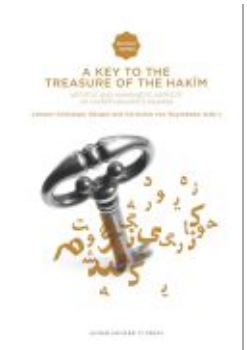




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## 7 What is it that Khusraw learns from the *Kalīla-Dimna* stories?

Christine van Ruymbeke

... *Khusraw Parviz, was unequalled by any of the kings in dominion, resources of funds and weapons, and enjoyment of the pleasures; were we to describe it all, this book would indeed be long. His reign lasted 38 years.*<sup>1</sup>

In his second *mathnavī*, *Khusraw u Shīrīn*, written in 1180 AD, Nizāmī informs us that the source for his 6.500 *bayt*-long romance was Firdawsī's epic (KS11, 52-3). But his inspiration also rests on other works of the medieval Islamic culture, such as, notably, Gurgānī's eleventh-century *Vīs u Ramīn* romance.<sup>2</sup> Towards the end of the story, there is also the explicit mention of the *Kalīla-Dimna* cycle of stories. It is this latter understudied passage which forms the topic of the present paper (KS92,1-43),<sup>3</sup> in which we shall glance at Nizāmī's aims underlying his choice to rewrite the fables and at his rewriting technique of this particular work.

In the *Shāh Nāma*, the passage dealing with the reign of Khusraw Parvīz contains mentions of the (in)famous and tortuous affair between Shīrīn and the twenty-second Sassanian King (who reigned from 590 to 628 AD)<sup>4</sup>. But the recital of the episode as told by Firdawsī has very little in common with a love-story. Nizāmī now wants to stress the love interest, the عشقبازی *'ishq-bāzī* (KS11,53 and KS12,4). In the process, he transforms the scandalous affair into a touching and noble love-relationship. Shīrīn is presented as an Armenian Princess. Her purity and her strength of character will allow her eventually to conquer her difficult lover Khusraw, and to help him reach some state of perfection, making him worthy of the Iranian idea of kingship accompanied by divine effulgence (فر *farr*).<sup>5</sup> Judging from the words of Ghazālī (d. 1111) quoted above, Khusraw Parvīz never was remarkable as a monarch, but for his wealth, army and harem. Nizāmī's choice of this particular ruler for the purposes of his *mathnavī* might have derived from the fact that Khusraw presented an excellent instance of a monarch in need of reforming. The poet pictures a misguided Khusraw, both as lover and as king, who misses opportunities and systematically embarks on the wrong paths. In Meisami's words describing medieval romances, "the protagonist's conduct as lover reveals his fitness, or

unfitness, for kingship; this aspect of his qualitative, or ethical, identity, depends directly on his capacity to be guided by love and to understand its nature correctly as encompassing, not merely private passion, but public order... [The romance explores] the relationship between love and justice, and specifically the role of love as the source of that wisdom which leads both to justice and to universal harmony.”<sup>6</sup>

It is thus possible to consider with Meisami that Nizāmī’s romance is in fact a Mirror for Princes, using the example of Khusraw’s quest, to point to the path leading from king *de natura* to king *de iure*<sup>7</sup>. Love, ‘*ishq*, is a guide to rightful actions and thus Shīrīn (representing Khusraw’s “better self”)<sup>8</sup> endeavours to lead her beloved king away from his former state of submission to the rule of his هوس *havas* (concupiscence).

Before reaching the tragic end of the *mathnavī*, the skies seem to finally clear as Shīrīn marries her capricious king-charming. She immediately embarks on a gentle coaxing policy to transform Khusraw into a perfect human being and king... Her efforts first seem in vain, as the king continues boisterous and pointless as before. Until one day, after years of feasting and drinking, Khusraw suddenly realizes that his hair is growing white as “on the locks of the dark violet he discovers some flakes of jasmine” (KS89,151). The king reacts with shock at this sign of age. Shīrīn, who had to bide her time till now, seizes upon the opportunity and exhorts him to think about his life and his career, to turn from pleasure’s joys towards wisdom in order to attain the heart’s fulfillment (KS90,2-39).<sup>9</sup>

ز رامش سوی دانش کوش یک چند بسی دیگر به کام دل برانی	زمین بوسید شیرین کای خداوند بسی کوشیده ای در کامرانی
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(KS90,2-3)

Her words are harsh as she paints the bitter reality: he has not been a just ruler, is not very popular amongst his people and is in danger of being overthrown, or at the very least of leaving behind a negative memory.<sup>10</sup>

سیه گشت از نفیر دادخواهان همه کاری نه بر موقع کند شاه ... ترا به گر رعیت را نوازی	بسا آیینه کاندر دست شاهان چو دولت روی برگرداند از راه جهانسوزی بد است و جور سازی
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(KS90,9-10 and 16)

Next, when he dies (the day approaches, as the white hair warns him), he will leave all his worldly possessions behind and, as any wise man would tell him, he should thus worry about other, deeper matters.<sup>11</sup>

در این منزل ز رفتن با خبر باش قیامت را کجا ترتیب سازد ز مال و ملک و شاهی هیچ بردند؟	نجات آخرت را چاره گر باش کسی کو سیم و زر ترکیب سازد ببین دور از تو شاهانی که مردند
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ببخشی شهنه راه تو باشد

بمانی مال بد خواه تو باشد

(KS90,24-27)

Duly chastened, Khusraw calls upon his vizier, wise Buzurg-Umīd, and puts all sorts of difficult questions to him (KS91,1-89). But Khusraw mistakes knowledge for wisdom. All eagerness, and brimming over with hope to discover the meaning of life, Khusraw's curiosity covers (impossible) questions on astronomy, metaphysics, the universe, the life of the soul, the hereafter, why people do not come back from death to indicate the right path to those who remain, etc. Buzurg-Umīd's answers are evading: "this is too subtle for you... you'll know once you are dead." Thus, the wise vizier considers that Khusraw is not able to grasp these truths or sciences and does not even attempt to explain them, or it may be that he modestly considers that true wisdom consists in admitting one's incapacity to answer these fundamental questions. It is manifest from this dialogue that Khusraw is asking the wrong questions, probing subjects with which a monarch need not bother. There are however two exceptions. The first consists in Buzurg-Umīd's several answers on the metaphysical question of the separation of body and soul, and the survival of the latter and its faculty of memory.<sup>12</sup> The second is a practical advice on keeping balance in food and drink. This frustrating dialogue ends with the mention of Muhammad and this is an occasion for Nizāmī, through the tongue of Buzurg-Umīd, to state Islam's divine nature. Khusraw is shaken, though he fails to understand the religious salvation Islam could offer him. In considering this passage, it is interesting to remember the *Siyāsat Nāma* where Nizām al-Mulk (d.1092) advises the king to listen to "religious elders" debating and interpreting the *Qur'an* and *Traditions* of the Prophet in his presence. This will open the "way of prudence and rectitude in both spiritual and temporal affairs" for him.<sup>13</sup> But Nizāmī's intellectual horizon is also informed by pre-Islamic elements such as the idea encapsulated in ancient maxims of statecraft, also present in works of political advice such as the *Siyāsat-Nāma* and Ghazālī's *Nasīhat al-Mulūk*: "A kingdom may last while there is irreligion, but it will not endure when there is oppression."<sup>14</sup>

So, Khusraw misses the opportunity to obtain information on spiritual perfection, but also to ask the right questions about the worldly art of government and ethics, which is what a king's job really is all about. It is at this point that Shīrīn, ever the wise counselor to Khusraw, steps in and requests that the vizier should also give her a portion of his wisdom and "open up" (and not bind in chains) and comment on some passages of the *Kalīla-Dimna* stories for them.

نصیبی ده مرا نیز ار توانی  
فرو خوان از کلیله نکته ای چند

کلیدی کن نه زنجیری در این بند

(KS91,92b-93)

An almost farcical indication that Shīrīn strikes the right note is that Buzurg-Umīd's face "blossoms like a rose petal" with contentment as he is about to embark on forty tales accompanied by their *nuktas* or lessons, taken from the *Kalīla-Dimna* stories.

بزرگ امید چون گلبرگ بشکفت  
چهل قصه به چل نکته فرو گفت  
(KS92,1)

When the vizier has enumerated his forty moral points from the *Kalīla-Dimna* tales, Khusraw feels that the advice is profitable for him. Though it is Shīrīn who had requested the tales, it is in fact Khusraw who profits from them, as he guards [the words of the old counselor] in his heart like a treasure within a fortress.<sup>15</sup>

چو بر گفت این سخن پیر سخن سنج  
دل خسرو حصارى شد بر این گنج  
(KS92,43)

Unfortunately, almost immediately after this, Khusraw is compelled to abdicate. He finds refuge in religion and in a fire-temple. Shīrīn accompanies him showing her devotion for the person of the king. Khusraw is then imprisoned and murdered, while asleep next to Shīrīn. The curtain falls on Shīrīn, stabbing herself on Khusraw's tomb (KS 96, 29).

Thus, Khusraw's albeit short foray into science and knowledge in the hope of becoming a perfect monarch is three-layered: there is Shīrīn's advice, Buzurg-Umīd's evincing answers to Khusraw's scientific and metaphysical questions and, finally, the forty *Kalīla-Dimna nuktas*. With reference to these latter, I may already pinpoint three important – and apparently opposed – elements. By naming *Kalīla-Dimna* immediately after the most weighty philosophical, astronomical metaphysical and theological questions, and after Khusraw's failure to be touched by true religion, Nizāmī seems to underline the importance of the work and perhaps also its positive difference as advice to monarchs, compared with the previous abstruse scientific or purely religious topics. Thus, by contrast, he seems to confirm the use of the fable collection as a practical Mirror for Princes.<sup>16</sup> This is misleading however, as will become apparent in the conclusions to this essay. Another element is the fact that it is Shīrīn who proposes to look at the *Kalīla-Dimna*, presenting this request as advice for herself, carefully steering Khusraw away from his unsatisfying foray into science without wounding his ego. I would like to posit the hypothesis that this might be an oblique indication of the poor regard the fables of the *Kalīla-Dimna* cycle enjoyed in Nizāmī's circle. Did they count amongst stories without importance, fit only for the entertainment of female minds? The analysis of their contents will indicate whether perhaps, on the contrary, Shīrīn's request for explanations of the *Kalīla-Dimna* gives us an insight in

what a monarch really ought to know. The third observation is that this newly acquired and fitting knowledge profits Khusraw but very little. Nizāmī does not comment in anyway on the profitability of these tales, although he mentions Khusraw's immediate repentance of his past بدعتهاى بیداد (*bid'at-hā-yi bīdād*, unrighteous tyranny/heresy) and striving to establish the سراى عدل (*sarā-yi 'adl*, dwelling place of justice). Is it so then, that the points recounted by Buzurg-Umīd refer to religion, to royal morals, showing the way to justice? Following on this, as if to confirm that the divorce between justice and monarchy is impossible to bridge and that righteousness inevitably leads to religion, the king chooses to retire in a fire-temple and is subsequently deposed by a (Byzantine-friendly) political faction backing his son Shīrūya.

This paper will address several questions related both to the author's tools and to the use he makes of his source: Do we know what version of the *Kalīla-Dimna* cycle Nizāmī had in hands and can we trace the forty verses in Nizāmī's *mathnavī* to the extant stories of the cycle? Is Nizāmī respectful of his original or does he manipulate and adapt the fables? Is he using these fables to further the action-line of his *mathnavī*? Do they shed light on the previous actions of the king and do they impact his future? Finally, judging from the way in which Nizāmī presents the relevance of the fables to Khusraw's search for knowledge, can we consider them apt advice for kings and deduce what is the lesson that Khusraw learns from the *Kalīla-Dimna*? (And is Duda correct in declaring that these fables help Shīrīn in her search for justice?)<sup>17</sup>

The *Kalīla-Dimna* cycle of stories has a complex history which need not be retold here.<sup>18</sup> It is however interesting to note that Nizāmī commits no anachronism as he mentions these fables in the context of his story; they are suitable in a romance dealing with the grand-son of Khusraw Anūshīrvān (r. 531-579), during whose reign the cycle of stories is supposed to have been imported to Iran and translated into Pahlavi Persian.<sup>19</sup> Anūshīrvān is a legendary figure of wisdom and excellent kingship (perhaps thanks to the guidance he found in the *Kalīla-Dimna* fables?). Nizāmī refers to him elsewhere in the course of the romance, when he appears in a dream to young Khusraw and promises him four things in life (most remarkable amongst which features Shīrīn) (KS 17, 150-1). This makes him the influence which shapes the prince's early ambition and life pursuits. The second, tacit reference to Anūshīrvān, through the *Kalīla-Dimna* fables, might conceivably be expected to have a similar life-shaping influence on the second part of Khusraw's reign, though, as mentioned above, that monarch's almost immediately ensuing deposition and murder preclude this.

The passage under scrutiny in Nizāmī's *mathnavī* consists of forty *bayts* (KS 92, 2-41).<sup>20</sup> In one instance only do we have an *enjambement* of two *bayts* (bb. 24 and 25) with the repetition in another context in b. 25 of the

character of the hypocritical cat, whose fable illustrates the point of b. 24. In Dastgirdī's edition used here, the *bayts* are arranged to follow the order of the fables as they appear in the extant *Kalīla-Dimna* texts,<sup>21</sup> but for some inversions. This does not necessarily correspond with the order of these *bayts* in manuscripts of the *mathnavī*. A further analysis of the order of the *bayts* is probably irrelevant, as the order of the stories also differ in the versions of the *Kalīla-Dimna* texts themselves, whether in Arabic or in Persian.

What is more relevant is that no strict pattern or logical progression is apparent in the contents of these forty *bayts*. In fact, it is possible to identify several themes, some of which are clustered together (as for example in bb 33 and 34, both referring to the danger of hasty action and bb 37 and 38 both referring to how honesty and good actions may rid one of bloodthirsty enemies). The present order in Dastgirdī's edition though, seems to backtrack several times to a previously mentioned theme (as for example for the encouragement to "suicide" in b. 8 and again in b. 35 and perhaps also in b. 36. Another instance would be in bb. 3 and 23, the tale of the Fox and the Drum teaching one not to be impressed by an enemy's bulk and sound and similarly the tale of the Elephant and the Hare which teaches the lesson not to evaluate an enemy's stature as an indication of his might). A recurrent theme is that of deceit, which is presented as useful (bb. 9, 10), or which ought to be discovered (b. 15), but which is also presented as dangerous and backfiring on its user (bb. 1, 6, 13, 14, 16). Thus *nuktas* may contradict one another or mention different or opposed ways to a same end (as also in b. 10 recognizing the usefulness of tricks to escape enemies and bb. 37 and 38 which advocate sincerity and virtue in order to be saved from enemies).

The fifteen first stories referred to by Buzurg-Umīd are taken from the first book of the *Kalīla-Dimna* cycle, the story of the Lion and the Bull, by far the best-known part of the whole work. The most famous stories<sup>22</sup> from that chapter are mentioned: that of the Ape and the Carpenter (b.2), of the Fox and the Drum (b. 3), of the Crab and the Fish-eating Bird (b. 6), of the Jackal, the Wolf, the Crow and the Camel (b. 9), of the Tortoise and the two Geese (b. 11) and of the Iron-eating Mice and the Child-stealing Falcon (b. 15). The two following *bayts* (bb. 16 and 17) retell stories from the chapter on Dimna's Trial. Next, the chapter on the story of the Ring-dove is referred to in bb. 18 to 21, with, for example the story of how the birds managed to escape all together from the net (b. 18), and the story of the Rat who took the Saint's barley (b. 20). Another famous chapter, that of the Crows and the Owls, receives eight mentions (bb. 22 to 29). Amongst these, there is the story of the Elephant and the Hare (b. 23), that of the Hypocritical Fasting Cat (b. 24) and that of the Estranged Wife who is frightened by a Thief and turns to her Husband (b. 26). The other chapters receive each one or two mentions: the Ape and Tortoise (bb. 30-1); the

Monk and Weasel (bb. 32-3); the Rat and the Cat (b. 35); the King and the bird Fanzah (b. 36); the Lion and the Austere Jackal (b. 37); Iladh, Beladh, Irakht and the wise Kibarioun (b. 34); the Lioness and the Horseman (b. 40); the Traveler and the Goldsmith (b. 38); the King's Son and his Companions (b. 39).

Nizāmī does not refer to any of the lengthy introductory chapters relating the story of Burzūya and he also ignores the chapter of the Monk who berates his Guest for citing Hebrew sentences when he actually knows no Hebrew.

Nizāmī's references are extremely pithy. One *misra'* (usually the second) consists of a mention of the protagonists, enabling us to identify the fables<sup>23</sup> and the other *misra'* gives the point of the tale (according to Nizāmī), the *nukta*, or lesson which is offered to Khusraw and Shīrīn.

It is not possible to ascertain what version of the *Kalīla-Dimna* stories Nizāmī knows and uses. Can it be the eighth-century Ibn al-Muqaffa' Arabic version? As far as the Arabic text is concerned, it is fair to agree with de Blois that "a comparison of the various manuscripts reveals at once such a degree of discrepancy that one must often wonder whether they are really copies of one and the same book [...]. We cannot truly say that what we possess today is Ibn al-Muqaffa's translation, but rather a variety of Arabic texts derived in one way or another from it."<sup>24</sup> In an attempt to check similarities between Nizāmī's version and the existing Arabic text, I have used for expediency's sake, an English and two French translations of the Arabic text(s),<sup>25</sup> which are each based on different manuscripts. The story mentioned in Nizāmī's b. 14, that of the Snake who eats the Frogs, is probably an indication that Nizāmī has not looked at the Arabic version of the fables. In two of the three translations, the story is not present. In Miquel's translation, which does mention the fable, the victim of the snake is not a frog but a cormorant.<sup>26</sup> The mention of two stories taken from the chapter of Dimna's trial, which is generally considered an addition made by Ibn al-Muqaffa' to the original Pahlavi collection of fables, also closes the door on the possibility that Nizāmī used a hypothetical version of the fables from a strand independent of the Ibn al-Muqaffa' translation.

Nizāmī might rather have consulted a Persian version. We know of the versified version by Rūdakī (d. 940), which only survives in stray verses collected in the *Lughat-i Furs*, the mid-eleventh-century Anthology of Asadī Tūsī<sup>27</sup>. There are also two extant prose versions, almost contemporary with Nizāmī's work: the version by Muhammad ibn 'Abdullāh al-Bukhārī (amputated at the end) and that by Nasrullāh Munshī, which both date from the 1140s AD.<sup>28</sup>

Our tools are scanty and the ground is shaky on which to search for the particular Persian version Nizāmī might have used. First, we may check the presence or absence in these different Persian texts of the stories mentioned by Nizāmī. I used a sample of three extant Rūdakī *bayts* in the



*ramal* metre containing elements enabling me to identify the fables to which they belong and thus to link them with certainty to Nizāmī's forty points. All forty stories chosen by Nizāmī are mentioned in Nasrullāh Munshī's version. The only extant Bukhārī manuscript is incomplete at the end,<sup>29</sup> which prevents me from checking the stories in bb. 38 and 39. It is relatively safe however, to infer from the structure of the rest of the work that indeed all forty stories must also have been present in Bukhārī's complete version of the fables.

Another and perhaps more refined check is the comparison of Nizāmī's choice of vocabulary with the extant Persian versions. A systematic resemblance between Nizāmī's words and one or the other of the three Persian works might indicate a possible relation, while a recurrent difference in vocabulary will point to the absence of such relation. Unfortunately, the latter is the case both with Bukhārī's and with Nasrullāh Munshī's versions. There is a marked difference in Nizāmī's choice of terms to designate both animals and human genres. For example in b. 2 and again in b. 28, to designate the carpenter Nizāmī uses the (Arabic) term نجار *najjār*, while both Nasrullāh Munshī and Bukhārī use the (Persian) term درودگار *durūdgar*. The story of the Tortoise and the two Geese (b. 11) is another interesting instance, where Nizāmī's tortoise کشف *kashaf*, becomes باخه *bākha* with Nasrullāh Munshī and سنگپشت *sang-pusht* with Bukhārī. So also with b. 12, where Nizāmī calls the ape کبی *kapi*, Nasrullāh Munshī, uses بوزینه *būzīna* and Bukhārī, the term همدونه *hamdūna*.<sup>30</sup>

These variants in vocabulary tip the scale towards a perception that Nizāmī's source text was neither that of Bukhārī nor that of Nasrullāh Munshī, though there is naturally the possibility that Nizāmī chose synonym terms for reasons of his meter or of personal poetical preference. However, the lemmata used in the stories mentioned in b. 11 (*kashaf*) and b. 12 (*kapī*) are identical with those in the relevant Rūdakī quotes found in Asadī's *Lughat-i Furs*!<sup>31</sup> It is particularly unfortunate that Rūdakī's work survives only in such fragmentary manner, preventing us from reaching any conclusion. The only point to be made by this analysis is the indication that Nizāmī's choice of terms is close to those of Rūdakī's fragmentary version.

In a third of the cases only, does Nizāmī keep the stories' moral lessons.<sup>32</sup> These lessons deal with the following themes: awareness that life is endangered by tricksters; union and tricks may defeat an invincible foe; worthless people are not worth worrying about; one will not profit from fraudulently obtained goods; sagacity is more useful than reliance on obvious stupidity; it is dangerous to trust a stupid person with one's life; fidelity is stronger than tricks; one must mistrust hypocrisy and cupidity; gullible behaviour is the cause of grievous loss; grief might sometimes bring profit; one should not rely on hypothetical future benefits; one should never harm anyone without thinking it over carefully; sincerity will never

bring one to harm; daily portion is appointed according to one's needs and, finally, bloodthirstiness will always backfire. I shall come back to this bewildering array of advice, containing practical pieces of advice which are often opposed to ethics, which contradict one another and which sport – if any at all – extremely flimsy relations to theories of kingship.

In all the other verses, not only does Nizāmī ignore the stated morals of the *Kalīla-Dimna* text, but he also voices an unexpected *nukta*, which shows a different facet and a different understanding of the tales. Such manipulation of the original is most likely to happen in a strong, self-assured cultural environment, by an author who considers he can improve an original which falls short of perfection and with a text which does not enjoy a high status amongst the target audience.<sup>33</sup> In some cases, the poet adds an element, mostly an adjective qualifying one of the protagonists, which is not present in the fables and colours the understanding of the episode to fit his purpose. In many instances, he takes the point of view of another character than the received hero, thus again, changing the understanding of the fable's moral. Elsewhere, the protagonists are used as emblematic opposites, referred to only in order to illustrate the opposition Nizāmī mentions, bearing no relation to the contents of that particular fable. And some verses present a mixture of these techniques.

*Bayt* 16 presents an example of a slight shift given by Nizāmī to the original fables by changing its point of view. "If you practice tricks (lit. draw tricks on the veil), then you will remain with this cloak-burning painter!"

بدان نقاش چادر سوز مانی

چو نقش حيله بر چادر نشانی

He refers to the rather unlikely episode of the woman who fails to notice on a particular occasion that it is her painter-lover's servant who wears the painted cloak (the signal agreed between them) and accordingly she lets this servant enjoy her sexual favours. The fable is meant to teach how dangerous it is to act, like the woman in the story, without carefully ascertaining one's data. Nizāmī takes a different point of view, that of the painter-lover who regrets the inefficiency of his original trick and burns his cloak, the instrument of the present catastrophe. So also with b. 7, ("Don't practice usury, listen to the advice [telling] what the hare did to the usurer-lion!"), referring to the story of the usurer-lion and the hare, usually told from the point of view of the desperately cunning hare who defeats the lion by playing on the latter's feelings of superiority and stupidity.<sup>34</sup>

که با شیر رباخوار کرد خرگوش

ربا خواری مکن این پند بنیوش

Nizāmī refers to the actual core of the story and mentions the lion's mistake in practicing usury (*ribā-kh"ārī*): the lion gives up his royal right to kill his subjects for subsistence. In exchange for this "cash-money" (the

safety of the animals), he receives as “interest payment” a daily prey. So again in b. 30 “By turning back (*vā gashtan*), one can escape from this coast, the ape (*kapī*) escaped from the tortoise (*kashaf*) by this art.”, where Nizāmī takes the point of view of the ape who escapes from the tortoise by turning back, while the traditional fable focuses on the mistake of the tortoise who is incapable of keeping the coveted goods (i.e. the ape).

به وا گشتن توانی زین طرف رست      که کیی هم بدین فن زان کشف رست

\*

\* \*

By adding a qualifying adjective, not present in the original fable, Nizāmī changes its interpretation completely. For example, in the mention of the story of the ascetic and the robe (b.4), Nizāmī refers to the ascetic, the *zāhid*, as being *mumsik*, miserly.

مکن تا در غمت ناید درازی      چو زاهد ممسکی در خرقة بازی

Nizāmī advises one not to act in order to prolong one’s bad luck, while the classical understanding of this story is that the loss of his robe (through theft) is attributable to the ascetic’s own indiscretion in admitting the dubious stranger (the thief) into his society. He is the cause of his own bad luck as he did not carefully consider the possible outcome of his gesture.

In b. 21 Nizāmī describes the wolf-bowman as *maghrūr*, proud, on whose heart “suddenly the bow/fate may send an arrow!”, while the fable’s point is the danger of hoarding: the wolf prefers to keep the juicy bits for a rainy day and proposes to first frugally rest content with the lean bow.

مشو مغرور چون گرگ کمان گیر      که بر دل چرخ ناگه می زند تیر

Similarly, in b. 31, the donkey is described as *ghāfil*, negligent, asleep, while the fable’s point is the donkey’s stupidity that allows him to fall in the same trap twice. “One oughtn’t to be like the negligent donkey on this road, for because of this negligence, the fox ate the donkey’s heart !”

چو خر غافل نباید شد درین راه      کزین غفلت دل خر خورد روباه

In b. 33 “Turn your back on the perfidity (*ghadr*) of that ascetic!”, Nizāmī chooses to describe the *zāhid*, the religious man, as perfidious, on the grounds that he killed his innocent (*bīgana*) faithful weasel (*rāsū-yi amīn*), while the fable only shows the destructive consequences of hasty action.

به ار بر غدر آن زاهد کنی پشت      که راسوی امین را بیگنه کشت

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\* \*

*Bayt* 2, referring to the tale of the monkey and the carpenter, presents yet another way for Nizāmī to use the fables. The lesson of the tale is that whoever interferes in a business for which he does not possess the necessary knowledge or technical skills, will meet with catastrophe, as did the monkey who tried to ape the carpenter. What Nizāmī says is that desire, *havā*, can no more change into friendship, *yārī*, than a monkey can turn into a carpenter. He uses the antithesis of monkey vs. carpenter, which, presumably had become proverbial, to oppose desire and friendship.

هوا بشکن کزو یاری نیاید                      که از بوزینه نجاری نیاید

So also in b. 22, where he compares elements which are antithetical to each other: *hirs* (cupidity) is opposed to *khirad* (wisdom), like owls to crows. "Give up cupidity, for this miserable carrier is opposed to wisdom as the crow to the owl!"

رها کن حرص کاین حمال محروم                      نسازد با خرد چون زاغ با بوم

Thus, he completely ignores the whole fable telling of the war between the two bird-kingdoms. He simply refers to the two emblematic enemies as the terms of comparison. Again in b. 23, Nizāmī uses the dramatic opposition in physical size between the well-known characters of the fable of the hare and the elephant (whose point is that one should rely on one's intelligence), to warn against short-sighted evaluation (*khurd-bīnī*) of the enemy (*khasm*)'s puny stature as an indication of his weakness: "See how the hare (*khargūsh*) stole the water from the elephants!"

مبین از خرد بینی خصم را خرد                      ز پیلان بین که خرگوش آب چون برد

In b. 29, Nizāmī mentions the mouse turned into a woman, who finally chose a male of her own original species, in order to advocate not to be attracted to evil people if one's nature is not evil.

اگر بد نیستی با بد مشو یار                      چنان کان موش نسل آدمی خوار

\*  
\* \*

Yet another technique to change the point of the fables is exemplified in b. 14 referring to the episode of the snake, the frog (*ghūk*) and the weasel.

جو بر دانا گشادی حیلہ را در                      جو گوک مارکش در سر کنی سر

Indeed the fable shows that the frog is ultimately loosing her family in the same manner as the trick she had played on her enemy the snake, but the emphasis is on the danger of using tricks which can backfire, no mention is made of the intelligence of the snake. Nizāmī introduces the idea that the frog is playing a dangerous game in trying to trick (*dar-i hīla gushādan*) a learned person (*dānā*).

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In the story of the crow and the snake (b. 5), which illustrates that what cannot be attained through force can be done by list, Nizāmī changes the point of view as well as the lesson.

مخور در خانه کس هیچ زنهار                      که با تو آن کند کان زاغ با مار

He advises against acting as does the snake (while in the fable, the story is told from the point of view of the crow) and he introduces the idea of violating hospitality (*dar khāna-yi kasī zinhār khurdan*), while there is never any mention of this in the original fable, as crow and snake are neighbours, not host and guest.

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In other cases, Nizāmī takes a secondary element of the fables and presents it as the point of the story. So, in b. 11 Nizāmī refers to the story of the tortoise (*kashaf*) and the two ducks (*buttān*) and chooses to mention only the ostensible pretext used in the story-line: “Many a head which was buried because of [its] tongue!”, or the danger of being too talkative.

بس سر کز زبان زیر زمین رفت                      کشف را با بطن فصلی چنین رفت

He ignores the weightier point of the tale, which is about the dangers of not following friends’ informed advice. So also in b. 38, where he refers to the traveler (*sayāh*)’s reward for his kindness towards the dangerous snake and carries the point of doing good (*nīkī*) and not to fear the bloodthirsty enemy (*khasm-i khūnkhu’ār*). The original fable in fact advises to select as objects of generosity and favour only those who are honorable, but also advises against despising man or beast before having examined their utility.

تو نیکی کن مترس از خصم خونخوار                      به نیکی برد جان سیاح از آن مار

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\* \*

In b. 18 which refers to the story of the Ringdove in the fowler’s trap, Nizāmī changes several elements:

چو آن مرغ نگارین رست ز آن دام

به دانائی توان رستن ز ایام

It is indeed at first through learning or rather wisdom (*dānā'ī*) that the ring-dove finds a way to escape: commanding to all the birds caught in the net to fly together in the same direction rather than struggle in all directions individually. Subsequently however, it is the friendship the ringdove has previously inspired to a rat that will make the rat agree to free all the birds from the net. Surprisingly, Nizāmī's point is that it is through learning/wisdom that one manages to escape from time/life (*ayyām*), "as the beloved/beautiful bird escaped from the net." The question remains whether this is an encouragement to escape from reality for example through books, or, as an extreme interpretation, that wisdom encourages one to escape from life, i.e. to suicide?

In b. 20, Nizāmī introduces the concept of injustice (*bīdād*), while the fable is meant to teach one to notice arrogant behaviour which must be based on a hidden strength, as when the rat eats the left-overs from the saint's barley.

که موش از زاهد ارجو برد زر داد

میریگ جو ز کشت کس به بیداد

"Don't unjustly take even one grain of barley from someone's harvest", for you will pay for this a thousand-fold! The rat took the saint's barley but had to give up the gold which was inspiring her with tricks and strength. (She nested above a purse of gold. Once the purse was taken away, the rat lost her ability to play tricks.)

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In this bewildering collection of lessons, most of the points voiced by Buzurg-Umīd do not refer to theories of kingship, but concern *akhlāq*, morality, a time-worn, clichéd *akhlāq*, relevant for the ordinary man and not specifically addressing royal duties. As mentioned above, other *nuktas* relate to purely practical attitudes which often lean on unethical advice, such as those which either extol the use of tricks or give pointers on how to elude tricksters. Some, however, are part of the typical advice found in the Mirrors. So, for example the injunction not to act without carefully thinking it over, illustrated by the story of the male dove who kills his female in b. 34 (this is one of the *nuktas* which Nizāmī has not tampered with), which is what we find in Ghazālī's anecdote about Anūshīrvān who declares he "never issue[s] orders thoughtlessly".<sup>35</sup> I detect in only a few other cases the surprising twist given to the fables, which might be Nizāmī's own advice directed specifically at a monarch. Let us for instance return to b. 7, which refers to the mistake the lion-usurer makes in relinquishing his terrifying hold over the animals in exchange for daily

“payments in kind” and thus practicing usury. This is a direct reference to regal foresight and wisdom, not to rely on a covenant which the emboldened subjects might forget once the ruler is too weak to fight back. This is however not the usual interpretation of the fable<sup>36</sup> where no mention is made of usury. Again, in b. 27, Nizāmī appears to directly address the monarch, by the introduction of the term *nāvard* (combat): If there is a combat, you can escape from your adversaries (*khusmānat*), like that pious man (*pārsā mard*) escaped from the *dīv* and the thief: by causing dispute and division between two threatening foes. *Divide et impera!*

رہی چون باشد از خصمانت ناورد      چنان کز دیو و دزد آن پارسا مرد

The story of the fox and the drum, whose moral is that a mighty mass often is nothing but wind, that nothing arises from sound and bulk, is transformed by Nizāmī, (b. 3) through his introduction of the term *talbīs*, which means fraud, and which will induce us to face the same ills as those which the fox experienced because of the drum.

بتلبیس آن توانی خورد ازین راه      کزان طبل دریده خورد رویاه

Nothing in the original fable refers to fraud. The fable reflects on appearances which can give a wrong impression, and, as far as kingly politics is concerned, advises that a king should not balk at appearances. By going one step further, by inferring that these appearances actually are imposture, that life, by presenting wrong appearances is fraudulent, Nizāmī here transposes the debate from the kingly search for bravery in facing an apparently redoubtable enemy, into the realm of philosophy.

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The first *bayt* provides a complex instance of transmutation: an alteration in the traditional point of view, a replacement of the stated moral and a remolding in the interpretation of the fable:

نخستین گفت کز خود بر حذر باش      چو گاو شنزبہ زان شیر جماش

This refers to the frame story of the first book or chapter of the fables. The jackal Dimna introduces the bull Shanzaba into the inner circle of the intimate courtiers of the lion-king. Shanzaba becomes the king's confidant, a post which Dimna coveted. The king and the bull finally become estranged through Dimna's slander and they fight each other to death. The lion-king wins. The official “moral lesson” of the fable is that when two friends accept the services of a person who is notorious for falsehood and deceit, their speedy disunion is the inevitable consequence of their misplaced trust.

But this is not the lesson Nizāmī proposes. He chooses to interpret the episode in the light of Neo-Platonism and Sufism and enjoins us to beware of ourselves (*az khud bar hadhar bāsh*), i.e. of our human passions, our concupiscent nature, represented by the lion, who is qualified as “deceiving”). This nature rules over our soul/intellect (represented by the bull Shanzaba), and ultimately, through deceit, will destroy us.

There is a certain irony in this interpretation by Nizāmī. Indeed, he totally ignores the intervention of the *roué* Dimna, who is the agent of the lion-king’s distrust and final wish to exterminate his former friend the bull. Nizāmī selects the moment in the story when the bull is on his guard (encouraged by Dimna) towards the all-powerful monarch: though he trusts the lion as a friend, he is also aware that honesty and criticism might alienate the goodwill of the king and that close association with the throne might earn him jealous enemies at court.<sup>37</sup> The king-lion in the fable is not deceiving, he is manipulated by Dimna and acts out of a misguided wish for self-protection. Nizāmī’s adjective (*jammāsh*)<sup>38</sup> qualifying the lion, changes the understanding of the episode, showing the point of view of the bull, which is ironically what Buzurg-Umīd wants King Khusraw to identify with.

In conclusion, let us return to the question raised in the title: “What is it that Khusraw learns from the *Kalīla-Dimna*?” Providing an adequate answer is embarrassingly problematical! The majority of Nizāmī’s *nuktas* have but a flimsy correlation with the received morals attached to the fables in the *Kalīla-Dimna* cycle. Few relate to the attitude of the monarch whether private or public. They neither seem to agree with the progression from king *de facto* to monarch *de iure*, as mentioned above, nor do they advance the affairs of love, which we have identified as the *mathnavī*’s main theme. In short, I would go as far as to say that they seem to have no impact on the story of Khusraw and Shīrīn. Apart from the few instances noticed above, that might relate to the attitude of a king in general, I only detect three further aspects targeted by Buzurg-Umīd’s *nuktas*, which might have a direct relation to Khusraw’s life.

First, there is the recurrent advice to use tricks and lists on one’s enemies. This sheds a new light on one of Khusraw’s most criticized actions: the trick he uses to rid himself of Farhād whom he sees as a dangerous rival for Shīrīn’s heart and favours. In the light of the “moral” advice given here, the king was perfectly justified in using this trick against a foe whom he was at a loss to defeat in any other way. It is also striking that it was his wise counselors, who advised him to send the false report of Shīrīn’s death (KS59,14-5).<sup>39</sup>

Second, in this story on love and marriage, there seems to be only one *nukta* that distantly relates to conjugal life (b. 26). The story of the bazari and his estranged wife who was terrorized (*bīm*) by the thief holds an admonition to turn from *fitna* to *vafā*, from disorder to fidelity.



چنان کز بیم دزد آن زن در آن شوی

ز فتنه در وفا کن روی در روی

This might be a direct reference to Khusraw's boisterous life which now ought to change to fidelity. No doubt there is irony again contained in the use of this particular fable to illustrate the point, as Khusraw has to adopt the point of view of the wife of the bazari.<sup>40</sup>

Finally, the three occurrences (bb. 8, 35, 36) where the points contain apparent encouragements to suicide, to escape from the cavern and unshackle oneself deserve a special mention. A surprising twist is given to the story of the three fish. Here again (b.8), Nizāmī shifts the point of view as he mentions the second "wise/old fish", who, too late to escape, pretends to be dead in order to be fished out and thrown away, when it can safely make its escape from calamity (*āfat*).

چنانک آن پیرماهی ز آفت شست

به خود کشتن توان زین خاکدان رست

Nizāmī uses this part of the story to illustrate the advantage of suicide (*khud-kushtan*) in order to escape this world which he calls a rubbish-bin (*khākdān*). A similar encouragement to "escape from this cavern," a Platonic allusion to this world, by the use of prudence (*hushyāri*) is given in b. 35, which refers to the story of the rat who frees the cat from the "snare of grief".

چو موش آن گریه را از دام تیمار

به هشیاری رهان خود را از این غار

The same meaning appears in b 36, referring to the story of the bird Qubbara (lark),<sup>41</sup> where Nizāmī advises "to fly outside" so as not to be destroyed within these bonds.

چو مرغ قیره زین قبه چند

برون پر تا نفرسانی درین بند

This latter example is almost certainly a reference to a mystic annihilation, as could also be the case for the two previous passages. In the light of Khusraw's decision to retire to a fire-temple and give up his worldly rule, they might well be the only practical advice given by Buzurg-Umīd which he abides by.

Ultimately, it is Nizāmī's technique which might give us a key to penetrate this puzzling passage. The introduction to the *Kalīla-Dimna* version by Ibn al-Muqaffa', contains the warning that in order to reap the advantages of the work, one must grasp fully the spirit in which it is composed, disengage from its figurative language the truth which it is intended to convey and so seize the exact purport of its fables. Thus, reading the collection of fables without attending to its scope and aims, often lying deep and not

obvious at first glance, is about as unproductive as a nut that has not been cracked.<sup>42</sup> Though it is a bit of a *topos* for the medieval Persian author to warn that the real meaning of his work is hidden and can only be grasped by alert intelligence, it does not follow that we should automatically dismiss this warning. The above injunction to the readers, opens the door to widely contrasting or even contradictory interpretations of the fables and even to considering the stated morals which round off the stories as unrepresentative of the actual aim of the book. The perceptive reader must independently search for the real purport of the fables and not swallow the superficial explanation, stated there for the *hoi poloi*, while the real gems remain hidden.

This gives Nizāmī liberty to interpret or even to twist the fables to fit the *nuktas* he wishes to state. But though a third of the forty *bayts* are “straight” references to the original, we have seen that the major part of the passage is so different from the older text that it may be considered not only an extended allusion but a parody. Not only “a poet’s deliberate incorporation of identifiable elements from other sources”,<sup>43</sup> but an allusion which changes the original text in order to mock both the original and the new text, caricaturing the latter, which is so famous as to be immediately recognized by the audience.<sup>44</sup>

If parody is what Nizāmī is using here, it necessarily strives for comic effect. Indeed, I have above detected more than one humorous note in this passage, probably stemming from the poet’s wish to introduce some entertainment before the tragic end of the tale. Humor is not absent from Nizāmī’s work and reading this passage as parody, with comic relief in mind, somehow helps to explain away the vexing puzzle posed by the changes introduced in the morals of the fables: for, in their new form, they do not acquire a relevance to the protagonist’s previous life and, but for few dubious exceptions, do not impact in any obvious way on his bleak future. This would also explain the absence of relation within the passage to the *mathnavī*’s story-line itself, with its two main themes of kingship and love. Rather than being an indication of the wisdom they contain, Nizāmī’s reference to the tales which ignores or twists their received interpretation, probably constitutes a subversive rewriting. This witticism would be in line with their humorous introduction by Shīrīn and the burlesque of Buzurg-Umīd’s flushed face, and propose what I see as a humorous moment following on the frustration of the failed scientific and philosophical dialogue between the king and his wise counselor. In this interpretation, Shīrīn’s earlier harangue to Khusraw to change his ways, has already provided him with the lesson in kingship he needed. Nizāmī then introduces a pastiche of the traditional question-and-answer sessions between a monarch and the court’s scholars. He follows this up with a witty parody of the famous fables.

The results of the above analysis are an indication that Nizāmī's manipulation is playful, introducing puns, or using the fables' characters as emblems in order to present unexpected twists in the points of view and in the morals applied. The absence of explanation, of variety and systematic novelty in the *nuktas* preclude us from considering that here is an attempted response to Ibn al-Muqaffa's original challenge to make manifest the true but hidden meaning of the fables. Similarly, my failure to detect any systematic relevance in the *nuktas* to act as a Mirror for Khusraw or to help along the story-line of the *mathnavī*, makes it difficult to consider that this extended allusion to the animal fables was meant to have any impact on Nizāmī's characters and their actions. Thus, an anti-climactic conclusion presents itself to us: to all appearances, this passage might well be nothing weightier than a literary tour-de-force introduced for the intellectual recreation of Nizāmī's cultured audience.

### Appendix: The passage in Nizāmī's *Khusraw u Shūrīn mathnavī*

چهل قصه به چل نکته فرو گفت	برزگ امید چون گلبرگ بشکفت	
چو گاو شنزبه زان شیر جماش	نخستین گفت کز خود بر حذر باش	1
که از بوزینه نجاری نیاید	هوا بشکن کزو یاری نیاید	2
کز آن طبل دریده خورد روباه	بتلبیس آن توانی خورد ازین راه	3
چو زاهد ممسکی در خرقه بازی	مکن تا در غمت ناید درازی	4
که با تو آن کند کان زاغ با مار	مخور در خانه کس هیچ زنهار	5
که ماهی خوار دید از چنگ خرچنگ	همان پاداش بینی وقت نیرنگ	6
که با شیر رباخوار کرد خرگوش	ربا خواری مکن این پند بنیوش	7
چنانک آن پیرماهی زافت شست	به خود کشتن توان زین خاکدان رست	8
که از شخص شتر سرباز کردند	شغال و گرگ و زاغ این ساز کردند	9
چنان کان طیطوی از موج دریا	به چاره کین توان جستن ز اعدا	10
کشف را با بطن فصلی چنین رفت	بسا سر کز زبان زیرزمین رفت	12
که دید آن ساده مرغ از کپپی چند	ز نا اهلان همان بینی در این بند	11
چو بازرگان دانا مال نادان	به حیلت مال مردم خورد نتوان	13
چو غوک مارکش در سر کنی سر	چو بر دانا گشادی حيله را در	14
که موش آهن خورد کودک برد باز	حیل بگذار و مشنو از حیل ساز	15
بدان نقاش چادر سوز مانی	چو نقش حيله بر چادر نشانی	16
علاج از دست نادان زهر گردد	ز دانا تن سلامت بهر گردد	17
چو آن مرغ نگارین رست از آن دام	به دانائی توان رستن ز ایام	18
ز موش دام در زاغ دهن دوز	مکن شوخی وفاداری دراموز	19
که موش از زاهد ارجو برد زر داد	مبریگ جو ز کشت کس به بیداد	20
که بر دل چرخ ناگه می زند تیر	مشو مغرور چون گرگ کمان گیر	21
نسازد با خرد چون زاغ با بوم	رها کن حرص کاین محروم	22
ز پیلان بین که خرگوش آب چون برد	مبین از خرد بینی خصم را خرد	23
ز روزه گریه روزی بین که چون یافت	ز حرص و زرق باید روی برنافت	24
نهد داغ سگی بر گوسپندش	کسی کاین گریه باشد نقش بندش	25

چنان کز بیم دزد آن زن در آن شوی	ز فتنه در وفا کن روی در روی	26
چنان کز دیو و دزد آن پارسا مرد	رهی چون باشد از خصمانت ناورد	27
چو نجاری که لوح از زن در آموخت	چه باید چشم دل را تخته بردوخت	28
چنان کان موش نسل آدمی خوار	اگر بد نیستی با بد مشو یار	29
که کپی هم بدین فن زان کشف رست	به وا گشتن توانی زین طرف رست	30
کزین غفلت دل خر خورد روباه	چو خر غافل نباید شد درین راه	31
چو زان حلوائ نقد آن مرد درویش	حساب نسیه های کز میندیش	32
که راسوی امین را بیگنه کشت	به ار بر غدر آن زاهد کنی پشت	33
چنان کان نر کبوتر ماده را کشت	مزن بی پیش بینی بر کس انگشت	34
چو موش آن گربه را از دام تیمار	به هشیاری رهان خود را از این غار	35
چو مرغ قبره زین قبه چند	برون پر تا نفرسانی درین بند	36
چو آن زاهد شغال از خشم آن شیر	به صدق ایمن توانی شد ز شمشیر	37
به نیکی برد جان سیاح از آن مار	تو نیکی کن مترس از خصم خونخوار	38
ز بازرگان بچه تا شاهزاده	به قدر مرد شد روزی نهاده	39
کز این بی بچه گشت آن شیر خونریز	به خونخواری مکن چنگال را تیر	40

## Notes

- 1 Ghazali (1964) 53.
- 2 Nizāmī mentions Vīs three times in this *mathnavī*, in connection with the dangers of losing one's reputation (Orsatti (2003), n. 37 citing Fakhr al-Dīn Gurgānī, *Vīs o Ramin, ba moqadamme-ye mabsut* [...], ed. M. J. Mahjub, Tehran, 1337/1959, p. 7-105, 95). See for example KS36.24. For a longer discussion of the relation between the two stories: Meisami (1987) 111-22; Bürgel (1987a) and Nizami-Bürgel (1980) Nachwort, 357-9.
- 3 As far as I am aware, this passage has elicited little interest till now and no such analysis has yet been attempted (I regretably am not aware of and thus have not been able to re-search secondary sources published in Iran which might have approached this topic). Indeed, in his French translation of the *mathnavī*, Massé leaves out these forty lines, commenting dismissively, though correctly, that: "Chacun de ces vers n'est intelligible que précédé de la fable à laquelle il s'adapte – fables qu'on ne peut inserer ici." Nizami-Massé (1970) n. 384, 250. Meisami (1987) n. 23, 196, however, notes about the passage: "His pursuit of wisdom includes a series of dialogues on philosophical questions and the recital of forty tales from the Kalilah wa-Dimnah (...), each one summarized in a one-line moral (*nuktah*)..." Duda (1933), 74, does not relate the *Kalīla-Dimna bayts* to Khusraw, but considers they are only addressed to Shīrīn, whom they strengthen in a noteworthy manner: "Auch Shirin wollte nun die Weisheit des Buzurgumid hören, der ihr auch Anspielungen auf vierzig Erzählungen und vierzig Sentenzen aus "Kalila und Dimna" darbot. Buzurgumid's Worte bestärkten Shirin in ihrem Streben nach Gerechtigkeit. (Shīrīn also wished now to hear Buzurgumid's wisdom, which he offers as references to forty stories and forty morals from the Kalila and Dimna. *Buzurgumid's words strengthen Shīrīn in her search for justice*. [I underline])." Unfortunately, the editor Vahid Dastgirdi gives no explanatory note on his understanding of the passage's relevance (Nizami-Dastgirdi (1372)). Neither does Bürgel (Nizami-Bürgel (1980) Nachwort, who, however has included an excellent and witty German rendition of the passage in his translation of the work. The fact that this latter experienced translator has chosen to strike an amusing note in his translation of the passage agrees with the conclusion I will reach at the end of this article. Nizāmī might also have alluded to *Kalīla-Dimna* elsewhere in his work, in comparisons or illustrations of particular thoughts, though there is no other passage

- referring to the fables as explicitly as this one. Bürgel (1998: n. 6, 82), mentions that story 14 of the *Makhzan al-Asrār* might be inspired by the frame-story of *Kalīla-Dimna*.
- 4 See my study on Shīrīn's personality and on her relationship with Khusraw as presented by Firdawsī: van Ruymbeke (2006).
  - 5 See for example Gnoli (1999). Lambton (1971) 425, remarks that for Ghazālī this was a compound quality consisting of virtues and certain mental and physical attributes, not unlike the qualities demanded by al-Farabī of the head of the virtuous city.
  - 6 Meisami (1987) 182-3.
  - 7 Meisami (1987) 197. Nizami-Bürgel (1980) 361-4, stresses the experience of love and Neo-Platonism in the *mathnavī*. See also Orsatti (2003) 165, who remarks that, rather than a 'Mirror for Princes', Nizāmī's *mathnavī* might revolve around the idea of the individual morality of the king, seen through the important experience of love. The difference between the attainments in kingship of Khusraw and of Iskandar in Nizāmī's *Iqbāl-Nāma* are striking, the latter being depicted as the ideal conqueror-philosopher-prophet of al-Fārābī's *al-madīna al-fadhīla* (Bürgel (1995)). In Iskandar's case, contrary to what Khusraw experiences with Buzurg-Umīd, his 'abstruse scientific (see below)' questions receive answers and help him become a king-philosopher.
  - 8 Nizami-Bürgel (1980) 364.
  - 9 Meisami (1987) 156-7 n. 23: "'O king' Shirin entreated, bowing low,/ 'From song towards wisdom turn your efforts now./ 'Long have you striven pleasure's joy to gain; strive now the heart's fulfillment to attain...". See Meisami's insightful comment: "Shirin's warning to Khusraw constitutes an exemplary counsel to kings."
  - 10 Meisami (1987) 156-7 n. 23: "How many a mirror held by kings, to black/ has turned, as men cry out at justice's lack./ When kingly power turns its face away/ from the right path, his deeds as well will stray.../ ...Oppression, tyranny are evils twain;/ 'twere best with love your subjects' trust to gain..." Lambton (1971) 421-2: "[in the Sasanian theory of kingship], the king, the representative of God upon earth, was concerned with orderly and just government...Religion was identified with the social order; prosperity and virtue were two facets of a unitary system. Justice, as conceived of in this theory, had little to do with legal justice, or indeed natural justice. In practice it was concerned primarily with the maintenance of the social order."
  - 11 Meisami (1987) 156-7 n.23: "Towards your salvation in the next world strive,/ remembering that this station you must leave./ He who amasses gold and silver: say,/ how shall he then dispose for Judgment Day?/ Retain it, and your wealth will prove your bane;/ but it will guard your path, if it's well given."
  - 12 This shows Nizāmī's interest for the question of the value of dreams and prophecy. See Marlow (2008).
  - 13 Nizam al-Mulk (1978) 60.
  - 14 Nizam al-Mulk (1978)12. See also Ghazali (1964) 46.
  - 15 See above n. 3, on Duda's failure to notice this.
  - 16 The fables, however fail to be included in studies on "weightier" Mirror for Princes, such as Lambton (1971).
  - 17 See above n. 3.
  - 18 See for example Brockelmann (1978).
  - 19 See also de Blois (1990).
  - 20 See Bürgel's translation in German of this passage: Nizami-Bürgel (1980) 309-12.
  - 21 We do not know which literary version Nizāmī might have consulted. See next point.
  - 22 It is possible to form an idea of how famous the tales are from illustrated manuscripts. This was made possible by comparing *Appendix B, Subjects of Illustrations Including Spaces Left in Uncompleted Manuscripts in Kalila and Dimna Manuscripts to 1400* in O'Kane (2003) 295-319, with *Appendix III, Subject Index of the Illustrations of Episodes*

- in Kalilah wa Dimnah Manuscripts and Derived Texts*, in the thorough article by Grube (1991) 301-481.
- 23 Nizami-Dastgirdi (1372) proposes a very helpful identification of each of the fables.
  - 24 de Blois (1990) 3.
  - 25 Ibn al-Muqaffa'-Knatchbull (1819); Ibn al-Muqaffa'-Miquel (1980); Ibn al-Muqaffa'-Khawam (1985).
  - 26 Ibn al-Muqaffa'-Miquel (1980) 99. Knatchbull's and Khawam's translations don't mention the story.
  - 27 See Asadi Tusi-Horn (1897). De Blois (2004) 192, mentions that he has identified the location in the *Kalīla- Dimna* text of about 50 extant Rūdakī verses. Though de Blois's results are still unpublished, I have not attempted to duplicate this exhaustive research but considered only three examples.
  - 28 Bukhari (1369). There are no reasons to believe that this is the same Bukhārī which Nizāmī mentions in the Prologue to the *Haft Paykar* (HP4,28) and who is traditionally identified as the collector of *hadīths* who died in 870 AD (Nizami-Meisami (1995), 276. Nasrullah Munshi-Minovi (1343). See also Nasrullah Munshi-Najmabadi (1996).
  - 29 See Bukhari (1369) introduction by Khanlari, 22.
  - 30 B. 14 with the story of the snake-eating frog, which is not present in the Arabic versions, is also interesting for the change in animals: Nizāmī mentions the frog *ghūk*, while Bukhari has a tortoise *sang-pushht*. In b. 18, Nizāmī calls the bird who leads the others the "beloved bird" مرغ نگارین *murgh-i nigārīn*, while Nasrullah Munshi mentions a کیوتر متوغه *kiūtar-i mutavvaghā* and Bukhari a کبوتر حمایل *kabūtar-i hamāyil*. Other instances in b. 19 and 22 زاغ *zāgh*/ کلاغ *kullāgh*; b. 20 زاهد *zāhid*/ مرد عبید *mard-i 'ibād*.
  - 31 Asadi Tusi-Salimi (1979) 193, 80 and 245: چون گشفت انبوه غوغالی بدید... and شب زمستان بود. کپی سرد یافت. These findings are unfortunately tempered by a third Rūdakī passage I was able to identify, which relates to the story of the rat and his gold, where Nizāmī uses the term *zāhid* (b. 20), while Rūdakī mentions a مرد دینی *mard-i dīnī*, thus a counter-example!
  - 32 Thus, b. 9 referring to the story of the Lion, the Jackal, the Wolf, the Crow and the Camel; b. 10 the story of the Titawi and the Spirit of the Sea; b. 12 the story of the Bird and the Monkeys and the Firefly; b. 13 the story of the Wise Bazari and the Stupid one; b. 15 the tale of the Iron-eating Mice and Child-abducting Falcon; b. 17 the tale of the False Physician who mistook poison for a cure; b. 19 referring to the stories of the Rat who agrees to cut the net for the Ringdove and that of the Crow who saves the Rat by catching it by the tale; b. 24 the story of the Hypocritical Cat followed by b. 25 the tale of the Monk who believes his Kid is a Dog; b. 26 the story of the Woman who turns towards her Husband as she is frightened by a Thief; b. 28 the story of the Carpenter and his Unfaithful Wife; b. 32 the story of the Dervish and the Halva; b. 34 the story of the Male Dove who kills his Female; b. 37 the story of the Lion and the Ascetic Jackal; b. 39 the story of the Prince and his Friends; the final b. 40 the story of the Lioness loosing her Cubs.
  - 33 It is unlikely that an author would re-write or manipulate an original regarded as a perfect masterpiece by himself and by the target audience. See Lefevere (1992) 87-98. This opens questions on the possibility of different attitudes towards Firdawsī's *Shāh Nāma* in the course of the centuries: in particular here, did Nizāmī re-write the episodes of Khusraw and Shīrīn, of Bahrām Gūr and of Iskandar out of admiration for his original or because he felt Firdawsī's poem was imperfect and open to correction? (see van Ruymbeke (forthcoming 2).
  - 34 For a detailed analysis of this story as it appears in the first book of Rūmī's *Mathnavī*, compared to its contents in the original cycle of fables, see my forthcoming article "The Kalile o Dimne and Rumi. That was the husk and this is the kernel." (van Ruymbeke (forthcoming 2).
  - 35 Ghazali (1964) 73.

- 36 See Nasrullah Munshi-Minovi (1343) 86-8; Bukhari (1369) 93-5; Lambton (1971) 425, referring to Ghazālī's point that if the sultan was weak, universal ruin would befall religion and the world.
- 37 Mention of the perils of service to an arrogant despot are a topos in medieval *andarz* literature, while the ruler is told that his most important qualities ought to be generosity and compassion. See for example Lambton (1971) 425-6, and Bagley's Introduction in Ghazali (1964). See also b. 37, the story of the lion and the ascetic jackal, which again presents how advisable it is to stay away from the monarch.
- 38 The metre demands two long syllables, although Steingass (1892), 370, gives "*jamāsh*, ... a deceiver, cheat;..." and "*jammāsh*, an amorous glance."
- 39 This somewhat tempers Meisami's (1987) 156, analysis of the king's action: "Khusraw's subsequent action – when, learning that Farhad inspired by love is near success, he sends the false report of Shirin's death which causes Farhad to die of grief – lacks even the technical justification that Maubad's (i.e. the old king and husband in Gurgani's Vis o Ramin romance) acts of violence against the adulterous lovers might claim; and his mocking letter of condolence to the innocent Shirin further emphasizes the baseness of his motives. Khusraw's triumph over his rival reflects no "code of honour", which must, willy-nilly, be observed but demonstrates his own lack of honor." Rather in the light of the fable here, Khusraw has followed the amoral advice from his counsellors (who in turn follow age-old political wisdom)... and soon regrets his act, although he still writes his cruel letter to Shīrīn. This dastardly act by Khusraw is embarrassing for all commentators of the romance. See also Nizami-Bürgel (1980), 352 and Bürgel (1998), 70.
- 40 Considering Shīrīn's exemplary love, Buzurg-Umīd has no reason to address the lessons of this fable to her, unless it were a long-overdue reference to the trick she played on the drunken king on their wedding night?
- 41 This is the story of the King and the Bird Fanzah in Nasrullah Munshi-Minovi (1343), 282-303.
- 42 Ibn al-Muqaffā'-Khawam (1985) 45. On the hermeneutical problem of the text, see Bürgel (1999), 189-204.
- 43 Preminger (1993) "Allusion", 38-9. This modern definition of allusion is different from the more restricted Medieval Persian understanding of the figure, as defined by Shams-i Qays (1338) 377. He explains the allusion, تلميح *talmih*, in the following manner: "when a small number of words refers to a lot of meanings, which are immediately identifiable, without the possibility of error; also when the poet tries to express with few words a complex thought..."
- 44 I am not taking 'Parody' in the strict rhetorical sense as defined in Preminger (1993) 881-3, but, follow the definition given by Bacry (1992) 257, which refers to either or both style and contents: "la parodie [...] procède à un détournement de l'oeuvre dont elle s'inspire... le comique résulte de la distorsion entre ce cadre connu et le contenu nouveau qu'il enserre".