowledge of the vices and unrestrained desires of men and kings. Her use of high discourse along with her hard won experience elevate her to a unique position of authority. Conversely, as the *Nights* tale illuminates, the barbaric behavior of her father, King Omar, goes against every moral ethic outlined in Ibn al-Muqaffa's text. Instead of exhibiting the character traits espoused by high discourse, his character is revealed in his own disgusting behavior. He is cast from high to the low from which those of elite status are trying to separate themselves from. He in

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[45] Ibid., p 158-163.

[46] Ibid., p. 165. Both the *Mukhtasar Tazkirah* of al-Qurtubi (671 AH/1273 CE) and *al-Burhan fi Alamat al-Mahdi Akhir al-Zaman* by al-Muttaqi al Hindi (975 AH/1568 CE) are noted scholars of hadith. These selections focus on the Day of Judgment.

essence is the "Other" that he despises. In the *Nights*, Nuzhat al-Zaman becomes

Master of discourse through the practice of moral behavior and wisdom gained through

a combination of knowledge and experience.

There is another passage in the *Adab* of Ibn al-Muqaffaʻ that closely mirrors

another tale in the *Nights*. In this passage, Ibn al-Muqaffaʻ has much to say regarding

the uncontrolled lustful desires of rulers and how succumbing to endless fantasies takes

a king from master to slave:

You must understand that the most degrading behaviors one can have with regard to
religion, and most damaging to the body, most expensive, most harmful to a man of
virtue and reason, most swift to destroy dignity and respectability is to succumb to the
insatiable appetite for passion and women.

And one of the misfortunes that weigh heavily and tests such passion is that he will
always grow tired of the woman he has, and his eyes will continually covet the woman
he does not have. However, you must understand that all women are similar. This
insatiable appetite for the unknown woman is mere fantasy...

Therefore, understand that the man who turns away from the woman in his own house,
to covet other women outside the home, is similar to one who prefers exotic foods to the
meals he has at home...

And most astonishing is the man of sound judgment, who when he sees a woman fully
draped in clothing from a distance can fantasize about her beauty and convince himself
that he is in love with her without ever setting eyes on her or knowing anything about
her, even when he is surprised to discover she is hideousness and deformed. However,
this experience will not serve for him as a warning or prevent him from committing
another offense. Instead, he will not cease in his fantasy of tasting all women,
mistakenly thinking that this new woman has something different to offer than what he
already knows. In this type of behavior lies misfortune.[47]

Ibn al-Muqaffa' compares this insatiable appetite when pursuing women to

gluttonous habits at the dinning table. Insatiable desire is often intoxicating, and the

feelings these desires produce is the goal, rather than the object itself. According to

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[47] Translation mine. See Appendix I, Kurd ʻAli, pp. 98-100 for Arabic script.

Jacques Lacan, desire has no object. An object may reveal a desire, however, "desire is always the desire for something that is missing and thus involves a constant search"[48] for that which is missing.

There is a tale in the *Nights* titled "The King and his Wazier's Wife" that illustrates the insatiable appetite of men and their never-ending fantasies regarding women. It is related: "There was once a King of the Kings, a potent man and a proud, who was devoted to the love of women and one day being in the privacy of his palace, he espied a beautiful woman on the terrace roof of her house and could not contain himself from falling consumedly in love with her."[49] He inquired after her and discovered her to be the wife of his wazier. He immediately dispatched her husband on an errand, and promptly found his way to her door. She greeted him respectfully, and asked him: "O our lord, what is the cause of thy gracious coming? Such an honour is not for the like of me.' Quoth he, 'The cause of it is that love of thee and desire thee-wards have moved me to this.'"[50] She tries unsuccessfully to convince the king that she is unworthy of this attention, but he does not hear her; he is caught up in his fantasy. He starts to molest her[51], when her quick wit intervenes: "This thing shall not escape us; but take patience, O my King, and abide with thy handmaid all this day, that she may make ready for thee somewhat to eat and drink.' So the King sat down on his Minister's

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[48] Homer, Sean, *Jacques Lacan*, p.87.

[49] Burton, R. "Craft and Malice..." cycle, Vol. IV, p. 2159.

[50] Ibid., p. 2160.

[51] The story relates that she "restrained him from committing a sin and crime."

couch and she went in haste and brought him a book wherein he might read, whilst she made ready the food."[52]

The story relates that the book she brought him to read contained moral instances and exhortations that ultimately restrained him from committing such an abhorrent act as rape upon another man's wife. Wazier's were powerful men in rulers' courts and were often influential in the development of *Mirror* literature. It is not unlikely that this wife had a copy of Ibn al-Muqaffa's *Adab,* for after awhile she returned and set before him over ninety different dishes of food. As he ate he was amazed that although each dish had a different texture and color yet, all of them had the same exact taste. He said to her:

> O damsel, I see these meats to be manifold and various, but the taste of them is simple and the same." "Allah prosper the King!" replied she, "this is a parable I have set for thee, that thou mayst be admonished thereby." He asked, "And what is its meaning?"; and she answered, "Allah amend the case of our lord the King!; in thy palace are ninety concubines of various colours, but their taste is one." [53]

When the King hears these admonishments from the wife of his wazier he could become angry and punish her in some way; or he could cajole her for her insolence and in an effort to shame her, make her weak and easier to manipulate, leaving her with shame and remorse for admonishing a king. Another possibility available to the king is that he could turn wrathful, taking away her husband's title and property, selling her into slavery, and leaving her husband destitute. Instead, he becomes enlightened or "aware" of his behavior, and thus feeling ashamed quickly leaves her home without

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[52] Burton, R. "Craft and Malice…" cycle, Vol. IV., 2160.

[53] Ibid., 2160.

saying a word. Once he returns to the palace, he realizes he left his signet-ring which

fell under the cushion, but chooses to reclaim it.

When her husband returns he finds the signet-ring, and it is said, "So he knew it

and taking the matter to heart, held aloof in great grief from his wife for a whole year,

not going in unto her nor even speaking to her, whilst she knew not the reason of his

anger."[54] The wazier merely "sees" the signet-ring and his thoughts paint the worse

possible picture; and it is these pictures that do damage to him and his wife. He is more

than despondent, for the story indicates he is full of wrath as well as neglect. Finally,

out of desperation, the wife goes to her father and reveals to him all she has recently

experienced.

Family honor in the pre-Islamic period, as well as the early Islamic period was an

ideal that focused on the honorable deeds and good graces of an Arab family. *'Ird*

(female sexual honor) is often an important element in the structure of the family, and as

Peter Dodd comments, "honor is characterized as preoccupation with sexual purity and

chastity, or as a cause of suspicion and jealousy between men and women...Yet much of

the organization of the Arab family can be understood in terms of *'ird* as a controlling

value, legitimating the family structure and the 'modesty' code' required of both men

and women..."[55] Dodd posits that although *'ird* is difficult to regain once it is lost, the

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[54] Ibid., 2161.

[55] Dodd, Peter. "Family Honor and the Forces of Change in Arab Society" *IJMES*, 4/1

(Jan, 1973), 40.

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honor of a family can be raised or lowered, as a result of the demeanor of the women in the family, or more specifically, "the conduct of men towards its women."[56]

It is interesting therefore, to understand how sisters and daughters hold family honor, as it is not their virtue and purity that comes under scrutiny, but rather how others view or question their virtue. *'Ird* may be in the control of male members, but it is the female members that take responsibility.

There are many paths available to the father in this *Nights* tale. He could choose to doubt what his daughter is telling him, and instead suspect her to be at fault; her father could ask the husband his side of the story, choose to believe the wazier of the king, and punish, if not kill his daughter for disgracing the family. At the very least, her father could decide to disown her, and like her husband, never trust nor acknowledge her again. Rather, he chooses to believe her unquestioningly, and takes the matter of the neglectful husband to the king. Her father approaches the king, who is taking council with the wazier. He says to the king:

> 'Almighty Allah amend the King's case! I had a fair flower-garden, which I planted with mine own hand and thereon spent my substance till it bare fruit; and its fruitage was ripe for plucking, when I gave it to this thy Wazir, who ate of it what seemed good to him, then deserted it and watered it not, so that its bloom wilted and withered and its sheen departed and its state changed.' Then said the Wazir, 'O my King, this man saith sooth. I did indeed care for and guard the garden and kept it in good condition and ate thereof, till one day I went thither and I saw the trail of the lion there, wherefore I feared for my life and withdrew from the garden.' The King understood him that the trail of the lion meant his own seal-ring, which he had forgotten in the woman's house; so he said, 'Return, O Wazir, to thy flower-garden and fear nothing, for the lion came not near it. It hath reached me that he went thither; but, by the honour of my fathers and forefathers, he offered it no hurt.'[57]

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[56] Ibid., 45.

[57] Burton, R., 2161.

Upon hearing the king's words, the wazier returned home and made peace with his wife and from that day forward trusted her.

Another example of allusions common to both *Mirrors* and *Nights* are those associated with animal fables (*mathal*). The appearance of animal fables in *Mirrors* is a result of many influences, from pre-Islamic Arabia and the stories ascribed to Luqmān (a legendary sage), to those from Greece, Persia and India. One of the earlier Indian *Mirror* works translated by Ibn al-Muqaffa' is a Middle Persian collection of animal fables, known as *Kalīlah wa Dimnah*. This work is based on an earlier Indian/Sanskrit text titled *Panchatantra*. From this one translation by Ibn al-Muqaffa', hundreds of translations were made over the centuries, including Greek, Hebrew, Turkish, Czech, Ethiopic, and English, to name a few.[58]

The ideas expressed in *Kalīlah wa Dimnah* are ones which seek to entertain and motivate young princes and kings to develop a certain harmony in their lives with higher ideologies, myths, and religious beliefs. The morals found in the tales encouraged young princes to transcend average man-made laws in the service of becoming a more just and honorable ruler who fights oppression. In earlier versions of the tales of *Kalīlah wa Dimnah*, each chapter begins with the king asking the philosopher the consequences of a certain type of behavior. The philosopher provides a moral tale, in which animals display the full range of human emotion in responding to the proposed dilemma. Its

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[58] See *Encyclopedia of Islam*. Brill Online, under article titled "Kalila wa Dimna"

didactic intent is clear.[59] This work also includes a mixture of stories taken from popular wisdom literature, folklore, aphorisms and verse.

One of the stories in *Kalīlah wa Dimnah* is the story of the Ringdove. The story is told by the philosopher as an example of how a man should be received into brotherhood among his fellows. The tale relates that a group of doves becomes ensnared in a net devised by a hunter. When the doves land to eat the seeds, they are caught in the net. Their leader, the Ringdove, suggests to the group that they all work together and fly away with the net to avoid the hunter. As the doves master this task successfully, a crow in awe of their group effort follows them. The doves land near the home of a mouse which assists his friend the Ringdove by gnawing the ropes, and when they are free everyone celebrates. The crow is so impressed with this act of friendship and moral regard for a species other than his own that he asks to be included in this brotherhood. The story continues, and the crow is presented with an opportunity to save the mouse. They in turn are able to assist other animals from impending disasters from hunters. [60] The fable illustrates the superior moral attitude of trust and love created amongst those considered strangers as initially alien to one's own nature. Each race of animal, either as hunter or prey, at first sees in the other the enemy. At any place in the food chain, one species is always going to be weaker than the other. Acting against one's more base instincts and desires allows a transformative experience to occur. Instead of separation and distancing, there is a desire to embrace and include.

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[59] Atil, Esin, *Kalila wa Dimna*, 9-10.

[60] Ibid.,35.

This inclusion eventually breeds understanding and empathy for the universality of the human condition.

Not all fables are altruistic. *Kalīlah wa Dimnah* also includes stories on how to deal with enemies in specific circumstances, when never to trust them and when collaborating with an enemy may be prudent and beneficial to an empire. The story of the "Owls and the Crows" is a tale about enemies one should never trust, even if they seem to offer friendship. The story of "The Mouse and the Cat" is a story of enemies who collaborate during difficult times to help each other out in a desperate situation. As Atil comments:

> *Kalila wa Dimna* is more than a book of parables or a *Mirror* for princes. It symbolizes man's search for truth and justice, challenging his perception of reality...The underlying theme of the work is that all creatures, big or small, are a part of creation and each society is a microcosm of a much larger entity that controls the destiny of its members.[61]

These moral ideas of humanity and friendship regardless of type or kind were inspiring to many. The Isma'ilis as well as the Muslim Neo-Platonist group known as Ikhwān al-Safa[62] (Brethren of Purity) frequently used animal stories and fables to make political or moral points. Like *Kalila wa Dimnah*, the writings of the Ikhwān were considered more than a book of parables or *Mirror*. The Ikhwān produced many epistles, ranging from classifications of knowledge and commentaries on religious sciences to

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[61] Ibid., 10.

[62] Although there are disagreements among scholars regarding specific dates, the *Encyclopedia of Islam* places the composition of the Epistles between 350 and 375 AH/961 and 986 CE.

philosophy and their position on emanationism.[63] The fable of the Ringdove was not only admired by the Ikhwān, but they dedicated an entire treatise, Epistle 45, to Ibn al-Muqaffa' and the story of the Ringdove.[64] The story of the Ringdove epitomized to the Ikhwān the foundation of their group, both in their loyalty to one other, as well as in the moral ideas expressed in *Kalīlah wa Dimnah*.

One of their most famous epistles, embedded within their 22nd rasa'il and titled "The Case of Animals Versus Man", tells the story of the ruthlessness of a humanity that knows no limits, as man's dominion over nature is wantonly predatory and selfish. The story unfolds on an idealized island inhabited exclusively by animals; man invades and systematically captures then destroys all creatures with which he comes in contact. The human spokesman claims authority over beasts before the King of Jinn:

> 'These cattle, beasts of prey, and wild creatures—all animals in fact—are our slaves, and we their masters. Some have revolted and escaped, while others obey with reluctance and scorn servitude.' The King replied to the human, 'What evidence and proof have you to substantiate your claims?' 'Your Majesty,' said the human, 'we have both traditional religious evidence and rational proofs for what I have said.'[65]

To counter the claims of man, a call is sent out to the animal kingdom to bring forward emissaries from their various groups to challenge the authority claimed by man over all beasts. Each elected spokesman presents his case before the King of the Jinn,

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[63] de Callatay, G., *Ikhwan al-Safa': A Brotherhood of Idealists on the Fringe of Orthodox Islam*; Netton's *Muslim Neo-Platonists*, and Goodman's, *The Case of the Animals versus Man Before the King of Jinn*, for more details.

[64] de Callatay, G., *2*.

[65] Goodman, *53*.

expounding on their unjust treatment at the hands of man. The eloquence of a camel or horse as he defends his kind is just as passionate as that of the mule, pig or ant. Each animal reveals its special abilities and its necessary purpose in God's world. Animals given a lowly and reviled status in the human world are elevated in this epistle. Even the pig, considered one of the lowest and debased of animals, is called upon to address the assembly. At first, the jinni scholars question this judgment and cannot even agree as to which category the pig belongs. The pig, out of frustration, says to the camel:

> Good Lord! What am I to say, and of whom shall I complain with all the conflicting things that are said of me…Muslims say we are accursed and grotesque….The Romans, on the other hand, eat our meat with gusto…The Jews detest, revile, and curse us…Magicians and sorcerers use our skins for their books, spells, amulets, and magic devices…That is why we are confused. We have no idea whom to thank and against whom to complain of injustice.[66]

All animals take turns, speaking of the injustice they suffer under the hands of man. Jinni philosophers discuss the origins of the enmity, and humans defend their position. On the island of animals, man is called to task for his harshness and cruelty. He is made to account for his assumption of "Mastery" over the world. The mule is the first to challenge the claims made by the human spokesman, who quotes verses from the Qur'an to support his mastery: "There is nothing in the verses this human has cited to substantiate his claims that they are masters and we are slaves…These verses point only to the kindness and blessing which God vouchsafed to mankind…No! God created all His creatures on heaven and earth."[67] The mule elucidates that it is man's presumption

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[66] Ibid., 63-64.

[67] Ibid., 54-55.

and incorrect interpretation of verses that justify his abuses. This presumption by man in assuming he is Master to all is challenged by those considered slaves to his whims. In the *Nights*, there is a significantly shorter version of the story titled, "The Birds and the Beasts and the Carpenter."[68] Instead of the animals denouncing the injustice of man before the King of Jinn, they share angst when panic on the previously tranquil island ensues after a duck is seen running through the forest in search of a place to hide. She comes upon two pea hens and relates her dream of foreboding where she sees the destruction of their world at the hand of man. They then start to run and come upon a lion cub that has also had the same dream. They, in turn, meet a mule and camel. As the duck and pea hens meet these larger and stronger animals, they are amazed that despite their strength, they are all at the mercy of man. When a horse comes upon the group at full gallop, all are astounded as he relates his story of escape:

> Let not my length and my breadth nor yet my bulk delude thee with respect to the son of Adam; for that he, of the excess of his guile and his wiles, fashioneth me a thing called Hobble and applieth to my four legs a pair of ropes made of palm fibres bound with felt, and gibbeteth me by the head to a high peg, so that I being tied up remain standing and can neither sit nor lie down. And...he bindeth on his feet a thing of iron called Stirrup and layeth on my back another thing called Saddle, which he fasteneth by two Girths passed under my armpits. Then he setteth in my mouth a thing of iron he calleth Bit, to which he tieth a thing of leather called Rein...O son of our Sultan, the hardships I endure from the son of Adam. And when I grow old and lean and can no longer run swiftly, he selleth me to the miller who maketh me turn in the mill, and I cease not from turning night and day till I grow decrepit. Then he in turn vendeth me to the knacker who cutteth my throat and flayeth off my hide and plucketh out my tail, which he selleth to the sieve maker; and he melteth down my fat for tallow candles.[69]

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[68] Burton, R. Vol. III, 114 – 125.

[69] Ibid., 119.

The physical strength of these animals is no power against the wiles and unbridled desires of men focused on domination. When the young lion hears the words of the horse, he is angry and vexed. He is sure he can overcome this onslaught of oppression. But alas, the lion himself is eventually tricked and captured in a cage and the duck meets an unpleasant death. In the end, in both the Ikhwān version and the *Nights*, the animals and the King of the Jinn understand the folly of their plight. They cannot control man and his pursuit of power through domination. The nature of both discourses, however, does advance arguments surrounding moral ethics and the presumptions of man in assuming a master-slave relationship over all he sees. As Goodman comments:

> Man is not absolute, not the be-all and end-all of nature. All his boasted powers
> of sensibility and discrimination are exceeded in one species or another except
> for one highly ambiguous gift, reason, which man, the Ikhwān satirically argue,
> exhibits more prominently in the breach than in the practice. And none of these
> gifts, least of all reason, is of our own devising. Where other species praise God
> by nature (by exhibiting in their behavior the intricateness and exquisiteness of
> his design) God-given reason affords man the opportunity for heedlessness.[70]

One of the most interesting differences between the *Nights* version and the Ikhwān's is the lack of a feminine voice in the Ikhwān epistle. All emissaries that come before the King of the Jinn in the Ikhwān version are masculine, and references to the feminine is virtually non-existent. This complete and total absence of any feminine "voice" in the text is contrary to the Qur'an story of the ant where a feminine voice of wisdom is ascribed to the ant story regarding the anecdote of King Solomon. Another commentary on the ant Sura by Ibn Zafar also refers to the inner wisdom of the female ant in the Sura. In a private email correspondence with the translator and scholar Lenn

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[70]Goodman, 13.

E. Goodman, I sought clarification of the choice in his translation of this epistle and whether the feminine pronoun was intentionally omitted. In his response, Goodman observes that there is no feminine presence at all in the Ikhwān's epistle, aside from some general remarks regarding birds and their young. Goodman comments, "The leader of the bees is called the king (not the queen) in this text. Aristotle reports both possibilities, but like most ancient writers they think the bees are ruled by a king!...[Even] when the Ikhwān want to characterize parental love, their model is male, not female."[71]

In comparison, the *Nights* version of this tale opens with the premonition of the duck and her dream of the coming of man. She warns all others in the forest and tries to prepare them as best she can. Her dream is affirmed by the dream of the lion and together they are met by others in the forest. Another interesting aspect found in both versions is the ferocity assigned to the lion. The lion is often referred to as King of the beasts of prey. The virtues and prowess of the lion is often confused based on their appearance versus their performance. In actuality, in the animal world, it is the lioness that hunts for all food. She hunts and feeds the male lion and then her offspring, taking the scraps leftover for herself only after all others have fed.

Another Islamic intellectual who uses animal fables in his *Mirror* is Ibn al-Ẓafar as-Ṣiqilī, a Sicilian Arab philosopher of the 6th/12th century. In his *Sulwān al-Muṭaʾ fi 'Udwan al-Atbā'* (Healing Seashells for a Prince Faced with Rebellious Subjects), he offers advice to rulers in the form of maxims, fables, anecdotes, and commentaries. His

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[71] Goodman, L, E. Private email correspondence. October 26, 2007.

focus is on both preserving power during stable times, as well as providing comfort to a ruler during times of duress and political upheaval.[72]

In the *Sulwān*, Ibn al-Ẓafar's discourse is focused around five philosophical maxims: 1-strong belief in God (*Tawfid*); 2-courage to conquer evil (*Ta'assi*); 3-patience or fortitude (*sabr*); 4-contentment and submission to the Will of God against all hardships (*rida*); and 5-consideration of the burden of rule, or abnegation (*zuhd*).[73] Each maxim is further elaborated in his discourse through the use of fables, anecdotes and commentaries. Within his discourse on contentment are several fables which illustrate the need for a ruler to exhibit mastery over his impatient, unruly nature: "It is better to govern with contentment than be governed by it. Incline yourself to contentment before you are compelled to it by necessity,"[74] he warns. Among the fables in this chapter on contentment is the story of the "Miller and the Ass", which is a parable told by the Monkey within the frame-story sequence. This fable is also found in the *Nights* under a different title and minus several maxims within the story itself. The story concerns a husband who loves his wife, but is not loved in return. She loves a neighbor, who does not return her love. The Miller has a dream that reveals the location of buried treasure, and upon waking, tells his wife the dream in an effort to ingratiate himself toward her.

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[72] See Dekmejian and Thabit, "Machiaveli's Arab Precursor: Ibn Ẓafar al-Siqilli" in *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 125-137; as well Kechichian & Dekmejian's, *The Just Prince: A Manual of Leadership*, for further information on Ibn al-Ẓafar and his political thought.

[73] Kechichian & Dekmejian, 24-25.

[74] Ibid., 75.

She tells the neighbor, and they steal away in the night to dig up the treasure. She suggests they split the money in half, and she will find a way to divorce her husband and marry him. He does not agree on her strategy and they argue. Avarice, fear and indignation overtake him and he kills her and throws her body into the hole that held the buried treasure. In the end, the Miller kills himself over the loss of his wife and possessions.

No one is content in this fable, with the exception of the neighbor. While the story illustrates how greed and oppression lead to violence, the maxims imbedded within also discuss holding onto secrets, rather than revealing them immediately without thought to whom you are entrusting them to. This fable within the Sulwān reveals a discourse that communicates more than the virtue of contentment over the vices of greed and power. Ibn al-Ẓafar instructs that divulging secrets, especially to a person held in questionable esteem, can result in chaos as well as a loss in power. And he especially warns about divulging secrets to ones' wife:

> That which women are good for is to sweep the house, to cook the food, to nurse the children, to ply the distaff, and to excite and sooth the passions. He who calls them to take part in his affairs, or imparts to them a secret, cannot do otherwise than descend to their level, since the capacity of women does not enable them to rise to ours.[75]

What is most interesting in this passage by Ibn al-Ẓafar's is that his focus is limited to the betrayal exhibited by the wife rather than the treachery exhibited by the neighbor. Both husband and wife have their desires thwarted; both meet death as a result of their misplaced trust and an inability to retain their power, symbolized by the treasure. Interestingly, the behavior of the neighbor is not commented on. However,

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[75] Ibn al-Ẓafar's, *Sulwān,* transl. M Amari, 260.

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the neighbor's violent murder of the woman over the treasure is not the focus of this maxim, and even without the maxims, the Miller is alluded to be a cuckold; a fool in his unquestioning devotion to his wife. The maxim illuminated in the *Sulwān* reveal the Miller's need to impress his wife, to somehow change her feelings about him. He is portrayed as a victim in this marriage and unable to control his wife.

The idea of men as victims to the women in their lives is prevalent in both high and low discourse. Women are accused of betraying men, and the ensuing humiliation men feel over the perceived betrayal, seems to be at the root of men's need to dominate women. As Bouhdiba comments, "Fear of women, anxiety when confronted with the procreative forces that they bear within them, the strange unease that is aroused by that mysterious attraction for an unknown being who is often no more than the unknown of being. In many societies all this frequently turns into a rejection of women."[76] Further, the perceived inclination toward infidelity by women is used to justify their domination by men and reinforces the notion that "woman's sexuality is insatiable, it is all pervasive and powerful, it cannot be controlled."[77] This need to control women is insidious, and the repeated return to this theme in high discourse suggests that it is difficult to achieve. It is also in the *Sulwān* that Ibn Ẓafar imparts advice concerning contentment and the efforts to control that which is not always controllable:

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[76] Bouhdiba, A. *Sexuality in Islam.* (London 1998), 116

[77] Attar, Samar. "Promiscuity, emancipation, submission: The civilizing process and the establishment of a female..." *Arab Studies Quarterly,* 2.

And be it known to thee, O reader, and may God be merciful unto thee, that contentment consists in ceasing to demand from other created beings that which is for our own advantage. Since Destiny is inevitable, he who sets himself against it is a fool; he who is content with it, shall be crowned with success; and he who lays aside all importunity, shall be prosperous and happy.[78]

Ultimately, Ibn al-Ẓafar's advice is to be content and refrain from attempting to control others unnecessarily through incessant (and often unrealistic) demands, or you will be forced to live an unhappy, frustrated life. In the story of the Miller and his wife the females' resistance highlights the struggle between power and contentment. Her need for power at all costs is met with her husband's blind loyalty. They both lose and meet with disaster. Her resistance to her husband's power is met with unwarranted violence from the male neighbor consumed with greed and domination.

Ibn al-Ẓafar's position regarding women seems to support the historical argument posited in high discourse by medieval Muslims that women are inferior beyond their limited role as housekeeper and procreator, rather than acknowledge their mutual weaknesses. Several *Mirror* texts discuss the limitations of all non-elites, including women. In al-Ghazālī's chapter titled "Describing women and their good and bad points" in the *Naṣīhat al-Mulūk*, the chapter is replete with aphorisms and anecdotes concerning the blessings and curses of women. In an *'isnād* (a list of authorities who have transmitted accounts) by Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb it is related, "'Take refuge in God from the evils caused by women, and beware (even) of the most pious of them.' This means, let not (even) your own wife receive praise.'"[79] According to this passage, neither a pious nor an impious woman can be trusted. The translator of the *Naṣīhat al-*

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[78] Ibn al-Ẓafar, 245.

[79] Al-Ghazālī, *Naṣīhat al-Mulūk*, FRC Bagley's translation, 158.

Mulūk, F.R.C. Bagley comments that "some places [of the *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk]* expresses a high-minded and benevolent [view of women]…on the other hand, a number of the passages and sayings…express a very disparaging, and more typically medieval Muslim, attitude towards women…Conspicuous among these…comparing characters of women to characters of animals."[80]

This distrust of women as well as the need to control citizens can also be found in the *Fakhrī* by Ibn al-Ṭiqṭiqā' (702 AH/1302 CE). In his collection of aphorisms presented to a Mongol price of Mosul in Iraq, is the warning:

> One of the things disliked in a ruler is excessive inclination to women. To consult them in affairs is to induce inefficiency, and an indication of weakness of judgment. As the Prophet, -peace be upon him- said, 'Consult them and do the opposite.'
>
> To each type of subject corresponds a type of administration. The upper classes are administered by nobility of character and gently guiding aright. The middle classes are administered by a combination of interest and fear, while the common people are administered by fear and by being constrained to the straight path and forced to the obviously right. Understand that a ruler stands to his subjects as a doctor to an invalid.[81]

This type of high discourse rhetoric is common throughout history and is certainly not limited to medieval Islam.

The most interesting aspect about this nature of rhetoric in *Mirror* literature is that it is not necessarily reflective of the society, rather it is rhetoric that seeks to limit and constrain for the purposes of exercising control and discouraging existing practices currently exhibited in society. In other words, women, including Islamic queens often counseled their husbands/rulers. As Nabia Abbott comments, "Several of the Umayyad

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[80] Ibid., xlix.

[81] Williams, *Themes of Islamic Civilization,* 113.

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queens had great personal influence on their husbands."[82] Abbott also elaborates on the

Abbasid period and the political influence and dedication to public works by many of

its' queens. The writer al-Jahiz (3rd AH/9th CE century), in describing the Abbasid

Caliphate of Baghdad comments:

> The kings and nobility had bondswomen who undertook all kinds of daily
> responsibilities joining the work force or staff of the diwans. There were women
> who attended to the affairs of people ... Furthermore, women appeared in public
> stylishly dressed and nobody decried that or reproached it.[83]

The well-traveled Ibn Battūta's (b. 705 AH /1304 CE) knowledge of the

treatment of women in Turkey provides insight into social practices: "A remarkable

thing which I saw in this country was the respect shown to women by the Turks, for

they hold a more dignified position than the men."[84] The social position of women in the

entire region of Mesopotamia prior to Islam indicates women of all classes often held

rights even within a patriarchal system. In her analysis of pre-Islamic Mesopotamia,

Leila Ahmed illustrates the historical status of women in society by commenting:

> upper-class women did enjoy high status and legal rights and privileges. Indeed,
> women of all classes within the legal systems…often enjoyed such rights as
> owning and managing property, in their own name, entering into contracts, and
> bearing witness…the high status and economic rights of kin and dependent
> women were not in conflict with the patriarchal system…The security of their
> power…depended on their installing family members…Such family members

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[82] Abbott, N. Two Queens of Baghdad. (Chicago, 1946), 10.

[83] Quoted in "Muslim Women Through the Centuries" Aghaie, Kamran Scot. National

Center for History in the Schools (Los Angeles, 1998), 32.

[84]See Fordham University website "Internet Islamic history Sourcebook" at:

http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1354-ibnbattuta.html. © Paul Halsall, October

1998. Last Updated March 18, 2007.

were quite often women—wives, concubines, or daughters…Thus emerged the role of 'wife-as-deputy.'[85]

I will end this chapter with a comparison of tales in the *Nights* to anecdotes found in *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* by al-Ghazālī. Al-Ghazālī is considered a great jurist, theologian and mystic of Islam. He wrote on a wide range of topics including jurisprudence, theology, mysticism and philosophy. The *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* combines traditions of prior empires, passages from Qur'an and Hadith, anecdotes, aphorisms of sages, and moral principles which the ruler should strive to emulate. Al-Ghazālī uses anecdotes to illuminate certain principles of conduct he discusses in each chapter. His anecdote may be a short tale told about some biographical incident or person, or it may be a tale used to express an idea.

There are over a half a dozen anecdotes found in the *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* that can also be found as short tales in the *Nights*. These anecdotes are exactly the same as the short tales in the *Nights*. There are several anecdotes concerning the Angel of Death, many stories relating the generosity of the Barmakids, and other anecdotes concerning the generosity and magnanimity of prior Persian kings. In his chapter entitled "On Women and their Good and Bad Points", there is a short tale concerning a water carrier and the goldsmith's wife that can also be found in the *Nights*, which discusses a wife's intuition about the slightest thought of infidelity on the part of her husband. In the mutual exchange between husband and wife, both acknowledge the importance of maintaining pure thoughts.[86]

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[85] Ahmed, Leila. *Women and Gender in Islam.* (Cairo: 1998), 15.

[86] Al-Ghazali, 168.

One of the anecdotes concerning King Anūshīrvān is found in al-Ghazālī's chapter on qualities felt to be required of Kings. He starts this chapter stating that God selected two superior classes of the Sons of Adam: prophets and kings. He affirms the idea of the Sultan being "God's shadow on earth":

> Which means that he is high-ranking and the Lord's delegate over His creatures. It must therefore be recognized that this kingship and the divine effulgence have been granted to them by God, and that they must accordingly be obeyed, loved and followed. To dispute with kings is improper, and to hate them is wrong.[87]

In al-Ghazālī's chapter on the quality of kings, examples and practices of the Sassanid kings are used to illustrate how justice is to be administered. He sees justice as an award from the Sultan but warns that an unjust sovereign will not endure. To illustrate his point, one anecdote he uses is the story of the just King Anūshīrvān. Anūshīrvān pretends to be sick and sends his agents with orders to find and return to him old brick from any ruined village, which he then could use medicinally. His agents return, stating that they cannot find a place in his entire kingdom in disrepair. The king is pleased because he understands that the greater the prosperity of his inhabitants, the longer his rule. Anūshīrvān concludes, "The religion depends on the monarch, the monarchy on the army, the army on supplies, supplies on prosperity, and prosperity on

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[87] The idea of the 'divine shadow', assimilated to the 'divine effulgence' is originally a Persian concept of a manifestation of the sacred element of fire or light in the person of the rightful ruler, developed from Sassanian times, but lacking in the original Zoroastrian intent. The king is accountable only to God for his conduct. See Darke's translation of al-Mulk's *Siyasat-nama*, xli.

justice."[88] The passage continues to relate that the people will tolerate neither injustice nor oppression. They will ultimately rebel, either through neglecting or abandoning the land and crops, or leaving their villages to disrepair. This idea, known as the "circle of justice" illustrates how all within the kingdom are interdependent. The destiny of a king is determined by his actions. A king who is only concerned with his own needs and singular interests is a king who has no ability to rule wisely. An unwise king is a threat to the prosperity of the kingdom and its subjects.

Another anecdote in the *Naṣīhat al-Mulūk* can also be found in the *Nights*, there titled, "The Pilgrim Man and the Old Woman who Dwelt in the Desert." It is a story about an old woman who prefers the solitude and freedom of the desert to the corruption of a king. The story relates that a pilgrim comes upon an old woman living alone in the desert. He asks her why she prefers the harshness of desert life. The pilgrim extols to her the benefits of spacious houses and ripe and delicious fruits with fat meats and plentiful flocks. She replies:

> 'All this have I heard: but tell me, have you a Sultan who ruleth over you and is tyrannical in his rule and under whose hand you are, who, if one of you commit a fault, taketh his goods and undoth him and who, when he will, turneth you out of your houses and uprooteth you, stock and branch?'' 'Indeed, that may be," answered the man. 'Then, by Allah,' rejoined she, 'these your delicious viands and dainty life and pleasant estate, with tyranny and oppression, are but a corroding poison, in comparison wherewith, our food and fashion, with freedom and safety, are a healthful medicine. Hast thou not heard that the best of all boons, after the true Faith, are health and security?"[89]

In this anecdote, the old woman finds health and security not in the city, but in the solitude of the desert. In the desert she is assured power and mastery over her body

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[88] Al-Ghazālī, 56.

[89] Burton, R., Vol. V, 1769.

and words. She is not restricted to the rules and order of a high discourse aimed at portraying her as debased and in need of restraint. Instead, the old woman sees the acts of a tyrannical king as a poison that permeates throughout the city.

In the version of this story found in the *Naṣīhat al-Mulūk*, the old woman's final words portend the poisonous nature of life lived under tyranny. She illuminates that the antidote to such poisonous tyranny is found in an environment where a woman can breathe: "those delicious sweets and those running waters contain fear, danger and injustice, all of which are poisons; while these foods here contain security, which is the bezoar stone."[90] In linking fear and danger with injustice, the old woman illustrates how poisonous power can become when it is allowed to go unchallenged. Her discourse cautions that feeding the desires mere trifles can be deceiving. The paradox lies in the illusion created by demands that are constantly being met. An abundance of "sweet" tasting food is often a sign of wealth and opulence; however, lasting security is built on a solid foundation that requires sacrifice and honest appraisal. She imparts that the moral maturity required in developing just actions and behavior is not always easy or sweet tasting, but satisfying all whims and desires is a small recompense for a tyranny that creates fear and uncertainty.

In summary, when we view the appropriation of the ideas of moral integrity and principled conduct usually associated with high discourse within low discourse, we find the boundaries between these previously distinct hierarchies shift and at times disappear, or indeed become inverted. This inversion is revealed in many layers. In the

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[90] Al-Ghazālī, 77. The bezoar stone was a mixture of animal intestines said to be an antidote to poison.

low discourse of the *Nights* this shift is experienced through an active feminine voice that challenges a high discourse that attempts to control her with the very dialogue embedded within the high discourse. This challenge is understood through an inverted narrative where the ideologies of authority and justice, usually considered the purview of rationality and cool logic, and therefore attributed strictly to the male elite, is appropriated through a feminine that reveals wisdom, while at the same time retains multiplicity. This inversion reveals deeper meanings and intentions.

Interestingly, the examples of feminine voices found in these stories cross both age and social class. Whether the feminine voice is a young woman of royal descent like Nuzhat al-Zaman, an older woman married to a working class Miller, or an old woman alone in the desert, the discourse is one that either elevates, or in the case of the Miller's wife, is a cautionary tale. It is paradoxical to consider that the lofty goals of high discourse are illustrated by the exemplary actions of women in low discourse. The discourse of *Nights* is revealing a language of relatedness, or a "voice" of *mythos*. I will elaborate on the concepts of *mythos* and *logos* in the next chapter. However, the language of *mythos* can be revealed in Nuzhat al-Zaman's mastery of discourse where she illustrates an authority that not only imparts knowledge and wisdom but is met by the court and qadis (jurists) with awe and acknowledgment of her uniqueness: "O King, of a truth this damsel is the wonder of the world, and of our age the unique pearl! Never heard we her like in the length of time or in the length of our lives."[91] She uses the rhetoric of high discourse, that imparts itself as rational and therefore superior, in essence a *logos* perspective, to empower as well as free herself from a slavery imposed

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[91] Burton, R. Vol. III, 53.

on her body and words. High discourse proves to be more than mere rhetoric for Nuzhat al-Zaman, as the king frees her once he buys her from the merchant.

Alas, the Miller's wife does not meet with the same fate. In her rush to take power, she immediately gives it away, thus losing control. Ultimately, the disorder within the marriage turns to chaos and violence when she further misplaces her trust. The Miller, in his effort to control his wife's feelings and affections, succumbs to his own fears of rejection and, as a result, looses all he has, including his life. The husband and wife are like mirrors to each other, both reflecting the same inability to retain power and control. The story not only warns against greed and mislaid trust, but it warns against misplaced control.

Conversely, the story about the old woman in the desert illustrates how a woman can effectively liberate herself from the usual container of limitation and debasement. The transgressive voice of the feminine not only utters the high discourse message of morality and just government, but she also questions the need to expose oneself to an environment that perpetuates an ultimate authority that continues to damage when operating unchecked. She encourages a movement away from an environment where the feminine is restricted, preferring the freedom that a more isolated atmosphere can bring. Isolation, rather than being the restrictive, imposed seclusion enforced by the male elite, is a self-imposed removal from that which harms and debases.

In its attempt to emulate the traditional aims of high discourse, the *Nights* allow women to redress the inherent power imbalance. Here, the lower instructs the higher and the inferior female subject, as portrayed in high discourse, now takes the position of higher within lower. Through this inversion, the ideals espoused in *Mirrors* remain.

Ironically, the *Nights* reflect that most rulers cannot live up to these ideals due to their own extravagant excesses and self-obsession. In fact, the rhetoric in high discourse that encourages separation and containment of the feminine ultimately reveals more about men's fears which stem from their inability to control themselves than it does about the threat of women.

IN THE DARKNESS, THE PATH

In the sea are riches beyond compare; but if you seek safety, it is on the shore.
Sa'adi, Rose Garden

It is interesting to speculate why so much of the selected content found in *Mirror* discourse is also found within selected tales of the *Nights*. In *Mirror* texts, the authors/scribes are the advisors, imparting wisdom of the ancients as well as life experience to the ruler. In *Nights* discourse, the focus is often on women in "non-traditional" roles as carriers of wisdom and insight.[92] In these stories, women do more than challenge men; they are themselves vessels of wisdom. The differences between these high and low discourses are revealed in various layers.

In this chapter I seek to compare the "voices" found in the high discourse of *Mirrors* with the low discourse of *Nights*. To assist in this analysis, I will explore one passage of al-Ghazālī's *Mirror* as an example of a high discourse "voice", and one tale from the *Nights*, "The Night Adventure of Sultan Mohammad of Cairo" as an example of a low discourse "voice." These "voices" will then be further contrasted to the esoteric discourse found in many Sufi writings, most notably the writings of Ibn 'Arabi.

To further understand the differences in "voices," the philosophical concepts of *mythos* and *logos* will be explored. These concepts will be used to illuminate dialogue style in both discourses, as well as various Sufi texts; thereby revealing deeper insights into the differences as well as the similarities of both discourse perspectives. The

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[92] There are instances where men provide lessons on virtue and justice as in the example of the *Nights* tale, "King Jali'ad of Hind and his Vizier Shimas."

philosophical concepts of *mythos* and *logos* provide a method of examining aspects of discourse style that may not be readily apparent, as well as assist in uncovering intentions of both discourses, thereby clarifying their distinct "voices." Through this *mythopoetic*[93] method of examining selected tales and anecdotes, inner meanings and intentions can allude and suggest storyteller intents. As Berger comments, interpreting inner meanings is "a creative method, and thus an imaginative method, attempting to illuminate areas hidden to "objective" analysis."[94]

One of the primary distinctions between high/low discourses is the specificity of conversation style that directs dialog in a certain direction. The discourse in *Mirror* texts comes from the "voice" or perspective (a language of *logos*) of the ruling male elite who approach the world from a significantly different and more unipolar perspective than that of the low discourse of *Nights,* in which the "voice" or perspective (a language of *mythos*) of multiplicity is more prevalent. The high discourse of *Mirror* texts is composed in a style that imparts itself as rational and the ideas are expressed through a knowledge based on what can be defined as a literal truth designed to reinforce an exclusively patriarchal perspective of rulership and power. This type of power is often symbolized by the "word" incarnate, which is associated with divine reason. Conversely, *Nights* discourse discloses a world that can be seen as imaginative

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[93] My definition of the word *mythopoetic* is used to describe the metaphoric or symbolic use of mythic elements in literature.

[94] Berger, A. Cultural hermeneutics: The Concept of Imagination in the Phenomenological Approaches of Henry Corbin and Mircea Eliade. *The Journal of Religion* (Madison,1986), 142.

and at times mystical, displaying multiple layers of metaphorical truth revealed at a deeper levels of understanding. These deeper levels of understanding are multifaceted and often revealed in dreams and images as well as insights gathered from either periods of meditation, or more devastating experiences in life where one re-evaluates the purpose of existence.

On reflection, neither the high discourse of *Mirror* texts, nor the low discourse of *Nights* has one consistent author. Both texts weave aphorisms and anecdotes with tales for the purpose of edify the reader (or listener) on the finer points of morality and integrity. This idea of an interwoven text is described by Roland Barthes as, "multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture."[95] *Mirror* literature and *Nights* tales are part of a long tradition of ancient works which reflect the culture. As Heartney notes in her observations of Barthes idea regarding the fluidity of texts, any/all texts are plural, "Which is not simply to say that it has several meaning, but that is accomplishes the very plural of meaning: an irreducible plural. The text is not a co-existence of meanings but a passage, an overcrossing; thus it answers not to an interpretation, even a liberal one, but to an explosion, a dissemination."[96]

As an example, several *Mirror* texts use the language of high discourse (and by association, the language of the ruling male elite) in anecdotes where everything is comprehended and categorized in extremes: good or evil, right or wrong, black or white. In this world of purely rational *logos* (science and logic), whatever poses a challenge or

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[95] Barthes, R. *Image, Music, Text.* (New York, 1977), 156.

[96] Heartney, E. *Postmodernism.* (Cambridge, 2001), 87.

is not easily understood is identified as debased and evil. In al-Ghazālī's *Nasīhat al-Mulūk* an entire chapter is devoted to the good (few) and bad (many) characteristics of women. Al-Ghazālī shares: "A sage wished [that] his short wife [might have been] tall. People asked him, 'Why did not you marry a wife of full stature?' 'A woman is an evil thing,' he answered, 'and the less [there is] of an evil thing the better."[97] This high discourse "voice" (or perspective) of the male ruling elite presents various arguments for the evilness of women that reflect a purely rational *logos* approach to the world by using language that separates and distances. This type of discourse assumes a hierarchal superiority by positing that whatever poses a challenge or is not easily understood must be debased and evil, and therefore kept at a distance.

The polarization within high discourses did not start with Islamic texts. Rather, the male as superior over the female has early origins in both the monotheistic philosophy of the Hebrews as well as early Greek philosophers. The attempt to separate *logos* and *mythos* stems from the erroneous belief that *mythos* is a threat to *logos*, and that culture is continually threatened by a *mythos* that Cassirer defines as superstitious at best, or at worst, an animistic perversion of objective reality. Cassirer comments, "The history of philosophy as a scientific discipline may be regarded as a single continuous struggle to effect a separation and liberation from myth."[98]

Within pre-Christian Greek societies, the Greek word *logos* was used to describe the concept of a universe governed by reason. From a Christian (and monotheistic)

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[97] al-Ghāzali, *Nasīhat ...,* 161.

[98] *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms,* in Shelburne, W.A. *Mythos and Logos in the Thought of Carl Jung.* (New York, 1988), 5.

perspective *logos* has come to mean the "Word" or transcendent truth, implying unchangeable and timeless, and therefore outside of corruption, or perfect. However, perfection is only possible through separation and distancing and is not considered wholeness. As Gras comments, "We may desire perfection (only possible through exclusion) but must suffer the opposite of this intention for the sake of completeness ...symbols of wholeness show that they all incorporate the synthesis of opposites which...is not always easy to achieve."[99] For a person to be whole and fully integrated requires a constant incorporation of ideas, thoughts and circumstances that challenge us specifically because their nature is opposite to our own.

Pre-Christian Greek societies also focused on the role of women in relation to men and society as a whole. In Aristotle's *The Politics*, the discourse focuses on the separation between the sexes and the superiority of men over women. Aristotle's writings can also be categorized as high discourse within which a shadow is cast upon the low. In his writings, he makes a distinction between women and slaves, but he is quick to point out that both are inferior to men: "Again, the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules, and the other is ruled."[100] This hierarchical style of high discourse is *logos* based dialectic, positioning men as superior and women as inferior, by design, places the woman in the category of slave to the master male elite. Granted, during the classical period of Greece men and women led very separate lives. As Ahmed comments, "According to Aristotle, the purpose of marriage and the

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[99] Gras, V.W. Myth and the Reconciliation of Opposites: Jung and Levi-Strauss, *Journal of the History of Ideas*. (1981), 42/3, 474.

[100] Aristotle, *The Politics*. ed. W.D. Ross, (Oxford, 1921), 102.

function of women was to provide heirs…[his] theories conceptualized women not merely as subordinate by social necessity but also as innately and biologically inferior in both mental and physical capacities."[101] However, as elaborated in chapter two, this distancing ascribed by the ruling elite was not necessarily practiced in society at that time.

In another passage within al-Ghazālī's *Naṣīhat al-Mulūk* the ruler is cautioned not be deceived into thinking that the world (and woman) has any permanence to offer. Al-Ghazālī offers ten analogies to explain the vicious and importune lures the world and woman are capable of:

> This is to explain the spell of this world. God's Apostle said, 'Hold aloof from the world, for she is a worse spell-binder than Harut and Marut. The beginning of the spell is that she appears to you in such a way that you suppose her to be stationary and fixed in relation to you; for you look at her, and she is the universe itself—yet—she is continually fleeing from you…another example of her spell is that she presents herself to you in an endearing manner in order to make you fall in love with her, and pretends that she will go along with you and not with another…she resembles a worthless woman who lures men to her in order to make them her lovers, then takes them to her house and destroys them.[102]

The world is seen in a constant state of flux, and therefore unreliable and ultimately evil. The unreliability of the world is juxtaposed against the unchanging permanence of God. Depriving oneself from any and all worldly possessions is often seen as the only means of achieving closeness to God. Deprivation is akin to God's unchanging

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[101] Ahmed, Leila. *Women and Gender in Islam*, (London, 1992), 28-29.

[102] Al-Ghazālī, *Naṣīhat …*,33.

permanence. However, the world is of God's making, and is the venue chosen by Him[103] to make Himself known.

In contrast to traditional *Mirror* discourse, the writings of another medieval philosopher, Ibn 'Arabi (d. 632 AH/1240 CE), provides insight into creation and the world from a *mythos* perspective. Ibn 'Arabi's writings were of a mystical nature, where he often fearlessly explored multiplicity, rather than political positions that served to enforce male elitism. As a Muslim mystic, his writings can be seen as symbolic narrative, where the strictly theological is transcended and a potential for relatedness is more fully appreciated. Sufism itself sought to bridge theology and spiritually by focusing on a personal experience of the oneness of the Divine. Ibn 'Arabi wrote of the experience of God as a hidden treasure, and comments that it is through the creation of the world and people that God is made known, as well as through which God's creatures known Him: "I was a treasure that was not known, so I loved to be known. Hence I created the creatures and I made Myself known to them, and thus they came to know Me."[104] What seems to be implied is that in the stillness of unchanging permanence God remains hidden; it is only through a descent, a lowering that God can

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[103] I use the word "Him" intentionally due to the approach taken by high discourse. When appropriate, I substitute "Divine" for God.

[104] Ibn 'Arabi. *Futūḥat al-Makkiyya* (3:399 Baāb 198), (Cairo, ND). Although the authenticity of this saying being attributed to the Prophet is challenged, its meaning is considered true and supported by the Qur'anic Sura: "I have only created Jinns and men, that they may serve Me" (51:56); as well as hadith: "Whoever knows himself knows his Lord" (as-Suyuti, Mawardi, Al-Jarrahi; also attributed to Yahya b. Mu'adh al-Razi).

be experienced. For Ibn 'Arabi this lowering does not have to be a hierarchical relational or an inferior placement which al-Ghazālī seems to imply in his description of women and the world as base and evil; rather, this lowering can be seen as an alternate position selected and determined by the Creator for the specific purpose of knowing and being known. Lowering in an effort to be known is to be in relationship with others, whether in the material world, or with the Divine. To be known is to be in experience as "Thou', rather than a distanced, impersonal "It." To be known requires a deeper understanding and commitment which is an entry into *mythos*. And although *mythos* is often juxtaposed to *logos*, both are needed.

The Cosmos owes its existence to the pairing by God of what can be called the Intellect (*logos*) and the Soul (*mythos*), and whether this feminine energy is seen in a positive or negative light depends on interpretation because without this drive to embody, there is no divine plan, no knowing and being known. The Arabic word for soul, *nafs* (as well as *dhat* "essence, nature"), is a feminine noun, and, as Schimmel comments, it appears three times in divergent ways in the Qur'an.[105] It is the soul that travels at night and gains the knowledge and insight needed to sustain wisdom in man. This internal-external partnership allows deeper growth and insight by the human being. As Schimmel notes, "it is only when the masculine and the feminine elements collaborate and work together that life can ascend to a higher stage, rather the same way the hard masculine element 'fear' and the soft feminine element 'hope' 'lead to the birth

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[105] Schimmel, *My Soul...*, 20. A soul inciting to evil, Sura 12:53; an accusing soul, Sura 74:2; and a soul at peace, Sura 89:27-28.

of true faith.'"[106] The challenge is to not only avoid assigning a hierarchy to hard and soft, in which "hope" (and by association "soft" and "feminine") would be inferior to "fear"; but the deeper challenge is an attempt toward an authentic wholeness, which includes an integration of *mythos* and *logos*.

At the heart of this esoteric journey toward union with *al-Ḥaqīqa* is a paradox between the body (outer) and soul (inner) that can only be integrated through personal realization of the unity of the Divine. Just as the body seems at times to be an adversary of the soul, so too, do some theologians and supporters of strictly Sharī'a law seem to be in conflict with mysticism, and ultimately Sufism. As Trimingham comments, "Mysticism is a particular method of approach to Reality...making use of intuitive and emotional spiritual faculties...This training, thought of as 'travelling [sic] the Path' (*salk aṭ-tarīq*), aims at dispersing the veils which hide the self from the Real and thereby become transformed or absorbed into undifferentiated Unity."[107] The mystic communicates in the language of *mythos, as* Sufi Master uses symbols, imagination, dreams, myth, and intuition to both teach and experience the path to inner knowing. It is not that many Sufis do not lead a life of deprivation, because they often do; however, their road to a more meaningful life is often in juxtaposition to those securing a power base. Sufis often take a path toward enlightenment and closeness to the Divine that is full of contradictions and paradox. As Schimmel comments, "Sufi masters as a sort of ko'an, a paradox meant to shock the hearer, to kindle discussion, to perplex the logical

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[106] Ibid., 22.

[107] Trimingham, Spencer. *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, (Oxford, 1971) 1.

faculties, and thus to engender a nonlogical understanding."[108] The only way to travel the path to undifferentiated Unity is with the guidance of a Sufi Master. The adept (*murīd*) must first humble her/him self to an outer experience of a teacher, as well as to the inner voice of intuition if *al-Ḥaqīqa* is to be known. Early Sufi Masters (4th through 6th A.H./10th through 12th century C.E.) encouraged experience over theorizing and sought to share their process of achieving union.

Interestingly, Trimingham identifies al-Ghazālī as a theorist of ethical mysticism, rather than a true Sufi mystic, by commenting: "al-Ghazālī's own intellectual background, his inability to submit himself unreservedly to guidance, imposed too great a barrier for him to attain direct Sufi experience. Teaching about the state of *fanā'* (transmutation of self) will not help anyone to attain it, only guidance under an experienced director."[109] By most accounts, al-Ghazālī was a conflicted man in his adult life, often trying to serve two "Masters:" mysticism and theology. In 478 AH/1085 CE al-Ghazālī joined the court of Nizam al-Mulk, and it is at this time his *Mirror* contribution is written, in great part, to refute what the empire felt at the time to be the Isma'ili claims to exclusive possession of true knowledge. al-Ghazālī seemed constantly pulled between mysticism (*mythos*) and theology (*logos*). This pull quite possibly plummeted him into spiritual crisis a mere four years (488 AH/1095 CE) after his appointment at the Nizamiyyah college in Baghdad; for he began to wander a decade in search of a deeper meaning to life.

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[108] Schimmel, Annemarie. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, (Chapel Hill, 1975), 13.

[109] Ibid., 3.

This conflict between *mythos* and *logos* can be more clearly experienced when reading another treatise of al-Ghazālī's. In this work, he discusses his inability to fully accept only jurisprudence and how this realization initially took him into deep despondency, "Now that despair has overcome me...I had to look clearly at the nature of my trust in what I could confirm with my senses...I proceeded therefore most earnestly to consider the evidence of my senses...This led me to loose faith in the evidence of my senses."[110] He concludes that there is no real way to certain knowledge except through Sufism, which al-Ghazālī posits as equal to the unveiling of truth by light opening and expanding the heart:

> Anyone who believes that the "unveiling of truth is the fruit of well-ordered arguments" belittles the immensity of divine mercy. God's messenger -- peace be upon him -- was asked about spiritual expansion and the sense in which this is found in the word of God; "Him who when God wishes to direct, He opens his breast to Islam," he said, "It is a light which God the Almighty throws upon the heart." When they asked him, "How may we recognize it?" he replied, "By this, that a person abandons every vanity to return to eternity." Muhammad -- peace be upon him -- said, God the Almighty created mankind in darkness, and then scattered some of His light upon them." It is to this light that one should look for inspiration. In certain circumstances it springs up from the depths of divine goodness. We must be on the lookout for it, according to the saying of Muhammad -- peace be upon him -- "It happens that your Lord sends messages of grace on certain days of your life; be ready for these messages."[111]

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[110] Al-Ghazālī website: http://www.ghazali.org/books/md/IIA-02main.htm. His evidence includes many observations regarding the nature of things; shadows that do not appear to move before the 'naked' eye but none the less move; stars, when view from the earth 'appear' small as a dinar (coin) but are understood to be the size of planets.

[111] al-Ghazālī. *Deliverance From Error*. See http://www.ghazali.org/books/md/index.html

According to al-Ghazālī, Divine Mercy is not necessarily revealed in order, but often in the "depths of divine goodness." Descending or "lowering" is an ultimate desire toward intimacy or union, and can only be achieved through a redemptive act of mercy and kindness. Acts of mercy and kindness are relational, or *mythos* in perspective. As Murata comments, "God's mercy precedes His wrath. He created the universe out of mercy and love...God's love, mercy, kindness, gentleness, bounty, and beauty breed intimacy. Intimacy is characterized by 'bold expansiveness.'"[112] Bold expansiveness is not only dynamic and unbridled; it is also characterized by mercy and love rather than aggression and domination. Interestingly, the characteristics of mercy, kindness, gentleness and generosity are identified by Murata as the feminine, or yin side of God.[113] The grace of the Divine is exhibited through the mercy given to this urge to embody.

Intimacy, considered by some to be the last stage on the Sufi path, has the potential to unite the high with the low, the soul with the body, they mystic with the theologian, and the intuitive with the emotional. As Dakake observes, "It is through the Divine *raḥma*, 'Mercy, Compassion,' that the world is made manifest-through the 'breath of the Compassionate'...all things come into being...The word for mercy, *raḥma*, is grammatically feminine, and is etymologically related to the word *raḥam*, meaning 'womb.' Thus the mercy of existence itself is symbolized as a kind of 'Divine

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[112] Murata, S. *The Tao of Islam*. (Albany, 1992), 77.

[113] Yin and yang is a Taoist concept found within Chinese cosmology, most fully expressed in the idea of the *I Ching*.

womb."[114] Dakake further discusses an interesting dichotomy within this idea of mercy and its relation to the feminine. Divine Mercy she sees as one of two poles of femininity: "For all men potentially, and for the Sufi mystic in particular, life is a constant struggle to overcome, conquer, and detach oneself from the *nafs*, that is, the 'ego or 'soul' or 'passionate self'...and on the other, to draw ever nearer...[for union with] the Divine Essence or *Dhāt*.[115] *Nafs* and *Dhāt* are polar feminine principles that challenge language and discourse. While *nafs* is experienced as the self-indulgent ego, *Dhāt* is stripped away of ego, it is Divine Essence in its purest form.

This idea of *nafs* and *dhāt* is explored in Ibn 'Arabi's discourse titled *Divine Governance*. Ibn 'Arabi seems to emulate Islamic *Mirror* texts, and yet, at the same time, transcends them. In the preface Ibn 'Arabi comments:

> When I visited the house of Shaikh Abu Muhammad al-Mururi, I found a book called "The Secret of Secrets" (*Sirrul Esrar*) written by Hakim (Aristotle) who was too old to accompany Zulkarneyn (Alexandre the Great) in his campaigns. The book contained instructions of how to rule the world.
> "Ebu Muhammad told me, 'This book is about ruling the world. What I want you to do is to write a book about the governance of the human kingdom, of how to govern our own selves where our real salutation rests.[116]

In his comments, his understanding of *Mirror* content and authorship is apparent, while at the same time his intent on transcending the genre is also evident. The text is divided into twenty-one chapters, all illuminating aspects of the soul as divine deputy of

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[114] Dakake, Maria Massi. "Waalking upon the Path of God like Men?", *Sufism: Love & Wisdom*, edited by Michon, J.L. & Gaetani, R. (Bloomington 2006), 132.

[115] Ibid., 133.

[116] Ibn 'Arabi. *Divine Governance of the Human Kingdom.* (Louisville, 1997; translated al-Halvet) 3.

the human realm and its relationship to the causes of conflict between intellect and ego. Within the preface of *Divine Governance* Ibn 'Arabi comments regarding the chapters, "They show how to keep order within the divine order while improving ourselves; how to guide our lives in the right way; how to protect His kingdom, which is the human being, from oblivion; how to rule it in the way that it is meant to be ruled, by the soul the Lord has placed in its as His deputy.[117] In chapter one, Ibn 'Arabi defines the universal soul in man as the ruler of the human being and deputy of the Creator. The human soul is compared to the governor of a city, and the total soul is king of the realm. Their beneficence or tyranny reveals their love of the Divine.

In chapter three, Ibn 'Arabi identifies another precinct in the city of man: the daughter of the deputy of the Divine: Personality, or Selfhood. He comments:

> Here there are contradictions, here both God's ordinances and what He has forbidden are kept. On special honored nights the commands of the All-Powerful are distributed here. The place is protected by God Himself, for it is under the Footstool where His holy Feet are set—just as the soul, the deputy of God, is under and protected by His Throne...Selfhood is a place of order and enlightenment, but it is also inclined toward the Evil Commanding Self. If it is tempted, then it loses its purity. All things are from God...When the self is rational and heedful, it is pure and in order. Then it is called the Self-Assured Self. That is its lawful state. Although God had created His deputy with the most perfect attributes, He saw that, on his own, he was nonetheless weak, powerless, and in need...The soul and the self are man and wife.[118]

From this *mythos* perspective both are equal in station as well as before the eyes of the Divine. When husband calls upon wife and she does not respond, the man asks his trusted companion, Intelligence, the reason for the unresponsiveness, to which Intellect

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[117] Ibid. 8.

[118] Ibid. 44-45.

responds: "you are calling upon a being that has a station as high as your own. She is a master in her own right, with power, and under the orders of the All-Powerful. She is called Desire for the Worldly, the Commanding Self."[119] As Ibn 'Arabi illuminates, she is not that easy to command, and often it takes the Lord himself as mediator between soul and self to interject. It is the Lord who restores harmony and peace through the acknowledgment and divine approval of both. According to Ibn 'Arabi, when the Self-Assured Self realizes its true potential, it will not be tempted by evil.

Many *Nights* tales focus on darkness and feminine wisdom. Within the tale cycle titled, "The Story of the Three Sharpers"[120] is the "Night Adventure of Sultan Mohammad of Cairo." The story is about the night wanderings of a restless and anxious caliph. A wandering caliph is an old tradition in Muslim storytelling known as 'As'Asa. Tradition relates that during the night rulers often grow restless with dis-ease, and decide to roam the city observing citizens anonymously. Night wandering tales usually begin with the restless caliph summoning his wazier, saying to him something like: "I am sore wakeful and heavy-hearted this night, and I desire of thee what may solace my spirit and cause my breast to broaden with amusement."[121] So the caliph and wazier go deep into the night, looking for something to comfort the spirit. Neither his money, power, authority, nor possessions ultimately bring him peace and contentment; rather, his restless spirit is desperate and in search of a deeper meaning to life. Something

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[119] Ibid. 46.

[120] Burton, R., supplemental *Nights.* Supplement *Nights* stories are taken from http://www.wollamshram.ca/1001/.

[121] Ali the Persian.

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within the Sultan is rejecting a purely *logos* perspective. During their night wanderings the caliph and his wazier disguise themselves as either merchants or dervishes, thereby allowing themselves to participate in the comings and goings of citizens of the night.

On one of their night adventures the Sultan of Cairo and his Wazier meet three sisters and their mother residing in a modest dwelling. The Sultan is intrigued with these women and, wishing to remember the exact place of their home, devises a method to identify their dwelling on the next evening for a return visit. The women easily see through his plan and thwart his efforts to find them the next night. The women are content in their home and have no desire for the intrigue of a restless Sultan. However, the Sultan cannot shake his desire, and along with his Wazier crafts a plan in hopes the women will reveal, or illuminate themselves. They determine to create an ordinance in the city forbidding any form of lamp light to be used after evening prayers. Somehow, they both perceive the wisdom and intelligence of these women.

Several evenings later, the men disguise themselves as dervishes and roam about the city in hopes of discovering these women again. In the distance they see a single light coming from the direction they knew housed the sisters and their mother. They approach the home to find the three sisters and their mother sitting by lamp-light busy weaving. Upon entering the home, they ask the women why the lamps are lit, as there is an ordinance issued by the Sultan forbidding the burning of lamps. One of the sisters responds:

> O Darwaysh, verily the Sultan's order should not be obeyed save in commandments which be reasonable; but this his proclamation forbidding lights is sinful to accept; and indeed the right direction wherein man should walk is according to Holy Law which saith, 'No obedience to the creature in a matter of sin against the Creator.' The Sultan (Allah make him prevail!) herein acteth against the Law and imitateth the doings of Satan. For we be three sisters with

our mother, making four in the household, and every night we sit together by lamp-light and weave a half-pound weight of linen web which our mother taketh in the morning for sale to the Bazar and buyeth us therewith half a pound of raw flax and with the remainder what sufficeth us of victual.[122]

In this story, the sister has likened the Sultan to Satan! She accuses him of inappropriate use of power. In questioning his ultimate authority as sovereign, she not only redresses the nature of authority as coming from God, but also exhibits her own authority over her household. In this story, she challenges the "ultimate" authority of a ruler by positing that no ruler should be followed that decrees rules that satisfy either whims or desires of the ruler, and at the same time create hardships on the community. This story seems to contradict the communal solidarity principles of the *umma* that is found within Sunnī Islam. In a creedal statement from Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (241 AH/855 CE) he states:

> A part of the essential Sunna, such that if one leaves any part of it…he cannot be considered as being the people of the Sunna is…hearing and obeying the Imāms and the Commanders of the Believers…whether he is pious or profligate, whether the people agreed on him and were pleased with him, or whether he attacked them…Whoever secedes from the Imām of the Muslims-when people have agreed on him…that rebel has broken the unity of the Muslims.[123]

This young woman may not practice Sunnī Islam, but she seems to possess a unique balance of *logos* and *mythos*. She uses rational thinking and reasoning to question and transgress manmade laws. She accesses a higher truth through a deeper reasoning which illuminates the soul.

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[122] Burton, R., supplemental *Nights.*

[123] Williams, J.A. *Themes of Islamic Civilization*, 28-31.

The Sultan (interestingly, disguised as a dervish), rather than exhibit customary wrath at having his authority come into question, is amazed by her insight as well as her knowledge of Islamic law. He questions her loyalty to the Sultan, and she replies that laws instituted by the Sultan contrary to Holy Law (Shari'ah) should not be obeyed. She relates to them some couplets, which in part communicate: "Do thou good to men and so rule their necks; Long reigns who by benefit rules mankind; And lend aid to him who for abidance hopes."[124] Upon hearing these words, the Sultan says to his Wazier: "By Allah, my soul inclineth unto that maiden."[125] In other words, his soul is drawn to the luminous, to the light of clarity. Wherever light shines, there is discernment.

Metaphorically speaking, the Sultan could be considered an adept (*murīd*), traveling the Path (*salk at-tarīq*). From a *logos* perspective, he has ultimate power that he may wield as he chooses. However, as God's emissary on earth, he betrays the very ideals established in *Mirror* literature. As an adept, the veils which hide the self from "undifferentiated Unity" are starting to lift. The darkness of night works with the illumination of Reason, in an effort to offer a deeper more meaningful truth.

Sufi masters often constructed allegories, stories or maxims meant to encourage adepts to meditate further on religious ideas at the center of Islamic mysticism. The *Nights* tale above illuminates certain images and symbols from the Qur'an and provides an interplay of ideas on several levels. This is a mythos perspective, as it seeks to use story and allegory for the purposes of illumination and understanding. For example, according to Islamic tradition, the darkness of night has great spiritual energy. The

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[124] Ibid.

[125] Ibid.

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Tahajjud is a special prayer made after midnight, when God can raise a person to the

gate of Truth and Honor.[126] Unlike the *logos* based Euro-Western Christian tradition

that often associates darkness or the color black with negative images, black within

certain Islamic traditions is often associated with hidden wisdom, and as Shah notes,

"by extension, with leadership. The Kaaba…in Mecca is draped in black, esoterically

interpreted as a play upon words of the FHM sound in Arabic, alternatively meaning

'black' or 'wise,' '*understanding*.'"[127] Shah furthers that the original banner of the

Prophet was black, which stood for both wisdom and lordship. Schimmel also discusses

the ideology behind color symbolism:

> white [is] connected with Islam, yellow with *īmām*, 'faith,' dark blue with *iḥsān*,
> 'beneficence,' green with *itmi'nān*, 'tranquility,' light blue with *īqān*, 'true
> assurance,' red with '*irfān*, 'gnosis,' and black with *hayamān*, 'passionate love
> and ecstatic bewilderment. Black is the light of the essence, the "Divine Ipseity
> as revealing light that cannot be seen but makes see"; it is the color of *jalāl*, the
> unfathomable divine majesty, whereas God's *jamāl*, His beauty, reveals itself in
> other colors. But beyond the Black Light-the experience of which has been
> equated with the experience of *fanā* as well-is the "mountain of emerald," the
> color of Eternal Life.[128]

Further, one of the first Suras to be revealed was Sura 92: The Night. The Sura

communicates the wonders of both Night and Day, of light and darkness, and speaks to

the contrast and attraction of opposites:

> The evidence of three things is invoked, *vz.*, Night, Day, and Sex…What
> contrast can be greater than between Night and Day? When the Night spreads

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[126] Sura 17:79-80.

[127] Shah, I. *The Sufis*, 418-419. Schimmel also notes the Ka'ba is often seen as a

metaphor of the feminine.

[128] Schimmel, AM. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 255-256.

her veil, the sun's light is hidden, but not lost...The wonder of the sexes runs through all life. There is attraction between opposites; each performs its own functions, having special characters...each is indispensable to the other.[129]

Finally, the Sura of Qadr (Destiny) has inspired many Sufi masters as it tells of a night journey of both the Prophet Muḥammad and the "one who took his servant on a night journey."[130] It was on this occasion that the Prophet Mohammad journeyed through the seven heavens on his mount Burāq. The Night of Power is said to be better than a thousand months. In this sura, the metaphor of destiny and night is often interpreted as a woman. Sells discusses the use of the feminine pronoun, *ha*, in the sura and comments, "the intricate and beautiful gender dynamic ...creates a sense of a feminine-gendered presence within a set of sliding or shifting referents (the sun, the sky and the earth and/or the sun, and then the soul). The objects evoked are marks of wonder and signs of their underlying source."[131] Sells challenges English translators of the Qur'an that use terms like "power" for qadr, as he sees the use of one word only limiting. Instead, Sells translates the word as "destiny" commenting:

> The term naturally becomes associated with fate and with wealth...Qadr seems to be situated between empowerment (qudra) and fate (qadar)...Translators of the Qur'an have tended to choose terms like 'power' for qadr, terms that express only one side of the semantic field. It is my view that 'destiny' might come closer to expressing the mutivalence [sic] of the term, though no single English term would seem sufficient...Along with the alternation of day and night, the alternation of male and female is central to sūrat al-qadr. Just as the spirit is associated with the transformation of temporal categories, so in the close reading

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[129] Ali, A. Yusuf. *Holy Qur'an, Modern English Translation.* (Kansas City, 1998), 1420.

[130] Ibid., Sura of Qadr.

[131] Sells, Michael. *Approaching the Qur'an: the Early Revelations* (White Cloud Press, 1999), 195 & 202.

of sūrat al-qadr and in the discussion of the three primordial moments, the rūḥ (which can be grammatically either masculine or feminine) has emerged at the center of a complex gender dynamic.[132]

Going beyond traditional rhetoric, Sufis uncover deeper meanings of sacred texts; expose a world that is experienced beyond the language of *logos*. Here, the female and male alternate, like day and night, soul and body, high and low. There is a fluidity of movement and experience. There is no hierarchy. The low instructs the high, and in that instruction is salvation.

In summary, in an effort to understand the differences in style between the high discourse of *Mirror* texts and the low discourse of *Nights*, the philosophical concepts of *mythos* and *logos* were explored with the intent of illuminating the different "voices" of both discourses. It has been demonstrated that in the language of high discourse everything is comprehended and categorized in extremes: good or evil, right or wrong, black or white. In this world of purely rational *logos* (science and logic), whatever poses a challenge or is not easily understood is identified as debased and evil. Its transactional dialectic is purely rational in perspective, using language that separates and distances and thus assumes a hierarchal superiority.

In conventional *Mirror* literature originating from the ruling elite, it is the "voice" of the male ruling elite struggling with containing and controlling the fearful sexual energy of women. In an effort to control these feelings, high discourse distances itself from this beguiling female through a *logos* based discourse. This type of discourse experiences the world (and therefore woman) as being in a constant state of flux,

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[132] Ibid., "Sound, Spirit, and Gender in Sūrat al-Qadr", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 111/ 2, (1991), 239-259

turbulent and therefore unreliable and ultimately evil. From a *logos* perspective, the unreliability of the world is juxtaposed against the unchanging permanence of God.

Conversely, the *Nights* tale, "The Night Adventure of Sultan Mohammad of Cairo" discloses a world that can be seen as imaginative and at times mystical, displaying a certain type of metaphorical truth that is revealed at a deeper level of understanding. These deeper levels of understanding are multifaceted and through a mythopoetic method of examining selected tales ties to Sufism and symbolic narrative are apparent. Within the esoteric world of Sufis, the feminine "voice" is much more prevalent. The selected *Nights* when juxtaposed against symbolic Sufi narrative demonstrates the power of the feminine to illuminate; functioning as a "mirror" in which soulful reflection overcomes dis-ease. In this story, the feminine challenges "ultimate" authority and abuse of power. This contrast of opposites metaphorically reflects both the attraction and mutual importance of the high and low.

Although this beguiling energy seems to insert itself chaotically, creating what is at first seen as confusion and uncertainty, it is in actuality performing according to Divine command. What is first understood as chaos is merely conflict arising out of a challenge to the "status quo." Demonizing the world (and by comparison women) not only inverts discourse but distorts the intent of relationships. Deprivation does not bring one closer to God, but rather further alienates as being in relationship with others is being in relationship with the Divine. To be known is to be in experience as "Thou", rather than a distanced, impersonal "It." To be known requires a deeper understanding and commitment through the act of "lowering." This descent or "lowering" is a desire to relate as well as a yearning to embody for the purpose of intimate knowing, and can only

be achieved through acts of mercy and kindness. Acts of mercy and kindness are relational and seek a "Thou" connection. Intimacy is only understood through materiality (and consequently, multiplicity), and materiality requires mercy and compassion to be known. It is through mercy and love that the unbridled creative energy is understood at the deepest level to be an impulse divinely inspired and controlled, rather than demonic. Its intent is creation and illumination, not destruction.

To deny authentic relationships is to deny God and therefore, align with Iblis. The mystical writings of the Sufis offer deeper levels of understanding. These levels are often multifaceted and revealed in images as well as insights gathered from either periods of meditation, or more devastating experiences in life where one re-evaluates the purpose of existence. This is the world of *mythos,* often dark and ominous, but also relational, seeking unity and relatedness rather than separateness. Lowering can now be experienced not as inferior, or something to avoid and condemn, but as a relational move toward the Divine. Moving beyond a hierarchical categorizing creates a sense of hope from fear, thus allowing wholeness to emerge and integration of outer/inner, soul/body, high/low to take place.

SUMMARY: BOLD EXPANSIVENESS

Intimacy is characterized by 'bold expansiveness.'"[133]

When ideas like moral integrity and principled conduct usually associated with high discourse are appropriated by low discourse, we find the boundaries between these previously distinct hierarchies shift and at times disappear, or become inverted. This inversion of discourse and rhetoric reveals many layers of meaning. In the low discourse of the *Nights* the shift and inversion of discourse is experienced through an active feminine voice. This voice challenges a high discourse that attempts to dismiss her gender by subverting its own rhetorical strategies. The fluidity of texts reveals the deeper nature of morality and reason, along with the concept of multiplicity. This idea of an "interwoven text" as discussed by Barthes actually mirrors the inversion between various *Mirror* texts and *Nights*. Both discourses co-exist and communicate universally while engaged in a mutual dialogue which crosses age, gender, class, and textual boundaries.

Although it may seem paradoxical to consider that the lofty goals of high discourse are met through the acts of a gender often constricted within discourse, it is in the low discourse of the *Nights* where themes of morality, justice, and reason become more than mere rhetoric. In its attempt to mirror the traditional aims of high discourse, the *Nights* allow women to redress an inherent power imbalance. It is in the *Nights* that reason is illuminated by the feminine and the lower instructs the higher. The restricted female subject often portrayed in high discourse, now takes the position of higher within

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[133] Murata, S. *The Tao of Islam.* (Albany, 1992), 77.

lower. Through this inversion, the ideals espoused in *Mirrors* remain. Ironically, the *Nights* reflect that most rulers cannot live up to these ideals due to their own extravagant excesses and self-involvements.

Various modes of communication between men and women were also explored in an effort to further understand the differences in style between the high discourse of *Mirror* texts and the low discourse of *Nights*. To understand the different "voices" of both discourses, the philosophical concepts of *mythos* and *logos* were explored. It has been argued that in the language of high discourse everything is comprehended and categorized in extremes: good or evil, right or wrong, black or white. In this world of purely rational *logos* (science and logic), whatever poses a challenge or is not easily understood is identified as evil at worse, and suspect at best. Its transactional dialectic is purely rational in perspective, using language that separates and distances and thus assumes a hierarchal superiority.

Conversely, *Nights* discourse discloses a world that can be seen as imaginative and at times mystical, displaying a certain type of metaphorical truth that is revealed at a deeper level of understanding. What may be experienced as inverted values by the power base is often used by Sufi masters to explore deeper meanings of power through understanding and community with the Divine. This deeper level of understanding is multifaceted, and is often revealed in stories and anecdotes meant to encourage adepts re-evaluate the nature of power as well as the purpose of existence. This is the world of *mythos,* often dark and ominous, but also relational, seeking unity and relatedness rather than separateness.

The age and social class of various women have also been explored within both discourses. The most striking difference between the representations of women that are older, and often poorer, with that of younger women, usually of royal blood, is that while the older women challenge a purely *logos* male authority, the younger women not only challenge male authority but are often deeper sources of wisdom and council to the male elite. Older and often poorer women challenge the justness of rulers, as well as step outside the boundaries of acceptable social institutions when they feel oppressive rulers limit their body and words. The fact that these women are older and live by simple means is important, as older women have always been treated with respect within Muslim society. Although older women are thought to be safer, this challenge to oppressive rulers is not limited to just older women. Younger, educated women also challenge the laws in place under rulers who are interested in selfish aims.

In both high and low discourses, young and older women display their priority of stability and security of the community or kingdom over their individual needs. Nuzhat al-Zaman's mastery of discourse as well as the waziers's wife use of allegory challenge power with as much authority as the old woman in the desert. In the story of the old woman in the desert, when the ruling elite allow themselves to believe that they are gods, rather than serving God, their alienation often results in abandonment of all humanity and justice. The metaphor of the bezoar stone is used to illuminate the idea of how power can become poisonous when allowed to go unchallenged. In linking fear and danger with injustice, the old woman cautions that feeding the desires mere trifles can be deceiving. It has also been demonstrated that although both high and low discourses reveal that ultimate external power is reserved for the male ruling elite, the very nature

of external power has been shown to be fleeting, as the Master-slave dynamic is always volatile, regardless of age, sex, class, or culture. External power is always ephemeral, being easily acquired and then just as easily lost, and that women can "mirror" this type of power and cruelty as easily as men. However, domination and distancing by either gender create chasms that can be the very cause of chaos and turmoil. Power is nothing without control, and control is a combination of fortitude and mercy. In the discourse of *mythos* the power of the feminine to illuminate, functioning as a "mirror" becomes more evident. In juxtaposition to the ruling elite, the discourse of the Sufi would be positioned as low; however, the contrast of opposites reveals the mutual importance high/low, outer/inner, body/soul.

In high and low discourses, the male elite struggle with containing and controlling the fearful and beguiling sexual energy of women. In an effort to combat these feelings of victimization experienced by the male as being cuckolded, high discourse (and therefore the male elite) tries to distance itself from this beguiling female by associating her with evil and the devil. Although this beguiling energy seems to insert itself chaotically, creating what is at first seen as confusion and uncertainty, it is in actuality performing according to Divine command. Listening to the advice of women has often been compared to allowing chaos to enter the empire. However, what may at is first be understood as chaos is merely conflict arising out of a challenge to the "status quo." Demonizing the world (and by comparison women) not only inverts discourse but distorts the intent of intimacy. To deny intimacy is to deny God and, therefore, to align with Iblis.

The "voice" of the feminine often confronts injustices through the metaphor of illumination. Feminine wisdom and knowledge has been shown to have a dark, chthonic quality. In the darkness, mercy illuminates the path. Power is secured through openness and willingness to hear other "voices." Openness allows access to the Divine, which thereby illuminates the soul. However, illumination often requires an entry into darkness, which allows access to wisdom. The feminine has the power to illuminate, functioning as a "mirror" in which soulful reflection overcomes dis-ease. This contrast of opposites metaphorically reflects both the attraction and mutual importance of these polar dynamic convergences.

It has also been argued that, contrary to the rhetoric of high discourse, dangerous and disruptive natures are not limited to women. In fact, men are capable of much greater destruction than women, especially when men do not comprehend their self-imposed alienation. The depth of alienation experienced by men in *Nights* tales can be found in the plethora of tales that begin with the metaphor of male sterility. The only remedy for sterility brought about through alienation and distancing is to be found in a deeper understanding of both the feminine within and without that reflects the very nature of masculine soul. It is only through this journey into darkness that the adept can develop a different kind of courage than what is expected of him as a warrior and ruler. It is the courage to enter into the shadow of a more mythic consciousness, often dark, chthonic, in which psychic integration becomes more than a possibility; it becomes critical to survival.

What emerges from the polarities of discourse is a liberation and transcendence of both high and low. The constructs found within high and low that seems to galvanize

class and gender fall away when the symbolic narrative found within Sufi literature emerges. Sufi literature contains the power of high, as it crosses over the boundaries established by *Mirrors*. In this crossing-over, authority is emancipated, while at the same time, deeper meaning and purpose are revealed. Through the subtlety of storytelling, the traditional rhetoric of both high and low are exposed, and deeper meanings of narrative challenge the very nature of justice. This deeper meaning exposes a world that can be experienced as *mythos*; the writings present an image of the universe that is reflective in multiplicity without excluding the unity of the Divine. There is a fluidity of movement and experience. Sufi expressions and institutions of Islam were often embedded in the multiplicity of community, rather than isolated in the *logos* of the power elite. The esoteric nature of Sufi teachings was often difficult to reconcile with more traditional teachings of Islam within the community. Sufi masters seek to challenge an adept's awareness by slowly lifting the veil of ignorance. Once the veil of ignorance is lifted, fear or confusion is often replaced by mercy and balance is restored. It is not that many Sufis do not lead a life of deprivation, because they often do; however, their road to a more meaningful life is often in juxtaposition to those securing a power base. Sufis often take a path toward enlightenment and closeness to the Divine that is full of contradictions and paradox. As Schimmel comments, "Sufi masters as a sort of *ko'an*, a paradox meant to shock the hearer, to kindle discussion, to perplex the logical faculties, and thus to engender a nonlogical understanding."[134] The ideals of Sufi teachings can be gleaned in the low discourse of *Nights* where multiplicity and

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[134] Schimmel, Annemarie. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, (Chapel Hill, 1975), 13.

relatedness are present. However, within the liminal space of Sufi story and metaphor, there is not high and low, and unquestioned human authority is transcended.

As Ibn 'Arabi demonstrated, unguided deprivation does not necessarily bring one closer to God, but rather further alienates. To experience undifferentiated Unity requires intimacy, an experience that encourages a "Thou" rather than a distanced, impersonal "It." To achieve intimacy requires a deeper understanding and commitment through the act of "lowering." This descent or "lowering" is a desire toward intimacy as well as a yearning to be embodied for the purpose of knowing the Divine, and can only be achieved through acts of mercy and kindness. Acts of mercy and kindness are relational and seek a "Thou" connection. Intimacy is achieved through materiality (and consequently, multiplicity), and materiality requires mercy and compassion to be truly known. It is through mercy and love that the unbridled creative energy is understood at the deepest level to be an impulse divinely inspired and controlled, rather than demonic. Its intent is creation and illumination, not destruction. Ibn 'Arabi then mirrors a book of counsel to kings, but transcends the hierarchal limitations found in high that seeks to control and alienate the feminine.

Within Ibn 'Arabi's *Divine Governance* discourse, the transcendence of traditional *Mirror* literature is apparent. However, the geographic kingdom of a ruler, where everything is controlled by a male ruling elite through a strictly *logos* based discourse is transposed into the human kingdom where husband and wife (male and female) share equally in station before the eyes of the Divine. From this *mythos* perspective, ultimate male authority should be challenged as both male and female are equal and responsible only to the Divine.

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APPENDIX A

Kurd 'Ali's edition of Ibn al-Muqaffa's

Adab

APPENDIX B

Sampling of *Mirror* Landscape

Although a complete list of the works of the Mirror literary genre is not possible due to the fact that many are no longer available, the following illustrates the depth and breath of the genre:

Ibn al-Muqaffa (d. 757/CE), *Kalila wa Dimnah* & *Kitab adab al-kabir*

Al-Jahiz (d. 868/CE), *Kitab al-taj*

Kay Ka'us (d. 1082-1083/CE), *Qabus-namah*

Nizam al-Mulk (d. 1092/CE), *Siyasat-namah*

Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali (d. 1111/CE), *Nasihat al-mulk*

Al-Turtushi (d. 1122-1123/CE), *Siraj al-Muluk*

Anon. (w: 1157-1162), *Bahr al-fawa'id*

Fakhr al-Mudabbar (d. 1228-1229/CE) *Adab al-harb wa'l-shuja'a*

Najm al-Din al Razi (d. 1256/CE), *Mirsad al-'ibad ila 'l-ma'ad*

Ibn Tiqtaqa (d. 1302/CE), *Kitab al-fakhri*

Jalal al-Din al-Dawwani (D. 1470/CE), *Akhlaa-i ialali*

Husayn Va'iz Kashifi (d. 1494-1495/CE), *Akhlaq –I muhsini*