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**Title**

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**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6qg479xf>

**Journal**

Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 15(1)

**ISSN**

0069-6412

**Author**

Martin, David

**Publication Date**

1984-10-01

Peer reviewed

**SELECTED *GHAZALĪYĀT* (LOVE POEMS)**  
**TRANSLATED FROM THE CLASSICAL PERSIAN OF**  
**KHĀQĀNĪ, SA'DĪ, AND RŪMĪ**

**David Martin**

Translations of the *ghazalīyāt* (love poems) of these three masters of classical Persian verse are here offered together for the first time for two reasons: (1) to suggest by way of comparison, the development of the *ghazal* (love poem) in the early middle period of classical Persian Poetry, and (2) to show the level of mastery achieved in the *ghazal* form by poets whose poetic reputation is in another genre.

The lives of these three poets were affected by new racial incursions from Central Asia into the northeast of Iran. By 1100 A.D., most of Iran was already under Turkish political domination in the family of the Seljuq Turks. Within the next two hundred years, the northeastern area of Iran, Khorāsān (including Gozgan with its city of Balkh, called "the Mother of Cities," and Transoxiana with its cities of Samarqand and Bokhara) and Khwārazm that together formed the center of the Islamic-Persian Renaissance of the 4th century and were the most prosperous areas of Iran since the Arab Conquest (ca. 640–740 A.D.), was devastated and depopulated, changing from a mercantile and agricultural economy to a nomadic herding economy. What was once an Iranian area in race, language and culture, came to be an area of Turkish dominance in population, language, and to some extent, culture. Even later (ca. 1250 A.D.), that part of Central Asia that was once Iranian became largely Mongol, pushing the Turks even farther west.

KHĀQĀNĪ

Hasan al-'Ajam Afḍal al-Dīn Bedīl bin 'Alī Najjār Khāqānī Shervānī (500–582 A.H. 1102–1184 A.D.) was raised on the northwestern borders of the Iranian cultural area, in what is now Azarbaijan S.S.R.<sup>1</sup> His mother was Christian and his father, Muslim. The area of Ṭabaristān (modern Gīlān and Mazānderān) just to the south and east had long been a holdout—for three

centuries after the collapse of the Sāsānian Empire under Arab Muslim attack of the old Iranian culture of the Sāsānian. Pahlavi was still written and read, and Zoroastrianism practiced, in the 5th/11th century. First known as Ḥaḡā'iqī ("of the truths"), he received his second *takhalluṣ* or pen name of Khāqānī (princely, royal) by serving as court poet to the Khāqān (king) of Shervān, Aktisān bin Minūchehr. Khāqānī has the reputation of being one of the most difficult and learned of all Persian poets. He was also certainly not humble; rather, his complete awareness of his poetic capability and accomplishments tended to make him haughty. In any case, he felt he was not sufficiently appreciated in Shervān in the northwest of Iran and hoped to fare better under the royal patronage of Sanjār, last of the great Seljuq sultans, in Khorāsān, the home of the Persian Renaissance. Several times he attempted to relocate there and was foiled by various mishaps. Once, when he was already halfway there, he was forced to turn back at Rayy (near modern Tehran) for some unknown reason. His hopes were dashed when the Oghuzz Turks in 548/1154, quarrelling with Sanjār over taxes and pasture rights, swarmed out of their cramped pastures in what is now northern Afghanistan (Guzgan), and captured Sanjār. They destroyed political authority in all of Khorāsān, and pillaged as far west as Nishapur (Nayshabūr), which they sacked, massacring many of its inhabitants.

To turn to Khāqānī's poetry, he is most famous for his *qaṣā'id* (singular, *qaṣīda*: ode) in which he eulogized ruling princes and great scholars using all of his learning—literary, religious, and scientific—to construct complex metaphors and "poetic machines" of interrelated and integrated metaphors. Yet he wrote very fine and comparatively simple love poems (*ghazalīyāt*). These tend to be short, piercing, poems. Already in the hands of Khāqānī, the *ghazal* had attained a mature form. In Khorāsān in the fourth and fifth centuries of the Hegira (eleventh and twelfth centuries A.D.), Persian poets had been adapting the Arabic *ghazal*, which had appeared first in its developed form in the urbane poetry of 'Umar b. Abī Rabī'a (d. 719 A.D.) of the early Umayyad Ḥijāzī school of poetry. This *ghazal* poetry was distinguished by topic and style. Its topic was illicit "love" affairs—whence its name, *ibāḥī*, "unpermitted"—wherein the male lover/poet seduced the woman and then abandoned her. It was truly more about sexual play than about true love. Its style was coy and employed implicit suggestion. 'Umar b. 'Abī Rabī'a's innovation was to introduce dramatic tension in the *ghazal* by using a dialogue between the man and the woman. Soon after the appearance of the *ibāḥī ghazal* (poem of illicit love), another school of love poetry developed most probably in the Umayyad courts of Syria and the 'Iraqī camp cities of Basra and Kufa. This *ghazal* was called '*Udhri* after the Arab tribe of the *Bani 'Udhra*, a Yemeni

tribe legendary for its unselfish lovers who suffered unrequited love, usually dying of heartache. Famous among the noble poet-lovers of this tribe were Jamīl and 'Urwā. Others not associated with the Banī 'Udhṛā, but 'Udhṛī poets in their own right, were the legendary Qais and Majnūn (who went mad from love of Layla, *majnūn* meaning "jinn-possessed" or mad). These 'Udhṛī poets may never have existed separately from the urban poets who in a nostalgic vein idealized the unrequited love of these desert nomads. In any case, the theme of death and madness as ultimate results of love (by which term unrequited love is almost always intended) is fully taken over by Khāqānī from these 'Udhṛī poets.

The Ghuzz or Oghuzz Turk outbreak of 1154 A.D. was the first of four devastating blows that befell eastern Islam, especially Khorāsān (northeastern Iran). The second came in a Mongol exploratory and punitive "raid" which penetrated as far west as Nishapur in 1220–21. The third blow came in the main Mongol conquest of Iran in 1256, culminating in the sack of Baghdad, the central metropolis of Islam, and the end of the Abbassid Caliphate (1258 A.D. The fourth blow from Central Asia came in Tamerlane's conquest of the Middle East at the end of the fourteenth century A.D.). The two remaining poets whose *ghazaliyāt* are represented in this selection of translations were all deeply affected by the Mongol invasions of 1220 and 1256 A.D. Sa'dī (1184–1291 A.D.), a native of Shirz, spent most of his life wandering outside of Iran due to the desolation of Iran wrought by the Mongols. Rūmī spent most of his life in Anatolian Turkey. His father, Bahā' al-Dīn Walad, a famous Sufi writer, fled from his homeland, Balkh, with his family because of political and religious differences with the local authorities, only to discover shortly afterwards that the Mongols had razed Balkh (1220 A.D.).

#### SA'DĪ

Musharrif al-Dīn b. Muṣliḥ al-Dīn 'Abdullāh Sa'dī of Shīrāz (1184?–1291? A.D.), perhaps still the most popular and widely read of the classical Persian poets, is the only one of the three poets who is as famous for his *ghazaliyāt* (love poems) as for his poetry in other genres, e.g., the *Golestān* (Rose-garden), short stories in prose and verse with pithy, practical morals, and the *Būstān* (Orchard), practical moralizing in verse. Nonetheless, his *ghazaliyāt* are generally ranked by Persians second only to those of his fellow Shīrāzī, Ḥāfiz. In Sa'dī's *Dīvān* (collection of *ghazals* and *quṣidas* where the poems are arranged in alphabetical order of rhymes), the single theme *ghazal* reached its peak, whereas in the *Dīvān* of Ḥāfiz, the peak of the multi-themed *ghazal* is said to have been attained. Significantly, however, Sa'dī was well acquainted

with the *Dīvān-e Shams-e Tabrīzī* of Rūmī, his contemporary. It is reported that when requested to choose the best *ghazal* written in Persian, Sa'dī chose one of Rūmī's, saying, "Never have more beautiful words been uttered, nor ever will be. Would that I could go to Rūm (Asia Minor), and rub my face in the dust at his feet."<sup>2</sup> E. G. Browne most lucidly compares the tone of the works of Sa'dī with those of Rūmī:

He (Sa'dī) is a poet of quite a different type from . . . [Rūmī] . . . and represents on the whole the astute, half-pious, half-worldly side of the Persian character, as the other two represent the passionately devout and mystical. Mysticism was at this time so much in the air, and its phraseology was—as it still is—so much a part of ordinary speech, that the traces of it in Sa'dī's writings are neither few nor uncertain; but in the main it may be said without hesitation that worldly wisdom rather than mysticism is his chief characteristic, and that the *Gulistān* in particular is one of the most Machiavellian works in the Persian language. Pious sentiments and aspirations, indeed, abound; but they are, as a rule, eminently practical, and almost devoid of that visionary quality which is so characteristic of the essentially mystical writers.<sup>3</sup>

This fierce worldliness and hardened cynicism are easily explained by the circumstances of Sa'dī's early life. When he was still a child, Sa'dī lost his father and had to struggle through an Arabic education in Baghdad, slavery, and years of near-constant travel, before he won recognition and was able to lead a settled life. He was probably over fifty when he returned to Shīrāz in 1256 A.D. to commit much of his poetry to paper. It is amazing that his hardships did not stifle the flow of his lyrical inspiration.

Despite Sa'dī's hard life and tough worldliness, his love poems display the same dominant strains of yearning for an absent lover as the *ghazalīyāt* of Khāqānī and Rūmī. In addition, we often see Sa'dī as a faithful lover who is dropped by a faithless or merely bored beloved. *Ghazalīyāt* nos. two and three, included here, are of this type. Curiously, the *mišrā'* (half-bayt or hemistich) with which *ghazal* no. two opens, closes *ghazal* no. three and *vice versa*. This indicates the consummate craft with which Sa'dī composed and polished his love poems. Indeed, Sa'dī is famous for his *sahl-e momtani'*, his "inimitable facility" as a poet. His verses flow like water, lacking the raging outbursts and fitful "stop and go" quality of Rūmī's poetry. Sa'dī's verses are more regular in metre than those of the other two poets whose work is represented here. Indeed, a great part of the beauty of Sa'dī's love poems is the

tension between the absolute lyrical control and the pent-up passion and anguish so well caught and frozen in the structure of the words.

One of the main devices he uses to sustain the tension of anguish and yearning throughout a particular *ghazal* is to allude to a former time when he was blissfully by his beloved's side. Thus, in *ghazal* no. five, he begins the poem with his beloved entering a room in which he is present, resulting in his heavenly transport at the vision of her/him. (I have uniformly translated "u", the aspecific as to gender third person pronoun, as "her" in these poems, but neither passionate homosexuality nor "platonic homosexuality" may ever be ruled out in classical Persian poetry.) Yet immediately afterwards, the theme of separation is introduced which more or less dominates the rest of the poem. In the second *ghazal*, the poet mentions union in the middle of the poem only after it has passed and has been replaced by deep separation. The poem closes with Sa'dī's inability to accept the end of the affair. The poet is left stubbornly hoping for her return. In *ghazal* no. three, the theme of union is also briefly sounded in the middle of the poem only to be engulfed by the anguish of separation which precedes and follows this brief spot of brightness. The reader who is well acquainted with Sa'dī's more practical and Machiavellian works is especially struck by his honesty in displaying his helplessness amidst the throes of love. Curiously, these love poems which are ranked so highly by Persians have only infrequently been printed. (None of the poems by Sa'dī here presented, to my knowledge, have been translated before.) Perhaps it is that very "inimitable facility" (*sahl-e momtenā'*) which has so frustrated and deterred translators.

### RŪMĪ

Mowlānā (Our Lord) or Mowlevi (My Lord) Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (604–672 A.H./1207–1273 A.D.), was born in Balkh in 604/1207. He founded the Mevlevi Order of Sufis, the famous Whirling Dervishes, and was descended from the royal house of Khwārazm on his mother's side. At the age of three he fled with his father Bahā' al-Dīn Walad Balkhī and family from adverse political circumstances. In the very next year (608/1211) Jingīz Khān razed Balkh. Rūmī and his family travelled widely, stopping in various places such as Nishapur, Baghdad, Mecca, Damascus, Malaṭiya, Arzanjān (in Armenia), and Laranda. At Laranda, when he was nineteen, he married Jawhar Khātūn, daughter of the Lālā Sharaf al-Dīn of Samarqand (623 A.H.).<sup>4</sup> Not long after his marriage, Rūmī moved with his father and extended family to Qonya in central Anatolia (Turkey), then the capital of the Seljuq Empire. His name Rūmī indicates this connection with the land of the Romans, Rūm, i.e., Greece,

Byzantine Anatolia being recently conquered by the Seljuq Turks. Bahā' al-Dīn lectured in Muslim law and sciences under the patronage of the Seljūq prince, 'Alā al-Dīn Kaiqobād. Rūmī studied first under his father, then under his father's Sufi disciple, Burhān al-Dīn Muḥaqqiq Tirmidhī. When his father died in 628/1230, Rūmī succeeded to his father's professorial chair. Although he had a large number of pupils, when the *malāmātī* Sufi (a Sufi of the "path of blame," *malāma*) Shamsi Tabrīzī arrived in Qonya (642/1244), Rūmī abandoned teaching to be tutored in Sufism by Shams.

Shams was an illiterate, traveling Sufi of the antinomian variety. It is said that his grandfather was Kiyā Bozorgomīd, successor of Ḥasan-b. Šabbāḥ, the "Old Man of the Mountain" (Alamūt) of the Assassins, an eastern branch of the Ismā'īlī Shī'īs. Although Shams' father, Khāwand 'Alā al-Dīn renounced Ismā'īlī Shī'ism, burned his books, and gave his son a Sunnī education, it was perhaps this very ancestral Shī'ism that encouraged him to believe that he was a prophet. In any case, his spiritual aura was so strong that in the *Dīvān*, Rūmī identifies Shams (the sun) with the Solar Source of Divine Effulgence; all who surrender to this solar onslaught are melted into this sun and become that sun. Shams fled from Qonya once in 643 or 644 A.D. to Damascus, but Rūmī heard of his whereabouts and fetched him back again. Shortly afterwards, in 645/1246, Shams was presumably killed by Rūmī's jealous disciples. It was probably during Shams' absence in Damascus that Rūmī began composing the *Dīvān-e Shams*. Remarkably, he was almost forty when he first became a poet. The fact that the *Dīvān* carries Shams' name is a measure of Rūmī's loving spiritual surrender to the Divine that he perceived in Shams. (It is, of course, this very spiritual surrender that gives "Islam"—"submission (to God)"—its name.) Most of the *Dīvān* was probably composed in *memo-riam* for Shams.<sup>5</sup>

Rūmī's poetry ranks with that of Shakespeare, Dante, and Homer and should need no introduction. Yet, due to the lack of interest in mysticism in the West, Rūmī is as little known here as the great Chinese poets Po Chu'ī, Lī Po, and Han Shan, and the Indian Kālidāsa. Rūmī is unpredictably brilliant and will use any means at his disposal to collapse the barriers between Divine Being (or consciousness) and temporal, normative being (or normative consciousness). More than the work of any other Persian poet, except perhaps for that of another Sufi, Rūmī's younger contemporary, Fakhr al-Dīn 'Irāqī, Rūmī's poetry *sings*. He sings the pulse of the Divine Heart beating in the corporeal body of a fool, the deathless (*bāqī*, from *baqā'*: mystical survival) in the lifeless (*fānī*, from *fanā'*: mystical annihilation).

Certain aspects of Rūmī's style stand out, such as the division of a *mišrā'* (half-*bayt* or hemistich) into two or more opposing semantic units. This allows

for telling use of interior rhyme, indeed, perhaps for the most effective use of it in all Persian Literature save in the modern poetry of Ahmad Shālū. Rūmī is not very subtle stylistically and rhythmically. He marshalls his poetic forces in full view, building up a sustained rhythmic hammering of meaning and passion at best. This hammering is deliberate and highly successful. It is intended to break down all of the lower *anfās* (selves: singular, *nafs*) simultaneously in a rising call. Its mesmerising rhythm, as in the first line of *ghazal* no. 1, lulls the lower selves:

*yār marā ghār marā 'eshq-e jegar khwār marā*  
*yār to'ī ghār to'ī khwāje negahdār marā*<sup>6</sup>

Both the acute appositeness of particular semantic segments and the opposite technique of the complete abandonment of the poem by the poet to face the Divine totally break the higher *nafs* (self). The poet ceases to be an integral part of the poem and addresses the Divine rather than the reader. This allows for the Divine Ocean to flood through (*esteghrāq*: absorption by drowning) in love. His *ghazaliyāt* (love poems) have the capacity to trigger *fanā'* (mystical annihilation into the Godhead), to trigger what *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* terms, "the Great Straight-upward Path," wherein total reality is apprehended instantaneously, and simultaneously with that apprehension, and as a result of it, identification of the soul as that total reality is made. This, to be sure, is a very hit-or-miss method on the part of the poet, which often fails, but when a poem works for a particular reader, that reader may be catapulted by sudden awareness through mystical annihilation into the Godhead. Sufi poets play for higher stakes than most artists in their art. This is because they play for higher stakes in their own lives. 'Irāqī so well illustrates this in one of his love poems addressed to the Divine (translated by Arberry):

Lo, we have cast, and made our stake;  
 Our life and heart hang on a spin;  
 What better throw could gambler make  
 If, giving all, thy love he win?

...  
 Along thy path to death I move  
 And I am glad; I will not turn.<sup>7</sup>

Jan Rypka and R. A. Nicholson have criticized the poetry of the *Dīvān-e Shams* as monotonous. Presumably, what they find monotonous is the expression of love for the Divine.<sup>8</sup> In a sense, they are right. If one reads many of these love poems in succession, one's capacity to pay attention is dulled. Nevertheless, the criticism of monotony is not to the point. Mystical poetry







draining away that wine, it  
 maintaining an anti-faith stance.  
 each time I drew a draught  
 but higher I got. this time  
 I raised the double-sized chalice  
 and on my side, met your lips.  
 it was no struggle at all for us.  
 we had no need to spur on our steeds.  
 I went as far as her door, met  
 and talked with her guardian who said,<sup>11</sup>  
 "what brought on this passion so mad?"  
 her neighbor overheard my sigh and said,  
 "don't you think Khāqānī is a bit  
 fever-touched?"

## 3

there's not a head not thrust up  
 by you against the knife's blade.  
 until head from neck is severed,  
 from love of you not a head may rest.<sup>12</sup>  
 each breath with your winning arrow-glances  
 yōu shéd  
 our blood, bléed us of our téars.  
 all the while my tear-shot eye  
 blinks and blinks, but your eye stays dry.  
 sovereign of the elegant  
 ladies you are,  
 yet you  
 lord it o'er me oppressively.  
 pound me down to wine, pound me!—  
 for no one gets the upper hand  
 over your authority.  
 when will you be straight with me?—  
 no one plays fair these days, especially you.  
 no one will ever get a square deal out of you.  
 nightfall came over me. I was grief-pierced,  
 lingering long in my love for you.  
 there's no way out for this smoke—

my heart's on fire—except through  
 hope's narrow hole.  
 each day, a thousand and thousand times out loud  
 I'd read and reread the "Book of Patience."  
 since you have my ear,  
 no wonder it never sounds right.  
 I cried out, "God, my God!" a thousand times  
 but you wére not moved. O God!—  
 why can't I have a loving mate  
 to ease my grief?  
 Khāqānī! what's the use of moaning  
 so impotently, "O God!"—?  
 —since the moan's pitch  
 won't shatter your heart's ice-cold freeze.<sup>13</sup>

FROM THE GHAZALĪYĀT (LOVE POEMS)

OF SA'DDĪ SHĪRĀZĪ

1

not so fast, caravan master!<sup>14</sup>  
 go gently, go glently and slow,  
 for you take my peace of mind  
 with you as you go.  
 that heart that used to be mine,  
 now goes with my love in your caravan.  
 I remain  
 behind, wounded, separated from her,  
 anguishèd, made wretchèd by her  
 as if her poison fangs penetrate  
 and infect my bones from a distance.  
 I told myself with charms and spells:  
 "I'll hide my pride inside"—but no go.  
 all hot, my blood flood flushed to the surface  
 spoiling the whole show  
 of reserve.

caravan master, hold O  
     hold that camel-litter wherein sits  
     my love! don't be so hasty  
     to pull away with  
         your caravan!  
     from love of that lady of stately grace,  
         my mind has lost its place.  
 she moves away and as she turns  
     proudly away, she takes my heart in tow  
         with her skirt that she trails behind her.  
     don't ask anymore about me  
     for there's no sign left of my heart.  
 my dear but rebellious love returned  
         and when she came,  
     my miserable subsistence faded into life.  
     I'm a chafing dish aflame—  
         now smoke billows out my mouth.<sup>15</sup>  
 with all this her injustice, and this  
     her baseless troth which me broke,  
     in my heart her memory dear I hold,  
     if betimes I  
         sing it not  
             on my tongue.  
 come back and sit upon my eye,  
     you who play so heavily on my heart,  
     you who seduce me so completely!  
     you know my gút eruption and cry  
     from this earth up-thrust-pierces sky.  
 all the night long I sleep not  
     nor heed I ány advisal rot.  
     no herald proceeds me on this road  
     to intercede with you—the reins  
     have slipped me, you see, I have no control.  
 (headlong youwards rush I.)  
 I said to myself, "I'll cry, tears wring  
     until the camels get stuck in mud  
     just like donkeys." but that  
         too, I couldn't do:  
     for my tear-spring heart already had  
         departed with the caravan.

patience in waiting to meet my heart's mate  
 and returning from gaming with my heart's bait—  
 these issue from me; I act—but they  
     are beyond my control,  
     acts slipping out my grasp!  
 they spout all kinds of talk hów  
     the soul out the body goes; but I  
     with my own eyes saw  
     my soul leave.  
 Sa'di, it's not fitting  
     that moans roam your throat—you ingrate!  
 yet endure your tyranny, my love,  
     I can no longer. crying now  
     is all that's left me.<sup>16</sup>

## 2

you broke troth with me  
     but I still hang from my oath.<sup>17</sup>  
 thankful for all your favors,  
     I was nourished by your kindness.  
 what can the slave do  
     who can't stand tyranny?  
     a load strung around my neck,  
     I toed the line.  
 'twas not your love  
     which blistered my feet,  
     for I was laid back deep  
     in the garden's green leisure.  
 only at the bleak  
     dawn of separation's day  
     did I know the spell of union's night.  
 how strange it would be  
     had there not been power  
     that night without me knowing.  
 if, hereafter, they ask my gain  
     from this world's harvest,  
 I'll say, "that dáy, thát day  
     I spent speaking with my love."



I stay up all night  
 waiting for the nightingale  
 to herald the daybreak.  
 under the devastation of being  
 without you,  
 Sa'di used to say, day under day:  
 "you broke troth with me  
 but I still hang from my oath."

## 4

a thousand times I swore:  
 "yours truly  
 won't go pokin' 'round love no more!"  
 —but at every breath I took,  
 the spectre of your face  
 kept pace with me.<sup>19</sup>  
 I didn't intend to tell my tale of love  
 but what difference did it make?  
 my tear-blooded eyes, my face,  
 pale-drained, told it anyway.  
 I arrived at the rosebush,  
 apprised of having no time to waste; but  
 I haven't even picked óne rose—<sup>20</sup>  
 just a thousand thorns  
 pricked my gut.<sup>21</sup>  
 Fate, you might say, and time  
 rolled up my life like a throw-rug;  
 but never have I told the tale right:  
 ever the vision of my love.  
 all those who advised me patience were bút  
 cold wind blowing on closed ears in vain.<sup>22</sup>  
 by your eyes I swear:  
 not even once did I look on any woman  
 with love's eye, desire's drive—  
 not until your eyes left mine.  
 not a day waiting  
 for your beauty to come my way  
 did I count as a day,



because the days spent away from you  
     I didn't consider as being  
         part of my life.  
 given your temper, what venom  
     haven't you expended on love?—  
     while not a word of complaint  
         to any friend have I made.  
 when first I saw your lasso, I shied  
     as any animal a-wild might do.  
 now that I'm tamed and intimate,  
     I won't be driven away—  
         even at sword-point.  
 who told you Sa'di isn't worth  
     and isn't man enough  
         for your love?  
 were I to break troth,  
     thén would it be shown in truth  
         that I'm not a man—(ah, but I am:  
         these my red eyes attest.)

## 5

you came in the door  
     and I went out my mind.  
 you could say  
     I left this world behind  
         and landed in seventh heave.  
 I keep my eyes peeled  
     to see if any have news of her.  
     someone spoke of her  
         and I broke down.  
 I was but dew before you  
     and you were sun shining.  
     love touched me to the quick  
         and I flew to the Pleiades.  
 I thought to myself: "go  
     see her. maybe the pain  
         of yearning, maybe the pain can  
         be eased." I saw her and

yearned for her then all the more.  
 I had not the strength  
 to pick myself up and visit my love.  
 yet I went: sometimes in head  
 and sometimes on foot,  
 stumbling headlong.  
 just to see her walk,  
 just to see her talk—  
 I was all eyes and ears.  
 how can I not look at her?  
 ever since the first time I saw her,  
 I haven't been able to take my eyes off her.  
 she herself wasn't interested in catching me;  
 it was I, all by myself,  
 who got myself caught, all  
 tangled up in the trap of her glance.  
 they ask me now, "how, Sa'di,  
 did you get so pale a hue?—  
 you who were so young and fresh!—  
 blood on your cheeks, health in your tint!"—  
 the elixir of love splashed  
 on my coppery skin  
 and I flashed into gold.

FROM THE GHAZALĪYĀT (LOVE POEMS)  
 OF MOWLĀNĀ (RŪMĪ)<sup>23</sup>

1

You are friend and cave to me, grief-torn love for me.<sup>24</sup>  
 my Lord Guardian You are.  
 Noah You are; Spirit You are; conqueror and conquered You are.  
 an open breast You are, full of pearl-secrets  
 You are for me.  
 light You are; feast You are;  
 Maṣṣūr's dominion and fortune You are.<sup>25</sup>  
 Mount Sinai's bird You are, You with beak wounding me.<sup>26</sup>



you came from this waterwheel-spinning sky,  
 but a deep sleep stole o'er you.  
 alas for this slight life!  
 beware this cumbrous slumber!  
 O heart, make a bee-line for your Love!  
 O mate, make tracks for your Mate! don't wait!  
 O watchman, wake and watch!—  
 the nightwatch has no business sleeping.

there are cries and snarled lives on every side;  
 every quarter shows candle and torch  
 because tonight the pregnant world brings forth  
 the world eternal.

you were mud but became heart and blood;  
 you were ignorant and became wise.

He who drew you so far this way  
 will draw you out that way.

His annoy amidst His struggles is joy.

His fires are cool water; don't frown His way.

His work is to sit in Spirit;

His work is breaking repentance vows.

from His many deceits and tricks,

these pearls of trembling tears drop.

O mocking arrow-notch jumper! you escape the bowstring, saying,

"you can't catch me, fit me to the string;

you can't do that to *me*!—I'm the town mayor!"

how long will you jump around? bend your neck!—

and if you don't, He'll draw you like a bow.

you sowed deceit's seeds;

you reaped regret's tears and sweat beads.

you thought God to be not;

now take a good look, you cuckold!

you ass! you're better than straw!

you're better than a blackened pot!

even in the pit's abyss you're better—

you're a disgrace to princedom and dynasty.

there's someone else in me

whom these eyes miss and fail to see.

know this for truth!—let this be your proof:

when water ignites from fire,  
     that someone inside you'll see.  
 I'm not armed with stone in palm;  
     I've no quarrel to pick with anyone;  
     no, I'm not out to get anyone—  
 how could I when my joy is orchard-lush?  
 thus does my eye gaze down from on high,  
     looking down from the other world:  
 on this side is a world; on that side is a world—  
     I straddle the threshold between the both.  
 he is at that threshold whose logic is mute.  
     stay poet!—enough of spreading these secrets—  
     just hold your tongue! be dumb!

## 3

didn't I tell you not to go where I know you?  
     here at the original black hole of annihilation  
     I am the fountainhead of life:  
         (point source spraying dimension-rays,  
         splaying out life waves.)<sup>30</sup>  
 and if in anger you stray a thousand years from Me,  
     you finally return free-fall  
     to Me who am your end-all:  
     (I, your ultra-gravity, call.)  
 didn't I tell you not to be at ease with the face of things?  
     I forewarned you with inside knowledge,  
     for I am the constructor of the house  
         that encloses you in comfort  
         and I painted the easing images  
         on the walls that surround you.  
 didn't I tell you I'm the sea and you're a fish?  
     don't dry out!—because I'm the real sea  
         with wet consequences.  
 didn't I tell you not to fly towards the trap bird-like?  
     come rather because I am your foot,  
         your wing, your power of flight.  
 didn't I tell you that they would cut you  
     off at freedom's pass and put you in deep freeze?

I told you—I who am your blast fire,  
 your sheet shine, and your atmosphere's heat.  
 didn't I tell you that they would bring out all your bad points?—  
 and that you would get lost in magnetic haywire?  
 I am the source of your pure polar north.  
 didn't I tell you not to discourse on the why  
 and wherefore of slave's labor? shape up!  
 I am Creator without grounds. I am the Prime Urge.  
 if you are a heart lamp,  
 know where the road home lies!  
 and if you have the crackling air of a divine,  
 know so: that I am your Divinity!

## 4

let lay your head back on a pillow!  
 go forget about me! just leave  
 me be!<sup>31</sup>  
 leave me to my nightwatchman's addiction:  
 to love's drunken affliction,  
 leave me!  
 we're nothing but an undulation of black passion,  
 alone all night,  
 swamping and swamped in the surging.  
 yours is the choice: if you want to, come!  
 love me! grace me! save me!  
 or if not, burn and spurn me!  
 run! just get away from me as fast as you can!—  
 unless you too want to fall in harm's way!  
 take the safe way out: leave fangland be!  
 we're nothing but eye-water cried out, crept here—  
 quivering, shivering—to lie low in a dog-sad corner:  
 from spots where our tear-drops splash,  
 construct and harness the hydrodynamics  
 of a hundred watermills!  
 the beautiful people don't have to  
 be true to the powers that be;

but now as for you, you pale-faced lover—  
 wait a bit, keep faith, string yourself out  
 a little further: be true to the True!  
 there is a pain having no cure but death—  
 how then can I ask you to cure this pain?<sup>32</sup>  
 I dreamed last night I saw an old man  
 lounging around love's part of town;  
 he was making signs with his hand  
 to me to follow him down.

if there's a dragon on the road of love,  
 be sure it's from man.  
 by love's lightning flash repel that man-dragon!

enough! enough of these black-dotted words.

I'm beyond myself now. if you're art-hot—I'm not—  
 speak to me of Bu 'Ali! rouse! tingle!—  
 draw on the sense of the Most High!<sup>33</sup>

**David Martin** grew up in Japan, Burma, India, and the U.S. He graduated in psychology from the University of Chicago. For some years he was director and lead writer for Shiva poetry Theater (formerly of Chicago and San Francisco, now defunct), which won first prize in the 1972 Chicago poetry Festival. From 1975 to 1977 he was a Fellow in Persian Literature at the Iranian Cultural Research Institute in Tehran—the first and last Westerner to be associated with the Institute. He has translated works from classical Arabic and classical and contemporary Persian. His own poetry and translations have appeared in *Poetry*, *Hawaii Review*, *Ab Intra*, *Greenfield Review*, *Jazz/Linguist*, etc. Presently he is writing his dissertation on Sufism at UCLA.

#### NOTES

1. See E. G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, 4 vols. (Cambridge, 1969), II, 391–399; Nikolai Khanikof, "Mémoire sur Khâcânî, poète persan du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle," published as a reprint (1864) from the *Journal Asiatique*, Jerome W. Clinton, "The

*Madāen Qasida* of Xāqānī Sharvānī, I," *Edebiyat*, I, no. 2, 1976, pp. 153 ff., and "The *Madāen Qasida* of Xāqānī Sharvānī, II: Xāqānī and al-Buḥṭurī," *Edebiyat*, II, 2, 1977; and my own translation of the above *qaṣida* as "At the Palace of Ctesiphon, a *Qaṣidah* of Khaaqaani," *Comitatus*, 12, 1981.

2. Al-Aflākī, *Manāqib al-ʿArifin* (Attainments of the Gnostics), quoted in translation by E. G. Browne, op. cit., II, p. 525.

3. *Ibid.*, II, pp. 525–526.

4. Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, *Selected Poems from the Dīvāni Shamsi Tabrīz*, ed. and trans. R. A. Nicholson, (Cambridge, 1977), p. xvii. Nicholson notes that Rūmī's first wife must have died young; Rūmī married again, his second wife, Kirā Khātūn surviving him.

5. For details concerning the life of Rūmī, see *ibid.*, pp. xvi–xxii, and al-Aflākī's near contemporary account in the *Menāqib al-ʿArifin* (Attainments of the Gnostics, i.e., "Knowers"), ed. T. Yazij; 2 vols. (Ankara, 1961), in Persian: English translation by James Redhouse, *Legends of the Sufis* (London, 1976); French translation by Clément Huart, *Les Saints des Dervisches Tourneurs*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1918–1922).

6. Lama Kawi-Samdup, trans., and Evans-Wentz, ed.; *The Tibetan Book of the Dead (Bardo Thödol)*; New York, 1973), p. 89, note no. 1.

7. 'Irāqī, translated by A. J. Arberry in *Mysticism*, ed. F. C. Hoppold (Baltimore, 1967), p. 224.

8. R. A. Nicholson, op. cit., p. xlvi.

9. *Goṣīde-ye Ash'ār-e Khāqānī Shirvānī* (Selected Poems of Khāqānī Shirvānī), ed. Sayyid Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Sajjādī (Tehran, 1972), *ghazal* no. 9, p. 420. Metre: *ṭawīl* (the long) tetrameter (--- / --- /- --- /- ---) where "-" signifies a short syllable and "--" signifies a long syllable. Persian metre is quantitative as to the number of long and short syllables.

10. *Ibid.*, *ghazal* no. 10, p. 421. Metre: *mutadārik* (the continuous) tetrameter: (-- / --- / --- / --).

11. Guardian (*raqīb*): this is one of the three stock characters of the ancient Arabic *ghazal* stemming from the time of Umar bin Abī Rābi'a (d. 719 A.D.). The "guardian" is usually a man who watches the lovers and guards the woman on behalf of the tribe to safeguard the tribe's honor. (The lover is frequently from another tribe.) The two other stock characters are (1) the "secret enemy" (*kāshih*) who, jealous of the lovers, tries to destroy the love affair by spreading rumors and (2) the "blamer" or "censurer" (*ādhil*). The "neighbor" (*hamsāye*: of the same shade) of the next *bayt* (couplet) is Khāqānī's equivalent of the "blamer." These stock characters appear more often in the poetry of Khāqānī than in those of the latter *ghazal* poets, for he was closer to Arabic Poetry both in time and poetic study. Khāqānī, unlike the other *ghazal* poets here represented, was mainly a *qaṣida* (eulogy) poet. The *qaṣida* was, *par excellence*, the Arabic "poem."

12. *Goṣīde-ye Ash'āre Khāqānī*, op. cit., *ghazal* no. 11, p. 421. The basic metre is a variant of *muḍāri'-e muthamman-e akhrabe makfūf-e maḥdhūf*: (-- / --- / --- / --- / ---).



13. In the first line of this signature *bayt*, Khāqānī addresses himself but in the third line, he is addressing his love.

14. *Kulliyāt-e Sa'dī* (The Complete Works of Sa'dī), ed. Moḥammad 'Alī Forughī, introd. by 'Abbās Eqbāl Ashtiyānī (Tehran, reprint of 1316/1937 edn.), *ghazal* no. 268. Metre: *rajaz-e muthamman-e sālim* (tetrameter): (--- --/--- --/--- --/--- --). This metre might just as well be called *kāmel* tetrameter: see Régis Blachère, and Maurice Gauderois-Demombynes, *Grammaire de l'Arabe Classique* (Paris, 1975), p. 548 (*kāmel*), variant 1:2, and p. 556 (*rajaz*), *mètre primitif*. (In Arabic prosody, from which some of Persian prosody is derived there is no tetrameter form in either *rajaz* or *kāmel*.)

15. The poet is indicating that his heart is on fire.

16. The first "your" in the signature *bayt* refers to Sa'dī, the second, to his love.

17. *Kulliyāt-e Sa'dī*, op. cit., *ghazal* no. 380. Metre: *basīṭ* tetrameter: (--- --/--- --/--- --/--- --).

18. *Kulliyāt-e Sa'dī*, op. cit. *ghazal* no. 379. Metre: *basīṭ* tetrameter: (--- --/--- --/--- --/--- --).

19. *Kulliyāt-e Sa'dī*, op. cit., *ghazal* no. 373. Metre: *mujtathth-e muthamman-e makhbūn* (derived from the scansion of *bayt* 2, *mišrā'* 2): (--- --/--- --/--- --/--- --).

20. "I haven't even picked one rose": more literally, "I didn't pick even one rose complete." Alternate translation: "I didn't even eat (*nakhordam*) even one rose complete."

21. "Pricked my gut": literally, "I ate." Alternate translation: "I swallowed whole."

22. Literally, this line (*mišrā'*) reads: "were air's wind blowing on my cold iron." The intimation is that cold iron cannot be further forged or tempered. Only red-hot iron may be worked and bent. Thus the poet's bent to the rashness of love may not be further bent to compass patience, endurance and fortitude (these all being *ṣabūrī*).

23. *Mowlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī*, *Kulliyāt-e Dīvān-e Shams-e Tabrīzī* (The Complete *Dīvān* of Shams of Tabrīz), ed. Badī' al-Zamān Forūzānfarr (Tehran, 1355/1976), 2 vols., *ghazalī* no. 37, vol. I. Metre: a variant of *mutadārik-e muraḥḥal* (tetrameter) where the 3rd foot tends to be "----" instead of "----": (--- --/--- --/--- --/--- --). The closing *bayt* (couplet) is in *rajaz-e muthamman-e maṭvī* (tetrameter): (--- --/--- --/--- --/--- --).

24. Reference to the Cave Companion (of the Prophet), Abu Bakr.

25. *Maṣṣūr*: Hossayn b. *Maṣṣūr* b. Mohammed al-Ḥallāj; See note no. 4, p. 52. *Maṣṣūr*'s dominion: "beyond the Two Worlds."

26. Mount Sinai's bird: Perhaps this is an oblique reference to Prometheus chained to a mountain peak in the Caucasus. A vulture came to eat his liver every day according to the myth. Then again, it may be the Simorgh that nests at the top of the cosmic mountain (Qāf). Mount Sinai could easily serve as symbol of the cosmic mountain as it was on Mount Sinai that Moses received various revelations. If the latter is the case, it would be an ironic reference indeed, for the Simorgh fostered Zāl, born with white hair. Zāl was the father of Rostam, hero of the *Shāh Nāmeḥ* (the epic Book of the Kings) of Ferdowsi. The sense here would be that the Simorgh wounded the poet by

giving the poet a glimpse of the Unitary Being of God. (See the climax of 'Attār's *Conference of the Birds*, trans. C. S. Nott (Berkeley, 1971) for the Simorgh in the role of bestower of epiphanic vision; see Sohravardī al-Maqtūl's visionary *récitation* in *Aql-e Sorkh* (Tehran, no date), p. 11, where the variant of Isfandi-yār's death at the hand of Rostam is given wherein Isfandi-yār sees the reflection of the Simorgh in Rostam's armor and is blinded by the Divine Effulgence).

27. This line has several other simultaneous meanings due to the many usages of *bār*: "... this load of mine;" "... this fruit of mine;" "... for this audience (--hear me!);" "... this be my plea (petition)."

28. Literally, "you went until you were not" (*rāh shodī tā nabūdī*).

29. Rūmī, op. cit., *ghazal* no. 423, vol. II. Metre: *rajaz-e muthamman-e sālim* (tetrameter):(-- ---/-- ---/-- ---/-- ---). Reynold A. Nicholson has translated this poem in *Selections from the "Dīwānī Shamsī Tabrīz"* (by Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī: Cambridge, 1977), no. 36, pp. 140–145. The reader is also invited to refer to Nicholson's (partial) translation of the same in rhyme, beginning, "Up!—O ye lovers—and away, 'tis time to leave the world for aye" (idem., p. 344).

30. Rūmī, *Kulliyāt-e Shams-e Tabrīzī*, op. cit., vol. II, *ghazal* no. 357. Metre: a variant of *hazaj* that the prosodists do not mention: (---- -/- - -/-- --- --- -/-- ---). The first five syllables are almost uniformly "----" and the ending syllables are uniformly in one of two patterns: "----" or "----".

31. Ibid., vol. II, *ghazal* no. 673. Metre: *mulārī'-e muthamman-e akhrab al-ṣad-rayn*: (-- -- -/- - - -/-- --- -/-- - - - -).

32. I take this pain to mean the pain of the human condition of being lost in the cosmos and, concomitantly, the pain of human separation from the Divine, the assumed result of dying being finding and arriving at one's home, the Divine.

33. Perhaps this is a reference to Bū 'Alī Sīnā (Avicenna, known in Iran for his mystical philosophy in addition to his medical, philologic and other studies) or Bū 'Alī Tirmidhī (or Abū 'Alī Tirmidhī, a famous early Sufi).