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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Crafting literary Urdu: Mirza Hatim's engagement with Vali Dakhani

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Abstract

The emergence in eighteenth-century India of literary compositions that used the elite registers of what was, at the time, called 'Rekhtah', and later defined as Urdu, is poorly understood. Conventionally, after an initial infatuation in Delhi with the works of Vali Dakhani,[1] a mid-century break is assumed, exemplified by the revision of Zuhur ud-Din Hatim's *Divan* as *Divanzadah* in the 1750s. Scholars have viewed this as a radical intervention in the creation of Urdu, which excised old vernacular models and embraced further Persianization. This article re-examines the evidence, combining methodologies from literary and historical studies. It points to the continuities present in Hatim's revision, including sustained engagement with Vali, even as Hatim attempted to appeal to new audiences, incorporating new trends alongside older literary models. Foregrounding literary networks and arenas of poetic practice shows the limited impact of the proscriptions and literary criticisms voiced by Hatim's critics. In studying the contested space of literary aesthetics and linguistic shifts against self-fashioning within changing networks, this article demonstrates that the relationship between the Persianate and vernacular sphere continued to be generative, rather than oppositional or hierarchical.

Keywords: Rekhtah; Urdu; *tazkirah*

Introduction

Just before the turn of the eighteenth century, a bilingual Persian-Urdu poet in Delhi, Ghulam Hamdani Mushafi (d. 1825), offered his own evaluation of the history of

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[1] In the transliteration of the poems, we have followed the system of the *Journal of Urdu Studies*. When transcribing and romanizing from the manuscripts, where there is no consistent differentiation between *nūn* and *nūn-e ġhunnah*, we follow conventions in modern printed Urdu editions. Spelling and other copying errors in the manuscript are also identified. In the text we have dispensed with diacritics except for the *ʿayn* (ʿ) and *hamzah* (ʾ). In words that have become familiar to English speakers, like 'Shia', these diacritics are not used.

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'Rekhtah', an early form of Urdu. In his 1794 biographical anthology of Rekhtah poets, *Tazkirah al-Shu'ara*, he included an entry on his older colleague, Zuhur ud-Din Hatim (1699/1700–*circa* 1783), whom he had interviewed towards the end of his life. Mushafi recounts how Hatim fondly recalled the enthusiasm for the collection of compositions, or *Divan*, of Vali Dakhani when it arrived in Delhi back in the 1720s. Hatim subsequently composed his own *Divan*, but changed his style mid-century, bringing out a new edition, named *Divanzadah* ('Descendant of the *Divan*'):

> These days, in [our] era, the idiom of Rekhtah has reached purity and excellence, the abovementioned [Hatim], also considering himself to be the rank of 'innovators' (*tazaguyan*, lit. 'fresh speakers'), threw his *Divan* from the vault of his heart and has arranged his new *Divan* in the language of Rekhtah-speakers' way, giving it the name of *Divanzadah*. (Mushafi 1933: 80–81)[2]

Mushafi's assessment that Rekhtah had been perfected and outgrown its initial immaturity, as exemplified by Hatim's revisions in the 1750s, has continued to find acceptance in Urdu scholarship.

Scholars generally agree that, with the arrival in Delhi of the *Divan* of the southerner Muhammad Vali Dakhani, the 1720s were a watershed. Yet this early phase has remained remarkably understudied. Within Urdu scholarship, there is general agreement that initial enthusiasm for the new 'Vali wave' gave way to a more polished diction and more formalized training for Rekhtah poets. The established literary scholarship on the origins of Urdu posits that the elite literary communities of North India, while embracing the vernacular Rekhtah, also attempted to formalize its poetic expression in forms largely borrowed from Persian, thus retaining their own elite mastery over its production and transmission (Faruqi 2001: 146–154). By the 1750s, the older poets had lost currency—both in circulation and as poetic models (Pritchett 2003: 868–869, 888–889; Dudney 2018: 49–50; Sadiq 1984: 96). Yet, to date, there is no satisfactory or robust case study to explain what may actually have occurred during the critical period from when the vogue for Rekhtah first exploded in the wake of Vali's *Divan* until it became established all across the former Mughal empire by the time of Mushafi's writing.

While literary scholarship assumed elite agency, it did not study the constitution of the elite. Recent historiography suggests that emerging forms of mass politics in eighteenth-century South Asian urban centres restructured elite and non-elite identities. Literary forms gave voice to troubled relationships between emerging and established status groups. A wide variety of small-town authors arrived at new courtly centres to seek employment in courts that had greatly changed from the heyday of Mughal power. This historiography positions writers as a group caught between diminished opportunities for imperial service, and competition from a rising tide of urban artisans, tradesmen, and professionals (Kaicker 2020). Mosques and schools were endowed by new elites in Delhi's neighbourhoods. These fostered both Shia and Sunni forms of piety (Dadlani 2018a: 101–104; Pernau and Cug̲h̲tā'ī 2006: 4–6).

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[2] We thank Sunil Sharma for working through this translation with us at an earlier stage of this project. All mistakes due to successive revisions are ours.

Persian and vernacular literati had to confront groups eager to claim their own space in urban politics. Our article combines these two distinct disciplinary approaches: literary scholarship's linguistic and text-critical awareness and historians' attention to the emergence of new social identities and reorganization of spatial and status politics.

Mirza Zuhur ud-Din Hatim has been viewed in many literary histories as emblematic of the transition between the old masters of Rekhtah and the mid-century new styles that created Urdu 'classical' poetry. To grasp what may have caused Hatim to revisit and revise this earlier work, we need to understand the social setting in which he worked. Hatim's original profession was soldiering, and throughout his long career, he served many courtly patrons in various capacities, mirroring the upward social mobility of many in this time period (Chandpuri 1966, 60–61).[3] Unlike many of his contemporary early Rekhtah poets such as Shah Mubarak Abru, and even his model, Vali, Hatim could not trace descent from a well-known lineage of scholars or Sufis; rather, he was a self-made man. This means that his self-presentation and professional success had to be earned within the literary milieu of eighteenth-century Delhi. Rather than viewing his *Divanzadah* as a complete refashioning at one point in time, we examine the ways in which Hatim engaged with changing audiences during his lifetime. We also explore how his revisions helped them to access and understand Rekhtah's older roots.

Hatim makes for a good case study as he enthusiastically took up Vali's example in the 1720s. In the mid-century Hatim introduced the *Divanzadah* to readers as a selection of his best work. In his later work he shows a keen awareness of new audiences and also a taste for new themes. The influential scholar of Urdu, Jamil Jalibi, has interpreted this as a transition from an earlier atmosphere of decadence at the time of the Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah 'Rangila' ('the colourful' or 'passionate') (r. 1719–1748) to a more sober Sufi-inflected idiom in the wake of the devastating invasion by Nadir Shah in 1739. Stylistically, Jalibi posits a turn away from Vali and emancipation from an archaic grammar with a fixation on bilingual puns (*iham*) to a more heavily Persianized style that is closer to the Delhi idiom of the mid-eighteenth century. Muhammad Sadiq (1984: 101), in his much-discussed English history of Urdu literature, differed in seeing Hatim as a 'belated convert rather than a leader of the new movement', but concurred that Hatim had been influenced by the growing preference for Persian over what Sadiq (1984: 102) calls 'The Hindi element'. Both Jalibi and Sadiq viewed linguistic choice as a selection of one language over the other, though that contradicts what they readily acknowledge was a multilingual, cosmopolitan society in which these literary practices were situated.

Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, while acknowledging Hatim's ambitions to revise his work in the new *Divanzadah*, has suggested that Hatim himself did not consistently follow the corrective guidelines for linguistic purity with which he is credited (Faruqi 2003: 851–852). In view of Faruqi's insights, this article re-examines Hatim's revisions in the *Divanzadah.* At the same time, it carries out a reassessment of Hatim's relationship with Vali. Indeed, there is a contradiction in the assumption that a turn from Vali's model would involve Persianization, since Vali had already incorporated into his work many themes, meters, and references to Persian poetry (Schimmel 1975: 154–155: Hashmi 1986: 19–20). As Faruqi (2003: 848) notes, Vali's main contribution was a new poetics from multiple linguistic and literary influences. This included 'sophistication of imagery, complexity and abstractness of metaphor, and the "creation of themes"' (*mazmun afrini*). Hatim's revisions also use linguistic registers, courtly and popular, for their aesthetic possibilities in *both* Persian and Rekhtah, rather than selectively erasing one for the other. This may help to explain why, rather than excising Vali, whose own works played with such multilingual expression, Hatim continued to use and engage Vali as a poetic model. The new *Divanzadah*, far from breaking completely with Hatim's older Rekhtah writings, presented them to a new audience in a more accessible form. Although some poems from the old collection were deleted entirely, none of those written in response to Vali suffered this fate. The edits that were made were minor.

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[3] We know little about Hatim's previous experience as a soldier; however, in the context of the time, this was not a high-status profession.

In support of this new approach, we cite not just editions, but also manuscripts of Hatim's work, which we describe first. We make use of what is likely to be Hatim's own autograph of the *Divanzadah* which is preserved at the British Library. This manuscript provides dates and the creative context for each individual poem. Our chronological analysis reveals that Hatim's break with his old poetic practices and his self-chosen mentor, Vali, has been misrepresented. We demonstrate how Hatim's engagement with Vali matured over the course of his long career from the 1720s until the 1780s and continued even after the creation of the supposedly revisionist *Divanzadah* in the mid-century. Not only did Hatim emphasize his debt to Vali in the preface of the new *Divanzadah*, but he continued to write more poems in response to Vali.

Next, we foreground the performative aspect of the newly emerging Rekhtah literature in *mushaʿirah* (Tabor 2019). On these occasions participants produced poetry in a given *tarah*, or 'pattern' of composition, including meter, rhyme, and theme. In *mushaʿirahs* Rekhtah poets often composed *javab* or 'response poems' to model poems by authoritative poets. They also appear to have done this through self-study of Vali's poems, as we shall demonstrate. Both types of responses display the responding poet's skill. Here we will hone in on the details of specific response-poems Hatim created for models by Vali, which we can trace chronologically thanks to the autograph manuscript.

Moving to the crucial period of the 1750s we revisit the much-quoted introduction to the *Divanzadah*, in which Hatim outlined his editorial goals. This can be understood as Hatim's response to the criticism levelled against his earlier works in the newly emerging *tazkirah*s of the mid-eighteenth century. Studying Hatim's actual poetic practice brings us to a better understanding of the cultural capital that the revision of the *Divanzadah* poems aimed for and also identifies its intended audience. Thus, we carefully compare the actual text of poems in their original and revised drafts.

Last, but not least, we situate Hatim's crafting of this new poetic language against the changing social milieu of the times. In examining Hatim's revised works we note continuities of themes, literary personas, and models even as the patronage networks of Rekhtah poets changed over the course of the century. We show how Hatim's intervention was driven by a desire for self-fashioning and upward mobility, one shared by many in his audience and networks. We also note the growing ambivalence in Hatim's work regarding the tumult and cultural changes of his time. Hatim's literary dialogue with Vali and older networks continued to build on a fluid literary vernacular that was indebted to its multilingual environment. This included broader Persianate trends in terms of meter, theme, genres, and also incorporated the colloquial expressions of a new generation. Hatim appealed to new audiences after the 1750s by replacing archaic vernacular terms with more familiar ones, not by further Persianization. We see a transformation into a poetics of the everyday, but one that grounded these new modes in a very familiar dialogue with a much beloved model. While concurring with the recent work of scholars like Kevin Schwartz (2020: 59–72) and Mohammad Tavakoli Targhi (2001) on the long persistence of Persian as a literary language in South Asia, the example of Rekhtah shows how the growth of vernaculars was also conditioned by a generative relationship with Persian, rather than competition and replacement.

Hatim and the many *Divanzadah*s

In order to understand Hatim's creative process, it is important to go beyond secondary sources. One important insight emerging from the study of the manuscripts of Hatim's work is that while the transformation of the old *Divan* into the *Divanzadah* in 1755–1756 (1169 AH) is important, Hatim continued to edit his work for over two more decades. He added poems, and also changed diction and content. When published versions of this text were created in the twentieth century, the editors designated specific dated manuscripts as the primary ones they consulted, while adding notes to alert readers to the content from other manuscripts.[4] In the process, the important fact that Hatim himself had been a compulsive editor of his own work was unintentionally obscured. To remedy this, we need to revisit the manuscript evidence.

The chart in Figure 1 below illustrates the dated relationships of each source manuscript mentioned in this article.

For the *Divanzadah*, we made most extensive use of a manuscript now in the British Library, listed as Urdu Ms. 68 (henceforth BL).[5] This manuscript was begun in 1755–1756 (1169 AH), as stated in its introduction, and appears to be the author's own autograph copy, a point noted by other scholars (Hakala 2014: 372). This is corroborated by the physical appearance of red-ink annotations for each poem's meter in the text itself, as announced in the introduction and described by the eighteenth-century *Tazkirah al-Shu'ara* (1794) by Mushafi, who provides some important clues as to what the first *Divanzadah* manuscript looked like: 'He [Hatim] wrote the meters (*bahr*) of his verse, each separately in red at the top of each *ghazal*, and the year of creation….' (Mushafi 1933: 80–88).

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[4] We are fortunate to be able to build on the excellent editorial work of two giants of Urdu studies. Ghulam Husain Zu'lfiqar of Punjab University, Lahore, published a Hatim *Divanzadah* (hereafter HDZ) (1975) reorganized by chronological sequence of the dates of the poems. 'Abd al-Haq of Delhi University published the old *Divan*, under the title *Intikhab-e Hatim* (Hatim 1977), and more recently a revised edition of the old *Divan* as *Divan-e Hatim* (Hatim 2008) and of the *Divanzadah* (Hatim 2011) organized, as it had been in Hatim's original manuscript, by final rhyme. For the old *Divan,* 'Abd-al Haq (Hatim 1977: 46–49; 2011: 445) made use of a manuscript of 1745 (1158 AH) preserved in Delhi, as well as an undated one from the library of the Anjuman-e Taraqqi-ye Urdu.

[5] This manuscript was formerly in the India Office Library and is described by Blumhardt (1926: 82–83, no. 160) in his catalogue as having the seal of Najaf 'Ali Shāh on the last folio. This means it is likely to have come from the collection of the navab of Awadh in Lucknow's Moti Mahal library, probably the manuscript identified as an autograph by Sprenger (2010: 610, n. 628).

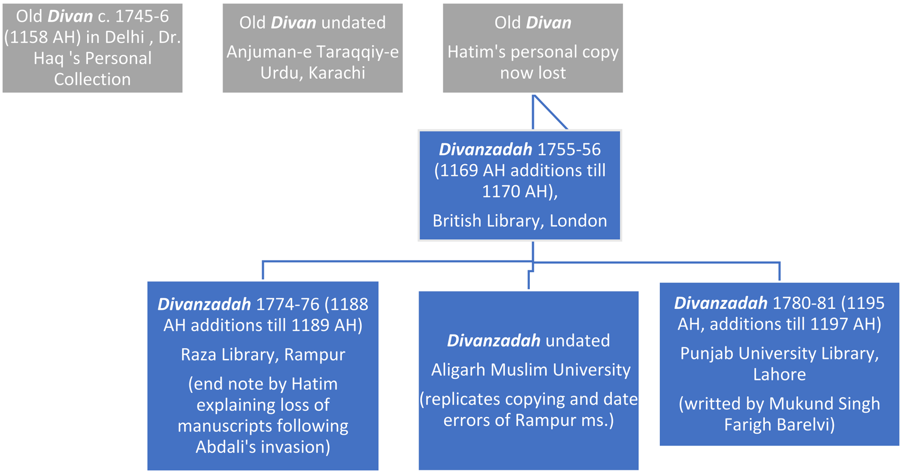
Old *Divan* c. 1745-6 (1158 AH) in Delhi , Dr. Haq 's Personal Collection
Old *Divan* undated
Anjuman-e Taraqqiy-e Urdu, Karachi
Old *Divan*
Hatim's personal copy now lost
Divanzadah 1755-56 (1169 AH additions till 1170 AH),
British Library, London
Divanzadah 1774-76 (1188 AH additions till 1189 AH)
Raza Library, Rampur
(end note by Hatim explaining loss of manuscripts following Abdali's invasion)
Divanzadah undated
Aligarh Muslim University
(replicates copying and date errors of Rampur ms.)
Divanzadah 1780-81 (1195 AH, additions till 1197 AH)
Punjab University Library, Lahore
(writted by Mukund Singh Farigh Barelvi)

Figure 1. Overview of the manuscripts of Hatim's *Divan* and *Divanzadah* during his lifetime. *Source:* The authors.

If this manuscript is indeed Hatim's autograph copy, it demonstrates his original intent in 1755–1756. Yet, Hatim continued to add poems on the margins in subsequent pages that are dated 1756–1757 (1170 AH; for example, BL fols. 1v, 46v). In fact, there is no stable text, as Hatim kept updating his poems. Thus, other manuscripts prepared during his lifetime, as shown in Figure 1, are also relevant to our discussion.

The last dated copy of the *Divanzadah* was written down in 1780–1781 (1195 AH) by his pupil Mukund Singh 'Farigh' shortly before Hatim's death. This manuscript, now in Lahore, has 109 *ghazals* written after the BL manuscript was created, including an additional response poem to Vali (Zu'lfiqar's notes to Hatim 1975: 144–179). It is relevant to note that Mukund Singh was also the compiler of his teacher's Persian *Divan* (Hatim 2010: 342). Haq notes a significant Indianization of Persian in this work (notes to Hatim 1977: 52–53), which would be the obverse of what happened in the Rekhtah *Divanzadah* according to current scholarly assumption. What is common to both the Rekhtah and the Persian collections is their deep interest in incorporating spoken colloquial forms into novel literary compositions that probably appealed to Hatim's audiences at different times. Thus, both in terms of his responses to Vali as well as his own changing understanding of his literary audience and tastes, it may make more sense to view Hatim's editorial strategy as part of a long and continuous engagement and re-engagement with both literary models and changing literary tastes, rather than as a single attempt to reinvent himself in 1755–1756 with the authoring of the *Divanzadah*.

Continued engagement with Vali

In contrast to current understanding, Hatim's engagement with Vali continued into his old age. This we can tell from the dated poems in all surviving manuscripts that respond to Vali's *ghazals*. First, all 19 original response poems to Vali from the old *Divan* made it into the new *Divanzadah*. Moreover, two additional poems were composed in response to Vali later in Hatim's life, the last poem added in 1768–1769. Far from rejecting Vali, in his new work he continued to compose poems inspired by Vali. Thus, Hatim reinforced Vali's image as a master worthy of emulation by other Rekhtah poets, despite debates about Vali's received reputation among poets after 1750s (Dhavan and Pauwels 2015: 626–627).

It is worthwhile tracing the evolution of Hatim's engagement with Vali through comparing the poems with their model. The influence was most intense over a period of seven years in Hatim's youth, starting in 1718–1719. During this time Vali served as the most significant model for Hatim. These early response poems were not edited out of Hatim's new *Divanzadah* but formed the basis of Hatim's 'new' style. Of the 19 poems that Hatim himself identified as responses to Vali in the old *Divan*, ten were part of a *tarji'band* (lit. 'return tie') song cycle in which these poems were linked by a common refrain. The composition of this *tarji'band* cycle dates to 1722–1723, a high point in Hatim's engagement with Vali, when he composed 11 poems in response to Vali, including the ten of the *tarji'band* cycle. This constitutes the largest number of Vali response poems in any year listed in the *Divanzadah.*

It is not entirely clear if Hatim had originally planned to include the *tarji'band* in the first draft of the *Divanzadah*, since unfortunately the BL manuscript was rebound in the early twentieth century and the original binding with the final pages is now lost. However, the later *Divanzadah* manuscripts reproduce the *tarji'band* set at the end (Zu'lfiqar's notes to Hatim 1975: 198). These later manuscripts show almost no changes beyond minor scribal errors, suggesting that Hatim still counted this as among his best compositions. In addition to the *tarji'band*, during his early years Hatim created nine poems modelled on Vali's. All of those were included in the *Divanzadah*, though slightly revised and polished to improve the emerging expressive idiomatic forms of the times.

Vali himself had composed a *tarji'band* of seven stanzas with seven couplets each, joined by a common refrain, for which he had repurposed some *ghazals* from his own *Divan* and composed some new ones. Hatim composed his in a sense of playful competition with his friend and fellow poet Shah Mubarak Abru, who composed a response to Vali's *tarji'band*, also comprising seven stanzas with seven couplets each.[6] The length of Hatim's *tarjī'band* outdoes that of both his model and his friend, offering ten stanzas of ten couplets each. This friendly engagement between poets is typical for this early phase of Rekhtah culture in Delhi. It also confirms the popularity of Vali's poems as models among the first generation of Rekhtah poets. As we shall see below, Hatim also evokes Abru as an authoritative poetic source in the introduction to the *Divanzadah*, indicating he did not fully distance himself from other older poets of the 1720s and 1730s.

In some cases Hatim presented his responses to Vali as instigated by patrons who shared his tastes. In 1728–1729, Hatim was asked to create another *javab* to Vali by invitation of his sponsor 'Ali Asghar Khan, as he said himself:

ay Valī mujh se ab āzardah na honā kih mujhe
yih ġhazal kahne ko navāb ne farmā'ī hai
ya'nī faiyāẓ jahān koñ 'Alī Aṣġhar Ḳhān

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[6] Abru 1997, 146–149. This is a reproduction of the manuscript copy of Abru's *Divan* dated 1731–1732 (1144 AH), housed in the collection of the Anjuman-e Taraqqi-ye Urdu, Karachi, Pakistan.

> *jis kī himmat kī ab Ḥātim ne qasam khā'ī hai* (BL fol. 60v)
> O Valī, don't be displeased with me now, because
> I have been ordered to compose this *ġhazal* by the Navāb.
> That is to say, the patron of the age, 'Alī Aṣġhar Ḳhān,
> Ḥātim now has been sworn to his generosity.

This sounds like a mock-complaint, or it could be a self-deprecating gesture. In either case, by the end of his first decade as a poet, Hatim had become self-referential about the process as he mocked his own dogged engagement with Vali.

The explicit commission to respond to Vali by his patron reveals the social aspects of the interaction. Hatim would take care to cultivate this patron, who allowed him access to the imperial court. Significantly, the medium is not, as might have been expected, a praise poem (*qasidah*), but rather a *ghazal* composed according to the patron's directions. Vali's original after which it was modelled was a love poem, but Hatim made adjustments by employing martial imagery. Fittingly, the first two couplets of the poem have hunting metaphors referring to the Mughals:

> *Tīr hai phirtī nigah-e turk kamān abrū kī,*
> *bāz kushtī kā lagānā fan-e muġhlā'ī hai* (BL fol. 60v)
> The Turk's glance is an arrow flashing from the bow of his brow.
> To set the killing falcon[7] is the sport of the Mughal.

This adaptation of Vali's model towards the courtly milieu of his time reveals Hatim's skill in appealing to his patron's self-image.

Hatim engaged far more with Vali than any other poet to whom he responded. In addition to the original 19 Vali response *ghazals* collected in the old *Divan*, all three of the later copies of the *Divanzadah* include two more Vali-inspired poems, dated 1748 and 1768–1769, yielding a total of 21 response poems to Vali. Scholarship on Hatim has not taken these later responses into account. It is notable that the first copy of the *Divanzdah* continued to be edited and expanded, but at no point were the Vali response poems edited out.

The *musha'irah* as a poetry workshop

The changing engagement of Hatim with Vali's poems reminds us that the writing of response poems was never an uncomplicated 'reception' (*istiqbal*) of an established master. As Paul Losensky (1998: 10) has demonstrated, Persian response poems were a constantly changing engagement with the poetic past. Ranging from rivalry to deferential imitation, they reflected a poet's 'literary voice and vision' to a new audience. More recently, Jane Mikkelson (2017: 527) has noted that in late-Mughal Persian verse 'the lyric itself was simultaneously, the battle ground, the stakes, and the prize'. Response poems to a master poet could be in a spirit of playful competition with a colleague, or as a more aggressive display of poetic supremacy with a rival, or even a thoughtful search for great poetic expressivity. Hatim's engagement with Vali illustrates the complicated and changing ways in which poets of the early eighteenth century harnessed the form of the response poem to craft a new poetic language in Rekhtah. These range from self-taught instruction through imitation to more complicated performative responses.

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[7] Taking *baz* as the Persian noun 'falcon' and *kushti* as 'fighting', but one can also interpret *kushti-baz* as 'wrestler'; perhaps the pun is intended.

The *Divanzadah* autograph provides details about the circumstances of the creation of each *ghazal*.[8] This is a rare source of information that allows the historian to anchor the development of Rekhtah chronologically. Even a cursory glance at the manuscripts confirms that a large portion of Hatim's early work was composed for 'patterned' *mushaʿirahs* (HDZ 1–3). In arranging the *mushaʿirah* a verse or hemistich of a poem was selected. Poems composed for the *mushaʿirah* all had to be in the same meter and rhyme, and also explore the same theme (*zamin*) (Pritchett 1994: 71).

Hatim's early responses to Vali around 1720 were superficial engagements of rhyme scheme and theme. He would mainly use the same ending phrases (*radif*), sometimes extended to *qafiyah* (penultimate rhyme). A few years later, Hatim created more sophisticated *javabs* involving elaborate *ma'ni afirini* ('meaning-creation')[9] and intricate playful reversals of Vali's original themes. The context of the 1722–1723 poems suggests a performative social environment, where clever responses to a given theme would delight an audience familiar with the originals. Few contain any weighty philosophical or literary themes. However, in preparation for these oral performances, and/or afterwards, in revising his work, Hatim also seems to have consulted written *Divan*s of Vali. This is evident from Hatim's responses that include references to other *ghazals* with the same rhyme that would have been written in Vali's *Divan* right before or after the poem singled out for the *mushaʿirah*. This can be illustrated with an example from his *tarjīʿband*, composed in 1722–1723, for a *mushaʿirah* piece, which seems to have been reworked into a highly crafted composition even in the old *Divan*. Thus, the first stanza in Hatim's *tarjiʿband* is a response, not to Vali's *tarjiʿband*, but to a separate *ghazal* with the same rhyme in Vali's collected works (Vali 2008, henceforth VK) :

gar chaman meñ chale vo rashk-e bahār
gul kareñ naqad āb-o-rang niṡār (VK 117.1)
When the envy of spring walks in the garden,
The roses scatter splendor like coins.

Hatim's first *she'r* in response is a deliberate reversal:

Kahāñ hai tū ay shāhid-e gul'iżār
Kih tujh bin nahīñ bāġh-e dil meñ bahār (HDZ 198 *tarjīʿband* 1)
Where are you, O sweetheart with the rosy cheeks?
For without you no spring comes to my heart's garden.

Whereas Vali's poem started with the beloved, who is the envy of spring (*rashk-e bahar)*—entering the garden, causing the roses to shed petals, like coins, in a mixture of jealousy and rapturous welcome—Hatim's deplores the beloved's absence from the garden, as her rosy cheeks (*gul-'izar*) would bring spring (*bahar*).

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[8] We follow the dates assigned in the British Library manuscript of the *Divanzadah*, noting variants found in other manuscripts in footnotes.

[9] For the terminology, see Pritchett's wonderful *Index of Technical Terms* published online, available at http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00ghalib/apparatus/terms_index.html, [accessed 13 October 2022].

Both poets next ponder the ‘memory’ of the beloved with continued references to spring blossoms and verdure. Vali refers to the down on the beloved’s cheek:

yād tujh ḳhat̤-e sabz kī ay shoḳh
zaḳhm-e dil par hai marham-e zangār (VK 117.3)
O impertinent one, the memory of the fresh down on your cheek
Feels like a verdigris balm to the wounded heart.

For Vali, the memory of the beloved is a soothing, green balm to the wounded heart. Hatim’s *she‘r* is also about remembrance (*yadgar*), but reverses the colour scheme:

chaman bīch ay shoḳh-e lālah ke ta’īñ
terā dāġh sīne pe hai yādgār (HDZ 198 *tarjī‘band* 2)
Entering the garden boldly as the tulip,
Your mark is a memory sign on my chest.

Hatim continues the flower imagery of the first *she‘r*, but here imagines the red tulip (*lalah*), following conventions from Persian poetry, as the memory-sign (*yadgar*) of the painful red wound on his heart. Thus, Hatim dwells on the pain of the memory, whereas Vali saw the beloved’s memory as the medicine for it.

In another *she‘r* Vali employed the trope of the intoxication of wine:

ḥaq ne terī ākhiyāñ koñ baḳhshā hai
ma’i-e vaḥshat soñ sāġhar sarshār (VK 129, 117.4)
God has bestowed upon your eyes
The cup brimming with intoxicating liquor.

Hatim playfully reverses the image, complaining of the lover’s drunkenness:

ishāre nain ke na mānūñgā maiñ
sharābī kī bātoñ kā kyā e‘tibār (HDZ 198 *tarjī‘band* 5)
I won’t follow the hints of your eyes
How can you trust a drunkard’s tales?

This colloquial complaint about a drunken lover deflates Vali’s lofty statement on the creator’s gift of intoxicating beauty. Hatim tends to be less elevated than Vali—the lover is simply drunk and therefore unreliable. These verses seem calculated to get a laugh out of the audience at a *mushʿairah*. In both cases the rhyme word is informal, yet Persian in register, subtly mocking lofty poetic descriptions of love.

This is an example of the language of the everyday used in poetic discourse; as Walter Hakala (2014: 372–377) has shown, this is also as a characteristic of Hatim’s *Vaṣf-e Qaḥvah*, or ‘Ode to Coffee’ of 1736–1737. This composition by Hatim was written both in Persian and in Rekhtah (with an overlap of seven closely corresponding lines). It is difficult to say which version was written first, but both were composed for his patron ‘Umdat ul-Mulk, so the audience for Rekhtah and Persian was not completely separate. The fourth line of the composition is identical in Rekhtah and Persian, humorously deflating the court’s majestic pomp, as it compares the reception of coffee with that of complainants seeking justice. This assumes that a Rekhtah audience would grasp the meaning of Persian legal terms from long familiarity. The Persian fourteenth verse corresponds to the Rekhtah’s sixteenth one, with a pedestrian description of Hatim's own routine of drinking coffee, two cups in the morning and two at night, underlining the ubiquity of consumption of this beverage by all.[10]

This eye for the everyday and humorous is also evident in other compositions. As Hatim reworked his response to Vali's *tarji'band*, he also encountered another Vali poem with the same rhyme which would have been written right after the model poem in Vali's *Divan*. In that poem, Vali used the imagery of snares for the beloved's tresses:

> *tujhe zulf-e ṣaiyād detī hai pech*
> *na is dām ke hāth soñ dil ko jāl* (VK 165.12)
> The hunter's tresses have curled all around you:
> Don't trap my heart with this snare.

In his *javab*, Hatim again transformed the dramatic original with its hunting imagery into an amusing reference for his urban audience in Delhi:

> *Kiyā dil ko zanjīr-e zulfāñ meñ qaid*
> *ye jab ḳhāl-e ḥabshī hu'ā kotvāl* (HDZ 199 *tarjī'band* 24)
> You arrested my heart in the chains of your tresses
> When your black mole became the policeman.

The *kotval* or officer of police in Delhi at the time was a soldier of Abyssinian descent or '*habshi*', Siddi Faulad Khan.[11] This kind of pointed reference to a familiar local authority figure would have drawn some laughter in a *mushaʿirah*.

After his intense engagement with Vali's *tarji'band*, Hatim still composed another response two years later in 1724–1725. Again, this involved several playful reversals of his model as well as a clever pun (*iham*) with the original. Vali's model in its last line stated:

> *ay Valī kyoñ ḳhushk maġhzī kā nahīñ kartā 'ilāj*
> *yād un ankhiyāñ kī tujh koñ roġhan-e bādām hai* (VK 283–284, 375.7)
> O Valī, why don't you heal your dried-up brain?
> memory of her eyes is to you like almond oil.

Hatim's whimsical response to Vali's reworks this 'nutty' imagery, transforming the healing quality of almond oil into a homonym pun:

> *Pistah-lab kī shoḳhī-e mizhgān kī shuhrat kyoñ na ho,*
> *jis kī haibat señ mushabbak sīnah-e bādām hai* (HDZ 13, 416.v4)
> Why would her pistachio lips and flirtatious lashes not be infamous?
> In fear for which, my perforated chest is ensnared.

The rhyme word in Hatim has to be read as *ba* + *dām*, 'with snare' to render meaning, but there is also a pun with '*bādām* or almond', which was in the original Vali poem.

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[10] The fourth line in the Persian and Rekhtah is the same: *Qabūl-e bar-gah-e bādshāhān/ Shikvah-e dast-e ṣāḥib-e dastgāhān*. '(Coffee is) Accepted in the courts of emperors/ (Like) complaints in the hands of the courtly'. In some manuscripts the word '*Julus*' or 'coronation/pomp' replaces *shikvah* in the Rekhtah version (see also Hakala and Naru 2014: 425–426). In contrast, the sixteenth Rekhtah verse and the fourteenth in Persian simply describe the routine of Hatim drinking two cups of coffee in the morning and two at night with few literary flourishes (Hakala and Naru 2014: HDZ 209; Hatim 2010: 238).

[11] He was also mocked by Sauda; see Malik 2006: 364–365.

This kind of intertextual *iham* makes sense only for the initiated who knew the poem was modelled after this specific one of Vali's. This whimsical element points to the oral environment of the *mushaʿirah*, rather than a context of self-study alone. Clearly learning through response poems was a social process.

The later response poems to Vali reveal growing maturity in themes, and a desire to use poetry in many different ways. One Vali *javab* that Hatim authored in 1748 is also a meditation on the martyrdom of the Prophet's grandsons Hassan and Hussain (HDZ 93, responding to VK 302). Hatim's last response poem to Vali, dated in some manuscripts of the *Divanzadah* as authored in 1768–1769, was repurposed a few years later by adding a *she'r* referencing Shah 'Alam II's return to Delhi under Maratha protection in 1772; this verse only appears in the Rampur manuscript of 1774–1775 (HDZ 164–165). Again, Hatim's register in this last poem is very colloquial, even obscene. Far from being removed from worldly concerns, this last *javab* shows a sharp critique of the political tumult experienced in this time:

> *duniyā to hai 'ajūzah o bahutoñ kī hai jhuṭail*
> *kab mard kholte haiñ us ūpar izārband* (HDZ 165, 127.8)
> The world has turned into an old hag, shared by many.
> How long will men keep opening their pant strings above her?

Such later poems invite us to consider the new ways in which Hatim and his audience still engaged with Vali, well beyond the Muhammad Shah epoque. In the last decades of Hatim's long life, the literary milieu and the historical contexts had changed substantially. This may explain the world weariness in some poems dealing with darker themes of martyrdom, ruination, and violence; however, Hatim's interest in depicting the world's pleasures in shared spaces of sociability did not wane, nor were they erased in his later works.

In summary, Hatim engaged in different ways with Vali's *ghazals* over the years. What started as generic responses based on theme and rhyme scheme became more intricate over time. This was a hybrid process. We can distinguish traces of the oral-aural performance context of the *mushaʿirah*, especially in friendly competition with peers such as Abru, and later polishing with written copies of Vali's *Divan*. The latter is particularly evident where Hatim works with more than one of Vali's poems in the same *radīf* at the time. There is a marked tendency to creatively reverse the meaning of Vali's model so as to delight the *mushaʿirah* audience through wordplay or *iham*, and puns that exploit near-homonymy. Also notable is a preference for everyday expressions, in both Persian and Rekhtah, and references to contemporary events, over Vali's more literary tone and abstract themes. Some, like the *Vaṣf-e Qaḥvah*, through its similarity of themes in both Rekhtah and Persian, indicate Hatim's familiarity and skill in playing with courtly registers and quotidian themes in both languages.

Understanding Hatim's revisionary project: Revisiting the foreword

How are we to understand the mid-century revisionist project of Hatim's *Divanzadah*? Current scholarly consensus has been shaped by later sources like Mushafi's *Tazkirah al-Shu'ara* (1794), cited at the beginning of the article. He reported Hatim's reminiscence of the enthusiasm in Delhi upon the arrival of Vali's *Divan* around 1720, but claimed that Hatim changed his style in his new *Divanzadah*. In particular, the reference that Hatim 'threw his *Divan* from the vault of his heart' misrepresents Hatim's editorial intentions for the new work. Mushafi's comment implies that some very drastic editing, and a rejection of the older work, had occurred in the making of the *Divanzadah*, but that was Mushafi's personal opinion based on his evaluation of his own period's style as superior. Later scholars followed suit, including Jalibi (1975: 434), who noted that in the old *Divan* 'the language of Vali and the color of *iham* from the age of Abru was dominant. Those *ghazals* and poems that he could correct and reform into the new style of poetry, he included in the *Divanzadah*, the rest were excised.'

However, Hatim's own explanation of his agenda, and his relationship to Vali, suggests a more complicated set of editorial goals, some of which may have been left unachieved. Revealingly, Hatim begins the foreword (*dibachah*) to the *Divanzadah* by presenting himself as a long-practising poet who had honed his craft for almost 40 years without any formal training with a master-poet. He emphasizes that his only masters were Vali in Rekhtah and Saʾib in Persian (BL fol. 1v). Thus, Hatim presents his expertise in the newly emerging vernacular not as the result of training with living masters, but rather as a process of self-study with the works of deceased master-poets, and Vali retains pride of place.

In the introduction to the *Divanzadah*, Hatim gives an account of his initial composition of his old *Divan*, as well as of the issues that evolved once this was in circulation. He recounts that the largely oral/aural context of poetic exchange created problems with the first *Divan* he had compiled as he wished to share his work with peers and students:[12]

> copying this was very difficult for everyone, therefore for the pleasure of {friends'} delicate sensibilities, **those who pursue this art and aspire to eloquence**,[13] who informed me of their condition with piercing wit, from their ideas, old and new. From every *radif* (by which sections of a *Divan* are organized) two or three *ghazals*, and from every *ghazal*, two or three couplets of excellence, and *marsiyah, manaqib, makhmasah, saqinamah* and *masnavi*, and such,[14] I brought forth selected examples by the ass-load (*kharvar*) and by way of abridgement drafted it in the form of a *bayaz* (notebook/composition book) and entitled it the *Divanzadah*, so that the vexation of the readers and copyists not be increased, **'the best speech is brief and useful'**. The measures and meters were written in red {also included}, so that beginners will derive the benefit from this. (BL fol. 1v)

The tongue-in cheek approach, particularly Hatim's amused exasperation at his readers and friends, complicates our understanding of the 'improvements' that Hatim made or intended to make in examples 'by the ass-load' in compiling the *Divanzadah*. The selection process does not suggest excision or a desire to cut ties with his model Vali, but rather a careful selection of choice works to serve as exemplars for his audience, described as 'beginners' (*mubtadiyan*). In this context, by mentioning his choice of the title as *Divanzadah*, he explicitly marks it as a continuation of the old poetry's lineage-tradition, rather than its reinvention. This passage also reveals a very pragmatic problem: Rekhtah as a newly crafted poetic language had no set orthography, as noted by Faruqi (2003: 817–818). The modified form of the Arabic script used at that time in particular lacked the full ability to represent the short vowels, retroflexes, and other sounds derived from Indic roots. Consequently, the likelihood of novice readers misreading or misunderstanding words was very great. It does not help that Hatim's handwriting, as is apparent from the *Divanzadah* autograph, was exceedingly small. This must have been a problem for the transcription of the old as well as the new *Divan*.

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[12] Bold text appears only in the original autograph; additions to this passage in later manuscripts are added in notes.

[13] In later manuscripts the reference to students of poetry was replaced by the more generic 'friends of delicate sensibilities': see Hatim (2011: 195) for references to alternate texts in other manuscripts.

[14] The phrase *mauquf dashtah* appears in later manuscripts, but not in the original autograph.

Thus, Hatim's discussion is intimately connected with the ways in which a poet's craft is improved through the guidance of master poets, dead and alive. He also focuses on inconsistent orthography and pronunciation. For that reason, in the autograph Hatim used a cluster of four dots over retroflexes, one possible solution before the standardization of orthography now common in printed texts. More importantly, to facilitate correct reading Hatim used red ink headings to identify the meter in which the poem was written, as well as the spoken rhythm (*tafaʿil)* represented in Arabic by the deployment of permutations of the root '*faʿl*' that define particular metrical feet. To explain why he did so, Hatim offers in the preface to the *Divan*zadah an *ihamgui* (punning) verse composed by his friend Abru:

> *Vaqt jinkā reḳhte ki shāʿirī meñ ṣarf hai, un satī kahtā hūñ būjho ḥarf merā zharf hai*
> *Jo kih lāve reḳhte meñ farsī ke faʿl o ḥarf, laġhv haiñge faʿl us ke, reḳhte meñ ḥarf hai*
> (HDZ 39–40)
> I say to those whose time is spent composing Reḳhtah poetry, 'pay heed, my words are deep:
> If you bring Persian words and meters to Reḳhtah, your meter will "run short", as is the word in Reḳhtah'.

There is a triple pun here: *harf* can mean 'word' but also 'mistake', *faʿl* means 'deeds', while also referring to the system of enunciating meters in poetry and *laghv* means 'mistake'. The reader is told to read the word 'in Rekhtah' which renders '*laghu*', which can mean, among others, 'short (as a syllable in metrical counting)'.[15] Here, *laghv* indeed becomes a 'mistake' of spelling and pronunciation—it 'runs short', to retain the colloquial pun in translation. In this riddling poem, Abru suggests that rigidly applying Persian orthography and meter to Rekhtah is pointless, as the poet will 'come up short' in both rhythm and deed. It seems that Hatim responded to this challenge by clarifying the rhythmic way to read each of his poems. Since discussion of pronunciation and orthography form the bulk of his introduction, it appears that Hatim was less concerned with throwing out his old creations than with rehabilitating them and facilitating his readers' understanding.

Scholars have paid greater attention to Hatim's ambitions than his actual poetic practice. Many recent studies have closely analysed Hatim's stated desire to find a balance between the everyday speech—*rozmarrah*—and the appropriate use of Arabic and Persian words by Rekhtah poets. Besides discarding obscure or pedantic Arabic and Persian terms, Hatim also mentioned jettisoning *bhakha*, or 'regional spoken vernaculars'.[16] Thus scholarship generally agrees that the common spoken speech of the *mirzas* (nobility) of Delhi and the *rinds* (free spirits) would become the standard to which Hatim aspired. Urdu scholar Dr Shamsur Rahman Faruqi (2003: 851) has rightly noted that this appears paradoxical as 'One can see Hatim's dilemma: he wants to hunt with the hounds and run with the hare. He doesn't want to declare independence from Vali, but he also wants to emphasize his own Delhi-ness.' But is this as paradoxical as it seems?

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[15] Platts Urdu dictionary. S.V. '*laghav*'.

The audience and model for this new literary register, as Hatim noted, were *mirzas* and *rinds.* This effort was aspirational, as Hatim worked hard to be associated with patrons in the elite circles of the noble *mirzas*, although he was not of that group himself. Walter Hakala has rightly emphasized that the elite register presupposes a connoisseurship on the part of both the poet and his audience, as it deploys a 'proximal irony' in juxtaposing the colloquialisms of everyday speech into the literary language of elite poetry (Hakala 2014: 374). On the other hand, Hatim sought to affiliate himself with the *rind*s or 'free spirits'. This is an even more elusive category to define in history, as it is not a social status defined by descent or title.[17] It denotes a familiar literary eccentric libertine persona, popularized in the classical Persian verses of poets like Hafiz.[18] Yet, the category of *rind* went beyond that literary persona, as contemporary recollections of Mughal and Safavid poets also identify specific figures known for their sociability, poetic skill, and eccentricity.[19] It is precisely this pleasure-seeking, street-smart, but spiritually inclined seeker ubiquitous in the poetry of the larger Persianate and vernacular worlds that Hatim invokes in his poetry (Amanat and Vejdani 2012: 7). For a society seeing greater social stratification and upward mobility, the *rind* was a more accessible model, and likely to have been more appealing as well!

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[16] The same short sentences in which Hatim outlines his agenda have been variously translated and interpreted by the three scholars with minor variations. Hakala translates the passage as follows:

> And during all this time, he has been engaged for about the last dozen years in the instruction of seekers, [considering correct only] those few words of the Arabic language and the Persian language that are commonly understood and frequently used in the colloquial discourse [rozmarrah] of Delhi which the elite [mirzāyān] of Hind and the shrewd eloquent speakers have guarded as their idiom. [Shāh Ḥātim] has ceased using the *hinduwī* of all regions, which they call *bhākhā*, except for only the colloquial discourse [rozmarrah] which is commonly understood and which the noble have selected as excellent and the smallest quantity of those words which come under attention in the adornment of speech. (Hakala 2014: 372–374)

Faruqi offers a more idiomatic translation:

> This servant [Shāh Ḥātim] … during the past ten or twelve years, has given up many words. He has favored such Arabic and Persian words as are easy to understand and are in common use, and has also favored the idiom of Delhi, which the Mirzās of Hind (the north) and the nonreligious standard speakers (*rind*) have in their use; and [he] has stopped using the language of all and sundry areas, and also the Hindavi that is called the *bhākha;* [he] has adopted only such a register as is understood by the common people, and is liked by the elite. (Faruqi 2003: 851)

Later in his text, Faruqi makes clear that *bhakha* is not referring to the literary version of Braj. Dudney offers snippets of translation with analysis:

> He asserts that certain words have an inherent ugliness/inappropriateness (*qabāḥat*), and that he has tried to give them up. The words he lists are all derived from Sanskrit, such as *jag*, meaning 'world'. This has usually been seen as the first salvo in the *Kulturkampf* whose armistice terms in the early twentieth century were that Hindi was to be 'the language of Hindus' (and hence the national language of India) and Urdu was to be 'the language of Muslims' (and, therefore, of Pakistan). But re-evaluating Shah Hatim's exact formulation is important; he rejects 'the Hindavī which they call '*bhākhā*' (in other words, Brajbhasha) in favour of 'the rozmarrah of Delhi'. More specifically, he states that he 'has chosen purely the rozmarrah which is understood by common people and acceptable to experts' (note the parallel to Arzu's invocation of common people and experts). (Dudney 2018: 42–49)

The constitution of both the *mirzas* and *rinds* had changed considerably during the Mughal period, with more tradesmen and upwardly mobile actors joining the once exclusive and noble groups so that by the seventeenth century they themselves became satirized in texts called *mirzanamahs* (O'Hanlon 1999: 47–93). By the mid-eighteenth century, political and economic dislocations had changed the profile of society (Naim 2002: 94–96). The courtly gathering was not the only space for poetic recitation and consumption—many scholars speak to the more heterogenous mixing of status groups in the marketplace, coffee houses, and festivals of this period (Tandon 2020: 166). These new venues created opportunities for more social mixing among various groups, as sources from that period such as the *Muraqqa'-e Dehli* report (Khan 1989: 19–20, 22–23, 35–44). This longer historical transformation was not unique to the Mughal realms. Within the Safavid empire, the growing presence of a bazari cultural milieu was noted by many observers. In coffeehouses and taverns, alongside the consumption of beverages, tobacco, and opium, customers consumed poems, recitations of romances, folk tales, and even sermons (Matthee 2005: 166–167). For many poets across the Persianate world the circle of patronage had widened, as had their audience and poets' interest in exploring these different spaces. We see this in the greater variety of Hatim's compositions: besides verses in praise of coffee, he also wrote on the consumption of tobacco, the often-raucous celebration of the Holi festival, a fireworks display, alongside a more traditional *saqi-namah* or 'cup-bearer' poem. All these compositions from the old *Divan* were retained in the *Divanzadah* as models worthy of study (HDZ 206–226).

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[17] Faruqi glosses *rind* twice in his discussion of Hatim's work, translating it first as 'nonreligious standard speakers' and later, on the same page, as 'educated, more or less free-living, non-religious frequenters of wine houses and market places' (Faruqi 2003: 851).

[18] Often contrasted to figures like the ascetic (*zahid*) or the preacher (*vaʿizz*), the *rind's* bacchanalian and libertine behaviour still revealed a specific truthful sincerity in contrast to the showy but ultimately false piety of the others. As Julie Meisami (1987: 295–297) has noted, the *rind*'s ability to capture the multiple roles of poet as lover, courtier, and moral philosopher offered admirers of Hafiz, whether prince or 'Everyman', advice on conduct.

[19] Thus, the 'Sufism' of one such figure, Muhammad Sufi, is characterized by Paul Losensky (2014: 149) as 'not a doctrinal belief, a philosophy, or a communal religious affiliation, but rather a mode of conduct that at once rejects and reflects normative standards of status and education, enabling a pursuit of individual refinement and self-development'.

Pinning down the category of the '*rind*' is key to understanding Hatim's target audience and model. The urbane, worldly, yet spiritual model borrowed from older masters was not rejected but embraced and enhanced in its Rekhtah presentation. Crucially, as a product of lifestyle and aesthetic disposition, the category of the *rind* could be used by Hatim and his milieu to celebrate the pleasures of life in the city, as well as its darker side.

As he worked on the *Divanzadah*, Hatim was speaking to a very different audience for Rekhtah. Unlike in the time of his youth, Rekhtah was no longer a new vogue and its appeal had widened considerably. By the 1750s three early *tazkirah*s of Rekhtah poets had appeared, offering a new form of literary criticism. In these early *tazkirah*s Vali himself received mixed attention as one of the early exponents of this form (Dhavan and Pauwels 2015, citing Chandpuri 1966: 8–9). Hatim, in turn, received a less than glowing account in Mir Taqi Mir's 1751 *Nikat al-Shu'ara* or 'Subtleties about Poets' (Dhavan and Pauwels 2015: 625–646). Hatim's modest background, his lack of formal training, and changing literary tastes would make him a target, despite the eminence of some of his patrons. Although Mir admitted he only had access to an incomplete copy of Hatim's *Divan*, he called Hatim 'ignorant' (*jahil*), and his work, a 'worn out vein' (*rag-e kuhnah*). Hatim was thus presented as both inept and out of step with current styles of poetry. Most rudely, at least for a younger critic in this culture, Mīr even offered some improvements for his elder's verse. Taking up a line of Hatim's:

> *hāy bedard se*[20] *milā kyoñ thā*
> *āge āyā mire kyā merā* (Mir 1984: 78)
> Alas, why did I meet the heartless one?
> Was the one who came before me truly mine?

Mir suggests:

> If it were my poem, I would also have added:
> *Mubtalā ātishak meñ hūñ ab maiñ*
> *āge āyā mere kyā merā* (Mir 1984: 78)
> I suffer now in this fire of Cupid's disease,
> Was the one who came before me truly mine?

There may well be a moral dig here, since *atishak* can also mean 'syphilis'. Mir seems to be rather crudely making fun of Hatim.

Thus, Hatim found himself being attacked and misrepresented, despite decades of participation in the poetic culture of the city and the court, even having acquired a retinue of pupils, some of whom gained fame in their own right, such as Sauda (d. 1780–1781). Clearly, a response to the new generation of Rekhtah poets, and more specifically Mir, was required.

In other *tazkirah*s though, notably in Qa'im Chandpuri's 1754 *Maḳhzan-e Nikat* ('Treasure House of Subtleties') (1966: 60–61), Hatim was treated with the respect usually extended to an elder *ustad* or master. Chandpuri, not coincidentally, was also much more respectful about Vali and had trained with both Hatim and Sauda (Dhavan and Pauwels 2015: 637–641). This background helps to explain both the tone and intent of Hatim's introduction to the *Divanzadah.* It also explains why, by the 1750s, Hatim was keen to portray himself as a practising *ustād*, and felt compelled to compile a list of pupils, as Mushafi reported in the 1790s:

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[20] Hatim himself had updated the language from *son* (in the old Divān, see Hatim 1977: 99) to *se* in the new version.

> These days, the singers of songs, both noble and plebeian, know him [Hatim] to be securely proven to be an *ustad.* In fact, he himself wrote the names of those who from beginning to end have benefited from his poetry and pasted them on two or three pieces of paper, by way of index, behind the page of his own *Divan*, so that people would know that Hatim had so many disciples. Among them was written the name of Mirza Rafi'Sauda, who in the opinion of all was among the outstanding Hindi poets of this age. In truth, that is not a lie. (Mushafi 1933: 80–88)

This list was part of the original *Divanzadah*, but was lost when the manuscript was rebound.

By this mid-point of his career, the network Hatim referred to in his earlier poems had been replaced by a new generation of Urdu poets. Small wonder Hatim represented himself as in dialogue with this new generation of poets. In the *Divanzadah* in later years poems appear in response to new names, the most numerous to his pupil Sauda (11 poems over a 30-year span from 1749–1779) and also the nobleman and poet Kukah Khan Fighan (eight between 1746–1754).[21] Although Sauda would later become a luminary in poetic circles, at the time Hatim began editing his old poetry, Hatim's own poetic reputation was being attacked by younger poets such as Mir. This does not necessarily mean he reflexively turned his back on his earlier models. Rather, the *Divanzadah* as a project was intended to help a new generation of poetry lovers understand and connect to this older work.

The making of the *Divanzadah*: The actual text

Confusingly, Hatim's approach to editing the *Divanzadah*, as posited in the introduction, does not always match his actual edits. Upon study, it appears that the changes in *Divanzadah* do not simply consist of the replacement of vernacular terms with Persian vocabulary, as many scholars have assumed. The confusion perhaps stems from the Urdu scholar Jalibi's analysis, where he gives a long list of examples of editing changes. Unfortunately, he takes the verses out of context, and only lists the lexical substitutions that can be taken as examples of Persianization (Jalibi 1975: 434–436). We offer here instead a close comparison of the full early response poem to Vali that Hatim composed in 1723–1724 with the edited version of the same poem he included in the *Divanzadah* some decades later. This gives us a sense of both the original response to

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[21] For Sauda, see HDZ 104–176, and Kukah Khan Fighan, HDZ 79–110. In the older work, the earlier Urdu poets Abru and Mazmun get three response poems each, and after 1739, six poems to Yaqin and Taban were composed (HDZ 7, 10, 16, 18, 28–29, 32). None of these would be that familiar to his later audience.

Vali as well as how it was ‘improved’. This is best shown via a transcription of folio 56v of *Divanzadah* in the British Library, as compared to the old *Divan* (Hatim 1977: 197). We chose this particular example because it is the most heavily edited of the Vali response poems (Hatim’s deletions are struck through to show the changes, new additions are in bold.)

> *Zamīn-e Valī dar san 1136*[22] *fī baḥr ramal muśamman maḥzūf masṭūr*
> In the style of Valī, 1136 AH, in the meter
> =-==/=-==/=-==/=-=
> *kāmiloñ kā yeh suḳhan muddat se*[23] *mujko*[24] *yād hai*
> *~~jag meñ~~ ~~be maḥbūb~~* ***ya‘nī***[25] ***be ma‘shūq***[26] *jīnā zindahgī (sic) barbād hai*
> For a long time, I have remembered this saying of the saints,
> That is: ‘Living without the beloved, ruins one’s life’.
> *bandahgī (sic) soñ sarv qad kī ek qadam bāhar nahīñ*
> *~~sarv gulshan bīch kahne meñ~~ ~~agar~~*[27] ***kyā hu’ā gar sarv kahne kī ta’īn*** *azād hai*
> Out of servitude the lofty one may not step even once outside.
> So what if the cypress is said to be free in name?
> *be madad zulfon kī us kī ḥusn ne qaidī kiyā*
> *ṣaid-e dil be dām karnā ṣan‘at-e ṣaiyād hai*
> Without the help of tresses, his beauty imprisoned me.
> The captor’s skill lies in hunting the heart without a snare.

Next come two couplets left out of the *Divanzadah*, but originally part of the response:

> *~~[Mukh koñ tere dekhkar bolā hūñ main shams al-ẓuḥā~~*
> *~~Tis ūpar~~ ḳhaṭ ~~sūrah-‘e vā al-shams ke isnād hai~~*
> Seeing your face, I uttered ‘By the sun of the forenoon!’[28]
> Your downy beard spells the seal of the *sūrah* of the sun.
> *~~Ḳhalq kahtī hai paṛā thā ‘āshiqī meñ koh-kan~~*
> *~~Tujh lab-e shīrīn kī ḥasrat meñ har ek Farhād hai~~*
> The world says that the mountain-digger had fallen in love,
> Longing for your sweet (Shīrīn’s)[29] lips, everyone has become a Farhād.]
> *Dil nihān phirtā hai Ḥātim kā Najaf ashraf ke gard*
> *Gar vaṭan ẓāhir meñ us kā Shāhjahānābād hai* (BL fol. 56v; cp. HDZ 3)
> Ḥātim’s heart secretly roams around the holy tomb of ‘Ali,
> While his apparent/physical homeland is Shāhjahānābād

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[22] The editor of the print version of the *Divanzadah* mistakenly notes this as AH 1132 (1719–1720 CE), an easy mistake since the numbers 2 and 6 are mirror images; compare with BL fol. 56v which clearly states AH 1136 (1723–1724 CE). The Rampur manuscript records this as AH 1133 (1720–1721 CE), see note on HDZ 3.

[23] The old *Divan* (Hatim 1977: 197) gives *son.*

[24] The old *Divan* (Hatim 1977: 197) gives *mujh kon.*

[25] The old *Divan* (Hatim 1977: 197) gives *jag men.*

[26] The old *Divan* (Hatim 1977: 197) gives *Mahbub.*

[27] *Divanzadah* has the line reshuffled: *sarv gulshan bīch kahne meñ agar āzād hai.*

[28] An allusion to the first words of Quran 91, so-called *Surat ash-Shams,* see http://quran.com/91, [accessed 12 October 2022].

[29] Pun on the meaning of the name of Farhad’s sweetheart, Shirin.

Vali's original[30]

> *hai bejā ushshāq kī ḳhātir agar nāshād hai*
> *ġhamzah-e ḳhūñḳhvār ẓālim bar sar-e bedād hai*
> If she is displeased, the lovers' attention is to no avail.
> Her blood-thirsty glances are cruel, to the point of being unjust.
> *kyoñ na ho favvārah-e ḳhūn josh zan rag satī*
> *har nigāh-e tez-e ḳhūbāñ nishtar-e faṣād hai*
> Why wouldn't a fountain of blood burst forth from my every vein?
> Every cutting glance of the beautiful people is like sparring lancets.
> *yak ghaṛī tujh hijr meñ ay dilrubā tanhā nahīñ*
> *mūnis damsāz merā āh hai faryād hai*
> I am not lonely even for an hour in your absence:
> My companion and sympathizer are my sigh and my complaint
> *til banāte dekh uskoñ mujh pe yūñ ẓāhir huvā*
> *ṣaid karne koñ hamāre raġhbat-e ṣaiyād hai*
> Watching him make a beauty-spot, it became apparent to me:
> The hunter's intention is to hunt me!
> *āsmān ūpar na būjho chādar-e abr-e safed*
> *jā-e namāz-e zāhid-e 'uzlat-nashīn bar bād hai*
> Do not take it that the sky is covered with a veil of white clouds
> It is the hermit's prayer mat spread on the wind as he kneels in seclusion.[31]
> *ḥarf-e shīrīn us satī hote haiñ har dam jalvah gar*
> *ahl-e ma'nī kī zabān kyā tesh-e Farhād hai*
> Sweet (Shīrīn's) promises flash continually from her mouth,
> How the poets' speech falls like the axe on the heart of Farhād!
> *sarv kī vā rastagī ūpar naẓar kar ay Valī*
> *bāvajūd-e ḳhud-numā'ī kis qadar āzād hai* (KV 266, 348)
> Look up and see how tall the cypress rises, Valī,
> Except for its self-confidence, to what extent is it free?

It is obvious that Vali's poem uses far more Persian imagery and vocabulary; by contrast Hatim uses more vernacular words. From the deletions, it is immediately apparent that the commonplace understanding that Hatim Persianized his work in the *Divanzadah* is untenable. Hatim deletes exactly the fourth and fifth couplets of this *ghazal* that bear the Arabic quote from a Quranic Surah and allude to the classic Persian love tragedy of Shirin and Farhad. Further, what at first appears to be a replacement for the Indic '*jag men*' with '*ya'ni*', when seen in the larger context of replacing '*jag men be mahbub*' with '*ya'ni be ma'shuq*', turns out to be less drastic.

Quite a few of the changes involve updating archaic expressions. This had also been noticed by scholars such as Jalibi, who noted in particular the old postposition '*son*' being replaced with ‘*se*’ as in the example cited by Mīr, above. In short, rather than Persianizing, Hatim replaces archaic words with vernacular terms more suited to the new contemporary audience.

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[30] The poem that follows this in Vali's *Divan* has the same end-rhyme and is a better match for Hatim's in terms of meter, but both have identical themes—the blood-drenched hunter snaring the lover, references to Shirin-Farhad—and even repeat the same phrases. That Hatim's response engages both suggests he closely studied Vali's *Divan*. Compare Vali's *ghazal* no. 347 with 348, VK 265–266.

[31] We are grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers of this article for suggesting this meaning. There is at the same time a pun, if one reads *barbad* as 'destroyed', which was the original rhyme of the first *shi'r* of the *ghazal*.

The other changes are mainly deletions of phrases and verses. By erasing some of the original references to the poem that inspired it, Hatim aims to render his own verse tighter and more condensed in meaning. Consider Vali’s last verse and Hatim’s response in his second verse. Vali had subverted the conventional imagery of the cypress tree, which stands for tall stature, and simultaneously, due to its lofty nature, as independent, thus a free spirit. Vali questions the freedom of the cypress and Hatim follows suit, making it explicit that the tree, rooted as it is in the garden, is free only in name. His correction prunes the line from superfluous wording (he cuts the Persianate *gulshan*) and renders it tighter. Hatim preserves, however, the next couplet on the lover being snared in the tresses of the beloved, who is also simultaneously free and fettered. The last line too could be taken to return to this theme, as it summons the image of Hatim strolling the streets of Delhi, yet communing with the holy Shia shrines at Najaf, simultaneously free and bound, hereby reversing Vali’s more critical worldly image.

This case study also supports our refutation of the common misperception of Hatim’s early poems as characterized by the physical, worldly pleasures of Muhammad Shah’s era. In this response poem Hatim is aware of the subtexts of Vali’s literary references[32] and subtly manipulates them to achieve the seemingly paradoxical idea of a spiritually grounded physical love. The newly edited poem in the *Divanzadah* yields a tighter version, evoking the qualities associated with the *rinds* of Hatim’s time, most prominently, praise of the physical beauty, often of the male lover, and its playful linkages with spiritual ideas. Hatim remains true to Vali’s inspiration, but anchors it in his own reading.

This example demonstrates that the innovation entailed neither increased use of Perso-Arabic themes or words. Vali’s poetry was already replete with these, thus use of Persian words did not constitute a new development. Hatim’s responses often involved colloquial registers to draw mirth in performance, or reverse and play with themes from the model, and show literary and aesthetic concerns rather than linguistic ones. Rather, what emerges by the end of this long process of practice in the final set of revisions for the *Divanzadah* is the greater expressivity of Hatim’s language as well as tighter control over the poetic form.

Texts and contexts: Hatim’s changing audience

The crucial question behind all this is to what degree Hatim’s network and audience changed during the mid-eighteenth century. This involves first Hatim’s patrons and his circle of companions and, more broadly, the issue of the ‘arbiters of taste’ throughout his lifespan. Despite his modest background, Hatim’s early success was via well-placed courtly patrons. We have already encountered his first patron, ‘Ali Asghar Khan, who commissioned one early Vali response poem (HDZ 14).[33] Khan was part of the clique that held power in the early years of Muhammad Shah's rule, but was bitterly resented by older nobility and eventually displaced.[34] Subsequently, for at least a decade in the period after composing his first *Divan*, as a well-regarded poet, but still heavily dependent on patronage, Hatim worked as the supervisor of kitchens in Navab Amir Ḳhan ʿUmdat ul-Mulk's household.[35] This patron was from a distinguished Persian family of old nobility, and Amir Khan himself was a gifted poet who had trained under Bedil and composed verses under the pen-name 'Anjam'. He was a favourite at court and very fashionable (O'Hanlon 2005: 27). However, in 1746 he was assassinated, said to have been provoked by his falling out with Emperor Muhammad Shah, and Hatim was again left to find a new patron.[36] In short, Hatim was subjected to frequent fluctuations in fortune, even during Muhammad Shah's rule.

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[32] For Vali the tropes of the tall cypress, or the mole and fuzzy down on his lover’s cheek, often evoked Vali’s lover Abu al-Ma‘ali (Dhavan and Pauwels 2015: 637).

[33] The London ms. dates this to 1141 AH (1728–1729 CE) and the Karachi ms. prepared at the end of Hatim’s life dates it to 1138 AH (1725–1726 CE).

Hatim was not the only enthusiast inspired by Vali in the early period. His close companion, Abru, and other contemporaries, such as Fa'iẓ Dihlavi, also used Vali's poems to shape and hone their poetic skills.[37] They also shared Hatim's self-presentation as an urbane connoisseur. The continued mix of scholars, merchants, and poets from many regions shared an emerging urban subjectivity in literary circles, which reached new audiences with broader themes (Dadlani 2018b: 149, 154–165). Rekhtah appealed even to non-native speakers of the vernacular, such as Qizilbash Khan Umid (d. 1746), a Central Asian soldier, who arrived in Delhi during Hatim's peak, and became a well-known figure in Rekhtah circles.[38] Persian played an important role in these circles as it facilitated circulation among poets and audiences, whose own spoken vernaculars varied greatly, but who had some exposure to poetic themes and performative contexts.

The period that followed has been heavily debated by literary scholars. Jalibi (1975, 429–431) suggested that after the 1740s Hatim retreated to Sufi contemplation and poetic composition, leaving behind more worldly and erotic themes. This influential narrative first appeared in the nineteenth-century *tazkirah, Ab-e Hayat* or 'Water of Life' (Azad 2001: 109). One should be careful about confusing a literary persona with actual biography, however. In fact, themes of worldly and physical love (*'ishq-e majazi)* are entwined with spiritual love (*'ishq-e haqiqi)* in all phases of Hatim's work. This interconnectivity was also a persistent theme throughout the Persianate world, from the Ottoman to the Mughal courts, as is the adoption of the libertine voice of the 'drunken' *rind* (Inan 2017: 683; Amanat and Vejdani 2012: 7). Hatim's self-presentation as a *rind* should not be surprising. It is characteristic for Hatim's early responses to Vali, as we have seen above, but it is also evoked in his later poetry.

Another continuity in the *Divanzadah* is the copious production of response poems to contemporary poets writing about worldly themes, rather than religious ones—Kukah Khan Fiighan, Hatim's own student Sauda, Yaqin—as well as new courtier-patrons, such as Navab Sayyid ᶜAli Khan Zamir and his sons (HDZ 106–159). Moreover, Hatim continued to present his work at the Mughal court throughout his life and did not retreat from it as Jalibi had believed (HDZ 141).

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[34] On Koki Jiu and her clique engaged in *rishvat-khori,* and their eventual fall in 1734, see Malik 2006: 80 (quoting *Shah Namah-e Deccan,* 87–91).

[35] In two poems (HDZ 41, 76) dated 1148 AH (1735–1736 CE) and 1158 AH (1745–1746 CE) his patron is mentioned by name, as is Hatim's work toiling in the kitchen, from which he humorously begs leave in the 1158 poem.

[36] Naim 2002: 148–149. Amir Khan was the head of the Iranian Shia faction at court, see Alam 1993: 286.

[37] Our forthcoming book explores this in greater detail (Dhavan and Pauwels forthcoming). See also Sharma 2018: 171–172.

[38] Chandpuri 1966: 74–75. See also Dudney 2017: 536–537.

Meanwhile, the changed spatial politics of Delhi encouraged scholars to look to new nobility as patrons. By the 1750s new noble lineages had emerged at the court, where imperial power was now greatly diminished. Such nobles endowed schools and mosques alongside tomb complexes which also offered support to scholars and poets. Sectarian identities also emerge within these patronage networks. A Shia-oriented complex was built around Safdar Jang and Najaf Khan's tomb in Aliganj in the 1750s by emigres from Nishapur and Mashad which would eventually become the ruling family of Avadh (Dadlani 2018a: 101–104). A Sunni complex arose around the grave and mosque complex of ᶜImad ul-Mulk Ghazi ud-din Khan's Turani family, later linked with the rulers of Hyderabad (Pernau and Cug̱ẖtāʾī 2006: 4–6). Significantly, both groups would go on to become patrons of well-known Rekhtah poets. Hatim maintained contact with both emerging groups in Delhi. We have already seen his expressions of Shia devotion in his early work comparing Delhi to Najaf. Hatim's favoured pupil Sauda, with whom he maintained a long-lasting connection in his later years, served both ᶜImad ul-Mulk and the Shia rulers of Avadh (Naim 2002: 155). Hatim himself also maintained ties with the Sunni Turani group: a 1758 poem written in response to ᶜImad ul-Mulk's own verse thanks him for his gifts (HDZ 153).

Beyond Hatim's immediate networks, how did the category of 'arbiters of taste' change during his lifespan? In the foreword to his *Divan*, Hatim deferred to the judgement of the '*ahl-e zaban*' or the 'knowledgeable poetic scholars'. How had these authorities changed by the 1750s when the *Divanzadah* was written?[39] As evidenced by Hatim's own changing patrons, the '*ahl-e zaban*' ranged from those who had longstanding roots in the aristocratic elite of the Mughal court, to those who were among the many new, seemingly parvenu, characters who had arrived in Muhammad Shah's court early in Hatim's career. In his recent work Abhishek Kaicker (2020: 9–11) has brought greater attention to the changes in the elite, as large numbers of scholars and office seekers, whose ambitions for office were frustrated by the diminished opportunities available in the Imperial court after 1710, flocked to Delhi at this time. At the same time Delhi was also the site of a very large and variegated artisanal and professional class of non-elites, from the working poor like cobblers, to wealthy goldsmiths, and even professional poets whose relationships with each other and claims to the protection and patronage of the court were frequently oppositional and tense. As Kaicker (2020: 285–286) points out, non-elite Rekhtah poets like Benawa, an immigrant from a small Punjabi town, could document such tensions in Muhammad Shah's reign, but far too often the literary elite attempted to distance themselves from these low-class communities.[40]

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[39] Arthur Dudney (2018: 40–41, 44–49) has noted that the great lexicographer and scholar Siraj al-Din Ḳhan 'Arzu' (d. 1756) argued that the '*ahl-e zaban*' had the best command of a literary language's poetic expressiveness. For Arzu, this went beyond the everyday spoken vernacular, or *rozmarrah*, to the more literary mastery of professional poets. Dudney argues that Hatim's attentiveness to spelling Arabic and Persian loan words correctly, as well as his expunging words from (Braj)bhasha and relying only on the spoken language of Delhi, is parallel with Arzu thinking on these matters. This is indeed a useful insight into Hatim's likely goal. However, Dudney's misreading of *bhakha*, the 'vernacular', as the specific idiom of 'Brajbhasha', misrepresents the target of Hatim's editorial zeal. It also assumes a well-defined group who counted among the '*ahl-e zaban*' in the 50 years that Hatim was a practising poet.

Hatim's own early work also shows a somewhat hostile attitude to these upwardly mobile groups. Perhaps due to his own modest background, once successful, he wished to distance himself from the less worthy groups he saw scrambling towards a more elite, *ashraf*, lifestyle. His frequently quoted *Shahr-ashob* 'Lament of the city' satirized the status-seeking ambitions of Delhi's artisans, domestics, and soldiers (HDZ 191–193). It is important, though, to consider the different redactions of the poem over time. It was started in 1729 (1141 AH), the very year that saw an uprising of low-caste urban groups, known as the Shoemakers' riot (Kaicker 2020: 256–290). In that context it becomes understandable that Hatim lamented:

> *amīrzāde haiñ ḥairān apne ḥāl ke bīch*
> *the āftāb par ab ā ga'e zavāl ke bīch*
> *phirīñ haiñ carḳhe se har din talāshmāñ ke bīch*
> *vuhī ghamanḍ-e imārat hai phir ḳhayāl ke bīch*
> *ḳhudā jo cāhe to phir ho par ab to hai dushvār* (HDZ 191, v. 4)
> Sons of nobility are amazed at their state
> They used to be at the zenith, now they have declined.
> But by the turn of heavens, they find themselves daily among the beggars.
> Their old pride of office still lingers, but in their imagination only.
> If God wishes, then it might return, but right now it is hard to bear.

Such sudden changes in status for Delhi's elite were, however, not just a single occasion of reversal of fortune. Throughout the century, social upheaval continued. As Delhi was ransacked again and again, fortunes kept turning and new social hierarchies arose. This is reflected in different redactions of *Shahr-ashob*, as Hatim added more lines. The following new quintet probably dates to around 1781:[41]

> *shahoñ ke bīch 'adālat kī kuchh nishānī nahīñ*
> *amīroñ bīch sipāhī kī qadardānī nahīñ*
> *buzurgoñ bīch kahīñ bū-e mehrbānī nahīñ*
> *tavāẓu'khāne kī chāho kahīñ to pānī nahīñ*
> *goyā jahāñ se jātā rahā saḳhāvat o pyār* (HDZ 191, v. 2)
> Among kings, no mark of justice left,
> Among nobility, no one appreciates soldiery,
> Among elders, nowhere a scent of sympathy left!
> If one expects hospitality, let alone food, not even water is left,

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[40] By the 1740s, travelogues like the *Muraqqa'-e Dehli* document the widening milieu of the growing Rekhtah cultural scene. Around that time a host of courtesans, singers, and musicians leap into the historical record, but as is clear from the *tazkirah*s of the period, these groups were never considered the *ahl-e zaban*, a role claimed by elite, *ashraf*, established poets.

[41] The edition by 'Abd al-Haq (Hatim 2008: 246) notes that the manuscripts before 1781 lack this composition; the earliest version had only 12 stanzas, while the last manuscripts included 25. The first verse in the longest recension alludes to the coming of the twelfth Islamic century, suggesting that at least that first verse, and probably the next one quoted here (as well as others), were added at around that time, close to Hatim's death.

As if generosity and love are leaving this world.

These five decades between the two verses quoted also brought a change of perspective for Hatim. Whereas in 1729, the poor state of the old elite had drawn his sympathy, by the end of the Islamic century, Hatim criticized the new elite patrons for not holding to the reciprocity of their obligations to soldiers and others dependent on them. In-between these years, Hatim himself had been subject to suspicion of being an upstart by younger rivals from much more distinguished lineages, which may help explain his changed perspective.

In Hatim's work we see both a growing sense of what was owed by the rising elite to dependants, but also a pragmatic resignation to the tumultuous changes in patronage. In the 1729 *she'r*s from *Shahr-ashob*, Hatim depicted, in broad satirical terms, the upside-down quality of Delhi in Muhammad Shah's reign as low-status artisans sought the rich foods, dress, wealth, and standing of the former elite. In the final quintet, Hatim consoled himself:

Tire hai rizq kā ẓāmin sadā ḳhudā ḥātim,
Tū inqalāb-e zamānah se ġham na khā Ḥātim,
Kih tujh ko rizq bahut aur rozgār hazār (HDZ 193, v. 25)
God always guarantees your daily bread, o judge (literal meaning of his pen name).[42]
Don't be devoured by sorrow about the turn fortune takes, Ḥātim,
As you will receive plentiful bread and thousands of ways of making a living.

This quintet would be echoed in the ending of the last response poem to Vali, which he wrote decades later, in 1768–1769:

Ḥātim ulaṭ palaṭ se zamāne ke ġham na khā
hotā nahīñ jahāñ kā kabhū kārobār band (HDZ 165, v. 9)
Ḥātim, do not let grief devour you in these seemingly upside-down times:
The business of the world is never finished.

Both poems counsel not to give in to depression, using the same Rekhtah expression (*gham na kha*). Yet, youthful optimism has given way to world-weariness. Yes, the world will be 'back to business' no matter what happens, but that is now perceived as relentless and wearying. Seen against the historical background of the return to Delhi of Shah 'Alam II under Maratha 'protection' in 1772, referenced in yet another late revision to this last Vali poem, such cynicism about the relentless power struggles would be perfectly understandable (HDZ 164–165).

In-between, Hatim appears to have taken this youthful pragmatic advice to heart, representing his work to ever-new audiences, without necessarily refashioning himself completely at any one given moment, as had been assumed thus far. The '*ahl-e zaban*' or 'arbiters of good taste' in rapidly changing urban circles did not remain stable for long. Hatim's reputation rose and fell in other poets' estimation, but so did his critics. All through this period, poets and *tazkirah* writers kept constructing and debating the parameters of this community of models. If the new audiences needed to be reminded of Hatim's own proximity to the new '*ahl-e zaban*', whom Hatim identified as *mirzas* and *rinds*, there was no shortage of such experience in Hatim's work, old and new. Hatim remained ready to remind his audience that he was an acknowledged *ustad*.

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[42] Perhaps also a reference to Hatim Ta'yy, renowned for his generosity, as suggested by an anonymous reviewer of this article.

Conclusion: Defining what constitutes a *rind* and *mirza* through Hatim's work

Hatim's continued reliance on Vali's poetic models, first as a student and later as a master poet and teacher, suggests that for Hatim and many of his contemporaries, Vali's place in the canon of Urdu poetic masters never waned. The range of literary Urdu used by Hatim and his peers changed over the course of the nearly seven decades his works span, as did the profile of the *mirzas* and *rinds* who constituted Hatim's idealized audience. Yet, Vali remained a prominent poetic model in the *Divanzadah*, whose emulation could guide poets to a deeper understanding of their craft. When Hatim made edits in his older response poems to Vali, he did so to improve the expressivity and flow of the poems, updating archaic forms, but not in order to excise the link to the original or 'Persianize' the model. Vali's early vernacular style already used Persian or Arabic loan words. The new generation of Rekhtah poets did not use these to any higher degree. Rather, Hatim deflated a dramatic, learned model to a more colloquial, everyday form. The bulk of the innovations in the *Divanzadah* are technical in nature: writing out the meter of each poem to ensure correct articulation, and replacement of old archaic vernacular terms with new ones. These had remained under the radar in printed editions of the text of the *Divanzadah*. Returning to the original manuscripts has revealed that Hatim was preoccupied with how a vernacular that had not been standardized could be written in the Persian script to convey correct pronunciation, and also conform to the tighter and more rigid use of meter that was emerging by the latter half of the eighteenth century. More importantly, we need to question if Hatim actually followed through on the lofty goals he set for himself in his new work. The Vali response poems were not in fact heavily edited, beyond slight revisions to remove archaic words or correct flow. While some other early poems were edited or deleted completely, all 19 Vali response poems were incorporated into the new *Divanzadah*. Further, Hatim continued writing poems in response to Vali later in life. This suggests that, far from wanting to distance himself from his poetic model, Hatim continued to view Vali as an established master whose work could inspire and provoke new ideas and approaches, and even speak to new tastes.

Misreading Hatim's efforts as abandoning old poetic influences and attempting to achieve linguistic purity is a consequence of seeing Persian literary influence through narrow ahistorical and nationalist filters. The eighteenth-century Persian circles of Hatim's milieu did not conflate linguistic usage, ethnic identity, or imperial community in the same manner we do now. In the Persianate world throughout the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia, Persian had a complicated but mutually stimulating relationship with local vernaculars, often providing the literate infrastructure upon which scholarship of other languages could be developed, and it is to this category of complex cultural and linguistic literary exchanges, and to the people who moved freely within both literary communities that Hatim's work was addressed. Indeed, providing tools to accurately reproduce the sounds and cadences of Indian spoken vernaculars in the Perso-Arabic script, and to realize their fit into metrical forms borrowed from

Persian, were among Hatim's primary goals. The *Divanzadah* does so by explicating poetic practices that had long precedence in Persianate circles, but using well-known Rekhtah poets, rather than Persian ones as models, identifying specific meters for students, and demonstrating the expressivity these could foster in the vernacular, while still fully inhabiting the semantic range of local forms. Rigorous training in poetics and close attention to meter, rhyme, and figurative speech became commonplace for Persianate communities in many regions as Persian flourished as a pan-regional cosmopolitan language, embraced by many non-native practitioners (Amanat and Vejdani 2012: 10). In applying these to an Indian vernacular such as Rekhtah, Hatim and his circles moved such literary practices into a new arena, while also highlighting their debt to older practitioners of such cross-linguistic virtuosity. Hatim was responding to Mir's critique of both his poetic model Vali, and of his own skills. He was also aware, as the introduction to the *Divanzadah* illustrates, that contemporary poets had difficulty reading and understanding his work. Thus, his *Divanzadah*, as the title clearly indicates, was meant to be the selected best of his oeuvre, not to efface or obscure either the origins or the inspiration behind it. Had the desire to edit out early influences really been Hatim's original motivation, surely he would not have mentioned Vali by name as his poetic model, identified each poem written in response to Vali in the title, nor picked a name for this new collection that implies a strong kinship with the old one.

So what value did Vali have for Hatim? In short, the decades-long process of responding to Vali helped Hatim hone his own poetic skills and further refine them later in his career: his literary persona became sharper, more attuned to the very traits of the imagined space of the *rind*. In particular, the goal appears to be to project the worldly, polished, street-wise, but spiritually grounded traits associated with this view, naturalized to the locale of Delhi. This performative, ever-continuing self-fashioning becomes foundational for the new vernacular, through the affective work done in reframing lofty literary themes into engaging everyday forms, expressing personal piety, or responding to contemporary patrons or events. These are trends also observable in Vali's poems, but in incorporating the changed social landscape of his own time, Hatim more fully inhabits both the persona and the language of the *rind* in his verses, equally comfortable in the milieu of the diminished Mughal court as in the rough and tumble of Delhi's bazars and streets.

Competing interests. None.

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