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Seeing King Solomon through the Verses of Hafez: A Critical Study of Two Safavid Manuscript Paintings

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University of South Florida

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Seeing King Solomon through the Verses of Hafez:
A Critical Study of Two Safavid Manuscript Fragments

by

Richard W. Ellis

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of Art and Art History
College of the Arts
University of South Florida

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Keywords: Islamic art, Persian poetry, Majalis al-Ushshaq, Allen Memorial Art Museum, Fredrick Artz

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Acknowledgements

Manuscripts have not only curious lives of their own, but also a unique ability to bring people together. In the premodern era, often produced by a team of specialists, handmade books were gifted, passed down, shared, and often read aloud with an audience. Today in museums, bound or unbound pages alike continue to be the centerpieces of intellectual and social engagements as the focus of curators, scholars, and visitors. One single “fugitive” leaf from among these pages, the topic of this thesis, has given me the chance to work under the supervision of remarkable scholars who greatly enriched my research and whom I deeply respect.

Several professors of the University of South Florida’s School of Art and Art History (SAAH) have mentored me during my graduate education and shaped my understanding of art history, each in their own way. Dr. Pamela Brekka, Prof. Elisabeth A. Fraser, Dr. Riccardo Marchi, Dr. Allison Moore, and Dr. Helena K. Szépe guided and supported me over the years. I am grateful to Dr. Szépe and Prof Fraser for serving on my thesis committee, and to Dr. Brekka and Dr. Napora for taking the time from their busy schedules to provide much appreciated feedback as questioners. My deepest appreciation is reserved for my advisor and the Chair of my thesis committee, Dr. Esra Akın-Kıvanç. She introduced me to the field of Islamic art and to the illustrated leaf that I study in this work. She has patiently guided me along this project from beginning to end, providing thoughtful criticism, as well as indispensable translations of the
Arabic and Persian texts. The discussions we have shared over the past five years about art, scholarship, spirituality, and humanity have significantly impacted the nature of this study, which I dedicate to her.

I also wish to express my gratitude for the superb faculty at Oberlin College and Conservatory who courteously hosted me during the most critical stage of my research. I would like to thank Emma Laube, the Curatorial Assistant for Academic Programs at the College’s Allen Memorial Art Museum, and her team, for kindly overseeing my visit with their small but important collection of excised pages from Persian manuscripts. I would also like to thank Ed Vermue, the Head of Special Collections and Preservation at the Oberlin College Libraries, for sharing with me the manuscripts and fragments that he safeguards with care, each of which is deserving of a focused critical study. I also thank Ken Grossi, the College Archivist at Oberlin College Archives, for making a plethora of documents available to me. I am grateful to Prof. Mohammad Jafar Mahallati, Presidential Scholar in Islamic Studies at Oberlin’s Department of Religion, for sharing his expertise on Islamic literature and for a wonderful conversation on love and friendship.

This research was made possible through a travel grant generously provided by the SAAH. The opportunity to study firsthand the manuscript page that is the topic of this thesis was vital for a better understanding of its physical features. I thank Prof. Wallace Wilson, Director of the SAAH, and Julie Herrin, Office Manager, for making my research travel possible. I should also acknowledge my bright graduate colleagues for our valued friendships. Their unwavering encouragement helped me see this project through. I am grateful to each of these individuals and institutions for their support during the course of my studies at the SAAH. Lastly, I would like to thank my parents for their vital support in my educational pursuits over the years.
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A Note to the Reader

For the sake of consistency, in my readings of Arabic, Ottoman, and Persian words, I follow the rules of Persian orthography, unless I am quoting from a source, in which case I preserve the spelling as it appears. The dates I use correspond to the Gregorian calendar, with Hegira dates provided when relevant. For translations of place names, where available, I use the most familiar English form. The images reproduced in this thesis are either courteously provided by Dr. Esra Akin-Kıvanç or belong to the public domain.
### Commonly Used Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AMAM</td>
<td>Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BL</td>
<td>British Library, London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BN</td>
<td>Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBL</td>
<td>Chester Beatty Library, Dublin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGA</td>
<td>Freer Gallery of Art, Washington DC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MMA</td>
<td>Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLR</td>
<td>National Library of Russia, St. Petersburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBL</td>
<td>Oxford Bodleian Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PML</td>
<td>Pierpont Morgan Library, New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIEM</td>
<td>Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi (Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum), Istanbul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSMK</td>
<td>Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi (Topkapı Palace Museum Library), Istanbul</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Abstract

This thesis is focused on a previously unpublished collage comprised of two manuscript fragments from Safavid Iran. One fragment contains a painting that depicts an enthronement scene featuring King Solomon, which, as I argue, was taken from a copy of the *Majalis al-Ushshaq* by Kamal al-Din Gazurgahi. The other fragment contains verses from the *Divan* of Hafez. The fragment from the *Divan* has been gutted and overlaps the painting of Solomon, effectively framing the image. Through visual and textual analysis, I argue that both fragments come from manuscripts that were produced in Shiraz. I further argue that the painting of Solomon was executed at the *asitana* of Maulana Husam al-Din Ibrahim in the second quarter of the sixteenth century. My argument about the fragments’ origins is followed by an exploration of the painting’s symbolism in which I focus on a broken branch, an integral component of Solomon’s iconography in Persian painting. Finally, I explore the object’s afterlife and consider how the physical reconfiguration of these fragments causes them to take on new meaning. I read the fragments as a single folio and bring to light correlations between the text and image, which, were only realized because of their uncanny union. I conclude with the collage’s collection history and a hypothesis regarding the fragments’ transatlantic route.
Introduction

The focus of this thesis is a painting at the center of a collage comprised of two fragments, each cut from a different sixteenth-century Safavid manuscript (fig. 1). The codices’ whereabouts remain unknown, but the collage is currently housed at the Allen Memorial Art Museum (AMAM) at Oberlin College and Conservatory in Oberlin, Ohio. The subject of the painting is King Solomon, the Abrahamic prophet highly revered in Islam. Solomon is depicted enthroned outdoors, in the presence of his vizier Assaf ibn Bayqara and a colorful assembly of jinn (demons), with his messenger hoopoe fluttering above his shoulder. He is crowned with a turban surrounded by a fiery halo that indicates his status as a prophet. His ornate throne is elevated above the ensemble gathered before him and establishes the hierarchic order of the figures. The scene is fantastical, set within a dreamlike meadow illuminated by a gold sky. The figures convene on the mustard brown foreground before a backdrop of periwinkle blue hills with a pair of elegantly painted gazelles and a tree with golden leaves. A stream, originally painted with silver that has since tarnished to black, runs across the bottom of the page and leads to a tree stump with newly sprouted fronds, located just beneath Solomon’s throne.

The painting appears on the recto side of an excised folio. Accompanying the image are three bayts (rhyming couplets) penned in an elegant nasta’liq script. Two of the bayts are written

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1 Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College and Conservatory, accession no. 1954.34. The collage was likely fashioned in the twentieth century by a French art dealer, as suggested by the French handwriting added to the top of the verso side. A quality photograph of the work can be found at http://allenartcollection.oberlin.edu/emuseum/view/objects/asitem/id/3492.
above the image and one bayt is written beneath it. Separating the two bayts and the painting is an Arabic inscription framed by illuminated cartouches and an intricate border composed of a floral motif painted in red, pink, white, green, and gold. I have identified these verses as being from a ghazal (lyrical love poem) of the Divan (Collected Poems) of Hafez (1315-1390 CE), the celebrated Persian mystic and poet. Intriguingly, the page containing Hafez’s text has been truncated at its center to open a window for the painting of Solomon. The gutted fragment was glued on top of the painted page, like a permanent picture frame. The execution is flawed however, and it results in the concealment of the very top portion of the image with the golden skyline. Regardless of the botched incision, this configuration makes the collage appear as a single page at first glance. The discrepancy between the scene being depicted and the text that surrounds it is revealed only during a first-hand examination of the page. The dissonance between the poetry of Hafez and this image of King Solomon becomes apparent also through a consideration of conventional depictions of Sufi mystics in Persian art: in a typical page from the Divan, Sufis are often featured in scenes of dancing, drinking, and mystical practices to effectively epitomize Hafez’s libertine perspective and his proclivity for ecstatic rituals involving wine. 

Although the painted segment on the recto side appears to be out of place in relation to the appropriated text of Hafez that surrounds it, its pertinence to the folio becomes evident once one turns to the verso side of the page (fig. 2). Penned on this side, is a body of text that has eluded the attention of previous scholars. Inscribed in Persian, the text is comprised of fourteen lines of nastā’liq script encased by a frame of blue, red, gold, orange, and green. This text is an excerpt from the famous narrative of King Solomon courting the Queen of Sheba, known as

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2 Illustrations to copies of the Divan of Hafez include Dancing Dervishes, painted by Kamal al-Din Bihzad ca. 1480 (MMA accession no. 17.81.4), and Allegory of Worldly and Otherworldly Drunkenness painted by Sultan Mohammad, ca. 1531-33 (MMA, accession no. 1988.430).
Bilqis. The particular instance of the narrative recounted here relates an exchange of love letters between the two rulers. My research has revealed this narrative to be an excerpt from the *Majalis al-Ushshaq* (Gatherings [or Meetings] of Lovers, from hereon, the *Majalis*), a popular collection of romances attributed to a lesser known poet, Kamal al-Din Gazurgahi, who was a protégé of the Timurid Sultan Husayn Mirza Bayqara (r. 1469-1506).\(^3\) In this study, I first identify the source as being a passage from the Majalis, and discuss the painting in relation to the contents of that passage. Based on this correlation, I assign the painting the title *King Solomon Composing a Love Letter*.

Going beyond mere identification of the source of the text, the purpose of this thesis is twofold. First, I work to identify the painting’s place of production through stylistic comparisons. These comparisons allow me to propose Shiraz—a city in the Western region of Fars that was once a prolific site of manuscript production—as the place of origin of the painted fragment. Second, I offer a discussion of the painting’s theosophical imagery through an interpretation of its various symbolic elements in relation to the allegorical themes of Gazurgahi’s *Majalis*. Collectively, my discussions are intended to reframe the painting within its intended context, before exploring more theoretical lines of thought.

In chapter one, in the absence of a previous study solely dedicated to excised and altered manuscript leaves in Islamic art, I review scholarship on manuscript production in Shiraz in the sixteenth century. Although past scholars have been concerned predominately with intact codices, and usually turn to single leaves only when such leaves fit within the framework of the

album, I benefit from their methodology to support my attribution for this single leaf. In chapter two, I offer a visual analysis of the painted fragment and present comparative analysis to give further credence to my attribution. In chapter three, I elaborate on the particulars of the painting that represent the version of the story of Solomon and Bilqis as told in the Majalis. I suggest that this excised page from a presently unidentified copy of Gazurgahi’s text was likely produced in the mid-sixteenth century at a workshop located at the asitana of fifteenth-century Sufi poet Mawlana Husam al-Din Ibrahim (d. 1470) in Shiraz. Following this argument, I relate the semiotic content of the painting to the semantic context of the Majalis. Chapter four is dedicated to one particular element of the painting: a broken branch. Here, I investigate the metaphoric meaning of this motif and discuss its hitherto unnoted significance as part of Solomonic iconography in Safavid painting. In chapter five, I turn my attention to the verses from Hafez inscribed on the recto side and discuss their relationship to the painting, which I identify as an illustration to the Majalis.

Although the two fragments were not intended for one another, I discern thematic correlations between the painting of King Solomon and the verses by Hafez. The relationship that I establish between text and image allows me to offer an interpretation of the collage as a single object. To elucidate on the fragmented nature of this collage, I employ ontological discourses established by modern and contemporary theorists, in particular Theodor W. Adorno,
as they relate to an aesthetic sensibility that engages with the unique qualities of fragments.\textsuperscript{7} In this final chapter, I describe the long history of these two collaged pages as one of “endless becoming” as opposed to an “absolute being.”\textsuperscript{8} As I conceive these two fragments as a singular, united object, I consider how they transform conceptually as well as physically, and hypothesize on how and why they might have been paired. The chapter ends with an analysis of the codicological features of the recto side of the page with verses from Hafez. Based on this investigation, I propose that this gutted page might have also been produced in Shiraz.

This peculiar pairing of an image with King Solomon and the verses of Hafez make for a fascinating case study of how manuscript fragments can be physically and conceptually reframed over time. At some point in these fragments’ lives, an art dealer gutted a page from an unknown copy of Hafez’s Divan and repurposed it as a decorative frame for the painting of Solomon. This amalgamation was probably executed on the hope that the enticing features of each fragment would mutually increase their value. In her recent article, “The Collectors Who Cut Up A Masterpiece,” Christiane Gruber discusses the practice of augmenting excised folios with frames made from paper with marbled or gold-painted borders, referring to this act with the word “cannibalized” to describe the violence of such reconfigurations.\textsuperscript{9} The word that I employ to discuss this object, “collage,” comes from the French coller, meaning to glue. It is important to note that the manner in which these fragments were dismembered and reassembled is distinguished from the common and deliberate practice of moving illustrations from book to book in the Islamic Persian context. A comparison of this collage to a similarly transitive

\textsuperscript{7} Ian Balfour, “‘The Whole is the Untrue’: On the Necessity of the Fragment (after Adorno),” in The Fragment: an Incomplete History, ed. William Tronzo (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2009), 83-92.
\textsuperscript{8} Dan Mellamphy, “‘Fragmentality’ (thinking the fragment),” Dalhousie French Studies 45 (Winter 1998): 83-98.
illustration from the *Divan* of Hafez at the MMA shows that when Persian artists removed images from their original context and reintegrated them into new books, their execution was nearly surgical, at times carried out by the use of stitches or papier-mâché.\(^\text{10}\) In recent years, scholars, particularly those who focus on European manuscripts, have begun tending to issues of fragmentation by studying the more unfortunate remains of some antique books and the curious fates that befell them.\(^\text{11}\)

In the case of the fragments from Oberlin, their unification provides a unique transformative exchange, in which content has been traded, context has been obscured, and the now-elusive details of the fragments’ independent histories have been supplemented by the accretions of a layered biography.\(^\text{12}\) In my Conclusion, I account for the pair’s shared afterlife, discuss the possible motivations behind their fusion, and speculate on the route that they may have traveled from Shiraz to Oberlin. A mention of the fragments’ only known owner, Fredrick B. Artz of Oberlin College, and his donation of this pair to the Allen Memorial Art Museum (AMAM), brings this study to an end.\(^\text{13}\)

\(^{10}\) A good example of this practice is observed on both sides of *Dancing Dervishes*, painted by Kamal al-Din Bihzad ca. 1480 (MMA accession no. 17.81.4), [https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/446892](https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/446892).

\(^{11}\) The scholarly journal *Fragmentology* was founded in 2018 as a part of *Fragmentarium*, an international research project dedicated to the study of manuscript fragments. Another recent initiative on the topic is the Broken Books project, a collaborative effort with similar endeavors. [http://brokenbooks.org/brokenBooks/home.html?demo=1](http://brokenbooks.org/brokenBooks/home.html?demo=1).


\(^{13}\) I borrow the term “route” from James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).
Chapter 1: Perspectives on Shiraz

The art of the painted book in Persian lands under the rule of the Ilkhanid, Timurid, and Safavid dynasties is perhaps the most widely researched topic within the field of Islamic art history. The painting of King Solomon on which this thesis focuses was produced during the Safavid dynasty (1501-1736), founded by Shah Ismail I (r. 1501-1524), who traced his origins to the sheikh of the prominent Safaviyya Sufi order established in 1301. Shah Ismail I’s patronage of the arts was greatly surpassed by that of his son, Tahmasp I (r. 1524-1576), who was an avid connoisseur. The painters of the Safavid era excelled in their art by drawing on the foundations laid by the artists of previous dynasties. Under the Safavids, manuscript illustration proliferated and artists working in the Persian cities of Shiraz, Tabriz, Herat, Mashhad, Yazd, Isfahan, and Qazvin developed diverse styles that contributed to a dynamic history of painting. However, prioritizing works of art produced for courtly patrons, past scholars of Persian painting have commonly focused on the capital cities Tabriz, Herat, and Isfahan. Although they did not entirely omit a mention of Shiraz in their surveys and catalogs of Persian art, only a few scholars have published on provincial centers like Shiraz. In this chapter, I present a review of previous scholarship on manuscript painting in Shiraz in the sixteenth century, for I maintain that this painting belongs to that geographical region and historical period.

Since the twelfth century, Shiraz has been home to some of Persia’s most celebrated poets and thinkers, and is also widely regarded as one of the most renowned centers of manuscript production. In the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Shirazi artists working under Timurid patronage elaborated on the tradition of manuscript painting that was introduced by the Ilkhanids in the thirteenth century. In terms of manuscript production, the Timurid period of Shiraz is one of the most thoroughly studied epochs.

Shiraz’s artistic production under the Safavids has also been subjected to a wide array of systematic studies. However, with few exceptions, these studies have been limited within a narrow and flawed framework set by the British art historian Basil Wilkinson Robinson. This scholar described Shiraz under the Safavids as a provincial center and speculated that the manuscripts produced there were intended merely for a commercial market, as opposed to having been commissioned by the court. Until recently, this notion has been uncritically reiterated in scholarship, leading to an underestimation of Shirazi art production in general.

Furthermore,
Robinson deemed the paintings of Shiraz to be of lesser quality compared to works by artists employed at courtly ateliers, and went as far as labeling them as “primitive.”

Prior to such mischaracterizations of Shiraz, a handful of scholars writing in the early twentieth century attempted to classify the city’s artistic output according to style. Grace Dunham Guest, the Assistant Director of the Freer Gallery from 1920 to 1946, was one such scholar. Her book, *Shiraz Painting in the Sixteenth Century*, published in 1949, was the first monograph dedicated solely to Shiraz. Guest’s main objective was to develop criteria for a stylistic classification of manuscript paintings produced during the sixteenth century, an endeavor that was initiated about a decade earlier by Ernst Kühnel, a German historian of Islamic art who attempted a periodization of five hundred years of manuscript illustration. Similar to Kühnel, but with a narrower scope, Guest’s pioneering work provided a descriptive profile for manuscripts from Shiraz. Her book makes a useful field guide as it contains original diagrams of common features found in paintings from Shiraz, such as human and animal figures and plant types, which she presents in hand-drawn diagrams. In this study, Guest also offered an insightful description of the compositional structures routinely employed by Shirazi artists, discerned formulaic proportions used in the rendering of figural and non-figural elements and explained how these familiar constituents can be used to identify a Shirazi origin. Informed by the stylistic and formal criteria that she thus establishes, Guest identified fifty-three previously anonymous illustrated manuscripts at the Freer and Sackler Gallery as representatives of the Safavid Shiraz style. Although the author’s expertly delivered visual analyses leave no room for interpretive discussions, the book nonetheless establishes useful criteria for a study of Shirazi manuscripts.

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About ten years after Guest, Ivan Stchoukine, a French art historian of Russian descent, published *Les Peintures des Manuscrits Safavis de 1502 à 1587*. This was the first monograph that attempted to construct a comprehensive history of Safavid painting in the sixteenth century that accounted for not just one but multiple sites of manuscript production. While Stchoukine’s main enterprise was to classify manuscripts according to their geographical origin, he also contributed to the field by expanding his focus beyond the paintings to include discussions of an array of codicological features. His work was novel also for his interpretations of the stylistic changes within the manuscripts’ historical frameworks. Although never translated into English, Stchoukine’s monograph remains an important reference source for studies of attribution.

Another art historian who engaged with manuscript production in Shiraz was Ernst Grube, a former curator of the Islamic Department at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In “The Miniatures of Shiraz,” Grube examined a small collection of works that the museum had recently acquired. In this article, Grube reiterated an argument originally proposed by Robinson, which proposed that the blending of local Injuid and Turkman painting styles resulted in the characteristic style of painting that became foundational for later artists working in Shiraz during the sixteenth century. The chronology that Grube presented followed the decline paradigm, in which the local style developed during Turkman rule was followed by a “classical” era under the Timurid dynasty, before artistic practices “declined” under the stewardship of the Safavids. Grube constructed this narrative with the statement that following the rise of Shah Ismail I, Shiraz was “reduced from a major court to a minor provincial capital,” and “would never again

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recapture her former glory as a center of Persian art.” Grube’s belief in an alleged artistic corruption caused by the Safavid painters led him to overlook the active network of artists working between Shiraz and other centers. More importantly, excluded from this decline theory were the dozens of luxurious Shirazi manuscripts stored in libraries across the world.

Such mischaracterizations of Shirazi paintings asserted by Robinson and Grube have been refuted in recent studies that point to refined examples of manuscript painting from Shiraz. In Princeton’s Great Book of Kings: The Peck Shahnama, for instance, art historian Marianna Shreve Simpson reproduced a previously overlooked deluxe manuscript that was made in Shiraz and intended specifically for the Safavid court. The presence of this manuscript of fine craftsmanship helped Simpson to revise the town’s previous reputation as merely a commercial center and to reposition Shiraz among the region’s major artistic centers.

In addition to providing discussions of provenance and collection history, Simpson has offered the reader insightful annotations for each of the manuscript’s paintings and their engrossing details. As she did in a previous work titled Sultan Ibrahim Mirza’s “Haft Awrang”: A Princely Manuscript from Sixteenth-Century Iran, Simpson drew attention to the relationship between poetry and painting in sixteenth century Persian manuscripts. In both studies, Simpson has effectively demonstrated the correlation between image and text, and paying particular attention to textual content, explored the main themes that are echoed in the images and in the “mood” that the image and the text share. Without discarding previous scholars’ contributions to our understanding of Persian art through their oeuvres, Simpson has argued that besides adding

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to the factual information found in artists’ biographies, illustrations can also embody latent meanings, such as mystical symbolisms, and can even make allusions to tropes in other manuscript paintings. Although Simpson is concerned with the multilayered components—both physical and symbolic—of only complete codices, her analytical approach is beneficial for studying a fragment, such as the topic of this thesis.

The most comprehensive study on manuscript production in Shiraz to date is *Turkman Governors, Shiraz Artisans, and Ottoman Collectors: Sixteenth-Century Shiraz Manuscripts* by the Turkish art historian Lale Uluç.\(^{28}\) In this work, the author constructs a chronological survey of the style of painting in Shiraz that spans from 1503 to 1603. This survey is based on a close examination of eighty-one exquisite manuscripts with particular attention to their richly illustrated contents and various codicological features. Most of the manuscripts that Uluç assesses are in the Topkapı Palace Museum Library in Istanbul, with some residing in twelve different libraries, mostly in Europe. Despite the large number of works that she brings to the attention of the reader, however, Uluç selects only complete manuscripts with inscribed dates of production. Working with this carefully selected corpus of codices, she addresses questions of style, observes the unique trends in manuscripts particular to Shiraz, and proposes that a school of painting persisted in Shiraz throughout the sixteenth century. Additionally, the author formulates an ambitious theory regarding patronage, a topic that has remained ambiguous due to the lack of patrons’ names that are typically listed on colophons. In an attempt to overthrow the conclusions of early scholars who designated Shiraz as a commercial market, Uluç identifies the Zu’lqadir governors who ruled over Shiraz for nearly a century as potential patrons. Pointing out that the end of their rule coincided with the decline in quality and quantity of manuscript

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production in Shiraz. Besides this compelling argument on patronage, Uluç’s monograph is assiduous for its discussion of the routes that these manuscripts traveled, often in the hands of Safavid and Ottoman collectors.

Although Uluç has aptly traced these manuscripts’ journey from their original Safavid contexts to Ottoman realms, there is no scholarly consensus on her theory regarding patronage. Skeptical in her overall review of Uluç’s monograph, Marianna Shreve Simpson, for instance, describes the author’s evidence as “circumstantial” and her argument as “not very convincing.”

Similarly, David Roxburgh maintains that no singular “school” of painting was active in Shiraz during the sixteenth century, but that itinerant artists produced the city’s corpus of painted manuscripts. Although questions of patronage continue to remain unresolved, the various methodologies and theories established by these scholars help to form an intricate system for investigating the origins of detached manuscript leaves, such as the painted fragment at Oberlin.

As is the case with so many excised leaves, this painting remains unpublished and has never been subjected to systematic research. The only existing records on it consist of a typed note by Richard Ettinghausen, the prominent scholar of Islamic art history and the former curator of the Freer Gallery. In this note, Ettinghausen misidentifies the page as belonging to a copy of the Shahnameh, the Persian epic composed by the poet Firdausi (d. 1020). This attribution is problematic, however, for King Solomon is not mentioned in Firdausi’s work, although the demons are remarkably consistent with typologies observed in the Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp.

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32 This note is preserved in a folder in the AMAM with no registration number attributed to it. At the time, Ettinghausen was Director of the Freer Gallery of Art, which was a major source for the AMAM’s collection of East Asian Art. Ettinghausen aided in the attribution of items in the collection during the museum’s acquisition of works from the Freer Gallery.
Ettinghausen was perhaps misled by this resemblance, and possibly related this folio to the other Persian fragments bequeathed by Artz, which do come from various copies of the *Shahnameh*.33

In addition to remaining unstudied, the Oberlin fragment has been on display only once, in 2013, in an exhibition, titled “Beyond the Surface: Text and Image in Islamic Art,” curated at the AMAM by Esra Akın-Kıvanç. Within the context of that exhibition, this collage was meant to demonstrate the intricate relationship between painting and literature, and an in-depth study of its visual, historical, and symbolic aspects fell out of the curator’s scope. The painting is currently preserved at the AMAM inside a double-sided matted frame, stored away from the public eye. The following chapters of this thesis aim to construct the history of this “fugitive” fragment and to interpret it through its layered literary, visual, and theological contexts.34

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33 As part of Artz’s bequest, the AMAM received a page from a copy of the *Shahnameh* with a painting on both sides (accession no. 1958.10), as well as another illustrated page from a different *Shahnameh* (accession no. 1958.17).

In this chapter, I present a visual analysis to facilitate a geographical attribution for *King Solomon Composing a Love Letter*. Early scholars of the history of Persian books frequently relied on their connoisseurship to identify the hands of different painters and the places of production of manuscript paintings. Such internal evidence as colophons, seals, signatures, and records of provenance also aided them in their attributions. In the case of the painting of King Solomon at Oberlin, we are left without any of these valuable tools. My analysis is therefore based on the painting’s stylistic affinities with similar artwork from Shiraz from the first half of the sixteenth century.

This depiction of Solomon enthroned is set within an ethereal meadow of periwinkle blue with a stream that was painted with silver that has since tarnished to black. The scene unfolds beneath a golden sky with small Chinese scroll clouds and a solitary, undulating tree with golden leaves. Miniscule red and blue flowers dot the mustard brown ground. A tree stump is planted at the mouth of the stream, sprouting new boughs, two of which are snapped and turn downwards. King Solomon is enthroned in the presence of his trustworthy hoopoe and his vizier Assaf ibn Bayqara, who stands before a group of beastly *jinn*. The composition is arranged in two halves, with King Solomon and his hoopoe on the right and all other figures occupying the left side. The entourage faces Solomon, whose ornate throne elevates him above the others, intimating his

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regal status as a supreme and righteous ruler. In the horizon line above Solomon’s throne appear two subtly drawn grotesque profiles. From behind the hills on the left side of the painting, pair of elegantly painted gazelles observes the scene, a motif that is symbolic of lovers in Persian literature.

King Solomon’s throne is an elaborately decorated hexagonal structure that is elevated by arcuated legs with drapes in between. The throne features gold panels decorated with black vegetal motifs that encase the seat, which is sumptuously lined with thin red arabesques set against a pink background. The throne is crowned with a blue and white geometric band, with rectangular panels in gold and dark blue, each topped at corner with a gold teardrop finial. On the throne, King Solomon sits cross-legged on a golden pillow. He is draped in luxurious robes of red and blue embellished with a golden starry pattern. A scarf of moss green is elegantly wrapped around his neck.

The faces are rendered with great care. Both King Solomon and Assaf have immediately identifiable facial features. Solomon’s almond shaped eyes are punctuated with dark pupils and crowned by a sharply pointed brow. His grey beard, each hair meticulously rendered, reveals his advanced age and God-sanctified wisdom. He is crowned with a fiery halo and a kulah turban, composed of a white cloth, trimmed with golden embroidery, wrapped around a red felt cap.\textsuperscript{36} Solomon holds a handkerchief in his right hand, an accessory symbolic of elegance and erudition in Persian art. With his left hand, he gracefully gestures toward Assaf, who is standing before him and returns the king’s gaze. Assaf is shown wearing a beige, ankle-length caftan over a white, gold-speckled garment, evocative of the leopard-skin clothing donned by the figures in the famous painting The Court of Guyamars from the Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{36} B.W. Robinson describes this turban style in Descriptive Catalog, 97.
\textsuperscript{37} The Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp, folio 20v.
turban is identical to that of Solomon’s, but his has a long tail that loops around his neck. His beard is shorter and darker than that of the king, appropriate for his junior status. Assaf is seated somewhat awkwardly on his chair, as though rising to a standing position. His chair is of a similar design as Solomon’s throne, establishing a visual connection between the pair, though it is significantly smaller in size. Assaf’s black shoes and stockings, which are the same moss green as Solomon’s scarf, poke out from beneath his robes. With his right hand he returns a gesture towards Solomon, while one of the jinn standing behind him clasps his left elbow. With his left hand, Assaf points downwards, a motion seemingly directed at the stump planted at the top of the stream beneath Solomon’s throne.

A group of four menacing figures, the jinn, crowds the left side of the image. The jinn are mentioned in pre-Islamic Arab and Persian mythology, as well as in the Qur’an, where God declares that He bestowed upon Solomon command over all living things including the jinn.38 The jinn have taken on different forms in myth, legend, and in religious texts and literature. They are sometimes described as being made of smokeless fire, and sometimes understood as shape-shifters, taking on the forms of serpents or dragons.39 In this image, they appear in their more conventional form as divs, or demons, the perpetual enemies of humanity that antagonize the various heroes of the Shahnameh. Their grotesque anthropomorphic forms are larger and fuller than those of the two human figures, with clearly defined ribcages, fleshy skin and bellies. Each jinn is rendered in a different color with swirling patterns embellishing their skins. Their ugly

forms are meant to instill displeasure in the viewer and to express the jinn’s true nature as a maniacal being of lesser intelligence. The costumes and bodily forms of the jinn recall the mysterious fifteenth-century paintings of demons by Ustad Muhammad Siyah Qalam (Black Pen), a few of which may be depictions of King Solomon’s abominable attendants that may have served as prototypes for later depictions of divs in Persian painting. Like the demons in these images, the jinn in King Solomon Composing a Love Letter are all shown wearing blue skirts tied at their waists, golden bells around their necks, and golden accouterments strapped around their arms and ankles. All of the elements of their costumes are indicative of their servitude.

Similar to Solomon and Assaf, the jinn are rendered with individualized features that give them each a unique personality, although they have almost identical large, bulbous black and gold eyes. Tugging at Assaf’s elbow with one hand is a towering jinn painted in mossy green. He has two short branchy horns that curve in towards each other, flappy pointed ears, and an open, bright red mouth that reveals his pointed teeth. His face is twisted in anger into a snarl and his bulging eyes protrude from beneath his sharply arched brows. With his other hand, he points at King Solomon. Standing at the side of green jinn is a spotted pink one, with a set of horns and a mouth similar to his companion. This creature is more humorous than furious, though. He expresses bewilderment by holding an index finger to his chin, but seems plainly unaware of his genitals, crudely exposed through a slit in the front of his skirt. In this regard, he is both shocked and shocking to the viewer. The right side of his body has been cropped by the edge of the overlying fragment. The pink and green jinn overlap a third one in the back of the group so that

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only its head and part of his upper body are visible. This one has feline features with a yellow skin spotted with orange swirls. It too holds a finger to his pinkish snout. A fourth jinn, painted in bright vermilion, and significantly more fiendish than the others, kneels in the foreground and grimaces up at Solomon. His fists are thrust in the white contents of a gold serving vessel perched on one knee. The jinn are almost always present in images of King Solomon. Here, they act as supporting characters that observe and comment on Solomon dictating his message for the Queen of Sheba and compelling the kneeling jinn to procure a depilatory solution, a peculiar detail in the story that I discuss below.

The overall style of this painting closely resembles what Lale Uluç has termed “the post-1520s style.” According to Uluç, this period of style emerged as a sudden and radical shift from the previous, more decorated style of painting that prevailed in the first decades of Safavid rule. The predominant style of painting that preceded the 1520s was excessively ornate with intensely saturated jewel tones, a profuse use of gold, dramatically elongated, curvilinear figures, and exuberant, lush landscapes. Images were either comprised of outdoor scenes with dense vegetation, or deliberately two-dimensional interior settings with every surface overcome with geometric ornament. Following the first decades of Safavid rule, however, artists began to produce manuscripts in a style that reflected a shift toward a plainer aesthetic taste at the court. Accordingly, figures with more rational proportions replaced the exaggerated figures of the Turkman School and decorative and floral elements became more restrained.

*King Solomon Composing a Love Letter* is imbued with a number of elements of this new style. In the absence of internal evidence that would help identify an artist or at least a workshop for this painting, I now turn to a comparative analysis and study the various components of this

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44 Ibid, 99.
painting that attest to its production in post-1520s style. These include the plain grounds painted in light colors, delicate and contained vegetal motifs, lack of intense color washes, a lighter color palette, well-proportioned figures, jinn that look like divs from the Shahnameh, and a more orderly and balanced composition. A discussion of a group of paintings associated with Shirazi artist Qasim bin Ali will facilitate these comparisons.

One particular artist from Shiraz, who may have worked on the Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp, Qasim bin Ali, appears to have played an imperative role in catalyzing the post-1520s style. Qasim was a skilled calligrapher and painter, known for advancing methods of rendering architectural elements and for the distinctive features he tended to give to his human figures, as opposed to employing the same facial type repeatedly. Little to nothing is known about Qasim’s life other than that he was possibly born in Shiraz and worked between his hometown and the capital city Tabriz. Ivan Stchoukine and Abolala Soudavar have contested the attribution of Shiraz as Qasim’s hometown and instead propose a Herati background. Regardless of where he was from, we know that Qasim did at least work in Shiraz, even if temporarily. Ten manuscripts produced at the asitana of Mawlana Husam al-Din Ibrahim include his signature, proving that he was well connected to the circle of Shirazi artists. The specific date that he began painting at the asitana is unknown, but his influence on manuscript painting there becomes apparent by the 1520s. One such painting that suggests Qasim’s presence there is included in the famous Bahram Mirza album, titled Portrait of Mir Sayyid, Minister of

45 Dickson and Welch identify Qasim as possibly being their “Painter B.” See The Houghton Shahnameh, 1: 257, n. 2.
46 For a detailed discussion of Qasim and his work in Shiraz see Uluç, Turkman Governors, 105-33.
48 Uluç, Turkman Governors, 105-14.
This work shows the artist’s predilection for bestowing individuality to his figures, which in this case represented actual historical individuals. In this portrait, without overlooking the distinctive features of the sitter’s face, the painter articulates his subject’s long hooked nose, gout cheeks, sunken eyes, protruding chin, and even the subtle wrinkles over the brow line, thereby attesting to the virtuosity of his hand.

The inclusion of a painting by Qasim in the Bahram Mirza album that was compiled by Dust Muhammad, the head of the royal atelier, shows that the former was also connected to or at least recognized by the Safavid elite, who were avid connoisseurs and patrons of art. Qasim’s affiliations with Tabriz explain how his influence on painting trends in Shiraz reflected artistic at the capital, specifically the new style ushered in by the Safavid synthesis. Uluç attributes the phenomenon of Shirazi painters’ conforming to the new courtly taste to an escalation in political relationships between Shiraz and the capital at Tabriz due to the consolidation of power of Shah Ismail I (r. 1501-1524). The fruition of the Tabriz metropolitan style in paintings at Shiraz was solidified in the midcentury when artists who painted for Shah Tahmasp began to leave the capital and traveled to provinces like Shiraz in search of work after the shah’s famous renunciation of the arts.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art owns a manuscript copy of the *Divan* of Mir Ali Shir Navai from 1580, which contains five paintings attributed to Qasim bin Ali. Although Qasim is noted for the effect he had on the local methods of rendering architectural elements in manuscript paintings in Shiraz, four of his five paintings at the Metropolitan depict outdoor

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50 Ibid, 99.
The outlines of the hills in these paintings are similar to that observed in *King Solomon Composing a Love Letter*. The lines dip and rise in swells, forming mushroom-like contours. Although the page from Oberlin is at least a couple decades older than these four paintings, their characteristic horizon lines mark an identifiable pattern. The later paintings at the MMA exhibit the changes in style that occurred as the century progressed, including a change in the color palette with the introduction of dark green to Shiraz. In *A Contest of Skill in Archery on Horseback* (fig. 3), for instance, a tree that is rendered similarly to the one found in the Oberlin page is distinguished with leaves that are painted a dark shade of green instead of gold. In this painting, periwinkle blue persists in the rocky hills, although the hidden grotesques of the Turkman era nearly vanish. Only the faintest trace of faces similar to those in *King Solomon* can be made out in the crests that rise and fall in *A Tournament at Arms* (fig. 4).

Another image from the same collection, titled *Preparation for a Noonday Meal* (fig. 5), contains a figure rendered in a pose that is evocative of one of the figures in *King Solomon*. Depicting a group of men performing culinary tasks, this image contains two cauldrons that are set beneath a blossoming tree, each with a small golden fire blazing under them. As they say, too many cooks in the kitchen spoil the pot. In this scene, with fourteen figures total, there are enough cooks to spoil the both of them. The various figures gesture at one another, obviously engaged in a heated conversation, perhaps debating over the recipe. In the foreground are figures who are tending to various shining vessels: one squats before a pool as though washing a cloth, another is engaged with a mortar and pestle, and between them is a bald kneeling figure with his fists stretched out before him and a vessel perched on his knees, revealing a striking similarity to...

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52 Uluç, *Turkman Governors*, 121.  
54 Ibid., “A Tournament at Arms,” MMA, accession no. 13.228.21.5.  
55 Ibid., “Preparation for a Noonday Meal,” MMA, accession no. 13.228.21.2
the pose of the vermillion *jinn* in *King Solomon Composing a Love Letter*. Unlike the *jinn*, however, the hands of the human figure are not quite inside the vessel, but overlap it, preventing the viewer from seeing its contents. The *jinn’s* arms are bent at a more acute angle and the human figure’s left shoulder is closer to his neck. The vessels that they each hold are quite similar as well. Although the vessel in *King Solomon* is smaller, they are both wide, shallow, gold, and are marked by vertical and horizontal lines that suggest their fluted form. Furthermore, each vessel bears a similar relationship to its holder, in which it is balanced precariously on their knee. While there are a few discrepancies, the overall poses are similar enough to allow one to suggest that one might have served as a model for the other. The affinities among these images make it likely that, if not painted by the same hand, they might have been products of the same workshop or were drawn from the same prototype. At the very least, they constitute recurring types that can be used to establish the conventions of a period, a locale, or even a specific atelier.

A particular *Shahnameh* that was also copied at the *asitana* of Mawlana Husam al-Din Ibrahim in 1522, which is now preserved in Istanbul, contains the first paintings from Shiraz that bear a signature by Qasim.56 This *Shahnameh* includes an illustration titled *Nushirvan Receives a Letter from the Khagan of China* (fig. 5), which also closely resembles *King Solomon* in significant ways.57 Even though it is not in the hand of Qasim, this copy of the *Shahnameh* possesses three sections of paintings executed in three distinctive styles. The painting cited here is of the first group, in which the works display aspects of the earlier decorative style, but are not consistent with it. These images are dated to the second decade of the sixteenth century. In *Nushirvan Receives a Letter from the Khagan of China*, the protagonist sits on a throne that is very similar to that of Solomon: it is hexagonal with gold panels that encase the seat, although

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56 Uluç, *Turkman Governors*, 111.
57 The *Shahnama* of Firdausi, TSMK H.1485, folio 496r. “Nushirvan receives a letter from the Khagan of China.” Reproduced in Uluç, *Turkman Governors*, 117, fig. 66.
with a set of steps leading up to it that is not present in Solomon’s throne, but with the same arcuated legs and drapery.

Each painting has a mustard-colored background and decorative bunches of frontally painted, stemless, red and blue flowers that are scattered throughout the field. Although the clouds on the Oberlin page are smaller and less intricate than the two depicted at the top of the Nushirvan page, they are of the same swirling, Sinicizing type. All of these elements, save for the figures, have been identified as traces of the prevailing, decorative style of the pre-1520s that lingered on in some of the paintings of the post-1520s, such as this painting from the Shahnameh.\(^{58}\) The Oberlin page includes all of the same qualities, including the switch to the new figure type. This balance between importations from the new style of the post-1520s, (such as the wavy horizon lines and proportional bodies), with the residual components of the previous local style (such as the decorative flowers, the mustard-colored background, and the swirling clouds), set the painting of King Solomon on par with the painting of Nushirvan, and makes it one of these rare transitional pieces of the first group of paintings in the Topkapi Shahnameh of 1522.

The similarities are not limited to these elements, however: the color palette is nearly identical, with a restrained use of bright red, dark blue, yellow, orange, and the distinctive mossy green, a prominent color of paintings from Shiraz at this time. According to Robinson, the pale green was widely popular in manuscripts produced in Shiraz in the sixteenth century. He states that Shirazi artists were supplied with materials that were inferior to those available to their peers working in Herat, and that the pale green, that was “unfortunately popular,” would eventually corrode, destroying the paper.\(^{59}\) Uluç adds that the popularity of the pale green was due to the

\(^{58}\) Ibid., 117.
\(^{59}\) Robinson, *A Descriptive Catalog*, 15.
inability of Shirazi artists to develop materials to produce bright and deep shades of green until sometime in the second half of the sixteenth century when it first appears in manuscript paintings. The distinctive light green that recurs in the depiction of King Solomon, in the rendering of Solomon’s scarf, Assaf’s stockings, and the large jinn standing in the foreground, is identical to the green used in the clothing worn by the figures in the painting of Nushirvan, and gives away their common origin.

The painting of Nushirvan from the Shahnameh was made slightly earlier than the other paintings in the same book, that are by Qasim. It is also a few decades older than Qasim’s works at the Metropolitan Museum. Although not created by Qasim, the earlier painting in the Shahnameh was still created at the same asitana where the artist eventually worked, and may have been the work of artists with whom Qasim came into contact. Therefore, I propose that King Solomon was created immediately prior or upon Qasim’s arrival at the asitana of Mawlana Husam al-Din Ibrahim in c. 1522. It would not be too far stretched to suggest that the artists of Nushirvan Receives a Letter may have also worked on the painting of King Solomon. However, the precise nature of Qasim’s involvement in the making of this painting at Oberlin remains unclear.

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60 Uluç, Turkman Governors, 231.
Chapter 3: From Solomon, with Love

Having assigned a geographical origin for the painting from the Oberlin page, I now turn my attention to the text that this image is meant to illustrate. While the verses inscribed on the Hafez fragment make it easily identifiable as a page from the prominent mystic’s *Divan*, the book from which the painted fragment might have come is less immediately apparent. This is discerned only when one turns to the verso side of the page, where the name of King Solomon appears five times, inscribed in *nasta’liq* script that is sprinkled with gold flakes. One can surmise the original context of the painting from the distinctive character of this excerpt, which I identify as being a copy of Kamal al-Din Husain Gazurgahi’s *Majalis al-Ushshaq* (Meetings of Lovers), an assembly of romantic tales told in verse and featuring royalty, religious figures, and well-known Sufi saints and poets. In what follows, after identifying the text as such, I discuss the particular features of Gazurgahi’s version of the narrative of King Solomon, and reveal the correlation between the text on the verso and the image on the recto to make sense of the combined pages’ individual parts. This identification leads to a review of previous scholarship on the *Majalis*, followed by a critical analysis of the theosophical meanings of Gazurgahi’s poetry. I trace the mystical roots of Gazurgahi’s themes in the discourses of such scholars as al-Ghazali and Ibn Arabi. This discussion segues in chapter four to a visual analysis of a particular element of Solomonic iconography, the broken branch.
Gazurgahi began composing the *Majalis* in 1503 in Herat and finished it in the following year.61 The parables told in this book are metaphors for the path of mystical love. Each story serves as an example of how earthly love can act as a means to reach the divine, the object of Sufi desire. Each “meeting” is metaphoric for the coveted union between the human being and God, to whom Sufis refer as the “beloved.”62 In Sufism, the mystic seeks union with God so as to reach *fana* (to be annihilated) in the spiritual process of being absorbed into His solitary existence. This union is described as an ecstatic metaphysical state of being, *baqa*, and in their literary discourses Persian mystics commonly relate the path of divine love to the various stages of earthly love.

Manuscript copies of the *Majalis* from the sixteenth century typically include one illustration for each of the seventy-six love stories that the book contains. Notably, in illustrated versions preserved in the Bodleian and the British Libraries, in the Topkapı Palace Museum Library, and in the Bibliothèque Nationale, the King and Queen are depicted in the company of one another at the climax of the story.63 The earliest of these illustrations is from a copy produced in Herat in 1504.64 It contains eighty-two illustrations that have not been attributed to a specific artistic center. The oldest copy with a colophon was made in Shiraz in 1552.65 Most of the remaining versions were produced in the later decades of the sixteenth century, indicating that the text’s illustrated versions gained increased popularity after initial production.66 Moving forward, I will elaborate on the elements that set the earlier version at Oberlin apart.

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64 Uluç, *Turkman Governors*, 184, reproduces the earliest manuscript copy, TSMK H.1086.
65 Ibid., 185, see manuscript OBL OUS.Add.24.
66 Ibid.
Gazurgahi’s version of the story of King Solomon courting the Queen of Sheba is primarily based on the Qur’anic narrative. However, Gazurgahi takes poetic license by extending the dialogue between the protagonists and adding literary elements that do not appear in the Qur’an. The story has a history that is older than the Qur’an. It first appears in the Talmud, is repeated in the Old Testament, specifically in the “Song of Solomon,” that some believe to be the work of King Solomon himself. Finally, the narrative of these “people of the book,” is maintained in the Qur’an, in chapter al-Naml (The Ants).

Authors of historical works, as well as their commentators, such as the Abbasid scholar Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (839-923 CE), who composed The Lives of the Prophets, and the Ilkhanid vizier and historian Rashid al-Din Hamadani (1247-1318 CE), who authored the Jami al-Tawarikh (Compendium of Histories), helped entrench the Solomonic narrative in Persian literature. King Solomon served as a point of reference also for thirteenth-century poets like Hafez and for Timurid and Turkman painters who had a penchant for depicting demonic forms in the rocky backdrops of epic scenes as these forms alluded to the jinn who had been imprisoned in stone by King Solomon. In the fifteenth century, stories from the life of the prophet-king appeared in poetic works, including the opening of the Makhzan al-Asrar (The Treasury of Mysteries) written by Nizami Ganjavi (1141-1209), the Hafi Awrang (The Seven Thrones) by Nur al-Din ar-Rahman Jami (1414-1492), and a later version of Nizami’s Makhzan al-Asrar

67 Qur’an 27:28-31 and 34-44.
composed by the lesser known and somewhat enigmatic poet Haydar-e Kharazmi.\textsuperscript{70} By the sixteenth century, the romance of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba had become such a literary staple that it was only natural for Gazurgahi to include it in his embellished elaborations of legendary romances.

According to the Qur’an, King Solomon became aware of the queen through his trustworthy hoopoe, which discovered her kingdom while on an excursion. Upon returning to Solomon, the bird describes to him the Queen of Sheba, Bilqis, as a beautiful and just ruler whose prosperous domain parallels that of King Solomon’s. The hoopoe adds that she was a pagan who, like her ancestors, worshiped the sun. She was also rumored to be of partial \textit{jinn} heritage. Upon hearing the news of a rival queen, Solomon, who was coroneted by God as the sole and supreme ruler of the earthly realm, threatens the hoopoe with its life should it be found lying about this mysterious queen. The king was intrigued nonetheless, and sought an audience with the queen. Solomon then sent his hoopoe to deliver a letter to Bilqis, which he composed to summon her to his palace. Bilqis initially refused this invitation, and sent immeasurably lavish gifts instead, which an offended Solomon rejected. After a series of exchanges of gifts and letters, Bilqis finally agreed to an audience at Solomon’s court.

One of King Solomon’s \textit{jinn} knew of the queen’s alleged supernatural lineage and feared that if the two produced an heir, all of the \textit{jinn} would be kept in a state of servitude forever, from generation to generation. Upon learning of the queen’s imminent arrival, one of the \textit{jinn} proclaims to Solomon that Bilqis had a pair of cloven feet, an attribute she inherited from her \textit{jinn} family, so as to discourage the king’s possible interest in her. Not entirely persuaded by the \textit{jinn}’s rouse, Solomon feels the need to see this for himself, so he orders the \textit{jinn} to construct a

glass pavilion staged over a running river.\textsuperscript{71} When the queen enters the pavilion, she stands across from King Solomon, who, from his throne, commands her to approach him. Mistaking the glass floor for water, Bilqis lifts up her skirt to wade through it.\textsuperscript{72} Upon realizing that she completely mistook her surroundings, the queen becomes aware of the deceptive nature of perception. As the story goes, this revelation compels her to cast aside her pagan traditions and immediately convert to the religion of Solomon. Following this meeting, Bilqis returns to her domain and also converts her kingdom to Islam.

In popular versions of the story, the climax occurs when Bilqis lifts her skirt, revealing that rather than having cloven feet, she had remarkably hairy legs.\textsuperscript{73} Despite considering her shagginess to be an unattractive attribute, Solomon still longs to be with her and, determined to find a cosmetic redress, turns to his \textit{jinn} for help. When Solomon asks them if they knew of a way to remove her hair without the use of a blade, the \textit{jinn} feign ignorance to prevent an anticipated union between the two. However, Solomon, in his unparalleled wisdom, sees through their guise and presses them to produce a solution. The \textit{jinn} then begrudgingly construct a bathhouse and brew a depilatory paste made from the lime that accrued in the pipes.\textsuperscript{74}

As noted previously, in a typical illustration of the narrative of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, the two are depicted together, usually at the climax of the story, when Bilqis appears to be walking on water.\textsuperscript{75} The image on the Oberlin fragment, however, only includes

\textsuperscript{71} Priscilla Soucek, “Solomon’s Throne/Solomon’s Bath, Model or Metaphor?” \textit{Ars Orientalis} 23 (1993): 109-34.
\textsuperscript{72} Qur’an 27:44 reads: “It was said to her ‘Enter the palace’; and when she saw it, she thought it was a lake of water and bared her legs. He said ‘Lo! It is a palace smoothly paved with glass.’”
\textsuperscript{74} Priscilla Soucek, “Solomon’s Throne,” 109-34.
King Solomon. Bilqis is notably absent, which sets this painting apart from other depictions of the same narrative. The omission of Bilqis in this painting, however, is not without reason.

This intentionality is revealed in the story that is penned on the verso side of the Oberlin page, which relates to the concluding events that follow the queen’s revelation, after she has returned to her kingdom. The excerpt contains a discussion over letters that Solomon and Bilqis exchange, in which they confess their mutual longing for each other. The verses by Gazurgahi explicitly describe the narrative, and I suggest that the moment depicted in the image on the verso side is precisely the moment of Solomon’s dictation of a love letter for Bilqis to be delivered by his messenger hoopoe. This correlation between text and image is suggested by Solomon’s presence without his queen. For the physical distance that separates them justifies her absence from the scene. The conversation concludes with Solomon requesting that she return to him, after having procured the hair-removing paste from his jinn. The red, kneeling jinn also helps to pin down the moment that is being depicted: he thrusts his fists into the white substance of the vessel on his knees while scowling up at King Solomon. The prop and expression identify him as the jinn that begrudgingly obliged to fashion the depilatory paste for Bilqis’s hairy legs.

Compared to the earlier depictions of this scene in copies of the Majalis, the Oberlin painting is unique in the artist’s choice to depict this particular moment. According to Uluç, who studied Shirazi manuscripts closely, copies of the Majalis were produced in Shiraz beginning in 1550. However, if this painting does not belong to the Paris Majalis dated to 1550, then it is possible to suggest that the illustrative cycle of the Solomonic narrative could have begun up to between 1520s and 1540s, at least a decade earlier than proposed by Uluç. At the same time, this depiction of King Solomon on the Oberlin page also shares several features with a frontispiece.

76 I thank Prof. Mahallati for his translation of the Persian text.
77 Uluç, Turkman Governors, 188.
from a *Shahnameh* dated to 1549, copied at *Dar-al-Mulk* in Shiraz by a scribe named Muhammad Shirazi. On stylistic grounds, the Oberlin painting could simply be a mid-century work that expresses residual elements of the older style and actually corroborate Uluç’s hypothesis.\(^{78}\) Regardless, in light of the specific moment depicted and the iconographical elements that I discuss below, I assign to the Oberlin image a date earlier that the 1550s, and place it within the second quarter of the sixteenth century.

*King Solomon Composing a Love Letter* is also distinguished from other depictions of Solomon that were circulating in manuscripts at Shiraz at the time. Serpil Bağcı points to the frequent appearance of the Solomonic narrative on frontispieces produced after 1480. Studying the iconographical elements of these frontispieces, Bağcı discerns that on these opening pages the two rulers are shown united in spectacular fashion. Bağcı attributes the ubiquity of Solomon as the subject of frontispieces for illustrated manuscripts to the king’s significant place in local myth and legend.\(^{79}\) The Muslim inhabitants of Shiraz in particular believed that their city was located in the site of King Solomon’s kingdom.\(^{80}\) Importantly, Bağcı also draws attention to a particular guild of painters in Shiraz whose members believed Assaf to be a prophet, as well as a painter and architect. Accordingly, Bağcı attributes artists’ penchant for Solomon to their personal connection to Assaf, and posits that since Solomon represents the ideal ruler, his image served as a substitute for a portrait of the book’s patron, which would be fitting for a frontispiece. This information makes it possible to suggest that the image of Solomon might have also been intended to flatter potential buyers who might identify with the legendary king. The anonymity of Solomonic frontispieces thus afforded that the manuscript could be presented as a

\(^{78}\) TIEM 1984, folios 613v-614r.  
gift to anyone. Regardless of whether the frontispiece satisfies the artists’ or patrons’ needs for representation, Solomon’s prevalence in Shirazi manuscripts is owed to his status in the city’s mythic origins.

To aid in our understanding of these frontispieces’ significance, Marianna Shreve Simpson assesses a specimen preserved at the Harvard Art Museum. Simpson points out that Firdausi did not include Solomon in the *Shahnameh*, his historical poem that recounts the kings of Persia, despite the latter’s prevalence in local mythic history. Thus, the frontispieces that so often depict Solomon were perhaps meant to remedy his notable absence in this epic by reinserting him in the historical imagination as a former ruler of Shiraz. Yet, this speculation does not fully explain Solomon’s presence in manuscript copies of texts other than the *Shahnameh*.

The anonymity of Solomonic frontispieces afforded that they could be gifted to anyone. Whether the frontispieces were meant to represent the patron or the artist is inconsequential. The significant point is that regardless of whom these images reference, the illustrations might have referenced the image of Solomon was deemed appropriate because of the specific city where these manuscripts were produced. King Solomon’s iconic status in Shirazi manuscripts was owing to his place in the city’s mythic origins. By depicting the throne of Solomon, these frontispieces appropriated the prophet-king as a type of patron saint for Shiraz, to the degree that they can be used to identify Shiraz as a place of origin for Safavid manuscripts.

In painted manuscripts from Islamic lands, especially in Shiraz, the narrative of Solomon and Bilqis appears to be deemed particularly appropriate for frontispieces. While frontispieces in Shirazi manuscripts often portray the two rulers enthroned together on a single page,

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occasionally the two are separated on two sides of a double frontispiece. Significantly, in *King Solomon Composing a Love Letter*, with no hint at a now-lost accompanying image, Solomon is shown alone in the company of his vizier and *jinn*. This seemingly unique depiction focuses on the two protagonists’ separation that preceded their imminent reunion. I read this separation expressed in visual terms as an allusion to the Sufi concept of *ishq*, an idea that refers to the unfathomably intense love that a human being feels toward God, ultimately experienced in *fana*, annihilation of one’s self upon union with the divine.

The concept of *ishq* is a main theme of pre-modern Sufi literature, verse and prose. In the *Kitab al-Mahabba* (The Book of Love), a chapter from the *Ihya Ulum al-Din* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences), for instance, al-Ghazali (1058-1111) states that the love of God that humankind possesses develops naturally, in a way similar to earthly love. When al-Ghazali was writing the *Ihya*, he sought to reconcile traditional Muslim belief of Sunni Islam with essential spiritual tenets of Sufism, such as reunion with the divine and the subsequent annihilation of the self. As the first to write about a love that exists or could exist between man and God, al-Ghazali compares the relationship to the natural development of affection among humans for one another.

These ideas are echoed in Gazurgahi’s *Majalis*, a point that has been observed by Süleyman Derin. While some scholars of the *Majalis* choose to interpret it and its reception along political contexts, in “Earthly and Spiritual Love in Sufism: Ibn ‘Arabi and the Poetry of Rumi,” Derin explores about the text’s mystical underpinnings and points out Gazurgahi’s mystical approach to earthly love.\(^82\) He discloses how the overall premise of the text is based on

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al-Ghazali’s notions about love and its relationship to the divine. Derin discerns that the text is also in line with the discourses of mystical love in the works of the Andalusian mystic Ibn Arabi. In the following chapter, through a consideration of the works of al-Ghazali and Ibn Arabi, I explore the implications of love in the relationship between humankind and the divine through an analysis of a symbol included in the Oberlin painting.

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Chapter 4: The Broken Branch and Its Mystical Roots

Persian poets and manuscript painters often employed plants as symbols in their verses and images, creating a garden of timeless metaphors. For example, delicate blossoms stand in for female beauty, entwined trees symbolize lovers bound to one another, and a cascade of flowers evokes a sensual tryst. The horrific Waq-Waq tree that sprouts living beings in the wilderness recurs as a disturbing trope in Persian tales. Fauna can also carry religious allusions: a cypress tree, for instance, can refer to the oneness of God’s being (tawhid), while the rose represents the Prophet Muhammad. Ibn Arabi’s concept of the Shajarat al-Kawn, the “Tree of all Being,” served as a singular symbol that could represent the entire cosmos. The Sidrat al-Muntaha’ (Lote tree) is described in the Qur’an and in Qur’anic commentary as a tree that establishes the boundary between heaven and Earth and has branches that bow from the weight of its bountiful fruits. Similarly, the thriving boughs of the sidra (tree of life) signify the believer, who strives to reach towards God’s light. In contrast, the dry and decaying branches of the Zaqqum (tree of

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85 The “cursed tree” grows fruit in the shapes of the heads of devils and is mentioned in Qur’an: 17:60, 37:62-68, 44:43, and 56:52. The Waq-Waq tree is depicted in the background of Bihzad’s famous painting, “Tale of the Princess in the Turquoise Pavilion,” in the 1493 Khamsa of Nizami, held in the British Library, Add. 25900, folio 188r.
87 Michael Barry, “Illustrating Attar,” 135-64.
hell) stand in for the nonbeliever, who is only good for kindling, an allusion to the burning fires of hell, or demonic forces such as the disbelieving jinn.\textsuperscript{89} The potential of vegetation to carry allegoric messages was not lost on the artist or artists of the Oberlin page, as is apparent in their use of one particular plant that is seamlessly integrated into the larger scene.

A tree stump sprouting wispy branches placed in the foreground, immediately beneath King Solomon’s throne, at first appears as an inconsequential element. However, upon close inspection, it becomes evident that one of these branches grows in the direction of Solomon and two of its fronds dangle at a sharp angle as though they have snapped. This is quite a common landscape element in Persian manuscript paintings, a popular stock image that circulated among Safavid artists. The broken branch appears, for instance, in a painting by Dust Mohammad found in the famous Bahram Mirza album, in several illustrations from the \textit{Shahnameh} of Shah Tahmasp, and in various copies of the \textit{Majalis}, among others.\textsuperscript{90} Despite, or perhaps because of its ubiquitous presence, previous scholars have overlooked it as a part of the natural landscape, without ever tapping into its allegorical references. In this chapter, given its significance in

\textsuperscript{89} The devil as God’s woodcutter comes from a parable told Rumi in Book II of his \textit{Mathnavi}.

Solomonic iconography, I trace the history of the broken branch topos and investigate its symbolism.

The broken branch as it appears in Persian painting is a convention that was established in the thirteenth century. It is found in paintings assembled in the so-called Timurid workshop albums and in the poetry of Rumi. An early work that features the broken branch motif in a significant way is a sophisticated monochrome painting found in an album compiled for the Safavid ruler Shah Tahmasp. Currently housed at the Topkapı Palace Museum Library, the work is attributed to Tabriz or Baghdad and dated to around 1375-1400 CE. This marvelous image, which Gülru Necipoğlu titled Celestial Vision, depicts a fantastic scene of an angel and a dragon appearing before a pair of human figures. Two robed men placed on a hillside to the left of the composition are shown as they encounter a seraph, a six-winged angel, which hovers before them with open arms. The figure on the far left stands erect, his mouth agape and his hands outstretched forward. In astonishment, he stares directly at the angel. The appearance of the second figure contrasts that of his companion: crouched on the ground, he turns his face upwards with arms that are stretched out before him. Beneath the hill, to the right, a tremendous coiled dragon is seen gazing upward at an emblazoned orb suspended in the air. The dragon raises itself from under a bent tree trunk that stems from the right side and cuts diagonally across the image. The tree trunk is barren and covered in rough, decaying bark and appears to have collapsed long ago.

In “Persianate Images Between Europe and China: The ‘Frankish Manner,’ in the Diez and Topkapı Albums, c. 1350-1450,” Necipoğlu, explores the work’s hybrid stylistic elements

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91 The Shah Tahmasp album, Istanbul, TSMK, H. 2153 folio 120v.
and the place of European and Chinese artistic styles in medieval Persian aesthetics.\textsuperscript{92} Pointing out how the Persian painting technique termed \textit{siyah qalam} (black pen) reflects both the Western monochrome painting style, known as \textit{grisaille} (grey scale), and Chinese ink and wash painting, Necipoğlu discusses the technical convergences observed in \textit{Celestial Vision}. In an attempt to elaborate on the painting’s symbolism, she attributes the human figures and the angel to a Christian tradition, and speculates that they may have been modeled after Byzantine prototypes that depict transfiguration scenes.\textsuperscript{93} In addition, interpreting the dragon that is reaching for the enchanting orb as a Daoist symbol of transcendent wisdom and enlightenment, Necipoğlu concludes that \textit{Celestial Vision} is an intersection of technical and symbolic parallels that were likely recognized and appreciated by the learned viewers among the painting’s contemporary audience. While Necipoğlu’s discussion reveals the painting’s syncretism, manifest both in style and content, there are additional aspects that deserve interpretation. I discern these themes in such subtle details as the poses of the human figures, the broken branches, and the pair of birds in the foreground.

A rereading of the human figures’ poses allows for an alternative interpretation of their response to the events taking place. First, I suggest that the psychology of the horizontally lying human figure, which Necipoğlu describes as “fearfully recoiling,” could instead be demonstrating the affect of swooning.\textsuperscript{94} This reaction might be signifying the figure’s inability to maintain physical composure as the sight of divine beauty overwhelms him. Persian poetry is rife


\textsuperscript{93} Necipoğlu (551) points to Taddeo Gaddi’s \textit{Annunciation to the Shepherds} (1327-30) and Pietro Lorenzetti’s \textit{Stigmata of St. Francis} (1320) as possible likenesses for the unknown Byzantine images. She further extrapolates on the paintings she identifies here in “The Composition and Compilation of Two Saray Albums Reconsidered in Light of ‘Frankish’ Images.”

with stories of men and women swooning in the presence of exceptionally beautiful individuals. The sensation of being overcome by the unfathomable nature of God is also discussed in Islamic religious texts. A prime example of this metaphysical experience that leads to physical and mental collapse is recounted in the Qur’anic story of Moses’s second meeting with God that took place at Mount Sinai. In this passage, encouraged by his first meeting with God, Moses requests God to reveal himself. Yet, when God reflects His presence on a nearby mountain, which subsequently crumbles to dust, Moses falls in a swoon, unable to withstand even this partial glimpse of God. This anecdote speaks of the incomprehensibility of God’s being through the eyes and minds of mere mortals, which notion the swooning figure in Celestial Vision might be representing.

The pose of the figure also recalls the act of prostrating during salah. In early Sufi discourses, the salah, meaning “prayer” or “worship,” and the word wasalah, meaning, “to arrive” or “be united,” were linked. This understanding led mystics and ascetics to perceive salah as a way to bring one’s self near God. Within this more mystical and specifically Islamic framework, it is plausible that the human figures in Celestial Vision, which Necipoğlu asserts are drawn after prototypes found in Byzantine religious art, are translations of a pair of god-fearing Christian shepherds into submissive Muslims, one of whom fervently bows in the presence of the divine.

Additionally, a closer inspection of its individual elements reveals that Celestial Vision includes forms that echo each other, pairs that lend cohesion and intricacy to the overall scene.

95 See for example, Shaykh San’an (or, Sam’an) beneath the Window of the Christian Maiden, from Mantiq al-Tayr (The Canticle of the Birds), 1553, Bukhara (Uzbekistan). Bibliotheque Nationale.
96 Qur’an: 7:143.
97 Salah is the Arabic term for daily ritual prayer, one of the five pillars of Islam. As a staple in Islamic worship, salah is the pious Muslim’s demonstration of their submission to God it is also a practice that unites the ummah, the larger Muslim community, in an embodied spiritual practice.
The tip of the fallen tree, for instance, points at a pair of waterfowl amidst a thicket of bamboo in the foreground. In their postures, the pair of birds echoes the human figures; one of the birds stands upright and gazes in the direction of the dragon with its beak open, while the other appears to be on its belly, splashing in the water. The two birds mimicking the spiritual experience of the human figures recall the metaphysical premises of Farid al-Din Attar’s (1145-1221) *Mantiq al-Tayr* (The Canticle of the Birds), a paragon of Persian poetry. In the beginning of the *Canticle*, King Solomon’s hoopoe leads a gathering of birds on a perilous quest to find the *Simurgh*, a fantastical bird that is a metaphor for the divine. In the Qur’anic story of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, the hoopoe serves to bring the rulers together, which in poetry and painting, signifies the individual’s return to their Creator. This interpretation finds further support in the depiction of the snapped bamboo in the foreground, which lazily tilts at a diagonal from the stalk that grows between the two birds. The breaking bamboo echoes the broken branch at the hand of the prostrating human figure, bringing to a full circle their reflection of the human figures’ spiritual experience.

The symbolism of a broken branch is forcefully iterated in Rumi’s famous reed poem. In *The Reed Flute’s Song*, Rumi writes:

Listen to the story told by the reed,
of being separated.

“Since I was cut from the reedbed,
I have made this crying sound.

Anyone apart from someone he loves
understands what I say.

Anyone pulled from a source
longs to go back.

At any gathering I am there,
ingling in the laughing and grieving,
a friend to each, but few
will hear the secrets hidden
within the notes. No ear for tat.
Body flowing out of spirit,
spirit up from body: no concealing
that mixing. But it’s not given us
to see the soul. The reed flute
is fire, not wind. Be that empty."99

In these verses, the reed flute serves as a metaphor for the solitary Sufi, as it yearns to return to its original state in the same way that the lover longs for the beloved from afar. The longing expressed by the reed pen epitomizes theosophical love for Sufi mystics, whose perceived separation from the divine, the origin of the creation, is the source of their intense desire to reunite with him. Rumi takes up the imagery of a snapping reed also in the opening line of his Mathnawi, where he declares: “Every pen is doomed to break when it reaches the word love.”100

In both examples, the reed is removed from its origin and is transformed into an expressive tool, one that produces music or writing. In the case of the pen, the reed snaps twice, however. First, at the time of its transformation from plant to a writing instrument, and then again when it cannot sustain the act of defining something so intense and incomprehensible as love and ceases to be, achieving annihilation and reaching baqa.

I propose that the broken branch in Celestial Vision is a mark of the artist’s awareness of and active participation in these literary and theological discourses that evoke the desperation of love and the lover’s longing for reunion with the beloved. The scenario that takes place in this

painting contextualizes the breaking of the branch as an effect of the human figure’s realization of the transitivity of the earthly realm and his commitment to worship the divine in its imminence. Therefore, I suggest that more than merely adding dramatic effect, the broken branch marks the spontaneous and earth-shattering moment of enlightenment, which begets gnosis.101

When the broken branch appears on the Oberlin page then, they can be understood as a symbol of the pangs of separation shared by Solomon and the absent Bilqis, whose curious omission here further strengthens my reading of the image. Simultaneously, the broken branch topos could also be an allusion to the queen’s gnosis that previously took place at Solomon’s court, or prefigures Solomon’s death, two instances of the story that reach a climactic snap.

That climactic snap is a recurring theme also in the Qur’anic story of Solomon’s death. In this narrative, Solomon is said to have propped himself up upon his cane as he was dying. He did this so that when he passed away he would still appear alive, if only for a brief moment.102 The Qur’an describes this peculiar strategy as a last ditch effort on Solomon’s part to buy himself time so that the jinn would complete the reconstruction of his temple. It was imperative that the prophet-king trick the jinn into thinking that he was still alive, for his death would indicate their release from his command. Miraculously, it was not until after the jinn finished their task that by the grace of God termite gnawed away at Solomon’s wooden staff until it snapped and his body collapsed on the ground. Upon seeing this, the jinn realized that they had been deceived into thinking that they were still enslaved and it dawned on them that they had been ignorant of their freedom. After realizing that they were no longer bound to this place, however, they shook free of their chains and vanished. The revealing moment of a snap in the story of the death of

102 Qur’an 34:14.
Solomon is, then, like the story of Bilqis’s conversion, a parable for the importance of faith for ultimate gnosis. In the visual depictions of the story of Solomon and Bilqis, I find an expression of that moment of revelation in the image of a broken branch.

Surprisingly overlooked by modern and contemporary scholars, this symbol is an important feature in the iconography of Solomon in sixteenth-century Safavid painting, as is evident from its presence in some of the period’s most significant manuscripts, as noted previously. The motif recurs in a depiction of Solomon and Bilqis in the Haft Awrang of the Freer Gallery, paired with the section of Jami’s text that discusses a parable featuring the royal couple. In this rendition, Solomon and Bilqis are depicted sitting together on an elaborate throne, in an enclosed garden with a quatrefoil fountain with three swimming ducks. The architecture is adorned with decorous tiles rendered in colorful geometric and delicate vegetal ornamentation. The rulers are in the presence of an assortment of figures, including an angel, the vizier Assaf ibn Bayqara, and a woman holding a swaddled baby. A number of other unidentified figures also populate the scene, both indoors and outdoors, seen in the windows and balconies, gesturing towards the spectacle below. At the entrance of the pavilion, located on the left side, a princely figure is attempting to enter the building, but he is stopped at the door by an impoverished elderly woman, and appears to be handing her money, an allegory of charity. In the background, a colossal red jinn appears to be landscaping as he takes a momentary break and leans on his shovel.

Hidden within this crowded scene, is a broken branch. It is ingeniously placed within the gold floral pattern that fills the margins around the image, an elegantly painted plant motif that is composed of delicate blossoms and leaves that stem from sweeping arabesque vines that

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gracefully curve along rounded arcs. Notably, the stem that twirls towards the entrance of the pavilion is subtly broken near its stem.104 The fracture is nearly imperceptible, but its significance is literally pointed out by a figure floating in the margins. A finely dressed page, a figure of lower status, leads a horse out from behind the façade of the building into the spatial vacuum of the margin. With the extended index finger of his right hand, the page nearly touches the break in the foliage. With his left hand, he points up at the Arabic inscription over the passageway, which reads: “Seek not the kingdom of Solomon, for it is dust. The kingdom is [still] there, but where is Solomon?”105

As his gesture directs the viewer’s attention to the vignette occurring at the pavilion’s entrance, the page who points simultaneously to the broken branch and the inscription also acts as a conduit that unites the two. His touch imbues the broken branch with both Solomon’s fate and the temporality of the material world, embodied here by the reference to “the kingdom of Solomon,” which, according to the Qur’an, included the earthly realm. Its placement near the door of a secluded garden pavilion, is suggestive of the idea that gnosis is a prerequisite for entrance into paradise, which the reader should seek, as opposed to the literal, earthly kingdom of Solomon. It is worth noting that the motif appears to be particular to the iconography of Solomon, as it occurs in several other depictions of his narratives as well.

The broken branch topos appears also in the marginalia added to a fifteenth-century single page containing calligraphy by Sultan Ali of Mashhad removed from The Emperor’s Album.106 The border, which contains a series of six-pointed stars that make up the seal of

105 Ibid.
106 This album is also known as the “Kevorkian album.” See Stuart Cary Welch ed., *The Emperor’s Album: Images of Mughal India*, (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987).
Solomon with birds drawn at their centers, was added in Mughal India, sometime after 1628.\textsuperscript{107} The floral arabesques fill the space around the star-shaped seals. In the upper and lower bands, the branches that approach the central seal from either side each abruptly end in a sharply angled break. The appearance of the broken branch in this Solomonic border attests to its well-established symbolism within the prophet-king’s iconography.

In another painting, one that was executed in the seventeenth-century in Isfahan, Solomon is once again shown enthroned in the presence of his vizier, a \textit{jinn} servant, and two unknown human attendants.\textsuperscript{108} The work appears in a copy of Haydar-e Kharazmi’s \textit{Makhzanu’l-Asrar}, which is the later poet’s own rendition of Nizami’s “Treasury of Mysteries.” As in the Oberlin painting, Solomon is shown wearing a turban and a scrolling fiery halo as he is seated on a golden throne. Assaf sits on a smaller chair, directly before Solomon. The two gesture towards one another, indicating conversation. The scene takes place before a body of water, which is suggested by the pool that begins in the foreground, and is set before a backdrop of a magenta hillside with moss-covered rocks at its horizon line. A towering tree spreads its branches, which extend behind and above the text blocks positioned above the scene that communicate the narrative.

According to the text that this scene depicts, Solomon and Assaf are engaged in a debate. Assaf proposes to Solomon that there is not a handful of dust that is not the remains of someone else.\textsuperscript{109} To counter Assaf, Solomon has one of his \textit{jinn} retrieve clay from the bottom of the ocean and fashion it into a goblet. After filling it with water, Solomon lifts the cup to his lips and the

\textsuperscript{107} Michael Barry, \textit{The Canticle}, 182, MMA, accession no. 55.121.10.8r. An artist named Daulat may have painted the marginalia, according to Marie L. Swietochowski, “Decorative Borders in Mughal Albums,” in Stuart Cary Welch, \textit{The Emperor’s Album}, 143.

\textsuperscript{108} \textit{Makhzanu’l-Asrar} of Haydar-e Kharazmi, from Isfahan, dated to 1614, signed by Reza-e Abbasi. See Soudavar, see \textit{Persian Courts}, 275, item no. 110h.

\textsuperscript{109} Abolala Soudavar, \textit{The Arts of the Persian Courts}, 281.
water becomes “bright as poison.” Solomon throws the clay body to the ground, where it shatters to pieces. Miraculously, a voice rises from the shards of clay and begins to speak. A short passage hovers above the ceramic rubble, meant to represent the disembodied voice:

I too was a soul upon the earth, a ruler among men. My life ended, and for many years I rested in the earth. Many years later, my body became a wall, which was slowly worn down by floods, and by the action of the celestial spheres my body became clay at the bottom of the ocean. The brightness in the water is the illumination of that soul.

Strikingly similar to the inscription above the entrance to the pavilion in the Freer Jami, the text above the clay fragments serves as a *memento mori*, one that reminds the reader of the impermanence of earthly life and the cyclical nature of the cosmos. Notably, in the foreground of the image is a tree stump with branches that appears at the shoreline, where it is meant to embody this moral. Like the red *div* in the Freer Jami, the blue *div* in this painting from Isfahan is shown leaning forward, though on a staff as opposed to a shovel, recalling the way in which Solomon died. The consistencies in the use of these symbolic elements in the paintings discussed so far demonstrate that they were a part of a shared iconographical lexicon that defined depictions of King Solomon. Although their meaning might have been lost to us, they were understood by those well versed in the visual and textual conventions of Persian art.

In the Oberlin painting, the significance of the broken branch is indicated through the subtle gesture of Assaf, where much like the page in the Freer Jami, the vizier points directly to the branch with his left hand. With this move, Assaf includes the branch in his conversation with Solomon. Perhaps he is directing the attention of the *jinn*, who stand at his heels, to the splitting

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10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
branch in an attempt to assuage their outburst by foretelling their master’s eventual death. Beyond foreshadowing the prophet Solomon’s inevitable end, however, I contend that the separation connoted by the broken branch in the Oberlin painting is a reference to both the physical separation of Solomon and Bilqis, each residing in their own kingdom, and the perceived separation between humankind and its creator. Although the motif occurs frequently and in a diverse array of paintings, the symbolism of the broken branch extends beyond its immediate references and plays a central role in understanding the metaphoric layers of Safavid depictions of King Solomon in literary works.
Chapter 5: A Meeting of Pages

For better or worse, *King Solomon Composing a Love Letter* is permanently confined to the Hafez fragment. Since their coupling is irreversible, unless one risks damage to the fragile paper, there is no way for the viewer to avoid their simultaneous display. This obstruction presents a unique challenge for one hoping to explain these fragments concisely. To elaborate on the collage’s dynamic quality, I preface my interpretation of it as a single, unified page with a discussion of the nature of a fragment as put forth in modern art-historical criticism, specifically in the writing of Theodore Adorno. To this end, I consider the implications of fragmentation for the art object and its relationship with its handler, the agent who brought about its fragmentation. By approaching the Oberlin collage in this way, I seek to address how later collectors of Islamic art became active participants in the willful, if thoughtless, transformation of historical objects into fragments. In the second part of the chapter, I offer an interpretation of the collage as a whole by proposing an interrelated theme between the verses and the painting. This reading is intended to offer a novel method to appreciate repurposed fragments in their new context. I suggest that, in the case of the Oberlin page, the two fragments’ union offers the viewer a whole new experience to see Solomon through the verses of Hafez, a perspective that was not intended by their original creator. Through this interpretation, I hope to demonstrate how these fragments generate new meaning for a contemporary audience, not only in spite of the vicissitudes of time that the pages have endured, but precisely because of them. The chapter includes a consideration
of codicological features that suggest that the codex from which this fragment came was produced in Shiraz, and I conclude with an argument regarding a particular inscription on this fragment that also alludes to Shiraz.

In his study on the place of the fragment in art criticism, professor of English Ian Balfour analyzes Theodore Adorno’s comments on a particular quality that the latter perceived in certain artworks, which Balfour translates as “fracturedness.” This concept is explained in this particularly erudite passage in Adorno’s *Aesthetic Theory*: “The enigma of artworks is their fracturedness [Abgebrochensein-literally, ‘their broken-off-ness’]. If transcendence were present in them, they would be mysteries, not enigmas; they are enigmas because, through their fracturedness, they deny what they would actually like to be.” Adorno’s reference here may not be to manuscript cuttings specifically, but to artworks in general, and describes a visual aesthetic of brokenness. Balfour contextualizes this phrase in relation to actual fragments, as in broken pieces of artworks that were once complete but that are now separate from the other parts that constituted the whole. He does so by connecting Adorno’s notion about the self-denial of the fragment in the last part of the quoted passage with an idea that is contained, quite appropriately, in a *fragment* of Adorno’s writing. Balfour’s reframing of Adorno’s statement positions it towards Hegelian notions of wholeness and truth.

The quote that Balfour retrieves from Adorno, “The whole is the untrue” comes from the latter’s *Minima Moralia*, and is used to counter Hegel’s famous statement that “The true is the whole.” This assertion summarizes Hegel’s argument that the identity of any given thing is

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113 Ibid., 87.
114 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel wrote *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, or *The Phenomenology of the Spirit*, in 1807. It is one of his most widely disseminated philosophical works and addresses a range of subjects including history, metaphysics, and epistemology, and is where he develops his concept of dialectic and *Aufhebung*, G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, trans. Peter Fuss (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019).
wrought out of its collective determinations and negations.\textsuperscript{115} In other words, the totality of a thing is based on the relations between the thing and other things, relations that describe what it is and what it is not, vis-à-vis its counterparts. For Hegel, the “truth” of what an object is lies in the understanding of it as a “whole,” to which perception one arrives at through the process of “othering” the object through a series of relations.

Within the framework of the concept of “fragments,” Adorno’s position would counter Hegel’s point about truth in terms of the art object’s essence, as his aphorism, “The whole is untrue,” casts doubt on Hegel’s teleological premise. According to Adorno, the parts that we are left with are not whole in and of themselves in the first place, and this incompleteness deprives them of ability to contribute to a whole. Importantly, though, this state of fragmentation is predicated only on the loss of the original whole and on the perpetual suspense of the fragment in a state of isolation.\textsuperscript{116} Along this line of thinking, fragments disrupt Hegel’s unilateral process of becoming because they are distinguished by their unique incapacity to achieve wholeness. Essentially, the very presence of a fragment denies the object from which it came the state of completion: a fragment both recalls the lost form of its original and opposes the wholeness of the object to which it once contributed as it cannot provide a complete representation of the whole as it once was.\textsuperscript{117}

Balfour’s stimulating analysis of the concept of the fragment in art-historical contexts was preceded by Dan Mellamphy’s discussion of literary or philosophical fragments in an article from 1998 that also engaged with Hegel. In “Fragmentality (thinking the fragment),” Mellamphy extrapolates on how the concept of the fragment bears an antithetical relationship to Hegel’s idea

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
of wholeness, and instead, coalesces with Friedrich Nietzsche’s discourses on the notion of becoming. Working from an existentialist point of view, Mellamphy turns the lens to Nietzsche and argues that the fragment’s rejection of both part and whole stands against the notion of “absolute Being” that prevails in Hegelian thought. This opposing view is best expressed in Nietzsche’s notion of an endless becoming, a concept that is epitomized by his phrase “Überwindung.” While more literally understood as “over-coming,” as in a coming that occurs over and over again, Überwindung designates a state of being eternally unfinished, to constantly call out to be finished, but never achieving it.

In fractured remnants of art objects, its “broken-off-ness” is discerned in the object’s unique ability to invite the viewer to speculate. Seen within a gallery, they act as muses from whom one can extrapolate ideas or create an imagined past by dreaming of the possible qualities of what may have been attached to it. The breaking point of a given fragment, the place where the carefully crafted form or surface reaches an edge that abruptly gives way to nothing, calls out for the object’s becoming, like a siren that inspires the imagination in the beholder to conjure whatever unknowns that have been lost.

Fragmenting the parts of a book by tearing out a page affects one’s engagement with the page on a phenomenological level. The predominance of framed displays for excised folios in museum settings has led to their confinement to the wall and to the transformation of the visitor from a reader who formerly beheld the book into an empty handed viewer. One can no longer touch the crisp pages, or turn them one by one, as one peruses the book: the viewer is now kept at a distance. The Hafez fragment has a particularly one-sided relationship with the viewer as one cannot even access its verso side; it is hidden from view, pasted against another page. The Hafez

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119 Ibid, 85.
fragment has been effectively refashioned as a frame to aid in the display of the image that was introduced to its hollow and lends its own gold floral border to the painted fragment. And, we find that the painting in the Oberlin collage denies what it was meant to be and takes on the identity of another literary work.

In addition to its painting having a split literary personality, the Oberlin page bears a dual identity of whole and fragment because the extent of its fragmentation is concealed by its material composition. In art-historical attempts to make sense of duplicitous objects Nietzsche’s notion of Überwindung is particularly aligned with Adorno’s notion of fracturedness—Agbebrochensein. Because fragments concomitantly reject and invite a wholeness that never materializes, the dichotomy of part and whole becomes defunct when considering the state of art-historical fragments in the context of a museum. To preserve the fragmented state of the object, it must be kept like a reliquary, isolated to be studied in and of itself. This stasis is achieved by the aesthetic approach to display often employed at museums, which maintains the object’s fragmented state of being while subtly concealing its broken-off-ness by presenting painted leaves as complete works of art.

The transformation of the pages that make up the Oberlin collage into a pair of fragments occurred at the hands of art dealers and collectors and was readily accepted by an art museum, which effectively continues to preserve the object’s fragmentation. Sealing the fragments together at an unknown time and place initiated their cycle of “endless becoming,” in which the fragments ceaselessly call themselves into being through the verses and image with which they have been endowed. Within this theoretical framework, I attempt to restore some degree of
autonomy to these drastically altered and displaced pages by offering a cohesive reading of the text and image according to the manner in which the collage projects them.\textsuperscript{120}

The poetry of Hafez that surrounds the image of Solomon is now a frame and an unavoidable framework for the painting. This configuration invites a consideration for the relationship that the main subject of the image, King Solomon, might have with the text that accompanies it. This interpretation is not altogether unwarranted, as Hafez composed dozens of \textit{ghazals} with references to Solomon. Despite these frequent references, Hafez’s interest in Solomon has not attracted scholarly attention until quite recently.\textsuperscript{121} The various references to the prophet-king are often made in the form of a flattering comparison between Solomon and a shah. As a court poet, Hafez was privileged by royal patronage in Shiraz, including Shah Abu Ishaq (r. 1343-1357) and Shah Mubariz al-Din Muhammad (r. 1314-1358). Shortly before the end of his life, Hafez also served Shah Mubariz’s successor, Jalal al-Din Sultan Suja (r. 1358-1384), and at the court of Timur (r. 1370-1405). Hafez’s practice of likening his patrons to Solomon dignified whichever ruler his compliment was directed to, since in Islamic cultures, he has long been recognized as an archetype of the ideal ruler, who possesses perfect, unquestionable judgment.\textsuperscript{122}

As noted earlier, King Solomon was known for his infinite wisdom that God bestowed upon him, and for his just rule over the earthly realm, which according to the Qur’an, was also divinely sanctioned. The verses on the Hafez fragment do not make a reference to King Solomon. However, I discern descriptive and thematic correlations between the painting and the poetry. As

\textsuperscript{120} Here I rely on Casey Haskins’ distinction of “instrumental autonomism” that refers to a “work of art’s distinctive capacity, as an object of value, to do something not done, or not done the same way, by other kinds of objects,” as described in “Kant and the Autonomy of Art,” \textit{The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism} 47, no. 1 (Winter 1989): 43-54.

\textsuperscript{121} An inquiry into Hafez’s interest in Solomon is found in Dominic Parviz Brookshaw, \textit{Hafiz and his Contemporaries: Poetry, Performance and Patronage in Fourteenth-Century Iran} (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019).

\textsuperscript{122} In his poetry, Hafez occasionally refers to himself as Assaf, which would offer, by proxy, a comparison between a shah and King Solomon. See Arthur J. Arberry, \textit{Shiraz: Persian City of Saints and Poets} (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), 156.
discussed in the previous chapter, separation and longing is an important theme of the painting. Notably, the verses that surround the painting also relate to the theme of separation and longing, from a similarly Sufi perspective on divine union. There is also some descriptive language in the text that coincidentally appears in the painting. In what follows, I first provide a translation of the poetry, and then discuss its correlation to the painting.

The Hafez fragment contains three bayts, two of which come from the same ghazal, and one from a different ghazal. Not all copies of Hafez’s Divan are identical in content or organization, a discrepancy that makes it difficult to determine the specific version from which these bays come. The lines penned on the Oberlin page consist of only fragments of Hafez’s Divan, necessitating for a search of the whole, and thereby presenting yet another layer of fragmentation. Two of the three bayts are penned in a text block above the painting. They read:

Do not look at the golden embroidery of my shirt.
Like a candle, many flames are hidden under my garment.

Come and take Hafez’s existence from before him.
For while you exist, none will hear me say “I exist.”

The first bayt alludes to the duality of the material world, expressing a mistrust of outer appearances (the golden embroidery) and the favoring of inner realities (the hidden flames of the candle and poet’s heart). The second couplet is more obscure. The first line declares that the poet wishes for his own life to be extinguished, apparently because he finds himself trapped in a paradoxical existential relationship with another being. This cavalier attitude towards mortality

123 The discrepancies in the order and scope of surviving editions have posed a great challenge to scholars who tried to distill Hafez’s poetry in a definitive translation of his works. For a discussion of the history of Hafez in English, see Priscilla Soucek, “Interpreting the Ghazals of Haﬁz,” RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics, no. 43 (2003): 146-63.
125 In A Two-Colored Brocade (220), Annemarie Schimmel states that references to an embroidered garment can signify one’s outer ego.
supplements the first verse that expresses contempt for finery. The next line of the second verse speaks of an existence that is denied to the speaker so long as the beloved exists, is a perplexing declaration and is perhaps meant to be. Such confounding and unorthodox statements are a common trope in Sufi poetry, often placed at the end of a ghazal and they are meant to be ecstatic utterances to confuse the reader to provoke thought and inspire spiritual contemplation.\textsuperscript{126}

A thorough perusal of the Divan reveals that these fragments come from a ghazal that begins with the following verse:

\begin{quote}
My Body, like dust, covers the face of my soul.
Blessed is the moment when I drop the veil off that face.\textsuperscript{127}
\end{quote}

As the matlaa, the first verse in a ghazal, these lines hold a key to the rest of the poem. Hafez expresses in this couplet his yearning for the state of non-being ensued through annihilation of the self (fana). His remarks about the deceptive nature of reality and his related wish to cease to exist are profoundly evocative expressions of a mystic’s desire for divine union.

Hafez’s contemplation of non-existence continues in the verses at the bottom of the page, penned immediately below the broken branch. This verse comprises the final two lines of a different ghazal. They read:

\begin{quote}
Hafez, do not dishonor yourself at every mean one’s door.
It is better to take your needs to the Gratifier of Needs.\textsuperscript{128}
\end{quote}

In this last bayt the poet speaks to himself, or to his alter ego, advising to maintain dignity and reminding himself that God alone ultimately provides for humankind’s needs. When paired with

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item This tradition is particularly rife in the genre of Shathiyat. For a discussion of this genre, see Carl Ernst, \textit{Words of Ecstasy in Sufism} (Albany: SUNY, 1988).
\item Hafez, \textit{Divan}, 398, ghazal 334.
\item Hafez, \textit{Divan}, 434, ghazal 336.
\end{thebibliography}
this painting, it appears as though the image illustrates the verses. The speaker in the poem becomes Solomon, while Assaf becomes Hafez and receives the king’s wisdom. The incorporation of this *bayt* adds that the desire for *fana* originates from its promise for the ultimate escape from the material world of gold and dust, which are equal for the mystic. The beginning of the ghazal to which this last *bayt* belongs may have been included on the missing cutting of this page, though we have no way of knowing for sure. With this absence, the artful composition of calligraphic poetry that was once a whole now exists only in a fragmented state.

Although the page of from the *Divan* has been gutted and is now technically incomplete, the hole carved out by a later hand (presumably an art dealer) has been supplemented by the image that it was made to encompass. In its current form, then, the Oberlin page exists in a concurrent state of being and non-being, ever shifting between a fragment and a new whole. Even in this constructed state, correlations between the text and image could lead one to think that the painting was originally meant to serve as an illustration to the *Divan*. Although there is no mention of the king-prophet in the segments of Hafez’s ghazals seen here, one can still read the fragments as part of a dialogue between Solomon and Assaf. This relationship can be established on the golden embroidery of the shirt that might be taken as a reference to the fine robes that Solomon is wearing, made of blue silk embellished with golden starry patterns. Similarly, the verse turns our attention from the embroidery to the candle-like flames that burn in the heart beneath the garment, which can be interpreted as an allusion to Solomon’s love for Bilqis. My proposed reconstruction of the fragmented verses in relation to the painting (which, in its partially covered state forms another fragment constitutes yet another fragment) finds support in this verse by Hafez that is particularly fitting for describing this collage:

> Hafez became a Solomon with the wealth of your love.
That is, of your union he has nothing in hand but wind.\textsuperscript{129}

The coupling of text and image would yield an illustration of a scenario that involved the author, Hafez, who takes on the role of vizier. The scene is narrated in the voice of Solomon, however, but the words he speaks in the dialogue still belong to the poet. Fragmented though it is, by the handiwork of an art dealer, the collage appears as a single page. By chance, it reads as one too. Perhaps Michael Barry is not too bold when he states that “an intensely Hafizian ambiance permeated the entire tradition of miniature painting in greater Persia during the fourteenth through the seventeenth centuries,” as the seemingly random pairing of the Oberlin collage demonstrates so effectively.\textsuperscript{130}

Although the Hafez fragment may be missing a few lines of verse, its margins, with an attractive golden floral motif, are very telling. The design within the margins is characteristic of luxurious Safavid manuscripts produced in the sixteenth century. In terms of execution, the motif does differ from the more sophisticated renditions of the same pattern found in manuscripts produced in Herat and Mashhad.\textsuperscript{131} With its use of five-petal blossoms of differing size and dimension, the marginal decoration, drawn in gold and pink, is representative of the type used in Shirazi manuscripts, including a copy of the \textit{Divan} of Hafez.\textsuperscript{132} This marginal decoration is also

\textsuperscript{129} This is a reference to Solomon’s command over the winds, another ability given to him by God. To have nothing in one’s hand but wind relates one’s possession nothing at all. Hafez, \textit{Divan}, 27, \textit{ghazal} no. 21.


\textsuperscript{131} The gold floral motif is similar to that of some folios found in the Peck \textit{Shahnameh}, though this same style appears in the \textit{Haft Awrang} of Ibrahim Mirza form Mashhad. The latter manuscript is also full of floating illuminated text blocks containing single lines of script penned in colorful ink.

extremely similar to those of a Qur’an that has been attributed to sixteenth-century Shiraz.\(^{133}\) The Qur’an, which was included in the Freer and Sackler’s exhibition titled \textit{Falnama: The Book of Omens}, also displays floral illuminations executed on blue and black backgrounds, just like the ornamentation in the cartouches of the rubrics of the Hafez fragment. The arched shapes of the cartouches that enframe the line of text within the rubric are similar. The flowers of in the illuminations on the Hafez fragment are more delicate and of a light pink color. The paper of the Hafez fragment is similar in quality to the paper of the painted fragment: both have the same glossy, creamy texture and color with a highly polished and extremely delicate surface.\(^{134}\) The Hafez fragment measures at approximately twenty-five by fifteen centimeters, and the painted fragment, which neatly overlaps with its pair, is almost exactly the same size. In Shiraz, copies of the \textit{Divan} of Hafez and the \textit{Majalis} were produced in similar dimensions, usually between twenty-seven and thirty centimeters, so it is no mere coincidence that they fit together.\(^{135}\) Although the codicological cohesion attests to the fragments’ mutual Shirazi origin, it is not the only factor that points to that site of manufacture.

In addition to the verses by Hafez, this fragment includes an Arabic inscription that appears to be original. Comprised of a single phrase, it is inscribed in the cursive \textit{naskh} script in blue ink, and placed centrally within a rubric featuring flowers against a black background. This rubric is placed just beneath the first two \textit{bayts}, immediately above the opening of the Hafez fragment. The text reads: “The Light that exudes from his shrine are his words.” This inscription


\(^{135}\) In \textit{Turkman Governors}, 191, Uluç states that all the copies of the \textit{Majalis} from the second half of the sixteenth century on measure between twenty-seven and thirty centimeters high and that all copies of the \textit{Divan} of Hafez that she has studied are in similar sizes. She notes that no copies of these texts were ever produced in large size in Shiraz.
functions as a *durood sharif*, an expression of praise and respect typically directed toward a deceased. In Islamic literature, phrases such as “may God shed light on his tomb” are often spoken or inscribed after the name of a revered ruler, saint, or prophet, but it is not usual for them to reference one’s own shrine or tomb. The Arabic phrase inscribed on this fragment appears as a decorous chapter heading, however, it is directed specifically at the Hafez and takes the tone of an epitaph, suggesting that it was written long after the poet’s passing in 1390.

The mention of the concept of light in this inscription is noteworthy because it equates the poetry of Hafez to light, which has always been a prevalent element in the imagery of Persian poets, including Hafez himself. The Qur’an often uses light as a metaphoric device, most famously in the “Verse of Light,” which declares: “Allah is the Light of the heaven and the earth.” In Islamic visual contexts, God is represented only by His words, through the art of calligraphy. The statement on the Hafez fragment is implicated with the significance of writing in Islamic culture because of the status bestowed upon it by the Qur’an.

The Arabic expression penned on the Hafez fragment unites three elements: Hafez’s “words” or poetry, his shrine, and an emanating light. By equating his poetry with the light of his tomb, the author of this inscription extols the merits of Hafez’s lifework and elevates the poet to a saintly status. Furthermore, the overt reference to the mystic’s resting place as a beacon in one

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136 This reference was made in regard to Yamin al-Dawla Sultan Mahmud in a letter addressed to His Excellency al-Qa’im bi-Amr Allah. Cited in Clifford Edmund Bosworth, *The History of the Seljuq Turks from the Jami’ al-tawārikh: An Ilkhanid Adaptation of the Saljuq-nama of Zahir al-Din Nishapuri* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2001), 39. One particular phrase, known as *salawat*, is reserved for the prophet Muhammad, ‘*alayhi s-salam*, meaning, “May peace be upon him!”


that alludes to his actual shrine, located in the *Golgast-e Mosalla*, the famous rose gardens of Shiraz. In his poems, Hafez himself repeatedly names the gardens as a place to search for earthly and spiritual delight.

This reference to the shrine of Hafez is preceded by other examples of site-specific allusions that Safavid copyists included in their editions of the *Divan* of Hafez. A reference to Hafez’s shrine appears in a painting that has been included in at least one manuscript copy of the *Divan* produced in Shiraz in 1537.\(^{139}\) The image is accompanied by two *bayts* by Hafez that speak of his resting place, inviting guests to drink and dance at his grave. According to Soucek, these *ghazals* were inscribed on the cenotaph that once stood over the poet’s tomb.\(^{140}\) The manuscript illustration, which was produced almost a century after the shrine’s construction, offers a vignette of the monument within the context of Safavid Iran, complete with figures drinking and dancing in a garden setting.

The original shrine of Hafez was erected under the order of Timurid governor Abdul Qasim Babur Mirza (d. 1457) in 1452 and it underwent multiple transformative restorations. The only surviving portion of the Timurid monument is the marble slab that lies above the poet’s body. Remarkably, this piece, a fragment in its own right, is also adorned with an assortment of verses from Hafez that address his own death. Carved by the calligrapher Haji Aqasi Beg Afsar-e Azerbajjani, the inscription contains the Arabic phrase “*Huwa ‘l-baqī*,” (He is the Eternal One) on top, and the beginning couplet of one of Hafez’s *ghazals*:\(^{141}\)

> In the hope of union, my very life, I’ll give up.  
> As a bird of Paradise, this worldly trap I will hop.\(^{142}\)

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\(^{140}\) Ibid.

\(^{141}\) I thank Dr. Akin-Kıvanç for translating the Arabic inscription on the marble.

The imagery of a “bird of paradise” hopping from this life to the next, in the pursuit of union with God, is evocative of Attar’s previously mentioned Canticle of the Birds, in this bayt, it is as if Hafez becomes King Solomon’s hoopoe that finally reaches the presence of the divine.

The practice of living poets’ usage of a deceased peer’s own verses as an epitaph has been discussed by Bernard O’Kane in a critical study of the tomb of Muhammad Gazi at Fusang, a town to the west of Herat. According to O’Kane, in the early fourteenth-century, the use of Persian on a cenotaph was considered to be novel, while the use of the deceased own poetry was unquestionably unique.143 This information allows one to conclude that by the time that Hafez was laid to rest at the end of the early fourteenth century, the appropriation of his own verses for his epitaph was more derivative that innovative. A comparison of the use of Hafez’s own poetry in the inscription on the marble slab to the inscriptions used at the tomb of Muhammad Gazi shows that these inscriptions are part of a larger, and presently understudied phenomenon.

The contributors of Tombs of the Ancient Poets: Between Literary Reception and Material Culture, a recent study of the appearance of poets’ own verses in their epitaphs in Classical, Renaissance, and modern times, reveal that this is more of a universal phenomenon.144 The practice of borrowing the words and phrases of famous writers for their epitaphs is interpreted by this volume’s editors, Nora Goldschmidt and Barbara Graziosi, as a veritable twist on Roland Barthes’s seminal essay, “The Death of the Author.”145 Through the use of the poetry written by the deceased, the living gives agency to the dead and permits them to speak through

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their own words, making the shrine a site for reading. In this case the author is literally dead, as is the calligrapher himself, for his authorship on the shrine consists only of borrowed words.
Conclusion

In recent years, the topic of collecting Islamic art works has become more central in discussions among art historians.\textsuperscript{146} To conclude this thesis, I offer a hypothesis for the fragments’ route from Iran to the United States of America, and their transmission into the collection of the AMAM. In this thesis, I employed the word fragment to point out that these pages were torn from a larger body. This choice of word is meant to express both lament over the loss of objects to which these pages continuously nod, and to scrutinize the ontology of the fragments themselves and how they signify a wholeness which, despite my efforts to recall the details of their original form, remains irretrievable.

Copies of the Divan of Hafez and the Majalis were both popular books among Ottoman collectors, who often purchased manuscripts from Shiraz. This knowledge makes it possible to suggest that the codices from which the Oberlin fragments came may have moved into the hands of western book collectors through Ottoman lands.\textsuperscript{147} The Ottoman elite’s penchant for copies of the Majalis was thanks to the book’s coverage of the Timurid ruler Sultan Husain Mirza, an exemplary patron of art in the eyes of Ottoman literati, who, some believed, was the author of the Majlis.\textsuperscript{148} The painting of Solomon on the recto side suggests that it may have even been


\textsuperscript{147} Uluç, \textit{Turkman Governors}, 469-505.

\textsuperscript{148} Ibid.
intended for an Ottoman buyer, as the turbans depicted differ from the typical Safavid headgear with its characteristic red baton, the *taj-Haidari*, which expresses coded Shi’i affiliations (as seen for instance, in fig. 6). It has been suggested that Persian artists, who were aware of Ottoman interest and wanted to attract this Sunni audience, sometimes avoided the Shi’i style of turban.\(^{149}\) Though there is no evidence other than what we know about the larger context of book collecting between the Ottomans and Safavids, it is plausible that after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire following World War I, the manuscripts were sold or stolen by one of the numerous Western collectors who were actively pursuing artworks within the territories of a weakened and decentralized empire.

At the top right side of the verso page appears a handwritten note that reads: “*Solomon avec des animaux*” (Solomon with animals), intimating a French interference. Accompanying this note are three numerical figures, possibly added by a French antiquarian or by the same person who brought the two fragments together, which might refer to the price of the collage or indicate an inventory number. Precisely how the two fragments traveled from Shiraz to Paris remains a mystery. All that is known is that their only identifiable owner of these fragments, Fredrick B. Artz, bequeathed them to the AMAM in 1958.

Artz was a remarkable individual and a prolific historian. He taught at Oberlin College and Conservatory for nearly four decades, from 1924 to 1961. Born in Dayton, Ohio in 1894, he was an alumnus from Oberlin before he earned his doctoral degree at Harvard. As a scholar, Artz sought to pioneer the field of intellectual history of Europe and published no less than eight monographs. Although he never wrote on art history, Artz amassed a sizable collection of manuscripts and fragments that he used as teaching materials in his courses. In 1983, Artz

\(^{149}\) Soudavar, *Persian Courts*, 118.
suffered a fatal stroke and his collection was inherited by Oberlin College and Conservatory. Descriptions of Artz from his *Festcraft* and a brief biography provided by the Oberlin College Community LGBT History Project describe him as a sensitive, magnanimous, and brave individual, with a witty personality. Artz was an influential scholar who left behind hundreds of students, many of who went on to earn doctoral degrees and teach history, but little is little trace of his habits as a collector.

The fragments under study in this thesis are not the only works of Islamic art that Artz bequeathed to the AMAM, nor are they the only manuscript fragments in the museum’s collection, which also holds a number of hitherto unstudied Islamic objects. The names of the individuals from whom Artz acquired these manuscripts and artifacts remain unknown. It is likely that he encountered art dealers on his numerous trips to France and the Low Countries in the midcentury, who offered cuttings of images that they pillaged from unfortunate codices. Artz, who valued the history of ideas, undoubtedly saw the intrinsic value in these artifacts, even though he could not read Persian. It is thanks to his genuine pursuit of knowledge and interest in non-Western art that these fragments were preserved and spared from further damage.

One of the goals of this thesis was to stimulate research that the AMAM’s valuable collection of Islamic art deserves. The hollow at the center of the Hafez fragment leaves a void in

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152 Artz gave a number of illuminated manuscripts, both Persian and European, as well as other types of objects to the museum, including a calligraphic wall tile. The AMAM has several of his finest painted fragments, but several complete manuscripts and fragments are held in the College’s Special Collections.
what we know about the page’s original contents. However, the painted fragment also acts as a charming consolation for an irretrievable loss. By naming the book from which that the painted fragment came, and the city and workshop at which it was produced, I hope to have aided in suturing the fissures between the fragment and its long lost codex. In addition to addressing the question of what this painting originally was, I also sought to consider what it has become since crossing the Atlantic, to allow the fragments to call their own form into being. By doing so, I strove to reconcile their dual identity. The collage presents itself as a page from the Divan of Hafez, but reveals its inner contents to be a painting from the Majalis. The arguments that I have established thus far allow for a description of this collage as being simultaneously both and neither of these. Rather, it possesses a dynamic identity comprised of what we now know its parts to have been, what we understand them to be in the present, and what they will continue to become, since having entered their imposed state of fragmentation. In this thesis, as I limit my focus to a critical study of these excised manuscript leaves, I hope that my work will draw attention to similar pages, numerous examples of which are preserved in museums in Europe, North America, and the Middle East and North Africa. Similar folios which, despite being fragmented, still maintain their contentedness to the larger body of Islamic art through repetition and allusion. In future research I intend on identifying other objects that are similarly fractured in the aim of reading their scars and piecing together their histories.
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Appendix: Figures

Figure 1
Figure 2
King Solomon Composing a Love Letter (verso), Shiraz, c. 1522-50 CE. Oberlin, Allen Memorial Art Museum, accession no. 1958.34. Photograph courtesy of Dr. Esra Akin-Kıvanç.
Figure 3
Figure 4

Figure 5
Images are not included in this version due to copyright

Figure 6
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Figure 7