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## **Of love and longing : a study of Ayatollah Khomeini's mystical poetry and its reception in Iran and abroad**

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## Reception of Ayatollah Khomeini's Poetry in Iran and Abroad

When Ayatollah Khomeini's poems, replete with unorthodox topics such as wine and homoerotic love, were published after his death in 1989, Iranians living inside and outside Iran responded in very diverse ways. Some, including many of his followers, took them as symbolic expressions to be read in the framework of a literary genre and a mystical context. Others denied the authenticity of the poems. Many conservative clerics criticized them for their unorthodox content, while some critics of the conservative clerics also took the poems at face value, and used the references on wine and erotic love as evidence of the hypocrisy of the clerical class.

Most Iranians in the Diaspora did not respond positively to Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry or his claim to be a poet. M. Legenhausen, an American scholar who works for the Islamic government in Iran and who has translated a number of Ayatollah Khomeini's poems, says of Ayatollah Khomeini's first published poem:

the mystical nature of the poem caught many, even among Imâm's most ardent devotees, by surprise. In one couplet, Imâm wrote, 'Open the door of the tavern and let us go there day and night, For I am sick and tired of the mosque and seminary.' The surprise is generated by the contradiction between the literal and symbolic uses of the images. Imâm Khomeini was a great supporter of the religious institutions of the mosque and seminary, but in the poetic genre of which his poem is an instance, the mosque and the seminary are symbols of insincerity and pretentiousness.<sup>597</sup>

Although M. Legenhausen was aware that Ayatollah Khomeini was using mystical motifs, he says that "there is something shocking in the fact that such a person should talk about wine at all."<sup>598</sup> Such reactions demonstrate that it is not the motifs found in mystical poetry that shocked Iranian readers, since they were familiar with mystical poetry, but rather the fact that Ayatollah Khomeini wrote these words, in his role as an Ayatollah and the leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

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<sup>597</sup> R. Khomeini, *The Wine of Love: Mystical Poetry of Imâm Khomeini*, eds. M.R. 'Azimi and M.L. Limba and trs. G-R. A'wāni and M. Legenhausen, Tehran: Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, 2003, p. xi.

<sup>598</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

To understand these different interpretations of Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry, we must approach the poems not only from a textual and historical perspective, but also from the reader's responses. The poems have a literary and mystical context, and the readers too have their contexts, their relations to the poet. In their literary reception theory and reader-response theory, H.R. Jauss and W. Iser emphasize that the meaning behind a literary work is not inherent in the text itself but comes to life once it is read, in response to the reader's personal experiences and the context in which the text is used. Meaning results from the interaction between the text and the reader, and depends on the reader's 'horizon of expectations.'<sup>599</sup> Every reader has a certain amount of prior knowledge of literary works, so that particular genres or themes are accompanied by particular expectations. A reader who has read Persian *robâ'is*, such as those of 'Omar Khayyâm (d. 1131), has a picture of what topics are treated in this genre and what purposes it serves. When the same reader reads the *robâ'is* of Ayatollah Khomeini, he or she already has a certain set of expectations. Each reader also has certain ideas about Ayatollah Khomeini as a politician and as a religious leader. This 'horizon of expectations' influences a reader's evaluation and interpretation of a text. However, horizons can change over time and place, so interpretations are not timeless. Khayyâm's poetry is a good example of how perception of the real nature of a text are influenced by time and place. Khayyâm's *robâ'is* are replete with hedonistic topics such as love and wine and with pessimistic themes of death and suffering, but they have been interpreted in many diverse ways.<sup>600</sup> During his lifetime Khayyâm was highly appreciated in the Persian-speaking world for his scientific achievements as a mathematician, astronomer and philosopher, but the few people who were aware of his poems disapproved of them as 'blasphemous,' since they did not fit into the orthodox Islamic climate in Iran at that time. Khayyâm's world fame as a poet only came when the English poet Edward Fitzgerald (d. 1893) rendered his *robâ'is* into English, turning Khayyâm into a hedonist figure who enjoyed the pleasures of the world. Although this epicurean image of Khayyâm has been dominant ever since, a great group of scholars, such as the Dutch poet P.C. Boutens (d. 1943) and the French poet. J.B. Nicolas (d. 1875), saw purely mystical messages in Khayyâm's poems, in which unorthodox themes such as wine and love have a deeper spiritual meaning.<sup>601</sup> This mystical reading of Khayyâm's

<sup>599</sup> H.R. Jauss, *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973.

<sup>600</sup> For the reception of Khayyâm's poetry see *The Great 'Umar Khayyâm; A Global Reception of the Rubā'iyāt*, ed. A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2012.

<sup>601</sup> For Boutens' interpretation see M. Goud, "Umar Khayyâm's Impact on Dutch Literature," in *The Great 'Umar Khayyâm; A Global Reception of the Rubā'iyāt*, pp. 115-127; See also M. Goud, "Honger naar

poems is also dominant in contemporary Iran. As R. de Groot states, during the presidency of Mohammad Khatami, “Khayyām’s *rubā’iyāt* were re-read in a way completely different from FitzGerald’s Epicureanism. Some defenders praised Khayyām’s freedom from prejudices and his rejection of hypocrisy. However, his poems were now mainly conceived in an Islamic mystical way, and great pains were taken to soften the sharp edges of the *rubā’iyāt* through the mediation of Quranic interpretation.”<sup>602</sup> The mystical interpretation of Khayyām’s poems enabled the Islamic Republic to adopt Khayyām as a national hero, without undermining Islamic values in which earthly pleasures such as wine drinking and love-making outside of marriage are forbidden by law, and sinful.

The reception of Khayyām’s *robâ’is* demonstrates that every person sees in a text what he wants to see. Ayatollah Khomeini’s poems, likewise, are interpreted by some as unorthodox declarations and by others as mystical poems with a strong symbolic loading. The diversity of responses to both poets’ work supports the idea that readers actively give their own meanings to the poems. I will treat Ayatollah Khomeini as the author, his poetry as an autonomous object, and the readers’ responses to his poetry, as three separate objects of study. In line with the reception theory, I will pose questions such as: How does interpretation depend on place and time? Why and how do Iranians living in the West approach Ayatollah Khomeini’s poems differently? Based on those findings, I will define the “horizons of expectations” of various readers and propose a broader interpretation of Ayatollah Khomeini’s poetry within a social, political and literary context.<sup>603</sup>

I have used a two-part typology of readers in studying the various responses to Ayatollah Khomeini’s poetry. This typology is derived from the books, articles and poems written in response to Ayatollah Khomeini’s poems, particularly *Cheshm-e Bimâr*, his first published poem. The first group are the followers of Ayatollah Khomeini. I will focus especially on a glossary of his collected works that promotes a mystical reading, and on *The Wine of Love: Mystical Poetry of Imām Khomeini*, published in English in Iran in 2003. This contains several of Ayatollah Khomeini’s *ghazals* and *robâ’is* accompanied by ‘mystical’ explanations by M. Legenhausen (b. 1953).

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Kwatrijnen: P.C. Boutens en de Perzische Literatuur,” in *De Perzische Muze in de Polder: De Receptie van Perzische poëzie in de Nederlandse Literatuur*, eds. M. Goud and A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, Amsterdam: Rozenberg Publishers, 2006, pp. 93-114.

<sup>602</sup> R. de Groot, “The Legacy of ‘Umar Khayyām in Music of the Netherlands,” in *The Great Omar Khayyām; A Global Reception of the Rubāiyāt*, p. 156.

<sup>603</sup> H.R. Jauss, *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation*.

The second group of readers are the opponents of Ayatollah Khomeini, in this case Diaspora Iranians. I will examine two parodies of one of Ayatollah Khomeini's poems: one by the famous Iranian author and satirist Hadi Khorsandi (b. 1943), who has written poems both supporting and attacking Ayatollah Khomeini, and the other by an anonymous Iranian poet in the Diaspora. I will examine the responses of these two groups to see what factors have influenced their differing reception of Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry.

### 6.1 Responses of Followers to Ayatollah Khomeini's Poetry

Although it was hard for many Iranians to believe that Ayatollah Khomeini had composed poems on love and wine, the responses were not all negative. Some followers recognized the authenticity of his poems and highly praised Ayatollah Khomeini for his poetic talents, trying to place him alongside classical mystical poets in the Islamic spiritual tradition. Some composed books, without overtly praising him but analysing several of his mystical poems and the role of mysticism in Ayatollah Khomeini's life. One of these is *Bâde-ye 'Eshq* (The Wine of Love) which contained poems composed by Ayatollah Khomeini that were translated into English and published, in 2003, with an introduction on Ayatollah Khomeini's mystical inclinations by M. Legenhausen.<sup>604</sup> In 1993, V. Adabiyyat compiled an entire glossary which promotes a mystical reading, the Glossary of the Collected Poetry of Imam Khomeini (*Farhang-e divân-e ash'âr-e emâm Khomeini*) for the Institute for the Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works.<sup>605</sup> Adabiyyat provides detailed interpretations of the terms Ayatollah Khomeini used in his works. I will first give a general outline of both books, followed by an analysis of the definitions they give for some of the terms used by Ayatollah Khomeini. To facilitate later comparisons with the responses of Diaspora poets, I will focus on terms used in the poem *Cheshm-e Bimâr*.

#### 6.1.1 Response 1: Glossary of the Collected Poetry of Imam Khomeini

The *Glossary*, which comprises 505 pages, is a modern version of mystical hermeneutics. The codification of mystical terms in Persian literature began in the thirteenth century, when mystical terminology had developed so many connotations that it was necessary to interpret the terms for novices. One such codification is Mahmud Shabestari's (d. 1320) *Golshân-e Râz* (The Rose-garden of Mysteries); another is Jamâli's (d. 1542) *Mir'ât al-Ma'âni* (Mirror of

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<sup>604</sup> R. Khomeini, *The Wine of Love*.

<sup>605</sup> *Farhang-divân-e ash'âr-e emâm Khomeini*, ed. V. Adabiyyat, Tehran: Institute for the Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, 1993.

Meanings).<sup>606</sup> Adabiyyat's glossary can be placed in the same tradition. It consists of four sections. The first, 'Poetic Genres' (*Anwâ'-e ash'âr*), gives a general description of the poetical genres found in Ayatollah Khomeini's *Divân*, accompanied by extracts. The genres are the quatrain (*robâ'i*), fragment or occasional poetry (*qet'e*), panegyric (*qaside*), epic (*mathnavi*), lyrical poem (*ghazal*), stanzaic poem (*tarji'band*) and a specific type of panegyric (*mosammat*). The second section deals with the 'Arts of Poetry and Eloquence' (*Honarhâ-ye she'ri va balâghi*), explaining several features of Ayatollah Khomeini's use of rhetorical figures such as amphibology (*ihâm*), metaphor (*este'âre*), hyperbole (*mobâleghe*) and allegory (*majâz*). In section three, 'Terms and Metaphors' (*estelâhât-o este'ârât*), which forms the central part of the book, the author interprets all the terms that Ayatollah Khomeini has adopted in his poems in alphabetic order. Examples include cloud (*abr*), eyebrow (*abru*), wine (*bâde*) and annihilation (*fanâ*). The last part of the book is a 'Glossary of Persons,' (*farhang-e e'lâm*), which introduces the historic and mythical persons that Ayatollah Khomeini mentions in his collected works. These include religious figures from the Shiite tradition, pre-Islamic Persian heroes such as Rostam, and famous characters from classical Persian literature such as Farhâd and Shirin.

In the introduction to the book, Adabiyyat calls Ayatollah Khomeini an Islamic jurist, a *mojtahed*, and the leader of the Islamic revolution, and also describes him as a philosopher and mystic. The author explains the important role poetry played in Ayatollah Khomeini's life from an early age. The author believes that poetry was a means for Ayatollah Khomeini to deal with his mystical experiences and his personal feelings, which he could not express openly in daily life. Poetry's indirect message gave him the opportunity to express his ideas on the love of God and union with the Beloved. More importantly, he wanted to be part of the rich mystical tradition of Persia. Adabiyyat mentions two collections, *Âsâr al-Hojje* (The Secrets of Sound Reasoning, 19XX) and *Âyene-ye Dâreshvarân* (Mirror for the Wise, 1330/1951), which mention Ayatollah Khomeini's poetical activities, indicating that his poetic activities were known to some of his followers prior to the publication of his collected

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<sup>606</sup> See A.H. Zarrinkoob, "Islam Entry," in *The Great Islamic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 8, ed. K. Musavi Bojnourdi, Tehran: The Center of Great Islamic Encyclopaedia, 1989, pp. 483-484. For the work of Shabestari see J.T.P. de Bruijn, in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, under

Maḥmūd B. 'Abd al-Karīm b. Yaḥyā Shabistārī. For an English translation of Jamālī's work see Jamālī-ye Dihlawī, *The Mirror of Meaning*, trans. A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, Persian edition by N. Pourjavady, Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2002.

poems shortly after his death.<sup>607</sup> The author refers to the enormous influence of Hâfez (d. 1389) and Jalâl al-Din Rumi (d. 1273), stating that Ayatollah Khomeini imitates these poets several times in his poetry and prose. In his poems Ayatollah Khomeini uses the same idiom as Hâfez and Rumi, and also imitates great classical poets such as Farid al-Din 'Attâr (d. 1221) and Fakhr al-Din 'Erâqi (d. 1289). In Adabiyyat's view, Ayatollah Khomeini's symbolic language fits within the mystical tradition, but is often misunderstood because people take his words at face value.

Adabiyyat's mainly metaphorical interpretation of Ayatollah Khomeini's poems can again be seen in his explanation of the terms and symbols in the ghazal *Cheshm-e Bimâr*, which centres on a passionate mystical lover who, to alleviate the pain of his separation, has taken refuge in a wine-house, forsaking all worldly contacts while praising the *pir-e moghân* (Zoroastrian Elder).<sup>608</sup> Wine is a central theme in this ghazal, as in many of Ayatollah Khomeini's poems. It refers to the *meykhâne* (wine-house), the *meykade* (wine-house), and the *rend mey-âlude* (the drunken rogue). The Elder of the Zoroastrians is also associated with wine, as a functional equivalent in poetry of the *pir-e kharâbât* (Old man of the tavern) and because Zoroastrians were (and are) one of those groups in Iran who may drink wine. Adabiyyat says that Ayatollah Khomeini's *ghazals* on love and wine resemble those of Hâfez, fitting perfectly into the antinomian Persian poetic tradition. In a mystical context, wine symbolizes the divine knowledge that brings the mystical closer to God. It is provided by the *pir* (literally, old man or Elder, but in this context the sheikh who guides the novice on the mystical path). The *pir* appears as the *pir-e moghân* (Zoroastrian Elder, or priest) or more often as the *pir-e kharâbât* (Old man of the tavern). As Adabiyyat indicates, the *pir-e kharâbât* guides mystics who have not yet reached perfection. Adabiyyat defines this figure as a perfect human being who guides the mystical lover towards annihilation in God (*fanâ*). According to Adabiyyat, Hâfez introduced the term *pir-e kharâbât* in poetry. In his view, the Zoroastrian Elder in this poem represents the first Shiite Imam, 'Ali ibn Abi Tâleb.

Adabiyyat responds to Ayatollah Khomeini's positive presentations of wine and drunkenness ("I asked for help from the breath of the rogue who is overcome with wine") by placing his poem in an Islamic mystical context, where the figure of the rogue (*rend*) who is overcome by wine (*mey-âlude*) plays a central role, representing a person who understands "love with heart and soul". Adabiyyat also explains drunkenness as the "bewilderment

<sup>607</sup> The author does not give any bibliographical data of these two collections. (source: V. Adabiyyat, *Farhang-divân-e ash'âr-e emâm Khomeini*, p. xxi).

<sup>608</sup> See my analysis of this poem in chapter 4.5 of this study.

(*hayrat*) the mystical experiences when he sees the beauty of the Beloved”. Adabiyyat’s glossary can be seen as a continuation of mystical hermeneutics, following the example of famous mystical masters such as M. Shabestari (d. 1320) and H. Jamâli (d. 1542), who had composed similar works before him.

### 6.1.2 Response 2: “*The Wine of Love: Mystical Poetry of Imām Khomeini*”

Another positive response to Ayatollah Khomeini’s poems is the book *The Wine of Love: Mystical Poetry of Imām Khomeini*, which was translated from Persian into English in 2003 and published by the International Affairs Department in Tehran to promote Ayatollah Khomeini’s ideologies. The Persian text was compiled in 1990 and consists of a small number of poems attributed to Ayatollah Khomeini and several letters he sent to his daughter-in-law Fâteme Tabâtabâ’i in the 1980s. M. Legenhausen (b. 1953), one of the American translators, added an elaborate introduction on Ayatollah Khomeini’s mystical affiliations and an appendix explaining the symbolism of religious poetry. Legenhausen obtained his Ph.D. in philosophy from the American Rice University and has worked in Iran since 1990, where he has taught Western Philosophy of Religion at various universities and institutes, such as the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute in Iran. He is fully convinced of Ayatollah Khomeini’s ‘holy’ position, and translated Ayatollah Khomeini’s poetry as a means of exploring a personal side of Ayatollah Khomeini, giving access to his hidden world. Translating these poems also helped him to “understand Iran, the Islamic Revolution, contemporary Islamic mysticism, or Imām Khomeini.”<sup>609</sup> As the title of the book indicates, Ayatollah Khomeini’s poems are treated as mystical lyrics.

In the Preface, Legenhausen elaborates on the mystical side of Ayatollah Khomeini, depicting him as a true mystic who “was assimilated in Allah.”<sup>610</sup> Legenhausen was convinced that Ayatollah Khomeini “presented to humanity, by his pen and tongue, all he had received from the divine source of grace.”<sup>611</sup> He depicts Ayatollah Khomeini as a mystic who had reached the stage of *fanâ* or ‘annihilation in God’ and who had access to the divine secrets through his mystical experiences.<sup>612</sup> In his view, Ayatollah Khomeini promoted both Islamic and mystical values. For example, Legenhausen sees the Islamic Revolution as a way “to reveal Islamic mysticism to the public,” to merge mystical ideas in an Islamic society and

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<sup>609</sup> *The Wine of Love*, p. xiii.

<sup>610</sup> *Ibid.*, p. i.

<sup>611</sup> *Ibid.*, p. ii.

<sup>612</sup> *Ibid.*, p. iii.

in political life.<sup>613</sup> Legenhausen also refers to the letter Ayatollah Khomeini wrote to Gorbachev, indicating the essential role mysticism played in Ayatollah Khomeini's life, both on a personal and on a political level. He describes Ayatollah Khomeini as a selfless person, who did everything in the name of God and never for his own benefit. In his view, some people did not appreciate Ayatollah Khomeini fully, because they did not understand him and could not grasp the meaning behind his symbolic language. This, according to Legenhausen, is why Ayatollah Khomeini often tried to speak in a language as simple as possible. In response to Ayatollah Khomeini's rejection of Islamic institutions such as the mosque and Sufi brotherhood in poems such as *Cheshm-e Bimâr*, Legenhausen says that Ayatollah Khomeini's spiritual station transcended that of ordinary persons. He says these lines on unorthodox behavior should not be taken literally, they indicate that Ayatollah Khomeini had actually encountered God and had, therefore, direct knowledge of and insight into the divine secret. Legenhausen indicates that Ayatollah Khomeini, unlike most of his contemporaries, wrote his poems in classical styles, such as that of Hâfez and therefore fits in the antinomian poetic tradition of Iran. As Legenhausen indicates, modernists and the orthodox often do not have a problem with Ayatollah Khomeini's poems in themselves, since there are many poems with similar mystical language in the rich Persian literary tradition. People rather have a problem with the fact that Ayatollah Khomeini, as a religious leader, composed these poems. As Legenhausen states:

Perhaps these poems, by a man so hated by his enemies and so loved by his supporters, in Iran and abroad, can serve as an introduction to the tradition in which he participates. The role Imām plays in this tradition is ambiguous. He has been criticized by conservatives for his departures from tradition, while Western detractors have deplored the rigidity of his 'fundamentalism'.<sup>614</sup>

One of the 'departures from tradition' that the Iranian clergy condemned was dabbling mystical poetry, and using wine and love themes in poetry, which did not accord with the expected behavior of an Ayatollah. Promoting a mystical reading of Islam, whether within a poetic tradition or in actual life, was a thorn in the eye of the traditionalists, and had for ages been condemned by the orthodox clergy. Other readers – but not the traditionalists – found it incongruous for Ayatollah Khomeini to preach love and peace in his poems, when he had

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<sup>613</sup> Ibid., p. xvii.

<sup>614</sup> Ibid., p. xxiv.

motivated thousands of Iranians to give their lives during the Iran-Iraq war. Legenhausen responds to this charge by stating that Ayatollah Khomeini did not encourage Iranians to go to war for his own sake but rather out of love and to save Islam from downfall.

*The Wine of Love* starts with a contribution by Fâteme Tabâtabâ'i, Ayatollah Khomeini's daughter-in-law.<sup>615</sup> Like the introduction, this gives a biased insight into the mystical side of Ayatollah Khomeini. At the request of the Publishing House, Fâteme Tabâtabâ'i explains how Ayatollah Khomeini composed his mystical poems. She begins her essay with a 'letter' addressed to Ayatollah Khomeini, who died some three months earlier, expressing her sadness. Fâteme explains the way some of Ayatollah Khomeini's poems addressed to her have come to life. She ends her essay with a personal letter Ayatollah Khomeini sent to her around the end of November 1986. In this letter, Ayatollah Khomeini explains that it was only in his older days that he was able to understand the inner secrets of Islam. As he says:

In my youth, when I had vigor and ability, die [sic. due] to the machinations of Satan and his minion, the commanding self, I became preoccupied with various notions and grandiose expressions by which I acquired neither concentration nor a spiritual state, because I never took in the spirit of these things. I didn't go from the exoteric to the esoteric, from the earthly domain to the angelic domain. I finally realized that I did not gain anything from all the clamor of the casuistry of the seminary but some heart-rending words. I was sunk so deeply among such expressions and such regards that instead of seeking to lift the veils, I collected books as if nothing else mattered in the entire world but a handful of papers. .... When I reached old age, with every step, I was gradually drawn from that misfortune, until I reached senility, and what is beyond senility, with which I am now wrestling.<sup>616</sup>

In her personal note, Fâteme defines Ayatollah Khomeini's death as a "spiritual journey" indicating the mystical reading she gives of life and death.<sup>617</sup> On several occasions Fâteme addresses Ayatollah Khomeini as her '*pir*' or spiritual guide.

The book continues with 31 *ghazals* and 41 *robâ'is* by Ayatollah Khomeini, occasionally accompanied by interpretations and remarks. The publisher of the *Wine of Love*

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<sup>615</sup> For Fâteme's and Ayatollah Khomeini's letters see *The Wine of Love*, pp. 5-15.

<sup>616</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>617</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

has also included the poem *Cheshm-e Bimâr*, the first poem by Ayatollah Khomeini to be widely published after his death, which aroused widespread criticism for its unorthodox content. The only elements in this ghazal that are explained by a footnote are the figures of Mansur Hallâj and the tavern's *pir*.<sup>618</sup> In the introduction, Legenhausen refers to the role Mansur Hallâj played in Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry. He indirectly compares the blasphemous behavior of this medieval famous mystic to that of Ayatollah Khomeini. As he states "Hallâj was charged with blasphemy and with claiming to have the authority to free the pious from the requirements of Islamic law." Shortly after that, Legenhausen says: "According to Imâm Khomeini's doctrine of Absolute Guardianship of the Jurist ....the Guardian-Jurist has absolute authority, even to the point of abrogation of the laws of Islam if he deems that such measures are required for the defense of the Muslim polity."<sup>619</sup> The implication is that Ayatollah Khomeini had reached spiritual perfection like Hallâj and therefore, from a mystical perspective, he was allowed to deviate from Islamic Laws and even to change them if thought it necessary. The image of Hallâj that Legenhausen reflects in these sentences was supported by classical Persian poets and became extremely popular in Iran-Iraq war poetry, where Hallâj is presented as the model martyr of love and praised rather than condemned for his blasphemous behavior.<sup>620</sup> Ayatollah Khomeini composed seven *robâ'is* referring to this famous mystic.<sup>621</sup> In most of these, Ayatollah Khomeini speaks critically of Hallâj, condemning him for revealing secrets by openly claiming perfection, but on two occasions Ayatollah Khomeini praises him for his unconditional love and willingness to die for God.<sup>622</sup> Legenhausen has adopted the contemporary positive image of Hallâj, comparing his deviance from Islamic law to that of Ayatollah Khomeini, in his role as the Governing Jurist. Not all orthodox clerics agreed with the right of the Governing Jurist (*Vali-ye faqih*),

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<sup>618</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>619</sup> Footnote 40 in *The Wine of Love*, pp. 30, 31.

<sup>620</sup> A famous poet who used the image of Hallâj in a positive sense is Sayyed Hasan Hoseyni. For his work see *Ham-sedâ bâ Halqi-yi Ismâ'il*, Tehran: Sûrîh-yi Mîhr, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 1387/2008. For further consultation on both the classical and modern images of Hallâj see J.T.P. de Bruijn, "De Politieke Betekenis van Perzische Poezie," in *De Pen en het Zwaard: Literatuur en Politiek in het Midden-Oosten*, eds. G.J van Gelder & E. de Moor, Muiderberg: Coutinho, 1988, p. 89; See also A.A. Seyed-Gohrab's comment on Hallâj as a role-model in Persian war poetry in "Martyrdom as Piety: Mysticism and National Identity in Iran-Iraq War Poetry," in *Der Islam*, Vol. 31, 2011, pp. 254-262.

<sup>621</sup> See the poems in Ayatollah Khomeini's *Divân* on pp. 217b, 226b, 231b, 232b, 246a, 246b and 248b.

<sup>622</sup> These two occasions are in the *robâ'î* "Sâye" on page 232b and in *ghazal* "Cheshm-e bimâr" on page 142 of Ayatollah Khomeini's *Divân*.

which Ayatollah Khomeini introduced. For them, both Hallâj and Ayatollah Khomeini were guilty of blasphemy.

In the last part of *The Wine of Love*, which is called ‘On the Symbolism of Religious Poetry’ and which Legenhausen has added to the original Persian version, Legenhausen elaborates on the purely symbolic language that Ayatollah Khomeini uses in his poetry. It seems very paradoxical that Ayatollah Khomeini, an exoteric leader if not a populist in public, should use such esoteric language in private. However, as Legenhausen argues “...the method of poetry involves taking liberties with language, and using images, sounds and rhythms, and other techniques, such as allusion to the writings of earlier poets.”<sup>623</sup> Ayatollah Khomeini did this and, in imitation of poets like Hâfez, made use of mystical symbols from classical poetry to express “his intense love for Allah.”<sup>624</sup>

### 6.1.3 Discussion of the Responses

It is not surprising to see that the followers of Ayatollah Khomeini, including the authors of *The Wine of Love* and *The Glossary on the Divân of Imâm Khomeini*, who supported him unconditionally, acknowledged the authenticity of his poems after his own son Ahmad Ayatollah Khomeini presented one of them to the public. Both authors confirm that Ayatollah Khomeini’s poems should be placed in a mystical context. By writing dictionaries, such as the one compiled by V. Adabiyyat, Ayatollah Khomeini’s followers integrate Ayatollah Khomeini into the vivid mystical poetic tradition which has typified Persian culture since the twelfth century. By showing the resemblance between Hâfez’s poetry and Ayatollah Khomeini’s lyrics, the authors of both works aim to indicate that Ayatollah Khomeini’s poetry is not much different from any other ‘classical-styled’ Persian poem. Both books pay ample attention to Ayatollah Khomeini’s mystical background, indicating how well educated he was in the mystical tradition. The question whether or not these ‘mystical’ poems have really been composed by Ayatollah Khomeini has not been my main focus in this research. One of the main questions has been why his followers attributed these poems to Ayatollah Khomeini, placing him in a mystical context. Why did Ayatollah Khomeini’s son Ahmad publish one of his father’s mystical poems in the daily newspaper *Keyhân*, displaying the mystical side of his father? Why did Fâteme Tabâtabâ’i contribute to a publication on Ayatollah Khomeini’s poetry, by introducing it with an essay on how Ayatollah Khomeini’s

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<sup>623</sup> *The Wine of Love*, p. 79.

<sup>624</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

mystical poems came into being? Before answering these questions I will focus on two responses to Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry amongst Iranians in Diaspora.

## 6.2 Responses to Ayatollah Khomeini's Poetry in the Diaspora

Among the varied responses to Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry and the mystical aspirations they displayed, a number of authors chose to criticise him in a satirical way, wrapping their message in forms that people of all walks of life could understand and appreciate. Humour has played a prominent role in the history of Persian poetry and has been used by poets for various purposes. In a courtly setting, Persian poets entertained the circle of intimates around their patron at drinking gatherings with funny sketches and humorous poems.<sup>625</sup> As J.T.P. de Bruijn has indicated, this type of humorous poetry, which is known as *hazl* ('light verse'), was purely entertaining and mild in nature. However Persian poets occasionally composed critical satires intended to harm a person's reputation. This type of literature, known in Persian as *hajw* ('satire'), will be the focus of this chapter. Before examining the satires of Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry, I will outline the nature of literary satire and how it has been used in the Persian literary tradition.

Satire is a literary genre used as a verbal weapon by authors all over the world.<sup>626</sup> As Abrams states, it aims at "diminishing or derogating a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt, scorn and indignation."<sup>627</sup> Satire has always been present in one form or another in Persian literature, within firm literary rules. Persian poets have used various techniques in polemic debates to scorn a person, a whole group, or any other subject, often by exaggerating or parodying a person's character traits.<sup>628</sup> Sometimes a poet creates an ironic situation by saying less than he means.<sup>629</sup> Other techniques are to focus on a single character trait of a person or group.<sup>630</sup> M.A. Jamâlzâde (d. 1997), the

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<sup>625</sup> For the role of humour and satire in the Persian literary tradition see J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Humor and J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Hajw. See also H. Javadi, *Satire in Persian Literature*, Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1988.

<sup>626</sup> See the article on satire by W.R. Jones, in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, under Satire, eds. A. Preminger and T.V.F. Brogan, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993, pp. 1114-1117.

<sup>627</sup> M.H. Abrams, *Glossary of Literary Terms*, Heinle & Heinle, 7<sup>th</sup> edition, 1999.

<sup>628</sup> R.P. Falk and F. Teague, in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, under Parody, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993, pp. 881-883.

<sup>629</sup> See W. V. O'Connor and E.H. Behler, in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, under Irony, pp. 633-635.

<sup>630</sup> H. Javadi, *Satire in Persian Literature*, pp. 28, 43-58.

pioneer of the Persian short story, like several of his contemporaries, mocked with the Persian-Arabic language which was often used by the clergy and which was often not understandable for the average Iranian. But Jamâlzâde also made fun of the Iranians that had studied abroad and who had added so many foreign words to their vocabulary that they were likewise hard to follow for many Iranians.<sup>631</sup> His *Yeki Bud, Yeki Nabud* (Once Upon a Time) was the first Persian short story collection and was condemned by the clergy because of its satirical content.<sup>632</sup>

Persian poets have had diverse reasons for writing satires. In a courtly setting, poets often attacked their rivals, who competed for the patron's good-will and a privileged position at court. Occasionally, poets would attack their own patron, if they were dissatisfied with their responses and rewards.<sup>633</sup> The most famous example is perhaps Ferdowsi's (d. 1025) *hajw* on his patron Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna, who had promised to pay him well for the composition of the *Epic of the Kings* (*Shâhnâme*), but who broke his promise.<sup>634</sup>

The clergy have been another popular target in both classical and modern Persian satire.<sup>635</sup> Several classical poets have included anti-clerical themes in their poetry. The most famous is probably Hâfez, who often criticises the clerics.<sup>636</sup> He condemns their religious hypocrisy in an open but sometimes ironic way, criticising them for pretentious religious behaviour and abusing their positions to gain power and wealth, as in the following couplets:

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<sup>631</sup> See H. Katouzian, "Jamalzadeh's Fiction," in *Iran: Politics, History and Literature*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2013, pp. 246-256 and J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Humor.

<sup>632</sup> For the life and work of M.A. Jamâlzâde see H. Kamshad and N. Mozaffari, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Jamalzadeh, Mohammad-Ali: ii. Work. See also H. Katouzian, "Jamalzadeh's Fiction," in *Iran: Politics, History and Literature*, pp. 246-256.

<sup>633</sup> J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Hajw.

<sup>634</sup> See Dj. Khalegi-Motlagh, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Ferdowsi, Abu'l Qâsem ii Hajw-nâma. See also Dj. Khalegi-Motlagh, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Ferdowsi, Abu'l Qâsem: i. Life.

<sup>635</sup> See J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Humor. See also H. Javadi, *Satire in Persian Literature*, pp. 59-98.

<sup>636</sup> For the background of religious satire see L. Lewisohn, "The Religion of Love and the Puritans of Islam: Sufi Sources of Hâfiz's Anti-clericalism," in *Hafiz and The Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2010, pp. 59-196.

Preachers who flaunt in prayer-niche and  
pulpit,  
Practice another thing when they are in private.

واعظان کاین جلوه در محراب و منبر می کنند  
چون به خلوت می روند آن کار دیگر می کنند<sup>637</sup>

Such verses have led many poets, including Ayatollah Khomeini, to an awareness of the dangers of religious status and false piety. The influence of Hâfez can also be seen in both classical and modern painting.<sup>638</sup> The famous sixteenth-century miniature painters Soltan Mohammad 'Erâqi and Sheikh-zâde produced a beautiful miniature on the above couplet by Hâfez.<sup>639</sup>

The anti-clerical strand in Persian literature reflects continuous polemics between the clergy and the mystics, from early Islamic times. L. Lewisohn argues that most Iranians are no longer able to interpret these anti-clerical satirical poems and ignore the metaphysical and symbolic meanings behind the lyrics. Iranian readers may be astonished to hear that someone like Ayatollah Khomeini also composed anti-clerical poetry in which he presents himself as a mystical lover, criticising the clergy for their hypocrisy. Readers may not realise that Ayatollah Khomeini adopted this ironic anti-clerical stance to place himself in a certain literary tradition in which poets criticised the sincerity of some members of the clergy, although Ayatollah Khomeini belonged to this group himself.<sup>640</sup> His poetry, like that of Hâfez, should not be interpreted as an overall critique on the clergy. This mocking of the clergy is merely a metaphor adopted from the classical period in which the hypocritical behaviour of certain members of the clergy is generalised and attacked. This popular metaphor is used by poets to highlight the importance of both outer and inner pious behaviour.

<sup>637</sup> Mohammad Shams al-Din Hâfiz, *Divân*, ed. P. Nâtel Khânlarî, Tehran: Khârazmî, 1362/1983, *ghazal* 194: 404.

<sup>638</sup> For the influence of Hâfez on figurative art see P. Soucek, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Hafez: xii. Hafez and the Visual Arts; For miniature paintings based on Hâfez's lyrics see M. Barry, "The Allegory of Drunkenness and the Theophany of the Beloved in Sixteenth-Century Illustrations of Hâfiz," in *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2010, pp. 213-226.

<sup>639</sup> See L. Binyon, J.V.S. Wilkinson and B. Gray, *Persian Miniature Painting*, New York: Dover Publications, 1971, p. 128 and plate lxxxiv-B. 127, c: A moving Sermon by Shaykh-zade.

<sup>640</sup> For the anti-clerical trend in Persian poetry see L. Lewisohn, "Overview: Iranian Islam and Persianate Sufism," in *The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism*, London: KNP, 1992, pp. 19-24 and L. Lewisohn, "The Religion of Love and the Puritans of Islam...", pp. 159-196.

In addition to the anti-clerical use of satire, Persian poets use satire to convey their opinions on social or political events in a disguised way.<sup>641</sup> As far back as the classical period, Persian poets have composed satirical lyrics with a socio-political content. The well-known *Mush-o Gorbe* (The Mice and the Cat) by Obeyd-e Zâkâni Shirâzi (d. 1370) uses animals to depict the socio-political climate of his time.<sup>642</sup> The mean cat in his fable represents the cruel king Mobârez al-Din, a contemporary of the poet. In the story, the cat kills numerous mice (citizens), including the patron of the poet, Abu Eshâq Inju. *Mush-o Gorbe* is not only a socio-political fable, it is also a parody on the Shâhnâme, through which Zâkâni critiques the arrogant and scandalous behaviour of the ruling class in the Shahnâme.<sup>643</sup> *Mush-o Gorbe* is only one of many classical Persian satires with a socio-political layer.

Persian satire received a new life from the onset of the twentieth century, when the socio-political situation in Iran changed and people pleaded for a constitutional form of government.<sup>644</sup> Poets, affiliated with the court, who had written for a courtly audience turned instead to writing for the people. As they were no longer connected to the court they did not limit themselves to mild humorous pieces.<sup>645</sup> Instead of pleasing his patron, the poet was now concerned with his own inner feelings and the concerns of society, such as social and political problems.<sup>646</sup> Iraj Mirzâ (d. 1924), who started his career as a court poet, became one of the best and best-known Constitutional poets, addressing socio-political issues in a light and humorous way.<sup>647</sup> Satirists such as Iraj Mirzâ played an invaluable role during this period. With the help of the constitutional press, which was no longer controlled by the state, poets could reach all layers of society and were able to generate political awareness amongst the Iranian population.<sup>648</sup> Often humour was used to express hidden messages of critique, for

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<sup>641</sup> See J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Hajw.

<sup>642</sup> For an elaboration on Zâkâni's work see L. Lewisohn, "Prolegomenon to the Study of Hâfiz 1 - Socio-historical and Literary Contexts: Hâfiz in Shîrâz," in *Hafiz and The Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, p. 10.

<sup>643</sup> H. Javadi, *Satire in Persian Literature*, pp. 110, 111.

<sup>644</sup> Ibid., pp. 116, 136, 137.

<sup>645</sup> J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Hajw.

<sup>646</sup> H. Javadi, *Satire in Persian Literature*, pp. 136, 137.

<sup>647</sup> For Mirzâ's life and work see H. Katouzian, "Iraj, the Poet of Love and Humour," in *Iran: Politics, History and Literature*, London: Taylor & Francis, 2012, pp. 220-232.

<sup>648</sup> For the function of satire during the constitutional period see A. Gheissari, "Despots of the World Unite! Satire in the Iranian Constitutional Press: The *Majalleh-ye Estebdad*, 1907-1908," in *Comparative Studies of*

example, on the inequality between men and women or on the corrupt and oppressive rule of the Qajars. During this period, newspapers and journals entered the literary and political arena, containing columns for political satire. The *Charand o Parand* (Fiddle-Faddle) column by ‘Ali-Akbar Dehkhodâ (d. 1956), in the famous newspaper *Sur-e Esrafil*, was very popular, although the newspaper was banned on numerous occasions because of its critical tone<sup>649</sup> Several other newspapers and journals containing only satirical cartoons and texts were published. The most important of these was *Tawfiq*. The symbolic language of poetry proved to be a perfect tool in which to embed socio-political critique. Rhyming poetry made satirical poems easy to remember, even for illiterate people, who would hear the poems recited in public places such as coffee-houses. The satirical cartoon was another effective medium for reaching the illiterate. Together, the satirical poems and cartoons communicated socio-political messages to a wide audience.<sup>650</sup> Those responsible for them did not always escape punishment.

While socio-political satire thrived during the Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911), and in some periods during the reign of Reza Shah (1925-1941) and his son Mohammad Reza Shah (1941-1979), it has been under censorship pressure in Iran, especially since the 1953 coup, when the democratically chosen Prime Minister Mosaddeq was toppled by General Fazlollâh Zâhedi with the help of the CIA and the British.<sup>651</sup> Under the current Islamic government in Iran, socio-political satire is strictly forbidden. Most of the political satire is composed by Iranian poets in the Diaspora, since they do not suffer from censorship. By setting up Iranian periodicals or newspapers in their ‘new’ country, which are accessible through the World Wide Web and other social media, they ensure their socio-political satires reach Iranians in their homeland. Contributions by Iranian poets to Persian language radio and

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*South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Volume 25, Number 2, Durham: Duke University Press, 2005, pp. 360-376.

<sup>649</sup> Due to bans, the weekly newspaper was only published 35 times between May 30 1907 and June 20 1908 and between January and March of 1909. See S. Soroudi, “Sur-e Esrafil,” in *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 1988, p. 231. For the socio-political character of *Chand o Parand* see Gh. H. Yusofi, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Čarand Parand. See also H. Katouzian, “Private Parts and Public Discourses in Modern Iran,” in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Volume 28, Number 2, 2008, pp. 284-285.

<sup>650</sup> See J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Humor.

<sup>651</sup> For the 1953 coup see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State: Khomeini and the making of a new Iran*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2003, pp. 18-20 and B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2009, p. 66. See also chapter 1.8 in this study.

television programs transmitted from outside Iran have also contributed to the continuation of this literary genre.<sup>652</sup>

### 6.2.1 Satire of Ayatollah Khomeini's Poetry and Mystical Affiliations

Satire was also used when Iranians in the Diaspora discovered that Ayatollah Khomeini had written mystical poetry referring to wine and homo-erotic love, praising the Christian and Zoroastrian monasteries, etc. Several poets composed satirical poetry in response. I will present the satirical responses of two Iranian Diaspora poets: Hadi Khorsandi, a well-known author, poet and stand-up comedian who lives and works in the West, and a poet who has chosen to remain anonymous, but this particular poem by him was very popular with Iranians abroad. In the tradition of various classical poets, both poets have clothed critical messages in humour to draw attention to a wide range of social and political issues. Before focusing on Khorsandi's satirical response to Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry, I will introduce a satirical poem he composed in 1978, several months before Ayatollah Khomeini's return to Iran.

### 6.2.2 Satirical Poetry by Hadi Khorsandi

Hadi Khorsandi is a famous contemporary Iranian poet, comedian and writer who has written on Ayatollah Khomeini in a satiric fashion. He has been forced to live in exile since 1979, after he published a satirical poem in the Iranian newspaper *Keyhân-e Landan* in which he criticised Mohammad Reza Shah and supported Ayatollah Khomeini.

The articles and poems Khorsandi has composed are mostly humorous literary pieces in which he draws attention to socio-political questions. He has been a prolific author, but the literature contains little bibliographical and biographical information on him.<sup>653</sup> In *Journalism in Iran: from Mission to Profession*, H. Shahidi mentions the incident that led to Khorsandi's exile.<sup>654</sup> H. Javadi, in his *Satire in Persian Literature*, refers to Khorsandi and his work often, characterising him as "one of the most talented satirists of Iran...[displaying]...a variety of techniques and an incredible resourcefulness in his writings."<sup>655</sup> Khorsandi was born in 1943 in Fariman, in the North-East of Iran. While he was still a teenager he became known for his

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<sup>652</sup> For censorship on socio-political satire in Iran during the twentieth century see H. Javadi, *Satire in Persian Literature*, pp. 136-171, 290, 291.

<sup>653</sup> Due to a lack of literature on Khorsandi's life and work I contacted Khorsandi on several occasions for additional information. On May 10<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, 31<sup>st</sup> 2012 and on June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2013 Hadi Khorsandi kindly supplied me with first hand information.

<sup>654</sup> H. Shahidi, *Journalism in Iran: from Mission to Profession*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2007, p. 26.

<sup>655</sup> H. Javadi, *Satire in Persian Literature*, p. 286.

satirical critique of political and social life. At high school he founded the journal *Tawfiq*, a 'satirical weekly.' During the 1970s, Khorsandi worked as a journalist for the national daily newspaper *Ettelâ'ât* (Information), the oldest newspaper of Iran, which was founded in 1925 and run mostly by journalists who were also connected to the state.<sup>656</sup> In addition to *Ettelâ'ât*, Khorsandi worked for *Zan-e Ruz* (Today's Woman), a weekly magazine for women which was founded in 1965 and which was part of the famous newspaper *Keyhân*.<sup>657</sup> Khorsandi also became widely known for his contributions to various television and radio programs.<sup>658</sup> Because of the political content of his work, Khorsandi's columns in Iranian newspapers were often censored. In 1978, while he was living in London, Khorsandi wrote a critical poem in the newspaper *Keyhân-e Landan* (The London Keyhân) which was published there as an oppositional counterpart to the *Keyhân* newspaper published in Tehran. His poem sharply attacked the Shah, who was about to be deposed by the opposition, and praised Ayatollah Khomeini as the hero and saviour of the Iranian people. When Khorsandi returned to Iran in early 1979, after the Shah had fled the country, he was condemned by Hezbollah sympathisers for the poem. Shahidi indicates that the poem had led to large-scale protests since "the *Keyhân* pieces... were critical of the post-revolutionary conditions."<sup>659</sup> Khorsandi received death threats from Hezbollahis and has been forced to live in exile in London since then. Khorsandi has also experienced death-threats in exile and, as the translator of one of his books indicates, in 1984 Scotland Yard discovered 'an unsuccessful plot to assassinate Khorsandi'.<sup>660</sup>

Shortly after Khorsandi's arrival in London in 1979, he founded the satirical newspaper *Tâghut* (Idol). The word is Koranic and refers to the story of Pharaoh who was a tyrannical and corrupt ruler. During the Islamic revolution Pharaoh was used as an archetype and was often applied, also by Ayatollah Khomeini, to the Pahlavi government. J. Show and B. Arezoo, the translators of one of Ayatollah Khomeini's books, have translated several speeches in which Ayatollah Khomeini uses the term. In their Introduction they define *tâghut* as "the illegitimate ruling power" and as "One who surpasses all bounds in his despotism and tyranny and claims the prerogatives of divinity for himself, whether explicitly or

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<sup>656</sup> H. Shahidi, *Journalism in Iran: from Mission to Profession*, pp. 3-6, 168, 281 and 286.

<sup>657</sup> Ibid., pp. 40, 82.

<sup>658</sup> H. Khorsandi, *The Ayatollah and I*, tr. Ehssan Javan, London: Readers International, 1987, Introduction.

<sup>659</sup> H. Shahidi, *Journalism in Iran; from Mission to Profession*, p. 26.

<sup>660</sup> H. Khorsandi, *The Ayatollah and I*, Introduction.

implicitly.”<sup>661</sup> In many of his speeches Ayatollah Khomeini applied the term to the Shah and his regime and to the opponents of an Islamic regime, implying that they were followers of the Shah’s monarchy.<sup>662</sup> When Khorsandi named his newspaper *Tâghut*, in 1979, it implied a strong condemnation of the government of the day, the Islamic regime, although it does not say anything about whether he also supported the Shah. Only a year after Khorsandi established *Tâghut*, he changed its name to *Asghar Âghâ* (Mister Asghar), after one of the characters in his columns in *Ettelâ’ât*.<sup>663</sup> In the journal, Khorsandi regularly ridicules the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran in short stories and poems. Like many Iranian intellectuals, he had been a convinced supporter of Ayatollah Khomeini, but after his forced departure from Iran in 1979 he became one of the renowned satirists of the Islamic regime, writing numerous satirical stories on Ayatollah Khomeini. In 1983 for example, Khorsandi wrote a parody in Persian of the imagined testament of Ayatollah Khomeini, who was still alive.<sup>664</sup> It is important to mention that in his stories and articles Khorsandi not only makes fun of Iranian officials, he also frequently ridicules the opponents of this government, for example those Iranians in exile who keep failing to overthrow the regime despite their attempts and promises. Even today, Khorsandi writes poems and parodies and performs as a stand-up comedian all over the world.

I have chosen to comment on a poem on Ayatollah Khomeini by Hadi Khorsandi because it is representative of how the Iranian diaspora responded to Khomeini. Khorsandi’s case is interesting as he was an active poet before and after the Revolution. In addition, to my knowledge, his poem has never before been the subject of a scholarly study in the West. Khorsandi is a living poet with a great impact on the Iranian community, and active as a satirical poet during various periods, up to the present day. Khorsandi’s poetry shows that he was critical of both supporters and opponents of the Islamic regime. The same goes for his

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<sup>661</sup> Several statements by Ayatollah Khomeini in which he uses the term *taghut* have been adopted in the book *The Position of Women from the Viewpoint of Imam Khomeini*, trs. J. Shaw and B. Arezoo, Tehran: Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini’s Words, 2001, pp. 20, 23, 37, 43, 69, 76, 84, 91, 96, 101, 106, 123, 132, 143 and 144.

<sup>662</sup> H. Khorsandi, *The Ayatollah and I*, Introduction.

<sup>663</sup> See H. Javadi, *Satire in Persian Literature*, pp. 285-287.

<sup>664</sup> Several of Khorsandi’s parodies from the newspaper *Asghar Agha* have been translated in English and have been published in his book *The Ayatollah and I*, tr. Ehssan Javan, London: Readers International, 1987.

poems on Ayatollah Khomeini, whom he praises but also criticizes. His utterly serious messages are able to reach an enormous public just because of the satirical form in which Khorsandi pours his words. Its rhyme, the often vulgar language, the multiple hyperboles and exaggerations, are not easily forgotten and have made this poet extremely popular, both in and outside of Iran.

### 6.2.2.1 Khorsandi's Satirical Poem "The Dream of the Shah"

Khorsandi has written several satirical poems and literary pieces on Ayatollah Khomeini. Before turning to these, I want to focus on a satire that Khorsandi wrote in 1978, before the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in which he supports Ayatollah Khomeini. The target of the satire in this poem is not Ayatollah Khomeini but Mohammad Reza Shah. It is called *Khâb-e Shâh* (The Dream of the Shah). Khorsandi wrote the poem while living in London and published it in the Iranian newspaper *Keyhân-e Landan*. The word *khâb* in the title of the poem is ambiguous in Persian, meaning both dream or sleep. The poem consists of 83 couplets depicting the Shah's downfall and Ayatollah Khomeini as a saviour, the right hand of God, who has come to free Iranians from the sufferings inflicted by the Shah. For the sake of convenience I will cite only several parts of the poem in my own translation, followed by an analysis:

| <b>The Dream of the Shah</b> |                                                                                                             | خواب شاه                                                     |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1                            | One night, God entered the Shah's dream,<br>and Khomeini came with God.                                     | خدا یک شب به خواب شاه آمد<br>خمینی با خدا همراه آمد          |
| 2                            | The king of kings, the chivalrous, the fortunate,<br>fell from his bed to the floor in consternation.       | شهنشاه جوانمرد جوانبخت<br>ز وحشت بر زمین افتاد از تخت        |
| 3                            | It was as if, at the divine command,<br>he fell from the royal throne.                                      | توگویی طبق فرمان الهی<br>فرو افتاده است از تخت شاهی          |
| 4                            | With much toil, he raised himself again<br>saying to the exalted Lord:                                      | به صد زحمت دوباره رفت بالا<br>چنین فرمود با باری تعالی       |
| 5                            | "Didn't you know that we were sleeping?<br>Why have you sought audience with me, at this time of<br>night?" | نمی‌دانم که ما هستیم در خواب<br>چرا این وقت شب، گشتی شرفیاب؟ |
| 6                            | You, who bestow grace on the King of kings,<br>why do you bring Khomeini with you?                          | تو که لطفی به شاهنشاه داری<br>خمینی را چرا همراه داری؟       |
| 7                            | If you want to visit me,<br>From now on, come alone.                                                        | اگر خواهی سراغ ما بیایی<br>از این پس سعی کن، تنها بیایی      |

- |    |                                                                                              |                                                          |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| 8  | Since this man has brought me ill-fortune.<br>Making kingship hard for me.                   | که این آقا مرا بدبخت کرده<br>به ما شاهنشهی را سخت کرده   |
| 9  | You can't imagine what he's done to me.<br>So much that I could fart on my life.             | نمی‌دانی چه آورده به روزم<br>که می‌باید به روز خود بگوزم |
| 10 | Bit by bit, people tear apart my pictures,<br>All of my family has become homeless.          | یکایک عکس‌هایم پاره گردید<br>همه فامیل من، آواره گردید   |
| 11 | All power has slipped from my hand,<br>Now my dear sister Ashraf has left me again.          | تمام اختیارات از کفم رفت<br>دوباره باز آجی اشرفم رفت     |
| 12 | He has lit such a fierce fire in my body and soul,<br>That smoke comes out from my ancestry. | چنان آتش زده بر جسم و جانم<br>که دود آید برون از دودمانم |

The prominent role played by Ayatollah Khomeini in this poem is evident from the opening line in which he appears next to God in the Shah's dream. There may be an allusion here to Ayatollah Khomeini's first name, *Ruh-Allâh* or 'Spirit of God,' which is also an appellation of Jesus. The lines also play on the Persian homonym *takht*, meaning both throne and bed, so that falling out of bed is a precursor to falling from the throne. Physical and psychological unease is indicated through several images based on the word *takht*, to say that neither sleep nor quiet rule is granted to the Shah. In the first couplets of the poem, the poet allows the reader to read the mind of Mohammad Reza Shah. Khorsandi presents the Shah as an arrogant and egocentric person. As couplet five indicates, even God has to arrange an audience (*sharafyâb*) with the Shah. The Shah is highly offended that anyone, even God Himself, would dare to disturb his sleep. What is more, he is outraged that God has brought Ayatollah Khomeini. The Shah asks God to come alone next time. The fact that Ayatollah Khomeini accompanies God implies that Ayatollah Khomeini is closely related to God. Ayatollah Khomeini is an Ayatollah, literally meaning a sign or miracle of God, but his name, the Spirit of God, implies an even closer relationship. The Shah falling from his bed or throne in consternation (*wahshat*) indicates how threatened he is by Ayatollah Khomeini.

#### **6.2.2.1.1 Religio-Political Climate under Mohammad Reza Shah: the Shah and the Ayatollah**

If we place couplets one to eleven in a socio-political context, we can see that Khorsandi's satire describes the gradual weakening of the Shah's power after Ayatollah Khomeini's appearance on the political scene in 1963. Ayatollah Khomeini's revolutionary ideology claimed that monarchy was illegitimate in itself, and he advocated a theocratic political system. As couplet eight indicates, the Shah lost complete control of the people, once Ayatollah Khomeini began "making kingship hard for me." Until the early 1960s, the Shiite

clergy, including Ayatollah Khomeini, took a rather quietist attitude vis-à-vis politics. This was influenced by Ayatollah Borujerdi (d. 1961), the highest authority in the Shiite world, who for sixteen years had been the only *marja'-e taqlid*. As V. Martin indicates, Borujerdi and the Shah had agreed that the latter would not interfere in religious affairs as long as the clergy did not mingle in politics. Since Borujerdi set the norm, most Shiites, including Ayatollah Khomeini, followed his example.<sup>665</sup> Among the exceptions was Ayatollah Shâhâbâdi, Ayatollah Khomeini's mentor in Qom, who like Ayatollah Khomeini was strongly influenced by *'erfân* (literally, gnosis) and believed that the clergy should be much more critical of the Pahlavi government and much more politically active, if they wanted to diminish the influence of foreign powers in Iran. In his role as the Leader of the Friday Prayers in Teheran and as teacher of ethics for members of the Tehrani guilds, Shâhâbâdi was able to spread his message amongst many Iranians, both amongst the visitors of the Friday Prayers and amongst his students.<sup>666</sup> As V. Martin has indicated, Shâhâbâdi's political activism went so far as to promote martyrdom to protect Islam.<sup>667</sup> B. Moin states that Shâhâbâdi's critique on the government sometimes put him in danger, such as the incident in which "he had to take refuge in the golden shrine of Shah Abdolazim in Rey, to the south of Tehran, to avoid arrest."<sup>668</sup> Although Ayatollah Khomeini would openly promote ideas like those of Shâhâbâdi later in his life, he was, like most of the clerics, rather quietist while Ayatollah Borujerdi was alive.

Although generally speaking, Ayatollah Borujerdi stayed aloof from political affairs, one incident in 1955 had a huge effect on the previous close clergy-state relation. It was in this year that Borujerdi himself turned against Mohammad Reza Shah, and moved those supporting him to do likewise, after the Shah refused to continue the heavy anti-Bahai pogroms, which were initiated by clerics in the 1940s and were initially supported by the Shah. Ever since the rise of the Bahai faith and the Bahai movement, which was founded by Sayyed 'Ali-Mohammad the Bab in Iran in the 1840s, the followers of this 'new' religion have been condemned by the Iranian government and the Shiite authorities. After a large group of Baha'is were exiled to Baghdad during the second half of the nineteenth century, they

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<sup>665</sup> For information on Borujerdi see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, pp. 1-56 and H. Algar, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Borūjerdī, Ḥosayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī.

<sup>666</sup> For information on Shâhâbâdi see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, pp. 32-33, 39, 44 and 202 and B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, pp. 42-44.

<sup>667</sup> V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, p. 33.

<sup>668</sup> See B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, p. 43.

founded an important Bahai centre in Israel in 1890. While the anti-Bahai campaign was rather quiet under the regime of Reza Shah, the Baha'is were heavily persecuted during the early reign of Mohammad Reza Shah. It was during this period that the Shiite clergy, headed by Borujerdi, tried to unite all Iranians under the banner of Twelver Shia Islam. All religions that delineated from Shia Islam, such as the Bahai faith, were considered a threat to the unity, both national and religious, of Iran. Shortly after a verbal attack on the Bahai movement on Iranian radio by Shiite authority Hojjat al-Islam Mohammad Taqi Falsafi in 1955, the Iranian military launched an attack on an important Bahai centre in Tehran shortly after. Many countries greatly condemned the anti-Bahai actions in Iran. While the clerics, headed by Borujerdi, tried to seek a 'final solution' to eliminate the Bahai-movement, the Shah was alarmed at the international reaction and the lawlessness that had accompanied the pogroms and refused to continue the anti-Bahai campaign. Borujerdi was deeply offended by the Shah's withdrawal and consequently the previous close relation which he had with the Shah would not recover before Borujerdi's death in 1961.<sup>669</sup>

The death of Ayatollah Borujerdi in 1961 led to a resettlement of the religio-political climate. Many Ayatollahs, including those with more political aspirations, hoped to succeed him as the pre-eminent Shiite Ayatollah. A group of leading clerics was intended to appoint a successor. Amongst the candidates were Ayatollah al-Hakim who resided in Iraq, and several Ayatollahs in Qom, including Ayatollah Golpâyegâni, Ayatollah Shari'atmadâri and Ayatollah Mara'shi Najafi, but no one seemed appropriate for the position.<sup>670</sup> Ayatollah Khomeini, then only fifty-nine years old, was much too young to succeed Ayatollah Borjuri, and B. Moin argues that Ayatollah Khomeini indicated that he did not want to succeed Ayatollah Borujerdi at that time.<sup>671</sup> As no appropriate successor could be found, the death of Ayatollah Borujerdi led to a period of religious instability in which local clerics could operate

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<sup>669</sup> For the role of the clergy and the Pahlavi government in the anti-Bahai pogroms of 1955 see M. Tavakoli-Targhi, "Anti-Baha'ism and Islamism in Iran," in *The Baha'is of Iran: Socio-Historical Studies*, eds. D.P. Brookshaw and S.B. Fazel, London: Routledge, 2008, pp. 220-231; see also R.A. Cohen, *The Hojjiyeh Society in Iran; Ideology and Practice from the 1950's to the Present*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, pp. 49-95.

<sup>670</sup> As B. Moin indicates, there were a total of seven or eight senior Ayatollahs. See B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, p. 70.

<sup>671</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

rather independently, since the religious power was not centralised and was no longer strongly controlled by Borujerdi.<sup>672</sup>

It was in this climate that the Shah implemented an ambitious national modernisation plan known as the “White Revolution,” which included land reforms, a literacy corps and allowing women to vote.<sup>673</sup> On a religious level, the Shah set up government-based religious institutions to control the religious masses and decrease the influence of the clergy. The Shah’s attempt to replace the *din-e mellat* (‘religion of the people’) with a *din-e dowlat* (‘state-sponsored religion’) was strongly condemned, in particular by the clergy who feared losing their influential position.<sup>674</sup> The estrangement of the Shiite clergy from the Pahlavi government, which had its roots in the withdrawal of Mohammad Reza Shah from the anti-Bahai pogroms of 1955, only increased with the implementation of these state-sponsored religious institutions. The Shah began to severely suppress the Shiite clergy, who increasingly opposed the Shah.<sup>675</sup> Of all clerics, Ayatollah Khomeini was the most critical of the Shah’s policies. In 1963, Ayatollah Khomeini headed demonstrations against the Shah’s reforms. His speech of June 3<sup>rd</sup> 1963 in the Islamic Institute Feyziye, in which he criticised the Shah and his government, could be heard throughout Qom and made him instantly famous.<sup>676</sup> Fearing that his critique could lead to more demonstrations, the Shah imprisoned Ayatollah Khomeini two days later, and sentenced him to death. However, his arrest led to protests by his followers, so that under the influence of the clergy, the Shah was forced to release him in August. Ayatollah Khomeini continued his attacks on the Shah, leading to his exile from Iran in 1964. He went first to Turkey, and a year later to Iraq. He stayed there until 1978, when Saddam Hussein asked him to leave. Ayatollah Khomeini spent his last year of exile in France, in Neauphle-le-Château. Ayatollah Khomeini continued his attacks on the Pahlavi government from exile.<sup>677</sup> In his view, only a government controlled by the clergy was a

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<sup>672</sup> M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi’i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi’ism*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987, pp. 254-255.

<sup>673</sup> For more information on the White Revolution see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, pp. 62-64. and S.A. Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, pp. 71-73.

<sup>674</sup> For more information on the opposition *din-e mellat* versus *din-e dowlat* see M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi’i Islam*, pp. 255-257.

<sup>675</sup> For the Shah’s suppression of the clergy see S.A. Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, pp. 84-86.

<sup>676</sup> Parts of Ayatollah Khomeini’s anti-government speech are quoted by R.P. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran*, Oxford: Oneworld, 2009, pp. 190-193. For Ayatollah Khomeini’s anti-government movement see *ibid.*, pp. 188-191, 244-245, 308.

<sup>677</sup> For Ayatollah Khomeini’s critique of the regime from exile see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, pp. 69-

legitimate form of governance.<sup>678</sup> Although Ayatollah Khomeini had presented his ideas on the ideal form of governance in 1970, when his book *Islamic Governance (Hokumat-e Islami)* was published, it was not until 1977 that he promoted these revolutionary ideas openly on a large scale.<sup>679</sup>

Ayatollah Khomeini's rejection of the Pahlavi monarchical system and promotion of an Islamic government became much more pronounced during the sixties and seventies. In addition to his rejection of the monarchy as a whole, Ayatollah Khomeini, like the majority of the Iranian population, condemned the Pahlavi regime on many grounds. Corruption, political and social repression, unemployment and a bad economy led to much unrest amongst all levels of Iranian society. Protests took a serious form in 1977, when a large group of lawyers and members of the National Front spread letters amongst the population in which they complained of the corrupt and repressive regime of the Shah. In 1978, supporters of Ayatollah Khomeini joined the open protests against the Pahlavi government after Ayatollah Khomeini's son Mostafa died under mysterious circumstances in Iraq. In the same year, an article on Ayatollah Khomeini was published by Tehran newspapers, referring to his possible Indian origin.<sup>680</sup> As V. Martin has pointed out, in this article Ayatollah Khomeini was depicted as "an agent of colonization," implying that he was a marionette of the English.<sup>681</sup> Shortly after the publication of this letter, open revolt broke out in religious circles in Qom, followed by other cities in Iran. The clergy and merchants were able to mobilise people to revolt against the Pahlavi government, since they, of all social groups, had the most contact with the population, both educated and illiterate. This was the beginning of mass mobilisation, organised by the clergy.<sup>682</sup>

During his stay in France, Ayatollah Khomeini closely followed all the developments in Iran, by listening to the radio and by reading a wide variety of newspapers. It was from there that he coordinated protest movements against the Shah and succeeded in attracting a

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<sup>678</sup> For an elaboration on Islamic Government see *ibid.*, p. 25 and R.P. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet*, pp. 380-382.

<sup>679</sup> R. Khomeini, *Islamic Government: Governance of Jurisprudent*, Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2005. See also V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, pp. 115-124.

<sup>680</sup> For the conspiracy theories about Ayatollah Khomeini's putative connections with England and India, see A. Ashraf, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Conspiracy Theories.

<sup>681</sup> V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, p. 149.

<sup>682</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

large group of followers in- and outside of Iran.<sup>683</sup> Ayatollah Khomeini's presentation in the media as the 'Imam,' a title which in a Twelver Shiite context had only been applied to the twelve infallible imams, the successors to the prophet Mohammad, greatly contributed to his popularity.<sup>684</sup> It was very significant that the title was, for the first time, applied to a person other than the twelve infallible imams.<sup>685</sup> The title gave him an almost saintly character, confirmed by his pious and modest way of life. B. Moin states that, when Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Iran in 1979, shortly after the Shah's departure, "it was almost as if the Hidden Imam of the Shi'a, their Messiah, had reappeared, albeit not in Mecca as tradition would have it, but on an Air France charter flight from a city long associated by the faithful with little else but sin."<sup>686</sup> The enormous impact Ayatollah Khomeini had on the Iranian population is also evident in this poem by Khorsandi. Couplets one to twelve, in which the poet presents Ayatollah Khomeini as the right hand of God, as his 'representative,' demonstrate that Khorsandi too was very much impressed by Ayatollah Khomeini's spirituality and person.

In the following couplets Khorsandi jumps to an undefined time when the Shah has left the country and is looking back at what he was:

- |    |                                                                                          |                                                         |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| 13 | I had a really good place and position,<br>I was a king of stature.                      | مرا معقول جایی بود وجاهی<br>برای خویش بودم پادشاهی      |
| 14 | I had a position, a high position.<br>I had a territory, which was fully respected.      | مقامی داشتم، والا مقامی<br>حریمی داشتم، با احترامی      |
| 15 | What a character I had, Oh God!<br>Oh God, what a highness I was!                        | عجب شخصیتی بودم، خدایا!<br>چه اعلیٰ حضرتی بودم، خدایا!  |
| 16 | The king of Jordan had always wished,<br>To be like me, but the bosses did not allow it. | همیشه شاه اردن آرزو داشت<br>که مثل من شود، ارباب نگذاشت |
| 17 | This very sultan Hassan, the king of Morocco,<br>this pimp imitated me.                  | همین سلطان حسن، شاه مراکش<br>ز من تقلید می فرمود جاکش   |
| 18 | In every respect, I was better than Feysâl<br>Only his nose was bigger than mine.        | همه چیزم ز فیصل نیز سر بود<br>فقط قدری دماغش گندمتر بود |

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<sup>683</sup> Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>684</sup> For the use of the term 'imam' see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, p. 153 and M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, p. 289.

<sup>685</sup> In Persian, the word Imam is applied to the twelve Shiite Imams. It is also used when it is preceding and modifying a noun such as *Emâm jom'eh* (The Friday Preacher). Sunnites use the Arabic word Imam to refer to a religious leader of the community.

<sup>686</sup> B. Moin, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, pp. 199, 200.

19 I had become the favourite of all kings,  
Especially the queen of England.

شدم محبوب جمله پادشاهان  
خصوصاً پادشاه انگلستان!

20 But in wearing chic clothes, in gallantry, Elizabeth  
envied me.

ولی در شیک‌پوشی، در رشادت  
!به من می‌کرد الیزابت، حسادت!

The use of the past tense from line thirteen onwards implies that the Shah has been removed from his throne, yet Khorsandi wrote this poem in 1978, several months before the fall of the Shah on January 16<sup>th</sup> 1979 as it appears from massive demonstrations that Khorsandi saw the fall of the Shah coming, with a Shah that was immensely unpopular and Ayatollah Khomeini that had generated an enormous group of supporters.<sup>687</sup> In these couplets, the Shah reflects on his life as a ruler of Iran. He boasts about his superior position and considers himself to have been the centre of the world. The poet ridicules the Shah's title of *shâhanshâh*, King of Kings, a title used by various Iranian rulers since the Achaemenid Empire (700 – ca 330 BC) and which the Shah bestowed upon himself in 1967.<sup>688</sup> He and his father Reza Shah promoted the idea that Iran had its political origin in the Achaemenid era, the time of the Arians, some twenty-five centuries earlier. During the Pahlavi period, numerous scholarly works were written to highlight the pre-Islamic Persian glory, emphasising that Persians were an Arian race, cementing a new identity.<sup>689</sup> The idea that the king had been chosen by God to be the ruler of the kingdom was often promoted during the Pahlavi period. It gave the Shah a semi-divine character, untouchable and unquestionable. As M. Momen states, the Shah considered himself “the true representative of the Hidden Imam,” although he never explicitly said this.<sup>690</sup> Khorsandi agrees with Momen in this respect, and ridicules the Shah's haughty behaviour in couplets thirteen to twenty by showing him recalling how all rulers, including King Feysâal of Egypt and Sultan Hoseyn of Jordan, wished to be like the Shah.

The Shah's relationship with America is also treated in the poem. As the poet indicates in couplet sixteen, the *arbâb*, ‘the masters’ decided how a ruler in the Middle East should behave. The word implies a servant to master relationship in which America is the master and

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<sup>687</sup> For the fall of Mohammad Reza Shah see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, p. 27.

<sup>688</sup> See the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, under Shâh. For information on the Achaemenid Dynasty see the article by R. Schmitt, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Achaemenid Dynasty.

<sup>689</sup> For the use of the term ‘Arian’ during the twentieth century see R. Zia-Ebrahimi, “Self-Orientalization and Dislocation: The Uses and Abuses of the Aryan Discourse in Iran,” in *Iranian Studies*, 44:4, pp. 445-472. See also A. Ashraf, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Iranian Identity iv. 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> Centuries.

<sup>690</sup> M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, p. 256.

the Middle East its servant, although Iran is the master of the rest of the Middle East. All the other rulers, who are also servants of America, are mere servants and should follow the example of Iran. In these couplets Khorsandi refers to America's prominent role in Iranian politics. Iran's strategic position close to America's Cold War enemy, the Soviet Union, was an important factor in the American presence in Iran from the 1940s. In 1953, their presence in the country increased even further after the CIA, together with the British, supported general Fazlollâh Zâhedî in his coup against Prime Minister Mosaddeq.<sup>691</sup> After that, Iran was filled with American 'advisers.' The Americans also played an important role in the oil industry during the 1970s.<sup>692</sup> The presence of the Americans, and in particular the privileges the Pahlavi government gave them, often led to popular unrest. One of the most famous incidents was led by Ayatollah Khomeini, in 1964, when he objected to the Shah's decision to give diplomatic immunity to certain American diplomats residing in Iran.<sup>693</sup> Iranians felt that Iran was being exploited by the Americans. However, as R. Mottahedeh indicates, "it can be questioned who [of these two] was using whom. [For] Often the Shah's desire to be a regional power exceeded any ambition the U.S. had for him".<sup>694</sup> After all, many Iranians believed that the Shah depended too much on America.<sup>695</sup> This feeling also emerges in couplet sixteen, where the poet characterises America as the 'boss.'<sup>696</sup>

#### 6.2.2.1.2 Persian Kingship versus Islamic Governance

In Khorsandi's poem, the reader can clearly see the tension between Ayatollah Khomeini and the Shah, since the latter's position as the *shâhanshâh* is threatened by the coming of Ayatollah Khomeini. The Shah's reaction to Ayatollah Khomeini's appearance in his dream shows how deeply he was preoccupied with Ayatollah Khomeini. Khorsandi presents Ayatollah Khomeini as arriving alongside God, thus associating him with the Divine as opposed to the mundane and earthly kingdom of the Pahlavi regime. Khorsandi portrays Ayatollah Khomeini as a kind of divine messenger as opposed to the king. These two positions have long been a source of tension in Persian history. Persian kingship is an ancient institution going back to the pre-Islamic period. In Persian tradition, the kings are appointed

<sup>691</sup> V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, pp. 18-20 and B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, p. 66.

<sup>692</sup> R.P. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet*, p. 333.

<sup>693</sup> For discussion of this incident see R.P. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet*, pp. 245-246.

<sup>694</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 334.

<sup>695</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>696</sup> For a discussion of the influence of America on Mohammad Reza Shah's policy see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, p. 23.

by God and are the shadows of God on earth.<sup>697</sup> The Persian creation myth is based on the first man who is also the first king, Keyumars, while the Islamic creation myth starts with Adam as a prophet and leader of mankind. With the arrival of Islam in Iran in the seventh century, these opposing views of leadership could not be easily solved. As M. Tavakoli-Targhi indicates, for several centuries there was a tension as to how to integrate the Persian kingly tradition into the Islamic tradition which was based on the line of prophets. Often historians transformed the original pre-Islamic stories and characters to harmonise them with the Islamic stories, usually starting their historiography with the glorious Persian kings of the past and ending with the victory of Islam. Mohammad Ghazâli (d. 1111), a great religious philosopher, integrated the two traditions by presenting both King Keyumars and Prophet Seth as sons of Adam. He argued that Keyumars and his successors had been chosen by God to guide the state (*dowlat*) and preserve kingship, while Seth and the other prophets had been appointed by God to safeguard religion (*din*). Ghazâli's interpretation of the two antigorical figures as brothers who were both appointed by God to have a leading and guiding function allowed the successive monarchical and religious authorities to accept one another's position and to work side by side, albeit on a different level.<sup>698</sup>

From the sixteenth century onwards a change of focus can be noticed in Persian historiographies. Instead of connecting and adapting the pre-Islamic Persian historical reports to align with Koranic stories, under Safavid rule historians focused mainly on the glorious and impressive character of the pre-Islamic period. As M. Tavakoli-Targhi indicates, "Juxtaposing Iran and Islam, ... prompted the emergence of new schizophrenic social subjects who were conscious of their belonging to two diverse and often antagonistic cultural heritages."<sup>699</sup> The antithesis, which was purposely created, was used for various purposes. During the constitutional revolution, historians and writers used this antithesis to create imaginary camps between secular and Islamic groups of people. Both camps gave their own meaning to historical events. While Islamic groups focused on the superiority of the Islamic culture in historical reports, secular groups used historical events from the pre-Islamic past to highlight their cultural superiority.<sup>700</sup> Khorsandi has used this opposition in this poem to create a chasm between Ayatollah Khomeini and the Shah. By doing so, the poet promotes Ayatollah

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<sup>697</sup> M. Tavakoli-Targhi, "Contested Memories: Narrative Structures and Allegorical Meanings of Iran's Pre-Islamic History," in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1-2, 1996, pp. 149-175.

<sup>698</sup> Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>699</sup> Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>700</sup> Ibid., pp. 174, 175.

Khomeini's reading of governance, according to which the leading jurist functions as the representative of Imam Mahdi and has superior authority on both a spiritual and a governmental level.<sup>701</sup>

In the following couplets the poet again criticises the Shah's claim to divine endorsement, by ridiculing his approach to political freedom:

- |    |                                                                                                   |                                                           |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| 21 | In all respects I ruled with splendour,<br>I had an eternal splendour around me.                  | به هر صورت، جلالی داشتم من<br>شکوه لایزالی داشتم من       |
| 22 | I have founded one political party,<br>To protect the constitution.                               | علم کردم یکی حزب سیاسی<br>برای حفظ قانون اساسی            |
| 23 | What a wondrous party, better than the Tudeh Party,<br>It was better than all the parties before. | عجب حزبی، ز حزب توده بهتر<br>ز هر حزبی که قبلا بوده، بهتر |
| 24 | All government employees joined it,<br>For it was better than going to prison.                    | شدند عضوش تمام کارمندان<br>که بهتر بود از رفتن به زندان   |
| 25 | Oh, I have established something good,<br>What a great Resurgence party I have established.       | دریغاً، چیز خوبی ساختم من<br>چه رستاخیز خوبی ساختم من     |
| 26 | These past few years I've made it progress,<br>I dose the people with it daily, in the arse.      | ترقی دادمش این چند ساله<br>به مردم کردمش هر روز، اماله    |
| 27 | But at the end I let it go,<br>Khomeini said so, and I cancelled it.                              | ولیکن آخر آن را ول نمودم<br>خمینی گفت و من "کنسل!" نمودم  |

Khorsandi emphasises the Shah's despotic nature by pointing to his approach to political parties, or rather preventing political parties. He brags about himself and speaks in vulgar language. In a mocking fashion, especially by using hyperbols, the poet describes how the Shah allowed only parties initiated and supported by the regime, giving no chance to oppositional voices. The mocking lies in how just, progressive, liberal and democratic these parties were, while in reality the parties were created to support the Shah. This resulted first in the establishment of a two-party political system. In 1957 a rather progressive opposition party, named the People's Party (*Hezb-e Mardom*), was called into life, followed by the more conservative governmental Nationalist Party (*Hezb-e Melliyân*) in 1959. In 1964 the Nationalist Party was replaced by the New Iran Party (*Hezb-e Irân-e Novin*).<sup>702</sup> In 1975 this artificial two-party system made way for a single party, Iran Nation's Resurgence Party

<sup>701</sup> For an elaboration on the governance of the jurist (*velâyat-e faqih*) see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, pp. 119-120 and R.P. Mottahedeh, *Mantle of the Prophet*, pp. 243-244.

<sup>702</sup> See V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, pp. 23, 125.

(*Hezb-e Rastâkhiz Mellat-e Irân*).<sup>703</sup> V. Martin argues that all Iranians had to join the Resurgence Party.<sup>704</sup> The poet was aware of this fact and comments mockingly in couplet 24 that all government employees joined it, “for it was better than going to prison.”

In couplet 23, the poet makes the Shah boast of ‘his’ Resurgence Party and says it was “better than the Tudeh Party.” The Tudeh Party was founded in 1941 by a group of released Marxists prisoners “to unite the exploited classes and forge a party of the masses.”<sup>705</sup> In 1949 the Shah banned the Tudeh Party after some of its members attempted to assassinate him. The party continued to operate underground. It was extremely popular among opponents of the Shah and played an important role during the Islamic Revolution.<sup>706</sup> Khorsandi highlights the popularity of the Tudeh Party, by placing it in opposition to Iran’s Nation’s Resurgence Party. By doing so, the poet contrasts Shah-supported institutions to opposition-supported institutions.

In couplet 26, the poet in a satirical fashion calls attention to the fact that modernisation was not something all people profited from. Why would people want progress, when it is administered like an enema? What is the purpose of offering all kinds of luxury goods in the shops, when most Iranians do not have the money to buy any? Ayatollah Khomeini also frequently calls attention to inequality and social injustices. Only a small group of Iranians profited from the enormous income from the oil-industry, leaving large groups of Iranians in poor conditions.<sup>707</sup> So not only on a political level, but also on economic grounds, people were dissatisfied with the Shah’s regime.

In the following couplets Khorsandi makes the Shah beg Ayatollah Khomeini for his compassion:

- |    |                                                                               |                                                           |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| 28 | He secured his position in such a way,<br>That I had to annul my own history. | چنان کوبید محکم، میخ خود را<br>که کردم منتفی تاریخ خود را |
| 29 | Everything that he said, I did,<br>even destroying my own pride.              | هر آن کاری که او فرمود کردم<br>غرور خویش را نابود کردم    |

<sup>703</sup> R. F. Azimi, “On Shaky Ground: Concerning the Absence or Weakness of Political Parties,” in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 1-2, 1997, pp. 65-71 and R.P. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet*, pp. 68, 332.

<sup>704</sup> V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, p. 23.

<sup>705</sup> These are the words of I. Iskandari, the founder of the Tudeh Party. See E. Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982, p. 281.

<sup>706</sup> Ibid., pp. 281-325. See also S. Zabih, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Communism ii: In Persia from 1941 to 1953. See also ٢ Haqšenâs, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Communism iii: In Persia after 1953.

<sup>707</sup> V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, p. 148.

- 30 On the radio I said emphatically:  
"It's all shit that I have done, I made a mistake,  
forgive me." ز پشت رادیو گفتم به تأکید  
که "گه خوردم، غلط کردم، ببخشید"
- 31 But he turned off the radio,  
not listening to my supplications and apologies. ولی او رادیو را کرده خاموش  
نکرده لابه وعجز مرا گوش
- 32 I am dying of grief for he has afflicted me,  
So that I say a hundred times, may God's mercy  
be on the late Mosaddeq. چنان از دست ایشان کرده ام دق  
که صد رحمت به مرحوم مصدق
- 33 Oh God, ask the Ayatollah,  
What more does he want than the life of the  
king? خداوندا! بگو با آیت الله  
چه می خواهی دگر از جان این شاه؟
- 34 In one action, he has humiliated me,  
Dragging me to the butcher's like a buffalo. مرا یکباره کرده "سنگ رو بخ"  
کشد چون گاومیشی سوی مسلخ

In these couplets, the Shah presents Ayatollah Khomeini as someone strong and persevering, who is not sensitive to any apologies, while the Shah is weak and pathetic. On several occasions the poet refers to historical events. In couplet 28, the word *tarik* (history or date) points to the abolition of the imperial calendar in 1978, which the Shah had implemented only two years earlier in 1976. Year one in this calendar was 539 BC, when Cyrus the Great founded the Persian Empire. R. Mottahedeh calls the decision of the Shah to adopt this calendar "an act of defiance to religion" in reaction to the growing inflexibility of the clergy.<sup>708</sup> The calendar reference in the poem contrasts the Shah to Ayatollah Khomeini, who stands for the Islamic reading of time. The couplet might also be a look at the future, where the poet hopes that the Pahlavi dynasty will come to an end, which actually occurred one year after Khorsandi wrote this poem.

In couplet 32 the poet refers to the relationship between the Shah and former Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddeq. Mosaddeq was the Prime Minister of Iran from 1951 till 1953. Since 1944, Mosaddeq had been the leader of the National Front, one of the groups opposing the Shah, condemning him for giving Britain huge shares of the oil profits. One of his first acts as Prime Minister was to nationalise the oil industry. Two years later, in 1953, general Zâhedi, supported by the American CIA and the British, launched a coup and

<sup>708</sup> R.P. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet*, p. 329.

unseated him. Mosaddeq lived under house arrest until his death in 1967.<sup>709</sup> Couplet 32 makes the Shah apologise for the way he treated Mosaddeq.

As the following couplets indicate, the Shah wonders what the benefits of being a king are:

- |    |                                                                                                   |                                                               |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| 35 | Now that my days are so dark, my fate so black<br>What benefit do I get from my crown and throne? | چنین که تیره روز و تیره بختم<br>چه سودی می برم از تاج و تختم؟ |
| 36 | He has made everything so difficult for me,<br>What do I gain from being the Sun of the Arians?   | چنین که کار ما را کرده مشکل<br>مرا از آریامهری چه حاصل؟       |
| 37 | I am sick from not sleeping for a week,<br>While Cyrus the Great's still quietly asleep.          | ز بی خوابی شدم یک هفته ناخوش<br>هنوز آسوده خوابید هست کوروش   |
| 38 | Cyrus, please return, I'm in shit over here,<br>I haven't had a moment's quiet sleep here.        | بیا کورش که ما ریديم اینجا<br>دمی راحت نخوابیدیم اینجا        |
| 39 | If I told you: "sleep in peace,"<br>I'm sorry, come back, precious man.                           | اگر گفتم تو آسوده بخوابی<br>پشیمانم، بیا مرد حسابی            |
| 40 | Come and confront Khomeini,<br>You, like me, will become a captive of his wrath.                  | بیا و با خمینی رو به رو شو<br>تو همچون من اسیر خشم او شو      |
| 41 | Come Cyrus, the time for sleep has passed,<br>"I've seen a strange creature here."                | بیا کورش که وقت خواب بگذشت<br>"عجایب خلقتی دیدم در این دشت"   |

In these couplets the poet refers to a statement the Shah had in 1971 at the celebration of 2500 years of the Iranian empire. The Shah, like his father, promoted the idea that the Iranian nation originated in the Achaemenid Empire founded by Cyrus the Great (d. 529 BC), which became known as the land of the Arians. This glorification of the pre-Islamic past has always played a prominent role in Persian historiography, but was intensified during the twentieth century under the influence of Nazi Germany, who believed that the white Nordic race originated in the land of the Arians. The Pahlavi regime devoted a lot of effort to reconstructing the Iranian past to prove its Arian origin. This focus on the glorious pre-Islamic period resulted in four important reforms. In 1935 Reza Shah changed the name of Persia to Iran. In 1965 his son adopted the title "*âryâmehr*" (Sun of the Arians), indicating his superior position. In 1971 the Shah organised huge festivities to celebrate the 2500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Iranian empire. Five years later he made a Persian calendar the official state calendar,

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<sup>709</sup> On Mosaddeq see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, pp. 18-20 and R.P. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet*, pp. 129-133.

indicating that the Iranian identity was not based on Islamic foundations, but on Arian origins.<sup>710</sup>

In couplets 37 to 41, Khorsandi refers to the moment when the Shah, accompanied by a large crowd of international royals and officials, stood at the tomb of Cyrus the Great and said: "Sleep easily, Cyrus, for we are awake."<sup>711</sup> This implied that Cyrus need not worry about the well-being of the Persian kingdom while the Shah was on the throne.<sup>712</sup> In couplet 40, Khorsandi makes fun of this statement by making the Shah implore Cyrus to come to assist him, but with the pessimistic warning that Cyrus, like him "will become a captive of his wrath". By presenting the Shah in this way, Khorsandi ridicules the apparent power and strength of the Shah, showing him to be a weak politician who could not manage by himself. The Shah asks Cyrus for help since he has seen "a strange creature here." The phrase comes from a children's riddling game that starts with the sentence, "I have seen a strange creature in this place". The Shah asks help from Cyrus to find out what this strange creature is. The Shah, then, gives clues about this creature:

- |    |                                                                                                      |                                                                    |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 42 | He neither leans on England,<br>Nor cozying up to the lefties world.                                 | نه او را تکیه‌ای بر انگلیس است<br>نه با دنیای چپ، در لفت و لیس است |
| 43 | He doesn't take America as his support and refuge,<br>He only leans against an apple tree.           | نه آمریکا بود پشت و پناهش<br>درخت سیب باشد تکیه گاهش!              |
| 44 | Oh God! Oh Creator! Oh Almighty!<br>Tell them to leave me in peace.                                  | خدایا! خالقا! پرور دگارا!<br>بگو آسوده بگذارند ما را               |
| 45 | If he is the Sign of God (Ayatollah), okay, I accept this,<br>But must he piss on the Shadow of God? | اگر او آیت‌الله است، باشد<br>به ظل الله می‌باید بشاشد؟             |
| 46 | I was neither murderer nor thief,<br>To end up with this punishment.                                 | نه قاتل بودم اینجانب نه دزد<br>که این شد دست آخر، دستمزد           |
| 47 | How many services I have offered, each one<br>will make my good name last forever.                   | چه خدمت‌ها که کردم دانه دانه<br>که ماند نام نیکم جاودانه           |
| 48 | I have never disappointed the CIA,<br>I sent the mafia their fair share.                             | نر نچاندم ز خود، یک دم "سیا" را<br>فرستادم حقوق "مافیا" را         |

<sup>710</sup> See R.P. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet*, pp. 311, 312, 326-329; A. Asgharzadeh, *Iran and the Challenge of Diversity: Islamic Fundamentalism, Aryanist Racism and Democratic Struggles*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007 and M. Vaziri, *Iran as Imagined Nation: The Construction of National Identity*, New York: Paragon House, 1993.

<sup>711</sup> R.P. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet*, p. 327.

<sup>712</sup> For the celebration of 2500 years of Iranian empire see Ibid., pp. 326-329.

- |    |                                                                                         |                                                          |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| 49 | I sent my wife to Baghdad,<br>Conveying my message to Ayatollah Kho'i.                  | عیالم را فرستادم به بغداد<br>به آقای "خوئی" پیغام ما داد |
| 50 | I gave barrels after barrels of oil,<br>So that the well may be emptied quickly.        | بدادم نفت‌ها را بشکه بشکه<br>که هر چه زودتر چاهش بخشکه   |
| 51 | I bought tanks by the handful,<br>Spending money in abundance.                          | خریدم تانک‌ها را دسته دسته<br>بدادم پول‌ها را بسته بسته  |
| 52 | Despite all this political work,<br>Despite all this intelligence and cleverness.       | ولی با این همه کار سیاست<br>ولی با این همه هوش و کیاست   |
| 53 | I didn't understand one thing: O God,<br>Are you a leftist? Or do you work for the CIA? | نفهمیدم شمای که خدایی<br>چپی؟ یا این که مأمور سیایی؟     |
| 54 | I have racked my brains,<br>But in the end, I do not know you.                          | شعور خود به کار انداختم من<br>شما را عاقبت نشناختم من    |

Khorsandi presents Ayatollah Khomeini as the total opposite of the Shah. While Ayatollah Khomeini is a strong character who needs no help from anybody, the Shah cannot survive without the support of America. The image in couplet 43 to Ayatollah Khomeini needing only an apple tree for support refers to a well-known photograph of Ayatollah Khomeini in Neauphle-le-Château in 1978, in which he is sitting on a cushion under an apple tree, looking like a pious mystic. The differences between the Shah and Ayatollah Khomeini could not be greater. While the first spends money and is concerned only with luxury and worldly pleasures, the latter is engaged only with the Divine world and eschews all material and social bonds. R. Mottahedeh confirms this selfless image of Ayatollah Khomeini and depicts him as a "forbidding man who never offered more than a smile in public to express his pleasure in anybody or anything."<sup>713</sup> Another character trait of Ayatollah Khomeini that betrays his mystical disposition was his rejection of titles. He did not want to be addressed by any title, since it could lead to arrogance and selfishness, which are both pitfalls on the road of the mystic.<sup>714</sup> Unlike Ayatollah Khomeini, the Shah very much liked to use titles. In couplets 2, 36 and 45 of the poem, the Shah refers to himself as the 'King of Kings' (*shâhanshâh*), the 'Sun of the Arians' (*âryâmehr*) and the 'Shadow of God' (*zellollâh*).

In a satirical tone, the poet refers to the Shah's arrogance and how he was convinced of his own innocence and kindness. In the poem, the Shah wonders why he is treated so badly by Ayatollah Khomeini, while in general he was on a good footing with the clergy. In couplet 49 the Shah refers to the friendly bond he had with Grand Ayatollah Kho'i (d. 1992), one of

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<sup>713</sup> Ibid., p. 187.

<sup>714</sup> Ibid.

the most influential clerics in the Shiite world, and one of Ayatollah Khomeini's greatest opponents. Like the majority of the clerics, Ayatollah Kho'i strongly opposed Ayatollah Khomeini's ideas on the Islamic state in general and the governance of the jurist in particular. Kho'i objected to the political role that Ayatollah Khomeini had in mind for the Islamic jurist, and he believed that all Islamic jurists should have a share in authority, not just one or a few. In couplet 49 the poet refers to 1978, when Farah Diba, the Shah's wife, flew to Najaf where Kho'i resided to ask for his help in calming the opposition to the Shah. On this occasion, which was also attended by Saddam Hussein, Ayatollah Kho'i gave a ring to the Empress, who in her turn handed it to the Shah. Kho'i strongly condemned the opposition to the Shah and defended him on many occasions. In their public speeches and statements, Kho'i and Ayatollah Khomeini condemned one another in a most offensive way. Ayatollah Kho'i was only one of the clerics who criticised Ayatollah Khomeini's politicisation of Islam. In general, the clergy were aloof from all political participation. Ayatollah Khomeini was one of the few clerics who promoted a political reading of Islam.<sup>715</sup>

In couplet 48, Khorsandi draws attention to the Shah's use of state money to give extremely high salaries to CIA informants. Couplet 51 refers to the large amounts of money he wasted on the newest tanks and other military equipment, while many Iranian people lived in poor conditions. In both couplets, Khorsandi places Ayatollah Khomeini in opposition to the Shah as the 'Shadow of God.' This title has been used by various Persian kings to highlight their semi-divine role as the representative of God on earth. The contrasting pair of the Ayatollah and Zellollâh (sign of God and shadow of God) in couplet 45, was a popular antithesis in the literature of the constitutional period (1905-1908). In an attempt to undermine the power of the state (*dowlat*) and to promote more political participation for the people (*mellat*), constitutionalists purposely created antagonistic camps such as *mellat-dowlat* and *Ayatollah-Zellollâh*. The separation of religion from state, which the constitutionalist promoted, resulted in a dissociation of the clergy from the governmental system. The clergy were now presented as the 'leaders of the people' instead of the 'protectors of the state.' By contrasting the Zellollâh (Shah) to the Ayatollahs, constitutionalist writers sought to undermine the sovereignty of the Shah. Khorsandi has used this image in the same way, by making the Shah say, "If he is the Sign of God (Ayatollah), okay, I accept this, but must he piss on the Shadow of God?" The poet gives the impression that the Shah would have allowed

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<sup>715</sup> B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, pp. 84, 141, 151, 158, 159 and S.A. Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, p. 81.

Ayatollah Khomeini to be in power, if only he could still be called the Shadow of God and accepted as such.<sup>716</sup>

It appears from couplets 53 and 54 that the Shah cannot look objectively at the people. He divides the nation into two camps: the left and the right. There is nothing in between. In the following couplets God responds to the Shah's gibberish:

- |    |                                                                                                                                    |                                                                    |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 55 | God said: Be quiet, you fool!<br>I have never seen a king more stupid than you.                                                    | خدا فرمود، ساکت باش، ابله!<br>ندیدم از تو ابله‌تر شهنشه            |
| 56 | Not all who were not on the left, were in the CIA,<br>Not all the leftist activists were Godless.                                  | نه هر که چپ نشد، عضو سیا بود<br>نه هر که "چپ‌گرا" شد، بی‌خدا بود   |
| 57 | It's not remarkable that you do not know me,<br>It's in the nature of kings not to know God.                                       | مرا نشناخت ناز تو، عجب نیست<br>خدا شناسی شاهانطبیع است             |
| 58 | In accordance with the diplomatic norms,<br>you only know your own boss.                                                           | تو بر طبق اصول دیپلماسی<br>فقط ارباب خود را می‌شناسی               |
| 59 | You were never left, or right,<br>You followed the path your boss desired.                                                         | نه از چپ رفته‌ای هرگز، نه از راست<br>رهی رفتی که ارباب تو می‌خواست |
| 60 | Because of him, you got so much power.<br>You wrapped a cord around the people.                                                    | به دست او، به این قدرت رسیدی<br>طناب از گرده ملت کشیدی             |
| 61 | You sit in this position at his command,<br>You have broken the pens of your opponents.                                            | به امر او بر این مسند نشست<br>قلم‌های مخالف را شکستی               |
| 62 | At his command you've become an enemy of<br>Palestine,<br>And given oil and gas to Israel.                                         | به حکم او شدی خصم فلسطین<br>به اسرائیل دادی نفت و بنزین            |
| 63 | It's not with petroleum that you shed the blood of<br>the people<br>but with the force of a bullet from the barrel of<br>your gun. | نه نفت است این، که با زور گلوله<br>نمودی خون مردم توی لوله         |
| 64 | The earth is died red with the blood of the people,<br>The homeland has become like a bloodbath.                                   | زمین از خون مردم، لاله گون شد<br>وطن، یک پارچه حمام خون شد         |
| 65 | For the sake of pleasing your bosses,<br>You have done an abundance of things, O king of<br>the butchers.                          | از این خوش خدمتی‌ها بهر ارباب<br>فراوان کرده‌ای، ای شاه قصاب       |

<sup>716</sup> For a discussion on the antithesis Zellollâh-Ayatollah during the constitutional period see M. Tavakoli-Targhi, "Refashioning Iran: Language and Culture during the Constitutional Revolution," in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 3, Issue 3-4, 1990, pp. 96-97.

God is not surprised that the Shah cannot find out who He really is, since it's in the nature of kings not to know God (couplet 57). Here Khorsandi criticises monarchy as an institution as well as the Shah. The poet condemns him for focusing only on his boss (America), again pointing at the master-servant relationship the Shah had with this country, this time comparing him to a dog that has been chained by his boss and has to follow his orders. In couplet 63 and 64, the poet responds to historical facts, when he speaks of the day on which "the homeland has become like a bloodbath." The reference is to the slaughter of thousands of Iranian demonstrators on Jale Square in Tehran, on September 8<sup>th</sup> 1977, which is also known as Black Friday.<sup>717</sup> The poet harshly condemns the Shah and America for this massacre, saying that the Shah, "the king of the butchers," launched this bloody attack just to please his boss America. The reproaches of the poet towards the Shah in couplets 58-66, of being much too dependent on America and on its allies, reflect the general attitude of Iranians to Mohammad Reza Shah in the late 1970s. Like Khorsandi in this poem, Ayatollah Khomeini was also very clear about his dislike of the Shah and his bond with America. In the long set of speeches that he gave in Neauphle-le-Château from October 11<sup>th</sup> to November 11<sup>th</sup> in 1978, Ayatollah Khomeini explained in clear-cut language his objections to the Shah's interior and foreign policies. Ayatollah Khomeini's words were relayed by his followers to all parts of the world. In his speeches Ayatollah Khomeini argued that, since the beginning of the foreign presence in Iran some 300 years ago, the main intention of the 'imperialists,' has been to get hold of Iran's natural resources and to set up settlements in strategic Iran. Ayatollah Khomeini blamed the Shah for allowing these foreign forces to dominate the country. As Ayatollah Khomeini sarcastically said in one of his statements, "Iran has suffered under a government which has handed over the whole of the country's dignity and respect to the oil-devourers on a silver platter."<sup>718</sup> Ayatollah Khomeini had many problems with the Shah and his foreign allies using the resources of the country and living in extraordinary luxury, while the nation was suffering from hunger and hardship. In his speeches Ayatollah Khomeini sharply condemned the Shah's role in world politics, depicting him as the puppet of the West, in particular of America, in their war for oil and gas. Ayatollah Khomeini divided the regime of the Shah into three parties: the Shah, the army and America, who were all strongly dependent on one another.<sup>719</sup> He blamed America for turning Iran into "a consumer market for

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<sup>717</sup> For the uprising on Black Friday see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, pp. 149, 151, 178 and B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, p. 188.

<sup>718</sup> R. Khomeini, *Kauthar*, p. 78.

<sup>719</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 147.

American surplus goods.”<sup>720</sup> He also blamed the international community for not condemning the Shah for his involvement in the massacre on Jale Square. The failure of Western countries to rebuke the Shah for killing these people, and violating human rights, was evidence for Ayatollah Khomeini that the Shah was cooperating with the West.<sup>721</sup> Khorsandi’s portrayal of the Shah’s dependence on America fits completely with the picture of the Shah’s relation to the West that Ayatollah Khomeini presented in his speeches.

The following couplets say that the people’s time of oppression at the hands of the Shah has now, by God’s will, “come to an end”:

- |    |                                                                                                   |                                                             |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| 67 | Oh king, now that your tail has been cut,<br>The time of the power of the people has come.        | کنون ای پادشاه دم بریده<br>زمان قدرت مردم رسیده             |
| 68 | Exile, exile is a pain without a remedy,<br>The time of deceiving the people has come to an end.  | "غریبی، درد بی درمان غریبی"<br>سر آمد دوری مردم فریبی       |
| 69 | Those sweet days have come to an end,<br>When you spoke the words of faith and religion.          | به پایان آمد آن ایام شیرین<br>که می گفتی سخن از مذهب و دین  |
| 70 | You have killed thousands of people in a clever way,<br>And did not neglect to visit holy places. | هزاران قتل کردی با مهارت<br>ولی غافل نبودى از زیارت         |
| 71 | You were only a Muslim when it was necessary,<br>Suddenly you went to Mashad.                     | مسلمان می شدی در وقت لازم<br>به مشهد می شدی یکباره عازم     |
| 72 | You fooled even God,<br>When you called yourself Our shadow!                                      | تو دست انداختی حتی خدا را<br>خودت را خوانده بودی سایه ما!   |
| 73 | Not one moment did you think that perhaps,<br>God would not be pleased with these actions.        | نکردی لحظه ای فکرش که شاید<br>از این کارت، خدا را خوش نیاید |
| 74 | Now, O worthless shadow of mine,<br>The people do not want my shadow.                             | کنون، ای سایه بی مایه من<br>نمی خواهند مردم، سایه من        |
| 75 | Both old and young are telling me:<br>“Oh Lord, remove this shadow from us.”                      | همی گویند با من پیر و برنا<br>که یا رب، سایه بر گیر از سرما |

In this part God criticises the Shah for deceiving God. According to Him the Shah has abused his title ‘Shadow of God’ for he was “only a Muslim when it was necessary.” In couplets 74 and 75 the poet implies that all Iranians wanted the Shah to resign. In the poem, Khorsandi presents the Iranian nation as being in deep need of a person who is sincere, who does not fool the people or God. Iranians want to identify with their leader and they can

<sup>720</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>721</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

certainly not mirror themselves on the Shah, who is almost a stranger to them with his focus on the West and on luxury goods.

In the last part of the poem Khorsandi introduces Ayatollah Khomeini again:

- |    |                                                                                      |                                                               |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| 76 | Then God turned to Khomeini and ordered him,<br>To blow gently on the poor creature. | خدا رو بر خمینی کرد و فرمود<br>بکن فوتی بر این بیچاره موجود   |
| 77 | Following God's orders,<br>Khomeini blew a quick breath at the Shah.                 | خمینی در پی دستور "الله"<br>به شاهنشاه فوتی کرد کوتاه         |
| 78 | A typhoon arose, fierce and turbulent.<br>The typhoon reached his honour the Shah.   | یکی طوفان بر آمد، تند و بی‌تاب<br>حضور شاه، طوفان شد شرفیاب   |
| 79 | Out of fear the king of 'justice,'<br>Constantly screamed in his bed.                | ز وحشت پادشاه "دادگستر"<br>مرتب "داد" می‌زد توی بستر          |
| 80 | As he was climbing down from his bed,<br>The respected king became unlucky.          | به بالا پرت شد از جانب تخت<br>شهنشاه عظیم الشأن بدبخت         |
| 81 | With the back of his head he hit the wall hard,<br>And woke from that deep sleep.    | سرش خورد از عقب، محکم به دیوار<br>از آن خواب گران گردید بیدار |
| 82 | He did not see Khomeini there, nor God,<br>His ears heard only this sound:           | ندید آنجا خمینی، یا خدا را<br>فقط گوشش شنیدی این صدا را!      |
| 83 | "Ask for mercy for your own bad acts!<br>And say your last words, King of Kings!"    | بکن تو به ز اعمال بد خویش!<br>بخوانای شاهشاهان، اشهد خویش!    |

In these last couplets, God asks Ayatollah Khomeini to help Him to remove the Shah, by blowing gently on him. Ayatollah Khomeini's prominent role becomes particularly clear in this last scene. The sharp difference between the Shah's weakness and Ayatollah Khomeini's strength is such that a gentle breath from Ayatollah Khomeini blows the Shah from his bed (which is also his throne). Throughout the poem Khorsandi shows the great discrepancy between the two characters and the monarchical and theocratic systems they represent. In the eyes of the poet, Ayatollah Khomeini, unlike the Shah, wants the best for the people and for Iran. He is a role model for the people: pious, strong and independent. The Shah on the other hand, is haughty, selfish and totally dependent on his boss America.

### 6.2.2.1.3 Discussion

Khorsandi's satirical "Dream of the Shah" clearly reflects the socio-political situation in Iran just before the Islamic government was established. The poem illustrates how secular intellectuals could be impressed by the courageous performance of Ayatollah Khomeini, a religious leader who seemed to be the complete opposite of the oppressive, egocentric, un-Islamic, materialistic and authoritarian Mohammad Reza Shah. Khorsandi's poem also touches on the religious climate in Iran under the Shah, where some Ayatollahs, such as Ayatollah Kho'i, sided with the Shah while others, in this case Ayatollah Khomeini, were wary of any cooperation with him.<sup>722</sup> Another main theme is the poet's rejection of the monarchical system. The poet has adopted the antithesis between the Shadow of God and the Sign of God, which was popular in constitutional poetry at the beginning of the twentieth century, to contrast God-given kingship from a government with a divine mandate, which was to be dominated by the clergy. By adopting this antithesis, the poet joined a debate that had been going on since the Islamic period began, on how to integrate the Persian kingly tradition into the Islamic tradition. By making fun of the Shah's titles and questioning the benefits of being a king, in couplet 32, Khorsandi attacks the monarchical institution and devalues it in comparison to a theocratic system. The fact that the poet associates Ayatollah Khomeini with the Divine in his poem, and imagines how angrily God would respond to the Shah's foolish behaviour, shows that he is not just opposed to monarchy, he supports Ayatollah Khomeini and a theocratic system.

Khorsandi's appraisal of Ayatollah Khomeini in this poem illustrates the Iranian people's susceptibility to religious sentiments, even after a long period of Westernisation. Under the Pahlavi Regime the power of the cleric had been greatly diminished. Once Reza Khan crowned himself the new Shah of Iran in 1925, he implemented some important changes that had major implications for the religious institutions. In his attempt to create a nation-state, Reza Shah brought the educational system, which had been dominated by the clergy, under state control. Reza Shah created a sharp distinction between religious and secular education. The judicial apparatus, which had again been dominated mainly by the clergy, also came under state control. Although the law was still based to a great extent on Islamic law, many clerics lost their jobs as jurists. Two changes to the laws had huge consequences for the religious class. The Conscription Law of 1925 meant that all men were

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<sup>722</sup> See M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, pp. 192-196 and S.A. Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, p. 81.

forced to join the national army, while the Dress Code of 1928 forbade Iranians to wear any sort of culturally or religiously defined clothing. Clerics and religious scholars and students who had passed studies in higher religious education were exempt from these two laws, but not those religious preachers who had not taken higher religious education. The demarcation which the Pahlavi government made between high-ranking ‘educated’ clerics and the low-ranking, often uneducated, ‘popular’ preachers had far-reaching consequences for religious life in Iran. It greatly diminished the power and influence of the popular preachers and allowed a small but well-organised group of Islamic clerics to gain independence from the Pahlavi governance. The ‘crème de la crème’ of the clergy were allowed a degree of power by the Pahlavi state and were able to develop autonomous institutions and influence. This may have contributed to the a-political stance of leading Ayatollahs such as Ayatollah Kho’i (d. 1936) and Ayatollah Borujerdi (d. 1961). As A. Keshavarzian states, perhaps the highest ranking clerics did not reject the 1925 Conscription Law or the 1928 Dress Code, which did not apply to them, since they wanted to separate the wheat from the chaff, that is, the elite clergy from the less educated popular preachers.<sup>723</sup> When the leading Ayatollah Borujerdi died in 1961, and there was a vacuum of religious authority, Mohammad Reza Shah seized the chance and started his White Revolution. It was also the beginning of a period of harsh oppression for religious groups. During this time of economic, political and social suppression, religious opposition groups headed by Ayatollah Khomeini won sympathy among the middle class. As S.A. Arjomand states “they readily accepted the religious party's portrayal of the Shah as the Anti-Christ and concomitantly took refuge in the comforting discovery of Khomeini as his messianic counter-image (and the only available one).”

Khorsandi’s poem demonstrates that he was one of those attracted by Ayatollah Khomeini’s promising words. The many historical elements which the poet has adopted and parodied demonstrate how Khorsandi, like many modern and classical poets, has used satire to comment on social and political affairs. Hadi Khorsandi’s poetry is entertaining, but at the same time very serious. He wraps up his political messages and calls for justice in hilarious ways. Because of the poetic form, the contents and the use of language, his ideas and poems stick in the mind. Like other satirists, he uses various literary devices to respond to historical

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<sup>723</sup> For a discussion of clergy-state relations during the Pahlavi Era see A. Keshavarzian, “Turban or Hat, Seminarian or Soldier: State Building and Clergy Building in Reza Shah’s Iran,” in *Journal of Church and State*, Vol. 45(1), 2003, pp. 81-112, and S.A. Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, pp. 80-87. See also M.M.J. Fischer, *Iran: From Religious Dispute to Revolution*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1980, pp. 108-109.

facts and figures, blending reality with falsity, taking them out of their contexts, to create other perspectives. Khorsandi responds to Mosaddeq's house arrest and adds his own story, in which he makes the Shah apologize for his acts against Mosaddeq, to condemn the Shah's performance. In a satirical way, the poet tells us how the Shah should have dealt with Mosaddeq. Khorsandi also plays with the historical events of 1967 in which the Shah spoke to Cyrus at his tomb, indicating that he had everything under control. Again, the poet adds a new 'chapter' to the story, in which he makes the Shah admit that he is weak and cannot deal with kingship. By taking these historical events from their context, and mixing them with fiction, the poet is able to correct the Shah's behaviour and to highlight its injustice for the reader.

Hyperbole, which Khorsandi uses several times in the poem, is another device which satirists use to influence a reader's perception of historical events or figures. By exaggerating certain features of Mohammad Reza Shah, such as his use of titles, his egocentric behaviour, his excessive expenditures and his approach to political participation, Khorsandi pushes the reader in a certain direction, where he can no longer deny the Shah's multiple defects. He treats Ayatollah Khomeini in the opposite way, presenting him as a saviour and placing him next to God, in a position which cannot be condemned by the reader. In order to contrast Ayatollah Khomeini to the Shah, the poet uses the antithesis Ayatollah ('sign of God') – Zellollah ('shadow of God'). This was a popular antithesis in the poetry of the Constitutional Revolution. He shocks the reader with his vulgar version of this antithesis. ("Must he [Ayatollah] piss on the Shadow of God?") Another way in which Khorsandi creates antagonistic camps is by his use of the antithesis Ruhollah- Zellollah.

The setting of the poem is another device through which satirists, such as Khorsandi, try to influence the reader's perception. Khorsandi jumps forward in time, portraying the Shah, who has fallen from his throne, and who complains about his destiny, reminiscing about all his 'good' deeds. In a sense, the poet shows the reader that a life without the Shah is possible, that the whole world will be better without his multiple trespasses. The presentation of God and Ayatollah Khomeini at the Shah's bedside illustrates the enormous difference in hierarchy between these persons. While God and Ayatollah Khomeini have a top rank, the Shah is somewhere down there, and even falls to the bottom, after falling from his bed, i.e. throne. Khorsandi purposely moves backward and forward in time, starting with a scene in bed, where the Shah is visited by God and Ayatollah Khomeini, followed by a scene where the Shah has fallen from his throne and again ending with the scene in bed, where the Shah meets Ayatollah Khomeini. By playing with time like this, the poet presents a problem, the tensions between Persian kingship and Divine kingship, that is followed by a scene in which

the world is presented as free from all the problems caused by Persian kingship, followed by a scene back-in-time, in which the reader is informed how to achieve this ideal world, i.e. through Ayatollah Khomeini. Satirical poems like these may at first sight look like mere humorous pieces for entertainment, in which the poet shocks the reader with his vulgar language and absurd and hilarious scenes. However the devices the poet uses, such as hyperbole and antithesis, are well-chosen means to effect a change in the mind of the reader, who perceives reality from a different angle.

#### 6.2.2.2 Khorsandi's Response to Ayatollah Khomeini's Poetry

Although Khorsandi supported Ayatollah Khomeini in "The Dream of the Shah," its publication in the Iranian newspaper *Keyhân-e Landan* led to Khorsandi's forced departure from Iran in 1979. One of the main reasons for choosing exile was that Ayatollah Khomeini was initially seen as a mystical and spiritual leader who did not want any political power for clerics. After the Revolution and especially during the Iran-Iraq war, the political power of the clerics increased. Ayatollah Khomeini progressively consolidated his power and position. During this early phase of the Revolution, government, cultural and educational organisations were cleansed from people with anti-Islamic Revolution tendencies. Many were executed and imprisoned, while others fled the country. Several revolutionary organisations were established to maintain the ideas of the Islamic Revolution in daily life. Among these organisations were the Revolutionary Guard and Hezbollah, who patrolled in the streets to warn or arrest people who would be suspected of an anti-Islamic revolutionary comport. As H. Shahidi indicates, Khorsandi was so much harassed by Hezbollah sympathizers who pleaded for his death, that he had no choice but to leave Iran.<sup>724</sup> Even in London, where he has lived and worked since then, he experienced several attempted assassinations.<sup>725</sup> His strained relations with the Islamic regime of Iran is reflected in his poems and short stories in exile. The tone of these works differs considerably from his earlier writing. Where he had been an active supporter of Ayatollah Khomeini, from 1979 he became one of his most notorious opponents, ridiculing him in poetry and in fictional stories. In 1989, when Ayatollah Khomeini's son Ahmad published one of his father's *ghazals* in the Iranian newspaper *Keyhân*, Khorsandi composed several critical quatrains in parody form on the poem. Before looking at Khorsandi's parodies, I will analyze the original poem by Ayatollah Khomeini.

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<sup>724</sup> H. Shahidi, *Journalism in Iran*, p. 26.

<sup>725</sup> H. Khorsandi, *The Ayatollah and I*, Introduction.

### چشم بیمار

من بخیال لب ای دوست گرفتار شدم  
چشم بیمار تو را دیدم و بیمار شدم  
فارغ از خود شدم و گوس آنالحق بزم  
همچو منصور خربدار سردار شدم  
غم دلدار فکنده است بجانم شرری  
که بجان آندم بشهره بازار شدم  
در میخانه گشتانید پرویم شب و روز  
که من از مسجد و از مدرسه بیزار شدم  
جامه زهد و ریاء گندم و برتن کردم  
خرقه پیر خراباتی و خشیار شدم  
واعظ شهر که از پسند خود آزارم داد  
از دم رند می آلوده مددکار شدم  
بگذارید که از بتکده یاد می کشم  
من که با دست بت میگذره بیمار شدم

### من بخیال لب ای دوست گرفتار شدم

### چشم بیمار تو را دیدم و بیمار شدم

فارغ از خود شدم و گوس آنالحق بزم  
همچو منصور خسته یار سردار شدم  
غم دلدار فکنده است بجانم شرری  
که بجان آندم بشهره بازار شدم  
در میخانه گشتانید پرویم شب و روز  
که من از مسجد و از مدرسه بیزار شدم  
جامه زهد و ریاء گندم و برتن کردم  
خرقه پیر خراباتی و خشیار شدم  
واعظ شهر که از پسند خود آزارم داد  
از دم رند می آلوده مددکار شدم

بگذارید که از بتکده یاد می کشم

من که با دست بت میگذره بیمار شدم

من بخیال لب ای دوست گرفتار شدم  
چشم بیمار تو را دیدم و بیمار شدم  
فارغ از خود شدم و گوس آنالحق بزم  
همچو منصور خسته یار سردار شدم  
غم دلدار فکنده است بجانم شرری  
که بجان آندم بشهره بازار شدم  
در میخانه گشتانید پرویم شب و روز  
که من از مسجد و از مدرسه بیزار شدم  
جامه زهد و ریاء گندم و برتن کردم  
خرقه پیر خراباتی و خشیار شدم  
واعظ شهر که از پسند خود آزارم داد  
از دم رند می آلوده مددکار شدم  
بگذارید که از بتکده یاد می کشم  
من که با دست بت میگذره بیمار شدم

### “Ill Eye”

1. Oh Beloved, I am possessed by the beauty spot above your lip.  
I became ill when I saw your eye.
2. I have become free from myself, I beat the drum of *Ana al-Haqq*.  
Like Mansur I have put my head on the executioner's block.
3. Anguish for the heart-ravisher set my heart on fire,  
so that I was overcome and became the talk of the bazaar.
4. Open the wine-house door for me, night and day,  
for I've turned my back on the mosque and seminary.
5. I cast off the robe of pious hypocrisy, pulled on  
the old dervish cloak of a tavern visitor, and so became sober.
6. The preacher of the town, with his exhortations, caused my illness.  
the breath of the drunken rogue succored me.
7. Allow me to recollect the temple.  
[for] I was woken by the hand of the idol in the tavern.<sup>726</sup>

<sup>726</sup> For Ayatollah Khomeini's ghazal *Cheshm-e Bimâr* see page 142 of his *Divân*.

The Persian text above was printed in *Keyhân* of June 14th 1989, p. 16.

Ayatollah Khomeini's *ghazal* is a typical mystical antinomian poem, containing motifs of wine (*khamriyyât*), antinomian mysticism (*qalandariyyât*) and asceticism (*zohdiyyât*). In this and many of his other *ghazals*, Ayatollah Khomeini presents himself as a mystical lover afflicted by separation from the Beloved. ("Anguish for the heart-ravisher set my heart on fire"). In couplets four and five, Ayatollah Khomeini indicates that, in an attempt to reach the Beloved, he has detached himself from all material goods and religious institutions. Instead, he dwells in the wine-house, praising the Zoroastrian guide on the mystical path, the Magian Elder (referred to here as "the idol in the tavern"), assisted by rogues who, like him, are drunk on wine. In couplet two, in the tradition of antinomian poetry, Ayatollah Khomeini identifies himself with Mansur Hallâj, the famous mystic who was executed in 922 in Baghdad by the Islamic authorities for proclaiming 'I am the Truth' (*Ana al-Haqq*), implying that he had reached a state of spiritual perfection. In both classic and modern Persian poetry, Mansur Hallâj has become the embodiment of unconditional love, often figuring as the 'lover par excellence' who is willing to sacrifice everything, including his life, for the sake of love.<sup>727</sup>

On June 14th 1989, only eleven days after Ayatollah Khomeini's death, the Iranian newspaper *Keyhân* published this *ghazal* at the request of Ayatollah Khomeini's own son, Ahmad Khomeini.<sup>728</sup> Its publication caused a furor among Iranians in Iran and abroad. Iranians in the Diaspora tended to react with denial and disbelief, since they could not reconcile the unorthodox character of the poem with their own hard experiences at the hands of Ayatollah Khomeini. Ayatollah Khomeini's followers acknowledged its authenticity. Others, including the majority of the reactionary clergy, criticized it. Soon after the publication of this poem, other poems by Ayatollah Khomeini came to light. Many of his later poems were handed over to the editor of Ayatollah Khomeini's *Divân* by people in Ayatollah Khomeini's inner circle or by his supporters. As B. Reinert indicates, many of Ayatollah Khomeini's poems were lost, partly during relocations, but also due to SAVAK raids on Ayatollah Khomeini's property in 1967, during which SAVAK found some of his poems.<sup>729</sup> According to B. Reinert, Ayatollah Khomeini never intended to publish them:

Wahrscheinlich aber liegt der Grund für das Verschwinden seiner vielfach eigenhändig und ohne Kopie aufgeschriebenen Gedichte ohnehin tiefer. Wer an den Früchten seines Geistes hängt, bewahrt

<sup>727</sup> For an analysis of Ayatollah Khomeini's use of Mansur Hallâj, see my analysis in section 3.8 of this study.

<sup>728</sup> See editorial in *Keyhân* of June 14th 1989, p. 16.

<sup>729</sup> See B. Reinert, "Ḥumainī im Spiegel seiner Gedichte," in *Islamische Grenzen und Grenzübergänge*, Volume 4, Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2007, p. 192, note 9.

sie so auf, dass sie nicht ohne weiteres verloren gehen. Ḥumainī war jedoch offenbar das Erlebnis seines Dichtens selbst wichtiger als dessen vorzeigbare Resultate. Man fragt sich, ob er damit überhaupt jemand ansprechen wollte, oder ob er eigentlich nur für sich schrieb.<sup>730</sup>

Probably there is a deeper reason for the loss of his poems, which were often written in his own hand without making any copies. Someone who values the fruits of his mind, preserves them in such a way that they are not easily lost. But for Ayatollah Khomeini, apparently, the experience of composing poems was more important than publishing them. One has to wonder whether he wanted to communicate with anyone through his poems, or whether he rather wrote for himself. In 1993 all these poems were collected in one volume of collected poems (*Divân*), consisting of some 1535 couplets in various poetical genres.

Among those who responded to *Cheshm-e Bimâr* was Hadi Khorsandi, who before 1979 had supported Ayatollah Khomeini, but who became a fierce opponent of him after the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran. He composed various *robâ'î's* in parody form, making slight changes to Ayatollah Khomeini's original couplets. What follows are my translations of several of these satirical poems:

|                                                                  |                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| I'm possessed by the beauty spot above the Beloved's lips,       | «بر خال لب دوست گرفتار شدم»                     |
| but when I saw his eyes I fell sick.                             | لاکن چشمش دیدم و بیمار شدم                      |
| I've become happy like you, who have become happy in the bazaar. | مشعوف چو از گرمی بازار شدم                      |
| I've become without a religion, a dictator and a blood-drinker.  | لامذهب و دیکتاتور و خونخوار شدم. <sup>731</sup> |

Khorsandi composed his *robâ'î's* in the same meter and rhyme as Ayatollah Khomeini used in his poem, to ensure they would be read as a response to Ayatollah Khomeini's *ghazal*. He uses the same antinomian themes, but adds an element of parody and satire that ridicules mystical motifs, metaphors and imagery, and the fact that they come from Ayatollah Khomeini. In the quatrain above, Khorsandi comments on at least two aspects of Ayatollah Khomeini's poem. First, the title of Ayatollah Khomeini's poem and its first line contain a phrase that literally means 'ill eye' (*cheshm-e bimâr*) but conventionally refers to the Beloved's magical eyes whose glance lures the lover to fall deeply in love.<sup>732</sup> Khorsandi makes fun of the convention by taking the phrase literally. Secondly, Khorsandi ridicules Ayatollah Khomeini's frequent use of the word *lâken* ('but') in his public appearances. Many

<sup>730</sup> Ibid., p. 193.

<sup>731</sup> H. Khorsandi, *Âyehā-ye Irāni*, Los Angeles: Zax, 1993, p. 110.

<sup>732</sup> For an analysis of the magic quality of the Beloved's eye see A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, "Magic in Classical Persian Amatory Literature," in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 32, No. I, 1999, pp. 71-97.

Iranians made fun of Ayatollah Khomeini's excessive use of this word in a clerical version of the regional accent of Qom. By adding the word 'but' to the second hemistich in the first couplet, Khorsandi implies that the illness of which he is speaking differs from what Ayatollah Khomeini is saying, and that this is a negative experience. When Ayatollah Khomeini says 'I became ill,' he means it in the sense it has in mystical poetry, referring to the 'spiritual intoxication' of the mystical lover. But Khorsandi uses the modern and literal meaning of the term illness to ridicule Ayatollah Khomeini.

In the quatrain, Khorsandi also responds to Ayatollah Khomeini's reference to the annihilation of the soul (*fanâ*) in the Beloved. Ayatollah Khomeini implies in his poem that he has annihilated his ego ("I have become free from myself"), but Khorsandi states that he has not set aside his ego, but rather his religion. Instead of perfecting his soul by losing himself completely in the Beloved, Ayatollah Khomeini's love-sickness has corrupted his soul, turning him into a 'blood-drinker,' a 'dictator' and an apostate (*kâfer*). It can also be read as saying that since Ayatollah Khomeini came to power, many people have lost faith in their religion and have become corrupt. Khorsandi is probably referring to Ayatollah Khomeini's inclusion of politics in religion, to form a theocratic political system. Indirectly Khorsandi is responding to Ayatollah Khomeini placing himself at the top of the political hierarchy, by incorporating the mystical (and unorthodox) doctrine of the perfect man (*ensân-e kâmel*) into his theory of 'the governance of the jurist,' so allowing an ordinary human being who has, in the eyes of the mystics, become a 'perfect' person to represent the twelfth Imam during his absence. In another *robâ'i* Khorsandi responds to Ayatollah Khomeini's use of love mysticism, saying:

With a kiss that Beloved has sewed up my lips, sewed up my lips.

With the flame of love he has burnt my soul, burnt my soul.

Then he unlawfully hit me on the head with a stone, with a stone.

Like a glass he has taught me to break, to break.

آن یار ببوسه ای لبم دوخت که دوخت

با شعله عشق جان من سوخت که سوخت

آنگه ب سرم سنگ جفاکوفت که کوفت

چون شیشه بمن شکستن آموخت که موخت.<sup>733</sup>

In this *robâ'i* the poet says that Ayatollah Khomeini's 'kisses' have 'sewed up' his mouth and the flame of love has destructively burnt his soul. Khorsandi turns the symbolic pain of the mystical lover, of which Ayatollah Khomeini speaks in his third couplet ("Anguish for the heart-ravisher had set my heart on fire") into a real physical pain in his parody.

<sup>733</sup> H. Khorsandi, *Āyehā-ye Irāni*, Los Angeles: Zax, 1993, p. 111.

Khorsandi blames Ayatollah Khomeini for distracting the people with his ‘words of love,’ while in the end nothing was left of their pleasure (*lezzat*) and cheerfulness (*khoshbâsh*) and ‘kicks’ were all the people received. According to Khorsandi, Ayatollah Khomeini has been able to lure the people to support his goal, by using concepts from love mysticism such as ‘love’ and ‘union.’ Khorsandi’s eyes were opened when he realized that Ayatollah Khomeini later used less peaceful means to keep the Iranians loyal to him. The poet connects Ayatollah Khomeini to the ‘unlawful’ and ‘unequal’ judicial and legal system in Iran twice. He refers to the fact that Iranians were often punished by the government, while their guilt had not (yet) been proven in a trial. As W. Floor indicates, judicial courts in Iran are not objective, often ignoring human and legal rights.<sup>734</sup>

In the following quatrain Khorsandi also refers to the corruption of Iranian society under Ayatollah Khomeini, where the time of equality has ended:<sup>735</sup>

It’s a pity the time of equality has come to an end.

افسوس که شد دوره یکرنگی ختم

That the beautiful days of jokes and happiness have come to an end.

ایام قشنگ شوخی و شنگی ختم

That love and union and pleasure and happiness,

آن عشق و وصال و لذت و خوشباشی

started with a kiss and ended with a kick.

با بوسه شد آغاز و به آردنگی ختم.<sup>736</sup>

The poet implies that Ayatollah Khomeini has used words deriving from love mysticism, such as union and love, to get popular support, but what “started with a kiss ... ended with a kick.” While many Iranians were at first very much attracted by Ayatollah Khomeini’s words, they were later appalled when they found that the regime he promoted was less peaceful than it seemed. This sentiment can also be noticed in this parody by Khorsandi.

<sup>734</sup> See W. Floor, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Judicial and Legal Systems v. Judicial System in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. See also *Final Report of the Special Representative on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, E/CN. 4/1993/41 E/CN. 4/2002/42.

<sup>735</sup> For the violation of the legal system by governmental officers see W. Floor’s article in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Judicial and Legal Systems v. Judicial System in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

<sup>736</sup> H. Khorsandi, *Āyehā-ye Irāni*, Los Angeles: Zax, 1993, pp. 111.

As the following quatrain indicates, Khorsandi is angry not only at Ayatollah Khomeini but also at those Iranians who supported him once he was in power, to secure their own positions:

I've seen those who cursed the sheikh and  
constantly flung foul language at his head,  
to get their possessions back, give him baskets of <sup>737</sup> flowers as a sign of respect.

آنانکه به شیخ، فحش بد میدادند

دشنام رکیک، بی عدد میدادند

دیدم پی پس گرفتن مال و منالگل خدمت او سبد سبد میدادند.

### 6.2.3 An anonymous Satire on Ayatollah Khomeini's Poetry

Some poets in the Diaspora who responded to Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry wished to stay anonymous. One example is the following parody on Ayatollah Khomeini's *Cheshm-e Bimâr*, composed in 1989:

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|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | [If even] the city's preacher [the Āyatullāh] has<br>headed to the wine-seller<br>How difficult this makes the job of the guardians<br>of morality and the police!                   | واعظ شهر سوی خانه خمار شدست<br>کار بر محتسب و شحنة عجب زار شدست                                           |
| 2 | What a lasso is my beloved's hair that even<br>The prayer bead carrying ascetic is ensnared!<br>Tell him to throw down his prayer beads if<br>truthfully!                            | چه کمندبست سر زلف نگارم که درآن زاهد سببه<br>بکف نیز گرفتار شدست<br>گو که تسبیح به خاک افکند ار از سر صدق |
| 3 | This murderer of the young Magi wants to put on<br>the sacred girdle.<br>The (wine) cup breaking shaykh has not broken his<br>old repentance                                         | قاتل مغیبهگان طالب زهر شدست<br>شیخ پیمانه شکن توبه دیرین نشکست                                            |
| 4 | He talks in delirium since he fell sick.<br><br>Don't listen to his delirium, don't accept a<br>wolf's recantation,<br>For in his trap two hundred flocks<br>[thousands] have fallen | هزیان گوید از آن روز که بیمار شدست<br><br>هزیانش مشنو توبه گرگان مپزیر<br>که بدین دام وسد گله گرفتار شدست |
| 5 | He sees his own face in every liquid; and with a<br>new trick<br>That seeker wants to use the mirror cup [for his<br>own ends]                                                       | نقش خود دیده بهر آب و به نیرنگی نو<br>طالب آن قده آینه کردار شدست                                         |
| 6 | After shedding the blood of a thousand Mansurs<br><br>He deceptively pretends to claim his own place on<br>the gallows                                                               | از پس ریختن خون هزاران منصور<br><br>خود به تزویر خریدار سر دار شدست                                       |

<sup>737</sup> Ibid., p. 112.

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|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>7 The oppressor who sewed up the lips of bowl and wine drinker<br/>Now is claiming to love the mole on the upper lip of the beloved</p>                                      | <p>آن ستمگر که لب ساغر و ساقی می دوخت<br/>هلیا مدعیه خال لب یار شدست</p>   |
| <p>8 The gay gathering of the drunkards of “Aren’t I” won’t let him in<br/>No matter how much he has come to despise mosque and seminary</p>                                    | <p>بزم مستان آلتش ندهد راه ورود<br/>گرچه از مسجد و از مدرسه بیزار شدست</p> |
| <p>9 He is not worthy of the drunkards who hold suffering of the world on their shoulders<br/>He who is so despised in the eyes of all the fellows of wisdom.<sup>738</sup></p> | <p>لایق صحبت رندان بلاکش نبود<br/>آنکه در چشمه همه اهل خرد خار شدست</p>    |

The anonymous poet has written his counter poem in the exact same metre as the original one by Ayatollah Khomeini, namely -0--/00--/00- (*ramal-e mothamman-e makhbun-e mahdhuf*), adding two additional couplets. To ensure his poem would be read as a response (*javâb*) to Ayatollah Khomeini’s poem, the poet wrote in the third person, while Ayatollah Khomeini’s *ghazal* is in the first person. Like Khorsandi, the poet uses the antinomian symbols and images that Ayatollah Khomeini used in his poem, but places them in another context to criticize Ayatollah Khomeini.

Couplet one responds in a satiric fashion to the fact that Ayatollah Khomeini identifies himself with unorthodox figures such as wine drinkers, but established a regime that enforced Islamic laws of dress and behavior, such as the ban on drinking wine. As A.A. Seyed-Gohrab has indicated, the wine motif has retained a prominent position in both classical and modern Persian poetry, although Islam forbids the consumption of alcohol. It has been used by Persian poets in medical, religious and mystical contexts.<sup>739</sup> To ridicule Ayatollah Khomeini, the anonymous poet takes the wine motif literally, pointing out that those who did drink were punished by “the guardians of morality and the police.” The poet is appalled that Ayatollah Khomeini identifies himself with the wine drinkers while, as he states in couplet seven, in reality Ayatollah Khomeini was an “oppressor who sewed up the lips of bowl and wine drinker.”

In couplet two, the poet responds to the fact that Ayatollah Khomeini in the first couplet of his poem claims to have been spiritually intoxicated after having witnessed the Beloved. The poet believes that the mystical state of *bimâri*, which Ayatollah Khomeini

<sup>738</sup>The translation comes from M.M.J. Fischer and M. Abedi, *Debating Muslims: Cultural dialogues in postmodernity and tradition*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, pp. 453-454.

<sup>739</sup> See A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, “The Rose and the Wine: Dispute as a Literary Device in Classical Persian Literature,” in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 47, Issue I, 2014, pp. 69-85.

pretends to have reached, is merely a trick to fool the people (“Tell him to throw down his prayer beads if truthfully”).

In couplet three the anonymous poet responds to Ayatollah Khomeini’s praise of the Magi (“Oh my friend, I have become possessed by the beauty spot above your lip.”), who in mystical poetry is often presented as an idealized beauty, reflecting his perfection on all levels. In his response, the anonymous poet depicts Ayatollah Khomeini as the “murderer of the young Magi who wants to put on the sacred girdle,” condemning him for his ‘peaceful’ and ‘tolerant’ words, while Zoroastrians had hard times under his rule. In addition, the poet believes that Ayatollah Khomeini is not worthy of wearing the sacred girdle, which mystics who have reached perfection are allowed to wear. The poet implies that Ayatollah Khomeini has only used concepts from love mysticism to place himself above others, claiming that he had reached a state of perfection.

In couplet four the poet, like Khorsandi, turns the mystical concept of *bimâri*, to which Ayatollah Khomeini refers, into a physical sickness. The poet believes that Ayatollah Khomeini’s illness is not caused by his longing for God but is rather a real physical disease. The poet is convinced that Ayatollah Khomeini merely uses beautiful mystical language to distract people, like a wolf who distracts people by showing a fake ‘repentance.’<sup>740</sup> According to the anonymous poet thousands of people have fallen in his trap. So does the poet refer to *bimâri*, which in a mystical context entails the ‘love-madness’ of the infatuated mystical lover that has witnessed God, but which the poet in the case of Ayatollah Khomeini defines as a ‘delirium’, (*divânegi*), a real physical disease that has nothing to do with the mystic that has reached spiritual perfection.

In couplet five the poet refers to an 1978 incident, where Iranians claimed that they had seen the face of Ayatollah Khomeini in the moon.<sup>741</sup> The news, which spread rapidly through the country with the help of the media, was soon confirmed by millions of Iranians who claimed that they had also seen his face. The incident added to Ayatollah Khomeini’s image of being a saint, by far trespassing the qualities of an ordinary religious scholar. Up to today many Iranians have responded to this incident, some positively and other negatively, claiming that these rumors have been falsely spread to popularize Ayatollah Khomeini. One

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<sup>740</sup> Comes from the Persian expression “*towbe-ye gorg marg ast*”(“the repentance of a wolf is its death”). See M.M.J. Fischer, and M. Abedi, *Debating Muslims: Cultural Dialogues in Postmodernity and Tradition*, p. 453.

<sup>741</sup> See A. Taheri, *The Spirit of Allah: Khomeini and the Islamic Revolution*, New York: Alder and Alder Publishers, 1986, p. 238; Y. Richard, *Shi’ite Islam*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1995, p. 197.

of the responses came from the famous poet Nader Naderpur (d. 2000) who composed and published the satirical poem *Khomeini dar Mâh, Khâtami dar Mâhvâre* (Khomeini on the Moon, Khatami on a Satellite) in the Iranian Newspaper *Keyhân*. In the couplet the poet also criticizes Ayatollah Khomeini's appropriation of Mansur Hallâj (d. 922). In the tradition of antinomian poets, Ayatollah Khomeini identifies himself with this mystic, who was executed for claiming to have attained spiritual perfection. The poet cannot believe that Ayatollah Khomeini identifies with this 'unorthodox' person, when in reality he oppressed those who deviated from Islamic Law: he has shed "the blood of a thousand Mansurs."

In couplet six the poet responds to Ayatollah Khomeini's adoption of the figure of Hallâj in his poem and condemns Ayatollah Khomeini's identification with this unorthodox figure in his poetry, while in reality he severely punished all those that trespassed the Islamic rules and prescriptions.

In couplet seven the anonymous poet defines Ayatollah Khomeini as an 'oppressor' (*zâlem*), an epithet that Ayatollah Khomeini applied often, to the West, the Arabs, the Sunnites or the Iranian royal family. The anonymous poet tellingly turns it on Ayatollah Khomeini himself. While Ayatollah Khomeini presents himself as a tolerant wine-drinking mystic, the poet depicts him as the total opposite, a cruel oppressor who harshly punished those who broke Islamic law.

In couplet eight the poet again comments on Ayatollah Khomeini's identification with 'wine-drinking' mystics who have turned their back at religious institutions. The poet implies that Ayatollah Khomeini will never be accepted by these sort of mystics.

Although the poet chooses to be anonymous, in the last couplet of the poem, where Persian poets traditionally leave their pen-name (*takhallos*), the poet suggests his own background when he speaks of Ayatollah Khomeini being "despised in the eyes of all the fellows of wisdom."<sup>742</sup> The term implies that the anonymous poet must be a person with a philosophical approach to Islam. It is clear that the poet is one of these "fellows of wisdom," that does not accept Ayatollah Khomeini's mystical pretensions at all.

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<sup>742</sup> See J.T.P. de Bruijn, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), under *Takhallos* ii In the Sense of Pen-Name. 3See also J. Rypka, *History of Iranian literature*, Dordrecht: Springer, 1968, p. 99.

## Conclusion

The content of Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry has led to many doubts about the authenticity of his poetry collection. Many Iranians could not rhyme the unorthodox topics in his poems with the Ayatollah Khomeini they knew in the political scene, where he often presented himself as an uncompromising Islamic leader. Only a small group of intimates was familiar with the mystical inclinations of Ayatollah Khomeini.

Also the responses in Diaspora were not positive. We have seen how both Khorsandi and the anonymous poet have removed all mystical and metaphoric values from Ayatollah Khomeini's original poem. While Ayatollah Khomeini wrote his *ghazal* in the classical style and terminology, making use of a wide range of mystical metaphors, both Khorsandi and the anonymous poet in their parodies purposely use these metaphors in a literal sense, trying to correspond them to the hard realities of Ayatollah Khomeini's regime. The form parody enables the poets to remove Ayatollah Khomeini's *ghazal* from its classical context, moving it to the modern period. Both poets depict Ayatollah Khomeini as a sick person, who used concepts from love mysticism to distract people. Both criticize Ayatollah Khomeini for presenting himself as a tolerant mystic, wary of orthodox institutions, while in reality he paved the way for the implementation of an Islamic governance where people were forced to live according to strict Islamic laws.

Khorsandi's satire on *Cheshm-e Bimâr* indicates that, according to Khorsandi, Ayatollah Khomeini has turned concepts deriving from love mysticism into means of destruction. In these *robâ'is* of the late 1980s, Khorsandi presents Ayatollah Khomeini as a cruel oppressor who loves to spill blood. Also in his satirical essays Khorsandi often depicts Ayatollah Khomeini as a blood-thirsty person. In the second part of his satirical story collection *Âyehâ-ye Irâni*, which is called *Part Two; in which Everyone waits for the Imam to die*, Khorsandi refers to the rumors which spread through Iran in 1982, stating that the war with Iraq would soon come to an end. In the name of the "Supreme War Council," Khorsandi satirically says: "There are reports upon hearing the news that the war has come to an end, Imam Khomeini has had a heart attack and has been hospitalized at the Heart Hospital's Queen Mother Suite. The Imam's doctors have prescribed that fighting should be resumed along the country's western borders within 24 hours".<sup>743</sup> In a satiric fashion Khorsandi implies that Ayatollah Khomeini enjoined war-making, depicting him as cruel dictator who only can be prevented from dying when the blood of his people flows. In another satirical

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<sup>743</sup> H. Khorsandi, *Âyehâ-ye Irâni*, p. 78.

story, Khorsandi has the main character in the story, the Supreme War Council, say that “the valiant, shroud-wearing Islamic Revolutionary Guards shall never let the Iraqi forces pull out of the areas they have occupied in Iran, and even should they leave Iran, the Islamic Republic will continue the war until Saddam Hussein is overthrown, the Palestine War has begun, Israel is bombed, Saudi Arabia is destroyed, King Hossein of Jordan has fallen, King Hassan of Morocco is punished, Soviet forces have left Afghanistan, Poland’s internal problems are settled, the crisis in Bulgaria is over, and the British Labour Party’s leadership problem is resolved”.<sup>744</sup> In other words, Khorsandi satirically says that the war will never be over, since every time the Iranian regime finds a new reason for prolonging the war. In another satirical story Khorsandi states that ‘they must shed blood these youth as an offering, for the sake of bloodshed they must shed blood. For the sake of all they must shed. It has blessings for us, blood does, for everybody’.<sup>745</sup>

Satirical story collections such *Âyehâ-ye Irâni* help us to understand the general message in Hadi Khorsandi’s exile poetry and in the poem analysed above. According to him, Ayatollah Khomeini used the mystical concepts of love and union to mobilize people for his political agenda. According to Khorsandi, Ayatollah Khomeini was only out for power and for world-leadership and made use of mystical poetry, which has played an important role in Iranian culture since the ninth century, to attract people. While the poet was a fervent supporter of Ayatollah Khomeini at first, and was also sensitive to his love messages, this poem demonstrates that Khorsandi is convinced that Ayatollah Khomeini soon set aside his peaceful means, once he came to power, and that he from then on used more violent means to attain mass obedience.

The message which Khorsandi conveys in his poem is also shared by the anonymous poet. Like Khorsandi, he has made use of parody, taking Ayatollah Khomeini’s original *ghazal* from its context, enabling him to depict Ayatollah Khomeini as a cruel oppressor, who distracts the people with his mystical claims. So does the anonymous poet make fun of the rumour which spread in 1978 that Ayatollah Khomeini’s face could be seen in the moon, presenting it as part of his distracting games. It seems as if both poets have a problem with the fact that Ayatollah Khomeini identifies himself with the mystical lover, placing himself in the tradition of poets such as Hâfêz and Khayyâm, who are the pride of the Iranians. It would be interesting to find out how Iranians in Diaspora would respond to the same poem, not

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<sup>744</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>745</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

knowing that it had been composed by Ayatollah Khomeini. Hopefully this question can be answered in the near future by further research.

The responses of Ayatollah Khomeini's followers on the other hand, show a purely mystical reading. Ayatollah Khomeini's followers have put every effort in proving that his poems should be placed in a mystical context, by adopting 'mystical' lectures from Ayatollah Khomeini addressed to his daughter-in-law or by composing a mystical glossary. The charges that the poems could not have been written by Ayatollah Khomeini are set aside by multiple references to his mystical works from the early 1940s. Like in the case of Khayyâm's poetry, which at the instigation of the Islamic government of Iran has been re-interpreted and presented as mystical poetry while it for ages had been criticized for its blasphemous nature, Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry in these two books is presented in a similar way. The question is why his followers want to place Ayatollah Khomeini in a mystical context? Why would Ahmad Ayatollah Khomeini, his own son, publish a mystical poem of his father in the daily newspaper Keyhân? And why would Fâteme Tabâtabâ'i, the daughter-in-law of Ayatollah Khomeini, comment publicly on Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry?

The fact that Fâteme Tabâtabâ'i allows Iranians to peak into her personal life, by depicting the mystical experiences she shared with Ayatollah Khomeini, enlargens the saintly status which has been projected on Ayatollah Khomeini by his followers since his appearance in the political arena. By merely focusing on the mystical side of Ayatollah Khomeini, the Iranian government, whether purposely or accidentally, overlooks Ayatollah Khomeini's political decisions, which in some cases had far-reaching consequences for Iran and for its people. The few references to Ayatollah Khomeini's political actions that can be found in these books, are all placed in a mystical context. Legenhausen interprets the Islamic revolution that was headed by Ayatollah Khomeini as "the exoteric dimension of the impetus to reveal Islamic mysticism to the public".<sup>746</sup> As Legenhausen states:

Imām Khomeini, in line with sentiments his reports having been expressed by his teacher Shāāhbādi, sought to initiate a process through which 'irfān could become public. This process was not to be a sudden revolution. His own works on 'irfān were not very widely distributed during his lifetime, but a persistent emphasis on the mystical elements of Shiite thought were interspersed among the more popular political declaration, and may be found in *The Greatest Jihād*,<sup>3f</sup> as well. (3f Imām Khomeini, *The Greatest Jihād: Combat with the Self*,

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<sup>746</sup> *The Wine of Love*, p. xvii.

2<sup>nd</sup> ed., tr. Mohammad Legenhausen (Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imām Khomeinī's Works, 2003), [EDs.]]<sup>747</sup>

As a matter of fact, Legenhausen places all of Ayatollah Khomeini's decisions in a mystical context, tracing them back to Ayatollah Khomeini's selflessness and unconditional love for God, saying: "If he tolerated derisions by the ignorant; if he took poison and traded his pride,<sup>3</sup> it was for Islam and Allah and if he waged *jihād*, that too, was to please the Lord."<sup>748</sup> By placing his poetry and his character in a mystical context, Ayatollah Khomeini's followers, whether purposely or unintended, offer an explanation for all of Ayatollah Khomeini's actions, also the political ones, which according to them all derived from his unconditional love for God.

In my view, Legenhausen, Adabiyyat and Ayatollah Khomeini's family have purposely placed Ayatollah Khomeini in a mystical light after his death, enabling them to project on him a holy status, that by far trespassed that of the ordinary man. It seems as if his followers have used his poems as tokens of his personal experiences on the mystical path, to support the thought that Ayatollah Khomeini had reached perfection and therefore was invulnerable and free from blame. It might have been a deliberate act to overemphasize the mystical side of Ayatollah Khomeini's character in books such as the ones examined, in order for the reader to re-interpret all of Ayatollah Khomeini's actions, whether they were poetical or political, and approach all of them from a mystical point of view, taking off the sharp edges of his character, which was often under fire for his political decisions. Another reason for Ayatollah Khomeini's followers to place him in a mystical context, could have been that they were well aware of the popularity of Islamic mysticism in Iranian culture. The whole Iranian society, not only a religious level, but also in the literary field, has been intertwined with mystical thoughts since the ninth century. Each Iranian, young and old, knows at least some mystical poems of Hâfez by heart. Islamic mysticism thus typifies the Iranian identity. It could be that Ayatollah Khomeini's followers purposely highlighted this mystical side of Ayatollah Khomeini, to disseminate him as a true Iranian as opposed to the Arab Islamic culture which many other Ayatollahs propagated. The replacement of the Pahlavi government by an Islamic institution, without doubt was an enormous change for Iranians living in Iran. By using mystical ideas in his ceremonies, books and as appears also in his poetry, Ayatollah

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<sup>747</sup> Ibid.

<sup>748</sup> Ibid., pp. iii, iv.

Khomeini was able to popularize Islam and to address the mystical feelings with which all Iranians have grown up. Millions of people, both inside and outside of Iran were appealed by Ayatollah Khomeini's words. His followers were well aware of this. As appears from the poem *Khâb-e Shâh*, Khorsandi, one of Ayatollah Khomeini's greatest opponents, was at first also attracted by Ayatollah Khomeini's 'messages of love', being a point of recognition for him. However, in Khorsandi's view Ayatollah Khomeini only used mystical ideas to for political purposes. This is also the opinion of the anonymous poet. Although both poets are very familiar with the mystical tradition in which Ayatollah Khomeini wrote his *ghazal*, they purposely erase all mystical values from Ayatollah Khomeini's poem in their parodies, since they believe that Ayatollah Khomeini had nothing to do with mysticism.