



# Repenting Roguery: Penance in the Spanish Picaresque Novel and the Arabic and Hebrew Maqama

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Repenting Roguery: Penance in the Spanish Picaresque Novel  
and the Arabic and Hebrew *Maqāma*

A dissertation presented

by

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to

The Department of Comparative Literature

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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**Repenting Roguery: Penance in the Spanish Picaresque Novel and the Arabic and Hebrew *Maqāma***

Abstract

*Repenting Roguery: Penance in the Spanish Picaresque Novel and the Arabic and Hebrew Maqāma* investigates the significance of conversion narratives and penitential elements in the Spanish picaresque novels *Vida de Guzmán de Alfarache* (1599 and 1604) by Mateo Alemán and *El guitón Honofre* (circa 1606) by Gregorio González as well as Juan Ruiz's *Libro de buen amor* (1330 and 1343) and *El lazarillo de Tormes* (1554), the Arabic *maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī of Basra (circa 1100), and Ibn al-Ashtarkūwī al-Saraqustī (1126-1138), and the Hebrew *maqāmāt* of Judah al-Ḥarīzī (circa 1220) and Isaac Ibn Sahula (1281-1284). In exploring the ways in which Christian, Muslim, and Jewish authors from medieval and early modern Iberia represent the repentance of a rogue, this study not only sheds light on the important commonalities that these religious and literary traditions share, but also illuminates the particular questions that these picaresque and proto-picaresque texts raise within their respective religious, political and cultural milieux. The ambiguity that characterizes the conversion narrative of a seemingly irredeemable rogue, I argue, provides these medieval and early modern writers with an ideal framework to address pressing problems such as controversies regarding free will and predestination, the legitimacy of claims to religious and political authority, and the understanding of social and religious marginality.

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## Introduction

Abū Ḥabīb, the roguish protagonist of Abū al-Ṭāhir Muḥammad Ibn Yūsuf al-Tamīmī al-Saraqusṭī's *al-Maqāmāt al-Luzūmiyya*, claims that authentic dream visions lead him to abandon his former life of trickery and banditry; his *tawba* appears to be confirmed when he becomes, in the eyes of his Sufi followers, “the ascetic of ascetics” and “the witness of witnesses” (461). Ḥever ha-Aḥoḥi, the bandit in the second gate of Ibn Sahula's *Meshal ha-Kadmoni*, is radically transformed after he hears “the voice of silence” urging him to return to the right path (216). By devoting himself to religious study, family life, and communal leadership he confirms his integral commitment to *teshuvah*. The rogue Guzmán de Alfarache also affirms that God has assisted him in finding a path to penance in the face of his hopeless situation as a galley slave; the prudent reader (*discreto lector*) is invited to decipher the multi-layered implications of this assertion. This dissertation seeks to study the intriguing stories of repentance outlined above, along with a number of medieval and early modern literary texts from the Arabic, Hebrew and Spanish traditions. The literary motif of the repentant rogue serves as the unifying principle in this study by providing a particularly fruitful case study in the intersection of comparative literature and religious studies.

Rather than focusing on questions about the possible genetic connections between the Arabic and Hebrew *maqāma* and the Spanish picaresque novel, this project endeavors to highlight the commonalities that these genres share, as well as to illustrate their points of divergence. Accordingly, this study examines texts from different periods and tenors variously concerned with the motif of the repentant rogue; thus, the selection of texts aims to provide an interdisciplinary and multicultural sample of sources while paying

attention to their historical and cultural specificity. In addition, this dissertation seeks to establish a dialogue between the fields of comparative literature and religious studies by investigating the ways in which medieval and early modern Muslim, Jewish and Christian writers use the framework of proto-picaresque and picaresque narratives to create discursively ambiguous texts, which, at one level, provide lighthearted entertainment to their audience, while, at another level, address serious questions of their respective religious milieux and invite their audiences to critically examine the uses and misuses of religious discourse. In order to clarify the critical framework that guides this project, the following section briefly reviews critical approaches to the generic traditions under study.

### Critical Perspectives

This dissertation strives to productively engage with studies and debates concerning the three literary and religious traditions that coincide and collide in medieval and early modern Iberia. The variety and complexity of these critical approaches are addressed from two perspectives. On the one hand, this project dialogues with studies concentrating on the individual literary traditions concerned as well as with the critical debates regarding these particular traditions. On the other hand, this dissertation combines the attention to specific literary and cultural patterns with the wider perspective brought by comparative studies on the intersections and exchanges between the literatures and cultures of medieval and early modern Iberia. In this respect, I would like to highlight two works of literary criticism with which this dissertation converses, that is,

Abdelfattah Kilito's *Les séances: récits et codes culturels chez Hamadhānī et Harīrī* and James T. Monroe's *The Art of Badī' al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī as Picaresque Narrative*.<sup>1</sup>

Of particular interest in the context of this dissertation is Kilito's contention that "Il y a maqāma quand un auteur donne la parole, sur le mode fictif, à un ou à plusieurs personnages" (152). This project revisits and expands upon Kilito's conception of the *maqāma* as fictional attributed discourse, particularly with respect to the Arabic and Hebrew Andalusī *maqāmāt* examined below. In addition, this study further investigates the commonalities between the Arabic *maqāma* and the Spanish picaresque novel elucidated in James Monroe's *The Art*, which represents a foundational text in the critical current that inspires this project. I have aimed to contribute to the understanding of the textual traditions illuminated by the studies of Monroe and Kilito by emphasizing the confluence of literary, polemical and educational interests in Arabic, Hebrew and Spanish approaches to the motif of the repentant rogue as well as by stressing the perspective of religious studies in my critical analysis. In the wake of Monroe and Kilito, I argue that the rhetorical and moral ambivalence that characterizes many of these texts implies a call for a critical audience who should pay the utmost attention to the uses and misuses of discourse and avoid falling victims to the twofold trap of hypocrisy and naiveté. In contrast to Monroe and Kilito, though, I specifically focus on the ways in which the repentance narratives and penitential themes integrated into the Arabic and Hebrew *maqāma* and the Spanish picaresque novel serve a variety of functions and purposes, from moral instruction to social, institutional and political denunciation.

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<sup>1</sup> Henceforth, *Les séances* and *The Art*.

By concentrating on the common recourse to the motif of the repentant rogue in medieval and early modern Iberian literatures, this dissertation reflects on the uses of picaresque and proto-picaresque genres to address complex religious questions in these literary and religious traditions. From al-Ḥarīrī's invitation to joining a learned discussion on the inscrutability of God's favor in *tawba* to al-Saraqustī's denunciation of claims to religious and political authority in twelfth century al-Andalus, Arabic *maqāma* writers employ the motif of the repentant rogue to address a wide variety of problems and concerns, albeit in a multivalent fashion. Contrastingly, the Hebrew texts examined in the second part of this dissertation, this study demonstrates, are anchored in clear didactic goals, while not neglecting humorous and polemical aspects. Although al-Ḥarīzī's *Taḥkemoni* and Ibn Sahula's *Meshal ha-Kadmoni* differ in their literary and moral purposes, both texts refer to the importance of *teshuvah* as the mark of the understanding of human freedom and the consequent responsibility to acknowledge transgression. By including complex repentance narratives and penitential themes in wide-ranging narrative, poetic and allegorical arrays, these texts attest to the multi-generic and flexible form of the Andalusī *maqāma* as well as to the way Jewish authors from medieval Iberia transcend the literary mold of the Arabic *maqāma* by exploring questions inherent to Jewish moral thought. The analysis of the picaresque novels in the third part of this dissertation illuminates the different approaches to the sacrament of penance in connection with the development of penitential doctrine and practice in the proximity of the Lateran Council IV of 1215 and the Tridentine Council of 1545-1563. Like the Arabic and Hebrew texts reviewed above, picaresque novels from the anonymous *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554) to Gregorio González's *El Guitón Honofre* (1604) frame their

allusions to serious spiritual matters within the narrative of the life story of a rogue. Unlike the Hebrew and Arabic *maqāma*, though, the ambiguity with which the Spanish texts are infused betrays a systematic institutional and societal effort to spread and verify particular views and doctrines regarding penance. This dissertation thus endeavors to provide an encompassing appraisal of the overarching motif of the repentant rogue across the three religious and literary traditions studied. The intersection of comparative literature and religious studies at the center of this project will contribute to a better understanding of the questions and problems with which these generic traditions engage and, particularly, the repentance narratives and penitential elements that they integrate.

#### Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation is divided into three parts corresponding to the three religious traditions concerned. Each part includes an introduction to the understanding and conceptions of repentance in the particular religious tradition under discussion along with two chapters devoted to close readings of literary texts belonging to this tradition. This division aims to clarify the most relevant concepts employed in the literary analyses as well as to illuminate many of the problems that the specific literary and religious traditions address.

The first chapter includes a comprehensive discussion of Islamic notions regarding repentance, *tawba*, and refers to different sources and periods of Islamic history. By discussing the views on *tawba* in the Qur'ān, the *ḥadīth*, Islamic speculative theology, as well as in Muslim ascetic and mystical poetry, this introductory chapter seeks to provide the necessary conceptual framework for the analysis of the specific problems with which the following chapters are concerned. Chapter two, "The Ambiguity

of Being Earnest,” presents a general introduction to the *maqāma* genre as well as analyses of Badī’ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī’s *al-Maqāma al-Khamriyya* and Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥarīrī’s *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya*. I argue that these texts provide contrasting approaches to the representation of *tawba* in the Arabic *maqāma* genre. While al-Hamadhānī’s text provides a light-hearted tale of false repentance in a clear denunciation of the misuses of religious discourse, al-Ḥarīrī’s *maqāma* creates a space for the participation of the audience in deciphering the ambivalence of the rogue Abū Zayd’s use of religious discourse and late-life *tawba*. The third chapter, “Tawba and Its Discontents,” analyzes Abū al-Ṭāhir Muḥammad Ibn Yūsuf al-Tamīmī al-Saraqusṭī’s denunciation of the claims to religious and political authority by twelfth century Andalusī Sufī masters in *al-Maqāma al-Muwaḥḥiyya Khamsīn*. By framing Abū Ḥabīb’s *tawba* and posthumous legacy within a series of allusions to Ibn Masarra’s particularly problematic tenet of the acquisition of prophecy (*iktisāb al-nubuwwa*), al-Saraqusṭī, I demonstrate, calls the leadership of twelfth century Andalusī Sufis into question and implicitly criticizes all parties vying for power in the period.

The second part examines views concerning *teshuvah* in Judaic religious thought and tradition. Chapter four discusses the different conceptions of *teshuvah* in the Hebrew Bible, Rabbinic sources, Jewish liturgy and liturgical poetry, Jewish mystical poetry, and Judaic theological reflections. “Disputes and Supplications,” the fifth chapter of this dissertation, examines al-Ḥarīzī’s revision of the model provided by the Arabic *maqāma* and interprets his multi-generic fictional compositions in the light of the flexible understanding of the *maqāma* genre in al-Andalus. In particular, I claim that “*Maḥberet ha-Bakkashot*” and “*Maḥberet Vikuah ha-Nefesh im ha-Guf*” attest to al-Ḥarīzī’s interest

in promoting a discussion of serious religious matters in the Hebrew language, while inviting his thirteenth century Jewish audience in the East to a deeper understanding of human free will and the concomitant necessity of the recognition of sin in *teshuvah*. The sixth chapter, “On the Path to Integrity,” studies the repentance narratives included in the second gate of Ibn Sahula’s *Meshal ha-Kadmoni*. This chapter shows how Ibn Sahula’s *Meshal ha-Kadmoni* calls for a balanced understanding of and commitment to *teshuvah* in a call for unity among all societal groups in the thirteenth century Castilian Jewry.

The third and last part of this dissertation centers on the development of penitential practice and thought in the Christian tradition. Chapter seven traces the development of the understanding of penance and conversion from the *Acts of the Apostles* to Tirso de Molina’s engagement with sixteenth and seventeenth century controversies regarding divine grace and human free will in *El condenado por desconfiado*. The eighth chapter, “Between Reform and Counter-Reformation,” contrasts the representation of penance in Juan Ruiz’s *El libro de buen amor* and Mateo Alemán’s *Guzmán de Alfarache*. By comparing these two texts, this chapter highlights the movement from a call for encompassing reform spearheaded by the Lateran Council IV of 1215 to the new significance of the sacrament of penance in Counter-Reformation Spain after the decisions of the Council of Trent of 1545-1563. The ninth and last chapter, “The Right to Remain Impenitent,” focuses on the treatment and understanding of impenitence in the anonymous picaresque novel *Lazarillo de Tormes* and Gregorio González’s *El guitón Honofre*. I argue that these texts, while equally presenting the story of an impenitent rogue, have radically different goals. While *Lazarillo* points to a relatively complex theological problem in the context of the social and institutional



neglect of charity, *El guitón* engages in a comedic and critical examination of contemporary debates regarding human freedom and divine grace while identifying the individual as the sole source of immorality and impenitence.

Regarding the discursive ambivalence at the core of the motif of the repentant rogue in these particular generic traditions, this project will pose and consider the following questions. What kind of clues, if any, do writers of *maqāmāt* and picaresque novels include in their works to help in understanding the implications of their roguish characters' repentance narratives? What role the audience is assigned with respect to this interpretive and moral task? How do these stories of repentance relate to contemporary discussions on penance in other literary genres and beyond the purely literary realm? How could a study anchored in the intersections of comparative literature and religious studies contribute to a better understanding of this particular generic tradition?

## PART ONE: *TAWBA*

### Chapter One *Tawba: Repentance in Islam*

Throughout the history of Islam, repentance (*tawba*) has occupied a special place in the most salient aspects of the religion. The *Qur'ān* abounds in terms that assert the importance of *tawba* as an essential dynamic in mankind's relationship with God. The prophet Muḥammad assured his companions that he turned to God in repentance a hundred times a day, according to a prophetic tradition (*ḥadīth*) transmitted by al-Agharr al-Muzanī (Ibn al-Ḥajjāj 12.41). Classical Islamic theology (*'ilm al-kalām*) found in repentance a doctrinal battleground for debates on free will, divine justice and divine omnipotence. Some practitioners of Islamic mysticism (*taṣawwuf*) established repentance as the first station (*maqām*) of the Sufi path (al-Qushayrī 91). Ascetic poetry (*zuhdiyyāt*) designated repentance as the centerpiece of its radical homiletic discourse, while mystical poetry identified *tawba* as the touchstone of the Sufi progress toward God. Yet all these facets contribute in creating a mosaic of doctrines, practices and beliefs rather than a monolithic theological dogma.<sup>2</sup> In this respect, a discussion of each of these areas will be helpful in gaining an understanding of the Islamic concept of repentance (*tawba*) as a whole. The purpose of this introductory study will be then to provide some general guidelines on the conceptual framework of *tawba* in the Islamic tradition, which should

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that Islam tends to encourage conciliation among doctrinal discrepancies. This is the "Islamic genius for integrality," to use Toby Mayer's fortunate phrasing (268). For instance, in Islamic law the technical term *ikhtilāf* indicates the differences among the authorities of religious law across and within the various schools. After the time of al-Shāfi'ī (eighth/second century), the consensus (*ijmā'*) became the unifying principle of Islam across the several schools and "their alternative interpretations of *Qur'ān* and sunna are equally legitimate" and "equally orthodox." A saying, first found in *Fiqh al-akbar* of Abū Ḥanīfa and later ascribed to the prophet, encapsulates this conciliatory spirit when stating that "difference of opinion in the community of Muslims is a concession (*raḥma*) on the part of Allāh" (Schacht 1061-1062).

pave the way for the discussion of the *maqāmāt* with which the following chapters will be concerned.<sup>3</sup>

### I. God Loves Persistent Penitents: Repentance in the Qur’ān

In “The Qur’anic Vocabulary of Repentance: Orientations and Attitudes,” Frederick M. Denny provides a detailed discussion of the various semitic roots that constitute the vocabulary of repentance in the Qur’ān. Denny’s research demonstrates that the stems *n-w-b*, *’-w-b*, *t-w-b* and, less frequently, *r-j-’* are generally associated with spatial and attitudinal metaphors, which delineate the semantic field of repentance in the Islamic sacred text. All of these roots convey a sense of return, thus implying a change of direction and attitude; repentant sinners resume the right path, mend their ways and return to God. In contrast to this group of verbs, the stems *ḍ-l-l* and *r-d-d* describe a sinner who walks off the right path and refuses to pay heed to God’s messengers; stubborn transgressors are said to go astray, turn their backs to God and never truly repent. These contrasting spatial and attitudinal metaphors are the foundation of the Qur’anic concept of repentance.

Among the aforementioned stems, the root *t-w-b* deserves special consideration. This root is not only the base of most of the nomenclature of repentance in the *Qur’ān*, especially from the Medinan period onward, but it is also the root from which the classical technical term for repentance, *tawba*, stems (Denny 650). As noted above, this stem communicates a sense of turning or returning, but unlike the other roots listed it may refer to God as well as to human subjects. God turns forgivingly upon (*tāba ‘alā*) repentant transgressors; a penitent sinner turns to God in repentance (*tāba ‘ilā*) or simply

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<sup>3</sup> For the sake of brevity, this introduction will particularly focus on Sunni Islam.

returns (*tāba*). When referring to human subjects, this spatial metaphor is often associated with atonement; thus, attitudinal and reparative desiderata are frequently numbered alongside a sinner’s endeavor to turn to God in repentance. For instance, *Sūrat al-Nisā’* describes the religious hypocrite’s return to God as an encompassing vital transformation. This *sūra* asserts that hypocrites in religion (*munāfiqīn*) will burn “in the lowest depths of hell” (*fī al-dark al-‘asfal min al-nār*). They will find no help, unless they turn to God in repentance, mend their ways, hold fast to God and worship God sincerely. Upon enacting these radical changes, they atone for their sins. Only then will they be counted among the believers, whom God lavishly rewards (Qur’ān 4.145-6). Repentance ensures the sinner a place in the community of believers, which entails a lifelong commitment to faith. Accordingly, the hypocrite’s return to God (*tawba*) requires the complete abandonment of his former way of life; reform, steadfastness and sincerity in worship ratify his *tawba*. In the Qur’ān a sinner’s *tawba* is “not just a pro forma registering of one’s sorrow over sin,” but a vital transformation “which through positive acts seeks to keep oneself on the straight path in the future” (Denny 657). This lifelong commitment to *tawba* is the locus of human responsibility in Islam.

Further, the stem *t-w-b* is also frequently used to describe God’s attributes of forgiveness and mercy. When a regretful sinner seeks forgiveness, God is said to be relenting (*tawāb*), merciful (*rahīm*) and forgiving (*ghafūr*).<sup>4</sup> *Sūrat al-Baqara* provides a good example of this use when evoking the construction of *al-Ka’ba* by Abraham and Ishmael. In the 124th *ayyah* Abraham is appointed as the Imām of the people, for his lord

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<sup>4</sup> The Qur’ān seems to deny divine forgiveness only to polytheists and apostates, if they never sincerely return to God. Moreover, in many *sūras* God is said to lead astray only the stubborn sinners, even though he forgives whom he wills and leads astray whom he wills. I will use Arberry’s translation of the meanings throughout this introduction.

has afflicted him with commands and he has fulfilled his orders.<sup>5</sup> Upon hearing this promise, Abraham asks whether his descendants will also be made leaders among the people. “My covenant (*‘ahdī*) does not apply to wrong doers,” God replies. The *sūra* continues relating how God made the house that Abraham had built (*al-ka‘ba*) “a place of return and a safe haven for the people” (*muthāba li-l-nās wa-‘amn*) and how the place where Abraham stood became “a station of prayer” (*muṣallā*). Abraham and Ishmael then ask God to make them submissive to His rule (literally, “Muslims for Him”) and to make their descendants a nation submissive to Him (*‘umma Muslima*), to show them His rites and to accept their repentance, for He is ever accepting of repentance and merciful (*‘innaka ‘anta al-tawāb al-rahīm*) (*Qur‘ān* Al-Baqarah 2.124-28).

This fragment is anchored in the semantic field of repentance while providing a detailed image of humankind’s relationship with the divine, the intercessory status of prophethood and the prevalence of divine mercy in Islam. God refuses to bequeath Abraham’s status to his descendants, since there will be wrongdoers among them, but he grants Abraham a place of return, prayer and protection for the people. Abraham and Ishmael’s subsequent plea confirms the intercessory status that God has granted them, as they ask God to turn upon them in forgiveness and mercy and to make their descendants a

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<sup>5</sup> Abraham’s trials signal an important motive in Qur’ānic repentance narratives in which, as al-Qurṭubī notes, affliction and despair are tantamount to the divine test that precedes forgiveness and the sinner’s consequent return to the right path, cf. Qur‘ān 7.168 . *Sūrat al-tawba* (9.118) provides a moving example of this use. Three of Muḥammad’s allies in Medina failed to join him in the expedition to Tabuk. Unlike other helpers who hypocritically adduced an excuse, these three supporters admitted their fault before Muḥammad. The prophet then banned them from any contact with the community and left them behind until God stated his judgment upon them. *Sūrat al-tawba* describes their plight as they waited for God to reveal his decision. In their banishment, their anguish and regret became unbearable. The earth narrowed upon them, despite its vastness; their souls shrank. They finally understood that there was no refuge from God but in God. Then, God turned forgivingly upon them, so that they might turn to him in repentance, for He is the forgiving (accepting of repentance) and the merciful. For a thorough discussion of this passage and its significance in the formulation of the Qur’anic conceptions of repentance, see Denny 656ff.

nation submissive to the divine rule.<sup>6</sup> Further, given the spatial metaphors associated with repentance, Abraham and Ishmael's request for forgiveness (*tub 'alaynā*) reflects God's granting of a place of return and safe haven for the people (*muthāba*); thus, the prophets are interceding on their descendants' behalf, whom God has previously described as transgressors. In fact, the meaning of these prophets' supplication in this *ayyah* calls the attention of the Cordovan *mufassir* Abū Abdallah Muḥammad al-Qurṭubī (d. 1259), who provides valuable insights on the significance of this *ayyah* in *al-Jami' li-Aḥkam al-Qur'ān*.<sup>7</sup> Al-Qurṭubī declares that there is divergence in the interpretation of Abraham and Ishmael's supplication in this *sūra* (*ikhtilāf fi m'anā qaūl Ibrāhīm wa-Ishmā'īl*). The Cordovan commentator quotes a group of exegetes (*ta'ifa*) as stating that Abraham and Ishmael were only asking for confirmation and constancy (*tathbūt wa-dawām*) by asking for God's forgiveness. The Cordovan *mufassir* agrees, since prophets are infallible (*anbyā' ma 'šūmūn*). Further, adds al-Qurṭubī, by asking God for forgiveness, the prophets intend to be clear and make their people know that the house they have built (*al-ka'ba*) is a place for the obliteration of sin and seeking repentance, in accordance with God's covenant (al-Qurṭubī 65). This is why the last part of this *ayyah* assures that God is ever forgiving and merciful (*al-tawāb al-raḥīm*).

The different meanings revolving around the use of the stem *t-w-b* in the Qur'ān assert two important elements of the Islamic conception of repentance, one concerning the relevance of divine mercy and the other concerning the necessity of humankind's

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<sup>6</sup> Mujahid, the 7th century *tā'ib* and *tafsīr* authority, explains these *ayyāt* by presenting a dialogue between God and Abraham. In Mujahid's dialogue Abraham asks God for several favors, upon learning that God will afflict him. One of the concessions with which God complies is the establishment of al-Ka'aba as a place of return and protection (qtd. in al-Qurṭubī 67).

<sup>7</sup> Al-Qurṭubī was a thirteenth century Andalusī Muslim scholar, associated with the Maliki school of law. He is particularly reputed for his commentary of the Qur'ān (*tafsīr*), quoted above.

responsibility before God and toward the community. If God is ever relenting toward humankind, humankind must turn to God in repentance, by committing to faith, mending ways and performing good works. In the Qur’ān and in Islam, in general, God’s mercy and forgiveness create a space for human agency and responsibility in providing an opportunity of return and amendment. As this discussion will demonstrate, this relationship between divine mercy and human responsibility will also concern the concept of repentance found in *al-ḥadīth*.

## II. Before the Sun Rises from the West: Repentance in *al-Ḥadīth*.

A great variety of *ḥadīth* are concerned with the conceptual framework of repentance, as these traditions often constitute exacting illustrations of divine lordship and mercy in interaction with human agency and responsibility. The acts and sayings of the prophet not only set an example for the pious, but also provide the community of believers with very vivid narratives embodying the desirability of *tawba* in the face of the assurance of divine mercy and forgiveness. Although mercy and forgiveness are two of the most salient attributes of God in Islam, their prominence does not exempt human beings from the necessity of *tawba*. A brief overview of relevant *aḥadīth* will be helpful in exemplifying the necessity of *tawba* in relation to the preeminence of divine mercy, forgiveness and lordship in these traditions.

According to a tradition transmitted on the authority of Abū Hurayra,<sup>8</sup> the prophet Muḥammad affirmed that he turned to God in repentance more than seventy times a day, his stature as the seal of prophethood and the recipient of the revelation notwithstanding.

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<sup>8</sup> Abū Hurayra was one of the companions of the prophet (*Ṣaḥāba*). He is reputed as the transmitter of many *aḥadīth*. He was under Muḥammad’s protection, to which he attributed the numerous traditions he had the opportunity to record. Although modern scholars show skepticism as to the authenticity of the traditions traced to him, many of his *aḥadīth* are found in the *Saḥīḥ Muslim* and the *Saḥīḥ al-Bukharī*, the most authoritative *ḥadīth* collections in the Sunni tradition (Robson 129).

The prophet's fellow human beings should pay heed to the example that he has set and repent. Before death rattles in their throats, their *tawba* will be accepted, for God has allowed his mercy to prevail over his anger (Ibn al-Ḥajjāj 49.4.14). Upon accepting every penitent man's *tawba*, affirms a tradition reported on the authority of Harīth b. Suwayd, God is more delighted than a man who having lost his camel along with his water and food supplies in the middle of a sun-scorched desert unexpectedly finds his riding beast and rejoices at his deliverance from thirst and starvation (Ibn al-Ḥajjāj 49.1.3). Another *ḥadīth* traced to Abū Hurayra relates that after absolving a man who asked for forgiveness on several occasions and relapsed into sin time after time, God accepted his *tawba* once again, for every time this man sinned and sought forgiveness, he also recognized that he had a lord who would forgive him or take him into account for his sins (Ibn al-Ḥajjāj 49.5.29). In sum, God will turn forgivingly upon whomever turns to Him in repentance before the sun rises from the west (Ibn al-Ḥajjāj bk. 35 num. 6525).<sup>9</sup>

These traditions present two dynamics intrinsic to the conception of repentance in the main sources of Islam, the Ḥadīth and the Qur'ān, 1) the pivotal role of divine mercy and forgiveness in creating a space for *tawba*, 2) humanity's need to repent as an acknowledgement of God's lordship. Divine mercy paves the way for forgiveness, but it is human beings' responsibility to fully embrace the opportunity with which divine mercy provides them. As the *ḥadīth* of the sinner who continuously repents, relapses and is forgiven demonstrates, it is the correlation between the recognition of sins committed and the request for divine forgiveness that ultimately ratifies a sinner's return to God. By

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<sup>9</sup> This tradition refers to Islamic eschatology, which identifies the sun's rising from the west as a sign of doomsday. On this day, the gate for the acceptance of repentance, which God built when he created the heavens and the earth, will be closed. Before this day, all sinners will be forgiven, if they turn to God in repentance and seek divine forgiveness. For a detailed description of the gate of repentance and the eschatological imagery associated with this door see Nawawī's *Riyāḍ al-ṣāliḥīn* 2.19.



imploing for divine forgiveness, the relapsing sinner confirms that he is subservient to a lord who punishes and forgives human transgressions. This awareness of God's sovereignty and Judgment enacts the penitent sinner's conciliation with God, as it attests to the essential relationship between God and humankind in Islam.<sup>10</sup>

The Qur'ān and the *ḥadīth* hence establish a substantial conceptual framework for the discussion of repentance. However, neither the Qur'ān nor the *ḥadīth* intend to provide a systematic evaluation of the theological questions their conceptual seedbed might pose. This theological inquiry will be the task of later generations of Muslim thinkers. The following sections are concerned with various attempts to create a systematic theological assessment of *tawba* in accordance with the traditional sources of Islam.

### III. The Theology of *Tawba*: *'Ilm al-Kalām*

The first endeavors to create a thorough inquiry into the principles of the faith in Islam are associated with the development of *'Ilm al-Kalām*, one of the Islamic religious sciences.<sup>11</sup> This science aimed at furnishing discursive arguments in the service of the elucidation and defense of the Islamic faith (Gardet 1142). This speculative endeavor attempted then to provide a rational basis that would strengthen faith as well as constitute an adequate apologetics for a religious group whose political expansion met increasing

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<sup>10</sup> Here I am echoing Frederick Denny's analysis of the prayer of Jonah in Qur'ān 21:87 (653). According to Denny, Jonah's prayer attests to the fact that "it is the awareness of the sovereignty of God which alone makes true repentance possible. Without this, the sinner, however remorseful and anguished, is lost. One can, in other words, be remorseful without being truly repentant. And this question became crucial in later Islamic definitions of repentance, to the effect that one must make amends and not return to the old behavior pattern, all the while acknowledging the Lordship of Allah" (653).

<sup>11</sup> The Islamic religious sciences include the study of prophetic traditions (and Imami traditions in the case of Shī'ism, Qur'ānic commentary (*tafsīr*), Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and Islamic speculative theology (*'ilm al-Kalām*), among other related fields.

interdenominational contentions. Although opposed at its inception by the stricter rationalism of the *falsafa* and the fideist tendencies of Hanbalism (Gardet 1148), *ilm al-kalām* was eventually integrated into what would become the Sunnite and Shi‘ite systems of beliefs.<sup>12</sup> This integration must be attributed to the two main *kalām* schools of the period comprising the ninth and tenth centuries, the *Ash‘ariyya* and the *Mu‘tazila*, whose divergent understanding of God and his attributes would have a tremendous impact on the development of the main theological tenets of Islam. An overview of the basic theses of these two theological schools would be of assistance in understanding the concept of repentance that they sustain. We shall confine ourselves to discussing their conceptions of God’s attributes and the different views on human acts that derive from these conceptions. These fundamental differences, as will be seen, ultimately determine the place that *tawba* occupies in their respective theological systems.

### 1. The *Mu‘tazila*

To the *Mu‘tazila* are usually ascribed the first attempts to create a rationalistic basis for the Islamic faith, an effort that dates back to the third/ninth century. Their speculative foundation takes the form of five principles, namely, God’s unity (*tawhīd*), God’s justice (*‘adl*), the promise and the threat (*al-wa‘d wa-l-wa‘īd*), the intermediate state of the Muslim sinner (*al-manzīla bayn al-manzīlatayn*), and the principle of commanding what is good and forbidding what is evil (*al-amr bi-l-ma‘rūf wa-l-nahy ‘an al-munkar*) (Gimaret 787). Among these five concepts, the principles of divine justice and the promise and the threat are particularly relevant in the context of this dissertation. God is absolutely just; He promises to reward the good acts and punish the wicked. These

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<sup>12</sup> The principles developed by the *Ash‘ariyya* and the *Mu‘tazila* broadly correspond to the theological foundations of Sunnī and Shī‘ī Islam, respectively (Monroe, *The Art* 47-63).

acts are good or bad in themselves, as it is self-explanatory to all adults of average intelligence. As a consequence, the moral value of acts is independent of divine revelation. Good and evil are rationally discernible properties; accordingly, they are commanded or forbidden in the divine revelation (Raysūnī 236).

The Mu‘tazilite theological system is therefore anchored in “the objectivity of value” (Arfa Mensia 121). Human subjects and God respond to the same principles. Evil ought to be punished and good ought to be rewarded, since this is the promise and the threat confirmed in the revelation. Otherwise, the primacy of divine justice, also dependent on the objectivity of value, would be compromised. Since evil is not intrinsically linked to God’s power, human subjects are entirely responsible for their evil acts, which are at variance with their rational capacity for discernment.<sup>13</sup> Acts are then an integral part of faith, according to Mu‘tazilite thought (Arfa Mensia 115). The believer who sins becomes neither an infidel nor a believer, as sins unatoned for cause him to fall into an intermediate state between belief and disbelief (*al-manzīla bayn al-manzīlatayn*). If this believer is unrepentant at the time of death, he will be eternally condemned. The Mu‘tazilite theological system demands the believers’ repentance for their salvation as the token of absolute divine justice.

## 2. The *Ash‘ariyya*

In contrast to the *Mu‘tazila*’s objective system of values, with which God and human beings alike comply, the theological system of the *Ash‘ariyya* identifies in the commands and prohibitions of the divine revelation and the Sunna the only criterion and

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<sup>13</sup> The emphasis on human rational capacities is also manifested in the Mu‘tazilite hermeneutical practices as rooted in allegorical interpretation (*ta‘wīl*) of the scriptures.

source of moral value.<sup>14</sup> The *Asha'riyya* dates back to its eponym, Abu'l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (d. 936), who being a former member of the *Mu'tazila*, employs this school's methods to the advancement of his own doctrinal branch. His theological school is reputed for having conciliated the traditionists' emphasis on *al-Qur'ān* and *al-Ḥadīth* with the recourse to rational argumentation in the defense of these very sources. Although in declared alignment with Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, who spearheaded a fideist approach to the *Qur'ān* while rejecting the rationalistic basis of faith sought after by the *Mu'tazila*, al-Ash'arī's defense of the priority of the Qur'ān and the Sunna is buttressed by the argumentative methods typically found in Mu'tazilite texts. Despite his methodological borrowings, however, al-Ash'arī decisively departs from the principles of the Mu'tazila. Al-Ash'arī's system prioritizes divine omnipotence. God is the absolute ruler who commands and is not commanded; thus, he is bound to no rule, not even to His own (Frank 35). His commands determine what is good; his prohibitions designate what is evil. The *Asha'riyya* then affirms the subjectivity of value. Moral value is neither absolute nor necessary (Arfa Mensia 121), but only relative to the commands and prohibitions in the divine revelation. Without the revelation, humankind would lack an adequate criterion of moral value. Further, the fundamental inadequacy of the human capacity for discernment implies that God's Judgment will ultimately and exclusively determine the moral value of human acts. Only God truly knows whether a human act is good or evil, just or unjust. This theological tenet is of particular importance with respect to the *Asha'riyya*'s complex theory of human acts.

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<sup>14</sup> The Sunna refers to the example and practice of the prophet Muḥammad and the first communities of Muslims.

### 3. Human Acts: the *Asha'ariyya*

The *Asha'ariyya*'s views on human acts are intrinsically linked to the prioritization of divine omnipotence within their theological system. Only God causes existence; consequently, he is the only creator of acts (*khāliq al-af'āl*). In fact, according to the *Asha'ariyya*, human beings have no inherent capacity to act. God creates this capacity (*istiṭā'a*) in human beings for and with every single act. This created capacity neither precedes the act nor lasts after the act in question is completed. The concomitance of the created capacity and the performance of the act entails the human agent's acquisition of the act (Frank 43). According to the *Asha'ariyya*, this acquisition of acts (*iktisāb*) establishes human responsibility along with the measure upon which divine Judgment is enacted. Nonetheless, it must be noted that, since only God determines the moral value of human actions, acts in themselves are not to be considered determinative factors with respect to individual salvation or condemnation in the day of Judgment. As a consequence, acts are not an integral part of the Ash'arites' understanding of faith. For the *Asha'ariyya*, a believer who sins is still a believer. If this believer dies unrepentant, he will not be condemned to eternal punishment, but he will be saved after he atones for his sins by enduring a period of punishment. In Ash'arite theology, the believer's repentance is neither a requisite for nor a guarantee of salvation. The priority of divine omnipotence in this school establishes that human beings can lay no claim to salvation or damnation, notwithstanding their perceived moral state at the time of their death.

The Mu'tazilite and Ash'arite theological systems thus developed the principles implicit in the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth into rationalistic systems for the understanding and defense of the Islamic faith. Further, these schools' views on moral value and the

repercussions of human acts create some conceptual coordinates for an exploration of the place that repentance occupies within the overarching framework of the Islamic faith. The contribution of these schools and the debates that they generated will be of particular relevance to the development of the two main world-renouncing movements of the formative period of Islam, that is, asceticism (*zuhd*) and Islamic mysticism (*taṣawwuf*). As the following sections will demonstrate, the theological conceptualization of these two movements will serve as the backdrop for the exploration of the nature of *tawba*, the implicit views on the value of human acts and even the repentance narratives that the main sources of *zuhd* and *taṣawwuf* present.

#### IV. *Tawba, Zuhd and Taṣawwuf*.

In his prefatory remarks to *al-Risāla fī ‘ilm al-taṣawwuf*, the eleventh century Sufi master Abū al-Qasim al-Qushayrī explains the motives that led him to write his treatise on Sufism in terms of the spiritual decline that, in his opinion, prevailed in his times. His *risāla*, argues this ṣufī, will provide the wayfarers of the ṣufī path with guidance through this perceived spiritual decay, which he describes in a vivid rhymed prose passage. Piety (*wara’*) has ceased; piety’s rug (*bisāṭ*) has been folded. Greed (*tama’*) has increased, as its hold has strengthened. Respect of the religious law (*al-sharī‘a*) has withdrawn from the hearts; the lack of attention to religion is considered the firmest support. “The distinction between the permissible and the forbidden” (*al-tamyīz bayna al-ḥalāl wa-l-ḥarām*) has been rejected. While disregarding the observance of worship, men neglect fasting and prayer. In sum, people rely upon those who follow their lust, those who are remiss in avoiding the forbidden, and those who depend on what they borrow from the commoners (*al-sūqa*), women and rulers (*dhwi al-sultān*) (al-Qushayrī 37). Although al-

Qushayrī composes his *risāla* at a time when Sufism had already reached a certain maturity, his vision of a world in desperate need of spiritual guidance echoes the dominant sentiment at the dawn of the two main world-renouncing currents during the formative period of Islam, namely, asceticism (*zuhd*) and Islamic mysticism (*taṣawwuf*).<sup>15</sup>

The wealth acquired in the Islamic conquests during the Umayyad dynasty (41/661-132/750), the luxury and refinement of the courtly protocol during the Abbasid period (132/750-656/1258), and the mercantile worldview of an increasingly influential urban bourgeoisie raised important questions about the moral implications of business, worldliness and world-denying practices. On the one hand, commerce had enjoyed particular prestige in Islamic societies from the beginnings of the religion. The prophet was a merchant; trade is often praised in the Qur’ān and sanctioned in the *ḥadīth*. Commercial activity seemed therefore entirely compatible with Islamic piety. More important, the absolute abandonment of worldly affairs could seem tantamount to a rejection of God’s bounty (Knysh 15).<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, the incongruity between the world-renouncing elements of the religion and the contemporary social and economic state of affairs during the first centuries of Islam would be the target of vigorous denunciation at the hands of the pious, who longed for the theocratic ideal of the first Islamic community and for a stricter compliance with the underlying ascetic message of Islamic religious discourse. These two aspects, however, are equally integral to Islam; thus, they often intersect and present a wide range of ramifications. This introductory

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<sup>15</sup> It must be noted that al-Qushayrī here expresses a specific concern about the state of *taṣawwuf* during his age. His treatise attempts to reform the misguided followers of the path by teaching them the examples set by the most celebrated mystics of the past. In this particular sense, his *risāla* takes a somewhat apologetical tone.

<sup>16</sup> In this particular case, Knysh refers to Ibn Sirin’s (d.110/728) objections against those who wear wool as a mark of asceticism.

study will now be confined to the following facets: 1) the significance of *zuhd* in Islam, 2) the characteristics of the world denying discourse and its relation to *tawba* in Islamic ascetic poetry (*zuhdiyyāt*) 3) the place of *tawba* within Islamic mysticism (*taṣawwuf*), and 4) *tawba* in Islamic mystical poetry. These different aspects will certainly attest to the complex web of relationships across the different manifestations of Islamic world-renouncing discourses and practices.

### 1. *Zuhd*

*Zuhd* designates the “deliberate austerity as part of a life of devotion” (Gobillot 284). This devotional ideal harks back to the ascetics (*zuhād*) of the second/eighth century, who, despite their different interpretations of the constituent elements of *zuhd*, share a number of commonalities such as their concern for licit gain (*al-kasb al-ḥalāl*), their exacting fulfillment of religious precepts, their constant thoughts of the afterlife and their concomitant engagement in world-denying discourses (Gobillot 284). More generally, *zuhd* refers to the “philosophy of life inherent in Islam according to which any Muslim who considers himself pious-no matter what religious current he thinks he belongs to-must behave (Kinberg 29). The behavioral standard implied in the concept of *zuhd* posed a number of questions concerning the meaning of this voluntary austerity and the practicality of world renunciation.

For some early ascetics, *zuhd* was intrinsically linked to *tawakkul* or the uncompromising trust in God. The most extreme manifestation of this view would have the *zāhid* refraining from earning a living and even from accepting assistance from fellow human beings in the expectancy of divinely delivered sustenance. Ibrāhīm al-Khawwās (d. 290/903) provides an illuminating example of this particular interpretation of the term



when relating the way he was surpassed in *tawakkul* by a young man as they journeyed together to Syria. Since al-Khawwāṣ had brought no provisions for the trip, committed as he was to his idea of *tawakkul*, he and his companion spent four days traveling on an empty stomach. At last, someone gave them something to eat. When al-Khawwāṣ encouraged his fellow traveller to share this meal, the young man refused to partake of the collation, arguing that he had vowed not to accept anything from go-betweens (*wāsita*) (al-Qushayrī 128). The fact that al-Khawwāṣ, reputed as the most fervent advocate of *tawakkul* of the Baghdādī school, interprets the young man’s attitude as the pinnacle of religious scrupulosity suggests the extreme form of asceticism this particular understanding of *zuhd* and *tawakkul* engenders. Accepting the help of one’s fellow human beings compromises the resolve of one’s trust in God; human beings become go-betweens who interfere with the ascetic’s direct relationship with God.

In contrast to the extreme interpretation outlined above, for many other Muslims *zuhd* simply represented the exercise of and contentment with a modest way of life. Nimrod Hurvitz in “Biographies and Mild Asceticism: A Study of Islamic Moral Imagination” analyzes this particular vision of *zuhd* in relation to the biography of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (164-241/780-855), the admired theologian, jurist and traditionist (Nimrod 41-65). Hurvitz demonstrates that this scholar’s biography, as presented by his son in *Sīrat al-Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, exemplifies a specific moral outlook, namely, Ibn Ḥanbal’s practical and moderate understanding of *zuhd*. Ibn Ḥanbal’s moderation is particularly evident in his attitude toward monetary matters and his daily life behavior. Like many other *zuhād*, Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal refused to accept the patronage of rulers, for he was content with the income his family generated. Unlike extremist advocates of

*tawakkul*, Ibn Ḥanbal did not starve himself, but ate moderately and earned a living. Ibn Ḥanbal's son then presents his father as a model of moderation in worldliness and asceticism alike. His frugal way of life, which highlights the importance of earning one's own livelihood without making this the sole object of one's life, clearly exemplifies the *praxis* of a pious Islamic life. Beyond the difficulties of an unyielding attachment to *tawakkul*, *zuhd* becomes the blueprint for conducting a life in accordance to Islam in the face of a society besieged by political, doctrinal and economical compromises. *Zuhd* then represents a critical and even oppositional practice against a world perceived as constantly threatening the integrity and spirit of the religion.

The image of a spiritually deleterious world is also central to the religious discourse of Islamic ascetic poetry (*zuhdiyyāt*). We shall now analyze the poetic work of Ibn Hanbal's elder contemporary Ismā'īl b. al-Qāsim Abū al-'Atāhiya (d. 130–211/748–826), who is reputed to have brought the *zuhdiyyāt* to their definite form (Kennedy 562–564). As it will be seen, the entirely negative image of worldliness presented in Abū al-'Atāhiya's poetry not only confirms the oppositional dimension of *zuhd*, but it also establishes a very specific set of poetic conventions and imagery, which, in many ways, form a contrasting precedent to the subsequent development of Islamic mystical poetry. I will focus on the homiletic aspects of *zuhd* poetry and the connections this discursive choice establishes between the concepts of *zuhd* and *tawba*.

## 2. The *Zuhdiyyāt*

In *Song of the Distant Dove: Judah Halevi's Pilgrimage*, Raymond P. Scheindlin describes Islamic ascetic poetry as “versified sermons, in which the speaker admonishes a listener or himself to reflect that life is short, and death is certain; the world is a whore,

seducing us with destructive pleasures, so beware!” (25). Scheindlin’s vivid description epitomizes the homiletic discourse in the *zuhdiyyāt*. This poetic type not only perfectly embodies the theme of *contemptus mundi*, but also constitutes an urgent call to repentance. This call is directed toward the contemporary world, the rulers and the poet’s own persona. As such, the relative conventionality of homiletic discourse is compensated by the subtle modulations of tone for which these different addressees ask (Scheindlin, *The Song* 26). In the case of Abū al-‘Atāhiya’s poetry, the tonal variations have been traditionally read in relation to the poet’s biography. Abū al-‘Atāhiya became a renowned poet at the courts of the Caliphs al-Mahdī (r. 158–69/775–86) and Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170–93/786–809), mainly because of the love poems that he wrote for ‘Utba, a slave girl in the Caliph’s palace. Midway into Hārūn al-Rashīd’s reign, however, Abū al-‘Atāhiya repented, donned the woolen garment of the ascetics and devoted his efforts exclusively to the *zuhdiyyāt*. Abū al-‘Atāhiya’s repentance has been variously explained as prompted by ‘Utba’s definite rejection of the poet’s advances, by his resentment toward the ruling class and by his possible involvement in palace intrigues; thus, his penitent devotion to the *zuhdiyyāt* has been often considered opportunistic (Guillaume 107-8).

Abū al-‘Atāhiya’s motivations and sincerity in repentance notwithstanding, the directness and forcefulness of his *zuhdiyyāt* are remarkable. In fact, an anecdote transmitted by al-Iṣfahānī attests to the legendary effectiveness of Abū al-‘Atāhiya’s ascetic poetry (111-112). Shortly after Abū al-‘Atāhiya’s had repented and had made a pledge to exclusively compose *zuhd* poetry, Hārūn al-Rashīd attempted to convince him to resume his duties as a courtly poet. Upon realizing Abū al-‘Atāhiya’s reluctance to comply with this modest proposal, the infuriated Caliph imprisoned his poet. A spy was

sent to surveil Abū al-‘Atāhiya’s behavior and sift through his every utterance. The only piece of information the spy could gather was a *zuhd* poem about the powerlessness of rulers in the face of death. This *zuhdiyya* moved the Caliph to tears and made him release Abū al-‘Atāhiya, since now he was convinced of the seriousness of the poet’s resolve. Although this anecdote does little more than insert a novelistic episode into Abū al-‘Atāhiya’s biography, it still illustrates the forcefulness and oppositional nature of the *zuhdiyyāt*. By presenting a radical homiletics, the *zuhdiyyāt* challenge the mundane prerogatives of the ruling class as embodied in the pleasures of courtly life. More important, the *zuhdiyyāt*, as al-İşfahānī’s anecdote suggests, confront the cultural and poetic model preferred at court, thus becoming a possible site of literary and moral resistance.

The moral dimension of the *zuhdiyyāt* is particularly prominent in the poems in which Abū al-‘Atāhiya’s poetic persona is urged to resist the enticement of the world and repent before it is too late. A poem written by Abū al-‘Atāhiya as he reportedly suffered from a terminal illness is eloquent of the tone of moral forcefulness his poetry often enacts. Thus the poetic voice makes a plea to God in the opening *bayt* “my God, do not torment me (*ilahī lā tu ‘adhdhibnī*), for I acknowledge what I have done” (Diwān 378-9). The intimacy and candidness revealed in this verse permeate the entire poem. The poetic voice presents an increasingly intense series of counterpoints that contrast the exterior behavior of the poetic I with his psychological state, his perceived flippancy with God’s unyielding favor. “People consider me a good man, but I am indeed the worst of people, if you do not forgive me,” declares the poetic voice. From this touching verse, the poetic voice proceeds to describe his actual condition and guilt. He declares that when

contemplating his remorse over his sins he bites his fingertips and gnashes his teeth in despair. He is profoundly possessed by the bloom of the world and squanders his time in this life out of desire. He caps this self-deprecatory outburst saying “In my hands there is a heavy burden, as if I were compelled to it, as if I... Had I been truthful to *zuhd* in this life, I would have turned my back (literally, “I would have turned the back of the shield”) to its people.”

The hesitancy embodied in the incomplete penultimate verse and the hopelessness expressed in the contrary-to-fact conditional sentence in the final verse depict a powerful image of the psychological state of the poetic I. Despair and remorse besiege this poetic persona. He is not the righteous man people think he is; he has failed to be truthful to *zuhd* in this life. But it is precisely his acknowledgment of the misrepresentations of his moral character, his heartfelt expression of remorse, his anguished plea for divine mercy and his implicit hope for divine forgiveness that makes this poem an instantiation of the Islamic conception of *tawba* and its possible connections to *zuhd*. The caustic homiletics that the poetic voice directs to himself not only denounces the enticement of this life, provides a thorough examination of his sins, and establishes an honest communication with God, but it also emphasizes the centrality of remorse as the leading force behind the poetic voice’s utterance. By expressing his deep-seated regret and by asking for God’s forgiveness in the midst of his remorse, the poetic voice recognizes that he has a lord who forgives the penitent and punishes the unrepentant. (Denny 603). If, according to a *ḥadīth*, repentance is regret (*al-nadam tawba*), the *zuhdiyyāt* become the epitome of the essential relationship between mankind and God in Islam as anchored in the recognition of divine lordship in repentance (qtd. in *al-Qushayrī* 91).

However, despite the importance of *zuhd*, this spiritual, poetic and material practice neither delved into the conceptual subtleties of the repentance process nor clearly defined the relationship between *zuhd*, *tawba* and other aspects of the religion. This would be the task of Islamic mysticism (*taṣawwuf*), whose conceptual and psychological insights would greatly contribute to consolidating the place of *tawba* in Islamic life. The following discussion will analyze the subtle conceptual framework developed by Sufi writers in their description of the mystical path and, particularly, in their conception of the various mystical stations (*maqāmāt*) and states (*aḥwāl*) of this path. As will be shown, this multilayered vision of the mystical ascent will also play a central role in the development of mystical poetry and, more important, in the place *tawba* occupies in this poetic tradition.

### 3. Taṣawwuf, Mystical Stations and States

The path (*ṭarīqa* or *ṭarīq*) is the leading conceptual framework of Islamic mystical writings. By the time al-Qushayrī wrote his influential *risāla* (circa 438/1045) the two overarching categories of this path, that is, the stations (*maqāmāt*) and the states (*aḥwāl*), had already been established and classified. Most ṣufī writers understand these two concepts as contrasting yet complementary aspects of the mystical experience. On the one hand, the stations are generally presented in a progressive order whereby the mystic seeker (*ṭālib*) or traveler (*sālik*) advances according to his own effort and determination while enjoying the gracious favor of divine assistance. The sufi must master or acquire these stations gradually, one after the other, but once he reaches a specific station he owns it for the rest of his life. On the other hand, Sufi literature usually conceives of the states as fleeting gifts of God. These gifts are granted in the mystic's encounter with the

divine Reality and the ensuing tranquility or rapture (Knysh 303). Although the sequential order particularly describes the stations, the states are also said to vary in intensity according to the level of perfection that each individual mystic has previously attained. Thus, the progressive or hierarchical understanding of the stations and the states is not only limited to the overall conception of the path, but it also describes the internal nuances within every station and state. This multilayered conception of the mystical path and the internal processes of each of its components ultimately contributes in creating a complex conception of *tawba*, a pivotal station in most Sufi treatises. For the purposes of this introduction, the discussion will be centered on 1) the complexities of the mystical station of *tawba* as evidenced by al-Qushayrī's *al-risāla fī 'ilm al-taṣawwuf*, 2) the hagiographies of sufi saints, and 3) the consequences that the sufi conceptions of *tawba* entail with respect to the development of Islamic mystical poetry.

#### 4. al-Qushayrī's *Risāla* and the Hagiographies of Sufism

In al-Qushayrī's *al-Risāla fī 'ilm al-taṣawwuf*, *tawba* is presented as the first station of the mystical path to God (91-7). This treatise highlights the significance of *tawba* in the mystical itinerary by elucidating the intricacies of sufi conceptual use, providing illuminating examples of repentance narratives drawn from hagiographies of famous Muslim mystics and illustrating contrasting views on *tawba* proposed by different sufi authorities. In designating *tawba* as the first station of the path, al-Qushayrī stresses the human effort that serves as the counterpart to God's gracious granting of this initial stage. Here al-Qushayrī not only echoes the order of the mystical stages already outlined by al-Sarraj (d. 988) and al-Sulamī (d. 1021), but he is also evoking the reciprocity suggested by the semantic field of repentance found in the Qur'ān and *al-ḥadīth*. In

particular, the concomitance of divine favor and human endeavor involved in the first step into the mystical path is dramatized by the hagiographical materials of this treatise. Among the various hagiographies presented in this *risāla*, the story of al-Fuḍayl b. ‘Iyād is especially relevant in the context of this introduction.

The repentance narrative of al-Fuḍayl b. ‘Iyād’s hagiography is eloquent of the dynamics revolving around *tawba* as the first station of the *ṭarīqa*. Before he became an influential figure of early Sufism, al-Fuḍayl led a life of debauchery and banditry. His repentance came about after two decisive moments. His first call to repentance took place as he was climbing a wall to meet a slave girl with whom he had fallen in love. As he went up the wall he heard a Qur’ān reciter proclaiming the sixteenth *aya* of *sūrat al-ḥadīd*.<sup>17</sup> Upon hearing these verses, which seemed to directly address him, al-Fuḍayl paid heed to the call and walked away. As night approached, he came across some ruins where he eavesdropped the conversation of the members of a caravan who were debating whether or not to travel that night. Those who were opposed to undertaking the night travel argued that al-Fuḍayl would certainly rob them if they proceeded. When he heard his name used in such ignominy, al-Fuḍayl regretted his past life and truly turned to God in repentance. He then escorted the caravan to their destination. Finally, he settled in Mecca where he died in 187/803, having led a life of asceticism and having become an important authority on *ḥadīth* (al-Qushayrī 424-5).

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<sup>17</sup> These are the Qur’ānic verses in Arberry’s translation: “Is it not time that the hearts of those who believe should be humbled to the Remembrance of God and the Truth which He has sent down?.” It is important to note the allusiveness of this passage in the context of Sufi literature. The “remembrance of God” (*dhikr*) is one of the stations of the mystical path as well as a crucial meditative practice in Sufism. Further, the Truth (*al-ḥaqq*) that God has sent down, in this case the revelation, becomes in Sufi literature the way divine gnosis is often described.



Although this repentance narrative most probably is a later interpolation, the structure and the concepts in which it is framed provide an appropriate image of the reciprocity of divine favor and human endeavor in *tawba*, the first station of the sufi path. The serendipitous hearing of a Qur'ānic verse, which al-Fuḍayl understood as a question specifically directed to him right at the moment when he was about to commit a sin, clearly embodies the necessary irruption of the divine into the life of the sinner in *tawba*.<sup>18</sup> The fact that the Qur'ānic verse that al-Fuḍayl overhears is so evocative of Sufi parlance, apart from confirming that this repentance narrative was carefully crafted, consolidates this bandit's *tawba* by placing it within a rich symbolic network of Qur'ānic, traditionist and mystical references. The bandit's ensuing encounter with the caravan further ratifies his return to God, being this the point where God's turning upon his servant and the servant's return to God intersect. The bandit repents of all his sins, leads a pious life from this point on and even becomes an authority of the Islamic sciences, thus constituting a moving example of the Sufi understanding of *tawba*.<sup>19</sup>

##### 5. Sins I Do Not Recall: Repentance in Sufi Poetry

Islamic mystical poetry is an embodiment of the rich conceptual framework of *taṣawwuf*. As such, the progressive nature of the Sufi path, the degrees of mystical experience intrinsic to its stations and states and the internal debates of Sufism are the underlying force of this Islamic poetic tradition. Among these various aspects, *tawba* is pivotal in the formation of mystical poetic discourse. As has been noted, the stratified

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<sup>18</sup> This type of repentance narrative abounds in al-Qushayrī's *risāla*. It is also reminiscent of the repentance of the brigand in Ibn Sahula's *Meshal ha-Kadmoni*. For a similar example in the Christian tradition of the conversion of a sinner upon hearing a suggestive utterance, see Augustine's famous conversion scene in Confessiones 8.12, which will be discussed in chapter seven below.

<sup>19</sup> This investigation will return to this repentance narrative in the next chapters, since it clearly resonates with other repentance narratives with which this dissertation is concerned.

structure of the mystical path extends to its constituent parts and, as a consequence, the meaning of *tawba* varies in accordance with the diverse stages at which a mystic wayfarer finds himself or herself. While a neophyte needs to repent of his sins by constantly expressing his regret, the mystic who has attained the divine knowledge, namely, the gnostic (‘*ārif*) is overwhelmed in the encounter with the Truth and therefore, as al-Nurī notes, has repented of everything but the Truth. The fact that Sufi poetry seldom mentions *tawba* and that, in effect, disregards the homiletic tone of the *zuhdiyyāt* should be understood against the backdrop of the stratification of the mystical path. Whereas the regretful tone of the *zuhdiyyāt* and the content of repentance narratives of Sufi hagiographies would signify the inchoative stages of the path, Sufi poetry is primarily concerned with the pinnacle of the *ṭarīqa* wherein the mystic has obliterated everything but the Truth.

Nonetheless, despite the primacy of this advanced stage in this literary tradition, Sufi poetry also provides complex images of the mystical path as a whole, which often illustrate divergent ideas on *tawba*. The following section will be concerned with an analysis of one poem by the Andalusī mystic Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī. This text will shed light on the complex conceptual network associated with the Sufi path in Islamic mystical poetry and exemplify several interpretations of *tawba* in this tradition.

## 6. Ibn al-‘Arabī

Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 638/1240) is one of the most complex and prolific Sufi theoreticians, as well as an accomplished Sufi poet. Born in Murcia (560/1165), his *tawba* occurred at an early age when he enjoyed a dream vision that encouraged him to abandon his involvement in worldly affairs and embark on the mystical path. In 598/1202

he departed for the East to perform the pilgrimage. He then settled permanently in the eastern Islamic lands, wherein he penned numerous works on Sufism, which afforded him the title of “*al-Shaykh al-Akbar*” (Ateş 707-711). Among his gigantic body of work, his poetry certainly stands out. He did not only write independent poetic pieces, but he also frequently included poems within his theoretical work. His comprehensive view of all the areas of mystical theory and practice instills his mystical poetry with a profound understanding of the interrelations among all the components and degrees of mystical experience. This mystic’s encompassing vision of the mystical experience will be addressed in the following analysis of one of his strophic poems (*muwashshahāt*), namely, “*yā ṣāḥi inna al-qulūb*” (Ghāzī 258-260).

The poem “*yā ṣāḥi inna al-qulūb*” presents a nuanced depiction of the mystical path along with a rare propaedeutic intent. Here the poetic voice addresses his friend (*yā ṣāḥi*) and instructs him on an essential principle pertaining to the advanced stages of the mystical path. “The hearts,” declares the poetic voice, “appear blissfully “in the secret of essences.” Next, the poetic voice proclaims that his only possession is what the early Sufi al-Tirmidhī told to the great scholar, namely, when he returns to God in repentance he repents not of sins, because he does not take them into account. After this candid acknowledgment, the poetic voice makes sure to warn the *ṣāḥi*, since the only one who fully understands what al-Tirmidhī said is the one who has already received this knowledge (from God). Further, the *ṣāḥi* is now prohibited from mentioning what is contained in these advanced stages; indeed, the secret of the beloved comprises an extraordinary, marvelous, righteous inner meaning in these stages. This cautionary tone is abandoned in the second half of the poem.

Now the poetic voice presents a dense series of images, which are evocative of the highest degrees of mystical experience. First, the voice in the poem addresses his shade (*yā ẓulātī*) and affirms that, if this shade becomes his *qibla*, then it will be part of his entirety. He encourages his friend to follow this way, since he was successful in all other areas. “All types of prey are seen in the belly of this wild donkey” (*inna al-ṣuyūd turā fi jawf hādhā al-farā*) (Ghāzī 259). There is no forgery in his encompassing vision; it will not disappoint “the persevering, the intelligent and the upright” (Ghāzī 259). Had the full moon appeared, adds the poetic voice, it would have brought him “a beginning with every rare meaning,” which is the “morning meal of the learned and of the guest” (Ghāzī 259). The hearts that follow this path precariously do not profess the religion that this poetic voice professes. These hearts only go forward at sunset when the near one summons them to meet their lot. The poetic voice then caps this convoluted imagery with a forceful description of the mystical experience, by exclaiming: “How great is the light on the cloak and on the one who wears it; by him “the holy man is guided.” “His youth is like his old age” (white hair) “when the ancient beloved calls him.” There is none like him “in the eyes of the noble sage.” “I am bewildered by myself and by him,” exclaims the poetic voice. “I see him at the sand dune with no hesitant doubt,” the speaker adds, “like the midsummer rain” (Ghāzī 260).

This poem is a testimony to the stratification of the mystical path and to the complex imagery that this gradation engenders. The cautionary tone that predominates at the beginning of the poem makes a clear distinction between the mystical stations at which the poetic voice and his addressee find themselves. In fact, this poetic voice cites the authority of al-Tirmidhī and situates himself at one side of the debate on whether the

Sufi wayfarer should always keep his past sins in mind or forget them altogether. Here Ibn al-‘Arabī sides with the opinion of al-Junayd and makes the poetic voice of his poem affirm that the Sufi’s return to God should be dissociated from sin. Yet the next line of the poem specifies that al-Tirmidhī’s dictum only applies to the Sufis whom God has already afforded this knowledge and, as a consequence, the addressee should not mention this prerogative of the gnostics. This poem then seems to present a dialogue between a gnostic and a fellow wayfarer who is in evident need of the gnostic’s guidance. The poetic voice is clear, direct and even pedagogical in contextualizing the expressions that he uses throughout the first half of the poem. The gnostic encourages his friend to proceed further into the path, but to proceed with care. The wayfarer in the initial stages of the path should always be aware of the gap that separates him from the privileged status of the gnostic. Lastly, this inexperienced Sufi should also be mindful of the mystical concepts to which he refers; he is not entitled to allude to the mystical experiences that God has not yet granted him.

It is especially significant that after the instructional gist of the first section of the poem the poetic voice plunges into a cascade of poetic images, which are centered on the intensity of the utmost degree of mystical experience. The images are presented in quick succession, as if they came about in intuitive flashes. The all-encompassing encounter with the Truth is reflected in the tantalizing images of totality and union throughout this part. The shade upon the poetic voice becomes his *qibla* and his entire being. The wild donkey’s belly contains the plurality of game, i.e., the prey engulfs all possible prey. The moon would have brought a beginning that included all the secrets. The distinction between the first, second and third grammatical persons in the poem is obfuscated; I, you

and he appear as if they were mirroring each other. But despite these flashes of the mystical encounter, this section of the poem still maintains some elements of the instructional intent of the first part. The gnostic encourages his friend to follow his steps. The necessary qualities for this endeavor are extolled; the persevering, the intelligent and the righteous will prevail in the path. Negligence is condemned; the hearts who only advance toward God at the end of the day are unbelievers with respect to the path. In fact, the semantic field of *tawba* surfaces in this latter example. Those who only make a step forward at sunset when God summons them and their lots have already been cast have experienced none of the stages of the path and have not even repented of their sins. They have postponed their repentance until the end of their lives, an inferior type of *tawba* already condemned in the Qur'ān.<sup>20</sup>

But this amplification of the instructional content of the first section of the poem is suddenly truncated in the last two stanzas of the poem. Now the beloved whom the poem evoked in the images of the shade, the wild donkey, and the elusive full moon appears. The poem comes to an end precisely when the poetic voice witnesses the presence of the beloved who, in contrast to the frenzy that precedes his appearance, represents stability and certainty. In this respect, this strophic poem by Ibn al-‘Arabī depicts the entire realm of the Sufi path, from its initial stations to its culmination in divine knowledge. Further, this poem ratifies *tawba* as an essential part of a pious Islamic life and, more precisely, as the mark of the highest degree of mystical experience whereby the gnostic turns away from everything but the divine Truth. All the different facets that this poem illustrates suggest not only Ibn al-‘Arabī’s intense poetical vision,

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<sup>20</sup> e.g., Qur’ān 4.18. Although this *sūra* states that deathbed repentance is of no use, *al-ḥadīth* provides many examples of sinners who were forgiven when they repented in the deathbed.

but also his sophisticated understanding of Sufism. His complex understanding of the mystical theory, practice and poetry will certainly provide this dissertation with an adequate point of reference throughout the following two chapters.

## Chapter Two: The Ambiguity of Being Earnest: *Tawba* in *Maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī*

This chapter concerns an analysis of the repentance themes and repentance narratives in *Maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī*. I will start by presenting the characteristics and development of the *maqāma* genre along with an overview of the critical studies devoted to this literary type in recent times. Next, this chapter provides a comparative study of *al-Maqāma al-Khamriyya* of Badī' al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī (d. 1007) and *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya* of Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥarīrī (d. 1122). I argue that al-Hamadhānī's text represents a clear denunciation of religious hypocrisy and naiveté, by evincing the unscrupulous doctrinal manipulation of the narrator Ibn Hishām, the hypocritical piety of the rogue Abū al-Faṭḥ and the intradiegetic audience's careless ingenuousness. Next, this chapter contrasts al-Hamadhānī's direct denunciation in *al-Maqāma al-Khamriyya* with al-Ḥarīrī's ambiguous representation of *tawba* in *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya*. Just as al-Ḥarīrī's intellectual coterie met to engage in serious discussions on al-Hamadhānī's *maqāmāt*, as he declares in his preface, the audience of *Maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī* should meet the challenge of al-Ḥarīrī's erudition and unveil the grammatical riddles (*al-'aḥājī al-naḥwiyya*) and the various lexical choices (*al-fatāwā al-lughawiyya*) of the work (13). In this regard, I show that the ambivalence of the repentance narrative of *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya* is yet another challenge to al-Ḥarīrī's audience, as well as an invitation to a learned discussion on doctrine and theology. In a context where the foundation of the *Nizamiyyāt* had largely established doctrinal stability and theological cohesion to Sunni Islam, the most sophisticated religious minds could certainly welcome the provocative debates that al-Ḥarīrī's work opened up. Here al-Hamadhānī's strident denunciation of hypocrisy and doctrinal manipulation would have appeared unsophisticated, and thus al-Ḥarīrī's work



aims at propitiating an open debate on doctrine and theology rather than at denouncing the misuses of religious discourse. The repentance of Abū Zayd's is then embedded in a stimulating conceptual seedbed that, as a riddle, needs to be carefully considered and deciphered. This chapter concludes that by including elements of Sufi hagiographies, the *zuhdiyyāt* and the Qur'ān as well as by alluding to Ash'arī theological thought, this *maqāma* ultimately affirms the main doctrinal tenets of Sunni Islam while opening a necessary space for a sophisticated discussion of all the facets of the Islamic faith.

### I. The Maqāma: An Overview

The *maqāma* is an endemic Arabic literary genre (Maqāma 107-115). Although the origins of this literary type remain an object of debate, the tenth century Arabo-Persian writer Aḥmad Badī' al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī (358-398/968-1008) is generally considered the creator of the specific form that would characterize the genre until the 19th century.<sup>21</sup> This form consists of brief episodic narratives in elaborate rhymed and rhythmic prose (*saj'*) as well as pieces of poetry presented at significant moments of the story (Stewart 145). Other important generic elements introduced by al-Hamadhānī include the use of two main characters, the transmitter and the rogue, the travel narrative in which every single episode is framed, and the outstanding roles of rhetoric and social satire.<sup>22</sup> According to tradition, al-Hamadhānī conceived of his *maqāmāt* as an amusing interlude to the serious and thorough study of the Islamic sciences. In fact, al-

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<sup>21</sup> By the third/ninth century the word *maqāma*, as Régis Blachère demonstrates, designated the pious harangue of the popular preachers (*qaṣṣ*) and the sermons at the Friday prayer (66). This homiletic sense certainly surfaces in al-Hamadhānī's work wherein the rogue often harangues the people of the towns in which the episodes are framed.

<sup>22</sup> It must be noted that by travel narratives I am not referring to the Arabic genre of *riḥla*, but rather to the fact that most of the episodes in al-Hamadhānī's collection are named after the city in which the story takes place.

Hamadhānī's *maqāmāt* often mimic and parody several structures and genres of serious Islamic texts, most notably the chain of transmission (*isnād*) typical of *al-ḥadīth*.<sup>23</sup> By placing a truncated and fictional version of the opening formula of the ḥadīth (*haddathana' Isa Ibn Hishām*) at the beginning of each *maqāma*, al-Hamadhānī not only makes a tongue-in-cheek reference to one of the most revered fields of study in medieval Islam but also, as will be seen, paves the way for a different approach to fictionality in Arabic literature. The episodes themselves are usually presented in a very regular pattern, thus schematized by Devin Stewart:

1. The transmitter arrives in a city;
2. Formation of an assembly or gathering for learned discussion;
3. The protagonist enters the assembly;
4. The protagonist undertakes an eloquent performance;
5. Rewarding of the protagonist by the transmitter or other character;
6. The protagonist leaves assembly, which breaks up;
7. The transmitter realizes the protagonist's true identity;
8. The transmitter follows the protagonist;
9. The transmitter accosts or reproaches the protagonist;

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<sup>23</sup> For a discussion of al-Hamadhānī's parodic use of the *isnād* see James T. Monroe *The Art of Badī' al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī as Picaresque Narrative* 24-5. For a critical view on Monroe's discussion see Jaako Hämeen Anttila in *Maqāma: A History of a Genre* 46. Anttila claims that by al-Hamadhānī's time the *isnād* was commonly used in belles-lettristic works and thus al-Hamadhānī's use was not necessarily a parody of *ḥadīth* or any other type of religious texts, but most probably a parody of serious *adab* texts. This author also calls Monroe's understanding of the fictional transmitter of the text into question and suggests that this was also a hardly surprising literary device at the time; the real function of the fictional transmitter, in the view of Anttila, lies in the fact that it dissociates the authorial voice from the fictive contents of the text. Although this latter point is suggestive, Anttila's claim of the wide-spread use of the fictional transmitter in religious and belles-lettristic texts alike calls for some qualification. In fact, the preface of *Maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī* describes a learned discussion of the work of al-Hamadhānī in which the fictionality of the transmitter and the rogue of this work aroused great interest. Al-Ḥarīrī's discussion suggests that al-Hamadhānī's *isnād* seemed peculiar to the readers at al-Ḥarīrī's time and that therefore the use of chains of transmission in belles-lettristic texts did not diminish its possible parodic impact.

10. Justification by the protagonist;

11. Parting of the two;

1. Departure of the transmitter from the city (implicit) (147).<sup>24</sup>

However, even though al-Hamadhānī established what would become the most common model of *maqāma*, his collection is far from homogenous in its inclusion of various patterns that do not conform to the aforementioned model. For instance, in the *Maqāma* of Bishr the two main characters do not appear in the story and in the *Maqāma* of the Madira there is no recognition scene, since the characters are together from the beginning. This deviation from the pattern should not only be attributed to the embryonic stage of the genre at al-Hamadhānī's time, but it also could be associated with the different understanding of the text still linked to the dynamics and prestige of oral performance and transmission (Drory 191). This fluid understanding of the textual tradition comes to an end at the hands of al-Hamadhānī's prestigious successor Abū Muḥammad al-Qāsim al-Ḥarīrī (446 -516/1054-1122), who not only brought the *maqāma* genre to a fixed form, but also took an exceptional interest in establishing and transmitting a definite written version of his work.

Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥarīrī made use of the aforementioned scheme consistently, framed his *maqāmāt* within a clearly discernible structure where the first episode of the collection narrates the first encounter of the transmitter and the rogue and the fiftieth *maqāma* marks their definite separation at the time of the rogue's repentance. Al-Ḥarīrī personally corroborated and approved the numerous copies of his work made by the

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<sup>24</sup> It must be noted that Stewart's scheme is based on the "Proppian functions" proposed by Abd el-Fateh Kilito in "Le genre "Séance": une introduction" *Studia Islamica*, No. 43 (1976), 25-51 and revised by James Monroe in *The Art* 21-3.

scholars who came from all over the Islamic world to have a grasp of this instant classic of Arabic literature. Further, al-Ḥarīrī's work was so admired for its rhetorical and lexicographical accomplishments that it immediately became part of the educational curriculum, thus serving as the paragon of classical Arabic style and erudition. Although in the preface of his work al-Ḥarīrī explicitly recognizes his debt to al-Hamadhānī, his work quickly eclipsed his predecessor's *maqāmāt* and became the indisputable model of the genre. A testament to the remarkable influence of al-Ḥarīrī is to be found in *al-Maqāmāt al-Luzūmiyya* by the Andalusī writer Abū al-Ṭāhir al-Saraqusṭī, who wrote his *maqāma* collection in imitation of al-Ḥarīrī's *maqāmāt* within two decades after al-Ḥarīrī had released his work. *Al-Maqāmāt al-Luzūmiyya* provides a telling case study on literary influence and generic development in its innovative use of the conventions established by the Andalusī writer's already enshrined predecessor. The next chapter of this dissertation will deal with the intriguing problems revolving around al-Saraqusṭī's *maqāmāt*.

## II. The Maqāma: A Critical Panorama

The *maqāma* genre has received considerable critical attention in Western academia. Western approaches to this literary type, however, had been generally negative until recent times.<sup>25</sup> Certainly, the crucial place that rhetoric and lexical intricacy occupy in the *maqāma* lies at the root of these negative views. Brockelmann's and Pellat's article on the *maqāma* in *The Encyclopedia of Islam II* provides a representative example of this tendency. These critics argue that, even though the edifying content of some *maqāmāt* could serve didactic aims, form soon monopolized the educational realm "to the detriment of the essence, through the accumulation, scarcely bearable today for the

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<sup>25</sup> The Ḥarīrīan model is still rejected by critics like El-Outmani who blames the "deformed perception" of al-Ḥarīrī's understanding of the genre as the cause of the prevalence of rhetorical aspects in the Andalusī *maqāma* and the consequent confusion of the *maqāma* and the *risāla* in this context (111).

average reader, of rare and unnecessary words, through a disagreeable pedantry and an impenetrable obscurity” (Maḳāma 114). Further, for these authors the privilege of form over content should be explained by “the love of Arabic-speakers for fine verbal style,” but “one gains the impression that an exquisite form sometimes conceals nothing more than a total vacuum” (Maḳāma 114). To this statement the authors add a timid caveat, since it is “not impossible that at least some of the compositions which appear most hollow lend themselves to different interpretations at a level which has yet to be ascertained” (Maḳāma 114).

In contrast to the unappreciative opinions reviewed above, recent *maqāma* studies have posed important questions about the way the *maqāmāt* have been traditionally understood in the West and shed light on the motivations and causes behind the development of this literary genre. In this regard, two works deserve special consideration, Abdelfattah Kilito’s *Les séances: récits et codes culturels chez Hamadhânî et Harîrî* and James T. Monroe’s *The Art of Badī‘ az-Zamān al-Hamadhānī as Picaresque Narrative*.

In *The Art* Monroe situates the *maqāmāt* within the overarching category of the picaresque genre, which allows for wide-ranging comparisons across different literary traditions. Among the many stimulating and provocative discussions found in this work, Monroe’s understanding of the counter-generic nature of the picaresque, in general, and the *maqāma*, in particular, is especially relevant in the context of this dissertation. By examining the *maqāma* through the prism of Qur’anic language, prophetic traditions (*al-ḥadīth*), the sermon (*al-wa‘z*) and the prophetic biography (*sīra*), Monroe sheds light on the generic hybridity at the core of the *maqāma*, demonstrates relevant commonalities

between the *maqāma* and other picaresque texts, and paves the way for a deeper understanding of the moral significance of this genre. This latter point relates not only to the generalized use of first-person narratives in picaresque texts, which often dramatize the gap between appearances and reality, but also to the legal, scriptural and theological concepts fallaciously adduced by the roguish first-person narrator. The *maqāma*, as any bona fide picaresque text, “is asking us to distinguish between true religion and false; between authentic spiritual commitment, and hypocritical time-serving disguised with the mask of orthodoxy,” (*The Art* 85) and is thus “ultimately moral”, even though “it teaches by negative example” (*Al-Maqāmāt* 4). Here Monroe makes an important step toward a comparative perspective anchored in the discussion of generic commonalities and religious, social and cultural specificity.<sup>26</sup> Monroe’s attention to cultural, religious and social criteria in his first study on the *maqāma* should be considered alongside Abdelfattah Kilito’s outstanding contribution to the understanding of the cultural contexts in which the *maqāma* genre was engendered.

*Les séances* traces the development of the *maqāmāt* to the cultural shifts that had taken place by the time al-Hamadhānī wrote the inaugural collection in this tradition. The fact that the *maqāmāt* were transmitted through writing from their inception signals the type of audience they addressed, that is, a learned audience who significantly differed from the public of oral tales and traditions. This idea of a select public also illuminates the “impenetrable obscurity” that in the view of Brockelmann and Pellat characterizes the language of this genre, most specially in its Ḥarīrīan version. Now language becomes an

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<sup>26</sup> Monroe makes clear that his study is not concerned with questions of the possible yet tantalizing genetic filiation between the *maqāma* and the Spanish picaresque genre. Monroe’s approach will be central in this discussion; the genetic question, although of crucial importance to literary history, will not concern this study.

impediment to rather than a means of communication; the double-entendre (*tawriya*) is here the most prevalent literary trope. But, as Kilito suggests, it is precisely in this intricacy where the audience's implication and complicity in the dynamics of these texts lie.<sup>27</sup> The genre asks for an informed and attentive audience who is capable of meeting its demanding hermeneutical challenges. This plea for attentiveness is also manifest at the intradiegetic level, for the *maqāmāt* precisely embody the dangers of misinterpretation and naiveté. The gullible audience who time after time falls into the rogue's traps not only presents a cautionary tale, but also establishes a clear hierarchy of knowledge, as Kilito suggests:

Le discours fait ainsi émerger deux interprétations qui ne sont pas simultanées mais successives: la première, inadéquate, est celle qui vient tout d'abord à l'esprit de l'auditoire; la seconde n'est concrétisée que dans un second temps, soit par Abû Zayd, soit par l'auditoire, mais alors celui-ci est déjà tombé dans le piège. Les victimes d'Abû Zayd sont, dans cette perspective, de mauvais interprètes qui, avant de parvenir à une vue juste des choses, passent par une phase d'aveuglement. (216)

The audience in the story is unable to reach the truth that the rogue has effectively veiled in dazzling rhetoric, thus mirroring the problems that the audience and readers of the *maqāmāt* may face when interpreting the text. Kilito also makes a crucial distinction between the different conceptions associated with the word *maqāma*. Apart from designating the specific form conceived by al-Hamadhānī, yet probably influenced by the specific organization of the genre, the word *maqāma* referred to a type of discourse and, more important, to a certain mode of fictionality. In fact, Kilito demonstrates that “Il y a *maqāma* quand un auteur donne la parole, sur le mode fictif, à un ou à plusieurs

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<sup>27</sup> Specifically, Kilito claims that “*l'ésotérisme des Séances contient en lui une sollicitation, une invitation, la promesse de richesses amoncélées que le lecteur est assuré de trouver*” (214). Kilito's insightful observation, as will be seen, deeply informs this study's understanding of the place that the audience occupies in this generic tradition.

personnages” (152). This sense of the word will be particularly relevant to the study of the later development of the *maqāmāt*, which significantly differs from the models of al-Hamadhānī and al-Ḥarīrī. In particular, the idea of the *maqāma* as a the main locus for fictional writing may illuminate the peculiarities of the Andalusī *maqāma* and, specifically, the development of the Hebrew *maqāma* in al-Andalus, as will be seen in the next part of this dissertation. But now it will be necessary to provide some historical guidelines before proceeding to an analysis of individual *maqāmāt*.

### III. *Maqāmāt* al-Ḥarīrī: Historical and Biographical Remarks

The appearance and development of the *maqāma* genre coincided with several political and cultural crises. As Monroe and Pettigrew have noted in a recent article, the reign of the Persian-speaking Buwayhids and the Berber-speaking Almoravids in 10th century Iran and in 12th century al-Andalus, respectively, would put the former political and cultural models into crisis and ultimately make the Arabic panegyric *qaṣīda* unviable. The Buwayhids and the Almoravids were hardly acquainted with the subtleties of the Arabic language and poetics; the secular and military nature of their rule clearly clashed with the conventions of the panegyric as embedded in the *qaṣīda* and addressed to the religious authority of the Caliph (Monroe, “The Decline” 159). As a consequence, the traditional form of courtly patronage experienced a process of decline. This decline, however, also allowed for the formation and development of new genres and new audiences. Al-Hamadhānī’s and al-Saraqusī’s *maqāmāt* can be understood against the backdrop of the cultural space opened up by the decline of the panegyric *qaṣīda* form, the concomitant vacuum in courtly patronage and the consequent changes in the audiences of poetic works. If the panegyric *qaṣīda* was devoted to the prerogatives of courtly insiders,



the *maqāmāt* “may be viewed as the literature of rejected and disgruntled outsiders no longer welcome at those courts ... and who turn a critical eye on society at large” (Monroe, “The Decline” 161). These two cases should provide helpful criteria for the discussion of al-Ḥarīrī’s cultural and political context.

The composition of al-Ḥarīrī’s *maqāmāt* should be evaluated through the prism of the particular circumstances of 11th-12th century Iraq. The Saljuqid Turks’ conquests of the eleventh century had definitely reduced the Abbasid Caliphate of Baghdad to a nominal religious authority. By al-Ḥarīrī’s time the Caliph al-Mustazhir (r. 487-512/1094-1118) faced the turbulent period that followed the deaths of Niẓām al-Mulk and Malikshah, two events that considerably undermined the power of the Saljuqid authorities.<sup>28</sup> The Caliph al-Mustazhir, in effect, needed to carefully juggle with the various internecine factions fighting to attain the sultanate. In particular, the struggles for the suzerainty between the Saljuqid Barkyārūq and his half-brother Muḥammad Tapar posed great challenges to the maintenance of the political stability of the Caliphate, which would only be accomplished in 498/1105 with the death of Barkyārūq (Hillenbrand 755-756). Another important figure in this conflictive period was Sadaqa Abū al-Ḥasan al-Asadī (d. 501/1108), an Arab who was reputed as the right hand of the Caliph al-Mustazhir and an important supporter of the future undisputed sultan Muḥammad Tapar. Soon after Barkyārūq’s death in 1105, Sadaqa, upon Muḥammad Tapar’s request, deposed the governor whom Barkyārūq had appointed at Baṣra and named one of his grandfather’s military slaves (*mamlūk*) as the new governor. This governorship, however,

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<sup>28</sup> Niẓām al-Mulk was the renowned minister of the sultans Alp Arslān and Mālikshāh. This vizier was the founder of a series of Sunni *madrasas* (*al-madrasa al-niẓāmiyya*) in the most important cities of Iraq, al-Jazira and Persia, which were crucial to the dissemination of Ash‘ari and Shāfi‘i views. In fact, these schools’ systematized the transmission of knowledge and established doctrinal continuity in the region (Bowen 69-73).

was short-lived, since the governor appointed by Sadaqa was captured by bedouin bandits that same year and the sultan had to appoint another governor to supplant him. Sadaqa's increasing power in the region and his often defiant stands against the sultan Muḥammad Tapar caused a breach between them. The hostilities between the sultan and his powerful vassal eventually led to a fierce battle in 501/1108, wherein Sadaqa was killed (Zetterstéen 716). Further, Sadaqa's son, Nūr al-Dawla Abū al-A'azz Dubays (Ibn Sadaqa), was also captured during the battle, and was therefore unable to gain ascendancy over his father's former dominions until Muḥammad Tapar's death in 512/1118.

The chaotic times that preceded and coincided with Ibn Sadaqa's raise to power provide a vivid image of Baṣra and its vicinity during al-Ḥarīrī's lifetime. In particular, the year 1106, in which Baṣra had three successive rulers, eloquently attests to the lack of a centralized power figure around which cultural productions could revolve. The obscurity surrounding the dedicatee and the patron of al-Ḥarīrī's *maqāmāt* is undoubtedly related to the atomistic power structures of this writer's era. Ibn Sadaqa and Anūshir-wān b. Khālid have been adduced as possible dedicatees of al-Ḥarīrī's magnum opus, but neither claim can be confidently sustained on the available evidence. The preface of the *maqāmāt* also poses important questions about the identity of the figure who, according to al-Ḥarīrī himself, commissioned him to write his *maqāmāt*. This person, whose suggestion is an order, remains equally obscure. In fact, Katia Zakharia has convincingly argued that this person is no other than God, to whom the opening and closing sections of the preface are addressed (*Abū Zayd* 75). Therefore, the context wherein al-Ḥarīrī conceived of his *maqāmāt* has some important analogies with al-Hamadhānī's and al-

Saraqustī's political and cultural milieu. Certainly, courtly patronage was in frank decline by al-Ḥarīrī's time, since the militarily minded Saljuqid Turks would presumably be unreceptive to the charms of Arabic poetry and the internecine strife constantly undermined the stability of any easily identifiable power structure. But, unlike al-Hamadhānī and al-Saraqusī, al-Ḥarīrī was able to exercise another type of power, anchored in the prestige that the perceived excellence of his Arabic language afforded him.

Al-Ḥarīrī was born in 446/1054 in Mashān, a town near Baṣra, to a family of landowners. He pursued his studies at Baṣra and eventually became the chief of intelligence (*ṣāhib al-khabar*). Although this formerly important office was in frank decline since the Saljuqid conquests, the position still put al-Ḥarīrī into contact with important figures at Baghdad and allowed him "to take part in the serious conversation of the bored bourgeois society of the decadent Baṣra of his day" (Margoliouth 221-222). Although Pellat's and Margoliouth's description needs to be taken *cum grano salis*, it is still telling of the urban intelligentsia for whom al-Ḥarīrī's *maqāmāt* were intended. In the preface of his work, as has been mentioned above, al-Ḥarīrī depicts a learned discussion of the formal peculiarities of al-Hamadhānī's *maqāmāt*. This educated conversation, suggests al-Ḥarīrī, was the preamble to his own ventures into the genre; thus, his work was conceived for the type of audience who, like the writer and his coterie, had the knowledge and the means to fully engage in sophisticated studies and discussions.

The preface further narrows down the ideal public of the *maqāmāt* and asserts that only a few would be able or willing to understand the real intent of the work. The

*maqāmāt* are, in the view of al-Ḥarīrī, a work of entertainment, but they also are a work of instruction. The reader and the audience will not only enjoy the great linguistic and grammatical feats found in this work, but will also be taught the intricacies of scholarly learning.<sup>29</sup> This work then needs to be assimilated to animal fables and other similar tales, to which no blame is usually attached and the usefulness of which is generally recognized. More important, argues al-Ḥarīrī, since works are defined by intentions (*al-'amāl bi-l-niyyāt*), and since he composed his *maqāmāt* for education (*al-tahdhīb*) and not for spreading lies (*al-'akādhīb*), his work can be considered a guide to the straight path (*al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*) (9-15). The preface of the *maqāmāt* then not only makes clear that the ideal audience of this work is an urban intellectual elite, but also takes pains to justify the overall usefulness of the work. Particularly, al-Ḥarīrī attempts to articulate a defense of his work's fictionality by explicitly alluding to the model of his prestigious predecessor, by relating the *maqāmāt* to other fictional works such as the fable, and by ultimately proclaiming the didactic intentions behind his work. This last argument refers to a well-known *ḥadīth*, resonates with Ash'arite theological language and seems to validate these *maqāmāt* as a possible summa of all the fields of the Islamic sciences and, therefore, as a useful tool in the exposition and dissemination of this knowledge. In fact, Zakharia identifies in the doctrinal stability and continuity brought about by Niẓām al-Mulk's madrasas the cultural shift that would allow for al-Ḥarīrī's fictional, linguistic and, indirectly, religious explorations (*Abū Zayd*, 26). In a period where Sufism and *'Ilm al-Kalām* had already attained a respected place within Islamic orthodoxy, al-Ḥarīrī is here aiming at creating a space for the type of fiction and writerly occupation his work so

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<sup>29</sup> Apart from the *maqāmāt*, al-Ḥarīrī penned several works on grammar and lexicography, which decisively inform the outstanding erudition of his *maqāmāt*.

eminently represents. This aspect of al-Ḥarīrī's *maqāmāt* will be elucidated in the following analyses of individual *maqāmāt*.

#### IV. Analysis of Two *Maqāmāt*: al-Hamadhānī's *al-Maqāma al-Khamriyya* and al-Ḥarīrī's *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya*

##### 1. Al-Hamadhānī's *al-Maqāma al-Khamriyya*

Al-Hamadhānī's *al-Maqāma al-Khamriyya* establishes an important paradigm for the treatment of repentance in the *maqāma* literary type, as well as a seedbed of theological questions on free will, divine omnipotence and the different views on *tawba* that these questions imply. In particular, al-Hamadhānī's use of irony in his representation of *tawba* in this piece illustrates the formal devices and the potential for moral denunciation inherent to the *maqāma*. In this *maqāma*, the narrator or transmitter, Ibn Hishām, boasts of the outstanding morals that he held as a young man. He claims that in his youth he found the golden mean between "seriousness (*al-jidd*) and jest" (*al-hazl*); his moral character was gentle (*sajīh*) and his behavior, sound (*ṣaḥīh*). So well-balanced his character was that he reserved the day for people (*al-nās*) and night, for the wine cup (*al-kās*) (al-Hamadhānī 125-127).

The above introduction provides a vivid portrait of the character of the narrator as well as an excellent example of the sharp divide between appearance and reality in the genre. Further, when all the claims of balance and distribution are swept away by the tagline, the audience is introduced into the dynamics of the genre and warned of the unreliability of the narrator. The narrator, in fact, only boasts of his own hypocrisy, which allows him to effectively lead two different lives. The contrapuntal arrangement of rhymed clauses, typical of the *maqāma*, particularly emphasizes the irony of this excerpt, by attesting to the flowery rhetoric with which the narrator's moral duplicity is infused.

But this ironic display is only the preamble of a long series of expositions on morality and piety, which precisely denounce the hypocritical and unscrupulous use of religious discourse and practice. The feigned piety and spurious repentance of the rogue Abū al-Faṭḥ al-Iskandarī is the most eloquent example of this denunciation.

After Ibn Hishām spends the entire night drinking with a group of friends, they hear the call for the morning prayer and hurry to the mosque. They enter the mosque and stand in the front row just behind the Imām. They perform an effective simulacrum of sobriety, by controlling their movements to the smallest detail. In the meantime the Imām is taking too long in his preliminary rituals. His diligence is excessive; his prostrations are overtly emphatic. The Imām finally stands up, and after sniffing the air denounces Ibn Hishām's bibulous group in front of the congregation, who immediately after attacks them violently and makes them swear they will never repeat such an offense. Ibn Hishām and his friends express their regret about their drinking escapades and swiftly flee the scene. Once outside the mosque, they ask some children about the identity of the Imām who denounced them. The children tell them that the Imām is the god-fearing man (*al-rajul al-taqīy*) Abū al-Faṭḥ al-Iskandarī. Ibn Hishām and his friends are astonished by the miraculous transformation of this seemingly irredeemable rogue. Nonetheless, they are grateful for this incontrovertible proof of God's omnipotence. Because of God's power, blind men are able to see, demons believe, and Abū al-Faṭḥ al-Iskandarī repents. Next, they praise God, for al-Iskandarī has hastened to return to Him (*'asra 'a fī 'awbatihī*) and they ask God not to deprive them of a repentance like his (*wa-lā haramanā llahu mithla tawbatihī*) (126). As night approaches, though, they see the flags of the wine shops and relapse in their drinking habits. They choose the biggest inn they find, wherein a female

wine seller entertains them, by kissing their heads and hands. She proceeds to inform them about the excellence of her wine, which it is as if it were dew from her lips. They asked her about the singer of her meeting place (*al-muṭrib fī nādīki*) (126). She informs them that she has indeed a favorite among her suitors, a noble *shaykh*. When she finally calls for her *shaykh*, the truth is revealed. The *shaykh* is Abū al-Faṭḥ al-Iskandarī.

This literary piece presents thus a series of parallelisms, the true significance of which is only revealed at the end of the story. At the mosque, the controlled movements of Ibn Hishām and his companions (pretending to be sober) are juxtaposed with the exorbitant body language of the Imām Abū al-Faṭḥ al-Iskandarī (pretending to be pious). Ibn Hishām's prayer asking God to grant him the same kind of *tawba* that Abū al-Faṭḥ has embraced is ironically fulfilled when he and his companions relapsed into drinking, meet Abū al-Faṭḥ at the same bar, and court the same woman. While the typical pattern of the *maqāma* genre makes this final revelation predictable, the use of point of view through Ibn Hishām's first person narrative suggests other levels of complexity, also inherent to this literary type. The audience knows exactly the same information that Ibn Hishām knows and is also completely aware of Ibn Hishām's hypocrisy, since he candidly acknowledges his moral duplicity at the beginning of the text. As a result, the audience and readers of this text only discover Abū al-Faṭḥ's hypocrisy when Ibn Hishām does, thus realizing that they also have fallen victim to Ibn Hishām's flawed point of view and naiveté. The fact that the intradiegetic audience, that is, the people of the town, remain completely unaware of their Imām's immoral conduct is especially significant. In fact, *al-Maqāma al-Khamriyya* provides the only example in al-Hamadḥānī's collection where Abū al-Faṭḥ has succeeded in deceiving an entire community for an extended

period of time. Unlike most of the other *maqāmāt*, the entire village knows Abū al-Faḥ by his real name. More important, he is not only the respected religious leader of the village, but he is also considered the epitome of virtue and religious zeal. They even call him *al-rajul al-taqī*, namely, the god-fearing man. The community immediately obeys his commands, even at the risk of jeopardizing other people's lives, as the severe beating that Ibn Hishām and his friends receive may indicate.

This *maqāma* hence denounces religious hypocrisy and, at a higher level, warns the audience against the dangers of credulity and misinterpretation. Ibn Hishām and his readers are finally able to come out of error and repudiate the hypocrisy and naiveté that have hindered them from the truth. But the fact that the people of the town persevere in their error emphasizes the individual and collective responsibility in propitiating the outrageous behavior of unscrupulous individuals like Abū al-Faḥ. Even when Abū al-Faḥ's histrionics should arouse a minimum of suspicion and the wine shop where he keeps his paramour is apparently located in the same town, the people of the town still blindly revere him. Here the readers of the text are urged to pay attention and understand the signs displayed before them appropriately, thus avoiding the twofold trap of gullibility and hypocrisy.

In addition to establishing an important precedent to the thematic treatment of repentance in the *maqāma* genre, al-Hamadhānī's *al-Maqāma al-Khamriyya* dialogues with important theological and doctrinal problems concerning *tawba*. Specifically, the terminology that Ibn Hishām employs when describing Abū al-Faḥ's repentance and the former's plea for God's favor reveal inconsistencies in the views on free will and divine omnipotence that they sustain. Whereas in the eyes of Ibn Hishām Abū al-Faḥ has



hurried to return to God (*'asra 'a fī 'awbatihī*), he himself asks God to allow him and his friends to repent (*wa-lā haramanā llahu mithla tawbatihī*). Abū al-Faṭḥ then had an active role in his return to God, thus implying an affirmation of free will and the concomitant idea of God's justice upon which the theological tenets of the Mu'tazila are based. As a contrast, Ibn Hishām would only repent if God grants him *tawba*, and therefore suggests a view of predestination and God's omnipotence anchored in Ash'arīte theology. This inconsistency not only entails a critical stance against the defective reasoning of Ibn Hishām's smattering of *kalām*, but also denounces the opportunistic use of contrasting doctrinal concepts by eloquent and unscrupulous individuals. This *maqāma* is then an unambiguous plea for a critical audience, a warning against religious hypocrisy and a subtle critique of predestinarian views on *tawba*. This latter point is eloquently evinced by the conventional ending of this *maqāma*. While Ibn Hishām recites a poem describing a man who abandons his piety and only hopes to live long enough to be granted God's forgiveness, Abū al-Faṭḥ once again blames the times he lives in (*hadhā al-zamān*) for his sins. They are completely aware of the necessity of *tawba*, but they choose to persist in their amoral behavior by affirming predestination and counting on every believer's eventual salvation in the Ash'arīte theological system. Their misuse of this doctrine entails an execrable religious transgression; they are trying to outwit God.<sup>30</sup>

This *maqāma* should provide some parameters for the evaluation of al-Ḥarīrī's *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya* with which the next section is concerned.

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<sup>30</sup> In *The Art*, James Monroe discusses the misuses of doctrine in al-Hamadhānī's collection in a chapter that he appropriately titles "Tan largo me lo fiáis." This is, indeed, the theological problem at the core of Tirso de Molina's *Burlador de Sevilla y convidado de piedra*, from which this phrase is taken. I will discuss the repercussions of this theological controversy in Tirso de Molina's *El condenado por desconfiado* in chapter 7 below. For a lucid discussion of Tirso de Molina's plays and the controversy *De auxiliis*, see Francisco Márquez Villanueva's *Orígenes y elaboración de "El burlador de Sevilla"* Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 1996. 35-59.

## 2. Al-Ḥarīrī's *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya*

Al-Ḥarīrī's *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya* represents an important development in the representation of *tawba* in the *maqāma* literary type. In contrast to al-Hamadhānī's *al-Maqāma al-Khamriyya*, *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya* presents an elaborate repentance narrative, directly addresses the theological understanding of *tawba* in Ash'arite thought, and alludes to the mystical dimension of *tawba* when the rogue Abū Zayd dons the woolen cloak of the mystics and reportedly repents in earnest. In addition, the fact that al-Ḥarīrī established a definite version of his *maqāmāt* by personally authorizing hundreds of copies of his work has important implications for the overall significance of the collection. In particular, the careful organization of the work is evident in the content and order of various *maqāmāt*. *Al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya* is the last *maqāma* of the collection and plays a determinant role in the structure of the entire work. The piece marks the culmination of the adventures of the rogue Abū Zayd, by which time he has grown old, is eager to repent, and death is looming. Al-Ḥarīrī's conscious arrangement, to which an autograph attests, does not lack some proto-novelistic intuitions. The ending of the work coincides with the last part of the antihero's life; the beginning of the work presents the first meeting between the rogue and the narrator. As will be shown, these intuitions seem to contribute to a rare depth in the depiction of the rogue's character and the candidness with which he relates his life in front of the people of Baṣra. This careful depiction of character also allows for a complex engagement with the theological and doctrinal implications of *tawba*, by a refined use of irony and ambiguity in its representation.

In this *maqāma*, the transmitter Ibn Hammām claims to be besieged by sorrow. He therefore decides to go to Baṣra, since he had heard that the assemblies of exhortation

in this city provide prompt relief to worries. Once he arrives in Baṣra, he sees a ragged man addressing the crowd while standing on a high rock. Ibn Hammām makes his way to a place near to the man, and so recognizes his *shaykh* Abū Zayd. Like Abū al-Faṭḥ in *al-maqāma al-khamriyya*, here Abū Zayd makes no effort to hide his true identity. The rogue then proceeds to praise the accomplishments of Baṣra and particularly the outstanding piety of its inhabitants. He then stops for a while, making people doubt his rhetorical prowess. But, after sighing, he describes his situation in detail. His *madiḥ* (*laus urbis*) becomes now a boasting poem (*mufākhara*); now the rogue will describe his character in detail. However, instead of giving an account of any praiseworthy qualities or accomplishments, Abū Zayd proudly boasts of his past life of trickery and brigandage. Next, he sadly confesses that he has grown too old to engage in these escapades, and that thus he now has nothing left, but regret, if regret still reported him any benefit. Now he assures the people of Baṣra that he only asks them for their prayers and supplications, so that God may hear them and graciously guide him to repentance. He has no interest in their money. After some tearful grimaces, he looks at the sky, and shouts “God is the greatest,” and affirms that he has seen a sign of God's response to the propitiatory prayers (*bānat ‘amārat al-istijāba*) (556); this sign remains unspecified. Upon hearing this announcement, the people of Baṣra bestow gifts and presumably money upon him, which he gladly accepts. As Abū Zayd flees the scene, Ibn Hammām follows him and directly asks him what his take on *tawba* is. Abū Zayd swears that the prayers of the people of Baṣra have been answered; God has made a miracle in transforming him altogether. In fact, Abū Zayd had come to the people of Baṣra with the heart of the deceiver and doubter, but after their prayers his heart miraculously became the heart of the regretful

(*qumtu fīhim maqām al-murīb al-khādi‘, thumma inqalabtu minhum biqalb al-munīb al-khāshi‘*) (557). Toward the end of the *maqāma*, Ibn Hammām appears inquiring about Abū Zayd's whereabouts. He discovers that the rogue has donned the woolen cloak of the *ṣūfīs* and has even become a thaumaturge (*dhū al-karamāt*) in his hometown Saruj. Ibn Hammām visits Abū Zayd, and is convinced of the sincerity of his repentance when witnessing how the former rogue spends days and nights in prayer and tears. Here Abū Zayd recites a poem lamenting the passage of time and encouraging his soul to bid farewell to his former way of life. His beard has whitened, he confesses. This irrefutable warning of imminent death makes him all the more eager to pray for God's forgiveness. Abū Zayd then quotes a Qur'anic verse from *surat al-kahf*; like Moses and the servant of God in the Qur'anic text, the two protagonists of the *maqāmāt* part ways. Abū Zayd finally advises Ibn Hammām to always keep death in front of his eyes (al-Ḥarīrī 548-566).

The complexity and suggestiveness of this *maqāma* have drawn considerable critical attention. Thus, it will be convenient to briefly review this critical corpus in order to establish the particular lines of inquiry that inform this study. Most of the critical analyses of this text have concentrated on the problems concerning Abū Zayd's final repentance. The question of whether Abū Zayd's *tawba* is sincere and the concomitant problem of whether this final episode is justified by an internal development in the collection are often addressed. For instance, this *maqāma*'s function within the overall structure of the collection particularly intrigues Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila. For Hämeen-Anttila, the final repentance of Abū Zayd is a *deus ex machina* of sorts, since this reformation is connected neither to the rogue's former life nor to a development sustained

throughout the previous *maqāmāt* (160). In contrast to Hämeen-Anttila's dismissive remarks on this *maqāma*'s unexpectedness, Abdelfattah Kilito emphasizes the significance of Abū Zayd's abrupt transformation and locates this change within the overarching conception of the work. Kilito argues that this piece is unique at several levels. First, this last episode does not include the customary unmasking of the rogue's trickery; the surprise in this *maqāma* is the lack of surprise. Second, in the view of Kilito this *maqāma* is, in fact, a diptych. The two components of this diptych consist of the encounter of the two protagonists at Baṣra and their final meeting at Sarūj. Kilito's discussion is based on an important pattern in the collection, which provides the entire work with structural cohesion and, in effect, divides the collection into five sections of ten *maqāmāt*. The first, the eleventh, the twenty-first, the thirty-first, and the forty-first *maqāmāt* contain religious exhortations to piety, repentance and world-renunciation. Then, the second part of the last *maqāma* plays the role that the fifty-first *maqāma* would have played. But, unlike all the previous examples in the collection, now the religious exhortation and the call for repentance are substantiated by a serious conversion narrative. Kilito argues that in the fiftieth *maqāma* Abū Zayd has fallen into his own trap. The prayers of the Baṣrans have really interceded on his behalf; God has effectively shown him the path to repentance. The second half of the *maqāma*, in which the rogue's devotion is described, is then a fitting seal for the collection. The five religious exhortations of the collection would coincide with the five centuries of Islam; the final and real *tawba* of the rogue, Kilito implies, is a hopeful calling for religious renewal in the threshold of the fifth century of Islam (231-4).

Similarly, James T. Monroe observes that al-Ḥarīrī's last *maqāma* "ends on a note of optimism lacking in al-Hamadhānī" (*Art* 165). Monroe relates this optimism to the author's religious orthodoxy and the implicit acceptance of deathbed repentance in Sunni Islam, as anchored in the doctrine of last acts. However, Monroe ultimately raises doubts as to the sincerity of Abū Zayd's repentance, by providing a close reading of the first part of the *maqāma* and showing the inconsistencies contained in the rogue's address to the people of Baṣra. Most notably, the fact that the rogue is the sole witness to the alleged sign of God's gracious forgiveness and his open acceptance of the bounty bestowed upon him despite his earlier protestations should alert the reader about the real nature of his repentance. Hence, Monroe claims that this *maqāma* advances an invitation for a critical evaluation of doctrine, as the audience "finally realizes that the author, who in this case was a Sunni, is also raising questions, this time from within the Ash'arī set of beliefs, concerning the validity and authenticity of a last minute repentance" (*al-Maqāmāt* 83).

Although these critical approaches are illuminating, some of the assertions they sustain may be further qualified. The following analysis revises Hämeen-Anttila's claims as to the structural isolation of the last *maqāma* of al-Ḥarīrī's collection, by examining the way this piece resonates with several other *maqāmāt*.<sup>31</sup> The *maqāma* genre is certainly pre-novelistic and therefore modern categories such as psychological development of character are foreign to it. This lack of psychological development, however, does not mean that other types of thematic, symbolic and even spatial connections are unattested

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<sup>31</sup> When declaring the unexpectedness of *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya*'s ending, Hämeen-Anttila notes that "we cannot speak of a Bildungsroman, as the reformation of Abu Zayd remains unconnected with his former life" (160). Despite the fact that Anttila's claim as to the abruptness of Abu Zayd's repentance is valid, the reference to the Bildungsroman in this context is particularly misleading, since, on the one hand, it would require the imposition of an anachronistic generic and cultural tradition upon the *maqāma* and, on the other hand, it would disregard the theological and doctrinal implications of this piece.

throughout the collection. In fact, al-Ḥarīrī's meticulous arrangement of his *maqāmāt* allows for a careful study of various *maqāmāt* that illuminate the final repentance of the rogue and situate this piece within very specific structural coordinates. Particularly, this analysis illustrates the connections between two *maqāmāt* of the collection, that is, *maqāmāt* 48 and 50, which deal with repentance narratives, homiletics, old age and death. I also demonstrate that this sample particularly contributes to the radical ambiguity of the last *maqāma* concerning the sincerity of the rogue's repentance. This point is further evinced by the way the final repentance of the rogue Abū Zayd and the poems that he recites in *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya* echo the repentance narratives in sufi hagiographies and the penitential discourse of the *zuhdiyyāt*. In fact, these echoes, as will be seen, do not necessarily imply a parody of serious religious texts, but rather an evocation of the premises advanced by these texts and ultimately a subtle invitation to a discussion of the problems they might pose. In this sense, this analysis reexamines the arguments of the studies of Monroe and Kilito and engages in a close reading of *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya* that rather than affirming or denying the sincerity of Abū Zayd's repentance focuses on the internal and external network of references upon which the ambiguity of this repentance narrative is based.

Unlike al-Hamadhāni's direct denunciation of Abū al-Faṭḥ's purported repentance in *al-Maqāma al-Khamriyya*, al-Ḥarīrī's repentance narrative in *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya* is fraught with ambivalence. This multivalence resides in the doctrinal, theological, homiletical and poetic elements of this piece, which suggest an important divide between the first part and the second part of the episode. While the first part raises some doubts about the sincerity of the rogue's *tawba*, the second part casts these doubts aside and

ratifies the validity of the repentance of even the worst of sinners. In addition, these two parts, which Kilito convincingly describes as two different *maqāmāt*, resonate with other episodes of the collection, thus implying a robust intertextual network of associations that al-Ḥarīrī’s sophisticated audience would have certainly grasped.

The second part of *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya* especially contributes to sustain the claim of Abū Zayd’s sincerity in repentance. The narrator Ibn Hammām, in the expectation of Abū Zayd’s usual unmasking, stays at his side for some time. Ibn Hammām then finds that the rogue’s punctilious performance of prayers, hymns of praise (*tasbīḥ*) and supplications for divine forgiveness is well beyond the supererogatory, for he spends days and nights in prayer while regretfully contemplating his past sins. Further, his way of life is clearly limited to the level of mere subsistence. He is dressed in a woolen cloak; a loaf of bread and olive oil are the only food he has and shares with Ibn Hammām. More important, the content of his teachings and poems is impeccably consistent with Sunnism. In fact, all the poems of this *maqāma* are *zuhdiyyāt* that present a self-excruciating poetic voice in regretful acknowledgement of his hitherto dilatory attitude toward *tawba*. In particular, the longest poem of this episode attests to al-Ḥarīrī’s skillful use of the conventions of the *zuhdiyyāt* and establishes a serious conceptual framework for the representation of *tawba* in this episode.

In this poem the poetic voice addresses his own soul and bids farewell to the memories of a former life of banditry, depravity and trickery, while expressing sorrow about the time he spent in these conditions. Further, after providing an exhaustive list of his sexual escapades, the poetic voice admits how many times he has dissolved repentance in vanity, by being “daring against the lord of heavens” (*tajarra’ta ‘alā rabbi*



*al-samawāt*) and by not being “truthful in what he preached” (*wa-lā sadaqta fī ma tadda ʿī*) (561). Then, the poetic voice exhorts his soul to don regret and “pour tears of blood” (*ʿaskub shābība al-dam*) before he slips and fatally falls (561). This is the time to pay heed to the white hair that covers his head, realize the imminence of death, be humble and recognize one’s sins. The tombs of generations long past should also warn this soul; his abode will soon be a narrow, desolate grave. Now is the time to seek redemption, since once installed in the house of dismay there will be neither a way out nor any discernible distinction. Teacher and disciple, the bright and the fool, the rich and the poor will all be engulfed into the void, and so blessed is he who has feared God in this life and the defiant will be eternally damned. At this point the poetic voice stops haranguing his soul and, for the first time in the poem, directly addresses God while enacting an anguished first-person soliloquy. Here the poetic voice movingly confesses the fear that besieges him because of his criminal and sinful life, asks the lord to forgive His rebellious slave, and proclaims the infinite mercy of God, who is the “best addressee of supplication” (*khayr madʿuw du ʿī*) (574).

This poem resonates with the language that al-Qushayrī and Ibn al-ʿArabī employed in describing the initial stages of the mystical path, maintains some important commonalities with the *zuhdiyyāt* of Abū al-ʿAtāhiya, and situates Abū Zayd’s repentance narrative within the framework of the views on *tawba* implied in the Qur’an and al-Ḥadīth. In focusing on Abū Zayd’s former dissolute life, this poem aligns with the opinion of al-Tustarī when he affirms that the sufi wayfarer should never forget his sins. The poetic voice fully recalls his transgressions and his candor attests to the initial stages of the mystical path, wherein the novice repents of his sins as a first step into a highly

stratified conception of *tawba*.<sup>32</sup> Although Abū Zayd's belated repentance would have made him one of Ibn al-ʿArabī's reprobates, his poem precisely stresses the necessity and relevance of *tawba* even in the case of a late-life repentance. As a result, the poetic voice in the poem admonishes his own soul to embark on an encompassing transformation before it is too late, by evoking the *zuhdiyyāt*'s conventional allusions to tombs, bygone generations and old age (*shayb*, white hair).

The aforementioned admonition not only ratifies the validity of *tawba* even at Abū Zayd's advanced age, but also manifests the poetic voice's despair at contemplating the time he spent without turning to God in repentance. Thus, the regret that this poetic voice expresses while candidly acknowledging his sins concerns the fact that he was completely aware of the necessity of *tawba*, but he still persevered in his sinful life and was therefore "defiant of the lord of heavens" (*tajarra'ta 'alā rabb al-samawāt*) (561). But the deep-seated regret and the despair with which this poetic voice infuses the poem only gain full significance in his final address to God, whereby he asks God's forgiveness, recognizes his lordship and praises his infinite mercy. In expressing regret, asking God's forgiveness and recognizing the lordship of God Abū Zayd's poem embodies the essential relationship between God and humankind in Islam. Just as the three allies of Muḥammad in *surat al-tawba* who in the midst of banishment, regret and despair acknowledged the lordship of God and were forgiven, Abū Zayd recognizes that he is subservient to a lord who forgives and punishes human transgressions (Qur'ān 9:60-82). More important, his trust in divine mercy and his implicit praise of an all powerful and merciful God ultimately eclipse his despair and regret, for he is certain that God

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<sup>32</sup> Although Abū Zayd has allegedly been endowed with miraculous powers (*karāmāt*) and has therefore attained the highest degree of mystical experience, all his demeanor clearly indicates that he would be at the inchoative stages of the mystical path.

allows even an inveterate sinner like him to repent. In this sense, the second part of *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya* clearly affirms Ash‘arī views on *tawba* as anchored in the priority of divine omnipotence. When Abū Zayd expresses his deep-seated regret over his belated *tawba* while acknowledging the lordship and mercy of God, his endeavor intersects God’s favor, thus culminating the path initiated when God showed a sign of his favor to Abū Zayd at Baṣra. Since the revelation of this unstated sign of divine grace ignites Abū Zayd’s *tawba*, the implications of this part of Abū Zayd’s repentance narrative should now be addressed.

By all appearances, Abū Zayd’s *tawba* occurs miraculously. After Abū Zayd convinces the people of Baṣra of his sincere desire to repent and his need for help in this regard, the Baṣrans join him in prayer and serve as his intercessors before God. Now Abū Zayd looks at the sky, sees a sign and proclaims that God has shown him the way to *tawba* and has forgiven him. According to James T. Monroe this scene alludes to a tradition according to which God descends to the lowest heavens every day to see whether a believer is seeking divine forgiveness. God then allegedly complies with Abū Zayd’s and the Baṣrans’ pleas from this particularly receptive position, but Abū Zayd remains the sole witness of the sign of God’s favor. Hence, Monroe raises questions as to the veracity of the rogue’s claims, since “neither do the heavens split asunder, nor does the merciful voice of God boom forth” (*The Art* 82). Even though Monroe’s skepticism is certainly reasonable, the fact that Abū Zayd’s *tawba* echoes serious repentance narratives in Sufi hagiographies may, to some extent, validate his claims.

The repentance narratives in Sufi hagiographies present an extraordinary diversity in terms of content as well as in the magnitude of their manifestation. Despite the fact

that in many repentance narratives the heavens do split asunder and the merciful voice of God does boom forth, in many other cases the occasion for an individual's *tawba* belongs in a quotidian context that touches the moral fiber of this specific individual and that, as a consequence, remains understated for the rest of humankind. Abū Fudayl's repentance narrative provides a good example of the specificity of the mystical experience of *tawba*.

As noted in the first chapter of this dissertation, Abū Fudayl's *tawba* came about when he heard the recitation of a Qur'anic verse that seemed to directly address him, but his *tawba* was ratified only after he attested to the terror that his ill-gained fame caused. The two events that ignited this brigand's *tawba* would appear insignificant if they were dissociated from the particular circumstances in which Abū Fudayl found himself. But, given his individual state at this particular juncture, these events marked his God-sanctioned path to *tawba*; they were miracles in his eyes (al- Qushayrī 424-5). The repentance narratives of other Sufis further attest to this particular understanding of *tawba* and the magnitude of its divine manifestation. M'arūf al-Karkhī's *tawba* occurred when he listened to a certain preacher at Kufa, who proclaimed that God forsakes those who completely turn away from him and shows mercy to those who turn to him wholeheartedly (al- Qushayrī 424-5). Sarī Al-Saqāṭī repented after Ma'arūf brought him an orphan to clothe, thanked him for his assistance and wished him to pay less attention to his business, so that the world would appear hateful to him (al- Qushayrī 427). Abū Sulayman Dāwud committed to *tawba* after the entourage of a certain official pushed him away on a street (al- Qushayrī 422).

All the aforementioned examples clearly imply that the magnitude of God's call to *tawba* often lies at an internal individual level. These individuals understood

seemingly casual events in the light of a profoundly religious vision. In their circumstances, even the simplest events and expressions served as the vehicle of God's irruption into the believer's life. These repentance narratives may thus shed some light on Abū Zayd's *tawba* and, in part, sustain his claims as to the revelation that he enjoyed at Baṣra. In the Sufi hagiographic tradition, God's turning toward his servant could very well reside at subtle individual levels, and so a manifest revelation is not a necessary condition of authenticity. Even the fact that the people of Baṣra had willingly joined Abū Zayd in his prayer for forgiveness could have constituted the sign to which he referred, as he implies when he tells Ibn Hammām that the prayers of the people of Baṣra had really operated "a miracle in him" (*inna sha'nī la-'ujāb*) (557). Although these parallelisms could very well suggest a parodic intent, the fact that similar repentance narratives occur in serious hagiographic texts should pave the way for a more nuanced interpretation of Abū Zayd's miraculous *tawba*. Not unlike Ḥever ha-Aḥoḥi's uncanny *teshuvah* in the second gate of *Meshal ha-Kadmoni* examined below, Abū Zayd's *tawba* embodies the intimate transformation of an inveterate sinner, upon discerning God's urgent call for repentance. In this particular sense, *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya* clearly dramatizes the Ash'arite prioritization of divine omnipotence and the ensuing inscrutability of God's design. No one possesses the necessary criteria to fully understand and fathom human actions, but God. The mystery of Abū Zayd's *tawba* then contributes to the profound ambiguity of this piece. This theological framework also informs the thematic and narrative treatment of *tawba* in other *maqāmāt* in al-Ḥarīrī's collection. The fact that other *maqāmāt* in al-Ḥarīrī's collection set important precedents for the repentance narrative and the poetic, homiletic and structural components of *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya*

not only further verifies the ultimate ambivalence of this last *maqāma*, but also demonstrates that this piece does not appear in isolation. *Al-Maqāma al-Ḥaramiyya* (48) features a genuine repentance narrative that in many ways parallels Abū Zayd’s final repentance, and so the following analysis will particularly concentrate on this text.

In *al-Maqāma al-Ḥarāmiyya*, an elderly member of the congregation at one of the mosques of Baṣra confesses his many relapses into drinking in front of the community.<sup>33</sup> He openly expresses his sorrow, since he has shunned a return to God (*bādī al-kāba li-rafḍi al-ināba*) (530). He then fully acknowledges his excess in gulping down wine must and asks the community whether they know of an expiatory act (*kaffāra*) that might take him away from his sin and draw him near to his Lord. Here Abū Zayd comes forth and claims that his daughter has fallen into the hands of the crusaders, and so the elder could give him the sum he needs to ransom his daughter as an ideal *kaffāra*. The elder agrees; Abū Zayd embezzles the money (al-Ḥarīrī 524-35). Although the ending of this *maqāma* presents Abū Zayd’s in his usual treacherous self, the elder’s repentance narrative clearly shows some analogies with Abū Zayd’s final repentance in *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya* (Zakharia, “Les références” 283). These two repentance narratives take place in Baṣra, their two elderly protagonists fully acknowledge (*mu’tarif*) their sins in front of the community, and the two of them ask the community for assistance while expressing their regret. More important, the supplicants’ recognition that, despite all their regret, they have been unable to repent and that they therefore need propitiatory acts and prayers so that God shows them the way to *tawba* certainly evinces an Ash’arī conceptual

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<sup>33</sup> Another important precedent to Abū Zayd’s sudden transformation is found in *al-Maqāma al-Ramliyya* (31). In this text, Ibn Hammām meets Abū Zayd while he is performing the major pilgrimage. As usual, Abū Zayd addresses the crowd and encourages them to undertake the pilgrimage in earnest. But when Ibn Hammām accosts him, he refuses his company, since he has made a vow to neither associate with his sinful companions nor to accept any compensation for his pious harangues. He then completely vanishes.

framework anchored in the principles of divine omnipotence, divine lordship and human subserviency. These two *maqāmāt* thus not only share a common setting, a common theme and, to some extent, a common resolution, but also coincide in their unyielding affirmation of God's omnipotence and the necessity of *tawba*, notwithstanding the age and condition of the individual believer. Yet the real implications of this seemingly unblemished orthodoxy are thrown into sharp relief against other aspects of Abū Zayd's repentance narrative. Far from constituting a unilateral moral and doctrinal message, the affirmation of some of the principles of Sunni Islam in this text only contributes to further its ambiguity and to effectively throw the gauntlet down to the sophisticated audience for whom al-Ḥarīrī longed. The following section analyzes the subtle inconsistencies in the doctrinal and theological concepts adduced in Abū Zayd's address to the people of Baṣra and in Abū Zayd's and Ibn Hammām's conversations. These inconsistencies would highlight the importance of accurate interpretation in al-Ḥarīrī's *maqāmāt* and the consequent call for an attentive audience.

If al-Ḥarīrī's prologue describes the ideal audience of his work in the image of his intellectual coterie, *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya* implies the hermeneutical principles that should guide this audience as they read or listen to the collection. Toward the end of *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya* Abū Zayd alludes to a Qur'anic verse that precisely centers on the problems of misinterpretation, namely, the seventy-eighth verse of *surat al-kahf*. In this verse an unnamed servant of God, traditionally identified with the Islamic figure of Khidr, tells Moses that at this point they should part ways, since Moses has failed to be patient. Next, he tells Moses the interpretation (*ta'wil*) of the various actions that Moses failed to understand. In previous verses, Moses had asked the godly man to teach him the

knowledge that God had granted him. The godly man agreed with the condition that Moses should refrain from asking him the reasons behind his actions. Nonetheless, after the pious man had committed several seemingly evil actions, Moses angrily protested and therefore the man cut Moses' apprenticeship short and explained to Moses the meaning of his actions. All the apparently unjust behavior turned to really be righteous actions. The fact that al-Ḥarīrī caps his collection with this Qur'anic exhortation to a deeper or allegorical interpretation (*ta'wil*) of seemingly unrighteous actions signals this *maqāma* writer's implicit invitation to the audience's involvement in decoding the hidden implications of his texts.<sup>34</sup> The didactic significance of al-Ḥarīrī's *maqāmāt*, which he claims that only a few would really understand, seems then to reside in the theological and doctrinal subtleties of the texts as much as in their lexical intricacy. The *maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī pose significant challenges to their audience, but this audience should precisely sift through the various elements of the texts to find their paradoxes. In this sense, the tension between the consistent doctrinal discourse and the inconsistencies hidden in this discourse creates the space for the audience's interpretation, learning and debate. The tantalizing ambiguity of these texts calls for the same kind of erudite discussion that prompted al-Ḥarīrī's incursion into the genre. An analysis of the various problems that Abū Zayd's *tawba* raises should illuminate the ambivalence that permeates *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya*.

Despite the fact that Abū Zayd's address to the people of Baṣra is couched in Ash'arite theological principles, some of the components of his discourse raise important

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<sup>34</sup> Here I echo Douglas T. Young's reading of an allusion to the same Qur'anic *ayya* in al-Saraqūṣī's fiftieth *maqāma*, with which the next chapter of this dissertation will be concerned (67). Surprisingly, Young's excellent discussion of the generic development of the *maqāma* overlooks the fact that al-Ḥarīrī had already referred to this Qur'anic verse and that, therefore, the intertextuality in al-Saraqūṣī's passage is twofold.



questions about the integrity of the rogue's orthodoxy.<sup>35</sup> As noted above, after Abū Zayd praises the piety of Baṣra, he gives a detailed account of his life. His description is reminiscent of the pre-Islamic self-praise poem (*mufakhara*), but, instead of proclaiming his bravery and nobility, Abū Zayd boasts of how many people he has deceived, how many innovations he has conceived, and how many veils he has torn apart.<sup>36</sup> Next, he nonchalantly declares that all these feats belong to a time when his hair was still black; now he has grown old and he has no other option but regret. This fragment not only amounts to a confession of theft, reprehensible religious innovations (*[kam] bid' a ibtada'tu*) and sexual offenses (*[kam] hijāb hataktu*), but also constitutes a candid acknowledgment of this rogue's incapacity to persevere in his criminal life because of senility. This latter declaration casts Abū Zayd's subsequent plea for intercessory prayers and the regret that he expresses in an especially negative light. Not only does he come back to God when his lot has already been cast, like Ibn al-'Arabī's heretics, but he also unabashedly confesses that regret is his very last option. The regret that he expresses

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<sup>35</sup> Given the careful organization of this *maqāma* collection, it is hardly coincidental that *al-Maqāma al-Sasāniyya* (49) is located right before *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya*. This *maqāma* presents a senile Abū Zayd preparing his will and entrusting his son the leadership of the confraternity of beggars (*Banū Sasān*). Abū Zayd's will is indeed a manifesto of his amoral impenitent worldview, and therefore its proximity to Abū Zayd's repentance narrative should warn the attentive reader against the rogue's late-life *tawba*. In other words, did the senile Abū Zayd come to Baṣra after perpetuating his amoral doctrines in his legacy to the *Banū Sasān*?

<sup>36</sup> When analyzing this particular passage of *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya*, Young argues that "al-Ḥarīrī's modifications in secularizing the sermon incorporated into the *maqāma* genre tend to de-emphasize doctrinal and ideological issues and commensurately privilege rhetorical aspects" (61). Nonetheless, as this chapter attempts to demonstrate, doctrinal issues and rhetorical aspects are intrinsically linked in al-Ḥarīrī's *maqāmāt*. In fact, the interconnectedness of the doctrinal and the rhetorical is particularly evident in *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya*, wherein even the *laus urbis* pronounced in front of the people of Baṣra is anchored in Baṣra's outstanding piety, its privileged status before God and, as a consequence, the especially propitious power of its citizens' prayers. Every single element of this *maqāma*, in effect, resonates with doctrinal and theological problems.

right before his miraculous *tawba* is then questionable, but he himself recognizes how problematic his late-life resolve is.

Abū Zayd's sincere acknowledgement of his inveterate impenitence contrasts with the apparent duplicity of his plea for propitiatory prayers to the people of Baṣra. As James Monroe has noted, the fact that Abū Zayd asks for prayers, claims that he is not after monetary rewards, and, once the sign of God's grace appears, accepts the bounty that the people of Baṣra bestow upon him, should warn the audience against the nebulous *tawba* of the rogue (*The Art* 83). In fact, al-Ḥarīrī's evaluation of the validity and authenticity of last minute repentance, already suggested in Abū Zayd's confession, particularly surfaces when the narrator Ibn Hammām interrogates Abū Zayd toward the end of this first part. Upon being asked about his *tawba*, Abū Zayd claims that the prayers of the people of Baṣra have produced a miracle. He came to Baṣra with the heart of the deceiver and the doubter, but after their prayers he has the heart of the humbled penitent (*al-munīb al-khāshi'*) (557). The implication here is a serious transgression in Sunni Islam, according to which human beings will be judged in accordance to their intentions.<sup>37</sup> The real problem in Abū Zayd's acceptance of the gifts bestowed upon him resides in the fact that he had procured this benefit when he was harboring bad intentions. Had the prayers of the people of Baṣra really transformed him, he would have, at least, declined their misguided generosity, thus honoring one of the most basic doctrinal tenets of the faith that he claims to profess. Since the bounty bestowed upon him is essentially defiled, the fact that Abū Zayd flees the scene, booty in hand, retires to his natal Sarūj,

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<sup>37</sup> As James Monroe notes in *al-Maqāmāt al-Luzūmiyya*, the importance of intention is linked to a *ḥadīth* that establishes a major predestinarian doctrine. "Since all human acts are predetermined by the will of God, Monroe affirms, humans may well intend to perform an act but be prevented from carrying out that intention. Therefore, God rewards or punishes human beings according to their intention, not according to their actual performance of the act" (462).

and devotes his life to prayer and asceticism certainly calls his late-life repentance into question. But it must be noted that this is the only aspect in Abū Zayd's repentance narrative that decisively contravenes his claims. All the other doubts that Abū Zayd's *tawba* may raise belong to the initial fragments of his address and, therefore, occur before his miraculous return to God. This carefully structured *maqāma* then employs a subtle suggestion to invite al-Ḥarīrī's audience to pay the utmost attention to the subtleties of religious discourse and thus join in the debates that this ambiguous repentance narrative promotes. The entire framework of this *maqāma*'s religious orthodoxy hinges on a single individual's intention; there is no better affirmation of the principles upon which the Islamic faith is founded.

This chapter has demonstrated that the differences between the conversion stories and penitential themes found in al-Hamadhānī's *al-Maqāma al-Khamriyya* and al-Ḥarīrī's *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya* attest to two divergent approaches to the literary motif of the repentant rogue. Whereas al-Hamadhānī advances a straightforward denunciation of the blatant misuse of religious discourse in his foundational text of the tradition, al-Ḥarīrī poses a challenge to his twelfth century audience in an invitation to a learned discussion of serious theological and literary matters. The variety of aims and approaches that these texts exhibit in their use of the motif of the repentant rogue provides an adequate backdrop for the discussion of the educational, mystical and burlesque elements integrated into the Arabic and Hebrew *maqāmāt* and the Spanish picaresque novels with which the following chapters will be concerned.

### Chapter Three: *Tawba* and Its Discontents: Repentance in al-Saraqṣṭī's *al-Maqāma al-Muwafīyya Khamsīn*

This chapter examines the repentance narrative and penitential themes in *al-Maqāmāt al-Luzūmiyya* of Abū al-Ṭāhir Muḥammad Ibn Yūsuf al-Tamīmī al-Saraqṣṭī (d. 1143) with a specific emphasis on the fiftieth *maqāma* of the collection. The first section of this chapter describes the important generic developments of the *maqāma* in al-Andalus with a particular focus on the Andalusī *maqāma*'s departure from the Eastern *maqāma*'s model, the conflation of several generic traditions under the term *maqāma* in al-Andalus, and the exceptionality of al-Saraqṣṭī's collection within the Andalusī literary context. This chapter then provides a detailed discussion of the historical context of twelfth century al-Andalus, and describes the conflicts between Andalusī Sufī masters and Andalusī qadis that characterized the period. Next, I analyze the death-bed repentance narrative of the rogue Abū Ḥabīb in the fiftieth *maqāma* of al-Saraqṣṭī's collection and the important theological and political questions that this narrative raises. Abū Ḥabīb's claims to prophethood at the end of the fiftieth *maqāma* are evaluated in the light of the political and spiritual crises of twelfth century al-Andalus, the mystical responses to these crises, and some of the heterodox ideas ascribed to endemic Andalusī mystical currents as epitomized by the mystical school of Ibn Masarra (d. 319/931). I argue that al-Saraqṣṭī's negative depiction of Sufism throughout *al-Maqāmāt al-Luzūmiyya*, and, most especially, in Abū Ḥabīb's repentance narrative signals this writer's skeptical outlook on the growing political and spiritual ascendancy of twelfth century Andalusī Sufī masters, and thus suggests this Andalusī writer's critical views on the Sufis as one of the sources of divisiveness in twelfth century Andalusī society. I

conclude that Abū Ḥabīb's repentance narrative in al-Saraqusī's fiftieth *maqāma* exemplifies the consistently negative representation of Sufis throughout the collection, affirms the need for a rational appraisal of the mystical claims to religious authority, and calls for an active involvement in renovating the religious and political realms while shunning the divisiveness that so dangerously weakened twelfth century Andalusī society.<sup>38</sup>

### I. The Andalusī Maqāma and al-Maqāmāt al-Luzūmiyya

In al-Andalus the term *maqāma* referred to a wide array of generic practices and, generally, to any sort of rhetorical exercise written in rhymed and rhythmic prose (*saj'*) (De la Granja xiv). By disregarding prominent features of the Eastern *maqāma* such as the characters of the narrator and the rogue, schematized plots, and beggar themes, the Andalusī *maqāma* allowed for important structural and thematic variations (Drory 196). Specifically, the conflation of *maqāma*, literary epistle (*risāla*), and literary debate (*munāẓara*) provides the Andalusī *maqāma* with a multi-generic framework that encompasses a wide spectrum of fictional as well as non-fictional literary endeavors.<sup>39</sup> From the debate between the pen and the sword, and the description of a town or a battle, to the narration of the havoc that a gargantuan he-goat causes on the eve of the feast of

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<sup>38</sup> Specifically, the power struggle between the juridical authorities and popular mystical movements to occupy the vacuum created by the faltering Almoravid rule constitutes, as will be seen, the crucial historical dynamic that informs al-Saraqusī's views.

<sup>39</sup> In the view of Ismā'īl El-Outmani the predominance of the Ḥarīrīan model of the *maqāma* in al-Andalus, and this model's purported didactic aims and emphasis on rhetoric, lie behind the assimilation of the *maqāma* genre into various sorts of rhetorical texts. See "La *maqāma* en al-Andalus". *Foro Hispánico*. Amsterdam; Atlanta: Editions Rodopi, 1994, p.105-22. In addition to the works of De la Granja, Drory, and El-Outmani, the following studies touch upon the formal development of the Andalusī *maqāma*: Nemah, H. "The Andalusī Maqāmāt," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 5, 1974, p. 83-92; and Tarchouna, Mahmoud. *Les marginaux dans les récits picaresques arabes et espagnols*. Tunis : Publications de l'Université de Tunis, 1982, 50-60. For a lucid description of the Andalusī *maqāma*'s place in the development of the genre, see Jonathan Decker, *Iberian Jewish Literature: Between al-Andalus and Christian Europe*. Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 2007, 107-11.

the sacrifice (*'id al- 'aḏḩā*), the Andalusī *maqāma* clearly challenges the boundaries of the genre. In this sense, beyond thematic and structural definitions of genre, the Andalusī generic practice attests to a particular understanding of the *maqāma* as a mode of fictionality anchored in attributed discourse, as Kilito has insightfully suggested in his study of the broader implications of the Eastern *maqāma* (Kilito 152). As will be seen in the next part of this dissertation, the diverse cultural, religious and literary references associated with the use of attributed discourse in this generic tradition entail contrasting approaches to fictionality and illuminate the overall development of the Andalusī *maqāma* in both its Arabic and Hebrew variants (Drory 196).

Nonetheless, in contrast to the above description of the Andalusī generic practice, al-Saraqusṭī closely follows the Ḥarīrīan model when composing *al-Maqāmāt al-Luzūmiyya*. In particular, al-Saraqusṭī names his main characters, the transmitter al-Sā'ib Ibn Tammām and the rogue Abū Ḥabīb al-Sadusī, after al-Ḥarīrī's Abū Zayd al-Sarujī and Ibn Hammām, uses the Ḥarīrīan schemata with relative consistency, and revisits some of the story lines in al-Ḥariri's collection.<sup>40</sup> Yet al-Saraqusṭī also revises several aspects of the genre, most notably the prosodic patterns of the *saj'* and the poetic pieces of the collection. In this regard, the Andalusī writer significantly adopts the rhyme scheme introduced by the sceptic poet al-Ma'arrī (d. 449/1058) in his *Luzūmiyyāt*, that is, *luzūm mā lam yalzam*, which includes an additional consonantal rhyme, and thus involves

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<sup>40</sup> It is important to note, however, that al-Saraqusṭī's adoption of his predecessors' name patterns is not a passive or simplistic procedure. Devin Stewart demonstrates that even though the names of Abū Ḥabīb al-Sadusi and al-Sa'ib Ibn Tammām clearly echo the names of al-Hamadḩānī's and al-Ḥarīrī's protagonists they also have important differences. In contrast to al-Iskandarī and al-Sarujī, the term al-Sadusī is a tribal rather than a geographical designation, and it might also connote the ever-changing character of the rogue through the associations with the number six with which it resonates. In addition, the transmitter's name, al-Sa'ib, also means "lost" or "stray," thus signifying his irredeemable lack of judgement (151).

a demanding prosodic requirement.<sup>41</sup> Another innovation partially related to al-Saraqusṭī's rhyme scheme is found in the additional transmitter of the collection, al-Mundhir ibn Ḥumām. While at the prosodic level the two transmitters' names evidently serve the function of fulfilling the complex requirements of the *luzūm mā lam yalzam*, at the structural level these names provide a double chain of transmission that better mimics the hadith's *isnād*, as well as creates yet another narrative level in the text.<sup>42</sup> This latter point is further attested in the narrative structure within single *maqāmāt*, which often challenge generic expectations. In the twenty-third *maqāma*, for instance, Ibn Tammām meets an elderly ascetic (*nāsik*) who preaches against worldly enticements, takes an old beggar under his protection, and is finally robbed by the beggar, who is revealed as Abū Ḥabīb. Here an audience well-acquainted with the Ḥarīrīan model of the *maqāma* would expect the ascetic preacher at the beginning of the text to be unmasked as Abū Ḥabīb, but this audience's expectations are effectively defeated by al-Saraqusṭī's deferral of the *maqāma*'s customary recognition scene.

The fact that al-Saraqusṭī employs the aforementioned structural variation in the fiftieth *maqāma* confirms that this Andalusī writer was keenly aware of the generic expectations that al-Ḥarīrī's collection had established, and that he took full advantage of the relative fixity of his predecessor's schemata by integrating subtle yet significant changes in the narrative structure of some of the texts in his collection (Decter 126).

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<sup>41</sup> In his Arabic-English Lexicon, Edward W. Lane defines *luzūm mā lam yalzam* as "the imposing upon one's self what is not indispensable; or adhering to a mode of construction that is not necessarily to be followed" (3010).

<sup>42</sup> The formal exigencies of the *luzūm mā lam yalzam*, as the additional transmitter of the collection may evince, have significant implications for the overarching narrative structure of *al-Maqāmāt al-Luzūmiyya*. As Monroe has demonstrated in *al-Maqāmāt*, this rhyme scheme creates "a second and deeper dimension of duplicity to the *maqāma* genre," and thus consolidates al-Saraqusṭī's contribution to the development of this literary type (100).

Finally, it must be noted that several *maqāmāt* of al-Saraqusṭī's collection do not precisely conform with the Ḥarīrīan model as regards the Propopian functions to which I have alluded above. *Maqāmāt al-qādī* (25), for example, includes no recognition scene, as the perverted judge in the text is never explicitly identified as Abū Ḥabīb, and *maqāmāt al-'anqā'* (36) focuses on a fantastic travel narrative in a clearly parodic rendering of Arabic *mirabilia* collections ('*ajā'ib*').<sup>43</sup>

## II. Twelfth Century al-Andalus: Sufism and Political Disenchantment

Ibn Qasī (d. 546/1151) established a *rābiṭa* in Jilla in the Algarve, where he gathered a religious militia composed of Sufi novices (*murīdūn*). This army of Sufi soldiers would take the fortress of Mertola in 539/1144, whereupon Evora, Béja, Huelva, Niebla, and Silves also fell.<sup>44</sup> Next, Ibn Qasī, who had proclaimed himself the religious and political reformer of the end of days (*mahdī*) and written a Sufi treatise that expounded on the religious stature of the Sufi saint, made his supporters recognize him as imam, and minted his own currency.<sup>45</sup> Ibn Qasī's small kingdom, however, soon faced internal conflicts, and the mystic therefore made an alliance with the North African Almohads, who invaded al-Andalus in 542/1146-7 and promptly nullified Ibn Qasī's political and spiritual ascendancy. As a last resort, Ibn Qasī attempted to make an alliance with the Portuguese king Afonso Henriques at Coimbra, but he fell at the hands of the

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<sup>43</sup> In fact, this latter *maqāma* also presents an intriguing discussion on the nature of fiction when the narrator Ibn Tammām rebukes the rogue Abū Ḥabīb for the lies he has included in his tall tale, but the rogue defends his opportunistic use of mendacity as he hopes that God would ultimately forgive him.

<sup>44</sup> It must be noted that Ibn Qasī's first attempt to seize political power dates back to 1142.

<sup>45</sup> The *mahdī*, the rightly guided one, refers to the wide-spread belief in a messianic figure who will come to restore religion and justice before the world ends (Madelung 1230-1238).



people of Silves who were unwilling to accept this new rapprochement (Faure 816-7; Fierro, *Opposition* 189).

Although Ibn Qasī is probably the best known Andalusī Sufi saint (*walī*) to have laid claim to mahdism and the imamate, his is not an isolated case.<sup>46</sup> The controversies regarding increasingly influential eschatological and messianic beliefs and the relationship between these beliefs and the legitimacy of political and religious authority played a major part in the spiritual and political landscape of twelfth century al-Andalus (García-Arenal 2). At the root of these debates lay the question of mediation between God and men. On the one hand, the fundamental Sunni tenet of Muḥammad's culmination of prophethood (*khatam al-nubuwwa*) seemed to preclude any further individual claims to mediation between God and men; the strictest Sunnism would be vigilant in protecting prophecy (*tahṣīn al-nubuwwa*) from this type of allegations.<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, the rise of Sufism (*taṣawwuf*) during this period entailed a reevaluation of Sufi sainthood (*wilāya*) as the revitalization of *nubuwwa*.<sup>48</sup> This revitalization would

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<sup>46</sup> For other examples of similar claims to religious and political authority, see Fierro's *Opposition* 189-90.

<sup>47</sup> Although the prophet Muḥammad is also considered the seal of the prophets among the Shi'ites, this particular belief has very specific connotations for this Islamic group. In his article "The Visionary Dream in Islamic Spirituality," Henry Corbin notes that, according to a specifically Shi'ite conception, the prophet Muḥammad brings to a close the cycle of prophecy represented by Adam, Abraham, Noah, Moses, and Jesus, but this fact does not imply a closure of "the religious history of humanity" (385). In this context, Corbin argues, the culmination established by Muḥammad specifically refers to "legislative prophecy," and thus prophecy as such has not come to an end, even though "there can be no new shari'at" (385). As will be seen, the Shi'ite conception of *nubuwwa* shares important analogies with certain trends in Andalusī Sufism, most notably the ideas associated with Masarrism (García-Arenal 96) and the certain elements attested in the work of Ibn Qasī's and Ibn al-'Arabī.

<sup>48</sup> García Arenal notes that, in addition to the distinction between prophets and saints, dreams played a major part in the reconceptualization of *nubuwwa* during this period, since God's will could be manifested in the oneiric realm as several hadiths and the Qur'an make clear (122). As to the relationship of *nubuwwa* and the dream vision, we should consider the distinction between prophets and messengers among the twelver Shi'ites, which is contingent upon these two groups' different revelatory experiences. Whereas the messenger sees the angel while awake, "the simple *nabī* sees or hears the angel in a dream" (Corbin 384).

allow for the acquisition of prophecy (*iktisāb al-nubuwwa*) by creating a distinction between prophets (*anbiyā'*) and messengers (*rusul*); the later were provided with a mission, that is, a new religious law (*shari'a*), along with their prophetic message, and the former were afforded a message without a mission (Corbin 384). In this particular sense, Sufi saints could acquire prophethood without compromising Muḥammad's status as the seal of the prophetic cycle, since they would not receive a new *shari'a* that might abrogate, or be perceived as abrogating, Muḥammad's culmination of law-giving prophecy.

Here it is necessary to note that the concept of the acquisition of prophecy was initially associated with an endemic current of mysticism in al-Andalus, that is, the mystical and theological thought of Ibn Masarra (d. 319/931) and his intellectual progeny.<sup>49</sup> From a theological perspective, this Andalusī mystic was indebted to the Mu'tazila's prioritization of divine justice; thus, he reportedly affirmed the createdness of the Qur'an (*khalq al-Qur'an*), maintained the principle of the promise and the threat (*wa'd wa-wa'id*), and denied the possibility of unconditional divine forgiveness (Fierro, *Heterodoxia* 116). More important, the affirmation of free will inherent in the Mu'tazilite prioritization of divine justice also seems to inform Ibn Masarra's mystical thought, for he "taught that the soul can, after a series of disciplines and mortifications, reach the goal of purity, becoming at that moment comparable in perfection to the soul of the Prophet," thus implying that the individual Sufi's purification and ensuing acquisition of *nubuwwa*

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<sup>49</sup> It is important to note that already in the tenth century Maslama b. Qāsim al-Zayyāt al-Qurtubī (d. 353/964) had tackled the problem of mediation between God and men inherent in the concept of the cessation of prophecy. Additionally, Ibn Qitt's failed attack on Zamora in 288/901 provides an even earlier attestation of the claims to mahdism and the willingness of some sectors of the Andalusī population to support messianic claims.

depended upon his effort rather than being a gift granted by God to whomever He pleased (García Arenal 132).<sup>50</sup>

Even though Ibn Masarra's ideas merely constituted a further development of the stratified and hierarchical conceptions intrinsic to the Sufi path, the followers of this mystical school were persecuted under the reign of Abd al-Rahmān III (r. 300/912-350/961), and their movement was virtually branded as the epitome of heterodoxy in al-Andalus.<sup>51</sup> The particularly problematic doctrine of the acquisition of *nubuwwa*, a tenet that, according to Ibn Hazm, was still upheld by the eleventh century Masarrī circle of Ismā'īl al-Ru'aynī in Pechina, seems to consolidate the Masarrī school's reputation as a quasi heretical group, at times assimilated to Shi'ite groups such as the Rāfiḍīs and the Ismā'īlīs (qtd. in Addas 923).<sup>52</sup> But despite the misrepresentations and attacks of his detractors, Ibn Masarra and his school remained influential. The respect that Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 638 /1240) professed for Ibn Masarra's mystical insights, as well as the analogies that Masarrism and the mystical teachings of twelfth century Andalusī Sufi thinkers such as Ibn Qasī shared, is a testimony to this school's important place within the development of

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<sup>50</sup> Here a caveat must be added. The available evidence on Ibn Masarra's teachings strongly suggests that he did not directly endorse the concept of the acquisition of *nubuwwa*, but rather affirmed "the agreement of intellectual contemplation and revelation," and hence introduced "a line of thought which was to gain particular popularity among Andalusī philosophers, and which is attested in the writings of Ibn al-Šid al-Batalyawṣī and Ibn Tufayl, Ibn Rushd and Maimonides" (Stroumsa 204). Among the Andalusī thinkers who shared the "line of thought" introduced by Ibn Masarra, Ibn Qasī and Ibn al-'Arabī should also be mentioned.

<sup>51</sup> In fact, caliphal decrees condemning the followers of the school of Ibn Masarra were proclaimed at the main mosque of Cordoba in 340/952, 345/956, and 346/957, as well as sent to the provinces to be read in every town. Ibn Masarra himself was reportedly charged of heresy (*zandaqa*) in his youth (Fierro, *Opposition* 181).

<sup>52</sup> It seems that the association of Masarrism with Shi'ism was not far-fetched. According to Ibn Hazm, the Masarrī Ismā'īl al-Ru'aynī laid claim to prophecy and the imamate, predicted future events, and received *zakat* from his followers, along with other practices largely associated with Shi'ism (Fierro, *Opposition* 182).

Andalusī mystical thought.<sup>53</sup> In this sense, the mystical and theological conceptions associated with Masarrism established a significant precedent for Andalusī Sufi thought during the first half of the twelfth century. The advancement of these Andalusī Sufi movements lies behind the ensuing conflicts over claims to religious leadership as embodied in the imamate; these conflicts dramatically surfaced during the last years of al-Saraqustī's life.

In the year 1141 Ibn Barrajan from Seville, Ibn al-‘Arīf from Almeria, and Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Mayurqī from Granada were summoned to Marrakech by the Almoravid amīr ‘Ali b. Yusuf b. Tāshufīn.<sup>22</sup> The ascetic life and spiritual leadership of these Sufi masters had afforded them a large following, which aroused the suspicion of the local authorities. The fact that Ibn Barrajan, the most prominent figure in this group, was reportedly recognized as the imam of 130 towns might have been the cause behind the Andalusī authorities' denunciation, since this Sufi's significant religious leadership clearly threatened the qadis' own aspirations to political and religious control. The particularly harsh punishment inflicted upon Ibn Barrajan by the Almoravid amir in Marrakech further attests to the serious danger this Sufi's influence was perceived to represent. After Ibn Barrajan died in prison in Marrakech, he was denied burial rituals,

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<sup>53</sup> Ibn al-‘Arabī is one of the most complex and prolific Sufi theoreticians of medieval Islam, as well as an accomplished Sufi poet. Born in Murcia (560/1165), his *tawba* occurred at an early age when he enjoyed a dream vision in which Jesus, Moses, and Muhammad encouraged him to abandon his involvement in worldly affairs and embark on the mystical path. In 598/1202 he departed for the East to perform the pilgrimage. He then settled permanently in the eastern Islamic lands, wherein he penned numerous works on Sufism, which afforded him the title of “al-Shaykh al-Akbar” (Ateş 707-11). Despite his long sojourn in the East, Ibn al-‘Arabī's references to Ibn Masarra, Ibn Qasī, Ibn al-‘Arīf, and Ibn Barrajan attest to his profound knowledge of earlier Andalusī Sufism (Goodrich 3, n.7). It must also be mentioned that al-‘Arabī wrote a commentary on Ibn Qasī's *Kitāb Khal‘ al-Na’layn*, a work that shows various analogies with Ibn Masarra's work. Specifically, Ibn Qasī's conception of “strangers” (*ghurabā*) and his views on prophethood demonstrate that the line of philosophical and mystical thought founded by Ibn Masarra made a mark on twelfth and thirteenth century Andalusī Sufism (Goodrich 96).

and his body was thrown into a dunghill, from which only the intervention of ‘Alī b. Ḥirzihim, a Sufi from Fās, saved him (Faure, "Ibn Barraḍjān" 732).

Ibn Barraḍjān’s fellow Andalusī Sufis also met an inauspicious fate. Although Ibn al-‘Arīf was pardoned and regaled by ‘Ali b. Yusuf b. Tāshufīn, he was eventually killed on his way back to al-Andalus, allegedly poisoned at the instigation of Ibn al-Aswad, the qadi of Almeria (Faure, “Ibn Al-‘Arīf” 712-713). Thus, the case of Ibn Barraḍjān and his fellow Andalusī Sufis provides evidence of the growing spiritual and implicitly political ascendancy of twelfth century Andalusī Sufi masters, as well as the aggressive repression and persecution to which certain influential Sufi masters were subjected by the North African and Andalusī authorities alike. The Andalusī juridico-political authorities, in particular, engaged in an open confrontation with the Sufi masters precisely because they felt that the mystics posed a serious challenge to their religious and political authority over Almoravid al-Andalus. This later point is evidenced by the numerous uprisings led by the *quḍā’* of several Andalusī towns in the wake of Ibn Qasī’s revolt. In 1144, for instance, Ibn Hamdīn, the qadi of Cordoba at several moments during al-Saraqusṭī’s lifetime, led a popular uprising, was proclaimed the governor of Cordoba, adopted the title of *amīr al-muslimīn*, and assumed caliphal prerogatives by moving to Cordoba’s former palace, minting his own currency, and encouraging other cities to pledge allegiance to him. Ibn Hamdīn’s rebellion against the Almoravids encouraged other qadis to follow his example; several judges then rebelled in Jaén, Granada, Evora, Béja, Badajoz, Jerez, Murcia and Valencia. In sum, this period “was a second outbreak of *mulūk al-ṭawā’if*, where everyone sought to carve out an autonomous principality for

himself; whether alone, or by having recourse to Alphonso VII (Ibn Ḥamdīn) or to the Almohads (‘Alī b. Maymūn in Cadiz)’ (“al-Murābiṭūn”).

Although this last series of events occurred shortly after al-Saraqusṭī’s death, they were the natural consequence of the internal conflicts and divisions that have characterized Almoravid al-Andalus during al-Saraqusṭī’s mature years. As the case of Ibn Ḥamdīn illustrates, the Andalusī qadis were as committed to curtailing the political and spiritual ascendancy of the Sufī masters as they were to engaging in internecine rivalries to promote their own aspirations to political and spiritual control. Thus, these two groups’ struggles for occupying the spiritual and political vacuum opened up by the collapse of Almoravid rule bear witness to the divisiveness that besieged al-Saraqusṭī’s al-Andalus. Neither the Sufīs nor the qadis could effectively promote the call for unity that twelfth century al-Andalus so urgently needed, since they were entirely absorbed in advancing their respective claims to political and religious authority. As will be seen, the problems intrinsic to this turbulent period of Andalusī history profoundly inform the conversion narrative in al-Saraqusṭī’s fiftieth *maqāma*, as well as illuminate the implications of the depiction of Abū Ḥabīb as a corrupt and corrupting Sufī leader.

### III. *Analysis of Ibn al-Ashtarkūwī al-Saraqusṭī’s al-Maqāma al-Muwaḥḥiyya Khamsīn*

In Ibn al-Ashtarkūwī al-Saraqusṭī’s *al-Maqāma al-Muwaḥḥiyya Khamsīn* the narrator al-Sā’ib Ibn Tammām meets a Sufī preacher, who mentions the name of Abū Ḥabīb as the authority upon which his sermon is based (*ḥaddathanī al-shaykh Abū Ḥabīb*) (461).<sup>54</sup> Abū Ḥabīb, the preacher proclaims, is now “the ascetic of ascetics” (*zāhid al-zuhād*) and “the witness of witnesses” (*shāhid al-ashhād*) (al-Saraqusṭī 461). He is

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<sup>54</sup> Although I am indebted to James T. Monroe excellent translation of *al-Maqāmāt al-Luzūmiyya*, throughout this chapter I offer my own translations of the text.

“unrivaled in the way of performance and exertion” (*wāḥid al-‘amal wa-l-ijtihād*); he has “donned regret as his banner” (*labisa al-nadam shi‘ār*) (al-Saraqusṭī 461). In sum, “because of him, God favors whomever He favors and, through his acquaintance, He exalts whomsoever He exalts” (*qad nafa‘a allahu bihi man nafa‘a wa-rafa‘a bi-‘ilmihī man rafa‘a*) (463). Ibn Tammām, who had long been looking for Abū Ḥabīb, is now even more eager to meet him. Upon reaching Abū Ḥabīb, Ibn Tammām confirms the veracity of the preacher's account; Abū Ḥabīb is entirely devoted to seclusion and prayer. After some time, the Sufi rogue finally looks at Ibn Tammām and declares that he has repented, while asking Ibn Tammām whether he is also repentant. Next, Abū Ḥabīb alludes to two hadiths concerning predestination and the attributes of prophecy. First, the rogue affirms that actions are judged according to intentions. Second, he asserts that authentic dream visions (*al-ru‘yā al-ṣāliḥa*) are a part of prophecy, and then recounts the dream visions that made him return to the straight path. In Abū Ḥabīb’s dreams a ghost (*tayf*) encourages him to abandon his sinful ways, since death is looming and time is merciless. Abū Ḥabīb at last realizes that he is almost a hundred years old; all his contemporaries have already died. At this point Abū Ḥabīb asks for God's forgiveness. God puts *tawba* within his reach; Abū Ḥabīb only hopes to “present (his *tawba*) to God” when he meets Him (*fā-alqā allahu ‘alayya min al-tawba mā alqāhu wa-la‘alī an arida bi-hā ‘alayhi wa-alqāhu*) (465).<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> It must be mentioned that this brief fragment raises several questions about the rogue’s use of Ash‘arite *kalām*, his alleged *tawba* and his ensuing claims to Sufi sainthood and *nubuwwa*. Since in Abū Ḥabīb’s account God reportedly grants him a warning of the absolute necessity of repentance and the rogue explicitly claims that God has bestowed *tawba* upon him, the rogue’s acknowledgement that he only hopes to be repentant when meeting God is decisively incongruent with the preceding Ash‘arite framework. Had God really bestowed *tawba* upon him, Abū Ḥabīb would have been able to repent, and not only hope that he is able to do so.

Upon finishing his tale, Abū Ḥabīb quotes the seventy-eighth *āya* of *sūrat al-kahf*, and orders Ibn Tammām to go to Iraq; the latter is informed of Abū Ḥabīb's passing on his way to this country.<sup>56</sup> The *maqāma* ends by describing Ibn Tammām's visit to Abū Ḥabīb's tomb. Ibn Tammām stays at Abū Ḥabīb's tomb until the ghost (*tayf*) of the Sufi rogue appears to him in a dream vision. Finally, Ibn Tammām spends several days at this burial site in the hope of divine forgiveness on account of Abū Ḥabīb's intercession, thus implying that Abū Ḥabīb's tomb has become a saintly pilgrimage site.

First, it must be noted that al-Saraqusṭī's subtle subversion of the Haririan *maqāma*'s generic expectations when postponing the *maqāma*'s customary recognition scene and introducing the additional character of the Sufi preacher has implications for the overall significance of Abū Ḥabīb's repentance narrative (Young, *Preachers* 200). By presenting Abū Ḥabīb's reputation as a Sufi master through the eyes of one of his disciples, al-Saraqusṭī not only encapsulates the problems implicit in Abū Ḥabīb's teachings, but also denounces the propagation of error by an uncritical following. The Sufi preacher at the beginning of this *maqāma* proclaims that Abū Ḥabīb is unique in his work and exertion (*wāḥid al-'amal wa-al-ijtihād*), and as such he is considered the paragon of ascetics (*zāhid al-zuhād*) and the best of witnesses (*shāhid al-ashhād*). More revealingly, when Ibn Tammām inquires about the whereabouts and condition of Abū Ḥabīb, the Sufi preacher intimates that this rogue has become an intermediary between God and men, since "through him God favors whomever He favors and through his acquaintance God exalts whomever He exalts" (*qad nafa'a allahu bihi man nafa'a wa-*

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<sup>56</sup> As has been seen above, al-Ḥarīrī alludes to the same Qur'anic *āya* in *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya*. The fact that both al-Ḥarīrī and al-Saraqusṭī cap their collections with this Qur'anic exhortation to a deeper or allegorical interpretation (*ta'wil*) of seemingly unrighteous actions signals their implicit invitation to the audience's involvement in decoding the hidden implications of their texts.



*rafa'a bi-'ilmihī man rafa'a*) (461). Not unlike Ibn Qasī and his predecessors, Abū Ḥabīb's is here considered a blessed Sufī saint who is not only admired among his followers, but who is also an authoritative religious leader who sends his disciples on a mission to preach his ideas and to proclaim his intercessory powers. Here the Sufīs appear as a credulous audience who takes mistaken perceptions to the extreme of attributing the power of intercession to an ill-famed master who himself, as will be seen, has previously fallen victim to misinterpretation. Whereas at the narrative level the Sufī preacher's gullibility mirrors Ibn Tammām's chronic naiveté and his eventual role in perpetuating Abū Ḥabīb's misguided legacy, the Sufī preacher's proclamation of Abū Ḥabīb's intercessory powers has important implications from a thematic perspective. The intermediary role ascribed to Abū Ḥabīb in the preacher's sermon precludes Abū Ḥabīb's own claims to prophethood, which, effectively, stem from this rogue's failure to correctly interpret the dream visions that he experiences. Abū Ḥabīb's misinterpretation of his dream visions not only points to al-Saraqusṭī's departure from al-Ḥarīrī's model when presenting one of the few instances in this generic tradition in which the *maqāma* rogue is hopelessly self-deluded, but also implies a complex series of allusions to issues regarding the legitimacy and the nature of claims to religious and political authority in twelfth century al-Andalus.

Indeed, the final encounter of Abū Ḥabīb and Ibn Tammām in *al-Maqāma al-Muwafīyya Khamsīn* epitomizes al-Saraqusṭī's critical views on the claims to religious authority among twelfth century Andalusī Sufī masters, and exemplifies the consistently negative depiction of mystics and ascetics throughout his collection. More important, Abū Ḥabīb's repentance narrative evinces a relatively complex representation of the

mystical understanding of *tawba*, as well as a significant revision of Abū Zayd’s repentance narrative in al-Ḥarīrī’s *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya*. In fact, this latter *maqāma* deeply informs the initial conversation between Ibn Tammām and Abū Ḥabīb, along with the latter’s regretful prayers and his account on the conditions of his *tawba*. Like Ibn Ḥammām in al-Ḥarīrī’s fiftieth *maqāma*, Ibn Tammām finds his former *shaykh* absorbed in prayer, as he exclaims: “Oh God my forgetfulness has been great” (allahumma innahu kathura nisyānī)” (462). Next, just as Abū Zayd did when addressing the people of Baṣra, Abū Ḥabīb expresses regret over his past sins and acknowledges that he has willfully postponed his *tawba* until he grew old. Abū Ḥabīb concludes his invocation by proclaiming his return to God (allahumma ilayka raja‘tu), praising God’s favor (inna faḍlaka al-wāsi‘ al-raghīb), and asking God to make him “one of those who are not deprived of His mercy” (fa-aj‘alinī mimman lā yakhīb‘an raḥmatika wa-lā yaghīb) (462).

Although Abū Ḥabīb’s regretful prayer is presented in rhymed prose (*saj‘*), the content of his invocation is evocative of the homiletic tone of the *zuhdiyyāt*, and particularly of the uses of the ascetic poetry’s register in the last section of al-Ḥarīrī’s *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya*. These subtle echoes of the *zuhdiyyāt*’s poetic language, along with the regretful tone of the fragment and the intertextual links to al-Ḥarīrī’s precedent, create expectations about Abū Ḥabīb’s devotion to *tawba*. Like al-Ḥarīrī’s rogue, Abū Zayd, toward the end of *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya*, Abū Ḥabīb seems to be destined to a final commitment to faith and an apparent return to God. This impression is further supported by the rogue’s expressions of regret, the recognition of God’s lordship implied in his praise of God’s favor and his plea for God’s mercy, along with his allusion to the hadith on the priority of intentions, a fundamental source of the predestinarian doctrines

associated with Ash‘arī *kalām* and Sunnism.<sup>57</sup> The first section of this episode then appears to confirm Abū Ḥabīb’s *tawba* by presenting an encompassing display of piety, which shares some analogies with Abū Zayd’s conversion narrative and its seemingly impeccable Sunnism. However, this first glimpse into Abū Ḥabīb’s theological and mystical views is promptly challenged by the implications of his dream visions and the claims to prophethood that his account contains.

When Ibn Tammām and Abū Ḥabīb reunite, the Sufi rogue interrogates his former victim as to whether or not he has repented, declares that he himself is now repentant, and describes the conditions of his *tawba*. The intriguing passage in which Abū Ḥabīb narrates the advent of his first dream vision, whereupon he finally realizes that he is about to turn a hundred years old, and God allegedly grants him *tawba*, is noteworthy:

“...among what has led me on the right path, guided me, and led me forward—since it has been handed down that authentic dream visions are an attribute of prophethood and that, praise be to God, misfortune and affliction have escaped me and I separated myself from some of my errors—is the fact that I saw a speaker as I slumber...” (463).

The brief fragment above poses significant questions. First, it must be noted that, even though in Monroe’s translation the allusion to the hadith on the attributes of prophecy is rendered in accordance to the generally accepted meaning of this tradition in Sunnism, namely, a reference to prophet Muḥammad’s gift of providing authentic dream visions, al-Saraqusṭī’s text remains decisively ambiguous as to the meaning of *nubuwwa* in this context. As Monroe rightly notes, this hadith belongs to a series of prophetic

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<sup>57</sup> Here I echo Monroe’s interpretation of this allusion in *Luzūmiyya* (492 n. 8). This reference to the centrality of intentions might also contain a veiled reference to the important role that intentionality plays in al-Ḥarīrī’s *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya*. If Abū Zayd disregards the priority of intentions by accepting the monetary gifts that he has procured at Basra while harboring bad intentions, Abū Ḥabīb makes sure to affirm this tenet before narrating the conditions of his *tawba*.

traditions in which the prophet Muḥammad states that his appearance in the dreams of the pious signifies an authentic (God granted) dream vision, since Satan cannot counterfeit his image (*Luzūmīyah*, 292 n8). However, Monroe's interpretation of this specific allusion deserves some qualification.

As the above discussion demonstrates, the reconceptualization of *nubuwwa*, associated with Masarrism as well as with several twelfth and thirteen century Andalusī mystical currents, entailed a reinterpretation of the attributes of prophecy, and, as a consequence, implied a reevaluation of the meaning of this specific prophetic tradition.<sup>58</sup> The distinction between prophets (*anbiyā'*) and messengers (*rusul*) or, in Ibn Qasī's nomenclature strangers (*guraḇā'*), presupposed a contrast between these two groups' revelatory experiences. According to this distinction, whereas messengers received their revelation (*wahī*) directly from an angel, even when awake, prophets were granted their divine inspirations (*ilhāmāt*) in dreams.<sup>59</sup> This hadith on the attributes of prophecy, in effect, was often quoted in medieval Sufism in order to validate the Sufī saints' status as the true heirs of the prophets, since this prophetic tradition clearly establishes a link between the dream visions at the center of the Sufī saints' revelatory experience and prophecy (Ohlander 205). In this regard, al-Saraqusṭī's reference to this specific hadith at the beginning of Abū Ḥabīb's repentance narrative has meaningful implications for the overarching significance of the episode. By representing Abū Ḥabīb as a revered Sufī saint, who is considered an intermediary between God and men, al-Saraqusṭī paves the

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<sup>58</sup> In fact, according to Fierro, one of the charges against Masarrism listed in Abd al-Rahman's decree was precisely the alteration of the meanings of prophetic traditions (*harrafū al-ta'awwul fī ḥadīth rasūl Allah*) (*Heterodoxia* 135).

<sup>59</sup> Here I echo the contrast between prophets' and messengers' revelatory experiences established by the thirteenth century Sunni exegete al-Bayḏāwī, cited by Ohlander (205).

way for an encompassing critique of the claims to religious authority advanced by some of the Sufi masters of his time. Moreover, when associating Abū Ḥabīb's religious prestige with highly questionable claims to *nubuwwa*, al-Saraqṣṭī not only condemns the sources of certain claims to religious authority, but also exposes the dangers of gullibility in religion and politics. In this respect, Abū Ḥabīb's conversion narrative neatly illustrates al-Saraqṣṭī's wider emphasis on the role of the audience in evaluating the implications of religious discourse. As David Wacks notes, when al-Saraqṣṭī "ironically frames his accounts of the subversive, popular performances of street preachers and storytellers with the authoritative performance" of hadith, "he questions the integrity of both types of performance, underscoring the need for audiences to read and listen critically, lest they themselves be duped like the hapless Ibn Tammām" (74). This latter point is especially evidenced by the connotations of Abū Ḥabīb's dream visions, his presumption that these visions are authentic, and his followers' passive acceptance of his claims, which constitute a testament to al-Saraqṣṭī's denunciation of misinterpretation as the root of fraudulent claims to religious authority.

If the parodic use of the hadith's chain of transmission in al-Saraqṣṭī's *maqāmāt* underscores "the need for audiences to read and listen critically" (Wacks 74), the deformation of the meaning of prophetic tradition at the hands of Abū Ḥabīb in this episode gives an eloquent lesson in the dangers of gullibility in religion. As has already been suggested, Abū Ḥabīb's allusion to the hadith on the attributes of prophecy at the beginning of his account neither confirms that the prophet Muḥammad is the speaker in Abū Ḥabīb's dreams nor does it indicate that the rogue claims to have seen the prophet in his dreams. Since in this *maqāma* al-Saraqṣṭī depicts Abū Ḥabīb as a Sufi saint who is

celebrated for his intercessory powers and who enjoys seemingly authentic dream visions, this episode clearly resonates with the reconceptualization of *nubuwwa* as exemplified by the ideas ascribed to Masarrism and other Andalusī mystical currents, and strongly suggests that the rogue lays claim to prophecy, albeit in a restricted sense. This impression is corroborated by Abū Ḥabīb's intimations about his moral state during the period that preceded his first vision.

The former rogue declares that he witnessed his first vision after he “had separated himself from some of his faults” (wa-qad fāraqtu ba‘ḍ al-hafawāt) (463). These declarations are evocative of the heterodox ideas imputed to Masarrism, according to which *nubuwwa* could be acquired after the soul has undergone a process of purification. Beyond any specific reference to Masarrism and other Andalusī mystical movements, however, the rogue's allusion to the abandonment of sin implies a radical deformation of the stratified conception of the Sufī path. The rogue only needs to partially abandon his sinful behavior in order to be entitled to authentic dream visions, God granted *tawba*, and even the acquisition of *nubuwwa*. It must be added that the omission of the prophet's name in Abū Ḥabīb's narration provides yet another indication of this rogue's claims to *nubuwwa*. In fact, a review of the dreams attested in the Sufī hagiographies found in *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya* reveals that when the prophet Muḥammad and certain Sufī saints appear in the dreams of the pious their names are invariably provided. For example, when the celebrated mystic Bishr al-Ḥāfi declares that he has seen the prophet in a dream he explicitly mentions the prophet along with his customary blessing. After his death, this mystic was also seen in a dream, and once again, the report of this dream vision does not fail to identify him (al-Qushayrī 404-406). Further, the first report on Bishr's

conversation with the prophet in his dreams is framed within an extensive chain of transmission, and thus attests to a diligent compliance with the authentication procedures of the Islamic sciences. Another example of the importance of names as an authentication device in Sufi hagiography can be found in Ibn al-Arabī's famous dream vision in which Jesus, Moses and Muhammad encouraged him to embark on the Sufi path (Ateş).

The consistent indication of the names of the godly persons who appear in dreams is hardly arbitrary in this context; in a religious and literary culture still influenced by the dynamics of oral transmission, names constitute the authority upon which bodies of knowledge are verified and disseminated. As a consequence, by omitting the name of the prophet Muḥammad, Abū Ḥabīb not only avoids identifying the speaker in his dreams as the prophet, but also becomes the only authority upon whom his account relies for subsequent transmission.<sup>60</sup> In addition, as the portrait of Abū Ḥabīb as a Sufi master provided by the Sufi preacher at the beginning of the episode illustrates, Abū Ḥabīb has succeeded in leading his followers into believing his misguided claims to *nubuwwa*, and so the sermons that his followers preach are solely based upon his authority. This critical portrayal of the claims to religious authority advanced by a Sufi master and the submissiveness of his Sufi disciples becomes the more serious when considering the lexical choices that the rogue does employ to designate the figure that appears in his dreams.

If by omitting the names of the prophet and of any other authoritative source in the description of his dream visions Abū Ḥabīb becomes the sole authority and

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<sup>60</sup> It must be noted that one of the controversial claims attributed to Sufi movements during al-Saraqustī's time was the idea that saints could attain a higher spiritual status than prophets (Fierro, *Opposition* 185). In this sense, Abū Ḥabīb's misappropriation of religious authority could be related to this prioritization of the figure of the saint in this context.

transmitter behind his tale, the terms that this rogue uses to describe the ghostly figure in his dreams strongly challenge the soundness of his report. Although in two different instances the rogue describes the figure in his dreams as a speaker (*qā'il*) or as a corporeal form or person (*shakhs*), he also designates this apparition as a suggestion (*ṭayf*) or specter. According to Edward W. Lane, the term *ṭayf* is synonymous with the word *ṭā'if* and, as such, designates “anything that obscures the sight, [arising] from a vain suggestion of the Devil” (1905). Even though, according to al-Muṣṭafawī (141), these terms might, in fact, refer to instigations originating from God, the jinn, or the Devil, the Qur'ānic attestations of the synonymous word *ṭā'if* infuse Abū Ḥabīb's narration with especially negative overtones. In particular, the *āyāt* 200 and 201 of *sūrat al-a'rāf* (7) are suggestive of one of the possible implications encoded in Abū Ḥabīb's lexical usage. In these *āyāt* the believers are told to take refuge in God when an evil suggestion (*nazgh*) comes to them from Satan; accordingly, those who fear God, whenever they are touched by an impulse from Satan (*idhā massahum ṭā'if min al-shayṭān*), remember Him and regain their sight (*mubaṣṣirun*). As to their brothers (who do not fear God), they are led astray and their error only increases.<sup>61</sup> The fact that Abū Ḥabīb's uses this specific term to designate the dream visions that he experiences is then yet another indication of the suspicions that this rogue's account arouses. In fact, al-Saraqusṭī's careful lexical choices in this fragment suggest that Abū Ḥabīb has not understood the true nature of his visions, and thus has misinterpreted their meaning and “his error has only increased.” Further, Abū Ḥabīb, the revered Sufi master, perpetuates and disseminates his misguided teachings through his followers' uncritical acceptance of his claims, and their

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<sup>61</sup> Here I am echoing the Sahih International translations of the meanings.



proclamation of their master's godliness and intercession. If according to a hadith authentic dream visions are only manifested to those who repudiate mendacity (Toufy 137), then Abū Ḥabīb's visions are not only entirely suspect but also profoundly misguided. Thus, the fact that Abū Ḥabīb misinterprets the real nature of his visions and that his followers and Ibn Tammām perpetuate his misguided legacy, constitutes a powerful warning against misinterpretation and credulousness as the root of unwarranted claims to religious and political authority in twelfth century al-Andalus. By the end of the *maqāma*, when Ibn Tammām himself is repeatedly visited by the specter (*tayf*) of Abū Ḥabīb, as he hopes for this rogue's intercession, only al-Saraqusṭī's careful readers perceive the tragic irony behind Ibn Tammām's hope.

This chapter has shown that Ibn al-Ashtarkūwī al-Saraqusṭī's *Al-Maqāma al-Muwafīyya Khamsīn* should be seen in the light of controversies regarding claims to religious and political authority in twelfth century al-Andalus. The allusions to contemporary currents of Andalusī Sufism in the context of the rogue Abū Ḥabīb's repentance story, in particular, provide evidence that al-Saraqusṭī is calling the growing ascendancy of Sufi masters during the first half of the twelfth century in al-Andalus into question while warning his audience against the twofold trap of misguidance and naïveté in the religious realm. By associating the rogue Abū Ḥabīb's opportunistic use of religious discourse, his reputation as an intermediary between humankind and the divine, and the dissemination of his ideas by an uncritical following with the heterodox views espoused by Masarrism and later Andalusī Sufi currents, al-Saraqusṭī underscores the urgent need for a discerning audience with respect to the conflicting groups in twelfth century al-Andalus. Al-Saraqusṭī's plea for a critical audience who might eschew the

influence of questionable religious leaders, I conclude, constitutes an urgent call for unity among the diverse societal sectors of twelfth century al-Andalus.

## **PART TWO: *TESHUVAH***

### **Chapter Four: *Teshuvah***

Repentance has played a prominent role in Jewish thought throughout the long and rich history of the religion. The Jewish Bible (*Tanakh*) offers a complex conceptual framework in which the priestly and sacrificial conceptions of atonement and the prophetic call to return to God at individual and communal levels are juxtaposed. Rabbinic intellectual culture conceives of *teshuvah* as the foundation of human existence, as well as the crucial link between the Temple worship (*avodah*) and the forms of worship developed in the aftermath of the destruction of the Temple and the consequent cessation of sacrifice. The theological principles that inform Baḥya ibn Pakuda's *Hidāya ilā Farā'id al-Qulūb* and Maimonides *Hilkhot Teshuvah* demonstrate the absolute necessity of *teshuvah* as the result of a deeper understanding of faith through the intellectual capacity and free will with which God has provided humankind. Prayer, liturgical poetry and the overall significance of the Jewish penitential season attest to the centrality of *teshuvah* in Jewish spiritual life, as well as provide a testimony to the role of *teshuvah* in reconciling God and His people, by establishing harmony at the individual and collective levels and celebrating the entire history of the Jewish faith. This chapter aims to discuss the facets of the Jewish understanding of repentance outlined above, thus providing the necessary conceptual framework for the analysis of the Hebrew Andalusī *maqāma* collections with which the next two chapters of this dissertation will be concerned.

## I. “Return to me and I will return to you”: Repentance in the *Tanakh*<sup>62</sup>

Although the technical term for repentance in the Jewish religious tradition, *teshuvah*, gained wide currency only in rabbinic times, the *Tanakh* already contained the rich conceptual framework upon which the Jewish views on repentance are founded (Petuchowski 175).<sup>63</sup> The Torah, the prophetic books, and the Hagiographa depict vivid images of the relationship between God and humankind through metaphors of nearness, separation and return, which epitomize the correlation of humankind’s *teshuvah* and God’s forgiveness in Judaism. In particular, the indispensability of reconciliation between humanity and God through *teshuvah* is substantiated by the fundamental Jewish conception of the covenant; thus, the *Tanakh*’s vocabulary of repentance constitutes a testimony to the mutual obligation between God and Israel. When Israel transgresses, God calls His people to repentance, and He forgives them once they have atoned for their transgressions. This covenantal relationship between God and Israel plays a determinative role in the conceptualization of repentance in the Judaic scriptures.

From a lexical point of view, the Hebrew roots *n-h-m*, *p-n-h*, and *sh-u-v* convey attitudinal, motional, and covenantal notions variously associated with the semantic field of repentance in the *Tanakh*. A brief overview of the usage of these roots throughout the *Tanakh* should be of assistance in illustrating the Jewish views of repentance as evidenced by this sacred text. The following discussion will focus on the roots *n-h-m* and *sh-u-v*, since these stems are particularly frequent in Jewish scriptures.

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<sup>62</sup> The title of this section is taken from Zechariah 1:3; cf. Malachi 3:7.

<sup>63</sup> Throughout this part I will follow the transliteration conventions of the *Encyclopedia Judaica*.

## 1. *Niḥam*

In the Hebrew *niphal* stem the root *n-ḥ-m* expresses the idea of regretting or being remorseful over a past or projected action; accordingly, the latter case often denotes a change of mind. A particularly telling example of this usage is found in the book of Jonah 3:9-10. After Jonah had preached to the people of Nineveh about their imminent destruction on account of their wickedness (*ra'atam*), the King of Nineveh released a proclamation ordering that all people and animals in the city be subjected to a strict penitential fast. "Who knows," the king adds, "God may repent, change his mind ... so that [they] will not perish" (*mi yodea' yashuv ve-niḥam ha-' elohim ... ve-lo' no'vad*). Upon seeing that the people of Nineveh mended their ways, God refrained from destroying them.<sup>64</sup>

The fragment above evinces several important notions of the Jewish understanding of penance and divine forgiveness. A series of parallel verbal structures juxtaposes the people of Nineveh's turning away from their evil ways, along with their hope that their prompt reform would make God desist from His plan, and God's final change of mind and ensuing forgiveness. When the people of Nineveh's great transgressions are expiated by their regret over their past sins, their abandonment of their evil ways, and their good works, God relents, since such is the covenantal obligation that God and Israel honor. More important, as an often-quoted Talmudic commentary on these verses elucidates, even though the people of Nineveh immediately acknowledge their transgressions and express remorse over their sins by wearing the sackcloth and

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<sup>64</sup> It must be noted, however, that the use of the root *n-ḥ-m* in this context does not directly indicate that God changed his mind regarding the punishment that He would have inflicted upon Nineveh, but rather points to the necessity of the people of Nineveh to change their ways so that God *might* change His mind regarding the destruction of the city. A clearer example of this usage can be found in Genesis 6:6, where God "regretted to have created humankind" (*vayinahem Adonai ki 'asah et-ha-adam*).

fasting, only their works (*ma'asehem*) ultimately ratify the abandonment of their evil ways and grant them God's forgiveness (T.B. *Seder Mo'ed, Taanith* 2:1). Acknowledging one's transgressions, expressing remorse over one's sins, and refraining from committing these sins in the future, though crucial steps, are but a part of the atonement process at the center of the conceptions of repentance discernible in the *Tanakh* and more fully elaborated upon in the Rabbinic sources (Petuchowski 180). If "in repentance man must experience genuine remorse for the wrong [that] he has committed," he must also "convert his penitential energy into concrete acts" (Milgrom 221). In this sense, rather than evincing a diffident attitude toward penitential practices, the Talmudic interpretation of Nineveh's deliverance asserts the importance of reparation, which, along with *teshuvah*, paves the way for collective as well as individual reconciliation with God.

## 2. *Shuv*

The place of *teshuvah* in the relationship between God and humankind in Judaism is thrown into sharp relief by the complexity and variety of motional, attitudinal and covenantal meanings associated with the root *sh-u-v*, from which the Rabbinic technical term for repentance, *teshuvah*, derives. The constant call to repentance that reverberates throughout the *Tanakh*, most especially in the *Nevi'im*, not only confirms the urgency of penitential discourse in the Jewish religious tradition, but also dramatizes the centrality of *teshuvah* in the mutual bond between God, the individual Jew and Israel. In particular, the concomitance of God's favor and human endeavor in *teshuvah* has specific implications in the *Tanakh*. As Petuchowski notes, the covenantal meaning of *teshuvah* attests to the certainty of God's response when humankind turns to Him in repentance, as well as illustrates the many occasions in which humankind does not answer to God's call

to repentance (178). The disparity between God's and mankind's responses to each other in the repentance process suggests that the *Tanakh* prioritizes the human capacity to do *teshuvah*. If God constantly exhorts humankind to repentance, human beings need to take the first step in the repentance process (Petuchowski 185); thus, the transformative act of repentance is achieved "through the will and attitude" of the sinners themselves (Neusner 19). As will be seen, this essential dynamic would have important repercussions on the development of the conceptual framework of *teshuvah* during Rabbinic times, as well as informing the consistent prioritization of free will throughout the history of Judaism.

## II. The Foundation of the World: The Rabbinic Conception of *Teshuvah*

If the *Tanakh* establishes the rich conceptual framework in which the Jewish views on *teshuvah* are anchored, Rabbinic literature expands and clarifies the legal, liturgical and practical implications of these Biblical conceptions, and consolidates the importance of *teshuvah* in Jewish spiritual life. Particularly, the Talmud and the *midrashim*, along with later Rabbinic commentaries, further elucidate the Judaic views on the relationship between God and humankind, sin, free will, and redemption that converge on the concept of *teshuvah*. In the context of this study, the anecdotal, homiletic and exegetical elements of which the *midrashim* consist are of particular interest, since they creatively elaborate on the Biblical passages concerned with *teshuvah*, as well as dramatize the pivotal place that *teshuvah* increasingly occupied in Jewish religious imagination. *Pirke De-Rabbi Eliezer*, an eighth century Aggadic work, provides a vivid testament to the special place that the Rabbinic sources assign to *teshuvah*. This work's elaboration of the creation narrative in the book of Genesis numbers *teshuvah* among the seven entities that predated the creation of the world, that is, the Torah, Gehinnom, the

garden of Eden, the throne of glory, the temple, repentance, and the name of the Messiah (10-11). More revealingly, this text presents *teshuvah* as the cornerstone of creation. Like a king who wishes to build a palace first lays out its design on the ground, God conceives of *teshuvah* before creating the world (10). The human world, this text intimates, would collapse without the redemptive function of *teshuvah*, which constitutes the foundation of human existence. In fact, the ontological precedence of *teshuvah* had already been suggested by the *Midrash Bereshit Rabba*, an Aggadic Midrash on the book of Genesis that dates back to the Amoraic period (3rd-6th century C.E.). In an ingenious commentary on Genesis 2:4 the *Genesis Rabbah* notes that the prepositional phrase *behibbare'am*, namely, “when they were created,” signifies that humankind was created with the Hebrew letter *he* (*behe baram*); accordingly, the graphic form of the letter *he* (ה) encodes a message for humanity (109). The opening at the bottom of the letter indicates that all human beings will descend to Sheol, the hook on the top signals that humankind could ascend from this underworld abode, and the opening at the left side of the letter is “a sign for penitents” (*ramaz le-ba'ali teshuvah*) (109). The interpretation of this particular word and the symbolism associated with the form of the letter *he* confirm the determinative role that *teshuvah* plays in humankind’s existence and afterlife in Rabbinic thought. In particular, the final call to repentance encoded in the space at the left side of the letter points to humankind’s ultimate responsibility in turning to God in *teshuvah*. If all human beings are headed for Sheol, according to this Rabbinic exegetical piece, they are also able to take full advantage of the redemptive space opened up by *teshuvah*, upon which their very existence depends. In this sense, *teshuvah* “turns out to be one of the very foundation stones of Rabbinic Judaism, for only on account of it can a sinful man



maintain his existence in the presence of God and can Judaism survive the cessation of the sacrificial cult” (Petuchowski 178).

In addition to illuminating the metaphysical and remedial dimensions that the Rabbinic sources confer on *teshuvah*, the above Aggadic fragments provide some insights into the views on free will, sin, and redemption that coalesce around the Rabbinic conception of *teshuvah*. The necessity of *teshuvah*, epitomized by the architectural simile in *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer* and the decoding of the letter *he* in *Bereshit Rabbah*, is rooted in the consistent recognition of human beings’ free will, their capacity of discernment, and the ensuing responsibility for their transgressions in Jewish religious thought, which was particularly developed, enriched and systematized during the Rabbinic period. In the view of the Rabbis, the freedom with which human beings are endowed can be described as “a two-edged sword,” since “it can rebel and it can repent” (Katz 938). The world would have fallen apart without *teshuvah* precisely because human beings may misuse their God-given freedom. Human beings need to appropriately answer God’s call to *teshuvah* through their repentance and through their good acts; redemption is the response that humankind earns by corresponding to this divine call (Katz 940). In Rabbinic literature, thus, *teshuvah* dramatizes the moment in which God’s people, Israel, the individual and God respond to each other. Such is the right and full use of the freedom with which God provided humankind, as conceptualized in the Rabbinic sources.

### III. *Teshuvah* in Jewish Liturgy: *Yom Kippur*

Although the origins and development of Jewish liturgy are an object of debate, the available evidence on the liturgy of *Yom Kippur* at different periods of the history of Judaism not only provides evidence of diverse conceptions of *teshuvah*, but also sheds

light on the development of Jewish liturgy as a whole. The precedent provided by the priestly and sacrificial context of the temple service (*avodah*) looms large in the development of this high holiday's liturgy; thus, the Levitical description of the special place ascribed to *Yom Kippur* at the time of the Second Temple should be borne in mind in this context. According to Lev. 16: 29-30, the tenth day of the seventh month (*Yom Kippur*) is a time of cleansing (*le-taher*) for Israel. Before offering the sacrificial victims for the atonement of the sins of family of the high priest and the people, the high priest would confess the sins of the priestly family, and the community's transgressions, while laying his hands on the head of the sacrificial victim, thus transferring the burden of transgressions into the beasts, which would then atone for these offenses. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the acknowledgment or declaration (*vidduy*) of sins carried out by the high priest during the ritual that preceded the offering of the Azazel goat, along with the people's simultaneous acknowledgment of their transgressions, suggests that sacrifices were only a part of the atonement ritual; collective and individual *teshuvah* was required for these sacrifices to be efficacious even at the time of the Temple (Herr 488).<sup>65</sup>

Indeed, the idea that *teshuvah* was a necessary requisite for sacrificial efficacy at the time of the Temple deeply informs the new forms of Jewish worship developed by the rabbis after the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. When addressing the problems that the cessation of the sacrificial cult posed, the rabbis "deliberately transferred Temple labels, rituals, and schedules to create a natural and comfortable setting with overtones of normalcy, sanctity, and continuity" (Langer 488). The liturgical stature increasingly ascribed to *Rosh Ha-Shanah* and *Yom Kippur* eloquently attests to the rabbinic efforts to

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<sup>65</sup> The idea that *teshuvah* was necessary even at the time of the Temple already appeared in Yoma 8:8. This is also the view affirmed by Maimonides in *Hilkhot Teshuvah* 1:1 on the basis of Leviticus 5:5, a passage that describes the acknowledgment of sins that accompanied sacrifices at the time of the temple.

echo the *avodah* in their new conception of worship and the renewed liturgical significance of *teshuvah*. *Yom Kippur*'s association with the Temple service, for instance, is explicitly stated in *Midrash Vayikra Rabbah*. According to this *midrash*, on *Yom Kippur* the Jewish community symbolically rebuilds the temple, reenacts the temple service, and relives the purification sacrifices that were at the base of ancient Jewish worship, by responding to the divine call to *teshuvah* in abstinence and prayer (3.7). Here *Yom Kippur* appears not only as a moment of conciliation with God, the individual and the community, but also as a time for celebrating the entire history of the Jewish faith. In this sense, the culmination of the Jewish penitential season on the tenth of Tishre attests to the confluence of the priestly conception of *teshuvah* as anchored in the Temple *avodah* and the call to individual and collective *teshuvah* advanced by the prophets. Although, as Montefiore notes, the mixture of priestly and prophetic elements in the Jewish conception of *teshuvah* "was never wholly brought into harmony by the Rabbis," the prophetic element predominates and provides the later understanding of the priestly service with an ethical dimension; accordingly, *teshuvah* constitutes the common thread that unifies the *avodah* and the forms of worship that emerged in the aftermath of the destruction of the temple and the ensuing cessation of sacrifice (214).

### 1. Prayer and Liturgical Poetry

The keen awareness of the history of Jewish worship and the prominence of *teshuvah* in Jewish spiritual life especially surfaces in the prayers, statutory confessions and liturgical poems that were gradually integrated into the liturgy of *Rosh Ha-Shanah* and *Yom Kippur*. The moving expressions of humility epitomized by the diverse prayers for divine forgiveness and mercy throughout the services of the Jewish Penitential Season

illustrate the nature of Jewish penitential discourse in this context. I would like to start this discussion by alluding to the formula of confession ‘*Al Het*, a statutory practice that mirrors the collective and individual acknowledgment of sins (*vidduy*) carried out during the ancient *avodah* by including an alphabetically arranged lists of transgressions.

#### A. ‘*Al Het*

The long confession text, that is, ‘*Al Het*, provides a particularly illuminating example of the penitential discourse at the heart of *Yom Kippur*’s liturgy and its associations with the precedent of the temple service.<sup>66</sup> After a long list of transgressions that includes breaches of positive and negative commandments and inadvertent offenses, this statutory prayer for God’s forgiveness alludes to the *avodah*. Now the congregation asks for forgiveness of sins that at the time of the temple required burnt offerings (*olah*), sin offerings (*hatat*), as well as forgiveness for sins “for which we would have been (imposed) the blows of the lashes, a flogging, death in the hands of the heavens, and expulsion and exposure” (Silverman 243). Here ‘*Al Het* makes a clear connection between the sacrificial cult of the temple and the liturgical context in which *Yom Kippur* is now framed. This connection not only illuminates the organizational analogies that the *avodah* and the new forms of liturgy share, but also points to the preeminence of prayer in the penitential spirit of the service of *Yom Kippur*. More important, the prominence of prayer in this penitential context embodies the trust that, as the covenantal relationship between God and His people assures, God’s forgiveness will always meet the sinner who turns to Him in repentance (*mekabeil shavim*); accordingly, by the end of ‘*Al Het* the supplicants, directly address God and proclaim “our eyes hope in You” (*einenu*

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<sup>66</sup> Although I am indebted to Silverman’s English rendition of the original Hebrew text, I include my own translations of this liturgical piece.

*meyahlot lakh*), since their *teshuvah* reassures them (Silverman 243). The collective and individual voices of the supplicants, encapsulated in the plural first person pronoun chanted by the precentor, and the direct address to God (*atah*) are juxtaposed, thus conveying a sense of closeness and trust. All Israel is praying for forgiveness. Their humbling acknowledgment of sins constitutes an instantiation of the covenant of God and His people, and hence their prayer attests to their individual and collective confidence. The preeminence of prayer and the precedent of the *avodah* intersect; *teshuvah* appears as the principle around which these different elements of Jewish worship coalesce.

The increasing importance of *teshuvah* in the aftermath of the destruction of the Temple is also evidenced by several rabbinic statements on the role of repentance, Torah study, charity and prayer as substitutes for the Temple sacrifices, and even as forms of worship superior to sacrifice.<sup>67</sup> Particularly, the correlation between *teshuvah* and prayer in Jewish liturgy paves the way for the new conceptions of Jewish worship that followed the destruction of the temple; the gradual development and integration of Jewish liturgical poetry (*piyyutim*) into the service constitutes an especially important branch of these new conceptions of Jewish worship.

## B. Judah Halevi

The adaptation of Arabic quantitative meters into Hebrew by Dunash ben Labrat (920-990) inaugurates a rich tradition of Hebrew poetry that revolutionizes the conception of Jewish liturgical poetry, and provides a unique forum to showcase the national pride in the purity (*zakhot*) of the Biblical language, while negotiating the

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<sup>67</sup> According to Montefiore, the Talmudists' responses to the spiritual vacuum created by the destruction of the temple oscillated between two different views. While for some of the sages repentance and good acts were superior to sacrifice, for other Talmudists the sacrificial system was perfect and divine, as every other aspect of the law (220).

significant cultural and religious issues that the dependence on Arabic models entailed. Despite the fact that, as Scheindlin notes, “Andalusī Hebrew poets continued to write synagogue poetry in the old genres and styles inherited from their predecessors in Islamic Iraq,” their literary practice generally reflected “the more complex intellectual concerns of a religious elite that was learned in the sciences and steeped in Arabo-Islamic culture” (*Song* 14). In addition to the formation of a robust tradition of Hebrew secular poetry, the intersection of secular and religious elements that often characterizes the liturgical poetry of this period constitutes one of the most notable innovations of the Andalusī school of Hebrew poets, which would promptly extend its influence over Jewish communities in the East and in the West alike. Yet in adapting Arabic models of secular and religious poetry, Andalusī Hebrew poets not only delved into the ideal of linguistic purity, *zakhot*, embodied in Biblical Hebrew, but also engaged in a profound cultural reevaluation of the thematic and formal conventions offered by the Arabic models. A particularly eloquent example of this effort can be found in the recasting of the Arabic *zuhdiyyāt* in liturgical Hebrew poetry. The following section will concentrate on Judah Halevi’s liturgical poem “*Adonai, Negdekha Kol Ta’avati*,” which neatly illustrates the meaningful transformation of the Arabic *zuhdiyyāt* by the Andalusī school of Hebrew poets. Halevi’s liturgical poem will also pave the way for the analysis of Ibn Gabirol’s *Keter Malkhut* in chapter five below.

A contemporary of Moses Ibn Ezra (d. 1135), Abraham Ibn Ezra (d. 1164), and Ibn al-Ashtarkūwī al-Saraqusṭī (d. 1143), Judah Halevi (circa 1075-1141) actively participated in the rich cultural environment of the twelfth century Jewish intelligentsia; in this respect, his body of work and the biographical information that may be inferred

from his writings provide valuable insights into the issues regarding the Judeo-Arabic cultural endeavor in al-Andalus. Judah Halevi explored the entire spectrum of poetical forms and themes, as he composed Hebrew secular poetry “on the good life,” to borrow Scheindlin’s apt description, as well as hymns for Zion and penitential poetry. In the context of this dissertation, Judah Halevi’s gradual disenchantment with the prerogatives of the Jewish intellectual elite to which he belonged and his subsequent spiritual crisis are of particular interest. In a gesture that might have been influenced by al-Ghazzālī’s renunciation of his position (Scheindlin, *Song 27-28*), Halevi claimed to abjure poetry, left family and friends behind, and embarked on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in search of a deeper spiritual experience. Although, as Brann warns, Judah Halevi’s abjuration of poetry should be taken *cum grano salis*, his abandonment of the privileged life that he enjoyed in his native al-Andalus exemplifies various important cultural values. These cultural principles figure prominently in Halevi’s penitential poem “*Adonai, Negdekha Kol Ta’avati*,” which was integrated into Yom Kippur’s morning service in most Jewish denominations. Below I include the entire poem.

Oh my Lord, all my desire is before you,  
 even if I do not bring it up to my lips.  
 I (wish) to be pleasant to you for one moment, and die.  
 If only my petition were granted to me,  
 I would entrust the rest of my spirit into Your hand;  
 I would fall asleep, and my sleep will be sweet.  
 When I am away from You, my life is death.  
 If I hold onto You, my death is life.  
 But I do not know how I will face [You]  
 what my worship and my law would be.  
 Oh lord, teach me Your ways!  
 Turn me away from my folly’s bondage.  
 Make me learn, while I am still able to  
 submit myself, and while my submission is still acceptable to You,  
 before the day I will be a burden upon myself,  
 before my limbs weigh heavily on each other,

before I submit myself unwillingly,  
 before the cloth moth eats up my strengths and they can no longer bear my  
 burden.  
 I will then go to the place where my fathers have gone  
 and my encampment will be where their encampment is.  
 I am like a foreigner on earth  
 yet I belong in her womb.  
 The days of my youth have so far been devoted to themselves  
 and when should I also be devoted to my (eternal) home?  
 The world, which has been granted to my heart,  
 has kept me away from considering my later end.  
 How will I serve my Maker while I am a prisoner of my inclination,  
 a slave to my desire?  
 How will I seek a high place  
 when maggots will soon be my sisters?  
 How could a good day be pleasant to my heart  
 when I do not know whether my tomorrow will be pleasant?  
 The days and nights  
 are committed to vanishing my remains until I fade.  
 Half of me will be scattered in the wind;  
 half of me will be turned back, ground into dust.  
 What will I say when my (evil) inclination pursues me  
 like an enemy from my youth to my old age?  
 And what does time have in store for me, if not Your favor?  
 Without You as my portion, what will my portion be?  
 I am stripped and naked of works;  
 I only have Your righteousness as my cover.  
 Until when should I direct my tongue to You and keep begging?,  
 when, oh my Lord, all my desire is before you. (Levin 133-134)

While the penitential spirit of this poetic piece might be reminiscent of Arabic *zuhd*  
 poems such as the text by Ismā‘īl b. al-Qāsim Abū al-‘Atāhiya discussed above, the  
 cultural and liturgical implications of Halevi’s poem set it apart from the rhetorical and  
 thematic conventions of the *zuhdiyyāt*. More important, even though the first line of this  
 poem, *adonai, negdekha kol ta’avati*, is a direct quotation from Psalm 38:10, the tone of  
 Halevi’s piece significantly differs from its biblical precedent. Whereas the psalmist’s  
 voice offers a vivid description of the sinner’s despair as he acknowledges his  
 transgressions before God in awe and in fear, Halevi’s poetic voice candidly declares that



he is still unable to commit to faith and asks God to show him the way to properly serve and worship Him before old age weakens his body and mind. Indeed, Halevi's middle-aged poetic voice's supplication for God's help breaks new ground in Judeo-Arabic penitential poetry. As Scheindlin notes in his illuminating analysis of this text, a middle aged poetic voice's petition for divine assistance in finding his way to *teshuvah* "modifies the convention of Hebrew and Arabic moralizing poetry, with its emphasis on old age as the time for repentance," by suggesting that "the ominous thought that impels one to repentance is not death but decrepitude" (*Song* 38).

But it must be noted that Halevi's poem revisits some aspects of the scriptural model to which he alludes, since both texts are framed by the recognition of divine omniscience. The penitents in these texts proclaim that God has knowledge of their desire for *teshuvah* even when they fail to adequately express this desire emotionally (*anḥati*) in the case of the psalmist or verbally (*'al sefati*) in the case of Halevi's poetic voice. Unlike the psalmist, though, the poetic voice in Halevi's poem conveys a striking sense of intimacy and closeness in his plea for God's help. Although the idea of omniscience determines the theological core of the text, the poetic voice's incapacity to utter his desire provides valuable insights into the tone and context of this composition. Bearing in mind the way this poem resonates with Psalm 38, the first two lines of the poem might be interpreted as an allusion to the liturgical context for which this text was intended.

Just like the psalmist who acknowledges his iniquity to ultimately proclaim his trust that God will help him by saying: "Oh my Lord, I hope in You; You will answer, my Lord, my God" (Ps. 38: 16), Halevi's poetic voice dramatizes the acknowledgment of sins carried out during the various services of Yom Kippur. But, unlike the psalmist and

in contrast to the heartfelt expression of regret and the determination not to relapse expected in this context, Halevi's poetic voice acknowledges his discomfort in confessing sins unatoned for; he only admits that he will continue to be a slave of his passions and his evil inclination. If the poetic voice acknowledged his transgressions before God, his *vidduy* would be inconsequential, since he is lacking good works and he is thus naked before God. Hence, this supplicant exclaims "I do not know how I will face [You]/ what my worship and my law would be" (Levin 133). He only expects and implores God to teach him the way (*vehoreni*), as he movingly asks: "What will I say when my (evil) inclination pursues me like an enemy from my youth to my old age ... Until when should I direct my tongue to you and keep begging when, oh my Lord, all my desire is before you" (Levin 134). The tone of intimacy and candor is once again expressed in the circular structure of the poem by the repetition of the first verse; in this respect, just like the psalmist only hopes in God and is confident of God's assistance, the poetic voice in this poem expresses confidence and trust that he will eventually be able to turn to God in *teshuvah*. God will teach him the way to understanding.

The confidence and candidness shown by Halevi's poetic voice also mirror the confessional prayers recited in Yom Kippur. This penitential context requires congregants to express their regret over their past transgressions, but also to rejoice in the trust that the covenantal relationship between God and His people has once again been renewed. Accordingly, in contrast to the penitential register employed in Islamic ascetic poetry, this poem conveys intimacy and confidence. Here God's omniscience gains another dimension. If this supplicant's desire to repent is clear to God, God's unfailing

response is equally clear to the supplicant. Halevi's penitent hopes in God and knows that He will respond to his prayer.

### C. *Unetaneh Tokef Kedushat Ha-Yom*

The liturgical poem "*Unetaneh Tokef Kedushat Hayom*" ("We will recount the might of this holy day"), included in the *Rosh Ha-Shanah* and *Yom Kippur* liturgy of several Jewish denominations, also illuminates the increasingly important role of prayer and *teshuvah* in Jewish spiritual thought and practice. "*Unetaneh Tokef Kedushat Ha-Yom*" relates the events of the day of judgment (*Yom ha-din*), i.e., *Rosh Hashanah*, and the way in which the entire creation is summoned and judged at this time. The *piyyut* opens by proclaiming "the might of the holy day" (*tokef kedushat ha-yom*); indeed, it is an "awe-inspiring and formidable" moment (*hu' nora' ve-ayom*) (Silverman 147). On *Yom ha-din*, the poetic voice declares, the shofar will resound and "a subtle murmuring voice" (*kol demamah*) will be heard (Silverman 147). Before this murmuring voice, the heavenly host will "run away in haste" (*yehafezun*); "they are not innocent before [God] in judgment" (*lo yizku ve'enekha ba-din*) (Silverman 147). The overwhelming terror and fright described in the initial lines of the poem give way to a very concrete series of images, which detail the ways in which every single sinner would meet his or her fate. Accordingly, on *Rosh Ha-Shanah* it is decreed "who will live and who will die" (*mi yihyeh u-mi yamut*), "who will fall in their apportioned time and who will not" (*mi ve-kazo u-mi lo ve-kazo*), as well as who will fall "to the plague" (*va-magefa*), "to famine" (*va-ra'av*), "to thirst" (*va-zama*), "to strangling" (*va-hanika*), or "to stoning" (*va-sekilah*) (Silverman 148). At this holy time it is also determined "who will repose and who will wander" (*mi yanuah u-mi yanua'*), along with "who will be humiliated and who

will be elevated” (*mi yishafal u-mi yarum*) (Silverman 148). This formidable series of mandates notwithstanding, this section concludes, “*teshuvah*, prayer (*tefillah*) and charity (*zedaka*) rescind the harsh decree” (*ma’avirin et ra’ ha-gezerah*) (Silverman 148). In response to this provision, the poetic voice praises God in His mercy. God does not desire “the death of the dying, but rather that they turn away from their ways and live” (*ki lo’ tahfoz be-mot ha-met ki ’im be-shuvo mi-darko ve-ḥayah*) (Silverman 148). Despite the fact that human life is but “dust in the air and a passing dream” (*u-khe’avaq foreah ve-khaḥalom ya’uf*), God in His infinite mercy “has called [His people] by [His] name” (*u-shemenu kara’ta bi-shemekha*) (Silverman 149).

This liturgical piece neatly illustrates the crucial place that *teshuvah* and prayer occupy in Jewish thought and practice, as well as their concrete significance in the context of the Jewish Penitential Season. The awe and fright that even the heavenly host experience before divine judgment on *Rosh Ha-Shanah* not only marks the transcendental significance of this holy moment, but also stresses the need for utmost humility at a human level. This call for humility is implicit in the poetic voice’s reference to the way in which human beings’ transgressions and their very existence shrink before the enormity of God’s plan, judgment, and mercy. By including a long list of the decrees that are written and sealed over the course of the High Holidays, the text does not only aim to highlight the awe-inspiring dimension of this time, but also to encourage congregants to reflect upon their moral fragility. At one level, the poem’s long list of mandates underscores the uncertainty of individual and communal destiny; the participants in this holy ritual not only need to seriously evaluate their actions but also to humbly recognize human impotence in the face of divine mandates. At another level, immediately after

pointing to the uncertainty and insignificance of human existence, the text shows the pathway to human agency and divine mercy. While assuring us that “*teshuvah*, prayer (*tefillah*) and charity (*zedaka*) rescind the harsh decree” the poetic voice presents the ways in which human free will and divine mercy intersect. The importance of these aspects resides in the fact that human beings have the God-granted freedom to mend their ways, address and praise God, and commit to righteousness; thus, the celebration of God’s kingship and power in the last lines of the poem ultimately affirms human freedom and power.

#### IV. Theology and *Teshuvah*: Discernment and Free Will

This section provides an overview of the principles that inform medieval Jewish theological and moral reflections regarding *teshuvah*, which should assist in illuminating the implications of the literary texts with which this part is concerned. The discussion will pay particular attention to theological insights into the association of human free will and discernment with the concomitant imperative to acknowledge transgression on the path to *teshuvah*. Specifically, I will examine the confluence of theological and moral concerns in Baḥya ibn Pakuda’s *Hidāya ilā Farā’id al-Qulūb* (circa 1080) and Maimonides’ *Hilkhot Teshuvah* (circa 1180). In this context, the allegorical dialogue between the soul (*al-nafs*) and the intellect (*al-‘aql*) included in the third book of Baḥya’s *Hidāya* should provide an adequate point of departure.

The dialogue between the soul and the intellect describes the way in which the individual must advance from the prescriptive exhortations in the Torah to the rational understanding of the duty to serve God. Here the intellect clarifies all the doubts that the soul has about this intellectual itinerary. As the soul interrogates the intellect, it gets

acquainted with some of the most complex issues of Jewish theology. Although the theological propositions on which the intellect expounds partially mirror Mu‘tazilite *kalām*, this exposition is informed by ethical rather than speculative concerns. For instance, the discussion of problems regarding predestination or compulsion (*al-jabr*) and divine justice (*al-‘adl*) ultimately affirms that human beings lack the capacity to provide a conclusive answer to this problem, but that they should behave as if they could determine their own actions, and as if they would therefore be punished or rewarded in the hereafter according to these actions (163). This humbling recognition of the limits of human reason attests to the practical dimension that the theological speculation pioneered by the *mutakallimūn* acquires in medieval Judaism; the highest form of understanding comes with the acknowledgment that it is not possible to fully understand God. With the revealed law as a guide, human beings must then commit to action while recognizing that these actions will determine the place that they will occupy in the world to come. In this sense, *teshuvah* coincides with the realization of human beings’ freedom to act, their awareness of God’s justice, and their true commitment to faith in their full exercise of their freedom and intellectual capacities. Ibn Pakuda’s allegorical representation of the challenges that individual sinners might face as they embark on the path to understanding their freedom and concomitant responsibilities is systematically expounded in Maimonides’ discussions on the place that *teshuvah* occupies in Jewish thought and practice in *Hilkhot Teshuvah*.

In his comprehensive legal and moral treatise on *teshuvah* in *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides provides a detailed presentation regarding the overarching significance of *teshuvah* in Jewish history, worship and ethics. “In our times,” he tells his thirteenth

century Jewish audience, “since the temple is no longer standing and there is no altar to atone, there is nothing but *teshuvah* [to atone for our sins]” (*ba-zeman ha-zeh she'en bet-ha-mikdash kayyam ve'en lanu mizbah kaparah 'en sham 'elo' teshuvah*) (Touger 13).<sup>68</sup> Maimonides' initial remarks regarding the continuity between the temple *avodah* and the crucial role of *teshuvah* in his times serve as the framework for his detailed analysis of the spiritual, ethical and social implications of *teshuvah* in the Jewish Weltanschauung.

From a spiritual as well as prescriptive perspective, Maimonides asserts the need for individual sinners to “verbally acknowledge their transgressions, constantly cry out before the Lord while weeping and supplicating, perform charity as much as one's means permit, keep oneself away from the thing on which the transgression occurred, change one's name as if to say: “I am another [person]...,” as well as to completely change one's behavior toward good and the right path ...” (Touger 29). Until the day that they die, sinners are free to return to God in *teshuvah* and gain a place in the hereafter; God will always accept sinners' *teshuvah* no matter how late in life they repent (Touger 23). Maimonides' emphasis on the necessity of individual and communal *teshuvah* and God's willingness to always accept their *teshuvah* dovetails with his discussion of the relationship between human free will and the moral and religious imperative of returning to God in *teshuvah*.

“Free will (*reshut*) has been granted to all human beings” (*reshut lekol adam netonah*) (Touger 115), Maimonides asserts; this is “a great fundament and a central pillar of the Torah and the *mitzvoth*” (*ve-davar zeh 'ikkar gadol hu' ve-gu' 'ammud ha-torah ve ha-mizvah*) (Touger 121). Since “power is in our hands and our own

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<sup>68</sup> Although I am indebted to Rabbi Eliyahu Touger's translation of *Mishneh Torah*, throughout this part I offer my own translations of the text.

understanding [might] make us do wrong, it is worthy of us to return in *teshuvah* and leave our evil deeds, since the power [to do so] is readily in our hands” (*ho’il u-reshutenu be-yedenu u-mida’etenu ‘asinu khol ha-ra’ot, ra’uy lanu la-ḥazor bi-teshuvah ve-la-‘azov rish’enu, she-ha-reshut ‘atah be-yadenu*) (Touger 121).<sup>69</sup> Given the fact that we have been gifted with freedom to act, “we should exert ourselves to do *teshuvah* and acknowledge our sins verbally to cleanse ourselves from sin so that we die as a *ba’al teshuvah* and become pure for the life of the world to come” (*yishetadel adam la-‘asot teshuvah u-le-hitvadot be-fiv meḥara’ev ve-li-ne’or kapav meḥata’ev, kede sheyamut ve-hu’ ba’al teshuvah, ve-yizkeh le-Hayey ha-‘olam ha-ba’*) (Touger 157).

Maimonides’ discussion of free will in *Hilkhot Teshuvah* indicates the primacy of humankind’s responsibility in following the guidance of the Torah and fulfilling the commandments. In contrast to the apologetic function often ascribed to speculative theology (*kalām*) among Muslim authorities, Jewish theological speculations emphasize the role of human beings’ intellectual capacity and freedom in deducing the necessity of returning to God in *teshuvah*. Jewish works like Maimonides’ *Hilkhot Teshuvah* and Bahya ibn Pakuda’s *Hidāya ilā Farā’id al-Qulūb* are intended to provide their readers with practical guidance as they engage in the deductive process that will lead them to *teshuvah* and a deeper understanding of the Jewish faith and its concomitant ethical imperatives. If according to Maimonides human beings are unique among creation for their God-given discernment, “one must also have proper gnosis” in order “to merit a

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<sup>69</sup> It must be noted that Maimonides highlights the importance of a significant participation in familial and communal life. For instance, Maimonides asserts that among the people who will not find a place in the hereafter are those “who lead the community to sin” as well as “those who separate themselves from [the people], since they will not be with them when they do *teshuvah* and will have no part in their reward” (*ha-foresh min ha-zibur left shebizman sheyya’asu teshuvah, lo yihyeh immahen ve-’enu zokkeh immahen*) (Touger 97). Jonah Gerondi’s *Shaare Teshuvah*, to be discussed below, also refers to the involvement in family and community life as a crucial part of *teshuvah*.



fuller place in the world-to-come” (Hary 11). Proper knowledge of God and His creation must be gained; Jewish moral life becomes an imperative to know, discern and appropriately commit to faith. In this dynamic process the *ba‘al teshuvah* “will have a great reward because he [or she] has in fact tried the taste of sin and yet abstained from it, and subdued his [evil] inclination” (*ell’a shesekhro ha-rebeh, shehari ta‘am ha-ḥet u-ferash mi-mennu ve-khabash yizro*) (Touger 161). In Maimonides’ eyes, Jewish religious life is an intellectual endeavor as well as a moral battle. Indeed, the confluence of intellectual and moral dimensions in Maimonides’ *Hilkhot Teshuvah* ultimately proclaims that “we have no other way to love the Holy One ... but by our knowledge of Him; in accordance with our knowledge [of Him] so will be our love [of Him]” (*‘enu ‘ohav ha-kadosh ... ella’ bada‘at sheyedato; ve-‘al fi ha-de‘ah tihyeh ha-ahavah*) (Touger 231). With this exhortation to fully commit to the exercise of human freedom and knowledge on the path to divine love Maimonides concludes his encompassing theological and moral itinerary of *teshuvah*. I would like to conclude this section by briefly discussing the fundamental Judaic conception of the two inclinations, which plays a major role in Jewish theological reflection as well as in the literary texts with which the next two chapters of this dissertation are concerned.

#### 1. *Ha-Yezer Ha-Tov* and *Ha-Yezer Ha-Ra‘*

According to Jewish tradition, humankind was created with two inclinations, the good inclination (*ha-yezer ha-tov*) and the evil inclination (*ha-yezer ha-ra‘*). Yet it should be noted that this conception points to an ideal of moral balance rather than to mutually exclusive categories. Accordingly, both inclinations represent necessary aspects of human life and activity, and so “even the so-called *ha-yezer ha-ra‘* ... is not intrinsically

evil and, therefore, not to be completely suppressed” (Rosenblatt 757). Further, according to the rabbinic authorities while *ha--yezer ha-ra‘* is a human innate tendency, *ha-yezer ha-tov* appears later in life as the individual “assumes the "Yoke of the Torah" and with the onset of the age of reflection and reason” (Rosenblatt 757). In this respect, when Maimonides refers to the idea of “subduing the evil inclination” he is alluding to the exercise of the full power of discernment at the core of Jewish ethical life. Free will and the intellect are the key to subduing the evil inclination through *teshuvah*; *teshuvah* serves as the affirmation of Jewish theological autonomy as well as a testimony to the intellectual commitment to all aspects of Jewish faith. As will be seen in the following chapters of this part, the conception of the two inclinations in human ethical life will be at the center of Judaic literary explorations of the necessity of *teshuvah* as an integral commitment to all aspects of the Jewish spiritual, social and ethical life.

#### V. Jewish Speculations: *Teshuvah*, *Kabbalah* and Neoplatonism

The mystical and philosophical understanding of Jewish worship transforms the significance of *teshuvah* in Jewish spiritual life over the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The essential meaning of *teshuvah* as a return to faith deepens; *teshuvah* now also indicates the return of the soul to its origin in the heavenly spheres. The poem “*Me-Rosh Mi-Kadme Olamim*” by the Catalonian scholar and traditionalist Rabbi Moses ben Nahman (1194-1270) neatly illustrates the confluence of the new cosmological sense of Jewish worship, the Neoplatonic theme of ascent and return, and Jewish penitential practice.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Rabbi Moshe ben Nahman, Nahmanides, was a towering figure of Jewish medieval thought belonging to the circle of Gerona. His prestige as a scriptural commentator and as a knowledgeable authority in rabbinic tradition played an important role in the eventual acceptance of Kabbalah in Jewish religious practice. It is important to note that he was the representative of Judaism in the famous Barcelona disputation of 1263.

In “*Me-Rosh Mi-Kadme Olamim*” a first-person poetic voice describes the way he was conceived “from the beginning, before any world (existed)” and how the King brought him out from “His sealed hidden treasures” (*mikhmanav ha-ḥatumim*) (Chavel 392). Next, the poetic voice provides a detailed account of his life’s descent from “the foundation of the (heavenly) strata” (*mi-yesod ha-ma’arakhah*), and the way he “was formed out of dust” (*be-afar rukkamti*) (Chavel 392). The poetic voice proceeds to affirm that his heart has been endowed with “just balances and scales” (*mozne mishpat va-feles*); thus, he will rejoice if his heart inclines him toward good and be derided if his heart leans toward evil, because this decision “comes not from the King” (*ki lo’ haytah me-melekh*) (Chavel 393). Trembling, the poetic voice now hurries “to acknowledge (his) transgression” (*le-hodot pishi*), hence responding to his previous musings as to when he will finally return to the King while honoring Him with good deeds (Chavel 393). Yet, like the poetic voice in the liturgical poem by Judah Halevi discussed above, this speaker trusts in the King and not “in (his) works” (*nismakhti alekha ve-lo le-ma’asai efneh*), since this world “is built upon (God’s) favor” (*olam ḥesed yibbaneh*) (Chavel 393). The poem ends in a confident tone with the poetic voice’s vision of his soul’s coming forth from the garden of the heavenly palace from which it has originated, while exclaiming: “strengthen the hand of the weak one and make her steady ... and make her joyful at the pavilion garden of the King’s orchard” (Chavel 394).

The encompassing itinerary of the soul from its origins in the heavenly heights to its vicissitudes in the world, its confession, trust in God and its final coming back to its origin epitomizes the vision of Jewish spiritual life propounded by medieval Jewish

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Although he seemed to have gotten the upper hand in this debate and was even rewarded by King James I of Aragon, he was eventually forced to leave Spain for Eretz Israel in the aftermath of the persecutions carried out by the Dominican order (Kaplan 740).

Neoplatonism. If the poem initially offers a cosmological vision in which God creative powers are highlighted, the text quickly focuses on a concrete dimension. As the poetic voice descends to the world, the duty of worship and *teshuvah* is emphasized in the clear affirmation of free will and the necessity of the acknowledgment of transgressions that preludes the soul's return to God. When the poetic voice claims that God, the King, has provided his heart with carefully calibrated scales and balances that allow him to choose between the path of rightfulness or the path of evil, a decision that depends not on the King, human responsibility on earth is highlighted. If the scales, balances and measurements to which Proverbs 16:11 alludes "belong entirely to the Lord" (*feles umozne mishpat la-Adonai*), the echoes of this scriptural passage in this context become a symbol of humankind's power to determine their own actions as well as the impact of these actions on the afterlife. Transcendence and immanence intersect. This is why the poetic voice finally hurries to acknowledge his transgression, while calling on his soul to return to the King with the gift of works. This is also why toward the end of the poem the tone of the composition changes; calmness and confidence now reign. The trust that the poetic voice puts in God is anchored in his diligent compliance with Jewish penitential practice; even when he is ashamed to ask for God's favor, just as the psalmist in psalm 38 and the poetic voice in Judah Halevi's poem are, Nahmanides' poetic voice does not hesitate to envision his soul's return to its origins. This vision of the relationship between the heavenly and earthly spheres marks the profound importance afforded to all the aspects of faith in medieval Jewish Neoplatonic thought. Here *teshuvah* serves as the unifying principle between the transcendent and the immanent; it is the serious

commitment to Jewish faith that leads to spiritual transformation and sustains the world,  
as well as the concrete ascent and return to the divine origin of all existence.

## Chapter Five Disputes and Supplications: *Teshuvah* in Judah al-Ḥarīzī's *Maḥberet ha-Bakkashot* and *Maḥberet Vikuah ha-Nefesh im ha-Guf*

This chapter is devoted to a study of the poetic and allegorical treatment of *teshuvah* in the *Taḥkemoni* of Judah ben Solomon al-Ḥarīzī's (circa 1165-1225). I will specifically focus on *Maḥberet ha-Bakkashot* and *Maḥberet Vikuah ha-Nefesh im ha-Guf*, two Hebrew Andalusī *maqāmāt* featuring prayers for divine forgiveness and a dispute between the soul and the body on the day of judgement, respectively.<sup>71</sup> I examine these two *maḥberot* as part of al-Ḥarīzī's educational efforts to promote the discussion of serious religious issues in the Hebrew language among the Eastern Jewish communities. In particular, the recurring representation of a stubborn sinner who finally reaches understanding, recognizes his transgressions, and proclaims his hope in divine grace, I argue, eloquently attests to al-Ḥarīzī's cultural and educational endeavors in the East. Unlike al-Ḥarīzī's representation of a naïve though pious audience, al-Ḥarīzī presents individuals who fail to fulfill the lofty standards set forth by revealed law, as they try to shake off responsibility for their trespasses, but finally understand and recognize their role in transgression before God.<sup>72</sup> Al-Ḥarīzī's treatment of *teshuvah* is therefore an educational and cultural endeavor, as well as an exhortation to understand human responsibility and free will and the consequent importance of individual acknowledgement of sin in the Jewish tradition.

I would like to start this discussion by addressing the *Taḥkemoni*'s first gate, *Maḥberet ha-Fatiḥah*. In this prefatory *maḥberet*, the narrator Heman ha-Ezraḥi refers to

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<sup>71</sup> See the discussion on the development of the Andalusī *maqāma* in chapter three.

<sup>72</sup> Al-Ḥarīzī's educational efforts should be also associated with a "Hispano-Jewish culture in transition," to borrow Bernard Septimus' apt description, and, particularly, with the efforts to maintain and celebrate the Andalusī cultural and literary heritage.

a discussion between Jewish youths, in which the author or compiler of the book (meḥaber ha-sefer) participates. One of the young men involved in the discussion argues in favor of the incomparable eloquence of the Arabic language; particularly, no work in the Hebrew language could outshine the brilliance of *Maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī* (83). The author or compiler of the book intervenes in defense of the holy tongue. He will write a work in Hebrew to rival al-Ḥarīrī's eloquence. The young man who sang the praises of the Arabic language and literature now reveals his identity; he is Ḥever ha-Keni, the rogue of the collection. Ḥever promises to appear to the author of the book in every episode and help him challenge ideas regarding the supposed shortcomings of the Hebrew tongue with respect to Arabic language and culture. The *Taḥkemoni*, from this particular perspective, is meant to showcase the artistic and rhetorical merits of the sacred tongue, while engaging in a polemical dialogue with *Maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī*.

The twofold objective of al-Ḥarīzī's *Taḥkemoni*, outlined in the first *maqāma* of the collection, might be associated with this Jewish writer's ambivalent attitude toward Arabic models, which could also be seen in the structural and generic choices of his work. On the one hand, al-Ḥarīzī included the conventional characters of the Eastern *maqāma*, that is, the narrator or transmitter Heman ha-Ezraḥi and the rogue Ḥever ha-Keni, he based several of the episodes of his collection on Arabic precedents, and he composed fifty *maqāmāt* or *maḥberot* just like al-Ḥarīrī did.<sup>73</sup> On the other hand, al-Ḥarīzī's collection participates in the multi-generic conflation of the Andalusī *maqāma*; thus, the collection comprises prayers, a poetic florilegium, as well as several debates or

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<sup>73</sup> Here a caveat must be added. Unlike *Maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī*, al-Ḥarīzī's *Taḥkemoni* has numerous textual traditions, which relate to the author's changes on the text according to different needs and circumstances.

disputes, which could be linked to narrative and homiletic models in the Jewish tradition as well as to Arabic literary genres.<sup>74</sup>

Although al-Ḥarīzī's *Taḥkemoni* have received considerable critical attention, only a handful of studies provide insights into the significance and implications of the texts with which this chapter is concerned, *Maḥberet ha-Bakkashot* and *Maḥberet Vikuaḥ ha-Nefesh im ha-Guf*. Here I would like to call attention to three critical studies, which, I hope, would be helpful in illuminating some of the questions with which these Hebrew texts are concerned, as well as pave the way for the discussion of al-Ḥarīzī's literary and educational endeavors during his time in the East.

1. First, I would like to make mention of David Segal's analyses of *Maḥberet ha-Bakkashot* and *Maḥberet Vikuaḥ ha-Nefesh im ha-Guf*, included in the analytical appendix to his English translation of the *Taḥkemoni*, titled *The Book of Taḥkemoni: Jewish Tales from Medieval Spain*. Segal claims that *Maḥberet ha-Bakkashot* should be seen within the poetic tradition initiated by Sa'adiah Gaon (882-942) and continued by Ibn Gabirol (circa 1021-1057), in which a poetic voice asks God to strengthen his resolve to repent, while acknowledging his many transgressions and praising God. Segal also argues that *Maḥberet Vikuaḥ ha-Nefesh im ha-Guf* is "an expansion upon the Neoplatonic opening of *Sefer Taḥkemoni*," while the intellect's "lengthy exhortation to buttress the soul's resolve and avoid the temptations of the flesh," points to al-Ḥarīzī's belief that "the major sinner is, indeed, the flesh" (492-493).

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<sup>74</sup> Even though the dispute genre in Hebrew letters might be traced to the Arabic *jadal* (Decter 161), the particular disputation analyzed in this chapter, as will be seen, engages with questions intrinsic to the Jewish tradition, such as the relationship between human free will, the recognition of sins before God, and divine forgiveness.



2. Next, I would like to refer to Rina Drory's article "The *Maqāma*," included in *The Literature of al-Andalus*. Drory argues that the sumptuous use of the Hebrew language in the *Taḥkemoni* sheds light on this collection's educational intent; thus, al-Ḥarīzī's use of Hebrew in his *maḥberot* aims "to prompt Eastern Jews to be interested in Hebrew, rather than mere admiration for what was considered to be the peak of Arabic eloquence" (206). Even though later in life al-Ḥarīzī might have abandoned the educational and linguistic interests described by Drory when he resumed his Arabic writing in panegyrics for Muslim rulers, the first *maḥberet* of the *Taḥkemoni*, explicitly states al-Ḥarīzī's educational and cultural interests in composing this collection of Hebrew Andalusī *maqāmāt*.<sup>75</sup>

3. Lastly, I would like to point to Adena Tanenbaum's discussion of the philosophical and literary precedents that inform *Maḥberet Vikuaḥ ha-Nefesh im ha-Guf* and, one might add, *Maḥberet ha-Bakkashot*. In *Contemplative Soul: Hebrew Poetry and Philosophical Theory in Medieval Spain*, Tanenbaum argues that al-Ḥarīzī's dispute text echoes al-Ḥarīzī's "predecessors' compelling synthesis of Neoplatonic and classical rabbinic eschatology" (206). In this sense, the soul is depicted in this text as an exile from the heavenly palaces that has been led astray from the straight path by her "descent into the defiling world of corporeality which can only be reversed by purifying acts of withdrawal, repentance, and prayer" (206). The conceptual framework of this dispute, Tanenbaum adds, largely coincides with the Neoplatonic cosmology of Ibn Gabirol's *Keter Malkhut*.

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<sup>75</sup> Drory also points to the importance of al-Ḥarīzī's stay in Provence and to his late in life adoption of Arabic in his literary works. If the Christian and Provençal milieu provided the ferment for producing "a work so notably Arabic-Hebrew in nature" (206), al-Ḥarīzī's late-life literary production in praise of local Muslim rulers seems to mark the abandonment of his cultural and linguistic project aimed at the Eastern Jewry.

In what follows, I aim to demonstrate that al-Ḥarīzī's *Maḥberet ha-Bakkashot* and *Maḥberet Vikuah ha-Nefesh im ha-Guf* are carefully structured texts, which present a detailed description of Jewish views on *teshuvah*, anchored in the relationship between human acknowledgment of sin and divine forgiveness. I specifically argue that al-Ḥarīzī's engagement with serious religious issues in these texts should be seen in the light of his educational and linguistic initiatives in the East, which attempted to preserve and promote the Andalusī literary and intellectual heritage in the face of societal and cultural changes. In particular, I claim that al-Ḥarīzī's treatment of *teshuvah* provides evidence of his interest in establishing a discussion about Jewish intellectual and poetic traditions in the Hebrew language. I aim to explore al-Ḥarīzī's texts not only as an endeavor to "revive the sacred tongue through original and purely poetic writing" (Itzhaki 176) or as an attempt to prompt the Eastern Jewish communities to be interested in Hebrew (Drory 206), but also as an effort to provide these same communities with significant discussions of a variety of religious questions and complex issues concerning the Jewish tradition in the Hebrew language.

The two texts with which this chapter is concerned, I argue, are complementary. If *Maḥberet Vikuah ha-Nefesh im ha-Guf* portrays the struggles of the individual soul to finally accept responsibility for sin, *Maḥberet ha-Bakkashot* highlights the role of divine assistance in finding the intersection between human intellectual and moral efforts and divine favor. Both *Maḥberet ha-Bakkashot* and *Maḥberet Vikuah ha-Nefesh im ha-Guf*, as will be seen, affirm that the understanding of humankind's free will and the concomitant acknowledgment of transgressions before God constitute the initial steps on the path to *teshuvah* and divine forgiveness. Further, these *maḥberot* exemplify the fact

that the understanding of humankind's free will and the necessity of *teshuvah* is intrinsically linked to humankind's embrace of the challenge of righteousness and the trust in divine assistance in persevering in this challenge. In order to illuminate al-Ḥarīzī's specific approach to *teshuvah* I compare these two *maḥberot* with the representation of *teshuvah* and the role of divine mercy in Ibn Gabirol's *Keter Malkhut*. While Ibn Gabirol presents a strict Neoplatonic text in his striking emphasis on divine mercy and an irreconcilable dichotomy between soul and body, al-Ḥarīzī's dispute and prayers pose a more balanced approach to spirituality while integrating the imagery and vocabulary of the Neoplatonic currents that preceded him.

My reading of *Maḥberet Vikuah ha-Nefesh im ha-Guf* departs from the strictly Neoplatonic framework proposed by Segal and Tanenbaum, and highlights the fact that this dialogue and the two prayers included in *Maḥberet ha-Bakkashot* aim to emphasize the responsibility of the individual toward God in his or her capacity to acknowledge sin and mend ways. In analogy to the poetic voices in *Maḥberet ha-Bakkashot*'s prayers, the soul in *Maḥberet Vikuah ha-Nefesh im ha-Guf* needs to accept responsibility for transgression; ascribing responsibility for sin exclusively to one aspect of human existence, whether corporeal or spiritual, only leads away from *teshuvah* and divine forgiveness. Like the biblical and poetic texts discussed in the previous chapter of this dissertation, the allusions to *teshuvah* in *Maḥberet ha-Bakkashot* and *Maḥberet Vikuah ha-Nefesh im ha-Guf* constitute an affirmation of human responsibility to acknowledge sin before God and the necessity to ask for divine assistance in committing to *teshuvah*. Only by accepting responsibility for transgression and praising God is the individual able to find a path to *teshuvah* in these texts in particular and in the Jewish tradition in general.

I conclude that *Maḥberet ha-Bakkashot* and *Maḥberet Vikuah ha-Nefesh im ha-Guf* are educational and celebratory texts, which invite the audience to join in the poetic voices' search for understanding divine forgiveness, while providing this Eastern Jewish audience with a relatively complex discussion of serious religious matters in the Hebrew language.

### I. *Maḥberet ha-Bakkashot*

In *Maḥberet ha-Bakkashot*, Heman ha-Ezarahi meets a group of students who are listening to the teachings and the poems recited by an old master. One of the students comes forward and asks the teacher to teach them “a prayer or a hymn of praise, which may be a shield and a rock” for them (*tefillah o teḥinnah/ tehi lanu soḥerah ve-zinnah*) (l. 10; p. 117). After some hesitation, the teacher complies with his students' petition and provides them with two different prayers. His first prayer is a “garland of praise” (*fe'er ha-tehillah*) and “a great vow” (*neder ha-gedullah*) (l.18; p.117); “whoever prays it with a determined mind will have the strength of his prayer immediately heard by the creator” (*lo hitpallel bah ish bekhavanat dato/ shelo yishma ha-bore mi-yad tefillato*) (l. 19; p. 117). This first prayer expresses the gratitude of a poetic voice who was instructed by God in His law; “the light of the world to come has been shown” to the eye of his heart (*ve-or ha-olam ha-ba be'en libi here'ani*) (l. 83; p. 120). Nonetheless, this speaker “has walked faithlessly on the path of his heart,” and God “requited (him) not” (*halakhti shovav be-derekh libbi ve-lo gemalani*) (l. 84; p. 120). This same poetic voice only asks God to love him until “he fixes what is bent” (*'ad atakken ha-me'uvat*) (l. 103; p. 121), and until he has “cleansed the dross and make the ritual uncleanness” of his soul (my only one) pure (*va-avarer sig libbi va-ataher tumat yehidati*) (l. 104; p. 121). Now this

first prayer ends in a plea for guidance; the poetic voice is confident that God can always teach His “ways to the astray” (*u-lelamed darkekha la-to'im*) (l. 109; p. 121).

The second prayer is also beautiful (*yefahfiyah*); there is “no other like it in the world” (*en lah be-tabal sheniyah*) (l. 146; p.122). This *bakkashah* asks for divine assistance in purifying the soul of the speaker. The poetic voice of this second prayer also asks the Lord to enlighten the eyes of his intellect. Yet he readily admits that he is “ashamed and humiliated” (*elohai boshti ve-nikhlamti*) (l. 149; p.122). Like the soul in the dispute of the soul and the body, which will be discussed below, this speaker attempts to divert attention from his transgressions and blame the evil inclination (*ha-yezer ha-ra'*) for his trespasses. “Ah, what can I do when my (evil) inclination desolates me” (*akh mah la-'asot ve-yizeri hashimmani*) (l. 197; p.125). This supplication ends in a call for the soul to come to her senses. “Wake up, riotous soul” (*ori nefesh homiyah*) (l. 246; p.125), the poetic voice exclaims, until when “will the vanities of the world entice you” (*le-matai habele tebel yasitukh*) (l. 247; p.125). Once she expresses her sorrow and recognizes her transgressions, God will guide her so that she sees His face and “finds grace in His eyes” (*ve-timzei hen be-'enav*) (l. 267; p. 128). Upon finishing these prayers, the old teacher is revealed as *Hever ha-Keni*, *Hever's* heart, he himself affirms, has “ways to all wisdom” (*u-vilvavi le-khol hokhmah mesillot*) (128 n269).<sup>76</sup> He “composes mockery for fools,” but “he lays down the fruit of prayer for the righteous” (*aḥaber la-sekhalim mahatallot/ ve-'e'erokh la-ḥasidim niv tefillot*) (128 n269).

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<sup>76</sup> The last two lines to which I have referred are included in footnote 269 of Yosef Yahalom's and Naoya Katsumata's 2010 edition of the *Tahkemoni*.

These two prayers point to views regarding *teshuvah*, human free will, and divine assistance in the Jewish tradition.<sup>77</sup> Apart from asking for understanding and redemption, these two prayers point to the underlying educational purpose of al-Ḥarīzī’s *maqāma* collection as well as to his wider interest in educational themes. Ḥever ha-Keni appears in this *maḥberet* as a revered teacher who complies with his students’ requests and composes prayers for them; Ḥever’s students are, in fact, the ones who ask for the prayers of praise and supplication that occupy the bulk of the text in this *maḥberet*. Further, the prayers composed and recited by Ḥever present voices in search of understanding; God will be the teacher who enlightens these supplicants’ intellect. At another level, Ḥever’s role as a teacher of prayer and his focus on divine guidance and instruction throughout his prayers might be associated with al-Ḥarīzī’s educational and linguistic efforts in the East. Just like Ḥever ha-Keni’s instructional practice, al-Ḥarīzī’s *maqāma* collection aims to teach “the fool with mockery” (*aḥaber la-sekhalim mahatallot*), and to instruct the faithful with the “language of prayer” (*ve-e’erokh la-ḥasidim niv tefillot*) (128 n269). This moral relativity coupled with rhetorical ambivalence echoes the discursive ambiguity of the Arabic *maqāmāt*’s repentance stories discussed above as well as presents a sharp contrast to the serious treatment of *teshuvah* in Ibn Sahula’s *Meshal ha-Kadmoni* examined below.

Apart from bearing witness to the *Taḥkemoni*’s indebtedness to the moral and rhetorical aspects of the Arabic *maqāma*, al-Ḥarīzī’s first *bakkashah* also provides evidence of a wider educational intent. This text presents various cases of (divine) instruction gone awry because of human stubbornness; the contrast between divine

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<sup>77</sup> The *bakkashot* hark back to Jewish liturgical custom; thus, they are associated with a great variety of prayers “in prose or verse, petitionary and abstract in content, mainly for recitation throughout the year” (Goldschmidt 72).

assistance and human disobedience is particularly prominent. The poetic voice in this *bakkashah* claims that he is faithlessly obedient to “the way of his heart” (*halakhti shobab be-derekh libbi*) (l. 84; p. 120), even though he has “been taught the good way and become knowledgeable of God’s Law” (*ve-derekh ha-tov limmdani/ ve-torato hishkilani*) (120; l. 82). Despite the fact that this poetic voice has disregarded “the light of the world to come” revealed to his heart (*ve-or ha-olam ha-ba/be-en libi he-rani*) (l. 83; p. 120), God punishes him not. The realization of humankind’s apparent inadequacy to comply with divine law, motivates the speaker to address God Himself, and to ask for patience and time. God has taught the speaker of the first prayer valuable lessons and has even included him among His people and placed him under His Law. Yet the speaker asks for patience and time until he “fixes what is bent” (*‘ad atakken ha-me’uvvat*) (l. 103; p. 121). He knows that despite his transgressions and his inability to learn from the divine lessons, God’s grace toward him perseveres. Because of his knowledge of a persisting divine love, the poetic voice dares to ask for the continuance of His love until he purifies his heart. For this reason, at the end of this section the speaker, in analogy to the poetic voice in Judah Halevi’s “*Adonai, negdekha kol ta’avati*” discussed above, affirms God’s omnipotence.

Like Halevi’s speaker, the poetic voice in this *bakkashah* expresses his trust in divine power to make sinners learn the way to the right path. Unlike Halevi’s poetic voice, though, al-Ḥarīzī’s speaker is finally able to overcome the awe and the terror of final judgment; thus, toward the end of the dispute he refers to divine omnipotence and instruction once again. The speaker knows that God “can do all to teach (His ways to) the sinner” (*kol tokhal le-horot ha-ḥata’im*), and He “makes criminals return” to Him (*u-le-*

*hashiv 'elekha ha-posh 'im*) (l. 108; p. 121). Despite his chronic stubbornness, the speaker in this first *bakkashah* is confident that God will lead him on the path to understanding. By highlighting the preeminence of divine assistance, this first prayer ultimately emphasizes human responsibility to understand the necessity to acknowledge sin and ask for forgiveness before God. Despite humankind's inability to avoid transgression, human beings also have the power to acknowledge sin before God, and thus be helped in doing *teshuvah*.

The second *bakkashah* greatly expands on the problems addressed in the first prayer. Unlike the first prayer's notable emphasis on understanding, Hever's second prayer highlights the penitent's verbal acknowledgement of sin (*vidduy*). If the first prayer dramatizes humankind's initial inability to comply with divine law, the second prayer transforms this all too human weakness into deep-felt shame and into a petition for divine forgiveness in the midst of the recognition of transgression. Human activity and emotion are foregrounded. The speaker covers his mouth with his hand in shame (*ve-yad lefeh samti*) (l. 149; p. 122). When "the bundle of sins" (*alummot avonim*) that he has tied together comes to his mind, "he is struck dumb" (*illamti*) (l. 149-150; p. 122). But like the soul in the dispute with which the next section of this chapter is concerned, the speaker of the second prayer is initially reluctant to accept full responsibility for sin. Despite the fact that the speaker addresses his tumultuous soul and encourages her to "wake up" (*ori nefesh homiyah*) (l. 174; p. 124), his soul argues that she is impotent with respect to her inclination. "The (evil) inclination desolated me and caused me to perish," she claims (*ve-yizeri hashimmani/va-hadimmani*) (l. 197-8; p. 125). This initial reluctance to acknowledge sin gives way to a significant change of register and tone in



the second half of the text. Now the poetic voice not only asks God to set him aright, but also moves closer to understanding his responsibility in sin. He now addresses his own soul. “Return to the secret of the foundation upon which your creation stands” (*ve-shuvi ‘ad sod haysod/asher binyanekh ‘alav ya ‘amod*) (l. 265; p. 128), he tells her. “God will certainly instruct you until you are able to see His face” (*ve-ha-el yorekh ve-yorekh yorekh/ ‘ad tizki li-re’ot fanav*) (l. 267-268; p. 128), the speaker confidently concludes.

These two prayers emphasize human stubbornness to learn God’s lessons and stay on the right path. Like the soul in the next *maḥberet* with which this chapter is concerned, the speaker in this *bakkashah* finally addresses God in affectionate and emotive terms after he realizes his obduracy. “O Refuge of Favor,” the speaker exclaims, “may it be Your will to gird me and to assist me inside and outside,” (*ihī raḥon millfanekha me’on ha-ra’zon/le-azreni u-le-azreni*) (l. 190-1; p. 124), and to “enlighten the eyes of my intellect” (*ha’er ‘ene sikhli*) (l. 210; p. 125). By the end of this prayer, thus, the speaker is confident that God will lead him to “contemplate His face” and that he will “find favor in His eyes” once again (*ad tizki li-re’ot fanav/ ve-timḥe’i ḥen be-‘enav*) (l. 267-268; p. 128). Hever’s final affirmation of the moral relativity of his literary output notwithstanding, al-Ḥarīzī’s *Maḥberet ha-Bakkashot* is clearly meant to educate his thirteenth century audience on how to approach the problems and challenges that they may confront in doing *teshuvah* and in their quest for understanding divine forgiveness. Al-Ḥarīzī’s seriocomic lessons on *teshuvah* in *Maḥberet ha-Bakkashot* are further elaborated in the Dispute of the Soul and the Body with which the next section of this chapter is concerned.

## II. *Maḥberet Vikuaḥ ha-Nefesh im ha-Guf*

In exploring al-Ḥarīzī's *Dispute between the Soul and the Body*, I expand on my analysis of *Maḥberet ha-Bakkashot*, shed light on al-Ḥarīzī's contribution to the development of the Hebrew Andalusī *maqāma*, and further examine some of the critical studies on these specific *maḥberot*. I argue that al-Ḥarīzī's exploration of *teshuvah* in *Maḥberet ha-Bakkashot* and *Maḥberet Vikuaḥ ha-Nefesh im ha-Guf* should be associated with his efforts to prompt the interest in the literary quality of the Hebrew language (Drory 196), and, in particular, to create the conditions for a discussion of complex religious questions in the holy tongue.<sup>78</sup> The *Dispute between the Soul and the Body*, as will be seen, constitutes a significant expansion of *Maḥberet ha-Bakkashot*, since both of these texts are anchored in generic and structural patterns deeply rooted in Jewish tradition while revisiting and revising themes and motifs of the Arabic *maqāma* tradition. The treatment of *teshuvah* in these two *maḥberot* is a particularly clear example of al-Ḥarīzī's cultural and educational endeavors in the promotion of discussions regarding all aspects of Jewish culture and religious thought, as well as yet another indication of al-Ḥarīzī's significant departure from Arabic and Islamic models and themes. Moreover, I believe that this Andalusī writer's varied approach to *teshuvah* bears testimony to his interest in prompting a thorough discussion of Jewish literary and intellectual heritage among the Eastern Jewish communities. These educational, literary and cultural

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<sup>78</sup> For a discussion of the function and uses of the Hebrew language among the medieval Jewish intelligentsia, see Drory "The *Maqāma*," 198. It must also be noted that a fragmentary dispute between the soul and the body exists in a thirteenth-century Castilian version, *La disputa del alma y del cuerpo*, which dates back to the twelfth century. Although the extant fragment only presents the soul's arguments against the body in the time of death, this fragment attests to the wide diffusion of the motif.

purposes, as will be seen, often deemphasize the philosophical interests and contents that have often been adduced to explain the significance of these particular *maḥberot*.<sup>79</sup>

In “*Maḥberet Vikuah ha-Nefesh im ha-Guf*,” Heman ha-Ezrahi is sad and hopeless. His life has abounded in sin; he has been unable to change the course of his life. But he meets Ḥever ha-Keni, and asks him for a parable or allegory (*mashal*) about the end of the soul and the body. Who is guilty for sin? Are the soul and the body equally blamed and punished for transgression in the Day of Judgment? Such are the questions that Heman expects Ḥever to answer. But, instead of providing straightforward answers to these questions, Ḥever composes and presents a lively dispute between the soul (*ha-nefesh*), the body (*ha-guf*), the evil inclination (*ha-yezer ha-raʿi*) and the intellect (*ha-sekhel*). Rather than exploring the questions of who is responsible for sin or who will be punished, Ḥever’s dialogue, in analogy to “*Maḥberet ha-Bakkashot*,” shows the path of the soul to understanding, accepting her responsibility for sin and praising God with the help of the God-given discernment (*sekhel*). An analysis of this text should also take into account the treatment of *teshuvah* in the two *bakkashot* discussed above in order to illuminate al-Ḥarīzī’s relatively complex educational methods and aims, as well as his commitment to the defense and promotion of the Hebrew language in the face of the prestige of Arabic eloquence and models.

In what follows, I demonstrate that the “*Maḥberet Vikuah ha-Nefesh im ha-Guf*” should be analyzed in conjunction with “*Maḥberet ha-Bakkashot*” 1) as an educational

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<sup>79</sup> Both Segal and Tanenbaum argue that “*Maḥberet Vikuah ha-Nefesh im ha-Guf*” presents an illustration of Neoplatonic views concerning the place of the soul and the body in the drama of salvation. Although their analyses of this particular text illuminate many of al-Ḥarīzī’s literary and philosophical sources, the following analysis will concentrate on al-Ḥarīzī’s promotion of a tangible understanding of human responsibility to recognize transgressions before God, which seems to overcome a strict Neoplatonic division between the soul and the body.

initiative to “prompt Eastern Jews to be interested in Hebrew” (Drory 206), 2) as an effort to provide the Eastern Jewry with a sophisticated discussion on *teshuvah* in the Hebrew language, and, particularly, 3) as an invitation to understanding and embracing human responsibility for sin. If the soul in this dispute, just as the speakers in the *bakkashot* discussed above, initially attempts to ascribe responsibility for transgression to the world, the body and the evil inclination (*tebel*, *ha-guf* and *ha-yezer ha-ra‘*, respectively), she soon realizes the importance of acknowledging her responsibility for sin, understanding this responsibility, and praising God for His guidance. The fact that al-Ḥarīzī in “*Maḥberet ha-Bakkashot*” and “*Maḥberet Vikuah ha-Nefesh im ha-Guf*” presents several cases of sinners or souls who refuse to learn despite God’s instruction points to the affirmation of free will and the concomitant importance of human acknowledgement of transgression throughout these particular *maḥberot* and in the Jewish tradition, in general.

Just as the speakers of his texts, al-Ḥarīzī’s audience needs to recognize their fallibility in their initial incapacity to understand the need of recognition of sins before God. The audience is free to transgress, these texts demonstrate, but it is also free to accept responsibility and do *teshuvah*. Al-Ḥarīzī’s aim in these texts appears to be twofold. To the effort in prompting the interest of Eastern Jewish communities in the Hebrew language, described by Drory, one might also add al-Ḥarīzī’s endeavor to promote a discussion on various aspects of Jewish intellectual and literary heritage in the Hebrew language. *Teshuvah* and human responsibility for sin, as will be seen below, will play a prominent role in such a discussion.

Hever ha-Keni's *mashal* revolves around the day of judgment (*yom ha-din*). It is on this day when the soul (*ha-nefesh*) is finally allowed to present her case.<sup>80</sup> Now the soul lambastes the body for his license and shamelessness. Has not the body "brought grief upon" the soul (*halo attah 'olalta li ha-yagon ha-zeh*), because "every day" he has been "determined to increase sin and offense" (*be-khol yom hayita marbeh het va- 'aberah*) (l. 35-36; p. 130)? His only pleasures reside in striving "after what his eyes see" (*latur ahare 'enekh*), "filling his belly" (*le-mallot bitnekha*), and "dedicating himself to lust" (*u-le-hitasek be-taznunekha*) (l. 38-39; p.130)). He has just "increased the fire" (*u-magdil ha-medurah*) with his "evil machinations" (*be-ro 'a mahshebotekh*) (l. 36-37; p.130). All of his thoughts are directed to "sink [the soul] in mud and grime" (*ve-kol mahshebotekh le-hatbi 'eni be-tit va-refesh*) (l. 40; p.130). Indeed, "woe to [such] a stricken body" (*oi lekha ha-guf ha-naguf*) (l. 34; p.130)! The soul "has entered the body to make him live" (*u-bati elekha le-haḥayotekha*), and to help him "be good for the hereafter" (*le-hetibekha ve-aḥaritekha*) (l. 53; p. 131). Even though the soul presents herself as immaculate and serviceable, the body just keeps her "burdened with his sins" (*he 'evadetani ve-ḥatotekha*) (l. 54; p. 131). The intellect (*ha-sekheh*) now strives to convince the soul that she must escape the influence of the evil inclination as espoused by the body in this particular section; she must disregard his words full of deceit. "Awake, pure soul" (*uri nefesh barah*) (l. 71; p. 131), the intellect tells her, and "beware of the evil inclination" (*ve-atah hishameri namin ha-yezer ha-ra ')* (l. 72; p. 131).

Although the soul's arguments throughout this section appear to be solid, a reappraisal of David Segal's contention that this *mahberet* is an "an expansion upon the

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<sup>80</sup> It must be noted that this text might be also referring to the Jewish liturgical calendar where the day of judgment is another term to refer to the beginning of the Jewish year.

Neoplatonic opening of *Sefer Tahkemoni*” (492) and that this text is meant to prove that “the major sinner is, indeed, the flesh” (493) might be called for. In fact, the answers of other participants in the dispute and the subtle changes in the responses of the soul throughout the dialogue seem to imply a more balanced view of the relationship between the soul and the body in this context. I would argue that, like the *Bakkashot* discussed above, this dispute presents an individual journey to understanding, rather than implying the primacy of the spirit over the flesh. Like the two prayers examined above, “*Maḥberet Vikuah ha-Nefesh im ha-Guf*” shows a movement from initial reluctance to understanding and acknowledging responsibility for transgression to the individual’s acknowledgement of sins. As a consequence, this particular analysis of “*Maḥberet Vikuah ha-Nefesh im ha-Guf*” will examine this dispute as a process in several stages.

As mentioned, the soul in this dispute has been able to adequately prove her case in her initial accusations against the body; she has convincingly argued that the flesh, the body, is the “major sinner” (al-Ḥarīzī, *The Book* 193). Some of the speakers in the dispute also argue in favor of the sanctity of the soul. While trying to convince her to eschew the pleasures offered by the body, the intellect (*ha-sekhel*) refers to the soul as “pure” (*barah*) (l. 71; p. 131), “the only one” (*yehidah*) (l. 77; p. 132), the captive (*asirah*) (l. 115; p. 133), a dove (*yonah*) (l. 78; p. 132), and saintly (*kedoshah*) (l. 241; p. 138). These epithets, as Tanenbaum notes, are a testimony to al-Ḥarīzī’s indebtedness to the symbolic apparatus of the Andalusī poetical corpus and its “synthesis of Neoplatonic and classical rabbinic eschatology” (206). This Neoplatonic terminology notwithstanding, the evil inclination (*ha-yezer ha-ra’*) also has words of praise for the soul, albeit with an entirely different aim in mind. *Ha-yezer ha-ra’* calls the soul “dear” (*yekarah*) (l. 210; p. 137),

and tries to convince her to enjoy her time in this life in a modest proposal for *carpe diem*. Yet, despite the solid arguments presented by the soul and her supporters, the counter-arguments advanced by the body take center stage at this particular stage in the dispute.

The body's response to the soul's claims and to the arguments presented by her supporters provides a cogent counter-argument. The soul, the body argues, has "chained (his) heart with her charms" (*kosheret libbi ba-ḥavarayikh*); thus, she has pulled his heart with the "ropes of her falsehood" (*ba- 'avot shekarayikh*) (1.46; p.130). She has incited him with her "sweet words" (*be-metek amarayikh*) (1.47; p.130). He has only "followed her," and fulfill "her words" (*va-ani avo aḥaraikh/ u-milleti et devarayikh*) (1.48; p.130). Further, upon hearing the soul's claims about his sensuality, the body argues that he has no control whatsoever over behavior and action. Before the soul dropped from the sky and entered into him, the body argues, "he was like a mute stone" (*ani hayiyti ke-even dumah*) (1.63; p.131); "he lay down in the soil," discarded (*mushlakh ba-adamah*) (1.63; p.131). But the soul "descended (to him) from the skies" (*yadadi li min ha-shamayim*), "opened his eyes to see" the world (*u-fakaḥt li li-rot 'enayim*), and made him "stand on his feet" (*ve-he 'emadti 'al raglayim*) (1.64-65; p.131). The soul made the body "touch with his hands" (*u-le-mashshesh yadayim*), taste the food that he ate with "his tongue and lips" (*ve-le ekhol lashon u-sfatayim*) (1.65; p.131). All these delights are not inherent to the body; only with the influence of the soul did the body realize that they were pleasurable.

Now the soul finds no answer to the body's claims; she is "weakened by his words" (*va-teḥelash ha-nefesh li-devarav*) (1.67; p.131). The silence of the soul because

of the body's "abundance of words" (*berov devarim*) (l.69; p.131) makes the intellect (*sekhel*) intervene. The intellect encourages this "pure soul" to "be awake" (*uri nefesh barah*) (l.71; p.131). But the soul is still unwilling to listen to the intellect's advice; she has no possible way to escape the snares of the body and the evil inclination, she claims. "How would I be able to set myself free?" (*ve-ekh yokhal le-himmalet mi-kavelo*) (l. 134; p. 134), the soul candidly asks the intellect. "The inclination bites me like a serpent on my right side" (*ha-yezer hezar li-imini ka-nahash [yisheheni]*), and "the body drags me with his ropes" (*ve-ha-guf ba-avoto yimshekhni*) (l. 136; p. 134), the soul continues. The soul, in sum, is "alone and barren in their midst" (*va-ani vetokhem yehidah ve-galmudah*) (l. 137; p. 134).

Despite the strong arguments of the body, the evil inclination's modest proposal for *carpe diem*, and the soul's stubborn reluctance to accept responsibility for sin, the intellect makes a last call to the soul. The intellect tries to show the soul the path to forgiveness by employing an adequate analogy. The soul should know that if "a human king" (*melekh basar*) lavishly rewards his servants, "how much the creator of all things" (*ve-khol shekhen bore ha-kol*) "will reward (the soul) for her works" (*tekabli sakhar tov li-fe'ullatekha*) (l. 243-249; p. 138). The analogy provided by the intellect finally has a strong effect on the soul. In analogy to this allegory, the soul understands her role as a servant of the Lord and delivers a song of praise to the "creator of all things" (*bore ha-kol*) (l. 247; p. 138).

The final prayer of the soul expresses confidence and determination. Apart from thanking God for "rescuing her from the evil inclination" (*min ha-ha-yezer ha-ra' hilaztani*) (l. 252; p. 139), this prayer shows a notable change of tone. Instead of accusing



the body or the world for her misbehavior, the soul praises God; she now sees that she will “find grace in the eyes of the Lord” (*emza hen be-‘enekha adoni*) (l. 251; p. 139). Now she is confident that “she has found hope for God’s mercies” (*yadati ki esh li tikvah be-rahame ha-el*) (l. 253; p. 139). God “will bring her back to the abode of light and praise” (*la-hashiveni li-neveh ha-or ve-hatehillah*) (l. 254; p. 139). This final prayer ratifies the soul’s final recognition of transgression, her confidence and her trust in divine assistance and mercy. The other participants in the debate fall silent. The soul now directs her words of praise and thanksgiving directly to God.

Apart from the educational intent that Drory associates with al-Ḥarīzī’s use of Hebrew in this specific moment of his literary career, I would like to extend this educational impulse to the recurring plots and themes employed by al-Ḥarīzī in his treatment of *teshuvah*. Although toward the end of the dispute the tone and content of the soul’s speech draw closer to the petitions delivered by the poetic voices of *Maḥberet ha-Bakkashot*, throughout the dispute the soul appears as a stubborn individual who refuses to accept and fails to understand her responsibility for transgression. More important, the soul’s stubbornness makes her present her case in the rhetorical battle solely by her own means. She is able to effectively present her arguments, but she is silenced by the body’s reply. She convincingly presents herself as the captive of the evil inclination and the body, but her reply only prompts an even stronger response by *ha-yezer ha-ra’*. Yet her final prayer ratifies her definite understanding of responsibility and her decisive step toward *teshuvah*; thus, this is the only time when she addresses God directly, as she confidently exclaims “I will find grace in your eyes, oh Lord!” (*emza hen be-enekha adonai*) (l. 251; p. 139).

The reluctance and stubbornness of the soul is only surpassed when she understands the importance of acknowledging her responsibility for sin. Only when she accepts her share of responsibility for transgression, does she dare to address God and ask for His assistance. In this sense, al-Ḥarīzī’s *vikuaḥ* and *bakkashot* seem to be anchored in a detailed illustration of the sinner’s path to understanding and embracing of all aspects of *teshuvah*; accordingly, these texts greatly contribute to the underlying moral and educational purpose of the collection. I believe that the concrete illustration of the sinner’s path to understanding human freedom and acknowledging sin in these texts implies a relative departure from the philosophically oriented precedents with which “*Maḥberet ha-Bakkashot*” and, particularly, “*Maḥberet Vikuaḥ ha-Nefesh im ha-Guf*” might be associated in terms of imagery and form. In particular, I have demonstrated that these *maḥberot*’s underlying educational goals stand in stark contrast to the philosophical and mystical interests that inform the poetry of Sa’adiah Ben Joseph Gaon (882–942) and Solomon Ben Judah Ibn Gabirol (c. 1021-1057), which Segal and Tanenbaum identify as al-Ḥarīzī’s most notable precedents and models for these *maḥberot*. In order to illuminate the contrasts between the representation of *teshuvah* in al-Ḥarīzī’s “*Maḥberet ha-Bakkashot*” and “*Maḥberet Vikuaḥ ha-Nefesh im ha-Guf*” and the aforementioned poetical and philosophical precedents I would now refer to Ibn Gabirol’s *Keter Malkut*, the “Royal Crown.”

### III. Ibn Gabirol’s *Keter Malkhut* and al-Ḥarīzī’s *Maḥberot*

In *Keter Malkhut*, Ibn Gabirol includes a detailed and evocative portrayal of the sinner’s path to *teshuvah*, redolent of Neoplatonic imagery. Unlike al-Ḥarīzī’s indirect declaration of his collection’s educational goals in “*Maḥberet ha-Fatiḥah*”, Ibn Gabirol

explicitly states the moral and educational purpose of his text from the outset. His prayer, Ibn Gabirol declares, “will be of use for the strong man, because through it he will learn uprightness and purity” (*bi-tefillati yiskan gever, ki vah yilmad yosher u-zekhut*) (255). Apart from this declared and seemingly elitist educational intent, Ibn Gabirol’s representation of the necessity of the “strong man” (*gever*) to praise God, acknowledge his sins, and wage war against the evil inclination in the company of worship, *teshuvah*, and the divine mercies, I argue, attests to al-Ḥarīzī’s and Ibn Gabirol’s divergent educational and literary goals.<sup>81</sup>

Unlike al-Ḥarīzī’s speakers’ initial reluctance to understand the necessity of recognizing transgressions before God and their consequent inability to accept responsibility for these trespasses, Ibn Gabirol’s poetic voice is confident and trustful in his address to God. As a consequence, Ibn Gabirol’s speaker immediately praises God’s greatness, His Unity, and His unwavering mercies. As this poetic voice sings the praises of God’s attributes, he expresses his worthlessness before the divine. Before God he is but “a mute stone” (*even dumah*), a “recipient full of shame” (*keli male khlimmah*) (279). After describing his worthlessness as he exalts God, the poetic voice relates the moment of his *vidduy*. He comes in front of the Lord with an indolent or “stubborn face” (*be-azzot panim*), “unclean thoughts” (*ve-tumat rayonim*), “an unclean heart” (*lev tame*), and a “stricken body full of a mob that grows and ceases not” (*guf naguf, male asafsuf, yosif ve-lo yasuf*) (280). In the following stanzas, the poetic voice delivers a comprehensive

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<sup>81</sup> While al-Ḥarīzī’s seriocomic educational stand might be associated with Hever ha-Keni’s declaration that he “composes mockery for fools” and “he lays down the fruit of prayer for the righteous” (*aḥaber la-sekhalim mahatalloṭ/ ve-e’erokh la-ḥasidim niv tefillot*) (128), Ibn Gabirol seems to have a very different kind of public in mind, namely, the morally strong men.

*vidduy* of his sins, which consists of an alphabetically organized list of transgressions reminiscent of Jewish liturgical practice.<sup>82</sup>

It is important to note that Ibn Gabirol pairs the remorse that a penitent sinner needs to show before God when acknowledging his sins with a firm sense of confidence, intimacy and trust in divine mercy. Unlike the soul in al-Ḥarīzī's second *bakkashah* and the poetic voice in Judah Halevi's "Adonai, negdekha kol ta'avati," the speaker in Ibn Gabirol's *Keter Malkhut* declares his guilt with no hesitation and in absolute confidence. But toward the end of the text a significant shift of focus takes place. Just like the soul in "Maḥberet Vikuah ha-Nefesh im ha-Guf," Ibn Gabirol's poetic voice alludes to his powerlessness in front of the evil inclination (*ha-yezer ha-ra'*). In an allegorical narrative, the speaker describes his battle against *ha-yezer ha-ra'* with worship and *teshuvah* (*avodati u-teshuvati*) as his companions in arms, along with the company of the divine mercies" (*maḥane raḥamekha*) (283). In the course of the battle, the evil inclination manages to send the speaker's worship and *teshuvah* fleeing; only the divine mercies remain by his side. With the divine mercies, the speaker confidently declares, he will prevail over his evil inclination. As a colophon to this prioritization of divine power and mercy, the poetic voice asks God to give him more time to atone for his evil deeds. In a bold final remark, he asks why he would have been "created and called forth to experience hardship" (*lammah nivreti, ve-lireot amal nikreti*) (284), if he was to return to God naked of good deeds.

In this sense, Ibn Gabirol's *Keter Malkhut* presents important analogies with the allegorical and thematic treatment of *teshuvah* in the *maḥberot* with which this chapter is

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<sup>82</sup> In fact, Ibn Gabirol's *vidduy* was eventually integrated into the liturgy of *yom kippur* in the Sephardic rite (Tanenbaum 59).

concerned, while maintaining significant differences. At one level, al-Ḥarīzī's dispute between the soul and the body echoes some of the expressions and imagery used in *Keter Malkhut*. Just like the speaker in Ibn Gabirol's text refers to himself before God, the body in al-Ḥarīzī's dispute claims that he was a "mute stone" (*even dumah*) before the soul descended into him (l.63; p.131). In an echo to the way the poetic voice of *Keter Malkhut* refers to his body as a mitigating factor in God's judgment, the soul in al-Ḥarīzī's dispute labels her corporeal companion as a "stricken body" (*ha-guf ha-naguf*) (l. 34; p.130). The closing sections of al-Ḥarīzī's dialogic *maḥberet* also appear to align with Ibn Gabirol's decisive prioritization of the divine mercies when the soul concludes her discourse by exclaiming that she "has found hope for God's mercies" (*yadati ki esh li tikvah be-raḥame ha-el*) (l. 253; p. 139).

Although, as Tanenbaum notes, the abundant commonalities between al-Ḥarīzī's dispute and Ibn Gabirol's *Keter Malkhut* bear witness to these authors' shared philosophical interests, al-Ḥarīzī does not fail to highlight the individual's path to understanding his or her responsibility to fully embrace human freedom and acknowledge transgressions before God in order to attain divine mercy.<sup>83</sup> In fact, if Ibn Gabirol's allegorical battle between Worship, *Teshuvah*, the Divine Mercies and *Ha-Yeẓer Ha-Ra'* appears to imply that the individual is powerless in front of his or her evil inclination without the assistance of the Divine Mercies, al-Ḥarīzī precisely dramatizes the importance of the individual's understanding of human free will and the concomitant recognition of sins on the path to *teshuvah* and divine mercy. Further, the Neoplatonic undertones of Ibn Gabirol's allusion to the Divine Mercies are definitely expanded in al-

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<sup>83</sup> It must be noted that Ibn Gabirol's prioritization of the Divine Mercies should be traced to his metaphysical inspiration.

Ḥarizi's *vikuaḥ* and *bakkashot* when the poetic voices are only able to address God and ask for divine mercy after recognizing their responsibility in sin. The fact that Ibn Gabirol's allegorical battle constitutes an uncompromising affirmation of the divine mercies' power to assist the individual in winning the fight against the evil inclination clearly departs from the comprehensive path to *teshuvah* and divine forgiveness undergone by the speakers in al-Ḥarizi's *maḥberot*. The initial reluctance of al-Ḥarizi's speakers to recognize their responsibility in sin and their gradual understanding of the necessity of this recognition, attests not only to al-Ḥarizi's departure from Ibn Gabirol's *Keter Malkhut*'s model, but also indicates the space provided for the participation and instruction of the audience in al-Ḥarizi's texts. Al-Ḥarizi provides the Neoplatonic framework of Ibn Gabirol's *vidduy* with a much wider context, a variety of voices, and a clear movement from initial misguidance to understanding, *teshuvah* and hope for divine forgiveness. This dynamism constitutes the mark of the *Taḥkemoni*'s educational principles, which, as Hever declares, "contain the ways to all wisdom" (*u-vi-kevavi le-khol hokhmah mesillot*), while providing "mockery for fools" and "the fruit of prayer for the righteous" (*aḥaber la-sekhalim mahatalloṭ/ ve-e'erokh la-ḥasidim niv tefilloṭ*) (128 n269).

This chapter has aimed to illuminate the confluence of literary, moral and educational goals in al-Harizi's *Maḥberet ha-Bakkashot* and *Maḥberet ha-Vikuaḥ ha-Nefesh im ha-Guf*. These two *maḥberot* point to al-Ḥarizi's interest in promoting a relatively complex discussion of serious religious matters in the Hebrew language among the Eastern Jewish communities. Particularly, I have demonstrated that these texts, although reminiscent of the imagery and poetic tropes of Neoplatonic texts like Ibn

Gabirol's *Keter Malkhut*, significantly depart from this philosophical framework by expanding on the path of the individual sinner to understanding, acknowledgment of transgression, and divine mercy.

## Chapter Six On the Path to Integrity: *Teshuvah* in *Meshal ha-Kadmoni*

In resonance with al-Ḥarīzī's use of dialogue in the *Tahkemoni*, every chapter of Ibn Sahula's *Meshal ha-Kadmoni* (circa 1381-1384) presents a lively discussion between two characters, the author (*ha-meḥaber*) and the challenger (*ha-maksheh*). While the challenger attempts to demonstrate that wisdom, good counsel, humility, and repentance only lead to a life of misery and humiliation, the author champions these pious qualities, and tells exemplary stories in favor of such principles. Even though both the author and the challenger are eloquent advocates of their respective viewpoints, by the end of every chapter the author emerges victorious in the rhetorical battle while the challenger is destroyed. From this particular perspective, *Meshal ha-Kadmoni* constitutes an unambiguous affirmation of wisdom, good counsel, humility, and repentance, as well as a celebration of the Jewish religious, ethical and cultural tradition.

For the purposes of this dissertation, I will concentrate on the second chapter of *Meshal ha-Kadmoni*, which highlights the place of *teshuvah* in Jewish life and culture. Let us start the discussion with a brief summary of this gate. The challenger (*ha-maksheh*) opens up the chapter by presenting arguments against the benefits of *teshuvah*; the story of the Ram (*ha-ayil*) and the He-goat (*ha-zafir*) is his first piece of evidence. As customary in this collection of tales, the He-goat mirrors the character of the challenger and narrates the story of a quasi-ascetic Muslim old man and his younger wife. The wife is tired of her husband's sexual neglect, and she thus identifies a young man to remedy her situation. After a savvy legalistic exposition based on Jewish rabbinic sources, she fulfills her desire. But, after a while, her young lover goes away from his father's home, incurs gambling debts, "a stone wall falls upon him" (*va-tippol 'alav gader ha-deḥuyah*)



(185). Now the pious man's wife and her young lover flee the scene not before they steal the old man's valuables. Upon realizing his ruin and shame, the old man warns his audience about the dangers of piety and naïveté. Repentance "came as my disease," he exclaims (*teshuvati haytah maḥalati*), (193); she (*teshuvah*) "enticed me and I was shattered" (*pitatni ha-teshuvah va-etpateh*) (193). Now the He-goat assures the Ram and his audience that he has narrated this story "to lead your soul to calmness and redemption" (*le-havy le-nafshekh maregoa u-fidyon*) (193). But the Ram disregards the He-goat's story. Inspired by the piety of the Ram, the shepherd of the animals sacrifices the Ram when his son falls suddenly ill. Despite the fact that the shepherd's son quickly recovers as a tangible sign of divine favor, the He-goat and the challenger understand that the case of the Ram validates their mundane point of view.

Unimpressed by the challenger's rhetorical display and his bleak view of piety, the author responds with an exemplary tale that demonstrates the primacy of a life conducted in accordance with Jewish commandments and values. In the author's fable, the Rooster (*ha-tarnegol*) and the Partridge (*ha-kore*) try to guide a violent and obdurate Hawk (*ha-nez*) on the path to compliance with the commandments and respect for the community of birds. The Rooster tries to convince the Hawk to change his way of life by telling him the story of the brigand Hever ha-Aḥoḥi. Hever grows up in a wealthy family, the Rooster recounts. Lacking any sort of discipline and disregarding the advice of his teachers and preceptors, he leads a life of debauchery. His behavior is so reckless that his father disinherits him. Hever now turns to brigandage. After fleecing numerous victims, he assaults a certain consecrated man (*nazir*) only to realize that his victim has no valuables. The old Nazarite promises Hever abundant riches if he spares his life, tells him

his story, and encourages him to join him in his house of learning. Hever agrees, becomes a great student of holy law, succeeds the old Nazarite as the leader of the community of scholars, and marries the Nazarite's daughter. This story, the Rooster concludes, shows the high status of penitents in the eyes of God. The stubborn Hawk, however, severely wounds the Rooster as soon as he finishes his story. The community of birds seeks the help of the Partridge, who also fails to make the Hawk mend his ways. As a last resource, the Rooster and the Partridge decide to open a case against the Hawk in the great Eagle's court. The Hawk is arrested, judged, found guilty, and executed. The gate closes in a celebratory spirit when the Partridge and the Rooster are named teachers of *teshuvah* in the Eagle's court.

Ibn Sahula's collection of fables has motivated several studies in Jewish literary and socio-political history. S.M. Stern in "Rationalists and Kabbalists in Medieval Allegory" points out the possible social and political implications of *Meshal ha-Kadmoni*. Stern claims that Ibn Sahula's collection of Hebrew fables should be seen in the light of controversies regarding the privileged position of thirteenth century Jewish aristocracy in Christian courts. Many fables and passages in *Meshal ha-Kadmoni*, Stern claims, "can only be understood ... as polemics against the class of Jewish courtiers who used their power to oppress the weaker members of the community" (77). Alexandra Cuffel further elaborates on Stern's socio-political reading of *Meshal ha-Kadmoni*. Cuffel argues that the concluding section of the second gate of *Meshal ha-Kadmoni*, which includes the story of the Hawk (*ha-nez*), the Rooster (*ha-tarnegol*), and the Partridge (*ha-kore'*) along with the story of Hever ha-Aḥoḥi's repentance, attests to *Meshal ha-Kadmoni*'s polemical aims (176). When the Hawk, possibly a representative of Jewish courtiers, violently

rejects the advice of the Rooster and the Partridge, continues to attack the community of birds, refuses to repent, and is finally judged and executed at the Eagle's court, Ibn Sahula's intended audience is shown the link between "violence and exploitation of all kinds" and an uncontrolled masculinity "which deprives the individual of his human status" (175). Similarly, Hartley Lachter in "Spreading Secrets: Kabbalah and Esotericism in Isaac ibn Sahula's *Meshal ha-Kadmoni*" contends that, like many Kabbalist of his time, Ibn Sahula aimed at inspiring "greater piety and observance among his coreligionists" (112). The characters of the Rooster and the Partridge in the second gate of *Meshal ha-Kadmoni*, in particular, embody Ibn Sahula's intended audience, that is, educated Jews who through their knowledge of philosophy and science "have come to doubt divine providence and thus question the purpose of fulfilling the mandates of Jewish law" (123). The Eagle in this fable, in Lachter's view, should be associated with Ibn Sahula's goal to show his readers that "science does not undermine the meaning of Jewish religious practice," since only the Jewish esoteric tradition teaches the real relationship between God and the perceptible world (123).

In the following analysis, this chapter further evaluates *Meshal ha-Kadmoni*'s educational and polemical aims. I depart from the socio-political reading of Ibn Sahula's work initiated by S.M. Stern, and interpret *Meshal ha-Kadmoni* as an effort to create a Jewish linguistic, literary and ethical model in juxtaposition to al-Ḥarīzī's *Taḥkemoni* and in stark contrast to the prestigious precedent of the Arabic *maqāma*. In particular, I argue that the second gate of *Meshal ha-Kadmoni* constitutes an invitation to a productive engagement with the thirteenth century Jewish community while encouraging reform across all the spectrum of thirteenth century Jewish society. I claim that Ibn Sahula's

contrasting representations of *teshuvah* point to a celebration of an integral righteous life. The ideal of moral integrity at the center of Ibn Sahula's moral and educational goals not only refers to an exacting compliance with the Jewish commandments as a sign of *teshuvah*, but also denotes that the study of Jewish sources and the continued commitment to the Jewish community and family constitute the seal of *teshuvah*. For the purposes of this chapter, I will focus on the tale of the Muslim man of Ashdod and the repentance narrative of Hever ha-Aḥoḥi along with references to the story that caps the collection, that is, the tale of the Hawk, the Rooster, and the Partridge.

These tales, I argue, provide a relatively complex series of contrasts in support of Ibn Sahula's ethical and educational principles through negative (the tale of the Muslim man of Ashdod and the story of the Hawk) as well as positive examples (the story of Hever ha-Aḥoḥi and the characters of the Rooster, and the Partridge). I demonstrate that these narratives highlight the importance of an idea of piety centered in the community, while denouncing violent and antisocial behavior and indicating the inadequacy of world renunciation as a spiritual model. While the story of the Muslim man of Ashdod constitutes a concise condemnation of a misguided approach to *teshuvah* in isolation from community and family life, the Hawk's execution in the last story of the collection provides a straightforward critique of stubborn rejection of good counsel, ethical guidance, and, consequently, *teshuvah*. In sharp contrast to these negative examples, Hever ha-Aḥoḥi's story of repentance embodies Ibn Sahula's consistent association between *teshuvah*, religious study, family life and an active role in the community, while departing from al-Ḥarīzī's precedent and his reliance on Arabic literary models. The fact that the second gate of *Meshal ha-Kadmoni* culminates in the presentation of the Rooster

and the Partridge as leaders and teachers of *teshuvah* in the Eagle's court confirms Ibn Sahula's commitment to promoting a life anchored in Jewish piety and participation in the community across all social strata of the thirteenth century Jewish community.

### I. Repenting Repentance or in Search of Integrity Lost

Toda buena costumre  
ha çertera medida,  
que si la pasa omre,  
Su bondat es perdida  
(Santob 65).<sup>84</sup>

In contrast to the Arabic *maqāmāt*'s call for a knowledgeable audience who might decipher the inconsistencies in the rhetorical displays in the text and avoid the naïveté of the intradiegetic audience, *Meshal ha-Kadmoni* is anchored in a series of contrasting examples highlighting the didactic and polemical intent of the collection. As opposed to al-Ḥarīzī's multi-generic format and general reliance on the structure and plots of the Arabic *maqāma*, Ibn Sahula consistently employs the dialogic form while addressing themes and matters inherent in the Jewish tradition. The arguments advanced by the two main characters of the collection, the author and the challenger, are echoed by the other characters in the text. Indeed, the collection's educational aims rely on the tension created by the competing arguments and stories in the text. The contrasts thus created offer a nuanced educational text, which explores the meaning of piety and *teshuvah* in relation to the active involvement with the community. The tale of the Muslim pious man eloquently attests to Ibn Sahula's views on the relationship between *teshuvah*, piety and community involvement.

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<sup>84</sup> Translation: "Good behavior has a certain measure. If this measure is exceeded, its goodness is lost."

Ibn Sahula's tale of the old Muslim man of Ashdod, his wife, and her lover poses important questions regarding the understanding of *teshuvah* and piety in Jewish medieval thought, in general, and in *Meshal ha-Kadmoni*, in particular. In contrast to the ambiguity that characterizes repentance stories in the Arabic *maqāmāt* examined above and the moral relativity ultimately affirmed in Hever ha-Keni's references to *teshuvah* in the *Taḥkemoni*, this tale of repentance presents a rare case of sincere piety gone awry. The Muslim man of Ashdod in Ibn Sahula's fable is described as a model of piety and righteousness. He is honest or innocent in character (*tamim be-middotav*).<sup>85</sup> Just like Noah, he is "righteous in his generations" (*zadik hayah be-dorotav*) (167).<sup>86</sup> He is reputed as "the master of *teshuvah*" (*ha-ish ba'al teshuvah*) (191). An Ishmaelite (Muslim), he is the first to arrive in the mosque for the morning prayer; he is also the last to leave at night. While he is approaching old age (*zaqen ba ba-anoshim*), his wife is "beautiful like the full moon" (*yafah kha-lebanah*) (169). "He pays no attention to the splendor of her beauty" (*ve-lo nistakel be-hod yafyah*), though, entirely devoted as he is to piety (169). "His mere countenance testifies to (his purity in all matters)," his wife tells her soon-to-be paramour and partner in crime, "and (indicates) that he pays no attention

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<sup>85</sup> Even though I have consulted Raphael Lowe's laudable rhymed translation, throughout this chapter I provide my own prose translation of the text.

<sup>86</sup> The above portrait of the old man of Ashdod resonates with discussions on the meaning and implications of righteousness in Jewish scripture and post-biblical sources. For instance, the descriptions of the old man as "honest" (*tamim*) and as "righteous in his generations" (*zadik hayyah be-dorotav*) allude to passages concerning Noah in the book of Genesis 6:9 and 7:1, respectively. The fact that Ibn Sahula decides to associate the character of the righteous Muslim man with Noah's antediluvian reputation seems to engage with the post-biblical debates regarding the meaning of the phrase "righteous in his generations" in Genesis 7:1. On the one hand, a number of stories in the *aggadot* aim to explain the biblical allusion to Noah's alleged righteousness by adducing his exhortations to repentance among his contemporaries and his care in rescuing and nurturing the animal species in the ark as definite marks of his righteousness. Rabbi Jonahan and Philo, on the other hand, interpret this description as implying that Noah was righteous only with respect to his wicked generation (Young 288). But by implicitly referring to this question, Ibn Sahula, I would contend, is not questioning the Muslim man's righteousness, but he is rather denouncing his excessive devotion and his consequent neglect of family and communal responsibilities.

to the majesty of my beauty” (*lo nistakel be-hod yafiy*) (173). Upon discovering his wife’s infidelity and the theft of his property, the man of Ashdod regrets his unwavering commitment to *teshuvah*, laments the neglect of his wife, and exhorts penitents to “turn away from the path of *teshuvah*” (*suru mi-derekh ha-teshuvah*) (193).

Although the moral of this story should be taken *cum grano salis*, as it is included among the Challenger’s arguments against *teshuvah*, the careful narrative development and structure of this tale reveal underlying literary, educational, and polemical aspects. From a literary perspective, the story of the Muslim man of Ashdod attests to Ibn Sahula’s effort to distance his writing from Arabic literary models as well as from the adoption and adaptation of these models by Jewish medieval writers like Judah b. Solomon al-Ḥarīzī. This endeavor toward literary and cultural autonomy, in fact, is explicitly addressed in Ibn Sahula’s preface to *Meshal ha-Kadmoni*. The collection, Ibn Sahula declares, strives to attract an educated Jewish audience “toward the essence” (*el ha-‘ikkar*) and turn it away from “the books of Homer, sectarians, and Epicureans” (*sifre hamiros minim va-afikoros*) (l. 17). In accordance with this effort at cultural reform, Ibn Sahula claims that *Meshal ha-Kadmoni* relies not on literary works foreign to the Jewish tradition, namely the literatures of “Edom (Christianity), Ishmael (Islam), Moab or the Hagarenes” (l. 50-51). I believe that Ibn Sahula’s declaration of literary independence sheds light on *Meshal ha-Kadmoni*’s particular treatment of *teshuvah* as well as elucidates the series of contrasts and tensions upon which the diverse repentance narratives in the collection are built. A closer examination of the story of the Muslim man, his wife and her lover should provide an adequate starting point for the discussion

of the confluence of literary, polemical and educational aspects in *Meshal ha-Kadmoni*'s repentance narratives and its general treatment of *teshuvah*.

In contrast to al-Ḥarīrī's and al-Saraqustī's tongue-in-cheek references to ascetic and mystical discourse in the repentance narratives that cap their collections of *maqāmāt*, Ibn Sahula's tale of the Muslim man of Ashdod is meant to unambiguously denounce world-renunciation as a source of social isolation and, concomitantly, as an inadequate approach to *teshuvah*. The critical tenor of this story becomes all the more noticeable when taking into account the juxtaposition of the old husband's apparent devotion to *teshuvah* and his neglect of married and communal life. Ibn Sahula's views regarding *teshuvah*, I would argue, should not be dissociated from his literary and educational goals, which in this particular story revolve around the significance of sexuality and religious observance. Even though the collection generally condemns the "sexual and social misconduct" of Ibn Sahula's Muslim, Christian and some Jewish contemporaries as an intellectually degrading behavior (Cuffel 167), the story of the Muslim man of Ashdod in particular aims to highlight the significant connections between sexuality and piety in the Jewish tradition and scriptures. The contraposition between family life and excess in the way of religious observance throughout the tale not only testifies to *Meshal ha-Kadmoni*'s polemical dimension in identifying Islam with religious inflexibility, but also reveals Ibn Sahula's educational purpose to promote an ideal of Jewish piety anchored in family and communal life among his thirteenth century Jewish audience. *Teshuvah*, as will be seen, serves as the leading principle behind this ethical, educational and cultural design.



It is important to note, however, that the story of the Muslim man of Ashdod does not constitute a straightforward polemic against Islam nor could it be reduced to “the wiles of woman motif” in medieval Hebrew literature, to borrow Norman Roth’s phrasing (146). In analogy to the verses of Shem Tov ben Isaac Arduziel quoted in the epigraph of this chapter, Ibn Sahula’s narrative instructs his intended audience to avoid any kind of excess even in the case of positive values and traits such as righteousness (*zedaka*), wisdom (*hokhmah*), and *teshuvah*. As a negative example in support of the desirability of measured behavior, the husband’s excessive piety and ostensible devotion to *teshuvah* is the primary source of conflict in the story.

Because of his daily commitments to prayer and religious study, his wife declares to her would-be lover, the old Muslim husband has failed to consummate his marriage or to “pay (his wife’s) debt” (*le-shallem et-nisheyi*) (173). “He,” his wife continues in an effort to convince her young lover of her unencumbered accessibility, “is the leading member in a house of religious study” (*ve-hu ha-gadol mi-bne metivta*) (173). He leaves their meeting place “much later than any other member” (*ve-sha’ah aḥarehem mi-te’aḥer*), and returns “the next morning at dawn before any of them does” (*u-vaboker li-fenehem shoḥer*) (173). His prayers and supplications “exceed those of his companions” (*yoter me-ḥaverav*) (173). In sum, he truly is *ba’al teshuvah* (173). The wife concludes her seductive entreaties by quoting the words of Yael the wife of Hever ha-Keni in Judges 4:18. “Come in, my Lord,” she exclaims, “come to me and do not be afraid” (*surah adoni surah elai al-tira*) (173). Her lover should come to her every morning, she adds, since her husband gets up early to “perform his foreign observances” (*la ‘asot*

*maasehu zar*) and complete “the strange practices of his worship” (*ma‘asehu nokhriyah ‘avodato*) (175).

Apart from the evident polemical descriptions of the Muslim husband’s “foreign worship” and the possible evocation of the extreme forms of asceticism that frame the repentance stories in the Arabic *maqāmāt* discussed above, this introductory section resonates with views regarding marriage and religious observance in the *Tanakh* as well as intersects with the educational aims of Jewish ethical literature (*sifrut ha-musar*) (Cuffel 181). Although the parallels between Ibn Sahula’s collection, Jewish scripture, and Jewish moralizing treatises might be generally associated with this medieval Jewish writer’s interest in “inspiring greater piety and observance among his coreligionists” (Lachter 112), the quotations of the biblical text and the echoes of contemporary ethical literature in this particular story serve multiple literary, educational and polemical aims. From the perspective of inter-religious polemics and educational interests, the text’s evocations of the *Tanakh* draw a distinction between a sacred vision of sexuality, family and communal life, which the text identifies with the Jewish *Weltanschauung*, and an excessive and isolationist view of religious observance partly associated with Islam throughout the tale. As far as literary interests are concerned, the story’s cluster of biblical citations greatly contributes to the endeavor toward literary autonomy called for in the prologue of the collection by highlighting the hermeneutical significance of Jewish scripture and Rabbinic intellectual heritage for Hebrew literary production. The characterization of the old Muslim husband and the younger Jewish wife especially illuminates the literary and polemical goals outlined above.

The story's links to medieval misogynistic literature notwithstanding, the wife of Ashdod is portrayed as a knowledgeable individual who cogently demonstrates that she is but a victim of a breach of the marital contract.<sup>87</sup> This legal framework provides an initial insight into the thinly-veiled polemical aspects of the narrative. While the Muslim or Ishmaelite religious identity of the husband is specified from the outset, the text does not refer to the wife of Ashdod's religion explicitly. Several elements of her characterization, though, suggest that she is of Jewish extraction. As mentioned, she refers to her husband's religious observances as "foreign works of his worship" (*ma'asehu nokhriyah 'avodato*) (175), thus distancing herself from her husband's religion and ethnicity. She also refers to "(Jewish) wise men of past generations" (*ḥakhme ha-dorot*) when she adduces laws concerning vows in Jewish rabbinical sources in order to show that her marriage is invalid because it remains unconsummated (171). A vow that remains unfulfilled, she adds in reference to her husband's neglect of consummation, is a serious transgression of this "necessary divine commandment" (*mizvah zerikha*) (171). From this perspective alone, the wife of Ashdod has a solid case against her husband. She not only spends her days alone and unattended, but she also shares the blame in a marital union that contravenes divine commandments concerning marriage. Even though the validity of

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<sup>87</sup> The fact that the wife of Ashdod is metonymically associated with the biblical character of Yael in this context is highly suggestive. In the book of Judges Yael's husband, Ḥever ha-Keni, while abiding far from his people makes a peace alliance with Jabin, the leader of the Canaanites who have been oppressing Israel. After the prophetess Deborah and Barakh lead a victorious campaign against king Yabin, Sisera, the commander of the Canaanite army, flees into Ḥever's tent. Yael receives him, gives him milk to drink, and once he falls asleep kills him by stabbing him with the nails of the tent. The initial implication of this evocation seems to indicate that, just as Yael did to Sisera in the biblical story, the wife of Ashdod deceives and entices her lover into sure perdition. Effectively, after the young man is lost in debt and disinheritance, the narrative voice in the story claims that "a stone wall falls upon him" (*va-tippol 'alav gader ha-deḥuyah*) (185). It must be noted, however, that the Biblical narrative celebrates Yael as the deliverer of Israel from the Canaanite siege. Further, she is blessed among women (*teborakh minashim*), as the Prophetess Deborah's song states it in Judges 5:24-27. The biblical allusions in this story therefore suggest an open-ended symbolic arrangement; Ibn Sahula's audience is ultimately responsible for evaluating the conduct of the husband and wife of Ashdod in the story and learn from the lessons in the story rather than simply condemning any of the characters involved.

her arguments is questionable given her transgressive intention, her pleas for marital rights are consonant with discussions regarding married life and the ideal of righteousness that *teshuvah* embodies in Jewish medieval ethical treatises. For instance, Jonah Gerondi (d. 1263) in his *Sha'are Teshuvah* includes the necessity to “break away from physical passions” (*shevirat ha-ta'avah ha-gashmit*) among his principles of *teshuvah* (*ikkare ha-teshuvah*) (8). This proposition, however, encourages control in the way of corporeal appetites, rather than strict abstemiousness. Accordingly, Jonah Gerondi advises the righteous man to “approach his wife only to fulfill the mitzvah of being fruitful and multiply or to fulfill the mitzvah of marriage rights” (*ve-al yiggash el ishah, raq lekayyem mizvat periyyah u-rebiyyah o le-mizvat onah*) (20). *Teshuvah*, in Jonah Gerondi's treatise and in Jewish medieval thought in general, describes thus an integral and measured way of life in which the holy obedience to divine law permeates all human activity. In this sense, the wife of Ashdod advances arguments firmly rooted in Jewish sources, and validates a measured view of piety as she accuses her husband of overstepping the just boundaries commanded by Jewish scriptures as well as advised by Jewish ethical literature. The Muslim husband's initial failure to “fulfill the necessary mitzvah” (*mizvah zerkha*) of marital rights detracts him from the path to *teshuvah*, as Jonah Gerondi's counsels in measured behavior might suggest. This moral implication is further confirmed by the imagery used in the descriptions of the Muslim husband's final compliance with the necessary mitzvah of marital relations (*onah*).

After the wife of Ashdod spends the day with her lover, she welcomes her husband to a well-provided dinner table and asks him to tell her a story. The old Muslim husband now expatiates on the ideal wife's comportment. He claims that a wife should

only be committed to virtue and to her husband's contentment. He adds that "the light of his [her husband's] face should illuminate her" and she should "exult in his joy" (u-ve or panav me'irah u-ve-simḥato allizah) (177). In sum, she should "bless him all day long" (ve-kol-ha-yyom tebarekhenenu) (179). Upon listening to her husband's description of an ideal wife, the wife replies "you have, indeed, done well when you mentioned me in your praise" (zadakta ba-mmahalol tizekreni) (181). After this ironic exchange, they go to bed and delight "in everything their souls desired" (va-yite'anegu ke-kol-ta'avat nafsham) (181). As soon as the husband wakes up, he goes to the house of prayer "to acknowledge," he tells his wife, "the good that we share and the light that illuminates us, because this day is holy for our Lord" (ve-latet hoda'ah al tov ḥelkenu ve-or naghenu, ki kodosh ha-yom la-donenu) (181). While the wife's affair continues, she and her husband "rejoice in their festival and solemn feast" (va-yismehū be-ḥaggam u-ve-mo'adam), since "this God-given statute and time has been allotted to all humankind, the time of marital relations" (zeh kol-ha-adam ḥoq u-zeman natan lahem shelo yeshannu et-tafkidam) (185).

The above fragments denote the festive context in which the married life of the couple of Ashdod is framed once the husband dedicates the divinely allotted right and time (ḥoq u-zeman) to his wife. Although the general content of the story does not exclude irony as it belongs among the arguments advanced by the Challenger and the He-goat against *teshuvah*, the concluding descriptions in this particular section attest to the holy significance of married life and dramatize the old Muslim husband's final compliance with divine ordinances regarding marriage. In a sense, as will be seen in the case of the repentance story of Hever ha-Aḥoḥi examined below, Ibn Sahula is here implying that the Muslim husband was hitherto involved not only in a serious

misunderstanding of piety and *teshuvah* but he was also transgressing these very principles. The final lament of the old Muslim husband when realizing his wife's infidelity and his utter ruin, in fact, confirms this implication.

Instead of engaging in a misogynistic diatribe, the husband regretfully exclaims that he has "defiled his piety in transgression" (*ba-avon zidki nitmeti*) (191-193), because he paid no attention to his wife. Not unlike the implications of Jonah Gerondi's descriptions of the *mizvot* concerning marriage, Ibn Sahula is here suggesting that the husband's initial neglect of these *mizvot* not only "defiles" his piety but also takes him away from *teshuvah*. The Ram's reply to the He-goat's story is instructive in this regard. Although he refers to the deceitful nature of women in passing, he soon ascribes the Muslim man's misfortunes to his own transgressions. He who is good before God, the Ram declares, escapes the snares of adultery, while the sinner is caught in them (195).<sup>88</sup> The old Muslim man's neglect of the marital contract, Ibn Sahula implies, contravenes revealed law, leads him away from *teshuvah*, and contributes to his final isolation and despair.

The old Muslim man's misguided conception of piety is also presented as the cause of his failure to embrace the communal dimensions of worship and *teshuvah*, which lie at the center of Ibn Sahula's moral and educational goals. In fact, the old Muslim husband's view of piety excludes any participation in community and family affairs. Because of his excessive piety, he neglects his wife, arrives to the mosque at dawn before anyone else, leaves the house of prayer after all his companions have left, and outperforms them in prayers and praises (*mitpallel u-mithannen yoter me-haverav*)

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<sup>88</sup> This line is a direct quotation of *Kohelet* 7:26.

(173).<sup>89</sup> But this seemingly blameless and praiseworthy routine, Ibn Sahula implies, reveals the old Muslim man's disregard for the communal dimension of religious observance; his devotions begin and end in solitude. His social and familial isolation challenges his reputation as a man observant of religious law and as a *ba'al teshuvah*. By separating himself from his spiritual community, he is incurring one of the five conditions that, according to Maimonides, obstruct the path to *teshuvah*. In his comprehensive discussion of laws concerning *teshuvah* (*Hilkhot Teshuvah*) in *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides states that "he who retires from the people will not be with them when they do *teshuvah* and will have no part in their reward" (*ha-foresh min ha-zibur lefi shebizman sheyya'asu teshuvah, lo yihyeh immahen ve-'enu zokheh immahen*) (Touger 97). In the wake of Maimonides and Jonah Gerondi, Ibn Sahula presents *teshuvah* as an integral part of the compliance with Jewish commandments and the recognition of the holiness of family and community life.<sup>90</sup> As opposed to al-Ḥarīzī's collection's focus on discursive and geographical wandering, Ibn Sahula aims to set his exemplary tales within firm moral, geographical and symbolic boundaries. This distinction not only provides a lesson on the importance of family and communal life for Ibn Sahula's thirteenth century Jewish audience, but also testifies to Ibn Sahula's decisive departure from Arabic models and the imitation of these models by al-Ḥarīzī. The story of Ḥever ha-Aḥoḥi with which the following section of this chapter is concerned further confirms Ibn Sahula's call for

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<sup>89</sup> The phrase "yoter me-ḥaverav" (173) is reminiscent of Kohelet's (2:15 and 7:17) reflection concerning the vanity (*havel*) of excessive wisdom (*hokmah*) and righteousness (*zedaka*).

<sup>90</sup> It must be noted that the divergent views regarding marriage and piety in this story might be associated with the differences between the treatment of gender and sexuality in Jewish ascetic texts and the treatment of this topic by their Muslim and Christian counterparts in the Middle Ages. Although the writings of Jewish medieval authors shared the same gender discourse as their Christian and Muslim peers, Jewish medieval texts did not fail to value marriage and the commandment to procreate and be fruitful as a "sanctioned cornerstones of the Jewish way of life and thought" (Rosen 158). Rosen's description illuminates Ibn Sahula's representation of an inter-religious marriage as a locus of conflict regarding two different conceptions of piety and sexuality.

literary autonomy and his affirmation of the inseparable connection between *teshuvah*, religious study and a commitment to family and community life.

## II. The Integral Penitent: The Repentance of Ḥever ha-Aḥoḥi

The repentance story of Ḥever ha-Aḥoḥi critically revisits al-Ḥarīzī's characterization of Ḥever ha-Keni in the *Taḥkemoni* as well as reevaluates the scriptural references included in this collection of Hebrew Andalusī *maqāmāt*. As mentioned, the repentance story of Ḥever ha-Aḥoḥi radically departs from the moral duplicity in Ḥever ha-Keni's cursory allusions to *teshuvah* in “*Maḥberet ha-Bakkashot*” and “*Maḥberet Vikuah ha-Nefesh im ha-Guf*.” While for al-Ḥarīzī's rogue *teshuvah* is just another component of his “scattered bits of rhetoric and teaching” (Decter 129), Ibn Sahula's brigand repents in earnest and becomes the embodiment of the “the man complete in his power, who returns to the Lord with all his heart, all his soul, and all his strength” (*ha-ish ha-shalem be-hodo, asher shav el adonai be-khol libbo nafsho u-me'odo*) (207). Instead of the associations of Ḥever ha-Keni's name and character with rhetoric and complicit friendship, Ḥever ha-Aḥoḥi will be called the Friend (he-Ḥever) as a testimony to his *teshuvah*, in the words of the Nazarite who instructs him and guides him to *teshuvah* (233). In addition, the biblical allusions in these medieval Hebrew texts bear testimony to al-Ḥarīzī's and Ibn Sahula's divergent literary and educational interests. If the name Ḥever ha-Keni refers to the biblical character who in the Book of Judges pitches his tent away from his people and even makes a peace agreement with King Jabin of Canaan, the enemy of Israel at the time, Ḥever ha-Aḥoḥi's patronymic designation alludes to one of the three mighty men (*sheloshah ha-giborim*) who in 1 Chronicles 11:12 stood with king David in the battle against the Philistines after the rest of the people of Israel fled before



the enemy. This shift in the implications of the biblical allusions concerning Hever bears witness to Ibn Sahula's meaningful engagement with al-Ḥarīzī's precedent. In his recasting of al-Ḥarīzī's character, Ibn Sahula seems to pose a challenge to al-Ḥarīzī's dependence on Arabic sources; al-Ḥarīzī, Ibn Sahula suggests, is separating himself from his people and even making an alliance with an inimical foreign power when relying on Arabic models. In contrast to the character of Hever ha-Keni in the Bible and the Taḥkemoni, Hever ha-Aḥoḥi represents a strong man who fights for the Hebrew camp even when all his fellow warriors have fled, just like his Biblical antecedent and, one might add, just as Ibn Sahula conceived of himself and his literary project.

Ibn Sahula's critical revision of al-Ḥarīzī's model also extends to his decisive departure from the treatment of *teshuvah* in the *Taḥkemoni*, as well as from the repentance stories in the Arabic *maqāmāt* examined in the previous part of this project. In sharp contrast to the irony and ambiguity that characterize the rogue's final acknowledgement of sins in the Arabic *maqāmāt* examined above as well as the allegorical treatment of *teshuvah* in the *Taḥkemoni*, Hever ha-Aḥoḥi truly and sincerely regrets his past misdeeds and makes an unambiguous acknowledgment (*vidduy*) of his transgressions before God and in the presence of the Nazarite, his soon to be father-in-law and spiritual mentor. But Ibn Sahula's critical revision of al-Ḥarīzī's treatment of *teshuvah* is not limited to a mere change of tone and content; Hever's repentance story also expands on the challenges and misunderstandings that the individual may confront when doing *teshuvah*. In this sense, the obstacles faced by Hever in his initial intention to do *teshuvah* clearly attest to the story's educational intent.

Despite the fact that the acknowledgment of sins before God is identified as an essential component of *teshuvah* in the Jewish tradition in general and in medieval Jewish sources in particular, Ibn Sahula's representation of Hever's *vidduy* warns his thirteenth century Jewish audience against a misguided and unbalanced approach to this initial step. Hever's necessary recognition comes in the midst of despair and hopelessness; he declares that he is simply unable to find a way to atone for his many transgressions. He even asks the Nazarite whether he needs to offer sacrifices for atonement, and the Nazarite reminds him that after the destruction of the Temple the words of the Torah atone for sins (im bezebah u-minehah en lo kafarah mitkafer bedivre torah) (233). Immediately after Hever's bouts of despair and hopelessness, he has a revelatory experience. Just like Abū Zayd claims to have experienced in his address to the people of Baṣra in al-Ḥarīrī's *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya*, Hever hears an otherworldly voice directly addressing him. Unlike al-Ḥarīrī, Ibn Sahula includes the words of "the subtle murmuring voice" (*kol demamah*) in a moving narrative fragment. The subtle murmuring voice comes into Hever's "very flesh" (*ve-hineh kol demamah baah le-vasro*), and exclaims "return rebellious sons, since I do not want the death of the wicked, downcast and ashamed" (*shuvu vanim shovavim, harḥokim ve-hakerovim, ki lo aḥfoz bemot ha-ra'sha nehfar ve-nikhlam*) (216). The juxtaposition of Hever's initial despair and the comforting message delivered by the "the voice of silence" embodies the particular understanding of the intersection between *teshuvah*, human free will, and divine mercy in the Jewish tradition. As seen in the discussion of Judah Halevi's "*Adonai, negdekha kol ta'avati*" in the introductory chapter of this part, full understanding of humankind's free will as well as trust in divine assistance and mercy pave the way for a final commitment to *teshuvah*.

Just as the poetic voice in Halevi's poem, Ḥever needs to implore for divine assistance and be confident that God will teach him the way to *teshuvah* after he acknowledges his responsibility for transgression.

Ibn Sahula's text, however, stands apart from Halevi's poetic exploration as well as from the representation of *teshuvah* in the *Taḥkemoni* because of its clear educational purpose. The doubts and confusion of an individual sinner in search for guidance to understand and embrace *teshuvah* are here foregrounded. The despair and hopelessness that permeate Ḥever's initial *vidduy* constitute an *exemplum ex contrario* regarding the spiritual tenor of this necessary recognition. His past life of thievery and brigandage notwithstanding, it is Ḥever's lack of trust in divine mercy what at this moment draws him away from *teshuvah* and divine forgiveness. Unlike the soul in al-Ḥarīzī's dispute, Ḥever does not attempt to deny responsibility for his trespasses, but rather expresses his profound regret over these transgressions and fully acknowledges his guilt. But his excessive self-deprecation and his eventual fall into despair, Ibn Sahula implies, lead him into a moral blind alley and derail him from the path of *teshuvah*. The intervention of the divine voice of silence is meant to clarify this implication. The voice of silence calls for a return, for a confident commitment to *teshuvah* and righteousness, and for unwavering trust in divine mercy and forgiveness. Not unlike the Muslim man of Ashdod, at this moment Ḥever is on the verge of incurring excess in the way of regret as well as falling victim to a misguided understanding of *teshuvah*. Only by listening to the word of silence and finally understanding the intimate connection between the acknowledgment of human responsibility for transgression and divine mercy, is Ḥever able to really embark on the path of *teshuvah*.

Yet the repentance story of Hever ha-Ahoi not only provides a comprehensive portrayal of the principles of *teshuvah*, but also describes the movement from Hever's initial disconnection from family and communal life to a definite commitment to religious study, family life, and communal leadership. With the help of the wealthy Nazarite, he restitutes all the valuables that he had stolen as a rapacious bandit, thus reconciling with the neighboring communities that he had previously wronged. Inspired by the Nazarite's house of learning, he commits to the study of Jewish scriptures and Rabbinic sources, and he masters the study of these Jewish sources in such a way that the Nazarite chooses him as the leader of his house of study. He-Hever's reputation spreads, his estranged father learns of his radical change and reconciles with him while giving him and the Nazarite lavish gifts. The Nazarite, impressed by he-Hever's scholarly accomplishments, marries him to his daughter, after expatiating on the advantages of having a scholar as a son-in-law. Toward the end of the story, a delegation of a nearby town comes to the Nazarite's house of study, and begs him to be their leader and teacher. The Nazarite, though, claims that he is too old to assume this responsibility, and advises the delegation to consider his son-in-law for the post. He-Hever initially refuses to assume this responsibility, but he eventually accepts after the Nazarite reminds him that "it is a mitzvah and an obligation upon you to lead(the community) into the good and superior path" (ve-alekha ha-mizvah ve-ha-ḥovah le-haderikhem be-derekh tov ve-naaleh) (245). He-Hever becomes a commander to his people in compliance with the Torah; he exalts "the law of *teshuvah*" (va-yorem et-mishpat ha-teshuvah) (247). He also raises his sons in accordance to these principles; thus, they are "entirely devoted to Torah

(study) and to righteous acts” (va-ihī lo banim ve-talmudim oskim ba-rorah u-vi-gemilot ḥasidim) (247).

As the above description demonstrates, the didactic and moral intent of Ḥever ha-Aḥoḥi’s repentance story centers on an idea of *teshuvah* as the overarching principle of an integral Jewish life. Unlike the Muslim husband of Ashdod, Ḥever ha-Keni and the other roguish characters in this dissertation, Ḥever ha-Aḥoḥi commits to a holistic approach to religious observance in conjunction with religious study, family life, and communal leadership as inextricable elements of his *teshuvah*. By the end of Ḥever’s story, a circular narrative structure is completed by confirming the words that the Rooster directs to the obdurate Hawk in the story in which Ḥever’s repentance tale is framed. Ḥever represents “the man complete in his power, who returns to the Lord with all his heart, all his soul, and all his ability” (*ha-ish ha-shalem behodo, asher shav el adonai be-khol libbo nafsho u-me’odo*) (207), and thus finds divine favor, becomes *ba’al teshuvah*, and makes a righteous commitment to communal and family life.

The story of the Hawk, the Partridge and the Rooster, which frames Ḥever’s repentance story and culminates the second gate of the collection, further confirms Ibn Sahula’s educational interests in promoting an idea of *teshuvah* as a return to compliance with Jewish commandments, and, particularly, as a reintegration in and an active involvement with communal and family life. The final appointment of the Rooster and the Partridge as leaders of the community of birds and teachers of *teshuvah* in the Great Eagle’s court, after they unsuccessfully try to convince the Hawk to respect the community of birds and mend his ways, points to contrasting polemical and educational goals. On the one hand, as Cuffel and Stern have argued, the character of the obdurate

Hawk who refuses to mend his ways under the allegation that he is fated to be a man of strife (*ish madon*) might be associated with “polemics against the class of Jewish courtiers who used their power to oppress the weaker members of the community” (Stern 77). The Hawk, in fact, takes pride in his majesty (*hod*) and in his high position (*ma’alah*) (291) and he uses his position to justify his disregard of the well being of the community of birds and the Rooster’s and the Partridge’s good counsel. On the other hand, the final appointment of the Partridge and the Rooster as the Great Eagle’s court teachers of *teshuvah* seems to imply that Ibn Sahula is not as much interested in straightforward polemics against Jewish courtiers as he is in calling for moral reform across all sectors of the thirteenth century Jewish society. Ibn Sahula’s call for comprehensive moral reform might be associated with the “ideal of communal leadership by men of scholarship and piety” espoused by the opponents of the aristocratic party in the controversies brought before the court of James I of Aragon (d. 1276) in the second quarter of the thirteenth century (Septimus 205). In fact, the trial of the obdurate Hawk in the Eagle’s court and the eventual appointment of the righteous Rooster and Partridge as leaders of the community and teachers of *teshuvah*, resonate with the (pyrrhic) victory of Naḥmanides and his anti-aristocratic party in the Catalanian court. Just like Naḥmanides and his supporters in the court of James I of Aragon, Ibn Sahula’s teachers of *teshuvah* embody the intersection of courtly, political and religious leadership.

This chapter has illuminated the confluence of literary, educational and polemical goals in the diverse narrative and thematic approaches to *teshuvah* throughout the second gate of *Meshal ha-Kadmoni*. I have demonstrated that Ibn Sahula aims to critically examine al-Ḥarīzī’s perfunctory approach to *teshuvah* in the *Taḥkemoni* and its

connections to the roguish repentance narratives in the Arabic *maqāmāt* discussed above. Accordingly, *Meshal ha-Kadmoni* not only provides the story of repentance that the *Tahkemoni* lacks, but also performs a significant discursive change. While the repentant rogues in the Arabic *maqāma* collections flee into seclusion and al-Ḥarīzī's Ḥever ha-Keni ultimately affirms a roguish relativity of morals, Ibn Sahula's rogue commits to study, leadership, marriage and family life upon abandoning his former life of banditry.

Even though one should not overlook the critical and polemical aspects included in Ibn Sahula's collection of stories, Ḥever's repentance narrative is not anchored in denunciation as much as in a hopeful illustration of the capacity of the individual to understand, find the way to *teshuvah*, and return to and become an important member of the community. Although the details of Ḥever's repentance story are clearly meant to provide a comprehensive spiritual guide in analogy to contemporary moralistic literature, Ibn Sahula does not confine himself to a portrayal of the elements intrinsic to *teshuvah*, but rather expands on the motif of the repentant rogue and points to an understanding of *teshuvah* as a pathway to an encompassing vision of Jewish spiritual, familial and communal life. The second gate of Ibn Sahula's *Meshal ha-Kadmoni*, this chapter has shown, promotes an integral idea of *teshuvah*; regretting sins, acknowledging transgressions before God, and finding a way to the trust in divine mercy are only the initial steps on the path to *teshuvah* in Ibn Sahula's educational and ethical vision. This particular chapter of *Meshal ha-Kadmoni* therefore calls for a return to communal and family life as the definite mark of *teshuvah*. Here it must be noted that Ibn Sahula's promotion of the ideal of *teshuvah* and his prioritization of an active engagement with the community seem to deemphasize the polemical intent initially proposed by Stern. Indeed,

the conclusion of this gate ratifies its general educational and moral goals. The Eagle, the Rooster and the Partridge become symbols of a just and pious court in service of the community. By emphasizing the individual's freedom to act in the benefit of or in detriment to the community rather than highlighting the abuses of a particular social group, I argued, Ibn Sahula aims to present an encompassing call for moral reform. This medieval Hebrew writer's didacticism resides in the exhortation for unity and understanding among the members of his thirteenth century community; *teshuvah* serves as the unifying principle of this educational, moral, and social ideal.



## **PART THREE: *PENITENCIA***

### **Chapter Seven: *Penitencia***

This chapter consists of a general introduction to the understanding of penance in the Christian tradition. The first sections introduce the views on penance and conversion in early Christian sources by analyzing the diverse conversion narratives in *Acts of the Apostle* and, in particular, the influential model provided by Saul of Tarsus/Paul the apostle's story of conversion. In addition, this section discusses the contribution of Saint Augustine, bishop of Hippo, to the development of penitential thought throughout the Middle Ages in his narrative and rhetorical engagement with the Pauline model of conversion in *Confessiones*. Next, this chapter discusses the crucial role of the Lateran Council IV in the development of the main penitential tenets of the Catholic Church, especially regarding the canonical implications and requirements of the sacrament. In this context, I analyze Gonzalo de Berceo's representation of penance in *Los milagros de nuestra señora* in order to illustrate the impact of the Lateran decisions concerning penance and, particularly, confession on thirteenth century Castilian literary production. Berceo's consistent affirmation of the necessity of contrition of heart, priestly absolution, and works of penance is contrasted with Saint Teresa of Jesus active and exigent engagement with the penitential practice of her time in the wake of the Tridentine decisions regarding penance and the implications of the sacrament in Counter-Reformation Spain. This chapter concludes by discussing the repercussions of the theological controversy *de auxiliis* regarding the precise relationship between human free will and divine grace in Tirso de Molina's *El condenado por desconfiado*.

I. From Acts to Confessions: Conversion and Repentance in *Acts of the Apostles* and  
Saint Augustine's *Confessiones*

1. The Conversion Narrative of Cornelius

In *Acts of the Apostles*, chapter ten, Peter finds himself in Jaffa, where he suddenly experiences a vision.<sup>91</sup> Peter sees the heavens burst open. A giant canvas descends upon the earth; all animals, both clean and unclean, appear on this cloth. Peter hears a voice that enjoins him to kill and eat one of the animals, but he refuses to eat impure meat. The voice repeats the command, and tells Peter that he should not call impure what God calls clean. After his vision, Peter meets a group of men who are looking for him. Peter is ordered to follow the men, and so Peter meets Cornelius, a centurion who was told by an angel to find Peter. Now Peter helps Cornelius and his entourage to convert to Christianity, and fully grasps the meaning of his vision. He should not limit his preaching to the chosen people; he must also welcome the gentiles to the Christian community once they convert. Yet as soon as Peter returns to Jerusalem, he is reproached by his companions for his preaching to the impure gentiles. Peter tells his vision to his critics; they rejoice at God's granting "repentance to life" (*ten metanoian eis zoen; paenitentiam ad vitam*) even to the gentiles.<sup>92</sup>

The above fragment exemplifies some of the most salient ideas of conversion in early Christian sources, which lie at the core of the subsequent development of Christian penitential doctrines and practices. As Ryan Szpiech notes in *Conversion and Narrative: Reading and Religious Authority in Medieval Polemic*, the numerous conversion narratives in *Acts* provided the foundation upon which Christian narratives of conversion

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<sup>91</sup> Henceforth, Acts.

<sup>92</sup> I will refer to the Greek New Testament and to the Latin Vulgate Bible throughout this section.

would be based in the Middle Ages (31). Particularly, the notion of conversion as a “textual drama of transformation” emerges as a common thread across conversion stories in medieval Christian sources and the Biblical narratives from which they derive (Szpiech 30). These tales of transformation, Szpiech argues, not only attest to a radical change of life, but also depend on a narrative framework that presents as well as legitimizes such a testimony. Thus, when Peter faces criticism because of his proselytizing among the gentiles, he tells his companions about his vision. This narrative validates Peter’s actions, as well as confirms God’s approval of and mandate for the conversion of the gentiles. Moreover, the divine message itself is revealed as a visual narrative, which Peter needs to decode in accordance with new parameters. Peter, in fact, initially fails to understand the meaning of his vision. Only by listening to Cornelius’ story does Peter grasp the intrinsic meaning of the visual narrative that he witnessed. If Peter’s leadership and proselytizing efforts have been previously limited to his Jewish community, now he would need to preach to all humankind. The “textual drama of transformation,” to borrow Szpiech’s apt phrasing, is here redirected toward the idea of conversion itself. Individual transformation and the theological history of Christianity meet in parallel narratives. Cornelius’ story and conversion illuminate Peter’s vision; Peter’s vision leads to the principle of universalization that allows for Cornelius’ call.

## 2. The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus/Paul the Apostle

The above narratives of conversion and universalization, however, lack the impact that the various versions of the conversion story of Saul of Tarsus/Paul the apostle in *Acts* would have upon the medieval understanding of conversion and, one might add, repentance (Szpiech 40). Saul’s “textual drama of transformation” provides a clearly

defined narrative and rhetorical model for all later conversion stories, while also pointing to issues with which medieval Christian thinkers would need to cope. Particularly, questions regarding the place and authority of the Jewish scriptures with respect to the legitimacy of the emerging Christian tradition, ideas about the inscrutable power of grace, and views on self and otherness surface in Saul/Paul's conversion narratives in *Acts*, and set the basis for theological and narrative approaches to conversion throughout the Christian Middle Ages.

Before his conversion, Saul is portrayed as a staunch opponent of Christianity; he is even represented as approving of the stoning of Saint Stephen (*Acts* 8:1). Further, *Acts* frame Saul's call in the context of his efforts to capture and imprison Christians. On his way to Damascus, a divine light blinds Saul as he hears Jesus' voice admonishing him to stop persecuting Him. Here blindness and insight merge to signify Saul's radical transformation, and point to ideas of Christian supersession through which he would now see the Jewish tradition. Paul the apostle, as he is called after his conversion, now uses his knowledge of Hebrew scriptures to engage in debates with Jewish communities across the Mediterranean. His former life as an opponent of Christianity is meant to attest to his dramatic break with his past; his reinterpretation of Jewish sacred texts in a Christian key indicates his dual identity as a convert as well as his attempt to validate his proselytizing efforts on the basis of Jewish scriptures themselves.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Here I am echoing Szpiech's discussion of the use and adaptation of the Pauline paradigm of conversion by twelfth century convert writers like Moses/Petrus Alfonsi and Judah/Herman. Szpiech argues that the dual identity of these converts gains a greater theological and rhetorical significance throughout this period. By "being both authentically other and fully familiar" these writers' conversion stories aim to "dramatize on an individual level the historical dynamic of abrogation in which one religion both obviates another religion and ... carries that defeated other within itself as the foundation of its meaningfulness and truth" (90).

The conversion narrative of Saul of Tarsus thus establishes the foundation for a variety of Christian writings, ranging from religious polemics and cross-denominational conversion narratives to accounts of the sudden transformation and repentance of notorious sinners after they face the divine call. Yet the representation of Paul in *Acts* is essentially concerned with the collective preoccupations of the incipient Christian community rather than with the obstacles and difficulties that individual Christians face as they attempt to conduct their lives in accordance with the ideals of their faith. Paul's call is centered on the conversion to (a new) life (*metanoian eis zoen; paenitentiam ad vitam*) embodied in Peter's vision and Cornelius' conversion in *Acts*; the sacramental and individual aspects of penance are not yet among the preoccupations and controversies of the early Christian community to which Saul/Paul belonged. The intersections between repentance and conversion will only be taken into account by later Christian thinkers. In this respect, Saint Augustine's famous conversion narrative in *Confessiones* should help in gaining a better understanding of the movement from the Pauline focus on conversion to an emerging sense of the intrinsic connection between interdenominational conversion and repentance in Christian medieval sources.

### 3. Saint Augustine's Conversion Story

If the idea of conversion that is discernible in *Acts* concerns the collective mission of Christianity, Saint Augustine's story of conversion in *Confessiones* enacts the individual Christian's struggles on the path to a firmer commitment to a Christian life. The contrast between the communal understanding of conversion in *Acts* and the emphasis on the individual penitent in *Confessiones* might be associated with developments in penitential doctrine and practice over the course of the fourth and fifth

centuries, such as the burgeoning emphasis on preaching on penance and the institution of Lent as “a celebration of penance in prayer, fasting, and almsgiving” (Fitzgerald 800). In the context of this dissertation, however, special attention should be given to the theological, rhetorical and narrative aspects at the center of Augustine’s contribution to the history of penance. Indeed, the bishop of Hippo’s celebrated *Confessiones* provides “a template for all conversion, both of the individual and of the Church itself” (Szpiech 55). To Szpiech’s apt description, one might add that Augustine’s contribution is not strictly confined to the understanding of individual and institutional conversion, but it is also associated with an expanding definition of conversion in its relationship with regret and penance. The complex psychology of regret evidenced by Augustine’s drama of transformation concerns only Augustine’s individual conversion and redemption; repentance and conversion coalesce in Augustine’s individual story. A close examination of Augustine’s conversion in *Confessiones* might help illustrating this particular aspect of the history of penance.

In book eight, Augustine finally accepts the main doctrinal tenets of Christianity. He addresses God and declares “I was certain of Your eternal life” (de vita tua aeterna certus eram) (8.1.1). His previous doubts as to the existence of “an incorruptible substance from which all substances derive,” he claims, “have been removed” from him (dubitatio tamen omnis de incorruptibili substantia, quod ab illa esset omnis substantia, ablata mihi erat); accordingly, he wants to “be firmer in God,” rather than “more certain” of Him (nec certior de te, sed stabilior in te esse cupiebam) (8.1.1). His certainty in faith notwithstanding, everything in Augustine’s “worldly life kept wavering” (de mea vero temporali vita nutabant omnia) (8.1.1). Even though the longing for the beauty of God’s

house overcame his desire for money and fame, Augustine is “still tenaciously attached to women” (*sed adhuc tenaciter alligabar ex femina*) (8.1.2). After he visits Simplicianus, a pious Christian, and hears several stories of conversion, Augustine is all the more “motivated (inflamed) to imitate” the examples that he hears (*exarsi ad imitandum*) (8.5.10). In anguish and despair, he goes to the garden that he used to frequent accompanied by his friend Alypius. Augustine’s anguish just increases as he tries to find strength within himself to no avail. He loosens “the reins of tears”; “rivers burst forth” from his eyes as “an adequate sacrifice” to God (*et dimisi habenas lacrimis, et proruperunt flumina oculorum meorum, acceptabile sacrificium tuum*) (8.12.28). But the allegorical figure of Contenance appears to him and admonishes him to abandon despair. Now she shows him her children, a group of young men and young women along with pious people of all ages, as she laughs at Augustine “with encouraging mirth” (*inrisione hortatoria*) (8.11.27). “Do you think these young men and women,” she asks him, “find strength within themselves and not in the Lord, their God?” (*an vero isti et istae in se ipsis possunt ac non in domino deo suo?*). Shortly after, Augustine hears the voice of a child chanting a song that he has never heard before. “Take up and read,” “take up and read” (“*tolle lege,*” “*tolle lege*”), the voice says, and Augustine immediately interprets these words as a divine command to read the scriptures. Not unlike the case of al-Fuḍayl b. ‘Iyāḍ, who repents after hearing a Qur’anic verse that seems to reproach him for his life of thievery and brigandage, as has been seen above, Augustine is able to fully commit to the strictures of a Christian life after he reads a passage from the Pauline epistle to the Romans. “Clothe yourselves not in banquets and drunkenness, not in sexual indecency and vices, not in rivalry and envy,” the passage reads, “but in the Lord Jesus Christ, so

that you stop paying attention to the urges of the flesh” (non in comessationibus, et ebrietatibus, non in cubilibus, et impudicitiiis, non in contentione, et æmulatione: sed induamini Dominum Jesum Christum, et carnis curam ne feceritis in desideriis) (13:13-14). Augustine’s friend follows his example, and converts; together they visit Augustine’s mother, a Christian herself, and celebrate their conversion. Augustine closes his story by thanking God for His favor. “You converted me to You,” exclaims Augustine in his final words in the chapter, “so that I look neither for a wife nor for any hope of this world, while standing (firm) in this rule of faith ... ” (convertisti enim me ad te, ut nec uxorem quaererem nec aliquam spem saeculi huius, stans in ea regula fidei) (8.12.30).

Augustine’s conversion narrative not only provides an influential reappraisal of the Pauline paradigm of conversion, but also illustrates some aspects of the early church’s penitential practice and doctrine while establishing the groundwork for the medieval theological understanding of penance. Whereas Augustine’s thoughtful array of motifs and images shows his narrative and rhetorical acumen, his story of conversion points to “the beginnings of a shift from a predominantly baptismal spirituality toward a penitential spirituality” in the fourth and fifth century Church (Fitzgerald 788). The change to which Fitzgerald refers is linked to the early Church’s conception of penance as a second baptism. Early Christian thinkers claimed that, while baptism canceled out original sin, penance was a one time opportunity for the remission of actual sins. Thus, penitents were expected to renounce sin and the world for the rest of their lives after doing penance (Larson 73-4). Augustine’s personal struggle, his difficulties to adopt the spiritual ideals of Christianity, and his anguish and despair at falling short of these ideals are partly explained by the relative severity of the penitential practice of his times; Augustine



needed a radical change for the lifetime commitment to penance that he was expected to honor. Augustine's vision of the allegorical figure of Continnence particularly attests to this specific understanding of penance.

When Continnence appears to Augustine and shows him her children while "laughing at him with an encouraging smile" (*et inridebat me inrisione hortatoria*), she also tells him that he should not despair in his weakness and instead follow the example of her children, who find strength not in themselves but in God. Continnence's words of encouragement resonate with Augustine's conception of his tears as an acceptable sacrifice, and prelude the sudden revelatory experience that he witnesses. His desire to imitate the pious examples of the past is fulfilled when he obeys the command that he perceives in the child's song, by reading the scriptures and realizing that he has been granted the divine assistance promised by the allegorical figure of Continnence. Not coincidentally, the passage that Augustine finds when he opens his book comes from Paul's epistle to the Romans. Paul's call for continnence in the epistle to the Romans matches Augustine's shortcomings and aspirations as well as confirms the advice that the allegorical figure of Continnence has previously given him. Augustine believes that God has graciously conceded him the assistance that he needs to go beyond anguish and tears and meet God's grace on the middle of the path to conversion. The final words that Augustine addresses to God confirm that he has finally embraced the definite commitment to a Christian life for which the penitential practice of the Church of his time asked. In an echo of his expressed desire to be firmer in faith, now Augustine celebrates that he unwaveringly complies with the rule of his faith after so many failed attempts. Augustine's elaborate and evocative narrative is meant to illustrate the triumph

of contrite individuals over despair in the same moment when they recognize that only the divine assistance leads them to an integral Christian life.

The above sections have aimed to demonstrate that the paradigms of conversion found in *Acts* and Saint Augustine's conversion narrative in *Confessiones* describe the movement from an idea of conversion concerned with the entire Christian community to a notion of conversion centered on the individual Christian. By presenting a first-person narrative fraught with the anguish generated by the sense of falling short of the ideals of the Christian faith as well as including a plethora of visionary, allegorical and scriptural elements, Augustine expands the Pauline model of conversion and provides a detailed depiction of an individual's efforts to commit himself to penance while recognizing the role of divine grace in the success of his or her efforts. Apart from elaborating and ratifying preceding narrative models, Augustine's tale of individual struggles and conversion precludes the increasing importance of contrition of heart in the subsequent conceptualization of the sacrament of penance. Perseverance on the path to conversion, the recognition of one's sinfulness, and a contrite heart are crucial for the rhetorical effectiveness and the theological core of Augustine's account, as well as for the elaborate views on sacramental penance that emerged throughout the late Middle Ages. Although at Augustine's times the official penitential system "suffered from severe limitations" (Price 30), the later development of Christian theology on penance and confession would owe much to this bishop's succinct portrayal of the individual Christian's path to penance and conversion. The development of an elaborate penitential system, the theology of penance, and the canonical ramifications of sacramental penance would be the task of

subsequent generations of Christian thinkers. Medieval efforts to define the theological and sacramental contours of penance will be the focus of the next section of this chapter.

## II. “Vinién con buena contrición”: Literature, Penance, and Councils

### 1. Gonzalo de Berceo’s *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* or a New Era of Penance

“La iglesia de la gloriosa profanada” (The Glorious (Virgin’s) Church Profaned), miracle seventeen in Gonzalo de Berceo’s *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*<sup>94</sup> (circa 1260), should be of assistance in presenting the profound changes in the sacramental and theological understanding of penance that took place over the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In this story three knights or noblemen (*tres cavalleros*) stalk one of their enemies and chase him into a church consecrated to the Virgin Mary. Without respect to the holiness of the place, the three men kill their enemy inside the church. The Virgin Mary is “deeply offended” (*tóvose la Gloriosa mucho por afrontada*) (137) by their violation of her sacred space, and thus God immediately punishes them by making their body “burn without flames” (*non ardié e quemava*) (137). The assassins look for help from one place to another; day and night they pray for the saints’ intercession. But, despite the murderers’ “constant prayers” (*peroravan cutiano*), “the saints were unwilling to help them” (*los sanctos ni las sanctas no lis querién valer*) (139). As a last resort, the noblemen decide to return to the Virgin and pray to her. They throw themselves in front of her altar, and shed many tears. “Mother,” they say, “we deeply regret the error that we committed; we sinned gravely, we committed a great folly, we received a great punishment yet we deserved an even greater one, we have paid the price for what we owed” (*Madre, repisos somos del yerro que fiziemos; erramos duramente, grand locura*

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<sup>94</sup> Henceforth, *Milagros*.

trasquemos, prisiemos grand quebranto, mayor lo merecemos, pechado lo avemos el escot que comemos) (139). Mary immediately takes pity on them. Their pain ceases, but their maimed limbs show the scars of divine punishment. Upon being freed from their pain, they quickly go to a bishop, show heartfelt regret for their offense, and confess. The Bishop hears their confession, since he sees that “they were truly contrite” (entendió que vinién con buena contrición) (140), and gives them absolution and works of penance. Their work of satisfaction consists of traveling from town to town, while carrying the weapons that they used to kill their foe in the church; they should show their weapons and their burned limbs so that all sinners see and learn from their negative example.

Berceo’s story attests to the crucial changes regarding the theological and sacramental understanding of penance that occurred during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.<sup>95</sup> If like Saint Augustine’s conversion story Berceo’s “La iglesia de la gloriosa profanada” highlights contrition of heart (*contritio cordis*) as necessary for divine forgiveness, the latter author does not fail to link contrition of heart to the contrite sinner’s willingness to confess his sins to a priest or prelate. More important, Berceo is confident in affirming the power of the keys, or the power bestowed upon an ordained priest or high Church official to absolve sins and impose works of penance. In “La iglesia de la gloriosa profanada,” even though the three noblemen in the story realize that Mary has interceded for them and that God has taken pity on them when their pain ceases, they still go to a bishop to confess their sins, look for absolution, and seek guidance in

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<sup>95</sup> It is important to note that the Latin sources of Berceo’s collection date back to the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. The fact that they include a similar emphasis on confession and the power of the keys suggests that there was a consistent confessional and sacramental practice of penance before the necessity of annual auricular confession was ratified by the Lateran Council IV of 1215. Nonetheless, the importance of the Church reform and the clarity and specificity of the Lateran decree regarding annual confession should not be deemphasized.

satisfaction. The bishop himself only absolves the three assassins after he confirms that they are truly contrite, and makes them be an example for all believers. Despite the fact that they are described as noble or distinguished men (*cavalleros*; Latin: *inclites*), the bishop orders them to go from town to town showing their wounds while begging for sustenance. Their work of penance is thus not only exemplary, but also self-deprecatory and, as such, consistent with the contrition to which they want to bear witness. “La iglesia de la gloriosa profanada” is then a comprehensive affirmation of the intersection between contrition of heart, confession, and the power of priests to absolve sins and assign works of satisfaction in the sacrament of penance.

Berceo’s clear and consistent correlation between contrition of heart, verbal confession, and the power of the priest to bind or to loose sins in the sacrament of penance is also evidenced by several other stories in *Milagros*. For instance, in “El sacristán fornicario” (The Fornicating Sexton) Berceo narrates the story of a sacristan who dies in sin, is favored by the Virgin, revived, and given the chance to confess and do penance (*confessóse el monge e fizo penitenzia*) (88). Similarly, “El monje embriagado” (The Drunken Monk) tells the story of a certain monk who one day drinks too much wine, and on his way back to church the devil tries to attack him in the form of a bull, a dog, and a lion; the virgin Mary always rescues him. After the monk sees such a procession of wild beasts, he realizes that after he drank his life has turned to the worst (*ca vidié por verdat un fiero encontrado, peor li era esto que todo lo passado*), and so he profoundly regretted or “condemned his sin” (*entre su voluntat maldizié al Pecado*) (151-152). By the end of the story, Mary commands the monk to go to a servant of hers the next morning and confess; Mary’s servant hears the monk’s confession, absolves him,

and provides him with good guidance. To conclude this brief review of the penitential elements contained in *Milagros*, I would like to refer to the last story of Berceo's Marian collection, "De cómo Teófilo fizo carta con el diablo de su ánima et después fue convertido e salvo." In Berceo's adaptation of this famous Faustian tale, Teófilo, a vicar, suddenly loses his prestige and position when the bishop whom he serves dies. Although he is offered the bishopric, Teófilo refuses to accept it. A new bishop is chosen; the new bishop appoints a new vicar. Teófilo envies the honor bestowed upon this new official, and sells his soul to the devil to recover his former prestige. But he eventually regrets his decision, and prays to the Virgin Mary for her intercession. The Virgin responds, hears Teófilo profession of faith, and even recovers the letter in which Teófilo confirms that he agrees to sell his soul. As soon as Mary gives him the letter, Teófilo confesses his seemingly unforgivable sin to the bishop in front of the community. After the bishop absolves him, the congregation rejoices when seeing the divine light that covers Teófilo as a veritable sign of divine forgiveness. The poetic voice now addresses his audience. "My friends," the narrator says, "if you want to save your souls, if you want to follow my advice, make true confession and do not delay, receive penance, and take care in doing penance" (Amigos, si quisiédes vuestras almas salvar,/ si vos el mi consejo quisiédes tomar, /fech confesión vera non querades tardar, /e prendet penitencia, pensátla de guardar) (218).

The above references are only a representative sample of Berceo's consistent connection between contrition of heart, confession and priestly absolution throughout his Marian collection. Despite the fact that for an audience knowledgeable of current Catholic practice and theology the correlation between contrition of heart, confession and

satisfaction may seem unsurprising, in Berceo's times the definitive relationship between these aspects of the sacrament of penance had just been ratified. Berceo's work, in this particular sense, is "the product of a new era in which confession suddenly acquired relevance for the laity" (Ardemagni 134).

The expanding meaning of confession that *Milagros* evinces should be traced back to the Lateran Council IV of 1215, which in its famous Canon twenty-one, *omnis utriusque sexus fidelis*, established the requirement of a yearly confession to one's parish priest. Although private confession appears to have been in practice before the Lateran Council IV, canon twenty-one constituted "the first universally binding rule governing frequency for both confession and the Eucharist" (McLaughlin 20). In the context of this dissertation, it is also important to note that the eleventh canon of this council, *quia nonnullis propter inopiam*, lays special stress on the importance of the education of the clergy and laity alike, and reinstated the neglected mandate of the Lateran Council III of 1179 to have a teacher in every cathedral who might "provide free instruction to the clergy of this church and to other poor students" (*per unamquamque cathedralem ecclesiam magistro, qui clericos eiusdem ecclesiae aliosque scholares pauperes gratis instrueret*). In this respect, Berceo's frequent apostrophes to the audience, his exhortations to penance, and his exemplary tales regarding the sacrament of penance's efficacy suggest that this Castilian poet actively participates in the efforts to promote and educate his audience about the increased stature of verbal confession and priestly absolution following the Lateran decrees. Like Saint Augustine's conversion narrative, Berceo's tales of conversion embody individual Christians' struggles to comply with the ideals of their faith. Unlike Saint Augustine, Berceo constantly reminds his audience that

contrition of heart is only the first step toward satisfaction; confession to one's priest or a higher Church official along with this Church minister's imposition of works of penance and absolution are the sole path to grace and forgiveness in the eyes of Berceo and the fathers of the Lateran Council IV. In this particular sense, Berceo's *Milagros* is a testimony to the expanding relevance of penance and confession in the wake of the Lateran Council IV, as well as an eloquent contribution to the educational efforts called for by this thirteenth century council.

As the above discussion has suggested, the importance of the Lateran Council IV for the history of the sacrament of penance would be difficult to overstate. On the one hand, this council draws a clear connection between the diverse components of the sacrament of penance, that is, contrition of heart (*contritio cordis*), verbal confession (*confessio oris*), and the priest's power to absolve sins, which lie at the basis of the modern understanding of the Catholic sacrament. On the other hand, this sacramental relationship also set the grounds for controversies leading to the Council of Trent's definite affirmation of and elaboration on the Lateran decrees in direct opposition to the Protestant Reformation.<sup>96</sup> But, if the Lateran council gave a clear answer to previously open-ended questions regarding the necessity of verbal confession and the sufficiency of contrition of heart for the remission of sins, only the Tridentine Council of 1545-1563 fully delved into the theological depths that the Lateran decision implied. This section

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<sup>96</sup> The twelfth century work of canon law *Decretum Gratiani* or *Concordia discordantium canonum* is of assistance in gaining an idea of the state of the question in the period immediately before the Lateran Council IV. The first distinction of Gratian's *Tractatus de Poenitentia* addresses the question as to "whether by the sole contrition of the heart it is possible to secretly satisfy to God, or whether by oral confession is (satisfaction to God possible)" (*Utrum sola cordis contritione, et secreta satisfactione, absque oris confessione quisque possit Deo satisfacere*) (*De Poen. C.33 D. 1*). To this fundamental question, Gratian supplies an extensive number of authoritative opinions in support of various possible answers. Gratian, nevertheless, is careful to note that he only intends to present the authorities on which the arguments in support of the positions on the priority of confession and satisfaction rest, and thus which of these two positions is to be maintained is reserved for the reader's judgment.



now discusses the social and spiritual dynamics that emerge in the wake of the Tridentine Council by analyzing the significance of penance and confession in Saint Teresa's *Libro de la vida* as well as the theological debates that inform Tirso de Molina's *comedia El condenado por desconfiado* with which the last section of this chapter is concerned.

## 2. Trent, Confession, and Saint Teresa

The ratification of the decisions of the Lateran Council IV of 1215 at the Ecumenical Council of Trent of 1545-1563 established and clarified the main elements of the Catholic doctrines of penance. By condemning the idea that the sacrament of penance is not necessary for the remission of sins, Trent reinstated the Lateran decisions regarding auricular confession, emphasized the importance of priestly absolution, and affirmed the sacramental status of penance, while clearly distinguishing between the Catholic understanding of satisfaction and forgiveness and the views on penance held by Protestant Reformers. The Ecumenical Council of Trent thus proposed a dialectical view of Christendom, in which penance took center stage in denominational self-definition, the spiritual examination of the faithful, and the education of the body politic. Even though the Tridentine focus mainly lay in theological considerations and the condemnation of Protestant doctrine, the sacrament of penance gained in relevance precisely through the Tridentine fathers' interest in defining the significance and contours of Catholic penitential theology and practice (Dedieu 10). In this context, Saint Teresa of Ávila's *Libro de la vida* (circa 1565) should adequately illustrate the views and practices associated to the Tridentine teachings on sacramental penance.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Henceforth, *LV*.

### 3. Libro de la vida

Saint Teresa's *LV* provides an intimate glimpse into the understanding and practice of penance in Castile during the period immediately after the Tridentine Council. In the prologue to her book, Saint Teresa assures her readers that in writing the account of her life she is only obeying her confessors' wishes as well as complying with the Divine Will. "...with all my heart I implore (Him) to afford me (His) grace," Teresa exclaims before she begins her account, "so that in all clarity and truth I may give this account that my confessors ask me [to give] (and [that] even the Lord, I know, has wanted me to give for some time, but I have found no courage [to do it])" (con todo mi corazón suplico me dé gracia para que con toda claridad y verdad yo haga esta relación que mis confesores me mandan (y aun el Señor sé yo lo quiere muchos días ha, sino que yo no me he atrevido)" (117-118). Despite Saint Teresa's reference to the spiritual guidance of her confessors as well as to her alleged compliance with their orders, in the course of the book it becomes clear that the relationship between Saint Teresa and her confessors was a checkered one. *LV*'s abundant references to confession and confessors attest to Teresa's interest in playing an active role in the sacrament of penance, and her close attention to the ministry and advice of her confessors. Her remarks regarding her confessors' learning, knowledge of sacramental practice and doctrine, and their attitude regarding her mystical experiences further confirm her active and even critical involvement in penitential practice. As Patrick O'Banion notes in *The Sacrament of Penance and Religious Life in Golden Age Spain*, "[w]hile some of [Teresa's] confessors, such as Francisco Borgia and Jerónimo Gracián, provided much-needed support and encouragement, she found others insufficiently learned, unable to live up to the moral

standards outlined in prescriptive literature, and incapable of comprehending her visionary experiences or method of prayer” (117). In this context, it must also be noted that Saint Teresa’s assertion as to her mere compliance with her confessors’ orders when writing her *LV* must be taken *cum grano salis*. “[B]ooks of such density of thought,” Francisco Márquez Villanueva points out, “are not commissioned nor are they improvised” (“La vocación literaria” 361).

Saint Teresa’s representation of confession and confessors and her use of penitential imagery function as a structuring principle in the *LV*. Saint Teresa’s opinions regarding the importance of finding learned and understanding confessors throughout her book should be associated with the Tridentine interest in educating the clergy so that they could adequately fulfill their pastoral mission with respect to an increasingly educated body of believers and the high standards set by the Tridentine council. Saint Teresa’s case shows that the sacrament of penance in Post-Tridentine Castile provided a framework to examine the faith and beliefs of confessants, as well as a venue to evaluate the pastoral duties of the ministers of the Church. Accordingly, individuals with a special devotion to the sacrament “could overcome the limitations of gender, low social status, even a problematic pedigree,” and “command the sort of respect typically granted only to those with great worldly power” (O’Banion 117). After Trent, confession became a space of negotiation.

As mentioned, Saint Teresa strives to associate her writing of *LV* with the authority of her confessors, and confession itself plays a major role in the narrative of her spiritual life. She does not fail to describe the assistance, or lack thereof, with which her confessors provide her and associates their helpfulness with their level of education. She

is particularly eloquent in describing the way in which one of her confessors almost led her astray in her youth, because of his ignorance and unlearned ways. In her early years, Teresa recounts, she became very sick and weak, and so she was taken to her sister's house. As she recovered, she met a clergyman of "great (moral) character and discernment" (una persona de la iglesia...de harto buena calidad y entendimiento) (129). Yet, just like the clergy to whom Juan Ruiz addresses his *chica liçión* on penance examined in the next chapter of this dissertation, Saint Teresa's confessor "was learned, but not much" (tenía letras, aunque no muchas) (119); she began to confess to him, because she had always had a liking for learning. But "half-learned confessors," she now admits, "have done great harm" to her soul (gran daño hicieron a mi alma confesores medio letrados) (119). She adds that in her experience it is better to have no learning at all rather than to have some education and avoid consulting truly learned and authoritative people regarding difficult questions. "A truly learned man has never deceived me" ( ... buen letrado nunca me engañó), she claims (119). She trusted this confessor at the time, only to realize that "he told her that venial sins were not a sin at all," while "the gravest mortal sins were (in his eyes) venial" (Lo que era pecado venial decíanme que no era ninguno; lo que era gravísimo mortal, que era venial) (119). She believed in the teachings of these half-learned confessors for some time while making many of her fellow nuns fall into the same deception, until "a greatly learned Dominican priest dispelled certain misconceptions that [she] had" and members of the Company of Jesus made her "fear greatly while rebuking her for her ill-advised principles" (hasta que un Padre dominico, gran letrado, me desengañó en cosas, y los de la Compañía de Jesús del todo me hicieron tanto temer, agraviándome tan malos principios) (119).<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> This "greatly learned Dominican priest" was Domingo Báñez, the leading figure of the Dominican camp

Saint Teresa's detailed description of her variegated experiences with her confessors as well as her remarks regarding the quality of their ministry attest to the profound impact of the Tridentine decisions on all aspects of Spanish religious life and letters. Although Saint Teresa claims that in pursuing her literary endeavors she is merely obeying her confessors, her critical insights concerning the ministry of these confessors connote her active involvement in the sacrament and her interest in engaging with penitential thought and practice as an integral part of her literary endeavor. Early modern Spanish Literature, as Saint Teresa's works demonstrate, creatively and actively engages with the spiritual and doctrinal concerns of the period; penance, one might argue, resides at the forefront of this confluence of literary and religious concerns in early modern Castile. The following section will explore the repercussions of Post-Tridentine theological reflections on penance, human liberty and divine grace in seventeenth century Spanish drama.

### III. The Theological Challenge: Between Human Freedom and Divine Grace in Tirso de Molina's *El condenado por desconfiado*<sup>99</sup>

#### 1. Trent's Silence

The Council of Trent (1545-1563) established the basis of Catholic views of penance in a direct response to the challenges posed by Protestant Reformers. For the purposes of this dissertation, Trent's pronouncements regarding the relationship between human free will, divine grace, and predestination are of particular relevance. To Luther's rejection of the role of works in salvation, encapsulated in his prioritization of faith in his

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in the controversy *de auxiliis* discussed below. Báñez testified in Saint Teresa's beatification process, even though he expressed his skepticism toward her visionary experiences (Volz). The fact that Saint Teresa contrasts the guidance of confessors from the two orders involved in the dispute *de auxiliis* seems to point to different attitudes toward her mystical experiences, which, in turn, might be associated with the different understanding of divine grace and human freedom spoused by these orders in said controversy.

<sup>99</sup> Henceforth, *El condenado*.

well-known adage “sin boldly, but believe even bolder” (*pecca fortiter, sed crede fortius*), Trent responded by affirming the existence of human freedom, the concomitant value of good works, and the truth of predestination only with respect to God’s foreknowledge of mankind’s cooperation with divine grace. Yet Trent’s decision left the door open to questions regarding the precise relationship between divine grace and human freedom. Specifically, Trent did not decide “how efficient grace operated to safeguard human liberty” (Sullivan 30).<sup>100</sup>

Trent’s open-ended response to questions regarding the precise relationship between efficient grace and human freedom eventually led to a heated and even virulent controversy between the Dominican order and the Company of Jesus in Spain. The decades-long debate between the Dominicans, led by Domingo Báñez, and the Jesuits, spearheaded by Luis de Molina, concerned the understanding of human freedom and its relationship with divine omnipotence and omniscience.<sup>101</sup> In analogy to the different views on similar matters espoused by the *Mu’atazilite* and *Ash’arite* schools of *Kalām* briefly reviewed in chapter one, these two religious orders perceived an unrestricted defense of human free will as an attack against divine omnipotence, in the case of the Dominican camp, or the uncompromising dependence on the divine decree, favor, and grace as an annulment of human freedom, in the case of the Jesuit camp. These conflicting views led these orders to accuse each other of heresy. While the Dominicans

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<sup>100</sup> Sufficient grace (*gratia sufficiens*) refers to a grace divinely granted to provide the power for a good work, but it “contains the idea of a withholding of consent on the part of the free will” (Pohle). Efficacious grace (*gratia efficax*) “contains the very idea that by it and with it the free will does precisely that which this grace desires should be done”(Pohle).

<sup>101</sup> The debate between Domingo Báñez, Fray Luis de León and Prudencio de Montemayor at the University of Salamanca in 1582 could be identified as the first incursion into the bitter polemic that would only come to an end twenty-five years later when Paul V delivered his decision on the matter.

claimed that the Jesuit view was tantamount to the Pelagian heresy's absolute affirmation of free will and consequent rejection of any divine aid in human activity, the Jesuits argued that the Dominican emphasis on divine grace and predestination made them fall into Luther's error. The controversies escalated in such a way that a special committee was established in Rome to resolve the issue at hand. But after nine and a half years of discussion under two pontificates, Clement VIII decided to declare that there was no official position regarding this matter in the Church. Both orders were granted permission to teach their respective views; they were also prohibited to accuse their rivals of heresy. The papal prohibition notwithstanding, the unresolved question remained a "fascinating topic even outside purely religious circles" (Márquez Villanueva, *Orígenes* 35).

Accordingly, the literary production of the period often implicitly addresses the problems with which this polemic was concerned. In what follows, I will discuss the repercussions of the controversy *de auxiliis* in Tirso de Molina's *El condenado* (circa 1635). This text, I believe, illuminates the impact of this complex debate on the understanding and representation of penance, confession and final judgment in the Spanish literary production of the first half of the seventeenth century, as well as pave the way for the discussion of the theological implications of the texts analyzed in subsequent chapters of this dissertation.<sup>102</sup>

## 2. El condenado por desconfiado

Tirso de Molina's *El condenado* presents the story of Paulo, a young man who has spent ten years isolated in the wilderness, devoted to prayer, fasting, and contemplation, and Enrico, a young man who leads an immoral criminal life. Paulo has a

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<sup>102</sup> For the above section, I have relied on Henry W. Sullivan's detailed historical review of the controversy in *Tirso de Molina and the Drama of the Counter Reformation* (28-40).

dream in which he sees himself on trial before the heavenly court. His good deeds and evil acts are put on a scale; his “guilt and injustice” (*mi culpa y mi injusticia*) outweigh his good deeds and he is condemned to “the kingdoms of terror” (*los reinos del espanto*) (58). Paulo is deeply troubled by this dream. He now asks God to tell him “the reason of this nightmare” (*me declarad la causa de este espanto*), and demands to know whether he will be condemned like in the dream. Further, he exclaims “oh my Lord, you will concede me this favor” (*aqueste bien, Señor, habéis de hacerme*) (58-59). Since he follows the good path, God will surely want to lead him out of the confusion in which he is immersed (59). A demon hears Paulo’s cries, appears to him in the form of an angel, tells him to go to Naples and meet Enrico, the son of Anareto; Enrico and Paulo will share the same destiny in the hereafter, the false angel tells Paulo. Paulo goes to Naples and overhears Enrico as he boasts of his hideous crimes. Frustrated and disappointed, Paulo decides to devote himself to banditry, just like Enrico. After a long series of clear encounters with divine grace, both characters find themselves in the face of death. Paulo refuses to repent and does not confess his sins as he lies dying, since he is sure that he and Enrico will be condemned. Enrico with his loved father’s encouragement repents immediately before he is executed; he is forgiven and brought to heaven surrounded by celestial music and heavenly canticles.

The scholarship on this text has variously associated the fate of the two characters with different theological fronts in the controversy *de auxiliis*. For instance, Ramón Menéndez Pidal claimed that Paulo’s death constitutes “a cry of horror against the neo-Augustinian doctrine of predestination” and evinces the dangers of the belief in “a divine decree that chooses or rejects the individual without taking into account his or her works”



(62). Menéndez Pidal adds that, as opposed to Paulo's belief in an inexorable and arbitrary divine decree, Enrico conceives of "a paternal God, the God of Molina" as he refers to "the grace that the sinner's free will requires on the path to goodness" (62). Further, "Paulo and Enrico," concludes Menéndez Pidal, "do not receive, as they would receive in accordance to Báñez's doctrine, intrinsically diverse divine aids," but both of them receive a sufficient grace which Paulo's free will resists and renders useless and Enrico's assent renders "efficient and salvific" (63). Henry W. Sullivan, for his part, argues that *El condenado* is indebted to the theological insights of Francisco Zumel, who participated in the controversy *de auxiliis* on Domingo Báñez's side. In particular, Sullivan claims that the "specifically Zumelist aspect of Tirso's treatment is his rejection of negative reprobation by which God would supposedly deny glory to anyone, discounting their works whether good or bad" (38). Sullivan is here alluding to Zumel's departure from Báñez's positions regarding grace and predestination, which imply that human beings' evil or good acts are intrinsically related to their predestination to eternal damnation or salvation, respectively, in accordance to God's foreknowledge of their free will's cooperation or resistance to grace.

In order to analyze the subtle echoes of the controversy *de auxiliis* in this play, I would like to refer to two scenes that might be of assistance in exploring its theological implications, namely, Paulo's conversation with a shepherd and the first meeting between Paulo and Enrico. Paulo hides in a mountain once he becomes a brigand and murderer. From his hideout, he defiantly declares that, since he and Enrico will be together in condemnation, he will never depart from Enrico's ways. This was "the word of an angel," he exclaims, he will therefore follow Enrico's path so that when "God, eternal Judge"

should condemn them they “would have in fact done enough to deserve it” (Palabra de un ángel fue; tu camino seguiré, pues cuando Dios, Juez eterno nos condenare al infierno ya habremos hecho por qué) (136). Right after pronouncing these insolent remarks, Paulo hears a voice coming from the thick of the wilderness, singing a ballad. “Let no one doubt of God’s most precious mercy,” the voice proclaims, “even if he is a great sinner” (No desconfíe ninguno aunque grande pecador, de aquella misericordia de que más se precia Dios) (136). “With firm regret so that he offends God not,” the voice continues, “should the humbled sinner return, and God will forgive him” (Con firme arrepentimiento de no ofender al Señor llegue el pecador humilde, que Dios le dará perdón) (137). Paulo orders his bandits to find who is singing the ballad; the singer is revealed as a shepherd who is looking for a sheep that went astray from the herd. Paulo inquires about the shepherd’s ballad and asks him whether he believes that, as the ballad states, God will forgive a man who has transgressed against Him “in works, words and thoughts” (con obras y con palabras y pensamientos) (139). The shepherd assures Paulo that God’s mercy is incommensurable; God’s mercy corresponds, the shepherd claims, with humankind’s fallibility in the exercise of free will. Paulo is comforted, tries to force the shepherd to stay at his side, but the shepherd escapes his grasp. After this brief exchange, Paulo advances an interpretation of his encounter with the shepherd. The shepherd has warned him that he offends God by not trusting in His mercy, Paulo tells himself; the shepherd has helped him in understanding that repentant sinners will surely find God’s forgiveness. Next, Paulo wonders whether Enrico could also find divine forgiveness as they, in accordance to the words of the false angel, would have the same place in the hereafter. But Paulo convinces himself that Enrico’s redemption is

impossible. Enrico is not only known as “the worse man who has ever been born in this world” (tiene nombre...del más mal hombre que en este mundo ha nacido) (143), but also has expressed no intention whatsoever to repent.

The brief scene reviewed above gives a vivid image of the relationship between divine grace and human free will at the center of Tirso de Molina’s theological drama as well as at the core of the controversy *de auxiliis*. Even though Paulo fully realizes that the shepherd’s words are a clear sign of divine grace, a message of hope and an encouragement to trust in divine mercy, he is still adamant about the impossibility of Enrico’s repentance and redemption. As a consequence, he entirely disregards the shepherd’s advice, despairs of divine mercy, and is all the more convinced to follow Enrico’s path so that when God condemns them they “would have done enough to deserve it” (ya habremos hecho por qué) (136). This scene then stresses the necessity of a cooperation of the human free will with the gifts of divine grace as well as invites to a balanced idea (neither Molinist nor Bañezian) of the relationship between human freedom and divine grace. Despite the fact that Paulo fully understands that the shepherd’s words constitute an invitation to an adequate use of human freedom in the intersection with divine grace, he chooses to persevere on his impenitent, criminal life in his conviction that he and Enrico are fated to damnation, or, in Bañezian terms, they are “negatively reprovved.” Paulo’s reluctance to recognize the role of human free will in penance and the affirmation of divine mercy in this recognition implies a critical stance against the Bañezian views regarding antecedent negative reprobation, or predestination to damnation due to God’s eternal decree and not to individual merits or demerits. As Delgado Varela, points out, Tirso is here implying that Paulo is not negatively reprovved

(negativamente reprovado): he is rather destined to salvation, but his misuse of free will eventually frustrates this divine ruling.

Tirso de Molina's implicit rejection of Báñez's theology of predestination in *El condenado* is further confirmed by Paulo's first encounter with Enrico. Paulo and his fellow bandits capture Enrico and one of his accomplices, tie them up, cover their eyes with a band, and pretend to be about to execute them. Enrico now exclaims: "Let the just Heavens take vengeance upon me," and laments: "I would like to repent but when I want to repent I am unable to do it" (Vénguese en mí el justo cielo quisiera arrepentirme y cuando quiero no puedo) (152). Paulo takes the opportunity to test Enrico's character, dons a monk's habit, and offers Enrico and his comrade confession; Enrico refuses to confess his excessive transgressions. Paulo despairs at this juncture, liberates Enrico and his companion, and tells Enrico his story. He was a hermit, he tells Enrico, who was told by an angel to go to Naples, look for Enrico the son of Anareto, and look at Enrico's conduct, since his place in the hereafter would entirely depend on Enrico's. After he witnessed Enrico's evil ways, he abandoned his former life of piety and devoted himself to crime, since he was now certain that God had already condemned their souls. Yet Enrico rebukes Paulo for his naïveté; he should have not abandoned his devotion. Paulo's acts were a sign of despair, a "rejection of God's word and an abusive opposition to His ineffable power" (venganza de la palabra de Dios y una oposición tirana a su inefable poder) (162). Enrico concludes by acknowledging that he is the worse man "that human nature has ever produced in the face of earth" (el hombre más malo que naturaleza humana), but he still hopes to be saved by divine mercy (163).

These two episodes attest to Tirso de Molina's insightful engagement with the theological debates concerning the relationship between divine grace and human freedom in late sixteenth and early seventeenth century Spain. Paulo's story of damnation and Enrico's last minute repentance constitute an eloquent and balanced illustration of this intriguing theological question. While Paulo's belief in a divine decree that predestines human beings to salvation or damnation without considering actual acts leads him to despair, disregard the God-given human freedom, and abandon his trust in divine mercy and forgiveness, Enrico's belief in an incommensurable divine mercy leads him to overcome his initial inability to repent and meet the efficacious divine grace that allows him to do penance and be saved. The contrasts between these two characters' ends serve to emphasize Tirso's invitation to a balanced view on the questions involved in the controversy *de auxiliis*. By juxtaposing Paulo's and Enrico's cases, Tirso warns his audience against the dangers of challenging the value of human freedom or the power of divine grace and mercy. Enrico's redemption becomes an embodiment of Tirso's ideal of balance on the relationship between human free will and divine grace. Enrico's exercise of his free will is highlighted when he finally obeys his beloved father and confesses; his father's forceful call to conversion as well as the supernatural voice that convinces Enrico to accept his capital sentence attest to Tirso's dramatic representation of divine grace. If Paulo's case emphasizes the necessity of the cooperation of the free will with divine grace, Enrico's initial acknowledgment that he is willing to repent but he is unable to do it highlights the role of divine grace in his final commitment to penance. The entire play constitutes a conciliatory and educational presentation of the contentious issues at the center of the controversy between the Dominican order and the Society of Jesus.

Tirso's dramatic representation of penance in *El condenado* as the encounter between the adequate exercise of human free will and the assistance of divine grace attests to his efforts in advancing a robust idea of theological drama. As Francisco Márquez-Villanueva notes, this seventeenth century Spanish playwright "culminates abruptly the notion itself of religious theater by adding the new province of theological drama not in the way of a medieval residue but as a modern concept" (*Orígenes* 33). Tirso's conception of theological drama and his thinly veiled allusions to the problems at the core of the controversy *de auxiliis* will be further evaluated in our discussion of the theological implications of the texts with which the following chapters of this dissertation are concerned.

## Chapter Eight Between Reform and Counter-Reformation: Confession and Penance in the *Libro de buen amor* and *Vida de Guzmán de Alfarache*<sup>103</sup>

This chapter analyzes the confession of Don Carnal in Juan Ruiz's *LBA* in juxtaposition to the conversion narrative of the rogue Guzmán in the second part of Mateo Alemán's *Guzmán*. I argue that Don Carnal's disastrous confession and Juan Ruiz's short lesson on the conditions and jurisdiction of penance should be seen through the lens of the didactic efforts of the fourteenth century Castilian Church in the wake of the Lateran Council IV of 1215, the Ecumenical Council of Vienne of 1311-1312 and the National Council of Valladolid of 1322. By examining the ways in which Juan Ruiz's *chica liçión* on penance resonates with fourteenth century didactic texts such as Martín Pérez's *El libro de las confesiones* of 1316 and *El catecismo de Pedro de Cuéllar* of 1325, I demonstrate that this particular section of the *LBA* belongs among the educational efforts of the Castilian Church of Juan Ruiz's time. In indicating the significant lexical and procedural correspondences between Juan Ruiz's short lesson on penance and Don Carnal's confession, this study shows that these two sections form a cohesive unit, which highlights the obligations with which a priest needs to comply and the negative example set by a friar who fails to comply with these obligations. The last section of this chapter concentrates on an analysis of the "radical ambiguity," to borrow Francisco Márquez-Villanueva's apt description, which permeates the conversion narrative of the rogue Guzmán (Rev. of Guzmán 493). I examine the ambivalence of Alemán's text from two fronts. By showing Alemán's alignment with contemporary discussions of penance, suffering and the narrative of the passion of Christ in the Synoptic Gospels, I attempt to illuminate Alemán's carefully constructed conversion narrative, as well as stress the fact

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<sup>103</sup> Henceforth, *LBA* and *Guzmán*, respectively.

that from this sole perspective Alemán's novel is consonant with Post-Tridentine religious discourse. When exploring the responses to the publication of *Guzmán de Alfarache*, as evidenced by picaresque novels like *El libro de entretenimientos de la pícaro Justina* (circa 1605) and *El Guitón Honofre* (1604), in conjunction with *Guzmán's* implicit views on the Tridentine concept of satisfaction, I argue that the novel ultimately challenges its readers to witness the aporia that the repentance of a rogue involves, thus implying a significant degree of audience participation. This chapter concludes that Don Carnal's confession in *LBA* and the rogue Guzmán's conversion narrative aptly illustrate the movement from the collective and multi-sectoral reform called for by thirteenth and fourteenth century councils to the Tridentine Council's focus on individual believers in its dialectical vision of the sacrament of penance. If the confession of Don Carnal in Juan Ruiz's text aims at educating Juan Ruiz's clerical audience by providing clear examples of penitential practice and malpractice, Alemán's novel reflects the implicit needs of a cultured society in the face of social tensions and the inquisitorial gaze.

I. Analysis of "De la penitència qu'el flaire dio a Don Carnal e de cómo el pecador se deve confessar e quién ha poder de lo absolver" in Juan Ruiz's *LBA* (quatrains 1128-1172)

In quatrains 1067-1127 doña Quaresma and Don Carnal engage in battle. Pulpo, Ballena, Puerro and several other fish and vegetables are on Doña Quaresma's side; Doña Çeçina, Çiervo, and Toçino along with several birds and quadrupeds support Don Carnal's cause. In the course of the battle, Don Carnal is severely wounded; Puerro inflicts serious wounds upon him, and Ballena squashes him in her embrace. Doña Quaresma wins the battle, hangs Toçino and Doña Çeçina from a beam, and confines Don Carnal in a cell where no one should see him except a confessor. Next, a friar comes to Don Carnal's cell and preaches to him. Don Carnal asks for *penitència* while giving a



sealed written account of his sins to the friar, but the friar explains to Don Carnal the necessity of auricular confession and refuses to accept Don Carnal's written confession. Here the narration is suddenly interrupted, as Juan Ruiz's poetic voice provides a *chica liçión on penitençia* (c. 1131-1161). After this brief digression, the narrative resumes. The friar imposes a strict fast upon Don Carnal. In order to atone for his *cobdiçia mortal* Don Carnal must only eat *garvanços cochos con azeite* on Sundays, for his *sovervia mucha arvejas* on Mondays, for his *grand avariçia formigos* on Tuesdays, for his *loca loxuria espinacas* on Wednesdays, for his *mortal ira lentejas con la sal* on Thursdays, for his *mucha gula pan e agua* on Fridays, and for his *envidia mucha fabas e non más* on Saturdays. The friar then absolves Don Carnal and departs. But as soon as Don carnal recovers from his wounds, he escapes to the Jewry where he is able to gain full strength among Jewish butchers as he plans his dramatic, orgiastic comeback (c.1128-1224).

Although the battle between Doña Quaresma and Don Carnal has attracted considerable critical attention, only a handful of studies have examined the significance and function of the sections "*De la penitençia qu'el flayre dio a Don Carnal*" and "*De cómo el pecador se debe confesar.*" The studies devoted to these sections have emphasized the canonical restrictions that apply to the limited jurisdiction of secular priests when hearing confessions and the privilege of the mendicant orders to hear confessions everywhere. Félix Lecoy in *Recherches sur le LBA de Juan Ruiz* notes that the discussion of jurisdictions in Juan Ruiz's short lesson on *penitençia* seems capricious; Juan Ruiz makes a friar Don Carnal's confessor, but does not even allude to the heated debates concerning the privileges of the mendicant orders to hear confessions (198-

199).<sup>104</sup> Eric Naylor, also, finds a fundamental incongruity between Don Carnal's confession and the focus on the jurisdictional restrictions for confessions attended by secular priests in Juan Ruiz's digression on *penitència*, since jurisdictional restrictions did not apply to mendicant friars like don Carnal's confessor, who had the privilege to hear confessions everywhere (222). Similarly, in her groundbreaking article "The Digression on Confession in the *LBA*," Rita Hamilton notes that "*De la penitència qu'el flayre dio a Don Carnal e de cómo el pecador se debe confesar*" imply a critique of friars who, exempt from preoccupations concerning the arduous study of jurisdictional restrictions with which secular priests have to comply, are "privileged to hear confessions everywhere and prepared to absolve even the hypocritically repentant Don Carnal" (154).

In what follows this section re-examines some of the interpretations of Don Carnal's confession and Juan Ruiz's brief lesson (*chica liçión*) on the jurisdiction and conditions of *penitència* in quatrains 1128-1160.<sup>105</sup> I argue that these sections should be seen in the light of the clerical reform and educational efforts called for by the Lateran Council IV of 1215, the Council of Vienne of 1311-1312, and specially the National Council of Valladolid of 1322. Of particular interest is the Council of Vienne's reinstatement of *Super cathedram*, Boniface VIII's papal bull of 1300, which annulled the privilege given to the mendicant orders "to hear confessions everywhere" and

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<sup>104</sup> The fact that Juan Ruiz's chooses a friar as Juan Ruiz's confessor might not be all that surprising. According to Bueno, friars were often appointed to assist parishes in hearing confessions during Lent (42; cf. Joret, "La función literaria de la opsiçión "frailía"/"clerezia" en el Libro de buen amor", 97). In this respect, Juan Ruiz's choice to represent Don Carnal's confessor as a friar is entirely consonant with the context of the episode.

<sup>105</sup> Although I have consulted Elizabeth Drayson MacDonald's translation of the *LBA*, throughout this section I use my own translations of the text.

restricted their jurisdiction to the specific bishopric where they have petitioned and been granted permission to hear confessions.<sup>106</sup> This historical event suggests that a reappraisal of Juan Ruiz's detailed description of the conditions and jurisdictions of confession in the context of Don Carnal's absolution might be needed. Juan Ruiz's digression, rather than highlighting controversies regarding the mendicant orders' privileges, has didactic aims that clearly resonate with the language and tenor of contemporary works such as Martín Pérez's *Libro de las confesiones* of 1316 and *El catecismo de Pedro de Cuéllar* of 1325. By interpreting these sections through the lens of the often ambiguous didacticism of the *LBA*, the apparent incongruity between Don Carnal's penitence and the digression on confession is revealed as a thoughtful juxtaposition of what a priest is required to do and the mistakes that he should avoid, that is, Juan Ruiz juxtaposes the exposition on a priest's obligations with the negative example set by a neglectful friar who fails to comply with these obligations.

Here the council of Valladolid of 1322 should provide us with an appropriate starting point. During the minority of Alfonso XI (1312-1325), the papal legate Guillermo Peyre de Godin convoked the national council of Valladolid, which according to José Sánchez-Herrero finally and efficiently imposed the decisions of the Lateran Council IV of 1215 and the Council of Vienne of 1311-1312 on Castilian soil (14). Following this council, several Castilian bishops wrote vernacular manuals and synodal

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<sup>106</sup> Here some qualification must be added. The history of the privilege given to the mendicant orders to hear confessions everywhere is a very complex one. Confining ourselves to the first two decades of the Fourteenth-Century, we might mention Boniface VIII's annulment of this privilege in 1300, Benedict XI's reinstatement of the privilege in 1304, and Clement V's inclusion of Boniface VIII's restrictions among the decisions of the Council of Vienne of 1311-1312. Thus, debates regarding approbation, that is, "the act by which a bishop or other legitimate superior grants to an ecclesiastic the actual exercise of his ministry" (Burtzell), might have been current in fourteenth century Castile. But Juan Ruiz's emphasis on *la grand neçesidad* throughout these two sections suggests that he is highlighting the *exemplum ex contrario* provided by the neglectful friar, rather than addressing issues of jurisdiction and approbation.

books in an attempt to address the chronic problem of the great simplicity or ignorance (*grand simplicitat*) of most clergy in Castile, to borrow the phrasing that Pedro de Cuéllar, Bishop of Segovia, employs in the prologue to his *libro sinodal* of 1325.<sup>107</sup> When in quatrain 1144a Juan Ruiz refers to “*clérigos simples, que no son tan letrados*” who hear confessions and absolve all sinners whether they belong to their parish or not, he is placing his discussion of confession within the educational efforts of the Castilian church of his time.<sup>108</sup> The *chica liçión*’s didactic aims become all the more clear when in quatrains 1151-1153 the poetic voice directly addresses his audience, encourages them to devote themselves to study, and provides them with a list of works with which they should be familiar. “Study turns the unlearned into a wise master” (*el estudio a los rudos faze sabios maestros*) (1151), the speaker says as he boasts of his knowledge of thirteenth-century treatises of canon and Roman law like Durand’s *Speculum judicale* and Henry of Susa’s *Summa aurea* along with earlier works like *Decretum Gratiani*, which, in fact, is the source upon which the *chica liçión*’s discussion of jurisdiction and conditions of penance is based (Blecua, *LBA* 282). By referring to the authorities upon which his *chica liçión* is founded, Juan Ruiz validates the contents of his short lesson on *penitència*, as well as provides the “simple cleric, who is not so learned” with a guide to embark on the study of the sources, conditions, and jurisdictions of *penitència*. Accordingly, Juan Ruiz’s digression on *penitència* is an instructive piece for those clergy,

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<sup>107</sup> According to Linage Conde, Pedro de Cuéllar closely follows the decisions of the National Council of Valladolid when composing his synodal book, but he omits the canon that prohibits ordaining the illiterate (32). This omission might point to the poor literacy among many members of the Castilian clergy of the time.

<sup>108</sup> In his edition of *LBA* Monypenny notes that Juan Ruiz is referring to the canonical *clericus simplex* or *sacerdos simplex*, that is, clergy who have been ordained but lack any special privilege (348). Yet it must be noted that Juan Ruiz, like Pedro de Cuéllar, is here directly addressing the “not so learned” Castilian clergy.

whom Martín Pérez in *El libro de las confesiones* calls *menguados en sçiençia* (lacking in knowledge), and in this particular sense Juan Ruiz's *chica liçión* fulfills a clear didactic function.<sup>109</sup>

In contrast to contemporary didactic texts like Martín Pérez's treatise on confession and Pedro de Cuéllar's synodal book, though, Juan Ruiz's *chica liçión* is framed within the tale of a confession gone awry. The juxtaposition of Juan Ruiz's *chica liçión* and Don Carnal's confession becomes all the more significant when taking into account the series of correspondences between these two sections. According to Juan Ruiz's lesson, repentant sinners must show signs of penance by their "gestures and wails" (*gestos e gemido*), since the Church cannot "judge what is hidden" (*quanto a la Iglesia, que non judga de ascondido*) (c. 1138). Truly contrite sinners would "beat [their] chest" in sorrow (*en sus pechos feriendo*), "raise [their] hands to God" (*a Dios manos alçando*), "sigh mournfully" (*sospiros dolorosos muy triste sospirando*), "weep profusely" as a sign of penance (*signos de penitençia de los ojos llorando*), and "lower [their] heads" if they are unable to do anything else (1139). Despite the *chica liçión*'s detailed description of the signs that allow the Church to determine whether a sinner is truly repentant, the friar who hears Don Carnal's confession is ready to absolve him even though he neither wails, nor sighs, nor even lowers his head. Carnal only asks for confession after the friar preaches to him, and even then he is unwilling to face the psychological hardships of

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<sup>109</sup> In "The Venerable Juan Ruiz, Archpriest of Hita," Francisco J. Hernández notes that Juan Ruiz's discussion of jurisdiction in his *chica liçión* might have been influenced by his experience as a witness in the conflict between the priests of Madrid and the archbishopric of Toledo in 1330 (17). This conflict, which dated back to 1317, stemmed from issues of jurisdiction concerning excommunications. Despite the fact that archbishops had exclusive jurisdiction to appoint the beneficiaries of fines paid for excommunications, a group of priests in Madrid had appointed beneficiaries for said fines, thus initiating a long quarrel that was only resolved in 1330 with the intervention of a mediator. As Hernández notes, when Juan Ruiz referred to simple priests who dare to exercise powers that are reserved for the highest ecclesiastical hierarchy he might have had this particular case in mind.

auricular confession as he attempts to hand in “a written account of his sins, bound and sealed with a seal of secrecy” (*En carta por escripto le dava sus pecados, con sello de poridat çerrados e sellados*) (1129). Further, contrary to the Lateran mandate to inquire about the circumstances of a sinner’s transgressions, the friar is more than willing to hear the confession of Don Carnal, who is 1) a notorious impenitent sinner, and 2) a weak and wounded prisoner of war who has no other choice but to confess.<sup>110</sup> This latter point is particularly significant because Don Carnal’s precarious health is mentioned several times throughout the episode. *Puerro* “severely beats him” (*feriólo muy mal*) and makes him “spit phlegm” (*fizole escopir flema*) (1102). After the friar absolves him, “the afflicted Don Carnal remained imprisoned, weakened and tearful due to the battle, sick and severely wounded, exhausted and aching” (*fincó allí ençerrado Don Carnal el coitoso, estava de la lid muy flaco e lloroso , doliente e malferido, coatribado e dolioso*) (1172). In fact, Don Carnal is so ill that the friar is said to absolve him because he is “in great need” (*en la gran neçedidat*).<sup>111</sup> The phrase *en gran neçedidat* is previously used in

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<sup>110</sup> I am referring to the famous Canon 21 of the Lateran Council IV, that is, *omnis utriusque sexus*. This canon not only ratifies the precept of a yearly confession to one’s parish priest, but also orders priests to inquire about the circumstances of a confessant’s transgressions, and encourages parishioners to find prudent and knowledgeable confessors. It is important to note that the vernacular legal compendium assembled during the reign of Alfonso X (1252-1284), *Las siete partidas*, alludes to this Lateran canon (I, ley 73). The fact that the friar in Juan Ruiz’s text might have known of this Lateran mandate via Latin as well as vernacular sources stresses Juan Ruiz’s critique of the *simpliçidat* of most Castilian clergy in his times.

<sup>111</sup> The well-known confession of Ciappelletto in Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Decamerone* (I, 1) is framed in a similar setting. Although Ciappelletto is, indeed, on his deathbed, he also manages to outwit the saintly friar who attends his confession. It is important to note that in both texts notorious sinners’ confessions are attended by a friar who is completely unaware of their nefarious, deceitful nature, yet agrees to attend their confessions without inquiring about their reputation. Both texts seem to be stressing the need for knowledgeable and informed confessors, as well as denouncing certain clergy’s neglectful exercise of their ministry. The disastrous consequences of these confessions certainly confirm the authors’ caustic denunciation. If Don Carnal returns in the ultimate triumph of the flesh, Ciappelletto, “possibly the worst man who has ever been born” (*il peggiore uomo forse che mai nascesse*) (27), is hailed as a saint.

Juan Ruiz's *chica liçión* on *penitençia* to refer to the only moment when a priest is not required to comply with jurisdictions. According to the poetic voice of the *chica liçión*, "in times of danger when death looms" (*En tienpo de peligro, do la muerte arrapa*), the simple priest becomes "an archbishop and pope" (*vós sodes para todo arçobispo e papa*), since the great need or urgency makes him acquire the privilege to hear confessions everywhere and to absolve all sins (1157). The connection between these two parts is further confirmed by the fact that the friar is also referred to as "a pope" in this context. Right before he absolves carnal *en gran neçesidat*, the friar is called "del papo papa," that is, "the pope or champion of gluttony."<sup>112</sup> The crowning irony of the episode is now revealed when this pope of gluttony orders Don Carnal to observe a strict penitential fast to be absolved of his many and possibly mortal sins. As Francisco Márquez Villanueva notes, Juan Ruiz is here relishing the opportunity to denounce a certain "friarly asceticism," which "is as mechanical and spiritless" as the religiosity of Don Carnal's confessor (*El carnaval* 182).

Apart from denouncing the hypocrisy of some ascetic friars, though, the absolution of Don Carnal points to another issue regarding questions of jurisdiction. The echoes of the *chica liçión* in this section suggest that the friar, unaware of Don Carnal's true character, misjudges the situation and believes that Don Carnal is in danger of dying in sin. The friar has come to Don Carnal's cell to preach and convince him to repent; it is

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<sup>112</sup> I adopt the interpretation of the obscure phrase "*del papo papa*" provided by Gybbon-Monypenny and Blecua in their critical editions of *LBA*. This rendition was previously proposed by María Rosa Lida de Malkiel in her 1940 article "Notas para la interpretación, influencia, fuentes y texto del LBA" (127), in which she also alludes to the Goliardic joke "papa...solus vult pappare." It must also be mentioned that the phrase "del papo papa" only appears in two of the three extant manuscripts of *LBA*; that is, the Gayoso manuscript that was copied in 1389 but that belongs to the same textual family as the Toledo manuscript of 1330 and the Salamanca manuscript (early fifteenth century). Finally, and on a more personal note, the verb *papearse* is still used in rural Puerto Rico to mean "devouring" or to "easily succeed in completing a difficult task."

Carnal who, moved by the friar's sermon, asks for *penitència* as he lays dying out of the severe wounds that *Puerro* and *Ballena* inflicted upon him, or so he thinks as he hears the friar's sermon. The friar then hears Don Carnal's confession and absolves him because Don Carnal, the prisoner, is *en gran neçesidat*. In the friar's view, he has all the rights to hear Don Carnal's confession. The *gran neçesidat* has made him archbishop and pope; he has acquired the power to hear confessions everywhere and absolve all sins in this moment of urgency.

Nevertheless, even though the friar seems to follow the *chica liçión*'s instructions in cases of *gran neçesidat*, his absolution of Don Carnal leads to a disastrous end, thus implying that a closer examination of the *chica liçión*'s exposition on *grand neçesidat* might be called for. When the simple priest hears a confession of sinners from another parish in cases of *grand neçesidat*, the *chica liçión* tells us, he still needs to “command such men, that if they speak before they die, they should have their own priest for confession, who should fulfill this duty for the sake of good” (*aquéstos tales devésdesles mandar/ que, si antes que mueran, si podieren fablar/ e puedan aver su cura para se confesar,/ que lo fagan e cunplan para mejor estar*) (1158). The *chica liçión* adds that the confessor “should also tell this wounded man that, if he does not die [due to his illness], whenever he recovers, he must go to the river or the fountain to wash away the grave sins for which you absolved him” while in *gran neçesidat* (*E otrosí mandatlle a este maldoliente/ que, si dende non muere, quando fuere valiente/ que de los casos graves, que'l vós distes ungente,/que vaya a lavarse al río o a la fuente*) (1159). In other words, even though the simple priest becomes an archbishop and pope when death looms thus acquiring the power to “wash away” even the gravest sins over which bishops and the



pope have exclusive jurisdiction, he needs to order the confessant to have his own priest, a bishop or the pope for confession, if he recovers. Despite the fact that the friar lists the entire repertoire of deadly sins before he imposes a penitential fast on Don Carnal, he fails to take into account the advice provided by the *chica liçión*. The friar neither tells Don Carnal to go to his parish priest nor commands him to confess to his many grave sins to a Bishop or a higher ecclesiastical authority, if he survives his wounds. The friar does not even contemplate the possibility that Carnal might recover from his wounds, and thus fails to offer him guidance. As a consequence, the friar ends up just being the pope of gluttony, as Don Carnal recovers from his wounds, gains full strength, and comes back in the ultimate sensual escapade with don Amor by his side. The friar does not adequately understand and practice his ministry nor is Don Carnal interested in finding a knowledgeable confessor who might have given him appropriate advice. By the end of the episode, thus, Don Carnal and the friar become an embodiment of the biblical parable to which Juan Ruiz alludes in his *chica liçión* (1145c-d), “if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit” (Matthew 15:14).

I have demonstrated that we need to depart from the emphasis of current scholarship on issues regarding the different confessional jurisdictions of secular clergy and the mendicant orders when interpreting the significance of these sections, as well as delve further into the specific canonical and conciliar contexts in which Juan Ruiz’s text was conceived. Since both *El libro de las confesiones* of 1316 and *El catecismo de Pedro de Cuéllar* of 1325 suggest that the annulment of the mendicant order’s privilege to hear confessions everywhere was well known in fourteenth century Castile, Juan Ruiz’s tale of an inept confessor might not be centered in controversies regarding this privilege. The

fact that contemporary manuals and catechisms show significant similarities with Juan Ruiz's treatment of confession confirms that Juan Ruiz's *chica liçión on penitençia* belongs among the efforts to educate the Castilian clergy in the wake of the national Council of Valladolid of 1322. Yet Juan Ruiz challenges his audience to decipher the reasons behind the utter failure of Don Carnal's confessor by juxtaposing his short lesson on *penitençia* and the negligent actions that lead to Don Carnal's undeserved and probably invalid absolution. Juan Ruiz's peculiar didacticism teaches his clerical audience all that they wanted to know about *penitençia* but were afraid to ask, as well as shows them how to avoid falling into the parable's pit. The relatively clear educational aims of Juan Ruiz's lessons on penance stand in sharp contrast to the challenging ambivalence and critical implications of the conversion narrative that caps Mateo Alemán's *Guzmán*. The contrast between the aims, tones, and contents of these two Castilian texts points to the dramatic transformation undergone by the Castilian Church, as well as indicates the concomitant changes in Castilian society, the audience's improved literacy levels, and their expanding horizons of expectation.

## II. Analysis of Mateo Alemán's *Guzmán de Alfarache*

In the the second part of Mateo Alemán's *Guzmán* (1604), chapter eight, the rogue Guzmán tries to convince himself to mend his ways. Misfortunes, he tells us, helped him begin to see the light of virtue; he claims that he would prefer to die rather than relapse into wrongdoing. He falls asleep in tears. He wakes up, and finds himself transformed; he claims that he has a new heart. Guzmán's conversion narrative caps a long life of impostures, trickery and theft, which sends him to jail and, at the moment when he narrates his life, to the galleys.

Guzmán's sudden, unexpected repentance is at the center of debates about the significance and intent of the novel. Particularly, controversies regarding the authenticity of Guzmán's penance and its role within the overarching structure of the novel have dominated studies of the text. Enrique Moreno Báez in his 1948 book *Lección y sentido del Guzmán de Alfarache* claims that, despite the fact that the novel represents a world immersed in "shadows, bitterness, and disillusion," it also shows "flashes" in the shadows (70). In the view of Moreno Báez, these flashes triumph by the end of the story when Guzmán reportedly changes his way of life and "is justified by God in His infinite goodness" (70). Alexander A. Parker's *Literature and the Delinquent* further expands on Moreno Báez's contention as to the veracity of Guzmán's final conversion. In Parker's view "[Alemán] clearly *intended* (sic) to write an orthodox work to contribute ... to Counter-Reformation literature" (31-2). Accordingly, "the story explicitly illustrated the [Catholic] doctrines of sin, repentance and salvation," while showing an individual's progress from "infamy" to "a higher love" (22). Parker adds that Guzmán's conversion "is so movingly presented that it is impossible ... to doubt its sincerity" (44). In analogy to Parker and Moreno Báez, Monique Michaud in *Mateo Alemán: Moraliste Chrétien* argues that Guzmán's conversion shows that all men could be saved in "a freely-consented movement to collaborate with God's free gift of grace," since Guzmán attained salvation even when he was the worst of sinners (377). Now I would like to refer to the scholarship of Francisco Rico, an influential proponent of *Guzmán's* Catholic orthodoxy. In *La novela picaresca y el punto de vista* Rico maintains that Alemán's novel "teaches a lesson on free will" (76). Accordingly, the story's ending remains seemingly unresolved; Guzmán is free to choose evil or good, "to persevere or desist" (77). But, Rico adds,

Guzmán's expressed anguish, itself "a corollary of human freedom," points to the final resolution of the "[free will] dilemma" in the way of "good and perseverance" (77). In a doctrinal sense, Rico concludes, Guzmán's anguish "announces his final repentance," and so his prolix sermons come from "a Guzmán who has overcome his [moral] dilemma ... in order to attest to his contrition [while] ... not hesitating to present himself in a negative light ... like other Saint Augustine in other *Confessions*" (79-80).

In sharp contrast to the interpretations outlined above, Américo Castro initiates a line of research that calls for a reevaluation of Alemán's work while pointing to the significant inconsistencies in Alemán's approach to religious and theological matters. Castro associates the overarching pessimism of Alemán's novel with this writer's conflicted identity and experience as an individual of New Christian extraction in Post-Tridentine Spain. By highlighting *Guzmán's* overt pessimism and the often critical implications of Alemán's treatment of religion, Castro concludes that "Mateo Alemán was the most anti-Christian writer among Cervantes' contemporaries" (356 n. 38). Benito Brancaforte further elaborates on Castro's call for skepticism regarding Alemán's novel's supposed religious orthodoxy, especially with respect to the protagonist's final repentance. While noting that the titles of the last two chapters of the novel, which narrate Guzmán's conversion, lack any allusion to Guzmán's reputed repentance, Brancaforte poses the following question: "are [Guzmán's final motivations] due to the fact that he does not want to sin or does [his supposed conversion] just confirm his utilitarianism and selfishness?" (74). As a possible answer to this rhetorical question, Brancaforte contends that only by "twisting [the novel] a great deal one would be able to conclude that *Guzmán* offers a consistent Catholic theology" (195). In *The Impenitent*

*Confession of Guzmán de Alfarache* Judith Whitenack also provides an illuminating analysis of the representation of religious thought and practice in Alemán's novel. For Whitenack, the "contrast between words and deeds" in Guzmán's religious attitude and his cruel description of his fellow galley slaves' gruesome deaths challenge the validity of his confession and justification, as advocated by the critics discussed above. By investigating the portrayal of confessants as only nominal believers and the prevalence of Guzmán's mendacity throughout the novel, Whitenack demonstrates that "[Guzmán's] confession cannot be taken at face value or regarded as genuine" (85-86).

Both sides of the aforementioned critical spectrum have sensible arguments. On the one hand, apart from the dangers that an open criticism of any aspect of Catholic dogma might have posed to someone of Alemán's new Christian background, the fact that Alemán's contemporaries praised his novel "for its moral content" (Longhurst 89) suggests that, at least at the denotative level, Alemán's novel *appears* to align itself with orthodox Catholic discourse.<sup>113</sup> The structure, language, and tone of Guzmán's account clearly resonate with the semantic field of penance and conversion in the Christian

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<sup>113</sup> The family history of Mateo Alemán has generated a robust and often acrimonious scholarly debate. This debate has centered on controversies regarding Mateo Alemán's Jewish ancestry, which stem from the interpretive traditions associated with the scholarship of Américo Castro and Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz. These vitriolic controversies, in fact, might be behind Francisco Rico's sudden change of mind regarding the biographical sketch that he provides in his 1983 critical edition of *Guzmán*. In the last footnote of his biographical notice, Rico disowns his previous assertion as to Mateo Alemán's *converso* background. Rico claims that Eugenio Asensio's and Edmond Cros' recent publications definitely challenged the idea that Alemán had Jewish ancestry. Rico is here referring to the documents regarding the life of Mateo Alemán published by Cros in his 1970 article "La vie de Mateo Alemán: Quelques documents inédits, quelques suggestions." The documents in question attest to the fact that Mateo Alemán was granted permission to travel to Peru in 1582, even before his certificate of *limpieza de sangre* was processed (335). This historical event leads Asensio to affirm that the idea that Alemán was denied authorization to immigrate because of his familial background "collapses like a house of cards" (167-168) and that, therefore, the belief that Alemán bribed Ledesma, the secretary of the Indies, to be allowed to immigrate to Mexico loses credibility. But Rico's change of mind becomes all the more surprising when taking into account Alemán's inexplicable and heartbreaking surrender of all his properties to Ledesma, which Asensio and Cros fail to explain. For documents regarding the life of Mateo Alemán, see Francisco Rodríguez-Marín *Documentos referentes a Mateo Alemán y sus deudos*, Madrid: Tip. de archivos, 1933.

tradition. Particularly, by referring to models of Christian conversion, contemporary discussions of penance, and the narrative of the passion of Christ in the Synoptic Gospels, Alemán seeks to authenticate Guzmán's tale as a recognizable and credible conversion narrative, which points less to Guzmán's "individual experience than to community standards of belief" (Szpiech 7). *Eppur*, since Alemán's prologue, just like Juan Ruiz's, al-Ḥarīzī's and al-Saraqūṣī's prefaces and colophons, alludes to the need for a critical readership who might decipher what the connotations of his work are, the many inconsistencies in Guzmán's account strongly suggest that Alemán wants his readers to regard Guzmán "as an unreliable narrator" (Whitenack 70), and to take an active role in examining the implications of his account. The novel's twofold prologue, to "the common people" (*al vulgo*) and to the "prudent reader" (*al discreto lector*), further confirms Alemán's call for a savvy and prudent audience. As a consequence, the ambiguity with which Guzmán's repentance is fraught relates to the fact that the novel is to be decoded to fully understand "all those things that [Alemán] refrained from writing, [but] that he wrote [for the reader]" [*mucho dejé de escribir, que te escribo*] (94). Alemán is here distinguishing between different types of readers and underscoring the fact that his work requires an audience able to understand the underlying meaning behind his writing. The declared need for a discerning audience has decisive implications for the understanding of the novel as a whole and, particularly, Guzmán's alleged conversion; no discourse is meant to be taken at face value. The following analysis will examine Alemán's carefully calibrated use of religious concepts and the ironic or ambiguous overtones of this use. By paying close attention to the ways in which *Guzmán* dialogues with contemporary discussions of penance, I endeavor to highlight the multi-layered

structure of the novel, which cautiously mirrors Post-Tridentine religious thought while inviting the prudent reader (*discreto lector*) to critically look at the roguish narrator's opportunistic attitude toward religious discourse and practice. I demonstrate that the way in which *Guzmán* resonates with contemporary religious literature should not distract us from identifying and analyzing the ways in which the novel implicitly calls the authenticity of Guzmán's conversion into question along with its alleged religious message. *Guzmán*, if certainly not an "anti-Christian" text, to quote Castro's provocative phrasing, often presents religious questions and behavior in a critical light.

In what follows, I examine the significance and function of Guzmán's conversion narrative within the overarching structure of the novel, 1) by providing a close reading of Guzmán's conversion narrative in juxtaposition to late sixteenth and early seventeenth century discussions of the connections between penance, human suffering and the narrative of the Passion of Christ in the Synoptic Gospels, and 2) by examining the ironic overtones of the novel's treatment of religion along with the responses generated by the publication of the first and second parts of *Guzmán* in 1599 and 1604, respectively. I argue that the use of penitential imagery and vocabulary along with a direct quote from the narrative of the passion of Christ in the Gospel of Luke cautiously places Guzmán's conversion narrative within recognizable and validating scriptural models, as well as links it to discussions of penance, the mortification of the flesh, and the redemptive power of suffering in clerical writings like Fray Juan de los Ángeles' *Diálogos de la conquista del reino de Dios* (1595) and San Juan Bautista de la Concepción's *Las mortificaciones públicas* (circa 1607). I also argue that the fact that picaresque novels like *El guitón Honofre* (circa 1604), Juan José Martí's apocryphal second part of *Guzmán*

(1602), and *La pícaro Justina* (1605) take issue with Alemán's postponement of Guzmán's conversion narrative to a sequel suggests that some contemporary readers perceived, at least the first part of *Guzmán*, as a not entirely edifying tale of an unrepentant rogue in the manner of the anonymous *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554). I show that the conversion narrative in the second part of *Guzmán* should be interpreted not only as a response to the doubts that the first part of the novel raised among certain readers, but also as evidence of the work's irony and ambivalence. *Guzmán*'s ambiguity and critical overtones serve as an invitation for Alemán's readers to carefully evaluate Guzmán's opportunistic use of religious discourse throughout the novel, and thus to critically look at the rogue's story of repentance. The implications of Alemán's treatment of religious matters as well as his allusions to theological concepts will be shown to challenge any one-sided reading of the work as a contribution to "Counter-Reformation literature" (Parker 32).

Like the account of Abū Zayd's repentance in *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya* and Juan Ruiz's *chica liçion on penitençia*, Guzmán's conversion narrative productively engages with serious scriptural and homiletic registers. In particular, references to the connections between suffering and penitence frame Guzmán's conversion narrative, resonate with contemporary religious literature, and confirm Mateo Alemán's adroit use of penitential language and doctrine throughout his novel.<sup>114</sup> Both *Guzmán de Alfarache* and certain late sixteenth and early seventeenth century clerical writings lay emphasis on the sacrifice,

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<sup>114</sup> Like Fray Juan de los Ángeles and San Juan Bautista de la Concepción, Alemán refers to the various shades of meaning of *penitencia*. The Spanish word "*penitencia*" just like the English word "penance" refers to "voluntary self-punishment inflicted as an outward expression of repentance for having done wrong," and to the Roman Catholic "practice of private confessions of sins to a priest and the receiving of absolution" ("Penance").



suffering and redemption embodied in the passion of Christ in their discussions of penance, self-mortification and satisfaction. San Juan Bautista de la Concepción's *Las mortificaciones públicas* (circa 1607), for instance, encourages the discalced Trinitarian friars to persevere in their public self-mortifications; in this way they bear Christ's cross and move sinners to penance, since just like Jesus they are enduring undeserved punishment (543).<sup>115</sup> Similarly, Fray Juan de los Ángeles' *Diálogos de la conquista del reino de Dios* (1595), recommends sinners to rejoice in the face of adversity, since hardships are a sign of God's love. When calamity strikes, Fray Juan de los Ángeles adds, sinners are flogged by the side of Christ (*azotado con Cristo*), and thus are counted in the number of the sons of God, who made His Son incarnate and suffer unspeakable punishment (136). Taking into account these discussions, the fact that Guzmán's alludes to the words that Jesus says to the women who weep for him in his *via crucis* becomes all the more significant.

While in route to the galleys, Guzmán meditates about his condition. He is bound to a heavy chain and shackled; more hardship awaits in the galleys. But he reflects on the unthinkability of the eternal punishment of the damned, sees his misfortune in a new light, and exclaims: "if these things are done when the wood is green what will happen when it is dry?" (*si esto pasa en el madero verde, ¿qué hará en el seco*) (876). By referring to the narrative of the passion of Christ in the Gospel of Luke (23:31), Guzmán seems to be implying that he is embarking on a *Via Crucis*, in which he will "be flogged by the side of Jesus," bear His cross, and look at the hardship that he faces in a new light.

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<sup>115</sup> This work is a defense of the discalced Trinitarian friars' public mortifications.

This allusion thus neatly frames the analogies that Guzmán subsequently draws between his suffering, penance, and Christ's passion.

Guzmán opens his conversion narrative by claiming that misfortunes led him to have a glimpse of the light of virtue, and thus he would prefer to die rather than reverting to his former criminal self. This remark introduces a long series of digressions in which the narrative voice argues that misfortunes are a mark of God's favor and love. Like Fray Juan de los Ángeles in *Diálogos de la conquista del reino de Dios*, Guzmán claims that suffering and hardships draw humankind closer to God, since such was Jesus' lot in this world. Accordingly, immediately after he claims to have woken up with a new heart, Guzmán reports the series of calamities that he endured. He claims to have been falsely accused of theft, brutally beaten, hanged from his hands, and flogged once again.

Guzmán maintains that the captain of the galleys only orders to stop the beating when he sees that Guzmán is about to die; he would not like to pay the King for a dead galley slave and still lose the stolen item. Guzmán also asserts that while he is beaten and tortured, he just prays and asks God to consider the blood that he is shedding together with the one that Jesus shed in the passion, so that he is saved. According to Guzmán, since he was in such a wretched state, his fellow galley slaves feel confident to invite him to join their conspiracy to take the galley by the force of arms. Guzmán tells his readers that he pretended to agree with the conspirators' plot, only to denounce them on the eve of the uprising; he is freed as a reward for this service to the king (899-905).

Not unlike San Juan Bautista de la Concepción's description of the Trinitarian friars' public mortifications, Guzmán strives to stress the similarities between the torture

and suffering unjustly inflicted upon him and Christ's suffering in His passion.<sup>116</sup> This parallelism is consonant with the quote from the Gospel of Luke at the beginning of Guzmán's sojourn in the galleys, as well as with Guzmán's sermon right before his conversion allegedly occurs. If Guzmán tells us that shortly before his ordeal he encourages himself to redirect the efforts that he makes to serve his master in the galley toward God, the brutal punishment that he endures at the hands of this master, Guzmán implies, is the seal of his service to God. The torture that he endures satisfies for his sins; the blood that he sheds draws him near to Jesus and marks his penance, or so he wants us to believe. This forceful description of Guzmán's suffering in analogy with Christ's passion caps Alemán's carefully constructed conversion narrative, which at first blush would seem to align with the Tridentine description of "*De satisfactionis necessitate et fructu.*" In Session 14:8, Trent decrees that "while we suffer in satisfying for our sins, we are made agreeable to Jesus Christ, who satisfied for our sins, and from whom all our sufficiency derives. We therefore also have a most certain pledge that if we suffer with him we will also be glorified with him" (*Conciliarum* 709). From this perspective alone, Guzmán's conversion narrative would seem securely anchored in early modern discussions of penance and mortification, the authority of the Gospels, and the latest developments of canon law. Yet it must be noted that only by considerably overestimating the significance of this aspect, would we be able to claim that Alemán's novel constitutes "a treatise of asceticism and illustrated morals, which offers a great

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<sup>116</sup> These parallels are drawn earlier in the story when Guzmán, the prisoner, claims that his fellow criminals are a bunch of "pimps and brigands" (*rufianes y salteadores*), but unlike them, he claims, when someone of his stature ends up in jail is only because God wants him to acknowledge his sin, serve Him, and be saved. In a similar vein, as he is led out of Seville along with his fellow galley slaves, Guzmán reflects on the heaviness of his chains, and considers it a light burden as he wonders what the eternally damned feel.

parable that aims to affirm the Church's dogma" (Michaud 348). It is my contention that Alemán's text employs religious discourse not only to disguise itself "as a sincere religious book so that it would receive the *aprobación* of the censors of the day" (Whitenack 44), but also to effectively hide the ironic and critical implications of the work as well as to offer a well-wrought simulacrum of Guzmán's final conversion.

Although for critics like Francisco Rico and Monique Michaud Alemán's *Guzmán* perfectly aligns with Post-Tridentine religious thought, some of Alemán's peers would not have agreed with such an assessment, as they jokingly allude to Alemán's writerly practice in their own writings. In the second book of Francisco López de Úbeda's *Libro de entretenimiento de la pícaro Justina* (1605), chapter four, Justina unabashedly declares that she does not preach nor does she want to preach; she only reviews the course of her life. She hopes, though, "to be good one day, and even one night" (*tengo esperanza de ser buena algún día y aun alguna noche*) (698). Since she sits in the shadow of the tree of virtue, some day she will eat the fruit from this tree. God willing, she will be able to tell us what happens in the last volume of her story, where she will tell us about her conversion (698). In a similar vein, the rogue Honofre in Gregorio González's *El guitón Honofre* tells us that after he escapes prison by bribing his guards, he decides to join the Dominican order. He tries to convince the prior of the order to accept him in his monastery, while lying about his background and feigning humility. But the prior replies that Honofre should think things through. Whenever one fails to adequately contemplate one's conditions and passions, one might end up rushing to repent, incurring error, and being reproached. "Desiring to join a religious order because of a sudden movement (of the soul) is a mistake," the prior tells Honofre, "since it is

certain that an ill-thought plan soon engenders regret” (*querer por sólo un repentino movimiento apetezer la religión es yerro, porque es cierto que de lo mal pensado se engendra el presto arrepentimiento*) (219).<sup>117</sup> The prior’s reasonable advice notwithstanding, Honofre outwits him, joins the order, behaves for some time, and relapses into crime. The novel closes as Honofre promises to tell us what happens next in a second part, where he abandons the cloth and returns to his worldly pursuits.

Both Gregorio González and Francisco López de Úbeda write their picaresque novels shortly after Alemán publishes the second part of *Guzmán de Alfarache*. The unrepentant voices of their *pícaros* seem to dialogue with Alemán’s rogue, who in the first part of *Guzmán* promises to tell his readers the story of his conversion in a second book. Like Guzmán, Justina and Honofre defer their conversion narrative to a sequel. Unlike Guzmán, Justina and Honofre do not claim to be repentant at the time when they narrate their story. Here González and López de Úbeda might be commenting on the inconsistencies inherent to Alemán’s ambitious literary project. If Guzmán were truly repentant, how could he tell his story of crime and misdemeanors so unabashedly and even proudly? Moreover, the irony involved in González’s and López de Úbeda’s novels not only implies that Justina and Honofre are more sincere than Guzmán, but also suggests that for some seventeenth century readers Guzmán’s conversion was a highly questionable one.

González’s and López de Úbeda’s skepticism regarding the authenticity of Guzmán’s final conversion might be illuminated by comparing Guzmán’s story of repentance with the well-known stories of conversion in *Acts of the Apostles* and Saint

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<sup>117</sup> As will be seen in chapter nine, this scene coincides with the consistent prioritization of free will throughout González’s novel.

Augustine's *Confessiones* discussed above. If we compare Guzmán's repentance narrative with Saul/Paul's conversion in the *Acts of the Apostles* and Augustine's conversion narrative in *Confessiones*, Guzmán's conversion might seem over-hasty. Unlike Augustine and Saul/Paul, Guzmán does not frame his conversion within a revelatory experience. Further, in contrast to Paul's and Augustine's crucial apostolic action after their conversion, the transformation of Guzmán's heart never translates into concrete works. Here the tripartite description of the sacrament of penance in the Ecumenical Council of Trent 14:3 must be borne in mind. Trent decrees that, while the form of the sacrament of penance resides in the words of the minister,<sup>118</sup> the acts of the penitent, that is, contrition, confession and satisfaction, are the matter of the sacrament. In fact, Canon Four of this session emphasizes the importance of this tripartite conception of penance, by stating that if someone denies that total remission of sins is only acquired by these three acts, he would be considered anathema (102).

In light of the above Tridentine canon, Guzmán's penance raises significant questions. Guzmán might be contrite; in the second to last chapter of the novel he even claims that he tried to confess regularly after his conversion (890). But Guzmán's penance remains incomplete, because, despite what he says when he claims to wake up with a new heart, he is unable to persevere in his compliance with the Tridentine precepts. After he assures his readers that he tried to confess regularly to wash his conscience and reform his life, he admits that he only did so "for a few days" (*con que corrí algunos días*) (890). After all, he adds, he is carnal (*mas era de carne*); he stumbles and falls in every step, even though he is far less inclined to relapse into his bad habits

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<sup>118</sup> The decree of absolution, that is, "ego te absolvo a peccatis tuis in nomine patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti."

(890). More important, Guzmán never specifies who attends his confessions in the galley. This omission is all the more significant if one takes into account how strongly the Council of Trent 14:6 ratifies the power of the keys, or the authority of an ordained priest to absolve sins in the sacrament of penance.

Guzmán's incomplete conception of penance also relates to his very own interpretation of satisfaction. Not unlike Lázaro's claims to extrasacramental penance to be discussed below, Guzmán implies that his penance has been completed on account of the torture that he endures, his misfortunes, and the suffering of Christ's Himself. This impression is further confirmed when by the end of the novel Guzmán claims that his misfortunes have come to an end and that he has thus "finished off the debt incurred in [his] criminal life" (*Rematé la cuenta con mi mala vida*) (905).<sup>119</sup> Moreno Báez simply takes Guzmán's claims at face value when he argues that the rogue "endures the hardships inflicted upon him with patience and humility [as he] considers them a means to deserve an increase in [divine] grace and a gift that God grafts him for his perseverance" (77). Similarly, Parker and Michaud argue that Guzmán's sudden conversion simply dramatizes the redeeming power of divine grace. While Parker coincides with Moreno Báez's contention that the novel's structural patterns denote "the natural movement toward evil, counteracted by divine grace offering men all the time the means of ultimate salvation" (42), Michaud maintains that God in His infinite mercy shows His grace to Guzmán, "who was the worst of sinners" (377). This particular line of research appears to gloss "over some very real difficulties" (Longhurst 86), especially as far as Alemán's subtly ironic approach to religious matters is concerned. Although

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<sup>119</sup> The ambivalence of this sentence should be noted. Is Guzmán referring to the fact that he will no longer be a galley slave, that is, that he has served his time in prison for his crimes, or is he referring to a decisive spiritual transformation?

Guzmán's overnight transformation might be understood as representing the sudden irruption of divine grace into the life of an inveterate sinner, other episodes in the novel warn us against uncritically accepting Guzmán's conversion. This critical warning becomes especially clear in one of the last chapters of the novel, which narrates Guzmán's second marriage.

In *Guzmán* 3.5, the rogue abandons his theological studies and becomes "a master of profane love" (822). Now the narrator relates the way in which he meets his future wife, Gracia, at Church. Notwithstanding the holiness of the place, Guzmán manages to get close to Gracia, her mother and her sisters. Gracia, Guzmán unabashedly declares, "was all grace and all the graces together were but small compared to hers" (818), and so he marries her. After enjoying some initial comfort on account of his in-laws' business, Guzmán and Gracia face economical problems and go to Madrid. In Madrid, Gracia is frequented by numerous suitors who shower her with gifts and all kinds of goods. A passive procurer, Guzmán enjoys his wife's prosperity; he only needs to avoid entering into their house when she has visits. After some difficulties with Gracia's clientele, they go to Guzmán's native Sevilla, where his mother is still alive. Guzmán's mother teaches Gracia some vital lessons on the savvy ways of the courtesan; Gracia ends up fleeing with all their property to Italy in the company of a galley captain.

Guzmán's marriage with Gracia points to a "total disruption of the sacred" (Brancaforte, "Introduction" 21), not only because Guzmán's priesthood is exchanged with a carnally motivated marriage, but also because of the double-entendres regarding Guzmán's wife's name and the theological concept of divine grace throughout the episode. As noted, when Guzmán meets his wife he claims that she is "all grace" and that



her grace surpasses the sum of all other graces. The double-entendre on Gracia's beauty, her name and divine grace is the crowning irony of Alemán's approach to religion and theology; its problematic proximity to Guzmán's final conversion clearly alerts the prudent reader against trusting the validity of such conversion. In this sense, Alemán's arguably malicious reference to divine grace in the context of Guzmán's activities as Gracia's procurer challenges the idea, first proposed by Moreno-Báez, that Guzmán's conversion is a work of divine grace. Guzmán misuses his God granted free will; grace escapes him, both physically and theologically. Yet Alemán's carefully calibrated depiction of Guzmán's story of repentance in association with scriptural and homiletic models effectively conceals the critical implications that the prudent reader is charged to find; the novel is ultimately fraught with ambivalence. As Márquez Villanueva eloquently puts it, Guzmán de Alfarache ends on "an entirely neutral note, when the lights of the theater suddenly go off with no space for the highly-regarded repentance, neither for joy nor for tears. With no moral, neither laments nor melancholy survives" ("La vida secreta" 302).

I have demonstrated that a diversity of perspectives should be borne in mind when analyzing the approaches to contemporary religious practices and doctrines discernible in Juan Ruiz's *LBA* and Mateo Alemán's *Guzmán*. In contrast to current scholarly interpretations of Don Carnal's confession in *LBA*, this study has shown that Juan Ruiz's depiction of a negligent friar is consonant with the educational efforts of the Castilian Church of his time, as evidenced by Juan Ruiz's inclusion of a short lesson on penance in this episode. In this particular sense, Juan Ruiz's fully participates in the efforts at clerical reform and instruction called for by the Lateran Council IV of 1215,

reiterated by the Council of Vienne of 1311-1312, and enforced on Castilian soil by the National Council of Valladolid of 1322. This initial analysis of the intersection of religion and literature in fourteenth century Castile has served as the backdrop for the analysis of the puzzling conversion narrative in Alemán's *Guzmán*. In this second section, I have explored the complex conversion narrative of the rogue Guzmán in light of contemporary literary production and the Tridentine decrees regarding penance. I have shown that Alemán subtly points to his audience's horizon of expectations, while inviting this audience to critically look at Guzmán's treacherous use of religious discourse. But Alemán's thoughtful use of ambivalence and dissimulation, I have demonstrated, allows for an open ended text, which is cautiously anchored in moralizing contents. Lastly, the juxtaposition of the confession of Don Carnal with the conversion narrative of the rogue Guzmán in this chapter has sought to illuminate the diverse approaches to the sacrament of penance in two different periods of the history of Spanish literature and the Spanish Church.

## Chapter Nine: The Right to Remain Impenitent: Impenitence in *El Lazarillo de Tormes* and Gregorio González's *El guitón Honofre*

This chapter explores the significance and implications of impenitence in *El Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554) and Gregorio González's *El guitón Honofre* (1604).<sup>120</sup> Although both texts narrate the life story of an unrepentant rogue, this chapter demonstrates that they differ in goals and principles. While the anonymous author of *Lazarillo* associates Lázaro's final impenitence with the influence of a corrupted and corrupting clergy and the widespread disregard of charity, Gregorio González's *Guitón* presents Honofre's refusal to repent as the result of the misuse of human freedom by a wicked, conceited individual. If *Lazarillo*'s institutional critique might be linked to sixteenth century works that associate early modern Spanish society's loss of charity and faith with the clergy's neglect of their pastoral duties, *Guitón* identifies the individual as the source of sacramental neglect. The divide between the denunciation of sixteenth century clerical corruption and the emphasis on individual wickedness defines these two works' divergent views on penance and impenitence. Whereas Lázaro seems to have no clear path to penance because of the generalized corruption of the world in which he claims to live, Honofre pays no heed to the advice of the pious, righteous people whom he meets and remains willfully impenitent. Unlike the anonymous author's moving portrayal of Lazarillo's path to spiritual orphanhood (Friedman 54), Gregorio González delivers a systematic portrayal of individual irredeemability; the Church is but one more

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<sup>120</sup> Henceforth, *Lazarillo* and *Guitón*.

victim of Honofre's trickery, mendacity and thefts.<sup>121</sup> The contrasts between these different picaresque texts, I argue, point to the preoccupations of two different periods of Spanish literary, social and ecclesiastical history. While *Lazarillo*'s denunciation delivers a powerful yet pessimistic call for clerical and societal reform in the proximity of the Tridentine Council of 1545-1563, Gregorio González's *Guitón* emphasizes the importance of human free will, while alluding to contemporary theological controversies regarding free will and divine grace.

### I. Analysis of *Lazarillo de Tormes*

In the anonymous novel *Lazarillo*, Lázaro, a town crier and wine seller in the vicinity of Toledo, narrates his life. Rumors of a scandalous relationship between Lázaro's wife and the archpriest of San Salvador have reached a certain authority figure, *Vuestra Merced* (Your Grace), who asks Lázaro for a report of the case. Throughout seven chapters or treatises, Lázaro provides a selective account of his life. The first chapter tells Lazarillo's familial history and his apprenticeship at the hands of an insightful yet cruel blind man. The second treatise describes Lázaro's vicissitudes in the house of a miserly priest, where he almost starves to death. Lázaro's time with a destitute, pretentious squire is the subject of the third chapter. Chapters four, five and six detail Lázaro's service to a Mercedarian friar, a seller of Papal bulls, and a chaplain, respectively. In chapter seven the reader learns of Lázaro's "summit of all good fortune" (*cumbre de toda buena fortuna*), that is, his commercial success as a town crier and wine seller, his acquaintance with the archpriest of San Salvador, his marriage to this

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<sup>121</sup> It is significant that later picaresque novels like Francisco López de Úbeda's *La pícaro Justina* (1605) and Francisco de Quevedo's *El Buscón* (1626) focus on individual corruption and malice and deemphasize the denunciation of the clergy at the center of the anonymous *Lazarillo*.

clergyman's maid, the rumors about the relationship between his wife and the archpriest, and his final compliance with the archpriest's proposed pact of silence.

Like Mateo Alemán's *Guzmán*, *Lazarillo* has generated a barrage of scholarly studies. In the context of this dissertation, critical analyses of *Lazarillo*'s treatment of religious and spiritual problems are of particular interest. In "La confesión en jeringoza del *Lazarillo de Tormes*," Carmen Rita Rabell interprets Lázaro's account as a confession before the Inquisition, in which Lázaro usurps *Vuestra Merced*'s power to condemn him by using jargon to connote the correspondences between his transgressions and the sins of the clergy (27). Similarly, in "Coming to Terms with Lázaro's Prosperity" Edward H. Friedman argues that "*Lazarillo de Tormes* may ultimately, and ironically, be about the use and the usurpation of control" (45) at the hands of a marginalized subject, who, nevertheless, "is doomed to remain unassimilated" as "a spiritual orphan" (54). Contrastingly, Stephen Gilman claims that by the end of *Lazarillo* readers witness Lázaro's "spiritual suicide" (154). Gilman adds that this work's bleak view on religion and morality is concerned with the standardized and simplistic religiosity in which the Spanish society portrayed in the text claims to believe, rather than with piety and faith in themselves (157). The divide between institutionalized religion and individual spirituality to which Gilman alludes is thoroughly elucidated by Francisco Márquez Villanueva in "La actitud espiritual del *Lazarillo de Tormes*." Márquez Villanueva demonstrates that *Lazarillo* showcases "a systematic program of social and religious critique" (*Espiritualidad* 115), which is rooted in the teachings of the Gospels. *Lazarillo*'s denunciation of the general corruption of the clergy points to "the tormented conviction that Christian ideals are betrayed by their own guardians" (129); thus, in *Lazarillo*

clergymen appear not only as morally corrupt people, but also as the source of societal corruption and agents of “the historical failure of the ideals of Christianity” (129). This contention is further confirmed by Lázaro’s identification with the moral relativism of his world at the instigation of the archpriest of San Salvador by the end of the story (95).

In what follows, I aim to revisit some of the critical perspectives outlined above by analyzing the significance of Lázaro’s final impenitence in light of 1) efforts at the reform of the Spanish clergy preceding and coinciding with the Ecumenical Council of Trent of 1545-1563, and 2) contemporary discussions on charity, in general, and on the relationship between the theological virtue of charity and penance, in particular. I argue that the impenitent demeanor that *Lazarillo*’s narrative voice exhibits by the end of the story points to a relatively complex theological implication, that is, Lázaro’s final impenitence should be explained by the disregard of charity at social, clerical, individual and theological levels in the text. If as Anne Cruz notes, “the abandonment of the Christian ideal of charity is precisely what is at stake in the novel” (30), this special emphasis neatly formulates the theological unsoundness that keeps Lázaro away from penance and from having recourse to the ambivalent penitential discourse that rogues like Abū Zayd, Hever ha-Keni, and Guzmán de Alfarache employ. Lázaro’s “jargon confession” (*confesión en jerigonza*), to use Rabell’s apt phrasing, dramatizes his absolute hopelessness before widespread spiritual misguidance and clerical corruption; his final impenitence offers a desperate testimony to the loss of the central role of the charitable deed in “making God present to the believer” and the way it “became simply a sign of the underlying personal faith” in the course of the sixteenth century (Anderson 8).

Although throughout the first few chapters Lázaro, still a child, is often in “pious and heartfelt communication with God” (Márquez Villanueva, *Espiritualidad* 75), his later years represent his gradual acceptance of the rules of a world without charity. In a theological tragedy of sorts Lázaro comes to realize that with no charity, there is no hope or faith. Further, the fact that the sacrament of penance is never mentioned in the story, along with the devastating portrayal of clerical corruption and the archpriest’s implicit threat to Lázaro in the last chapter of the novel, suggest that there is no path to penance, no sacramental absolution, no voluntary and free confession of sins in the world that Lázaro claims to inhabit. Not unlike contemporary discussions on the clergy’s neglect of their pastoral mission, the anonymous author of *Lazarillo* aims to demonstrate that the corruption of the clergy and a society deprived of charity not only lead to destitution and abject immorality, but also to a heart-rending sense of spiritual exclusion and sacramental neglect. Lázaro’s impenitence by the end of the story verifies the need for the religious and social reform called for by the Ecumenical Council of Trent and contemporary devotional literature while expressing a profound sense of pessimism and hopelessness regarding the feasibility of such reform.

If the last chapter of *Lazarillo* caps the anonymous author’s systematic representation of the clergy “as pivots and sources of evil in society” by presenting Lázaro’s abject acquiescence with the Archpriest of San Salvador’s proposal (Márquez Villanueva, *Espiritualidad* 129), the emphasis on charity throughout the text confirms its place within debates concerning clerical reform, particularly within discussions of the relationship between the clergy’s neglect of pastoral duties and societal disregard of charity and faith. In this regard, one of the documents prepared by San Juan de Ávila for

the Spanish delegation at Trent, “*Causas y remedios de las herejías*” (“Causes and Remedies of Heresy”) of 1561, should provide us with an adequate point of reference.

Just like the earthly sphere receives the influence of the heavens, San Juan declares, people should cling to the ecclesiastical estate so that they know “what is harmful and what is beneficial” (51). Yet, even though there have always been prelates who perform their duties for the benefit of their community, the majority of them not only neglect their pastoral duties, but also lead their followers astray (53). Some clerics, San Juan adds, turn their confessionals and pulpits into “places of [spiritual] lukewarmness and contradiction of the good” (*lugares de tibieza y contradicción de lo bueno*) (64), and limit themselves to teaching what the theological virtues are rather than practicing these virtues in their lives. As a result of this widespread neglect, both clergymen and lay people are lacking of “the most endearing charity toward their neighbor” (*aquella entrañable charidad a los próximos*) (62); thus, it is not surprising that “so many people have lost their faith” in these times (*No nos maravillemos, pues, que tanta gente aya perdido la fee en nuestros tiempos*) (65).

Although San Juan’s piece does not directly address issues of clerical corruption, his mention of the self-interest of the majority of high Church officials (*prelados*), their mere lip service to the teachings of the Church, their role in promoting spiritual halfheartedness, and the resulting loss of charity and faith among clergymen and laymen alike coincides in many respects with *Lazarillo*’s social and religious critique. Not unlike *Lazarillo*, San Juan’s perceptive and detailed report not only illustrates the need for clerical and societal reform, but also emphasizes this need by associating the clergy’s neglect of their pastoral mission with the widespread lack of charity and faith. Lázaro’s



final subordination to clerical corruption points to the same type of sacramental neglect and loss of virtue that so deeply concerned San Juan de Ávila. Let us now briefly review the final stage of Lázaro's life itinerary, or his "spiritual suicide," to borrow Gilman's apt phrasing (154).

In the last chapter of *Lazarillo* the narrator tells us about his success as a town crier. Lázaro is so successful at his trade that a clergyman, the Archpriest of San Salvador, hires him to advertise his wine and subsequently encourages him to marry his maid. Lázaro gladly agrees to marry the Archpriest's maid; from "such an important person" as the archpriest "only good and benefit could derive" (*de tal persona no podía venir sino bien a favor*) (131). Yet some ill-intentioned friends have told Lázaro that "they see [his] wife make the Archpriest's bed and cook for him" (*veen a mi mujer irle a hacer la cama y guisalle de comer*) (132); Lázaro admits that some nights he has had to wait a long time for her to come from the Archpriest's house (132 n.27). Trying to make the matter clear, the Archpriest tells Lázaro that "he who pays attention to ill-intentioned rumors, will never prosper" (*quien ha de mirar a dichos de malas lenguas, nunca medrará*) (132). He promises Lázaro that, despite what others could say, Lázaro's wife "enters [the Archpriest's] house much for [Lázaro's] honor and hers" (*Ella entra muy a tu honra y suya*) (133). "Therefore," the Archpriest advises Lázaro, "do not pay attention to rumors, but rather ... to your benefit" (*Por tanto, no mires a lo que pueden decir, sino ... a tu provecho*) (133). Lázaro concludes his account by referring to his eventual agreement with his wife's and the Archpriest's forced pact of silence. From that point on, they live in peace; the three of them "stay compliant" (*así quedamos todos tres bien conformes*) (134).

The novel thus implicitly denounces clerical corruption and the utter disruption of the Church pastoral duties and teachings. The “benefit” (*provecho*) highlighted by the Archpriest in his counsel to Lázaro is paid by great personal and institutional opprobrium; the Archpriest is not only humiliating Lázaro, but he is also rejecting the priesthood and showing total disrespect toward the sacrament of marriage. Further, his advice to Lázaro as to take into account his profit rather than the (well-founded) rumors about his wife’s infidelity seems to imply that Lázaro would face harsh consequences, if he refused to accept the Archpriest’s immodest proposal. This implicit threat would also involve the impossibility of Lázaro’s access to penance. If Lázaro wanted to confess his sinful state and be absolved, he would be breaking the archpriest’s imposed pact of silence and incurring his wrath. The corruption of the clergy and their neglect of their pastoral duties, as the anonymous *Lazarillo* and San Juan de Ávila’s *memorial* aim to demonstrate, are detrimental to charity and the spiritual well-being of society and the individual alike. The loss of these virtues in society and its institutions impedes an adequate sacramental life; Lázaro only has access to a perverted form of the sacrament of marriage, and his abject silence takes him away from contrition, confession, or satisfaction. He has no spiritual guidance; his putative spiritual mentor only advises him to be silent.

In this context, the second and third chapters of *Lazarillo* provide lucid illustrations of the association of clerical neglect and corruption with the abandonment of charity in the text.<sup>122</sup> In the third treatise, we find *Lazarillo* wandering in the streets of

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<sup>122</sup> In his *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española* of 1611 Sebastián de Covarrubias describes the diverse conceptions associated with *caridad* in early modern Spain. Theologically, Covarrubias defines charity as “a most upright affection of the soul by which we love God for His own sake, and love [our] neighbor for the sake of God” (*rectissima animi affectio qua diligitur Deus propter se, et proximus propter Deum*).

Toledo. He claims that he is striving “to find strength in his weakness” (*sacar fuerzas de flaqueza*) (71); he begs for food as he nurses the horrible wound that his master in the previous chapter, the miserly priest of Maqueda, inflicted upon him. Lazarillo’s wound “heals in [only] fifteen days” (71), since the people of Toledo take pity on his miserable state. Once the open wound on his head heals, though, every time he begs people chastise him. “You are just a lazy scoundrel,” he is told. “Look for a master to serve!,” they add (*Tú, bellaco y gallofero eres. Busca, busca un amo a quien sirvas*) (71). Now Lazarillo, still just a child, has no remedy. Charity, he assures us, “just went back to heaven” (*ya la caridad se subió al cielo*) (72).

The aforementioned portrayal of abandonment and despair points to contemporary debates concerning the assistance of the poor. Indeed, the publication of Lazarillo took place at a time when the traditional perception of the poor as “representatives of Christ who provided the wealthy an opportune means of salvation in their need for alms and charitable works” was called into question, and a contrasting position that “considered the disenfranchised potentially antisocial reprobates” became increasingly dominant (Cruz 22-23). When Lazarillo begs for food in Toledo only to meet hostile reproaches for his alleged idleness, the anonymous author is implicitly criticizing mid sixteenth century attitudes toward the poor as reflected in contemporary laws that required beggars to obtain a license to beg, be restricted to their place of birth,

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Covarrubias’ association between Godly and neighborly love in *caridad* should be borne in mind when considering the representation of love in the *Lazarillo*. The novel casts a consistently negative light on interpersonal relationships. Only the relationship between Lazarillo’s mother and the moorish man Zayde represents a loving union. This positive portrait, however, ends on a decisively negative note when Zayde is brutally punished for the thefts that he conducted to sustain the family and Lazarillo’s mother is condemned to a hundred lashes for her relationship with a non-Christian subject. Apart from this case, characters like the destitute squire, who hires Lazarillo and who ends up being supported by the him, and the *triperas* who give Lazarillo some food represent the only charitable individuals whom Lazarillo encounters. Yet, as Márquez Villanueva reminds us, only marginal subjects such as these avoid participating in the cruel mistreatment of fellow human beings denounced in the novel (*Espiritualidad* 112).

and face the galleys if they failed to comply with these statutes (Cruz 28). Apart from critically looking at contemporary socio-political conditions, this episode serves a clear structural function. Lázaro's devastating description of a pitiless Toledo neatly matches the mistreatment and cruelty that he experiences in the previous chapter. The wound on Lazarillo's head, which was inflicted upon him by a priest who showed no charity to him, now helps him receive charity. Once Lazarillo recovers, he relives the experience of the uncharitable world that he met at the priest's house, where he needed to use cunning to survive on a minimum of sustenance.

The anonymous author's vivid representation of the ungenerous, cruel society in which Lazarillo lives not only denounces very concrete socio-economic circumstances, but also resonates with contemporary discussions on the theological virtue of charity and the latest developments in canon law. Fray Luis de Granada's translation of Thomas à Kempis' *De imitatione Christi* of 1536, for instance, includes a reflection on the overarching significance of charity in Christian life. This text asserts that "charity is the greatest of theological virtues, because God Himself is called charity" (*[e]ntre las cuales (virtudes teologales) la mayor es la caridad, pues el mismo Dios se llama caridad*) (427). Charity, Fray Luis' translation adds, "is like a perfect circle, which encompasses all virtues, since it generates them and infuses them with perfection" (*es como un círculo perfecto, el cual incluye dentro de sí todas las virtudes: pues es motivo de todas ellas y a todas comunica su perfección*) (427). In the context of this discussion, the Ecumenical Council of Trent's decrees regarding charity, contrition and the sacrament of penance should also be mentioned.

In the fourteenth session Trent stipulates that “even though perfect contrition might sometimes happen through charity” reconciliation “should not be ascribed to this contrition even with the desire for the sacrament that it entails” (*Conciliorum* 705). Taking into account these contemporary discussions on the theological significance of charity as well as the Tridentine pronouncement regarding the relationship between charity and perfect contrition on the way to sacramental reconciliation, *Lazarillo*’s denunciation of a loveless society and a morally corrupt clergy is all the more poignant. Lázaro finds no guidance or example that might assist him in understanding the importance of charity in leading an integral Christian life and in committing to the penitential doctrine of his time. The widespread disregard for the well-being of others keeps Lázaro from even considering the possibility of attaining perfect contrition through charity, as Trent conceded. Any commitment to the sacrament of penance is impeded by the pact of silence forced upon Lázaro as the very foundation of his marriage. Lázaro ’s “jargon confession” thus constitutes a carefully structured self-defense on the basis of the generalized abandonment of charity in the wake of the clerical neglect of pastoral duties represented in the text. This contention is specially confirmed by Lázaro ’s account of his time at the house of the priest of Maqueda.

The priest in question is “avarice incarnate” (*la mesma avaricia*); all the miserliness in the world is gathered in him, “perhaps because of his own nature or because he acquired it upon donning the priestly habit” (*toda la lacería del mundo estaba encerrada en éste: no sé si de su cosecha era o lo había anejado con el hábito de clerecía*) (47). This vivid portrait of the priest as a miserly man introduces a series of vignettes elaborating on the theme of a world devoid of charity. After only three weeks at

the priest's service, Lazarillo becomes "so enfeebled as to be barely able to stand on [his] own legs out of hunger" (*a tanta flaqueza que no me podía tener en las piernas de pura hambre*) (51); the priest only gives him an onion to eat every four days. The clergyman goes as far as to keep the onions in a locked room and gives Lazarillo the key to the room only in some occasions. If someone is around when Lazarillo asks for the key to the onion room, the priest ceremoniously unties the key from the keychain and tells Lazarillo "take the key and return it later, go and do nothing but indulge yourself" (*Toma, y vuélvela luego y no hagáis sino golosinar*) (48). If the priest shows little charity to Lazarillo, he himself eats "five silver coins' worth of meat for lunch and dinner every day" (*[c]inco blancas de carne era su ordinario para comer y cenar*) (49). The priest only shares some of the broth and a little bread from his sumptuous meals with Lazarillo. On Saturdays the priest asks Lazarillo to buy a ram's head, three gold coins worth, which he eats entirely and from which he only shares the gnawed bones with Lazarillo while saying: "Take this, eat, triumph! The world is yours! Your life is better than the pope's!" (*Toma, come, triunfa, que para ti es el mundo. Mejor vida tienes que el Papa*) (50).

It must also be noted that the miserly priest's apparent disregard of charity and Lazarillo's consequent struggles in Maqueda appear in a penitential framework; Lazarillo's wrongdoing, he tells us, is the cause of his encounter with the priest. "My sins made me stumble upon a clergyman," (*... me toparon mis pecados con un clérigo ...*) (46), Lazarillo declares, thus implying that he performs his penance through the hardships that he faces at the house of the priest. The series of events that follow this declaration are meant to prove that Lazarillo's starvation and wounds serve as an extra-sacramental form of penance. This implication makes the absence of any mention of the sacrament of

penance in the text all the more significant. The negative light in which the clergy are presented and the generalized disregard of charity demonstrate that Lázaro has no possible path to sacramental penance or even to the perfect contrition that, as stipulated by Trent, charity makes possible. Although throughout the initial treatises Lazarillo shows genuine piety, faith, and charity in his heartfelt communications with God and his selfless service to the destitute squire, in the last chapter his expressions of gratitude because God has “enlightened” him and led him to a “beneficial path and way” (... *quiso Dios alumbrarme y ponerme en camino y manera provechosa* ...) indicate that he has reached a dead end (128). If Lázaro’s acquiescence with the suspicious dealings between his wife and the Archpriest of San Salvador and his proud account of the matter signify his “spiritual suicide” (Gilman 154), his detailed description of societal, clerical and individual disregard of charity is meant to convince his readers that he has no better choice. Before ecclesiastical corruption and power and the general abandonment of the charitable deed as the way to make “God present to the believer” in the text as well as in sixteenth century Spain (Anderson 8), Lázaro exercises his right to remain impenitent.

## II. Analysis of Gregorio González’s *El guitón Honofre*

Like *Guzmán* and *Lazarillo*, *Guitón* provides a detailed first-person account of the life of a rogue, or a *guitón* (vagabond). Throughout fifteen chapters the rogue Honofre tells his readers about his early orphanhood, his stay at the house of a tutor, his life with a stingy sacristan, his encounter with the pious student Don Diego, the series of thefts, frauds and impostures by which he enriches himself, his imprisonment and his escape from jail, and his fraudulent attempt to mend his ways in a Dominican monastery.

Although *Guitón* occupies an important place in the literary history of the Spanish picaresque novel, only a handful of studies have been devoted to this work.<sup>123</sup> While Francisco Rico finds that *Guitón* is but “an ill-painted rag doll” (monigote pintarrajeado) (*La novela* 144), other critics have argued that this novel provides an illuminating case study on generic transformation in the wake of the unprecedented success of the first part of Mateo Alemán’s *Guzmán* of 1599. In “El guitón Honofre y el modelo picaresco,” for instance, Fernando Cabo Aseguinolaza claims that *Guitón* is rooted in “a profound distrust in (Alemán’s) model”; thus, the novel ironically and mockingly approaches Alemán’s precedent in order to create an “anti-plebeian satire” (sátira antivillanesca) (285). Similarly, Emilio Moratilla García contends that *Guitón* presents a “mimetic contrafactum” (*mimético contrafactum*) of Alemán’s literary and moral vision (15). In this sense, Honofre’s character shows “a crooked natural inclination ... and a willful rejection of any kind of reform” in sharp contrast to “the radical changes of conduct and situation of Lázaro de Tormes and *Guzmán*” (15). Sabine Schlickers, for her part, finds that *Guitón* critically revisits and parodies the conventions of the precedents of *Lazarillo* and, particularly, *Guzmán*; accordingly, Honofre’s “pseudo-conversion” by the end of the novel constitutes “the height of parody” with respect to the moral and literary model established by *Guzmán* (185-186).

In what follows, I will examine González’s *Guitón*’s revision of the generic conventions of the picaresque novel by paying special attention to the treatment of religion and, particularly, penance in the text. By comparing *Guitón*’s religious and spiritual attitude with the religious views implied in *Lazarillo* and *Guzmán*, I demonstrate

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<sup>123</sup> The novel’s critical neglect is partially due to the fact that the only extant manuscript of the work was only found in 1927, remaining unpublished until 1973.



that Gregorio González's novel departs from its predecessors by emphasizing the role of human free will in penance while subtly alluding to contemporary controversies regarding divine grace and human free will. Although lacking *Guzmán's* discursive ambiguity and complexity of character as well as *Lazarillo's* systematic critique of social and clerical corruption, *Guitón* constitutes a carefully structured tale of impenitence and irreverence anchored in a humorous and parodic challenge to *Guzmán's* penitential discourse. Further, the fact that Honofre's refusal to repent and his irreverence toward the sacred are presented within the context of his encounters with Jesuit and Dominican priests and friars, I argue, not only suggests González's tongue-in-cheek allusion to these orders' involvement in the famous controversy *de auxiliis*, but also attests to his implicit rejection of the underlying theological basis of *Guzmán's* conversion narrative. Like Alemán's *Guzmán*, González's novel presents the confessions of a chronic sinner. Unlike Alemán's ambivalent representation of his rogue's encounter with divine grace and his consequent conversion, González's *Guitón* presents an unambiguous tale of individual stubbornness and obduracy. In this particular sense, González seems to affirm the ultimate inscrutability of the problems involved in the controversy *de auxiliis* briefly outlined in the above discussion of Tirso de Molina's *El condenado*.<sup>124</sup>

In contrast to Tirso de Molina's clear challenge to Báñezian theology in *El condenado*, González's *Guitón* attests to the unavoidable confusion that the thorny theological questions regarding the relationship between human freedom and divine grace generate when Honofre deceives a Dominican friar into believing his alleged divinely

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<sup>124</sup> It is of interest to note that Gregorio González studied law at the Universidad de Salamanca during Domingo Báñez's tenure of the first chair at this institution. González's representation of a pious Dominican prior deceived by a falsely penitent rogue might contain a tongue-in-cheek reference to the Salamanca theologian's positions. La Universidad de Salamanca is also the institution that Honofre attends when serving the pious student Don Diego.

inspired vocation and allowing him to join the order by the end of the novel. González appears to imply that the misuse of human freedom and the last-minute repentance embraced by Guzmán provide evidence of an execrable religious transgression, that is, the insolent attempt to outwit God.<sup>125</sup> As a consequence, in contrast to *Lazarillo*'s association between institutional corruption and individual and societal "abandonment of the Christian ideal of charity" (Cruz 30) and Juan Ruiz's denunciation of half-learned clergymen, *Guitón* presents the clergy in a positive light; they are not to blame for Honofre's disregard of their guidance in his deceptive and opportunistic use of religious discourse. "If the world is corrupt," Honofre treacherously claims, "a poor little tramp cannot reform it" (*[c]uando el mundo esté asolado un triste Guitón no lo puede reformar*) (142). Faithful to this principle, *Guitón* presents no simulacrum of penance and no symbolic or literal punishment for the unrepentant rogue.<sup>126</sup> In analogy to contemporary questions regarding the relationship between divine grace and human freedom, *Guitón* remains unresolved.

*Guitón*'s unambiguous approach to impenitence is especially evident in the last chapter of the novel when Honofre attempts to join the Dominican monastery in Zaragoza with the declared intention of mending his ways. In the previous chapter, *Guitón* is finally arrested after he fleeces merchants from several Spanish cities in a

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<sup>125</sup> As has been seen in chapter two, al-Hamadhānī's *al-Maqāma al-Khamriyya* points to a similar offense.

<sup>126</sup> Here a brief comment about the implications of impenitence in Francisco de Quevedo's *El buscón* and Francisco López de Úbeda's *La pícaro Justina* should be added. Even though the rogue Pablos in Francisco de Quevedo's *El buscón* never repents, the fact that by the end of the novel he claims that "(his life in America) got even worse, since one's life does not change for the better by simply changing one's place of residence, without changing one's way of life and habits" (*Y fueme peor ... pues nunca mejora su estado quien muda solamente de lugar, y no de vida y costumbres*) (178) confirms the moralizing and exemplary nature of Pablos' impenitence. Similarly, Justina's tongue-in-cheek mention of her future conversion, which would be narrated in the sequel of her book, relates more to roguish dilatoriness than to any disregard of the concept of conversion in itself. From this perspective, Honofre's shameless refusal to repent and apparent impunity are fairly exceptional in the picaresque novel tradition.

highly profitable scheme. He is interrogated, but he refuses to confess to his crimes. But after a lieutenant tortures him, he admits his fraud; his serious crimes will most probably send him to the gallows. Luckily, Honofre tells us, God finds him an attorney who “fits in perfectly with his character” (*Deparóme Dios un procurador hecho a mi modelo*) (206). The attorney in question accepts Honofre’s bribes, and helps him find corrupt guards who lead him out of prison. Once free, Honofre expatiates on God’s infinite favors toward him; he also makes sure to point out that even if he dedicated “his whole life to pay the slightest part of what he owes to God’s favor,” he would fall short of reaching “a single dot of this infinite line (of favor)” (*aunque gastara toda mi vida en remunerar la menor parte de lo mucho a que me tienen obligado sus beneficios, no llegara a satisfacer un mínimo punto de esta infinita línea*) (206).

The above soliloquy, reminiscent of *Guzmán*’s moralizing digressions, is followed by Honofre’s fallacious argument that, since he cannot possibly pay what he owes to God, he would “pay whatever is in his soul’s power to pay” because “whoever pays whatever he can, pays his debt even if he pays nothing” (*pues no puedo lo que debo, a lo menos he de hacer lo que pueda conforme a la potencia de mi ánimo, porque el que enteramente paga lo que puede, aunque no pague, no queda a deber nada*) (206). Immediately after this fallacious reasoning Honofre exclaims “God called me, and I answered His call, since it seemed to me that the danger that I could face upon being found, if they looked for me, would be excused if I were to join a religious order” (*Llamóme Dios y respondile; pareciéndome que el peligro que me podía correr de ser hallado, si me buscaban, lo escusaría con meterme en religión*) (216). Next, Honofre goes to Zaragoza, approaches a Dominican monastery and requests to talk to the prior of

the order. He claims that he is a Castilian nobleman (*un hidalgo castellano*) who “has been the worst man in the world since the moment he was born” (*Desde que nació he sido el hombre más malo del mundo*) (217). His misdemeanors are infinite; his good deeds are so few that they “could be written down on a fingernail” (*cuanto bien en mi vida he hecho se puede escribir en la uña*) (217). A few days before his visit to the prior, however, he has come up with the idea to give up worldly goods, and pursue divine rewards by taking the habit of the Dominican order. The prior is still unconvinced, and encourages Honofre to give further thought to this idea. “Joining an order because of a sudden whim (movement) is a mistake,” the Prior tells Honofre, “since ill-advised actions are soon regretted, and joining an order is not a trivial matter to be taken lightly” (*querer por sólo un repentino movimiento apetecer la religión es yerro, porque es cierto que de lo mal pensado se engendra el presto arrepentimiento. Estas cosas no son de donaire; no se toman por pasatiempo*) (218). In this context, it must be noted that the prior of the Dominican Monastery’s word choice seems to contain a thinly-veiled allusion to the famous controversy *de auxiliis*. The “*repentino movimiento*” resonates with the Thomist/Dominican contention that “divine influence precedes all acts of the creature...the motion emanating from God and seconded by free intelligent agents takes on the character of a physical pre-motion (*proemotio physica*) of the free acts” (Pohle).

Supposedly moved by the divine, Honofre kneels down in tears, assures the Prior that he has given deep thought to the idea, and that he is convinced and committed. The prior ends up accepting Honofre into the monastery, where he is a model of humility for some time. But he relapses into his old self; his fellow friars are frightened at him. As the

novel closes, Honofre promises to tell new adventures in a second part, which will narrate what happens to him after he abandons the order.

Honofre's opportunistic and short-lived conversion poses several important questions regarding the significance of González's novel. As noted, Sabine Schlickers interprets Honofre's final pseudo-conversion as the epitome of González's parodic approach to Alemán's model (186). Accordingly, the ending of *Guitón* would ironize the conversion narrative in *Guzmán* and the pious remarks that abound in the initial chapters of *Lazarillo*. Despite Schlickers' valuable insights into the significance of intertextuality and irony in González's novel, this critic's emphasis on parody might need some further qualification. Apart from engaging in a parody of the literary conventions established by *Lazarillo* and *Guzmán*, González revises the religious principles at the heart of these precedents. Honofre's false conversion narrative constitutes not only "the height of parody" with respect to *Guzmán* (Schlickers 185-186), but also the definite mark of González's prioritization of human free will throughout his novel. If the anonymous author of *Lazarillo* systematically denounces the depravity of the clergy as the root of social and individual corruption, González highlights human beings' freedom and responsibility in making moral choices, and thus Honofre alone is to blame for his corruption. The story of the defiantly unrepentant Honofre precisely illustrates the misuse of human freedom by portraying the rogue's distortion of religious discourse and his neglect of opportunities for reform. As seen above, Honofre's declared intention to repent and enter a monastic order is not only opportunistic, but it is also guided by a fallacious and insolent reasoning. He has no power to atone for his sins, Honofre claims, and so he would be justified before God even if he does nothing to atone for these transgressions.

This unsound premise not only points to what Moratilla García calls “a crooked natural inclination” and the consequent “rejection of any kind of reform” (15), but also stresses the prioritization of free will in the text and explains the rogue’s final impunity.

*Guitón*’s emphasis on free will is further confirmed by the juxtaposition of Honofre’s behavior and the pastoral function of the clergy throughout the novel. In contrast to the members of the clerical estate in *Lazarillo* and *Guzmán*,<sup>127</sup> in *Guitón* clergymen are diligently committed to their pastoral duties; they even show genuine concern for Honofre’s spiritual well-being. The prior of the Dominican monastery in Zaragoza, as seen above, provides Honofre with adequate spiritual guidance, is truly moved by Honofre’s feigned show of repentance, and rejoices at Honofre’s apparent determination. “Your good spirits, sir, have given me great pleasure” (*En verdad, señor, que he recibido mucho gusto de tan buen ánimo*) (219), exclaims the well-intentioned prior as he invites Honofre to come back to the monastery and go through a series of character tests and lessons on monastic life. Despite the prior’s precautions, though, Honofre succeeds in deceiving him and his fellow friars and is accepted in their community. The prior’s thoughtful advice and the narrative voice’s affirmation of the transformative power of religion notwithstanding, Honofre wastes the opportunity of reform that the prior offers him in the Dominican monastery by disregarding the guidance of the benevolent and wise clergyman and eventually leaving the order.

Honofre’s mere use of the Dominican monastery as a hideout is consistent with the opportunistic and even blasphemous approach to religion, in general, and penance, in particular, which he exhibits throughout the story. Chapter ten provides a good

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<sup>127</sup> For a discussion of the implicit critique of the clerical estate in *Guzmán*, see Francisco Márquez-Villanueva “Guzmán y el cardenal”, *Serta Philologica F. Lázaro Carreter natalem diem sexagesimum celebranti dicata: Estudios de literatura y crítica textual*. Tomo II. Madrid: Cátedra, 329-338.

illustration of Honofre's general disregard for the sacred. In this chapter, Honofre takes vengeance on a group of Jesuits, who inherit the property of Honofre's late wealthy master and refuse to give Honofre the piece of clothing for which he asks. At night, Honofre visits the leader of the Jesuits, tells him that he has fatally wounded a man, and, while the Jesuit runs to find the wounded man and hear his confession, Honofre steals the Jesuits' chickens. Upon realizing that the Jesuits also keep some turkeys, Honofre approaches the Jesuit once again with his chest covered in chicken blood, and tells the priest that some thieves stabbed him and stole the chickens. The Jesuit believes Honofre and tries to attend his confession, but Honofre "to avoid sacrilege," since he was "in the middle of a burglary," pretended "to faint like a fox" (*por no incurrir en sacrilegio, ya que pecaba en latrocinio, me fingí desmayado como raposo*) (168). As the crowning blasphemy, after stealing all the turkeys and locking the Jesuit up in his own house, Honofre shouts "Father, it seems to me that now you can hear the turkeys's confession, since they are in deadly danger" (*Padre, pareceme que podrá venir a confesar los pavos, que están en peligro de muerte*) (180).

The above episode not only attests to Honofre's vengefulness and irreverence, but also confirms his willful rejection of penance. Honofre claims that he pretends to faint to avoid blasphemy, since otherwise he would be deceiving his confessor only to later commit a burglary.<sup>128</sup> Yet, once he steals the turkeys, he does not hesitate to blaspheme as he invites the Jesuit to hear the confession of the birds, which he plans to kill. Honofre's

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<sup>128</sup> In fact, Honofre has an execrable sacrilege to confess. In Valladolid, Honofre enters the church of San Salvador. He is hungry and penniless, and he is unwilling to beg for food. He proceeds to help in the mass, steals the money of the collection, and takes possession of the consecrated bread. He eats the hosts and claims to be full of blessings; from that point onward he had no need of a "witch doctor," and he "was not afraid of poisonous animals" (*Desde entonces no tuve necesidad de saludador ni temí animal ponzoñoso*) (195).

blasphemy is all the more serious if one takes into account how diligent the Jesuit priest is in his pastoral duties. Even though Honofre knocks at the priest's door late at night, sword in hand, the priest immediately tries to help him and lets him into his house. Further, the priest runs desperately as he tries to find the man whom Honofre supposedly wounded in order to hear the wounded man's confession before he dies. Later on, when Honofre pretends to be severely wounded, the priest lets him into his house, leads him to a bed, tries to hear his confession, and as soon as Honofre faints runs to find a surgeon. When Honofre tells the priest to hear the confession of the turkeys, thus, he is not only committing blasphemy, but he is also indicating his lack of regret and his heartless cruelty while mocking the priest's diligence and genuine concern for others.

The vignette above illustrates Honofre's insolent impenitence. Honofre's cruelty and lack of regret are based on his contention that "economical stature and ostentation" rather than inner virtues are the marks of social distinction, since in his eyes "all human beings are equally vicious and hypocritical" (Juárez-Almendros 91). Yet the fact that Honofre, as has been shown, meets virtuous people like the Dominican prior and the Jesuit priest makes his blasphemies, amorality and impenitence all the more gratuitous. The contrast between Honofre's behavior and the uprightness of character of the Dominican prior and the Jesuit priest, I would argue, confirms González's careful revision of his predecessors' models in the direction of a greater emphasis on free will. By showing the various opportunities for reform that Honofre meets by the side of the pious, González highlights Honofre's obduracy, as well as points to the aporia at the center of the bitter debates between Jesuit and Dominican theologians regarding the relationship between human free will and divine grace. Since by the end of the story



Honofre rejects the advice of members of both orders and perseveres in impenitence, his life story stands as an illustration of the ultimate inscrutability of the questions involved in the controversy *de auxiliis* as well as a testament to the confusion to which these questions might lead. Such unresolved theological questions especially resonate with the allusions to penitential discourse and practice in chapter eight and nine, when Honofre joins the entourage of the pious, wealthy student Don Diego on his way to Salamanca.

In chapter eight, Honofre meets Don Diego, a wealthy student, who is on his way to La Universidad de Salamanca. Don Diego is the same age as Honofre; he is kind, pious, and generous. He treats Honofre to dinner the same day that they meet; he even makes Honofre share the room in a fancy inn with one of his servants. Next, Don Diego invites Honofre to join him as he travels to Salamanca. During the travel Honofre tells Don Diego what he did to the stingy sacristan whom he previously served. Upon realizing that the sacristan had fallen in love with a certain noblewoman, Honofre tells Don Diego, he pretends to be their go-between, steals all the gifts that the sacristan sends to her, and falsely tells the sacristan that she invites him to visit her one night. The sacristan is caught in his ill-advised attempt to visit his beloved. He is severely beaten, forced to run naked through the streets of the city, and finally has to leave the city and his position in utter infamy. Although admiring Honofre's wit, Don Diego admits that he would be much happier had Honofre used his talent for good. The rogue, confirming his impression about Don Diego's piety, changes his tone and claims that he deeply regrets what he did to the sacristan; he only hopes in God and humbles himself before God like another Mary Magdalen so that He forgives him for his iniquity. To Honofre's pretended regret, Don Diego replies: "Seeing your repentance has greatly edified me, Honofre, ...

since you are also a student, you can serve me and let us spend time, the short time that we have to live, just serving God and studying” (*Mucho me ha edificado, Honofre, el verte tan arrepentido, ... quiero que estés conmigo, y pues que eres estudiante, me sirvas y se gaste el tiempo, lo poco de la vida nos resta, en servir primeramente a Dios y en estudiar*) (145). Don Diego is such a good preacher that Honofre admits that he “almost converted” him (*a pique me vi de que me convirtiese*) (155). Yet through his service to Don Diego, Honofre claims, he realizes that he will never repent “even if he had a longer life than Methuselah,” since even the saintly Don Diego was unable to convert him (155).

Honofre spurns every single opportunity for penance and reform that he meets; his moral choices point to his sole responsibility in his corruption. Without any charity or even the slightest intention to confess to his sinful life, contrition and penance escape Honofre; divine grace never finds him. Honofre is free to choose his path, has plenty of opportunities to mend his ways, yet his misuse of free will and his mocking attitude toward the sacred keep him away from penance. By the end of the novel, he manages to reject the guidance of both Jesuits and Dominicans; he stands as the mocking reflection of their unresolved theological controversy. In this sense, Gregorio González’s critique of the individual’s misuse of free will is as systematic as *Lazarillo*’s institutional and societal denunciation.

This chapter has provided an analysis of the treatment of impenitence in the anonymous picaresque novel *Lazarillo* and Gregorio González’s *El guitón*. Although these texts clearly have different aims and principles, they share an interest in exploring the causes and sources of a similar spiritual problem. As has been demonstrated, *Lazarillo* denounces clerical misguidance as the root of individual and societal

corruption; thus, society's lack of charity and individual neglect of the sacraments are traced to the same causes of concern identified by the Ecumenical Council of Trent of 1545-1563 and contemporary devotional literature. In addition, this study has demonstrated that González's *Guitón* prioritizes human freedom and emphasizes human responsibility in transgression. This focus on the individual's moral freedom, I have demonstrated, not only challenges the literary and moral models of previous picaresque novels, but also makes a subtle allusion to contemporary debates regarding the relationship between human freedom and divine grace. Impenitence in these two texts serves as an urgent yet pessimistic call for reform as well as a light-hearted look at one of the most complex theological questions in Catholic theology. Penance and its absence meet in a literary, social and theological crossroad; this dissertation has aimed to traverse this intersection.

## Conclusion

This dissertation provided a detailed evaluation of the motif of the repentant rogue across the three religious, cultural and literary traditions that intersected in medieval and early modern Iberia. A comprehensive study of the representation of the repentance of a seemingly irredeemable rogue in Muslim, Jewish and Christian texts from medieval and early modern sources remained a desideratum; this project has aimed to contribute to fulfilling this critical need. By exploring the overarching motif of the repentant rogue in the Spanish, Arabic and Hebrew Literatures of medieval and early modern Iberia from the perspective of comparative literature as well as from the lens of religious studies, this dissertation elucidated many of the theological, educational and polemical goals and interests with which these traditions engage. The tripartite structure of this project not only highlighted the important commonalities that these different religious and literary traditions share, but also shed light on the particular interests and problems within each of the traditions concerned.

The first part of this dissertation demonstrated that the stories of repentance found in the Arabic *maqāma* from Badī' al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī to Abū al-Ṭāhir al-Saraqustī served a variety of functions and purposes. Al-Hamadhānī's *al-Maqāma al-Khamriyya*, I demonstrated, denounces the opportunistic use of religious principles and theological discourse by unscrupulous individuals, thus establishing an important precedent for social and moral criticism in the *maqāma* genre. The analysis of al-Hamadhānī's tongue-in-cheek depiction of religious and social problems in this particular *maqāma* is further explored in our reading of Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥarīrī's *al-Maqāma al-Baṣriyya*. I showed that the ambiguity surrounding the final repentance of the rogue Abū Zayd in this

*maqāma* poses a hermeneutical challenge to al-Ḥarīrī's twelfth century audience and invites this audience to join in a learned and critical discussion of complex religious questions. In contrast to al-Hamadhānī's and al-Ḥarīrī's general call for the audience involvement in the interpretive process, Abū al-Ṭāhir al-Saraqusṭī's *al-Maqāma al-Muwafiyya Khamsīn* addresses very specific concerns regarding claims to political and religious authority in twelfth century al-Andalus; the repentance narrative of the rogue Abū Ḥabīb, I demonstrated, implicitly calls for the political unity that twelfth century al-Andalus so urgently needed.

The analysis of the Hebrew Andalusī *maqāmāt* in the second part of this dissertation showed how Jewish authors from medieval Iberia go beyond the models provided by the Arabic *maqāma* while adopting the flexibility of the Andalusī form of the genre and engaging with problems inherent to the Jewish tradition. Our analysis of the allegorical and poetical treatment of *teshuvah* in Judah al-Ḥarīzī's *Taḥkemoni* demonstrated that this writer goes beyond the revered model of *Maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī* by committing to the moral and cultural instruction of the Jewish communities in the East. “*Maḥberet ha-Bakkashot*” and “*Maḥberet Vikuah ha-Nefesh im ha-Guf*” are shown to serve a clear educational purpose, while integrating a wide-ranging array of philosophical and mystical elements. Our reading of Ibn Sahula's *Meshal ha-Kadmoni* paid particular attention to this medieval author's further elaboration on al-Ḥarīzī's educational and literary goals as well as to his revision of al-Ḥarīzī's treatment of *teshuvah* when providing the repentance narrative that the *Taḥkemoni* lacks. The conversion story of Ḥever ha-Aḥoḥi, this dissertation showed, promotes the ideal of an integral Jewish life in *teshuvah* across all sectors of thirteenth century Jewish society.

The various functions and uses of the motif of the repentant rogue in the Arabic and Hebrew *maqāma* provide a useful contrast to the representation of penance in the Spanish picaresque novel. In analogy to al-Hamadhānī's denunciation of the twofold trap of hypocrisy and naiveté, the ninth chapter of this dissertation demonstrated that *Lazarillo de Tormes* involves an uncompromising critique of clerical corruption and the generalized neglect of the theological virtue of charity. Not unlike Ibn Sahula's interest in promoting moral and cultural reform among the entire spectrum of thirteenth century Jewish society, Juan Ruiz's *chica liçión* on penance and the disastrous confession of Don Carnal, chapter eighth showed, fully participate in the comprehensive call for clerical reform in fourteenth century Castile while pointing to a multivalent educational and literary approach to the sacrament. Similar to al-Ḥarīrī's invitation to join in a conversation about the implications of Abū Zayd's late-life *tawba*, Mateo Alemán's *Guzmán de Alfarache* urges the *discreto lector* (prudent reader) to consider the irresolvable ambivalence of Guzmán's penance and reflect on the wide-ranging implications of this sacrament in Post-Tridentine Spanish society.

This project has thus shed light on the variety of purposes and functions that the motif of the repentant rogue serves in the Arabic and Hebrew *maqāma* and the Spanish picaresque novel. The interdisciplinary and comparative lens employed in this project will contribute to academic discussions and debates not only in the field of comparative literature, but also across the disciplines of Middle Eastern Studies, Judaic Studies and Romance Languages and Literatures. In this particular sense, I am confident that this dissertation will not only establish links among different disciplines in the Humanities,

but will also pave the way for further interdisciplinary studies in the languages and literatures of medieval and early modern Iberia.

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