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**The Aesthetics of Appropriation:  
Ghalib's Persian *Ghazal* Poetry and its Critics**

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**The Aesthetics of Appropriation:  
Ghalib's Persian *Ghazal* Poetry and its Critics**

**by**

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## **Abstract**

### **The Aesthetics of Appropriation: Ghalib's Persian *Ghazal* Poetry and its Critics**

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This thesis examines the Persian *ghazal* poetry of Mirza Ghalib. It does so in the light of the corpus of critical literature in Urdu, Persian, and English that concerns both the poetry of Ghalib as well as the poetry of the so-called “Indian Style” of Persian poetry. Poems by Ghalib and his literary forebears, including Fighani, Naziri, ‘Urfi, Zuhuri, Sa’ib, and Bedil are offered in translation; critical commentary follows each text. The thesis explicates the ways in which each of these authors engaged in an intertextual dialogue, here called *javaab-go’ii*, or appropriative response-writing, with his forebears, and argues that the dynamics of this intertextual dialogue contribute significantly to the poetry’s aesthetics. These “aesthetics of appropriation” are discussed, analyzed, and evaluated both in the light of Ghalib’s writings on literary influence and Persian poetics, as well as in the light of the aforementioned corpus of critical literature.

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## **Ghalib's Persian *Ghazal* Poetry and its Critics**

*Ghalib, az man sheva-e nutq-e Zuhuri zinda gasht  
az navaa jaan dar tan-e saaz-e bayaanash karda am*

Ghalib, because of me, the style of Zuhuri's diction has come alive.

With my song, I've poured spirit into the body of his words' instrument.

Words such as “tradition,” “individual,” and “talent” have held a privileged place in literary-critical discourse in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Each word might be read as alluding to, even standing for, larger debates taking place among contemporary scholars of literature: the development of literary cultures and the formation of literary canons, conceptions of authorship and literary identity, and notions of creativity and literary genius.

In recent years, scholars exploring these issues have sought guidance from theoretical and critical approaches inspired by the notion of intertextuality. In general, such approaches privilege modes of critical and scholarly inquiry that locate literary works within particular literary and discursive contexts. Such studies examine issues such as textual meaning and literary aesthetics in the light of these contexts with an eye to explicating the aesthetic significance of works of literature vis-à-vis the ways in which

those works of literature appropriate and engage with antecedent texts.

In many ways, the extensive corpus of literary criticism that concerns the Persian poetry of Mirza Ghalib fits squarely within this broader intellectual discourse. Indeed, ever since Urdu critic Altaf Husain Hali published his study of Ghalib's life and poetry, *Yadgar-e Ghalib* in 1897, critics and scholars have discussed Ghalib's Persian poetry in terms of its relation to classical Persian literature. But unfortunately, the majority of this scholarly discourse has been framed by the concerns of literary historiography. Heavily influenced by the nationalist proclivities of this tradition, scholars and literary critics have focused on aspects of Ghalib's Persian poetry that allow that the poetry be assimilated into preexisting nationalist narratives.

In this thesis, I shall demonstrate, through close readings of Ghalib's poetry, that the aims of this critical undertaking have been too narrowly conceived. I shall demonstrate that contemplating the dynamics of Ghalib's engagement with particular texts within the Persian literary tradition is central to the appreciation of the aesthetics of his poetry. As I make this argument, I shall draw evidence from Ghalib's poems, from Ghalib's "paratextual" writings, and from the thoughts and reflections on Persian diction and poetics that are found in Ghalib's letters. I ought to state clearly, lest I be accused of mining Ghalib's letters for the "authorial word" on textual meaning, that I read Ghalib's writings on Persian poetics as the work of an informed literary critic and master poetician, and as writings that suggest fresh critical approaches to his poetry. I shall also critique some important works of literary criticism that concern both Ghalib's Persian poetry, and "Persianate" literature in general. I shall demonstrate the ways in which this criticism has anticipated the intertextual study I aim to make, as well as the ways in



which contemporary theories inspired by the notion of intertextuality can refine the concepts, and perhaps redirect unsatisfactory trajectories, of contemporary Urdu and Persian literary criticism, literary theory, and literary historiography. In the second section of the thesis, I shall offer a close intertextual reading of a Persian poem by Ghalib by first engaging in close readings of the works of his forerunners. Ultimately, I shall weigh the conclusions that I reach through these close readings against some of the ideas that have come to dominate the discursive landscape of contemporary Persianate literary criticism and Indo-Persian literary history.

In the afterword of his collection of Persian *ghazals*, Ghalib brings to the fore the notion of literary influence, naming the Persian poets whose work ‘guided’ his own. He tells us:

Although my nature, which is a Godly messenger angel, was a select-speaker and chosen-seeker even at the very beginning, it embraced most of the lavishness of those who do not know the path, and considered their stumbling gait as intoxicated staggering. Nevertheless, in this searching to and fro, kindness moved the elegant-gaited forerunners auspiciously towards the worthiness of a fellow-traveler, which they found in me, and their hearts took pity on my vexation. They took pity on my idle wanderings, and looked on me as instructors. Shaikh ‘Ali Hazin, with a suppressed smile on his lips, made manifest in my sight my pathless wanderings, and the angry poison-gance of Talib Amuli and the flash of the eye of Urfi of Shiraz burned all the stuff of those nonsensical stagnant exertions at my, the traveler’s, feet. Zuhuri, with the warm-headed eagerness of breath-

holding,<sup>1</sup> tied an amulet around my arm and provisions around my waist. Naziri, with his carefree gait, brought his style of movement to my unique manner. Now, with the auspiciousness of the glorious upbringing of the instruction of this group of angel-like magnificence, my dancer-pen is a cock pheasant in gait, and a *musiqaar* [=musical bird] in singing, and a peacock in glory, and a phoenix in flight...<sup>2</sup>

Ghalib's prose is exceedingly difficult, and translating it is a real challenge. My translation of this passage is stubbornly literal, but one can easily glean from it the conceptual metaphor at work in the original: the development of a poet's ability and taste is a journey, and every wayfarer needs a guide or set of guides. In less metaphorical terms, Ghalib not only notes the importance of his forerunners, he affords them a kind of poetic agency, and the reader is left to make sense of the relationship of these "aesthetics of guidance" to Ghalib's Persian verse. In the *ghazals* that precede this text—for example, in the couplet with which this thesis began—Ghalib alludes again and again to the names and poems of these and other canonical poets of the Persian tradition, constructing an aesthetic space in which the reader is aware that the works of past masters are somehow operating in the present.

Ghalib confirms the importance of following in the footsteps of others in his Urdu and Persian letters. Therein, Ghalib frequently enters into debates concerning issues of *sanad* (warrant/sanction), the *pesh-rav* (forerunners), and *tatabbu'* (emulation). Ghalib comments on these issues in responses to friends and pupils' requests for advice about

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<sup>1</sup> The Persian is unclear to me here, and others' English translations of this passage are not transparent.

<sup>2</sup> Ghalib, *Divan* (Tehran: Intisharat-i Rawzanah, 1376 [1997 or 1998]), 122.

proper Persian idiom and diction, or their inquiries about which canonical poets' verse's style or language is worthy of emulation. In a Persian letter to Navab Ali Bahadur, Ghalib writes:

...from among the *Rekhtah*[= Urdu]-speakers, the speech[=poetry] of Mir [Taqi Mir] and Mirza [Sauda], and from among the crooning of the Parsi[=Farsi]-speakers, the words[=poetry] of Sa'ib, 'Urfi, Naziri, and Hazin should be kept in sight. It is not to be kept in sight that the ink of the page descend from the eye to the heart, rather all efforts ought to be made that you recognize the essence of the word[s], and that you see the light of the meaning, and that you separate the valuable from the worthless<sup>3,4</sup>

Here, Ghalib emphasizes an active engagement with the literary past. He emphasizes both the importance of the poet's awareness of the subtleties of words' meanings and connotations, and the necessity of the poet's developing discerning judgment.

Interestingly, Ghalib deemphasizes the importance of rote memorization.<sup>5</sup> Passive engagement is secondary to active engagement. A master's words are not to be imitated passively, but to be purposefully examined, questioned, and considered in the light of their use and significance. Notice also that this process is to be carried out not in terms of

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<sup>3</sup> The "sarah" from the "naa sarah": the good from the bad; the quality merchandise from the not-quality merchandise; the current (as money) from the not current.

<sup>4</sup> Ghalib, *Panj Ahang*. (Lahore: Panjab University Press, 1969), 567.

<sup>5</sup> One might contrast Ghalib's suggestion with Nizami's famous prescription, which he makes in his *Chahar Maqalah*, that a poet must memorize 20,000 classical verses and 10,000 modern verses if the poet wishes to attain to the ranks of the "immortal" poets. See Nizami 'Aruzi Samarqandi, *Chahar Maqala (The Four Discourses) of Nidhami-I-'Arudi-I-Samarqandi*, tr. Edward G. Browne (London: "E.J.W. Gibb Memorial" & Luzac, 1921), 49-50.

literary *topoi* and tradition *in toto*, but in terms of words' uses in particular works of the masters of the Persian and *Rekhta* literary traditions.

Persianate poetry has a number of genres, motifs, and poetic practices in which poets practice direct engagement with the work of masters. From time to time, Ghalib discusses such practices in his letters. In a letter to Mir Mahdi Majruh, Ghalib expresses his annoyance at the former's failing to express his happiness at their mutual friend Miran's recovery from illness. Ghalib sends Majruh a playful couplet in which he makes a *tasurruf*, or appropriation, of a couplet by Mir Taqi Mir, one of Urdu's most important poets, a fact confirmed by his being remembered as "*khuda-e-sukhan*" (roughly, "The God/Lord of Poetry"). Ghalib then makes some critical comments about the couplet. He writes:

You must have heard that *maqta'* [=closing couplet] by Mir. I write with a variation of words:

*kyuun na Miran ko mughtanim jaanuun*

*Dilli-waalon men ik bachaa hai yeh*

Why shouldn't I regard *Miran* as a valued prize?

He's the only one who's survived among the people of Delhi.

Mir's *maqta'* goes like this:

*Mir ko kyun na mughtanim jaanen*  
*agle logon men ik raha hai yeh*

Why shouldn't {I, we, they, you} regard *Mir* as a valued prize?  
He's the one who's lived<sup>6</sup> among {earlier; superior} people.

What a fine *tasarruf* is 'Miran' in place of 'Mir' and 'survived' in place of lived!<sup>7</sup>

Notice that, reflecting on his couplet, Ghalib imbues the changes that he makes in the *tasarruf* with aesthetic value. That is, the beauty and pleasure of Ghalib's couplet lies not in the couplet itself, but in the ways in which Ghalib's couplet has reinterpreted and changed the words of Mir's original. In a sense, if one were to read Ghalib's couplet without an eye to the original, one would miss out on the experience. Here, the poet's wit is on display, the pleasure of the couplet hinging on subtle word play. One of the aims of this thesis, which locates itself in the broader context of the intertextual study of Persianate poetry, is to make explicit the aesthetics of such "appropriation." This intertextual study of Persianate literature follows the model that Ghalib has provided here. It considers the ways in which contemplation of the strategies of reconfiguration, appropriation, and intertextual engagement demonstrated in this couplet can enrich readings, and appreciation, of Persianate *ghazal* poems.

One technique of appropriative engagement that is in many ways similar to

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<sup>6</sup> Also, "remained, been".

<sup>7</sup> Ghalib, *Ghalib ke Khutut Vol. 1-4 (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition)*, ed. Khaliq Anjum (Delhi: Asliyah Offset Printers, 2002), 509.

*tasarruf* is *tazmin-nigari*: literally “warrant/security-writing”, though perhaps best translated as “quote-grafting”. As ‘Aqil Ahmad has explained in his important work on Urdu traditions of *tazmin-nigari*, *tazmin* takes many forms. Entire *ghazals* may be treated in an extended *tazmin*, in which each stanza of three to six lines ends with a couplet of the original *ghazal*, where the remaining lines, which have been grafted structurally onto the original couplet, lead in to the couplet, modifying, critiquing, explicating, or playing on the ambiguities of the original. Ghalib published very few extended *tazmins*. His most famous is certainly the *tazmin* that he wrote of an Urdu *ghazal* by Bahadur Shah Zafar. Here is one *band* (“stanza”) of that piece:

*Tuu ne dekhaa kaisi ban ga’ii mujh par raazdaar*

*Khvaab-o-bedaarii pah kab hai admii ko ikhtiyaar*

*Misl-e-zakhm aankhon ko sii detaa jo hotaa hoshyaar*

*Khainchtaa thaa raat ko main khvaab men tasviir-e-yaar*

*Jaag utha jo khainchni tasviir aadhii rah ga’ii*

O confidant, you saw what came over me.

What control does man have over sleeping and waking?!

I’d have sewn my eyes shut like a wound, had I been sensible.

*Last night, I drew an image of the friend in a dream.*

*When I suddenly awoke, half the drawn image remained!*

The two italicized lines are my translation of Zafar’s original couplet, the others, that of

Ghalib's lead-in. Note the ways in which Ghalib's lines, the third line in particular, set up the situation that Zafar has created in his couplet. Indeed, the notion that Ghalib introduces in the third line is striking, and the reader's curiosity is roused. What could possibly drive the lover to such extremes? Zafar's couplet, then, becomes the answer, almost the "punch-line", of Ghalib's well-grafted lead-in. The word that critics writing in Urdu often use to describe this sense of effective *paivastagii* (lit. "graftedness") is "*bar-jastagii*", literally "jumping up". Indeed, with Ghalib's lead-in, Zafar's couplet does "leap out" at us in a new way. Ghalib's couplet, with its hyperbole, emphasizes the lover's frustration. Foregrounding the lover's exasperation is an interesting move on Ghalib's part, for if we consider Zafar's couplet apart from Ghalib's *tazmin*, we can just as easily imagine the tone of the original couplet as tongue-in-cheek or playful, the lover grumbling at his misfortune.

Composing a *tazmin* that readers will find *bar-jastah* demands that the poet be able "to think backwards" from the model couplet. The *tazmin*-writer's task is, in a sense, to write an effective "prequel" to the original, often setting up the situation in which the speaker-lover of the original couplet utters that couplet. This is particularly true of *tamzins* grafted onto couplets written in the *vuquu'h-go'i* ("occasion-speaking") or *mu'aamalah-bandi* ("affair-closing") mode(s), wherein the couplet is uttered in response to some particular dramatic situation, a situation that usually involves some kind of interaction with the beloved.<sup>8</sup>

Ghalib regularly involves single-line *tazmins* in his Persian *ghazals*. Most often, the *tazmin* will be made in the final, signature verse of his *ghazal*. For example:

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<sup>8</sup> Critics debate the meaning of these terms, and I give my interpretation of them here.

*qaafiyah Ghaalib chuun niist purs zi 'Urfi*

*gar man farhang buudamii chih ghamastii*

Ghalib, when there's no rhyme-word, ask 'Urfi.

“What grief would there have been if I had been a dictionary?”<sup>9</sup>

The second line of Ghalib's couplet is the final line of 'Urfi's *ghazal*, which predates Ghalib's *ghazal* and is written in the same structure, or *zamiin* (lit. “ground”), as Ghalib's *ghazal*. To say that two *ghazals* are written in the same *zamiin* is to say that the poems share the same end rhyme-refrain pattern as well as the same meter. In order that a poet incorporate a full line of a forerunner's verse into his *ghazal*, then, his *ghazal* must be written in the same meter as the forerunner's *ghazal*; because of the formal structure of the *ghazal*, the *ghazals* must be of the same *zamiin* (same rhyme-refrain and meter) for the quoted full line to appear in the second line.

Critics are somewhat ambivalent about the aesthetic significance of the *tazmins* that we find in Ghalib's Persian *ghazals*. In the hands of literary historians, these *tazmins* serve as brief bits of information in taxonomic projects, wherein historians count and cite the occurrences of such *tamins* in Ghalib's *ghazals*, and often copy the full couplet from which the quote was lifted in order to provide the context of the original quoted line.

Critics writing in the biographical mode often invoke these *tazmins* in general discussions of Ghalib's deep respect for, and/or stylistic and psychological debt to, the work of his

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<sup>9</sup> Mirza Ghalib, *Divan-i Ghalib* (Tehran: Intisharat-i Rawzanah, 1376 [1997 or 1998]), 154.



forerunners.<sup>10</sup>

But it is more interesting to ask about the aesthetic significance and literary function of the *tazmins* that we find in Ghalib's Persian *ghazals*. That is, aesthetically, what is communicated by a *tazmin*, and how does a particular *tazmin* contribute to the meaning and aesthetic experience of the *ghazal* in which it is found? One answer to this question is that Ghalib's *tazmins* function as intertextual allusions. They direct our attention towards the *ghazal* of the forebear whose line has been quoted. Naturally, once our attention has been drawn to that *ghazal*, we ought to ask why Ghalib has drawn our attention towards it.

As noted, quoting an entire line of a preexisting *ghazal* requires at least that the newer *ghazal* be written in the same metrical structure, and most often that the newer *ghazal* share its *zamiin* with the original. Indeed, one might consider the *tazmin* as a structural allusion. Through this allusion, an intertextual *rabt*, or connection, is made between the newer *ghazal* and the older *ghazal*. This connection is similar to the connection that we observed in Ghalib's playful *tasarruf* of Mir's couplet, and the questions concerning mimicry, appropriation, and reconstruction that we asked of Ghalib's *tasarruf*, a motif which itself functions as an intertextual allusion, may be asked of these *ghazals*.

This reading of the *tazmin*'s function is significantly different from the readings made by the taxonomers and literary historians mentioned above. That is, the *tazmin* verses, which often praise the work of the forebear mentioned, instead of being read as general claims about the two authors' styles, serve as starting points for aesthetic

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<sup>10</sup> Examples are ubiquitous. See Husain, "Ghalib aur Zuhuri" and Zamani, "Ghalib aur Talib" for focused discussions of forerunners' influence on Ghalib in which Ghalib's one-line *tazmiins* are invoked.

discussions of the latter's poet's engagement with the earlier poet's text. Often, Ghalib refers to this kind of engagement as writing the "*javaab*" (lit. "answer", but often "outperformance") of the forebear's *ghazal*. The aesthetics and poetics of *javaab-go'ii* will be examined in depth in the study of Ghalib's "fire" ghazal found in section two of this thesis.

The traditions of *tazmin-nigari*, *tasarruf*, and *javaab-go'ii* suggest the possibility that a kind of literary history be written that is grounded in close readings of poems.

But historians and literary critics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have been inclined to frame their discussions of Ghalib's Persian poetry, and its relation to the Persian tradition, in stylistic and nationalistic terms. Critics often take as the starting point of their discussions of Ghalib's verse the brief summary of Persian literary history that Ghalib expounds in a famous letter to Chaudhari 'Abdul Ghafur (pen-name Sarur). Ghalib writes:

My master Mr. Sahib Alam is angry with me and the reason for this is that I have called Mumtaz and Akhtar's poetry defective. In this letter, I submit a scale. Let Hazrat Sahib weigh on this scale the poetry of these gentlemen [*saahib*], meaning the Indian's poems, from Qatil and Vaqif to Bedil and Nasir Ali. This is the scale. From Rudaki to Firdausi, Khaqani, Sina'i Anvari, *et cetera*, up to us, one group. The work of these gentlemen (*hazraat*), with some small differences, is based on one style (*vaz'*). Then Hazrat Sa'di is the inventor of a special style (*tarz*).<sup>11</sup> Sa'di, Jami, and Hilali. These persons are not numerous. Fighani is the

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<sup>11</sup> In his essay, "A Stranger in the City...", S.R. Faruqi argues against translating these words as "style." See that essay, pages 6 and 7, for a literary historian's take on this letter.

inventor of another special style (*shevah*). He brought delicate, subtle ideas and lofty meanings. Zuhuri and Naziri and ‘Urfi and Nau’i perfected this style (*shevah*). God be praised! Life spilt into the form of poetry! After that, gentlemen of gifted nature gave simplicity’s unction to this style (*ravish*). Sa’ib, Kalim, Salim, Qudsi, and Shifa’i are in this group. Rudaki, Asdi and Firdausi: this style (*shevah*) was abandoned at the time of Sa’di, and Sa’di’s style (*tarz*), on account of its being inimitably simple, never found currency. Fighani’s style (*andaz*) spread, and in it various colors went on appearing. So now three styles (*tarz*) have become established. Khaqani and his peers, Zuhuri and his likenesses, Sa’ib and his equals. Sincerely by God, from among these three styles [*tarz*], upon which style [*tarz*] is the poetry [*kalaam*] of Akhtar and Mumtaz based? No doubt, you will say that this style [*tarz*] is something else altogether. Thus we come to know that theirs is a fourth style. What can be said? Fine, it is a style, it is a good style, but it is not Farsi. It is Indian [*hindi*]. It is not a coin of the royal mint. It is a false coin<sup>12</sup>. Justice, justice!<sup>13</sup>

There is an important difference between the historical narrative, framed in stylistic terms, that is found in this passage, and the poetical emphasis on influence that we observed in the passages quoted thus far in this paper. Indeed, the sweeping generalizations that Ghalib makes concerning the style of these poets seem a far cry from the engaged, poetical comments that Ghalib makes in other letters. They seem equally

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<sup>12</sup> Also, “unidiomatic, unchaste, obsolete, barbarous (words); uneducated, unpolished, rude.” From John T. Platts, *A Dictionary of...* <http://dsal1.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.2:1:5341.platts> (accessed Feb. 12, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> Ghalib, *Ghalib ke Khutut Vol. 1-4 (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition)*, ed. Khaliq Anjum (Delhi: Asliyah Offset Printers, 2002), 613-614.

removed from the particularities of the appropriations, quotes, and allusions that one finds in his Persian *divan*. These generalizations certainly do not offer any interesting insight into particular poems of the poets mentioned here, and one wonders whether they have any relevance to a discussion of the aesthetics of these poets' works. No doubt, Fighani writes plenty of poems whose meanings are not lofty. Poets change styles from poem to poem; in the *ghazal* they may even do so several times within the same poem. The notion that a poet has an unvarying style seems a convenient fiction, and perhaps a necessary one, for those who choose to discuss literary traditions in essentialist terms. By essentialist terms, I mean those terms in which occasional features of, or accidental facts about, particular authors or a body of literature are abstracted and reified as defining characteristics or qualities of those authors or that body of literature. Accounts of literary history couched in such terms risk being grossly underdetermined and misleading.

It is disappointing that many literary historians' debates concerning Ghalib's verse and its position in Persian literary history have largely focused on the notions of style, national identity, and literary influence, broadly conceived, found in this passage. I say disappointing because the passage also lends itself to a slightly different reading. Notice that, rather than grouping poets exclusively according to stylistic characteristics, Ghalib links together poets' names based on whose style of poetry those poets have engaged and improved upon. This emphasis on engagement, as opposed to formal qualities, speaks to the importance of the role that poets' actively engaging particular forebears' styles played in a poet's forming his or her literary identity. The brief foregoing discussion of intertextual motifs in Persianate poetry suggests the terms in which a scholarly discussion of literary style and literary history might be grounded. Of

course, critics who write about Ghalib's Persian verse do involve these terms in their work.

The work of literary criticism that continues to exert the most influence on modern critical discourse concerning Ghalib's Persian *ghazal* poetry is Altaf Husain Hali's *Yadgar-i Ghalib* (1897).<sup>14</sup> Since its publication, critics writing in English and Urdu have challenged, expanded upon, and emulated the modes of exegesis that Hali models in this important text. Of particular importance to a study of Ghalib *vis-à-vis* his place in the Persian *ghazal* tradition is Hali's discussion of two of Ghalib's *ghazals* that is found towards the end of the book.

Hali analyzes two of Ghalib's *ghazals*, setting each of Ghalib's *ghazals* against a model *ghazal* composed by one of Ghalib's forerunners (Naziri or Zuhuri), the model *ghazal* sharing Ghalib's *ghazal's zamiin*. Hali takes apart Ghalib's poems, matching each couplet of Ghalib's *ghazal* with a couplet of the model *ghazal* based on both couplets' sharing a rhyme word, or based on both couplets having, according to Hali, a similar theme or mood. Hali maintains the order of the couplets as they appear in the model *ghazal*.

This critical method, which draws on the poetics and aesthetics that we observed Ghalib's letters, allows that Hali ask questions about the dynamics of intertextual engagement discussed above. Indeed, Hali anticipates some of the themes and methods of the intertextual study that we shall make of Ghalib's Persian *ghazals* in the next section of this thesis, and, in my own readings of Ghalib's poetry, I have been markedly inspired by his work. For example, Hali makes some interesting intertextual observations

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<sup>14</sup> The scope of Hali's text's influence on Urdu criticism has been examined in some detail. See Frances Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and its Critics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

concerning the following couplets by Naziri and Ghalib. Both couplets share the same rhyme-word, “*davaa*” (cure/treatment/medicine). Hali’s comments follow:

Naziri

*tabiib-e ishq babarrad tama’ zi biimaarii*  
*kih shab baraahat aziin dard-e be davaa khuftast*

Love’s physician will sever hope for the patient  
Who, at night, peacefully, with this pain without a cure, is sleeping.

Ghalib

*bah subh-e hashr chuniin khastah ruu-siyaah khezad*  
*kih dar shikaayat-e dard-o gham-e davaa khuftast*

On doomsday’s morning, he’ll rise broken and disgraced  
Who, complaining of pain and grieving for a cure, is sleeping.

Naziri says... the sign of a true lover is... that, on the way of the beloved, he does not feel pain or suffering at all, rather he feels that every pain and suffering is the essence of all comfort. Thus it follows from Naziri’s description that a true lover is one who always lives in discomfort and restlessness, and that when this happens, sometime or another a complaint will cross his lips.

For this very reason, Mirza [Ghalib] reversed this theme. He says that the patient who has slept complaining of his heart's pain and searching for the cure/medicine will rise disgraced [lit. with blackened face] on the day of resurrection.<sup>15</sup>

One might disagree with Hali's analysis. The "theme" of both couplets seems to be the same: a true lover is perfectly comfortable with the pains and sufferings of love. But the manner in which both poets have handled the theme and its rhyme-word, "*davaa*", is certainly very different, and herein lies the beauty of Ghalib's verse. As suggested above, one can interpret Ghalib's couplet's end rhyme-refrain as an allusion to Naziri's couplet. Therefore, we might ask what sort of intertextual tension is created by this allusion? Perhaps Ghalib has proven or strengthened Naziri's claim about the lover's masochism, defining the lover in relief against those who do not qualify as lovers. Or perhaps Ghalib's couplet can be read as a reversal of Naziri's manner, and therefore an "outperformance" of Naziri's couplet. In any case, the appropriation of the rhyme-word beautifully corresponds to the reversal. In Persian, Naziri's rhyme-word is "*be-dava*" (without medicine/cure). Ghalib has changed this to "*dava*" (cure). Naziri's lover's manner is depicted by what the lover does, while Ghalib's lover's manner is defined in the negative, that is, by what non-lovers do. The suggestive nature of this reversal makes Ghalib's couplet more evocative; we are to infer that the true lover is comfortable with pain, but this is never stated explicitly. Ghalib's couplet carries the force of a criticism of

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<sup>15</sup> Hali, Altaf Husain, *Yadgar-e Ghalib* (New Delhi: Ghalib Institute, 1986), 274-275.

Naziri's handling of the theme, and suggests an aesthetic that privileges implication and innuendo over directness.

Hali's analysis of the "dava" (cure) couplet certainly anticipates the intertextual mode of criticism and appreciation that I have just employed. Unfortunately, many of the pairings in Hali's analysis of Ghalib's Persian *ghazals* seem arbitrary, as when Hali compares the following two couplets, whose rhyme-words are different (breeze and dragon):

Naziri:

*samiim-e mihr zi baagh-e vafaa namii aayad*

*bah har chaman kih to bishgufta'ii sabaa khezad*

Not a scent of kindness comes from constancy's garden.

In every garden in which you've blossomed, the breeze is sleeping.

Ghalib:

*bibiin zi duur va majuu qurb-e sharr kih manzar raa*

*dariichah baaz o badarvaazah azhdahaa khuftast*

Look from afar and don't seek the nearness of the king. For viewing,

The window's open, and at the gate a dragon is sleeping.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 274-275.



Hali tells us:

...The essence [*ma'aal*] of both [couplets] is this: Knowledge of the Essence [*zaat*] is impossible. But in my opinion Mirza's description has turned out more eloquent and attractive than Naziri's description.<sup>17</sup>

The 'thematic' grounds on which Hali has defended his juxtaposition of these couplets are shaky at best, and there is nothing else that would suggest there being intertextual tension between these two verses. Indeed, the juxtaposition seems unreasonable.

Naziri's couplet suggests an occasion on which the disappointed lover laments never hearing a word from the beloved. Naziri's diction is simple and clear. The occasion of Ghalib's poem is entirely different. Addressing other potential lovers, Ghalib's lover admonishes that involvement with the beloved will bring pain: look but don't touch.

Hali does offer a few insightful comments concerning the ways in which Ghalib appropriates and alludes to phrases, themes, or leitmotifs in the *ghazals* of Naziri and Zuhuri, but, in general, careful, reasonable comments are the exception in his analysis.

Hali never makes explicit the purpose of the brief comparative study he makes of Ghalib's Persian ghazals, but, as the quote above suggests, the aims of Hali's study ultimately seem to be evaluative. That is, Hali sets out to demonstrate which poet's handling of a particular rhyme-refrain, theme, or phrase is "better". Consequently, Hali focuses on the aesthetic merits of particular conceits and lexical items at the expense of detailed analysis of the aesthetic significance, the beauty, of the way in which Ghalib

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 274-275.

appropriates and engages the motifs, conceits, and lexicon of the couplets on which his *ghazals*'s couplets are modeled.

On a superficial level, one wishes that Hali had broadened the scope of his analysis. Amir Khusrau<sup>18</sup> and Sa'ib Tabrizi<sup>19</sup>, two canonical poets of the Persian tradition by whose work Ghalib was influenced, and with whose work Ghalib was intimately familiar, both composed *ghazals* in this *zamiin*. An analysis of all four poems may have led to more a focused, detailed discussion of Ghalib's poem.

Hali's evaluative mode of criticism is popular in much of the literature that concerns Ghalib's poetry, and indeed in the literary criticism that concerns Persianate literature in general. Critics often compare couplets that share a metrical structure and rhyme-refrain in order to ask which poet better handled the prosodic and semantic limitations imposed thereby. Scholars and critics in Urdu refer to poets' handling of a particular rhyme-refrain as "*radiif-bandi*" (lit. refrain-closing) and "*qaafiyah-paima'v*" (lit. rhyme-measuring).

Critics use the latter term pejoratively. Often, it is criticism leveled against poems whose authors have used a rhyme-word (often appropriated from a previous poem) only for the sake of the rhyme word's lending its rhyming syllable. To label a couplet as "rhyme-measuring" is to say that the poet has failed to make creative use of the rhyme word. As one can imagine, to be accused of blindly copying the rhyme scheme and form of the work of one's forebears would be an insult for the poet. Ghalib himself was accused of setting his forebears' *ghazals* in front of him as he composed. This is an accusation he denies, saying,

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<sup>18</sup> Amir Khusrau, *Divan-i Amir Khusrau* (Lucknow: Naval Kishore, 18??), 81.

<sup>19</sup> Sa'ib Tabrizi. *Kulliyat-i Sa'ib Tabrizi* (Tehran: Khayyam, 1954), 185 *ghazal* #494.

How I laugh that you, like other poets, have thought this, too, of me, that I set [in front of myself] the *ghazal* or *qasiidah* of a master, or wrote down its rhyme words, and began matching words to those rhyme words. *Laa haula wa laa quvvata illaah billaah!*<sup>20</sup> In childhood when I began to write *Rekhtah* [= verse in Urdu], curses upon me if I set in front [of myself] some *Rekhtah* or its rhyme-words. I just looked at the meter and the refrain and in that *zamiin* I began writing a *ghazal* or *qasiidah*. You say Naziri's divan must have been in front [of me] at the time of composition, and when I saw that rhyme-word's couplet, I must have written [based] on it. By God, if in this *zamiin* of yours Naziri too has a *qasiidah*, it doesn't follow that it's a poem. Brother, poetry is meaning-creation, not rhyme-measuring.<sup>21</sup>

In a recent, thought-provoking essay concerning the aesthetics of *radiif-bandi*, 'Atiq Ahmad Siddiqi has suggested that Ghalib, in this letter, may be attempting to conceal what he himself felt to be a sign of a weak poet.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, as critical studies of Ghalib's Perisan *ghazals* have demonstrated, Ghalib did compose with the rhymes of his forerunners in mind. The notion of poetic "weakness" is interesting, and deserves critical attention. But perhaps more interesting is the way in which Ghalib privileges creative engagement over the imitation of form.

Indeed, the passage indicates the centrality of the relationship among form,

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<sup>20</sup> Lit., "There is no power nor strength except in God." Often said upon hearing something disagreeable as way of expressing contempt.

<sup>21</sup> Ghalib, *Ghailb ke Khutut* (New Delhi, 2002), 335.

<sup>22</sup>Siddiqi, 'Atiq Ahmad, "Ghalib ki Radif-Bandi" in *Ghalibnaamah* 3.2 (1982): 155.

influence, and creativity to Ghalib's poetics. Ghalib once again suggests that a poet's study and assimilation of the poetic tradition involves careful study of preexisting poems as well as composition in the form of those poems. Of particular interest is the way in which Ghalib links emulative and creative processes in this letter. Recreating the formal aspects of art is useful, perhaps even necessary; it is a means to an end: innovation and creativity are the ultimate goals of the emulative process. This is an important poetical, aesthetic, and critical perspective, and ought to be taken seriously by scholars who study Ghalib's work. The question remains, however: What exactly does this mean about the aesthetics of Ghalib's poetry, and how can awareness of this kind of engagement inform the ways in which we read and appreciate particular poems?

If Hali's *Yadgar-e Ghalib* is the most influential study of Ghalib's poetry, Dr. Arifshah C. Sayyid Gilani's work on Ghalib's Persian verse is perhaps the most comprehensive. Gilani begins his discussion of Ghalib's ghazals by quoting the "three-schools" passage translated above. He notes the importance of tradition to Ghalib and to Ghalib's work. Indeed, Gilani provides a long list of Ghalib's *ghazals*, in which, he claims, Ghalib has imitated the work of forerunning poets.

But for a number of reasons Gilani's analysis is unsatisfying. Gilani does not give any specific criteria for considering a particular *ghazal* as an 'imitation' of another poet's work, and Gilani's identifying entire *ghazals* of Ghalib as 'imitations' of those of his forebears implies that Naziri, Hafiz, indeed each of the forebears listed, has a single unique, identifiable style that Ghalib could imitate. Gilani does include the opening couplets of several of Ghalib's *ghazals* alongside the opening couplets of Ghalib's forebears' *ghazals* that share the same *zamiin*, but, disappointingly, this juxtaposition

functions merely as evidence of the fact that Ghalib imitated the work of his forerunners, and Gilani says nothing about the aesthetic significance of this fact, or about the aesthetic implications of the couplets' having a common structure.

Although strictly speaking not "stylistics," Gilani's work employs a taxonomic method of inquiry that is typical of much of the twentieth century literary criticism that concerns Persian poetry in general, and "Indian style" Persian poetry in particular. Gilani classifies Ghalib's ghazals according to various categories. "Construction," being a quantitative study that catalogues the number of lines in each ghazal; "diction," being the quantity and quality of Ghalib's metaphors and prosody (Gilani also catalogues the meters in which Ghalib wrote); "thought," wherein Gilani generalizes that Ghalib's thoughts are "allusive and elusive, baffling and obscure."<sup>23</sup> He then divides Ghalib's *ghazals* into four classes: those that have "dictional elegance," those that are "musical," those that have a "romantic rush," and those that have "mystic thoughts."<sup>24</sup>

In the world of the *ghazal*, one in which figurative language reigns supreme, and one wherein poets are free to vary thematic content and tone not only with each poem, but with each couplet within each poem, one ought to be suspicious of such neat categories. Indeed, few poems from among Ghalib's Persian *ghazals* allow that we classify them in this way. But a more important objection to this method of inquiry is this: the taxonomical generality of the stylistic mode will fail by definition to engage Ghalib's poetry at the level of each poem's singularity and uniqueness, and as long as the objective of literary criticism involves an inquiry into the aesthetic experiences that particular poems give rise to, the utility of the taxonomical, stylistic method will remain

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<sup>23</sup> Arifshah C. Sayyid Gilani, *Ghalib: His Life and Persian Poetry* (Karachi: The Azam Books Corporation, ca. 1962), 155-160.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

dubious. Poems do evince their having been written within particular literary traditions, and these traditions involve intelligible linguistic, thematic, and tropological patterns. But the “poeticity” of poems inheres in the ways in which those poems simultaneously adhere to, and stand apart from, generic conventions.

Scholars writing in English, Persian, and Urdu have challenged the turn towards stylistics that has dominated Persianate literary criticism and historiography in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.<sup>25</sup> Talib Kashmiri, in a thought-provoking article on Ghalib’s Persian poetry, points out that scholars and literary critics have not paid adequate attention to the role that imitation and engagement play in the aesthetics of Ghalib's works.<sup>26</sup> He argues that many critics think that Ghalib's achievements are "the result of the power of [Ghalib’s] imagination"<sup>27</sup> and goes on to argue that such critics fail to take into account the ways in which Ghalib has borrowed from other poets’ poems.

But Talib Kashmiri employs a dubious method of intertextual inquiry and comparison that has become somewhat of a cliché in Ghalibian and Persianate critical literature. Kashmiri tells us that the purpose of his article is to catalogue the ways in which Ghalib has “absorbed” (*jazb karna*) the themes and ideas of other poets. To this end, he juxtaposes Ghalib’s couplets against the couplets of Ghalib’s forerunners on the grounds that the couplets share a common theme, trope, or image. Consider two couplets that Talib excerpts, the first couplet being a Persian couplet by ‘Urfi, the second being an Urdu couplet by Ghalib:

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<sup>25</sup> See Kinra, Smith, Losensky, Faruqi. Also, see Ahmadi for a somewhat sympathetic reading of the stylistic project of Bahar’s *Sabkshinasi*.

<sup>26</sup> Talib Kashmiri, "Mirza Ghalib Aur Digar Shu'ara," *Khuda Bakhsh Library Journal* (1992): 48.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

*biyaar baadah kih jaanam damii zi naalah bar aayad*  
*hazaar zamzamah az dil bayak piyaalah bar aayad*

Bring wine, that my soul might cope with lamentation a moment--  
With a single goblet, a thousand gentle songs will come forth from  
my heart.

*phir dekhiye andaaz-e gul-afshaanii-e guftaar*  
*rakh de ko'ii paimaanah-o sahbaa mire aage*

Look *then* at the style of speaking/poetry's rose-scattering:  
Let someone place a goblet and some wine before me!<sup>28</sup>

Kashmiri claims that “the source of Mirza's... couplet is this very couplet by Urfi.”<sup>29</sup>  
But, although these couplets do share a similar theme, one wonders on what grounds we can claim that Ghalib was influenced by ‘Urfi’s couplet, further still that the couplets ought to be read as being in dialogue with one another. Indeed, it ought not to surprise us that two *ghazal* poets should say something similar about wine’s having a positive effect on their speech. After all, both are writing in a literary tradition in which wine-related tropes are prevalent, in which the lover character *qua* poet often identifies himself as a *rind*, or profligate. Perhaps it makes more sense to consider these two couplets as an instance of what Persianate literary critics call “*tavaarud*,” or “coincidence.”

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 52-53.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 52-53.

Although one may doubt Talib Kashmiri's reasons for juxtaposing these couplets, the juxtaposition is still interesting. Consider the dramatic situation that each couplet presupposes. 'Urfi's couplet is unambiguously addressed to its interlocutor, whom we might imagine to be the wine-bearer, a confidant, or the beloved. In 'Urfi's couplet, the lover desires wine for his own sake; that is, wine as a means of alleviating the lover's own grief. Ghalib's couplet, on the other hand, is proclamatory: declared before all, yet spoken to no one in particular. In Ghalib's couplet, it is not the lover who desires the eloquence that the wine will bring, but some as yet unnamed, unknown hearer who might desire to hear beautiful verse. 'Urfi's imperative might be read in a number of ways— as a simple order, an earnest request, or perhaps a doleful plea made by a despairing lover. Ghalib's words are more forceful and bold than those of 'Urfi, and Ghalib's lover comes across as playful, boastful, even pompous. Both poets treat this common theme differently, but it is difficult to say with intellectual honesty that Ghalib has made a *tasarruf* of 'Urfi's couplet.

Critics writing about Persianate literature in general, and about Ghalib's verse in particular, commonly employ this trope-centered mode of criticism as they formulate arguments concerning genre, style, meaning, and literary influence. Indeed, critic Shamsur Rahman Faruqi and historian Annemarie Schimmel prefer this *mazmuun* (theme)-centered method for discussing notions of literary influence, literary culture, and literary history. But as the foregoing discussion demonstrates, this method can be misleading, as on paper it often gives one the false impression that the poets whose work is being examined were engaging one another's couplets in a kind of intertextual and tropological dialogue.



In his important work on intertextuality in Latin poetry, scholar and theorist Stephen Hinds reminds us that tropes do not demand “interpretation in relation to a specific model or models.”<sup>30</sup> In his discussion, Hinds refers to the work of critic Charles Martindale, who calls for a clear distinction to be drawn between poets’ allusions to particular models, and poets’ adaptations of conventional *topoi*. I believe that what Hinds and Martindale mean is that literary tropes are part of what might be called “the generic background”, and that a trope or leitmotif’s presence in two poems is not sufficient grounds for claiming, as so many scholars of Persianate literature do, that one of the authors had read, or is alluding to, the other’s poem. This theoretical distinction is crucial to the scholarly study of intertextual aesthetics in Persianate literature. Poets are wont to involve a limited number of leitmotifs, images and *topoi* in order to foreground the manner in which they make creative use of those motifs, images, and *topoi*, particularly in poetry that is baroque or mannerist. But the presence of similar images, tropes, and themes in the works of several poets cannot be sufficient grounds for claiming intertextual engagement. In Hinds’ terminology, the scholar ought to distinguish between the (intertextual) “model” and the (generic) “code”. Intertextual literary techniques, such as allusion, quotation, *tazmin*, *tasarruf*, *javaab-go’ii*, and the focused study of *ham-zamiin ghazals* provides a theoretical framework for making intellectually satisfying choices while discussing intertextuality in Persianate literature(s).

A second point that Hinds makes is germane to our discussion. In the final chapter of his book, Hinds argues for what he calls a “subjectivist” approach to literary history and literary-historical criticism. This approach privileges each author’s historical

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<sup>30</sup> Stephen Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 35.

experience of his literary tradition(s), an experience that scholars may make sense of through close readings of the author's poems. Hinds' argument opens an interesting door. In this mode of inquiry, texts serve as gateways for exploring the dynamics of a poet's engagement with literary tradition, the historical position of the poet and the aesthetics of the poet's poetry being inextricably linked. As I understand, Hinds is arguing for an epistemic shift from the rigidly exclusive categories of "intrinsic" and "extrinsic" studies of literature (to use Welleck and Warren's terms) towards a study of literature that attempts to make sense of the aesthetic significance of each poet's "subjective" engagement with literary history. Hinds tells us that the role of the intertextual literary historian and critic is:

...to redescribe tradition as, in effect, something mobilized by poets for the particular purposes of particular poems, and even for the particular purposes of particular moments in particular poems.<sup>31</sup>

Hinds' mode underlines and emphasizes a point that many critics, scholars, and theorists seem often to forget, viz., that notions of literary culture, literary tradition, and literary history ought to take into account close readings of literature. Literary genres and literary traditions are not metaphysical essences; they are conventions and traditions that are diffused through vast networks of texts and narratives about a copora of texts. The intertextual critic's project is to make sense of, and demonstrate, the ways in which individual poets creatively engage, critique, challenge, iterate, and appropriate those texts

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 123.

in their work. In effect, Hinds' argument challenges, and one might say deconstructs, the notion that literary works are products of authors' engagement with "the genre," an idea that dominates literary scholarship. Instead, close studies in which attention is paid to the aesthetics of intertextual engagement, destabilize dominant notions that literary genres, traditions, periods, and movements are stylistically or culturally heterogeneous. Hinds makes space for scholarly discourse that focuses on the ways in which multiple authors writing within a single "genre", even within a single "tradition" or "period", conceive of that genre, period or tradition in ways that are significantly and constitutively different from one another.

With this fresh perspective, and building on the work of Ghalib's critics that we have examined in the foregoing discussion, let us turn to a critical, intertextual analysis of one of Ghalib's Persian *ghazals*. In the study that follows, we shall ask questions concerning meaning, tradition, literary voice, and poetic identity that are similar in many respects to the questions that Ghalib's critics have been raising for the last hundred years or so. However, our perspective adjusted slightly, we shall raise these questions with an eye towards understanding which features of Ghalib's poem evince Ghalib's engagement with the tradition, how this engagement informs the aesthetic experience that the poem gives rise to, and how our awareness of these dynamics might problematize some of the ways in which literary historians and critics have traditionally approached Ghalib's Persian poetry.

## II

### **Towards an Aesthetics of Appropriation: An Explication and Evaluation of Intertextual Engagement in the "Fire" *Ghazal***

I shall here examine a collection of Persian *ghazals* by canonical poets of the so-called “*sabk-i hindi*” or “Indian Style”. Most of these poets’ names arose in the foregoing discussion. The *ghazals* translated and analyzed below share a *zamiin*. The *ghazal*’s meter is *bahr e ramal e musamman e mahzuf* (the apocopated octave running meter).<sup>32</sup> The rhyme-refrain of each *ghazal* is “...*aa aatash ast*” (lit. “... *aa* fire is”) where “*aa*” is the rhyme and “*aatash ast*” (‘fire is’) is the refrain. The meter is among the longest of Persian meters.

Translating this group of *ghazals* has been particularly challenging. The reader will notice that, at times, normal English word order has been eschewed in favor of retaining the structural integrity of the original poems. That is, I have intentionally made some lines difficult to read in the interest of retaining the position of the *ghazal*’s *radiif* (refrain), “is fire” at the end of each line. In some cases, English grammar has prevented my smoothly doing so, and in various couplets the refrain will appear as

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<sup>32</sup> I borrow the translation of the meter’s name from Thiesen. Each couplet’s meter reads:

— √ — — / — √ — — / — √ — — / — √ —  
— √ — — / — √ — — / — √ — — / — √ —

— represents long syllables, and √ short syllables.

...is fire  
...are fire  
...there's fire  
is... fire

But the reader *will* find that the word that precedes the refrain (or, in the fourth case, falls between “is” and “fire”) is the translation of the *qaafiyah* of the original *ghazal*. Thus in the line

He's up to his knees in tears, and on the sole of his foot there's fire.

“foot”, my translation of *paa*, is the *qaafiyah* of the original *ghazal*. I have made a concerted effort to render the *qaafiyah* used by different poets as the same word in English. I have done this in order that the reader be able to read comparatively and to consider the ways in which the *qaafiyah-radiif* (rhyme-refrain) structure of the *ghazal* functions allusively, though the reader be reading the *ghazals* in translation. It is my hope that my translation will aid the reader in quickly referring back and forth between and among the *ghazals* as I critique and explain these *ghazals*.

The only exception that I have made has been with the rhyme-word “*darya*” which means both “river” as well as “sea”. Our poets have used the word in both of its denotations. Thus when the reader finds that “sea is fire” appears as the *qaafiyah-radiif* of a couplet of one *ghazal*, and “river is/are fire” appears as that of another, the reader may infer that both poets have used the word “*darya*” as the couplet's *qaafiyah*.

The poems are presented according to the date of each author's death. Several authors' lives overlap. This has been addressed in the intertextual analysis that follows each poem.

This study is not intended to be a complete study of the "aa is fire" *zamiin*. Qafilabashi notes that Shifa'i, Sanjar, Makhfi, Mirza Muhammad Baqir Husaini, Mir Ma'sum Shah, Tajalli Shirazi, and Sayyid Khalil Qafilabashi (himself) have all composed ghazals in this *zamiin*.<sup>33</sup> In his *tazkira* of poets who moved from Iran to India, Gulchin-i Ma'ni adds that Insi Shamilvi Harvi, Razi Isfahani, Salik Yazdi, Qarari Gilani have composed *ghazals* in this *zamiin*.<sup>34</sup> My own readings have turned up two other poets who have composed ghazals in this *zamiin*, Rusva and Majzub. The fact that so many poets were writing in this *zamiin* across such a long period of time suggests not only the popularity of this *zamiin*, but also the importance of *javaab-go'ii* as both a means of poetic creation and as a means of participation within the tradition. It also calls to mind the fact that intertextual readings of Persian *ghazals* are not likely to be exhaustive. The minor poets, whose work exists only in fragments, mentioned by Gulchin-i Ma'ni remind us that canonical poets may be inspired by the work of "subaltern" poets whose works they may hear in gatherings or at musical performances, works to which they may allude. It is hoped that the comparative analysis that follows, which focuses on those poets often associated with Ghalib and the "Indian style", will lend itself to further studies of the connections between the poets who have written *ghazals* in this *zamiin*, and that this

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<sup>33</sup> Sayyid Khalil Qafiyabashi, *Mighnatis-i 'Ishq: Bahsi dar Bab-i Sabk-i Hindi wa Muqayisah-i Ash'ar-i Naziri wa 'Urfi*, (Tehran: Intisharat-i Bahrul 'Ulum, 1994), 149-153.

<sup>34</sup> Ahmad Gulchin-i Ma'ani, *Karvan-i Hind: dar ahval va asar-i sha'iran-i 'asr-i Safavi kih bih Hindustan raftah and*. (Mashhad: Mu'assasah-i Chap va Intisharat-i Astan-i Quds-i Ra'zavi, 1369 [1990 or 1991]), 124, 449, 527, 1127.

study will not be misread as pretending to be exhaustive.

Before moving into the study, a few notes about translation and the *ghazal*'s refrain, "aa is fire", ought to be made. The word "aatash" (fire) in Persian has one or two important denotations mentioned in Dekhoda's Persian dictionary that are not mentioned in the Oxford English Dictionary, and awareness of these denotations will aid us while reading and appreciating these texts in translation. In Persian, fire may mean (in addition to flames, coals, heat, light, passion, pain, and grief) "sharpness" or "astringency," and "wine". Dekhoda notes that the famous classical Persian dictionary *Burhan-e Qate'* has the following to say about fire:

In the meaning of light, currency[?], splendor, anger, and lightness of spirit [=happiness], and value and status and heavy-pricedness [lit. 'heaviness of price'], and it is a symbol for Satan [also a fiend or crafty person] and a symbol for a brave and courageous man. And they also call fire the digestive power and appetite.<sup>35</sup>

Not all of these meanings are relevant to the following discussion, but several are, and ought to be kept in mind. Also, one might also keep in mind that the beloved's face's luminosity may lead the poet to refer to it simply as "fire."

A second concern deserves to be addressed. I have chosen to focus on this *ghazal* for an admittedly arbitrary reason: it is one of my favorite of Ghalib's Persian poems. I have been impressed by it since I first read it two years ago. But, unfortunately, despite

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<sup>35</sup> *Loghatnaameh: Persian Dictionary | Dekhoda*, "Atash", <http://www.loghatnaameh.com/dekhodaworddetail-72e60bdda46744bca9d8f2bf5e1295e7-fa.html> (accessed Feb. 15, 2010).

having help from friends, poets, scholars, and mentors, I still do not feel completely confident in my interpretation and translation of a few of Ghalib's forebears' couplets.

In a way, one begins to sympathize with, even envy, the mode of critical inquiry whereby scholars pick and choose for a discussion of the couplets' tropes and imagery that they are able to make sense of and render with confidence into English. But, in a sense, the *ghazals* surrounding Ghalib's *ghazal* chose me, and not the other way around. Or perhaps I should say that Ghalib chose them for the reader. I have made similar readings of several of Ghalib's Persian ghazals, and I find this set to be by far the most interesting, and, as I mentioned, I find Ghalib's *ghazal* particularly beautiful. I shall mention the couplets about whose meaning I am unsure in the critical notes that follow each *ghazal*.

A final challenge has been one that is surely familiar to readers and translators of baroque and mannerist poetry. The poets whose work is translated here cultivate an aesthetic that privileges virtuosity in terms of literary devices such as *double-entendre*, innuendo, and punning. While such devices are ubiquitous in Persian and Persiante lyric poetry, they are pronouncedly material to the appreciation of these *ghazals*. I have done my best to carry across as many of the subtleties of word play as one finds in the Persian, sometimes at the expense of producing a fluid English translation.

For example, a few of the poets examined here play on the multivalence of the rhyme-word "*saudaa*", which literally means "black," thus "the black bile that causes madness." It also means "love" or "business and trade." I have chosen, for the most part, to translate it as "love-madness" here, but all of these meanings ought to be kept in mind. Again, relevant puns and word-play will be noted in the commentary.



Finally, because I have not only translated but also critiqued these poems, I must say a few words about my method of reading Persianate poetry. Scholars writing in the Euro-American academy have engaged one another in heated debates over the notion of “unity” in the *ghazal*. Scholars who advocate reading for unity invoke arguments adopted from the philosophy of aesthetics. Their studies of *ghazals* adapt analytical principles concomitant with the notion of unity (e.g. the principle of sufficient reason), and argue that such principles ought to guide the appreciation of art objects. Other scholars invoke historicist arguments which involve the critic’s ethical responsibility to read the *ghazal* as it would have been read by the culture in which it was produced (here, Persianate literary culture), wherein notions of unity are seldom, if ever, found in critical discourse. To be honest, and hopefully not too blunt, I have no philosophical position on the matter. I simply read poems, enjoy them, and discuss them. If a sense of unity arises from my experience of a poem, I discuss the poem as unified. But I do not actively look for dramatic, thematic, or any other kind of unity as I read *ghazals*, and consequently my way of speaking about intertextual engagement will differ from that of modern Euro-American critics such as Paul Losensky. I am indebted to Dr. Losensky’s important work on imitation and Fighani’s poetry, but at present I do not share his critical presuppositions.

Our discussion begins with Fighani’s version of the fire poem.

Fighani (d. 1516-1519)

For lovers, in a frenzied head, love-madness is fire.

In the body, blood's a lancet; in the heart, the dark core is fire.

The body doesn't desire a soft sleeping-place when the heart's burning.

For the gambler, below and beside, the carpet of silken brocade is fire.

I melt with shame as I seek my desired from you--

In the way of those who've lost their hearts, the expression of desire is fire.

Having dreamed of drunkenness, I burn from the bane of its after-effect.

Why shouldn't I burn, when in all my limbs and organs there's fire?

Even if your wine-bearer be Khizr, don't drink too much wine.

For that which, tonight, is the water of life, tomorrow, is fire.

The wise-hearted ones convey beneficence in death and in life--

When the rose-branch dries in the winter, it's fire.

If Fighani will draw thus burning sighs from his heart,

As long as he breathes, the roses of the desert are fire.

The ghazal opens with a general claims about lovers' suffering, which the poem's

speaker has imagined in terms of the body. One might ask whether the speaker has sublimated his own experience to all lovers, or whether the speaker is prescribing devotional behavior to all lovers. In any case, the images of the second line parallel the lover's madness: that which is necessary for sustaining the lover's life causes his pain. Two idioms augment the effectiveness of the metaphor. In Persian, the word for "stinging" is "*sozish*" (lit. "burning"); the word that I have translated as "love-madness," which appears as a rhyme word in many of the ghazals that follow, is, in the original, "*sauda*." The range of meanings attributed to this word is wide: in traditional medicine it is 'the bile that causes madness', in poetry it is 'love', in business it is 'trade or transaction', and in chromatics it is simply 'black'. In Persian, a pun is made with the second line's *radiif*, "the dark core," which is, in the original, '*suwaidaa*.' The two words, "*sauda*" and "*suwaida*" share an etymological root meaning "black." The pun augments the paradox that we observe in the rhyme-refrain: the darkness of the love-madness and core of the heart is set against the light of the fire.

The second couplet may be called a *husn-e matla'*, that is, an extension of the thematic, structural, and imagistic content of the first line. Here, the lover extends the pain vis-à-vis body images of the first couplet, particularly the image of the burning core of his heart. The speaker also extends the sublimated and normative image of the lover. The lover's desire to sustain his restlessness is illustrated with a *tamsiil*, or analogy. The word that I have translated as gambler may also be read as "fireplace." Both words recall the lovers of the first line (this is reinforced by the structural parallel between the *ghazal's* first and fourth lines), and "fireplace" lends itself to comparison with the body that houses the lover's burning core.

The lover speaks of his own experience as the third couplet begins, indicating his own humility as well as the magnificence of the beloved. But in the second line, the lover returns to the general notion of lovers that we observed in the poem's first two couplets. The couplet is ironic, for the lover's speaking, constituted by this couplet, ignites his humility, and ultimately melts him.

In couplet four, the bodily imagery is continued, and the lover attributes his burning to the wine-like dream that he either is having or has just had (the grammar allows for both interpretations). In couplet five, the speaker cautions his readers about the after-effects of drinking. The couplet alludes to the story of prophet Khizr, who, we are told, along with Alexander the Great, wandered through the desert in search of the water of life. Khizr eventually found it, and we are told that he still acts as a guide in this world to those who have strayed from the path. But why should the lover refuse Khizr's wine?

It may be that the fire of this couplet is the fire of hell, the punishment for indulging in earthly, forbidden pleasures. But perhaps a richer explanation, and one that bears in mind significance of Khizr, is that eternal life, which also means eternal separation from the beloved, thence eternal pain, will burn the lover forever.

In the poem's signature verse, a second voice enters and speaks of Fighani in an aside to the reader. Does the speaker claim that the fire that burns in Fighani's chest will continue to scorch the roses of the desert in a literal sense? Perhaps, but I suggest that Fighani here uses the device *husn-e ta'lil*, or "the beauty of cause-making" (Annemarie Schimmel translates this as "phantastic aetiology"). Like fire, roses are bright red, and roses will remain that way as long as Fighani heaves his fiery sighs. What do roses

signify here? One might consider the context of performance: poems are spoken (the idiom is *shi'r guftan*, to speak poetry), not written, and speaking involves breathing. Does the poet Fighani, by his fiery breath, whereby he speaks the words of poetry, give to roses their redness, that is, the quality that makes them beautiful?

Fighani's "aa is fire" poem, more than the "aa is fire" poems that follow it, exhibits a thematic continuity. Images and ideas in one couplet lead into the images of subsequent couplets. Body imagery pervades the poem; there is the transition from the opening couplet to the second couplet via the image of fire in the heart, and this image's contiguity with the burning "mind" of the third couplet, the fourth couplet's burning organs, the fifth's imbibing leading to burning. Couplets four and five concern the after-effects of drinking wine, and the fire that wine pours inside the lover leads to the lover's fiery sighs.

Much of Fighani's *ghazal* focuses not on the experiences of a particular lover, but on the character of lovers in general. Its tone is somewhat moralistic, or at least educative; its speaker is often the voice of wisdom. Consider the generalities in the first three couplets, the prescriptions in the first three couplets, and the directives in the fifth and sixth couplets. Fighani's *ghazal* is a space in which the nature of the devoted is at the center, and as we turn to the *ghazals* that have been modeled on Fighani's poem, we might do well to keep this idea in the back of our minds.

'Urfi (d. 1590)

War, fire. Truce, fire. Comity is fire.

My cheerful affairs with that bad-tempered one lie in fire.

I fill my goblet with the water of life and fire's what I drink.

Wine with the beloved is pure vintage; alone, it's fire.

Be a wine-seeker as long as I pour it from my cask, for

In these goblets and pitchers, what I have prepared is fire.

With whom shall I speak of the secret of this truth: The light of the friend's face

Smells like a rose in my mind, and in the eyes of Moses it's fire.

Be both a salamander and a fish, for in the Oxus of love,

The surface of the river is *Salsabil* and the depths of the river are fire.

For the friend, seeing the condemned one is more soul-burning.

Otherwise, in the soul of Zulaikha, shame and love-madness are fire.

Beauty's not the kind of commodity whose price is gold and silver.

For the people and wealth of the caravan, Zulaikha is fire.

'Urfi, give up this idle thought, it's inevitable:

Your destiny's either eternal heaven, or it's fire.<sup>36</sup>

A first impression of 'Urfi's ghazal, in contradistinction to Fighani's, is of a collection of fragmented verses. The lover opens the lyric with a forceful expression of the inescapability of his situation. Whatever be the nature of his relationship with the beloved, its upshot is fire. The persistence of this pain is accented by the repetition of the word "fire," which appears three times in the first line, taking up nearly half of the poem's metrical space. In the next couplet, 'Urfi alludes to the motif of the fourth couplet of Fighani's poem, wherein, as we observed, the wine's transformation from the water of life into fire occurs between today and tomorrow, or perhaps between this world and the next. But in the world of 'Urfi's lover, this change is instantaneous, taking place just before 'Urfi touches the water to his lips. 'Urfi offers a reason for the transformation that resonates with the theme of the first couplet, but also contradicts it. The wine would not turn to fire if the beloved were near—this fire is not inevitable.

In the third couplet, we see again the “wine as fire” trope. Who is the speaker of these lines? Is it the lover, inviting us to join him in a drink? Or has the lover relayed to us something that the wine-bearer has said? Or is it the *piir-e mughaan*, or the tavern-keeper? Whoever the speaker be, the wine that burns like fire is what this speaker recommends, and we are reminded that fire is not only a symbol of the lover's anguish, it also brings the lover pleasure.

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<sup>36</sup> The version translated here, and included in the appendix, is the version found in the Naval Kishore edition of 'Urfi's divan (see the bibliography). The first line of the version published in the Kitabkhanah-i Sina'i edition is inaccurate with regard to meter and rhyme-scheme (*mudaar* in place of *mudaaraa*), and the choice of words found the Naval Kishore version better fits the context (i.e., Naval Kishore's *jaan-soz* (“soul-burning”) instead of “Kitabkhanah-i Sinai's *jaan-kaah* (“soul-afflicting”).

In the fourth couplet, the univalence of the firelight stands in contrast to the lover's ambivalence towards his situation. He speaks with gnostic wisdom, but knows not whether anyone can understand his words. Indeed, the interrogative may carry the rhetorical force of a negation, that is, no one will understand the truth. I have introduced "smells" here because in Persian the word for "mind" also means "nose". Literally, the line reads "the light of the friend's face is a rose in my mind/nose."

In couplet five, the lover, again speaking with the voice of wisdom, recommends that his addressee be adaptable to love's throes. The couplet is a web of binary relations. The bodies of water are divine and mundane: *Salsabil*, a fountain in theological paradise, and Oxus, a river in Iraq. The animals are the mythical and the factual: the salamander, which lives in fire, and the aquatic fish. Then of course, there is the epistemological binary that motivates the relationship between these images: appearance and reality.

Although the next couplet shares its qaafiyah with the opening line of Figghani's poem, 'Urfi's couplet does not engage Figghani's line semantically or thematically. Instead, 'Urfi involves the story of Joseph and Zulaikha, and alludes to the point in the story at which Zulaikha accuses Joseph of assaulting her. In 'Urfi's poem, Zulaikha burns with regret as she watches him being taken away to prison.

The allusion to the story of Joseph and Zulaikha is found in the penultimate couplet as well. Zulaikha bought Joseph at auction, and spent all of her family's money doing so. Later, she again spent a fortune building a palace in order to impress Joseph. Zulaikha's devotion is reckless, and it is with this devotion that the speaker sympathizes here. In the final line, a sympathetic friend--often an annoyance to the lover--offers frustratingly simple and ineffective advice. The speaker of this couplet obviously knows



nothing of the throes of love that the lover has confronted in this ghazal, and whether or not we read the signature couplet in the light of the couplets that precede it, the bathetic counsel gives no solace.

Aesthetically and structurally, Urfi's poem differs significantly from Fighani's poem. 'Urfi's poem shares only one *qaafiya*, '*sauda*' (love-madness) with Fighani's poem. The persona of the lover of 'Urfi's ghazal seems to change with each couplet: now a tortured, frustrated lover, now an experienced lover; now a rash lover willing to sacrifice everything.

Naziri (d. 1612)

If sparks, if flames spread everywhere, what's manifest is fire.

Soothe my heart's pain, for, with fire, comity is fire.

Envy an obstacle, ardor overwhelming--O God, how shall I reach you?

The lover's path amid the seven seas is fire.

Like an extinguished lamp, I've found heart in company.

Because of the breath of those seated in solitude, my desire is fire.

If you carry this fiery face to the land of infidelity,

The Brahman will begin to dance, for the Truth is with fire.

That Majesty burns the rivals with the morning zephyr.

For the delicate ones, at the head of that alleyway of winter there's fire.

In submitting to love, it's a custom to lose both world and creed.

For everyone in whose head there's a gamble, love-madness is fire.

Devotion and beauty can't be kept behind a veil.

The flame inevitably winks, revealing every place there's fire

Naziri's burning weeping melted the sand in the vale.

He's up to his knees in tears, and on the sole of his foot there's fire.

Naziri's opening couplet is similar to 'Urfi's and shares a rhyme-word, '*mudaaraa*,' comity, which may also mean 'civility' or 'tolerance'. Like 'Urfi's lover, Naziri's lover burns when he acts with moderation and tolerance toward the beloved, to whom he refers metonymically as fire. But unlike the fire that burns 'Urfi's lover, a fire which is inescapable, Naziri's fire results from his failure to act, that is, his having done nothing to stop that spark from spreading.

Naziri's second couplet accentuates with a paradox the inescapable situation that the lover describes in the couplet's first line. In the third couplet, a thankful lover shares that his desire is rekindled. In couplet four, the lover praises the beloved's refulgent face,

imbuing it with the power to convert the non-believer.

The beloved of couplet five has the power not only to affect the natural world, but to do so fantastically. It is a familiar trope of the *ghazal* world that the morning breeze carries the scent of the beloved to the noses of the lovers who wander the streets. Here, the breeze brushes against the beloved's beauty and "catches fire." As it blows through the alleyway, it warms, and perhaps burns, the hearts of the lover's undeserving rivals.

I discussed the multivalence of couplet six's rhyme-word, "love-madness", in the context of Fighani's *ghazal*. Here, it seems to mean "love-madness" and "business, trade" all at once. The word that I have translated as "submission" shares its etymological root with "Islam," and connotes established religion.

In the seventh couplet, fire plays an unexpected role. The flickering ("winking") of the flame inevitably reveals the presence of fire, be it in the fire that burns within the lover's heart or the fire that shines on the beloved's face. The couplet is a brilliant play on words: The word that I have translated as "reveals," "*ghammaazi kardan*," shares its etymological root with "*ghamz*" and "*ghamzah*," both of which mean "wink" or "twinkling" (*ghamzah-e sitaarah* means "the twinkling of a star"). "*Ghammaz*" is a noun of intensity, and is usually translated as one who "gives the game away," so to speak. "*Ghammaazi*" is its abstract noun, roughly meaning "all the things that a *ghammaaz* is and does."

In the signature couplet, the speaker reflects on the lover's state with a striking image. Like 'Urfi's *ghazal*, Naziri's *ghazal* seems not to follow the patterns or tone of Fighani's *ghazal*. Naziri's is a more fragmented *ghazal*, the lover's tone changing with each couplet. Each couplet, save the sixth, seems to respond to a particular occasion;

unlike Fighani, Naziri's lover persona seems not to moralize or to prescribe behavior appropriate to lovers.

Zuhurii (d. 1616)

Bones brittle, dry as a reed flute, and my tale is with fire.

He burned no one more completely than me. My foot is fire.

For the nightingale, the rose gathered wounds from petals.

In moth-burning, the candle itself is completely fire.

Stranger to the alley! Rub sandal to stave off the burning of desire...

Fire doesn't burn ornaments. This heart of mine is fire.

Don't ask the torrid wind about the desert of separation and its dust.

Down to the earth there's ash, up to the Pleiades, there's fire.

Look, burning-bloodedness! Everywhere his white poplar arrowhead

Struck stone, from its spark, spear-high, there's fire.

My eye ought to have been covered when he removed his burqa.

I, myself, brought forth smoke from myself. Spectacle is fire.

The wind does not settle, that I might present to it my grief.

When asking about me, in the bottom of the wind's foot there's fire.

When love decorates the shop in Joseph-selling,

Because of the heated bustle of the market, Zulaikha is fire.

Farhad has been so feverishly engrossed in his work that still,

From the spark of his axe, in the core of flint, there's fire.

Zuhuri, washing your robe of abstinence is wisdom.

It will be cleansed by the river, but what's preferred is fire.

Zuhuri's treatment of the fire image in many respects resembles that of 'Urfi. Indeed, literary historian Muhammad Abdul Ghani claims that the two "held friendly communication with each other."<sup>37</sup> In his history of Persian poetry at the Mughal court, Ghani copies, side-by-side, selected couplets of *ham-zamiin ghazals* written by 'Urfi and Zuhuri. His selection includes several couplets from the fire *ghazals* that are being examined in this study.

Ghani goes on to suggest that the meter and rhyme's being identical suggests that they "have had poetical contests and competed with each other." Ghani's speculation is

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<sup>37</sup> Abdul Muhammad, *A History of Persian Language and Literature at the Moghul Court* (Lahore, Hijra International Publishers, 1983): 175.

based on the hearsay evidence of Zuhuri and ‘Urfi’s correspondence.

Zuhuri’s poem resembles ‘Urfi and Naziri’s poem more than it does Fighani’s poem. The couplets are, again, more fragmented: this is a collection of impressions and rhetorical flourishes. In the first couplet, the fire that affects the lover is very much external, as were the inescapable fires of ‘Urfi. In couplet two, the beloved’s passion for destroying lovers is abstractly depicted. In couplet three, the lover turns toward uninitiated lovers, mocking their futile attempts to avoid love’s throes.

In couplet four, the fire and heat of the lover’s world are vividly depicted using a common earth-Pleadies binary. The words for earth and Pleiades share an etymological root in Arabic consisting of three letters, “th-r-u”, meaning “to be wealthy”. Once again, the fire that burns the lover is an external fire, and one that is inescapable. In couplet six, the poet locates the burning inside his heart, in which burning blood resides, just as fire resides in stone.

In couplet seven, we return to an external fire, one that acts on the lover from the outside. Here, the beloved’s face is compared to burning flames. In couplet eight, the lover complains of the winds’ never resting, and we again observe the lover’s plight. In couplet nine, Zulaikha’s jealousy is the cause of her burning in fire. In the penultimate couplet, Zuhuri makes an interesting “*husn-e ta’lil*”, attributing fire’s waiting to be released from the rocks to Farhad, who was to bring a stream of milk from the mountain to Khusrau’s palace. The signature couplet is humorous. The speaker enters, addresses the Zuhuri, and suggests that Zuhuri not cleanse, but rather destroy outward signs of piety and conformity with religious orthodoxy.

Talib (d. 1627)

The people will open me every place that, so to speak, is fire.

I am the Moses of this era. My tongue's words are with fire.

Found a city of paper for the sake of us vagabonds

Wherever you see there's water underfoot and, up high, there's fire!

My teardrop, whence blood's spilt in the ruby's heart,

Appears as water in your eye, but it's fire.

I'm not the breeze of the garment. I've no association with the rose.

I'm ruby-water. All of my mingling is with fire.

My delicate-tempered manner isn't eternally of one mode.

Today, everything in my eyes is water. Tomorrow, it's fire.

O companion.. It's an ocean of love and it has waves of flames.

Make arrangements for a vessel of ruby, for the sea is fire.

Talib gathered roses from the rose-garden of fire like Abraham.

But in separation from friends, all roses are fire.

Talib's *ghazal* is perhaps the most imagistic of all the *ghazals* examined here. It begins boldly: just as Moses faced the fire of God on mount Sinai, Talib's lover character speaks with fire. In Persian, those who are "*aatash-zabaan*" [lit. "fire-tongue"(-ed)] have a powerful ability to speak and to move their listeners. The speaker has declared his skill as an orator and poet; the fruits of his imagination will act as a touchstone. With our intertextual context in mind, we might say that Talib's couplet asserts a position of aesthetic power and prowess in the tradition of the "fire" *ghazal*; note the significance of the word "fire" in the second line: the poet's language attends to the subject of "fire", the *radiif* of this poem's *zamiin*.

In couplet two, fire seems to have been used as a metonymy for the sun; fire and water coexist here in harmony with the natural order. The image is abstract, and suggests the themes of *tark-e dunya* (roughly, *contemptus mundi*), as well as the worthlessness of worldly endeavors. Couplet three shares with couplet two its imagistic shape and force. The logic of the couplet is convoluted and beautiful. Seeing the lover's tears, the wine, or ruby, has felt pain (blood has spilt in its heart), and this is evinced by its red color and its burning qualities. The beloved sees the lover's burning teardrops, and mistakes them for water. They are tears of blood, and burn in his eyes, though this escapes the beloved.

The fourth couplet is suggestive, and I have tried to make the English suggestive as well. The couplet's speaker seems to be wine itself. One wonders whether the phrase "my mingling" can be interpreted as "mingling with me". Does the wine warn the lover or invite him? Does the lover prefer the fire of intoxicated passion to the sweet scent of



the rose?

Couplet five picks up on the notion of ephemerality, and alludes, both structurally and thematically, to Fighani's today-tomorrow couplet. But Talib has handled the theme quite differently. The couplet turns on the multivalence of the word "*mashrab*", which I have translated as "manner." *Mashrab* literally means "the place of drinking", but also means a tavern, one's nature or disposition, a vessel, water, or wine. The second line may be read either as "everything that is in my eyes is water" or "In my eyes (figuratively), everything is water..." Perhaps the unpredictable lover warns of the efficacy of his tears (as in couplet three). Or perhaps the lover has made a claim similar to that of Fighani: what appears as water today is fire tomorrow. But one notices that the water of Talib's ghazal is not the water of life; indeed, the theological implication that we observed in Fighani's *ghazal* is absent here. The image is to be considered as an image, the resonances contemplated and admired, and it is not clear whether Talib's couplet conveys any "thought" in particular, which Fighani's couplet certainly did do. The penultimate couplet turns on a pun that English, thankfully, is able to capture: vessel ("*kashti*") means both ship as well as goblet. The couplet's diction is clear, and the lover speaks with the voice of wisdom.

The signature verse's allusion to the story in which Nimrod sentenced Abraham to death by fire illustrates the lonely lover's plight. Talib's roses burn despite God's intervention—loneliness pains the lover nonetheless. The couplet seems to allude to Fighani's closing line; the burning rose image creates a loose connection between the couplets. Fighani's fiery sighs burnt the roses, and as I suggested, this may refer to their fiery red appearance. I suggested that Fighani's roses may somehow connote the

couplets of his poem, and Talib's couplet allows for this reading as well: Talib has produced roses from the "fire" pattern, but ultimately these images are not enough to ease the lover's pain.

Sa'ib (d. 1676)

For an enlightened soul, the world in an eye that's keen-sighted is fire

For the restless dew, mud on the sole of the foot is fire.

The limpid water of this hunting ground is a fountain-spring of swords.

The unscathed poppy of this hem of the desert is fire.

In the arena of the hard-hearted, there's nothing but pain and scathing.

A bit of secret that's struck on stone is fire.

My nightingale never saw the warm face of the rose.

Oh how happy is the moth, for its lord is fire.

World-burning beauty takes no heed of complaints.

For the carefree child, the snare of spectacle is fire.

Mercy is mercilessness when the battle's with the self.

In jihad against the head-strong enemy, comity is fire

Until you've seen the dark face of the world-possessor,

How will it become clear to you that the world is fire?

Gathering the wounds of regret bears fruit.

The beehive's honey that's purified is fire.

My company warms the wise-hearted companion with love.

For this blood-dripping kabob, this chest of mine is fire.

Like the wild rue, I'm in fire for fear of the evil eye.

Even though, like a censer, the effects of this home of mine are fire

Forbidding us aged ones from love is sheer unfeelingness.

Love in old age is like, in the time of winter, fire.

Tear-shedders' hearts don't turn black because of darkness.

For fish, in the heart of the night, the water of the sea is fire.

Love has brought the world's smallest particles into music and dance.

Like the wild rue, the melancholy ones' ruler is fire.

As long as the knot of being remains in place for love's wayfarer,  
Like the wild rue, wherever he sets his foot there's fire.

The fellow traveler ought to be as bold as the moth,  
For whom, with a burning chest, desire is fire.

The tale of ardor can't be written in every letter.  
Pluck a page from the salamander's wing, for poesy is fire.

Sa'ib's world-burning love is just like the rose-garden of Abraham:  
It has gardens behind its veil, though what's manifest is fire.

Critics and commentators interested in style and stylistics often observe that Sa'ib employs extensively the device of *tamsiil*, or *misaaliyah* ("analogy").<sup>38</sup> This general claim is borne out by Sa'ib's fire *ghazal*. Of *tamsiil-nigaarii* (analogy-writing), Rana Khurshid tells us:

This is the art of the *misaaliyah*: that first the poet make the claim of some moral fact, then that he straightforwardly describe some occurrence, situation, state or

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<sup>38</sup> For detailed discussions of *tamsiil* in Sa'ib, see Muhammadi, Dr. Husain. *Beganaah Misl-e Ma'nii* ...pp. 135-167 and Siyasi, Dr. Muhammad "Tamsil dar shi'r-e Sa'ib" pp. 82-166, and (in Urdu), Khurshid, Raanah "Sabk-e Hindi wa Ghazal-Go'ii-e Saa'ib".

sense from among life's observations in support of it.<sup>39</sup>

One may, in the light of this definition, wonder whether the opening couplet of this *ghazal* counts as a *tamsiil*. There is nothing direct or straightforward about Sa'ib's comparison here. The lover seems to make a statement about appearance, reality, and pain. The images speak to one another: eyes, light, fire, seeing; pain, world, appearance. In the second line, the dew, which eagerly awaits the morning so that it may settle on the beloved rose, is grieved by what hinders it and prevents it from doing so. In both lines, what appears as physical causes the lovers' torment: the world, the mud.

The second couplet continues the themes established in the first couplet, and, as a thematic extension of the couplet, may be called a "*husn-e matla*" ("beauty of the opening couplet"). Structurally, this is parallel to the opening couplets of Fighani's *ghazal*. Here, appearances deceive, and what appears as pure causes pain. Sa'ib's treatment of the appearance-reality binary recalls Talib's extensive treatment of the same.

The theme developed in the first two couplets is sustained in the third, and Sa'ib's lover again confirms the inevitability of the lover's pain. This is echoed in the next couplet, but the image is more self-conscious. That is, Sa'ib has made an insightful comparison between two stock characters in the *ghazal* world: the nightingale who circles the garden, eternally seeking the rose, is less fortunate than the moth, who circumambulates the fire that will eventually destroy it.

Couplet five's second line may read either "For the carefree child, the snare of spectacle is fire" or "The carefree child's snare of spectacle is fire." The second seems to

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<sup>39</sup> Rana Khurshid, "Sabk-e Hindi wa Ghazal-Go'i-e Sa'ib" in *Khuda Bakhsh Library Journal* 137 (2004): 120.

make more sense if we accept that the couplet is about the cruelty of the beloved.

Couplet six's rhyme-refrain recalls the opening line of 'Urfi's ghazal. Sa'ib has made a *tasarruf* of 'Urfi's line, and changed the arena. Sa'ib's fire is not the ineluctable fire of devotion and courtship, but the painful consequence of tolerating one's base desires. Shibli Nu'mani famously discusses the important role that morality plays in Sa'ib's poetry, and one does sense in this couplet, and the couplets that surround it, a wise, moralizing voice that is present, but perhaps not so pronounced, in the poems of Sa'ib's forerunners.

Couplet seven reminds us of the theme of *contemptus mundi* that we observed in the ghazal's opening verse. Here, the world's ephemerality is conceived of in relief against the beloved's countenance. In couplet seven, the lover speaks as one who has experienced the throes and pains of love, and one wonders whether the addressee of this couplet is the beloved or another lover. The burning stings of the world's bees are worth the fruits of labor. The notion that Sa'ib's speaker conveys gnostic wisdom informs the meaning of the next couplet. The couplet alludes to Fighani's couplet, in which the companion is mentioned. But here, Sa'ib's lover's words, not the burning rose-branch, are the source of warmth.

In couplet eight, the lover notes that it is not for material possessions that he is envied by others. Perhaps it is his wisdom and words that arouse the jealousy. Or, perhaps, he has aroused the jealousy of the younger lovers who appeared in couplet seven, whereupon he speaks couplet nine. But it may be that these couplets are best understood as being in *vuquu' go'ii*<sup>40</sup> mode, wherein the poet responds to a particular

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<sup>40</sup> Literally "happening-speaking," critics disagree about the meaning of this word. See discussions in Nu'mani, Rahmati, and Losensky for interesting interpretations.

situation, and the pleasure of the couplet lies in one's imagining the situation to which the couplet responds.

In couplet ten, the moralizing voice returns, with a paradigmatic *tamsiil*. Here, the property of fire that is salient to the metaphor seems to be its brightness. The word I have translated as "sea" is, in 'Urfi's Oxus couplet, translated as "river", and there is indeed a structural allusion at work here. Lovers do not allow the darkness around them to extinguish the light in their hearts. The sense of determination and positivity in the couplet is unmistakable, and such moods are unique to Sa'ib among the poets whose *ghazals* have been examined here.

The tone of couplet eleven mirrors that of couplet ten. Love, perhaps devotion, moves the lovers as does fire the seeds of the wild rue, which pop and "dance" as they burn. The wild rue image is invoked again in couplet twelve, and this time the lover's footstep resembles the popping and burning. To have fire under one's feet is to be swiftly moving, and the eager lover will ever be on the move.

In couplet thirteen, the moralizing voice returns, and Sa'ib once again advises that the lover be bold and determined. The couplet's rhyme suggests a structural allusion to Fighani's couplet. Indeed, Sa'ib seems to address Fighani's lover, warning that the lover ought not to be timid, humbled, and shamed as one approaches the beloved. Sa'ib's couplet also alludes to Naziri's couplet, again with the same rhyme-word.

The penultimate couplet alludes to the salamander, or phoenix, who dwells in—and is reborn in—fire. In popular stories, it is told that a kind of inflammable fabric was made from an animal.<sup>41</sup> The lover's poetic creation being fire, it must be written on a fabric that will not burn. This image resonates with the images that Sa'ib has given us

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<sup>41</sup> Sayyid Ja'far Shahidi, "Samandar" in *Bayaaz* 1 (1986): 103-104.

throughout this *ghazal*, those in which the lover-poet seems aware of his own poetic abilities.

In the *ghazal*'s signature verse, Sa'ib alludes structurally both to the signature verse of Talib as well as to that of Naziri. But the intertextual tension is sustained between Sa'ib's and Talib's verses, each turning towards the other's poetic persona to comment on that persona's work. And where Talib's couplet highlighted the pain of separation, Sa'ib's once again returns to the appearance-reality distinction with which the *ghazal* opened. Sa'ib builds on the valences of fire that have been introduced in this *ghazal* to make a final moral statement. That is, if one were to leap into his burning love, which one might note we know only via his words, one would find that what awaits one on the other side is a garden of flowers.

Sa'ib's *ghazal* stands apart in many ways from the *ghazals* that came before it. As noted here, his verses lend themselves easily to mystical readings, and the speaker of the *ghazal* seems not to be a grieving lover, or a lover experiencing the throes of love, but the voice of wisdom and experience. In this way, Sa'ib's poem seems distant from that of 'Urfi, and very close to that of Fighani. Indeed, Sa'ib's poem seems not to allude at all to the poems of 'Urfi, Naziri, or Zuhuri. Furthermore, we see in Sa'ib's poem a number of structural features (the use of *tamsiil*, generalizations about devotion and love) that remind the reader of Fighani.

Bedil (d. 1720) (I)



Since I'm without you tonight, the stuff of my limbs and organs is fire.

If I shed all these tears, up to the Pleiades there's fire.

For my heart, the mischievousness of my sigh is no means of comfort.

Burning is wine for a banquet whose decanter is fire.

Just like the sun-- don't ask about my reputation's deception--

If my fountain-spring is watery, what's manifest is fire.

You-less like the candles that they burn on gravestones.

I've poured dust on my head, and on this head of mine there's fire.

The highest essence is billowy from every lowly part--

This stone, too, ailing and grounded, is completely fire.

Separated from the rose bush, the branch is spent in the fireplace.

Life with friends is pleasantry, and alone it's fire.

There remained black-faced disgrace wherever my reputation's color faded.

In truth, the upshot of keeping face is fire.

With two worlds of desire one can't be union's rival.

I brought thorns and straw to the place there's fire.

There's no stuff of anyone's brain except for burning.

We're feverish with the business of love-madness; the business of love-madness is fire.

Wine's pleasure doesn't merit the worry of drinking's after-effect--

Today, pass on the water that tomorrow is fire.

If my weeping was ineffectual, beware of my wail.

My water turned to blood, but this fire of mine is fire.

There's no mirror-bearer of the people's ecstasy but for the wild rue's dance--

But who is Bedil, the heart-less, as long as he thinks that the world is fire?

Bedil has composed two fire *ghazals*, both of which are presented in their entirety here. The version of Bedil's divan that was printed by Naval Kishore press, however, has only one version of the fire *ghazal*, which is a mixture of the couplets of the two *ghazals* translated here. These two *ghazals* were particularly difficult to translate, because much of the enjoyment of Bedil's work lies in the kinds of puns and etymological connections, or "*rabts*", that he employs in his verses.

The first couplet of this *ghazal* is quite powerful, and recalls the image of the fire-consumed lover that we observed in Fighani's poem. Here, the lover's tears are fiery, a

synaesthetic extension of their being blood-red, perhaps because the lover's tears, as we shall see, are like the melting wax of a candle. The couplet alludes structurally to that of Zuhuri, but Bedil has introduced the further paradox of tears' causing fire, any kind of moisture being absent entirely from the scorched world of Zuhuri's couplet.

The imagery of the second couplet is abstract; words resonate: banquet, party, decanter, wine, burning, (fiery) breath, discomfort, (blood-filled) heart, fire. There are other valences: "decanter" ("*miinaa*") may mean sky, mirror, wine, goblet, the ornamentation of a goblet, even a ball of wild rue. Here are several (not all) possible translations of the second line:

It's the burning of the wine in a party whose decanter is fire.

Burning is wine for the party whose decanter is fire.

Wine is the burning of the party whose decanter is fire.

The burning of a party is wine, for its decanter is fire.

The wine of a party is burning, for its decanter is fire.

Perhaps we are meant to rearrange and to contemplate the meanings that these words allow; perhaps it is the imagery itself, not the meaning, that we are meant to admire.

Couplet three turns on a Persian idiom, *chashmah-e khursheed*, (lit. "the fountain-spring (of) the sun"), which refers to the sun's disc. The second line may also read, "If to my fountain-spring, water is manifest, it's fire." An added pleasure here is that "chasmah" resembles the word "chashm", eye; this contributes to the idea that underlies the couplet: Reputations are made of words, "reputation" itself being one, and words'

meanings can mislead. Somewhat ironically, the shamed lover admonishes not to trust words' surface meanings—words too have appearances that deceive. Awareness of words' multivalence, their literal and figurative meanings, is what motivates this couplet's aesthetic appeal, and the couplet is effective not only because it brings together creatively images such as the sun, water, and fire, but because of the way in which conventionalized metaphors and idioms are brought to the fore and made fresh once again.

This is also true of couplet four, in which Bedil makes use of the common idiom “*khaak dar sar kardan*” (lit. “to make/do dust/dirt on head”), which can mean many things, including to mourn, to be given a bad name, and to die. Of course, Bedil has called to the fore this idiom's literal sense, and built the couplet's image of ultimate loneliness upon it.

In couplet five, we again see this unique form of imagistic punning. The word that I have rendered as “dormancy” (*zamiin-giirii*) literally means “ground-seizing”, and suggests infirmity or weakness. Fire inheres in the stone, and the cause of this burning fire is the stone's dormancy, its desire to move. Dekhoda glosses “highest essence” as meaning “the sky”, which adds to the couplet a fourth elemental image: the air of the sky, the billowy (lit. wave-struck/striking), the stone, and the fire.

Couplet six recalls the image of the branch that we observed in Fighani's ghazals. But where Fighani's branch's fire offered beneficent warmth, Bedil's branch burns in the fire of separation.

In couplet seven, Bedil once again impresses with wit. The couplet turns on several puns concerning faces, light, and the fire-water binary. The word that I have

translated as “keeping face” is “*aabruu*” (etymologically speaking, “face-water”, but literally meaning “honor”), and there is surface-meaning tension between the water-face of honor, and its fiery consequence. Once again, the couplet offers an imagistic, poetic explanation of the etymology of a common idiom, “*ruu-siyaahii*” (lit. “face-blackness”). One might consider whether the proposition that several of Bedil’s couplets have made “*husn-e ta’lils*” not of natural phenomena, but of Persian idioms.

Couplet eight shares its posture with several of this *ghazal*’s couplets. The image of the brambles, along with the “worldly desire” of the first couplet, suggests mundane pursuits. But notice the agency and symbiosis that the lover has suggested here: the lover’s goal is to burn in union’s fire and brings, by the lover’s own will, worldly desire as fuel for that fire. It would be misleading to think that this couplet is an example of *tark-e dunya* (*contemptus mundi*), as the lover has, rather than forswearing worldly desire, considered that desire as a means to union.

Couplet nine recalls the opening couplet of Fighani’s *ghazal*, and shares its rhyme-word (“*sauda*”) with Fighani’s opening line. Bedil’s use of *sauda* is different from that of Fighani, because Bedil means to pun by it. This pun governs the imagery of the couplet: the black bile that causes love-madness rests in the brain, which of course burns with love’s fever. *Sauda*, being both business as well as love-madness, resonates with the *saamaan* (“material, goods, stuff”) of the minds of lovers.

Couplet ten recalls Fighani’s couplet, indeed structurally alludes to it. Here we have some interesting possibilities for an intertextual reading. Taken on its own, the fire in Bedil’s couplet suggests most immediately either the mundane “burning” of a hangover, or the theological fire of Hell. But if we read the water as referring to the very

water of life that Khizr feeds the lover, the couplet's fire can be read as the eternal pain of separation that we observed in Fighani's *ghazal*. Indeed, this reading resonates sympathetically with the general tone and thematic content of Bedil's *ghazal*.

The penultimate couplet returns to the image of burning tears with which the *ghazal* opened. The lover's burning tears unable to burn its object, the lover warns of the heat of the lover's fiery breath.

The *ghazal's* signature couplet recalls the opening couplet and "world is fire" couplet of Sa'ib's *ghazal*. Bedil puns here on his pen-name, which may mean those lovers who have given away their hearts to the beloved. The lover must give up the notion that the fire that causes the wild rue seed to dance, that is, to throw it into ecstasy, is found in the mundane. The lover, who's given away his heart, knows that the fire that causes the wild rue to dance comes from some place other than the world.

Bedil's first fire *ghazal* draws heavily on the imagery, tone, and literary techniques (particularly *tamsiil*) that we observed in the *ghazals* of Fighani and Sa'ib. He moralizes, paying particular attention to the nature of devotion. Like the fire of Fighani's *ghazal*, the fire of this *ghazal* is internal; it inheres in the lover's body (his tears, mind, breath, the stone-heart). Poetic reasoning, punning, and creative juxtaposition of words according to surface meanings or etymological relationships are at the fore.

Bedil (II)

With the memory of your beauty's rays, my heart's completely fire.

Because of the presence of the sun, this mirror of mine is fire.

Just like a candle, my form melted with wails of joy.

Everywhere you see a tear, it's water. Here, it's fire.

As long as breath remains, life has no respite from twists and turns.

It keeps itself writhing as long as thorns and straw are with fire.

The heat of the gathering of the horizons is dependent on fever.

If the sun be the candle during the day, all the nights it's fire.

Love emerges if you tear open my chest.

Like the talisman of stone, the name of this riddle is fire.

O bad-tempered one, one can't ignore the burning of the crippled ones' tears.

If the blister on my foot bursts, the desert is fire.

I'm the candle of an image. Don't ask about my burning and melting.

As long as there be rays of color, I'm on fire.

Drown in Unity if you want to live without worries.

For fish, whatsoever be other than the sea is fire.

Except in anonymity, no trace of peace can be found.

Otherwise, because of my ascent, up to the wing of the phoenix there's fire.

Bedil, all the restlessness of my sigh is not without reason,

Since, because of my burning heart, down to the sole of my breath's foot there's fire.

The focus on internal fire that we observed in Bedil's first fire *ghazal* continues in this, his second. This version begins with a simple and beautiful image. The lover's heart-mirror reflects "your" light upon recalling "you"—notice that the fire-light-burning that fills the surface of the mirror is the effect of the lover's memory, not the effect of the beloved's outward manifestation. The couplet appears to be a *tasarruf* of this famous couplet by Hafiz, against which I shall make clear what I mean by this *zaahir-baatin* (outward-inward) binary:

In the beginning, your beauty's rays came alive with glory.

Love became manifest and set fire to the whole world.<sup>42</sup>

In both Bedil's, as well as Hafiz's, couplet, fire is manifest because of the beloved's appearance (be the beloved mundane or what have you). But in Hafiz's couplet, the fire spreads throughout the world, and, as we move along his Hafiz's *ghazal*, it becomes clear that this is the love-fire that engulfs the lover in flames. But, as noted, Bedil's fire is

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<sup>42</sup> Hafiz Shirazi, *The Divan of Hafez*, tr. Reza Saberi, (Boston: University Press of America): 181. This translation is my own.



internal, burning and shining in his heart alone. The fire of Hafiz's couplet resonates with the fire that we observed in 'Urfi's *ghazal*—a fire that is objective, prior to the lover's experience, and thus inescapable. Against this, the subjective fire of Bedil's couplet, which flares only with Bedil's act of remembrance, resonates with the notion of fire that we observed in Fighani's *ghazal*.

This emphasis on the subjective experience of fire continues in the next couplet, where the lover's lament is compared to the melting of a candle. The couplet recalls Talib's tear-fire couplet. Both poets have offered reasons for the lover's tears' being fire, but Bedil's comparison of tears with hot, melting wax, is simpler and clearer than Talib's image.

In couplet three, the lover again reflects on the nature of the devoted lover's life, which finds no respite from burning as long as the brambles of existence remain. The emphasis on the subjective discussed above enters into couplet four. The couplet plays on a particular use of "tumult", found in phrases like "*hangamah-e khurshiid*" (the sun's tumult, or the "light and heat of the sun").<sup>43</sup> *Hangaamah* contributes two other senses that are germane to the meaning and force of this couplet: the site of battle and struggle, and the arrangement of a gathering. My translation, I admit, fails to capture these. The form of the couplet recalls the *tamsil* that we observed in the *ghazals* of Sa'ib and Fighani. Fighani's body imagery is also called to mind.

The theme of fire's burning inside the lover, and its potential to act on the outside world, is maintained in couplets five and six. In couplet five, the lover's breast is likened to a talisman, that is, to what brings bridges the gap between the metaphysical and the mundane, what affords metaphysical agency to the worldly. But it may also mean a

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<sup>43</sup> Rahim Afifi. *Farhangnamah-e Sh'iri* (Tehran: Surush, 1372-1373/1993-1994): 2667.

puzzle, or something impossible to solve. To open the lover's breast is to do the impossible: as is to bring fire from within the rock. Couplet six's image combines the water of blisters, symptoms of the lover's endless wandering, with the fire of internal burning in a striking paradox. The inevitability of the lover's burning, a theme observed in 'Urfi and Talib's *ghazals*, is made fresh in the next couplet. The candle that burns in an image never changes its state: its wax cannot melt, and its wick never burns. That is, Bedil's lover's eternal burning is a consequence of his mode of existence.

The next couplet alludes structurally to the couplets by 'Urfi and Sa'ib that share its rhyme-word. Bedil reverses Sa'ib's image, and introduces the sufistic notion of unity [*wahdat(ul-vujuud)*]. The lover's posture in Bedil's penultimate couplet shares this moralizing tone. Once again, Bedil's lover's internal fire reaches out and affects the world—here, the Anqa or phoenix, and recollects the way in which Fighani's fire burned the flowers of the desert. The word that I have translated as “ascension” may also indicate a means of attaining to the divine through contemplation. This sense certainly fits the sufistic tone that we find in this couplet. The *ghazal's* signature verse hyperbolically describes the reason for and extent of the fire of the lover's breath.

Both of Bedil's *ghazals* rely heavily upon the frame set by the *ghazals* of Fighani and Sa'ib. Not only in terms of imagery, motifs, and structure (i.e. the extensive use of *tamsiil*), but also in terms of tone. Bedil and Sa'ib's *ghazals* in general seem to be about the ways of devotion, and not about the occurrences and happenings that befall the lover (as was the case in Naziri, 'Urfi, Zuhuri, and Talib's poems). To what extent do other poems by Bedil exhibit the influence of Sa'ib and Fighani's work is an important question that arises from this study. The role of imitation in forming one's style has been

foregrounded in this study, and it is ironic that one should find in Bedil, for many the quintessential “Indian Style” poet, the style of the only two poets examined here who spent little or no time in South Asia. Though it is unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis, Sa’ib and Fighani’s influence on Bedil is a topic that deserves further scholarly attention.

Ghalib (d. 1869)

I opened my chest and people saw that here is fire.

Henceforth they will say of fire that it's, so to speak, fire.

Awaiting the appearance of the wine-bearer roasts me like a kabob.

In the goblet, wine's the water of life; in the decanter it's fire.

Your weeping in love is the effect of my sigh's smoke.

In your eye, a tear is water. In this heart of mine it's fire.

So you say that his appearance-place isn't far from here?

Forbearance is a handful of straw, and a taste for spectacle is fire.

To be unreservedly in affliction is better than the fear of affliction--

The depths of the river are *Salsabil* and the surface of the river is fire.

He lifted the veil from his face and I was consumed by fire.

Wine is wind to his fire, and to me it's fire.

I've made room for myself in your heart in proportion to my boldness.

Let me say clearly: what is a stone for you is, for me, fire.

I weep such that there's nothing but water beneath the earth.

I wail such that up to the zenith of the Pleiades there's fire.

Drink up today and beware: don't keep any for tomorrow.

In the *shari'a*, today wine's water and tomorrow it's fire.

The secret of the bad-tempered ones can't withstand being hidden any longer.

It's the veil-holder of my burning and yearning at every place there's fire.

Ghalib, I've confronted the way and tavern of 'Urfi, who said,

"The surface of the river is *Salsabil* and the depths of the river are fire."

Ghalib opens his version of the fire *ghazal* with a powerful couplet. The fire of Ghalib's chest is so impressive that it has changed the way all who have seen it think of "natural" fire, which cannot compare to it. The idea is striking, and the significance of the word

"fire", being this *zamiin's* refrain, has made it more so. With our intertextual reading in mind, we may read the couplet as Ghalib's way of announcing this *ghazal's* place in the tradition of *ghazals* written in this *zamiin*: the fire that earlier poets made their refrain was impressive, but now I shall compose a fire *ghazal* and show you *real* fire.

Astute readers will notice immediately that Ghalib's opening couplet makes a *tassarruf* of Talib Amuli's opening couplet. Talib's couplet's first line may be read as a challenge, and Ghalib's couplet as a response to that challenge. Ghalib's couplet exhibits its being so both in terms of form and content. It shares a number of lexical items with Talib's couplet: to open (*gushuudan*), people/creation (*khalq*), place (*jaa*), "so to speak" (*goyaa*). The *tasarruf* that Ghalib makes of the words and theme of Talib's couplet are worth elucidating. Asifa Zamani tells us:

The first has mentioned his fire-description. And the second has opened his chest and shown that if fire is anywhere, it is here and this is it.<sup>44</sup>

The structural, lexical, and semantic *rabt* between the two verses has created an intertextual dramatic situation. Turning towards his audience, Ghalib's speaker has used Talib's speaker's words to claim his own superiority, his own power and prowess, within the tradition of the "fire" *ghazal*. Notice the wittiness of Ghalib's use of "so to speak": Talib claimed that his fire would compete with any so-called fire, and Ghalib has appropriated Talib's own words as he claims that all fire, including Talib's, will be seen as "fire-like". He has not only met Talib's challenge, he has trumped Talib's claim by turning Talib's own words against him.

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<sup>44</sup> Asifah Zamani, "Ghalib aur Talib" in *Ghalibnamah* 2.2 (1981): 245.

Ghalib's second couplet recalls the second and third couplets of 'Urfi's *ghazal*, and Ghalib's couplet's rhyme-word recalls the verse by Bedil. Ghalib has reversed the image that we find in the first line of the second couplet of 'Urfi's *ghazal*, and he has made clear the image we found in Bedil's couplet: expectation, not wine, is what burns the lover. Worth noting is the way in which the change that has been made to 'Urfi's image affects the identity of the lover in Ghalib's couplet. Ghalib's lover persona has a distinct outlook on drinking and separation from the beloved. 'Urfi's lover laments his separation from the beloved and burns with agony; the wine of Bedil's gathering is polyvalent: painful fire, the fire of intoxication, etc. But Ghalib's lover needs only the goblet and the appearance of the wine-bearer to achieve immortality. An intertextual reading suggests that Ghalib's lover's voice awaits the very words relayed in the third couplet of 'Urfi's *ghazal*.

Ghalib's third couplet picks up on both the imagery and the appearance-reality motif that we found in Talib's couplet. Here, Ghalib turns towards the beloved and accuses the beloved of feigning sadness. The lover's breath has turned to smoke because of the fire burning in his chest, and when this smoke irritates the eyes of the beloved, the beloved's eyes begin to water.

Couplets four and five engage the *carpe diem* theme. The fifth couplet is perhaps this *ghazal*'s most famous. It is a reversal of the line by 'Urfi that we read earlier. Ghalib's verse is often cited in the critical literature, and Niyaz Fatihpuri famously critiques what he feels are the defects ("*naqs*") of 'Urfi's couplet, and the way in which Ghalib has appropriated and improved upon those defects, in his important discussion of

*ma'nii aafriinii* (meaning-creation).<sup>45</sup> Fatihpuri's most convincing argument is that the Salsabil, a flowing spring, does not connote fish in the way that fire does so the salamander.

Writing in a typical evaluative mode, Fatihpuri frames his discussion in terms of 'Urfi's shortcomings, and claims that Ghalib, seeing these shortcomings in 'Urfi's imagery, made a change to the couplet. Such evaluative frames are interesting, but not the ultimate goal of our intertextual analysis, which focuses on the particularities of Ghalib's *tasarruf*, and on explicating the ways in which explication of the aesthetics of *tasurruf* informs and enriches our reading of the poem.

Notice that Ghalib's lover persona once again stands in contradistinction to that of 'Urfi. Whereas 'Urfi's lover solemnly warns of the many trials and hardships ahead—as 'Urfi's lover was wont to do in that ghazal, Ghalib's lover admonishes that we ought not to be deterred by the appearance of danger. The *tasarruf*'s simplicity is what makes it witty and beautiful: Ghalib has switched the position of just two words, surface and depths. The simplicity of the semantic and lexical rearrangement stands in contrast to the radical shift in theme and mood.

Couplet six calls to mind Zuhuri's couplet, both couplets being spoken on the same occasion. But in Ghalib's couplet, responsibility for the cause of the lover's burning has shifted from the lover's not covering his eyes to the wine that turns the beloved's face fiery red, wine which ignites the passion in the lover's heart. Couplet seven presents an interesting image. The beloved's heart is a stone, and the lover has, with his boldness, made room for himself there. It is as if the lover dwells in the core of

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<sup>45</sup> Fatihpuri, Niyaz. *Intaqadiyat*[sic] p. 346. Scholars of Persianate literature will find Fatihpuri's discussion of meaning-creation interesting and important; it offers an alternative to the structuralist notion of meaning-creation that Frances Pritchett advances in *Nets of Awareness*.

the beloved's heart of stone, which is filled with fire. Ghalib's couplet is more abstract than those of Zuhuri and Bedil in which this "fire hidden in the stone" theme is treated.

In couplet seven, Ghalib reinterprets critically the earth/Pleiades binary that we observed in Zuhuri's *ghazal* in terms of the weep/wail (*giryaa/naalah*) binary found in Bedil's couplet. The word that I have translated as "earth" denotes, according to Dekhoda's Persian dictionary, that earth which is moist. Zuhuri's couplet focuses on the aridity and heat that the lover faces: the fiery heat of love has dried up the moist earth and set fire to the heavens. Ghalib's couplet seems to be a corrective motion: the appropriateness of the watery weeping's image to "earth", and of the fiery breath's image to "Pleiades", is what makes the couplet beautiful. This discernment is reinforced both by the parallel structure, sets the moist earth and fiery Pleiades in separate, parallel spaces, as well as by the repeated use of "'*daaram*" (lit. "I have", translated here as "I"). This emphasis on the speaker intensifies the force and beauty of this corrective *tasarruf*.

In couplet eight, Ghalib grapples with the today-tomorrow binary that, by the time he wrote his poem, had become a convention within this *zamiin*. Not surprisingly, Ghalib's lover proves witty and biting satirical. Consider Ghalib's couplet against those of Fighani, Talib, and Bedil. In Ghalib's couplet, the fire is certainly that of Hell, a turn away from the 'fire of after-effect' that we find in Fighani, and perhaps Bedil's, verse. Ghalib reverses the reasoning of Fighani and Bedil's lovers, and brings in the notion of Islamic jurisprudence as he argues for *carpe diem*. Observe how easily Ghalib's lover twists the words of the religious law. Moreover, Ghalib seems on the surface to rely on the precepts of this religious law as he reasons. Ghalib's lover demonstrates how easily such precepts are twisted by reason to meet the needs of the



occasion. That is, “According to religious law, wine will become (Hell’s) fire tomorrow, so we had better drink it all tonight!” It is difficult to hold back my laughter as I read this couplet; it seems to grow more amusing with each read.

The penultimate couplet recalls the reference to the beloved of ‘Urfi’s opening couplet, as well as Naziri’s “winking flame” couplet. Indeed, both Ghalib and Naziri’s “at every place there’s fire” couplets are the penultimate couplets in their *ghazals*, another way in which intertextual tension is introduced between them. Both couplets share common images and a common theme. Naziri’s couplet described the inevitability of the exposure of the beloved and lover’s game. But Ghalib’s lover once again proves witty, and perhaps even a bit sinister. Notice that, in Ghalib’s verse, it is not devotion, love, or intense feeling that may be exposed, but the secret of a plurality of bad-tempered beloveds. Can the couplet be read as a playful threat? Tabassum suggests a reading that is a bit more somber:

‘There isn’t the power to hide the secret of the bad-tempered ones any more than this. Wherever there is fire, that is the veil-holder of our burning and bearing.’

The hot[=harsh] temperament of the bad-tempered is like fire. Not everyone can withstand it. We have given it room in our heart silently and with such patience/courage; that is to say it is a secret that is hidden in our heart. That is to say, the fire has become in our heart the burning and bearing of love...<sup>46</sup>

But Tabassum fails to take notice of the fact that it is not one, but a number of beloveds

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<sup>46</sup> Sufi Ghulam-e Mustafa Tabassum. *Sharh-e Ghazaliyat-e Ghalib Farsi vol. I* (Delhi: Kitabi Duniya, 2006), 276

whose secret can no longer be borne by the lover's chest. In the reading that I am suggesting, the pleasure of the couplet lies in the fact that the lover puts his own need of relief above the needs of any beloved. Unlike Naziri's lover, who tells himself and his reader that union with the beloved is inevitable, Ghalib's lover cannot wait for fate to run its course.

In the signature couplet, Ghalib makes clear that he has written the *javaab* of 'Urfi, making a *tazmin* of the verse by 'Urfi that Ghalib has reversed. The couplet's closing statement directs our attention towards 'Urfi's *ghazal*, but it also seems to make a larger statement about Ghalib's poem. We have observed that Ghalib's lover persona in this *zamiin* is characterized by a sharp wit, boldness, and sense of humor. None of these qualities seem to describe 'Urfi's lover.

We have seen that Ghalib has taken pains not only to create lover-personae that stand in contradistinction to those of his forerunners, but to do so while making explicit references to his forerunners' poetic reasoning, as well as to their handling of the tropes and images of the "...aa is fire" *ghazal*. Furthermore, we observed that, in this *ghazal*, Ghalib set his voice explicitly against 'Urfi's voice. But perhaps more interesting is the fact that Ghalib has chosen not to mention Zuhuri and Talib, to whose versions of the *ghazal* he alludes several times.

Critic Harold Bloom might call this "poetic misprision" on Ghalib's part. That is, Bloom might say that Ghalib's "anxiety of influence" has led him to obscure the ways in which that influence manifests itself in his work. But this notion seems misplaced in this context. Indeed, it seems more likely that Ghalib has assumed, even relied upon the fact that his audience would have access to the *ghazals* of Talib, 'Urfi, and Zuhuri. The

aesthetics of Ghalib's *ghazal*, that is, the significance and beauty of most of its couplets, involves the changes that take place between Ghalib's couplets and the couplets of these forerunning masters. In this *zamiin*, only Makhfi's poem is comparable to Ghalib's poem in the explicitness of its intertextual aesthetic. Ghalib's *ghazal* displays the poet's dynamic wit, his erudition, and his ability to refresh tired tropes and to outperform the poetic reasoning of his forerunners. To attribute this aesthetic sensibility to Ghalib's anxiety would be to ignore the conscious engagement, allusions, levity, and playfulness that we observed in Ghalib's verse.

But perhaps more important is the following conclusion: "Imitation," even in its qualified form, "*imitatio*", which critic and scholar Paul Losensky prefers, seems not to describe adequately what we observe in Ghalib's fire *ghazal*. Yes, the fire poem evinces indebtedness to the poems that came before it, and we do find that Ghalib has availed himself of "models". But the allusive puns, witty turns, and "upstaging" that we find in Ghalib's *ghazal* suggest a more dynamic mode of engagement than what is suggested by the notion of "imitation". This dynamic engagement is the key to appreciating the creativity and beauty of this poem, and the poem demands to be read on these terms.

### III

#### **Persian Literary History in the Light of *Javaab-Go'ii***

In the twentieth century, the foundational works of Persian literary history have contributed to the reification of some of the notions of period, style, and nationality that we observed earlier in Ghalib's letter to Chaudhri 'Abdul Ghafur. Shibli Nu'mani's *Shi'r-ul Ajam* ("The Poetry of Persia"), Edward Browne's *A Literary History of Persia*, and Muhammad Taqi Bahar's *Sabk-shinasi* ("Stylistics") couch the history and aesthetics of Persian poetry in the language of national and geographic identity. Indeed, critics and scholars of "Indo-Persian" poetry have generally embraced Bahar's term, "*sabk-i hindi*," or "the Indian style" in their work. Some regard the significance of "Indian" in "the Indian Style" as linguistic, and authors regard it as cultural. Dr. Waris Kirmani finds in the poetry of Ghalib and in that of the poets of the Indian style the direct influence of South Asian society. Both he and Shamsuddin Ahmad agree that India's cultural environment, particularly the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims, and the linguistic and cultural plurality that, they claim, one finds in South Asia, gave rise to the unique aesthetic sensibility that we have come to call "the Indian style."<sup>47</sup>

National identity and the formation of a classical "Indian" Persian literary tradition are at stake here, and critics and scholars are quick to mobilize essentialist rhetoric within this nationalist frame. This is particularly true where Ghalib's Persian

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<sup>47</sup> Waris Kirmani, "Ghalib ke Peshrav Naziri-o Bedil Vaghairah," *Ghalibnamah* 17.2 (1996): 107-108; Shamsuddin Ahmad, "Ghalib Farsi Ghazal ki Rivayat Men," *Ghalibnamah* 2.2 (1981): 116-118.

verse is concerned. In his introduction to Yusuf Husain's English translation of Ghalib's Persian *ghazals*, Nazir Ahmad writes:

A thoughtful poetry with complex images [such as Ghalib's] loses its appeal specially to the Iranians. The Indianism of some of his words and phrases may lose the charm of his poetry to a native Persian.<sup>48</sup>

Waris Kirmani echoes these sentiments in the introduction of his *Evaluation of Ghalib's Persian Poetry*, in which he claims that the Indian style appeals to the Indian mind, and is "best appreciated by scholars of the soil."<sup>49</sup> One of Urdu and Indo-Persian literature's most famous critics, Niyaz Fatihpuri frames his discussion of Indo-Persian poetry in similar terms.<sup>50</sup> Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, in his essays "A Stranger in the City: The Poetics of the Sabk-i Hindi" and "Expression of the Indo-Muslim Mind in Urdu Ghazal," makes similar claims about the relationship between style and "national minds".<sup>51</sup>

One of the aims of this study has been to break away from the nation-style-tropological frame into which critics set discussions of "Indo-Persian" poetry in general, and Ghalib's Persian poetry in particular. This study has aimed to shift the focus of critical inquiry from pseudo-scientific stylistics, viz. the cataloguing of tropes and lexical peculiarities, to the close study of poems. Both in his poetry as well as in his other writings, Ghalib demonstrates the centrality of emulation and engagement to the poetic

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<sup>48</sup> Nazir Ahmad, introduction to *Persian Ghazals of Ghalib*, by Yusuf Husain (New Delhi: Ghalib Institute, 1980), xiii.

<sup>49</sup> Waris Kirmani, *Evaluation of Persian Poetry* (Aligarh, India: Aligarh Muslim University Press, 1972), xii.

<sup>50</sup> Niyaz Fatihpuri, *Intaqadiyat* p. 312: "In the last 1200 years, how many such poets has Iran produced whom the world [has] remembered? The answer to this is disappointing."

<sup>51</sup> See S.R. Faruqi, "A Stranger in the City..." pp. 13-14 and "Expression of the Indian Mind..." p. 1.

craft. This study has been an attempt to apply some of these notions to the reading and appreciation of Ghalib's verse. Essentialist rhetorics, be they national or stylistic, only distract and detract from appreciating poems and engaging poets along with their poems at the level of particularity or subjective experience.

Historian Rajiv Kinra, in his otherwise stellar examination of the stylistic turn in Persian literary scholarship, makes a typically essentialist mistake. Of two of Chandar Bhan's couplets, in which Bhan mentions "refreshing" the lifestyle of Majnun and "refreshing" the lineage of the lunatics by having them smell the tips of the beloved's hair, Kinra writes:

Without knowing beforehand that these four lines were Chandar Bhan's, one might struggle in vain to decipher where (and by whom) they could have been written, because really they could have been written *anywhere* in the Indo-Persian ecumene. But given the poet's insistence on producing *tazagi*, there can be little doubt about *when* they were written. Thus here again, on the most basic level of literary historical analysis, the term *sabk-i hindi* simply fails to account for the most salient feature of the verse in question, namely Chandar Bhan's effort toward poetic renewal.<sup>52</sup>

Kinra might have expanded this "ecumene" to include Persian lyric poetry written outside South Asia as well. Indeed, nothing in the two verses identifies them as being written in India. But it is a bigger mistake to assume that a poet's "insistence on producing "*tazagi*"

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<sup>52</sup> R. Kinra, "Secretary-Poets in Mughal India and the Ethos of Persian: The Case of Chandar Bhan Brahman, Volume One" (PhD diss., The University of Chicago), 329.

implies the poet's writing within the Safavid-Mughal period. Safavid-Mughal poets' refreshing "the simple... poetics of a tradition grown 'cold' and stale"<sup>53</sup> is indeed significant to their poetics. But, whatever their reason for involving the poetics of freshness in their works, their doing so does not distinguish them from the poets of previous periods. Sunil Sharma translates a couplet by the Persian poet Salman (d. 1121):

*be qeyas-e shive-ye man ke natije-ye naw aamad*  
*hame tarzhaa-ye taaze kohan ast o baastanii*

In comparison to my style whose outcome was innovation  
all other "new" styles are old and trite.<sup>54</sup>

Note that, in Salman's poem, the word that Sharma has translated as "new" is indeed "taazah" ("fresh"). Noting a poet's using the word "taazah" to describe a quality of his poems is a superficial and arbitrary way of locating, defining, and discussing aesthetic and stylistic periods or movements. Indeed, Sharma's discussion of Salman's poetry demonstrates that there is nothing "fresh" about Safavid-Mughal poets' cultivating an aesthetic of "freshness" or "newness."<sup>55</sup>

It may seem trivial to say so, but what distinguishes the poetry of the Safavid-Mughal period in general, and the poetry of Ghalib in particular, is the poetry's location

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 345.

<sup>54</sup> S. Sharma, "Poetics of Court and Prison in the Divan of Mas'ud-e Sa'd-e Salman" (PhD diss., The University of Chicago, 1999), 162.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. 162-164.

within the Persianate literary tradition. This thesis has suggested that this location is not usefully conceived of in terms of geo-political space, political periods, or stylistic inclinations towards “freshness”. These terms are convenient as shorthand, metonymic ways of referring to a literary period, but the reader of Indo-Persian poetry is aware that these words mask a complex, dynamic, perpetually fluctuating, and wholly heterogeneous assortment of literary cultures, poets, networks of imitation, and subjective histories. One aim of this intertextual study of the works of several canonical “Indo-Persian” poets has been to demonstrate why these historical-political frames have been, and ought to be, called into question by contemporary literary scholars. Indeed, the literary critics and literary historians who find in Ghalib’s *oeuvre* “Indian-ness” have overlooked the historical and aesthetic significance of Ghalib’s engagement within the Persian tradition, and they would do well to find, rather than evidence that confirms preexisting nationalist narratives like “Indian minds”, a collection of polyphonic imaginative experiences, and literary artifacts that evince Ghalib’s creative, imaginative contribution to Persian literature.

Paul Losensky’s recent work on Safavid-Mughal poetry privileges the mode of inquiry that I have employed here, and I am indebted to his important work on the poetry and reception of Fighani, with whose “fire” *ghazal* this thesis’ discussion began. But I think that it is important to recognize that even Fighani’s work, though often remembered as foundational to the “Indian style”, was not necessarily privileged or imitated by the poets writing in the Safavid-Mughal period. Indeed, this study of Ghalib’s fire poem suggests that Fighani’s “fire” *ghazal* was not imitated by ‘Urfi, Zuhuri or Ghalib. Makhfi



and Rusva's "fire" *ghazals* (written in this *zamiin*), too, though not examined here, suggest that the authors did not directly imitate Fighani.

Losensky's important book frames the discussion of *javaab-go'ii*<sup>56</sup> in terms of imitation, or *imitatio*, and Losensky's discussion of Persian poetry vis-à-vis *imitatio* is erudite, sensitive, and illuminating. I risk, in my concluding comments, crudely oversimplifying Losensky's sophisticated arguments and elegant readings of poems by Fighani and his imitators. However, I do find that it is somewhat misleading to consider Ghalib's work as imitative. Surely, imitation of form (including grammar, structure, metaphors, tropes, images, and symbols) plays a significant role both in the process of composing a *javaab* as well as in poetic composition in general. But to limn Ghalib as an epigonal reader, that is, as a re-creator of Indo-Persian poetry, even as a re-creator of particular poems within that tradition, is to risk drawing attention away from, even masking, the creative, dynamic relationship that Ghalib had to the Persian poets to whose work he responded. Ghalib did not imitate or recreate the Persian tradition in the way that artists during the Renaissance recreated and imitated the forms of Greco-Roman art. Ghalib participated in the Persian tradition by challenging its canonical authors' works, making discerning aesthetic decisions about the content of those works, appropriating those works, and producing occasions of poetry that refresh the tradition and make it relevant once more.

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<sup>56</sup> Losensky prefers to use the term *istiqaal*, which he translates as "welcoming", and which refers, roughly, to the same poetic practice as *javaab-go'ii*.

## Appendix: Persian Texts of the Poems

فغانی  
Fighani

عاشقان را در سر شوریده سودا آتش است  
در بدن خون نشتر و در دل شویدا آتش است

تن نخواهد خوابگاه نرم چون گرمست دل  
گلخنی را زیر و پهلوی فرش دیبا آتش است

میگدازم از حیا تا از تو میجویم مراد  
در نهاد بیدلان عرض تمنا آتش است

خواب مستی کرده میسوزم ز آشوب خمار  
چون نسوزم چون مرا در جمله اعضا آتش است

می مخور بسیار اگر چه ساقیت باشد خضر  
کانچه امشب آب حیوانست فردا آتش است

مرد صاحب‌دل رساند فیض در موت و حیات  
شاخ گل چون خشک گردد وقت سرما آتش است

گر چنین خواهد کشید از دل فغانی آه گرم  
تا نفس خواهد زدن گل‌های صحرا آتش است

عرفی  
'Urfi

جنگ آتش آشتی آتش مدارا آتش است  
خوش سروکاری از آن بدخو مرا با آتش است

باده خوابی باش تا از خم برون آرم که من  
آنچه در جام و سبو دارم مهیا آتش است

باکه گویم سر این معنی که نور حسن دوست  
با دماغ ما گل و در چشم موسی آتش است

بم سمندر باش و بم مایی که در جیحون عشق  
روی دریا سلسبیل و قعر دریا آتش است

دوست را محکوم کس دیدن بود جانسوزتر  
ورنه در جان زلیخا شرم و سودا آتش است

حسن جنسی نیست کانرا سیم و زر باشد بها  
خان و مان کاروانی را زلیخا آتش است

عرفی از اندیشه بیهوده باز آ چاره نیست  
سرنوشت ما بهشت جاودان یا آتش است

گر شرر گر شعله پر جا گشت پیدا آتش است  
چاره دل کن که با آتش مدارا آتش است

رشک مانع شوق غالب در تو یا رب چون رسم  
راه عاشق در میان هفت دریا آتش است

چون چراغ مرده از صحبت دلی آورده ام  
از دم خلوت نشینانم تمنا آتش است

گر به کفرستان بری این روی آشناک را  
بربمن در رقص می آید که حق با آتش است

از نسیم صبح می سوزد حریفان را جمال  
نازکان را بر سر آن کوی سرما آتش است

در سلم رسم است ما را دین و دنیا باختن  
برکه را در سر قماری هست سودا آتش است

عاشقی و حسن را در پرده نتوان داشتن  
شعله غمازی کند ناچار پر جا آتش است

گریه گرم نظیری ریگ در وادی گداخت  
از سرشکش تا به زانو در ته پا آتش است

خشک چون نی استخوان و ماجرا با آتش است  
کس نسوزانید از من پاک تر یا آتش است

بهر بلبل داغها از برگ بریم چیده گل  
شمع در پروانه سوزی خود سراپا آتش است

غیر کو در دفع گرمای هوس صندل بمال  
آتش آرایش نمیسوزد دل ما آتش است

از هوای تفته دشت هجر و خاک آن می‌پرس  
تا ثری خاکسترس و تا ثریا آتش است

گرم خونی بین که پیکان خدنگش هر کجا  
خورده بر سنگ از شرارش نیزه بالا آتش است

دیده میبایست پوشیدن چو برقع بر فگند  
دود از خود خود بر آوردم تماشا آتش است

تا دهم پیشش غمی بر باد ننشیند دمی  
باد را در پرسش من در ته پا آتش است

عشق در یوسف فروشی چون بر آراید دکان  
از برای گرم بازاری زلیخا آتش است

کوبکن بودست از بس گرم کار خود بنوز  
از شرار تیشه اش در مغز خارا آتش است

شست و شوی دلّق پر بیزت ظهوری حکمت است  
پاک می‌گردد بدریا لیک اولی آتش است

طالب آملی  
Talib Amuli

خلق بگشاید مرا هر جا که گویا آتش است  
موسی وقتم زبانم را سخن با آتش است

شهری از کاغذ بنا کن بهر ما آوارگان  
هر کجا بینی که پائین آب و بالا آتش است

قطره اشکم که خونها در دل یاقوت ازوست  
مینماید آب در چشم تو اما آتش است

باد دامن نیستم با گل ندارم اختلاط  
آب یاقوتم همه آمیزشم با آتش است

طبع نازک مشربم دایم بیک منوال نیست  
هر چه امروزم بچشم آبست فردا آتش است

قلزم عشق است و موج شعله دارد ای رفیق  
کشتی از یاقوت سامان کن که دریا آتش است

طالب از گلزار آتش چیده چون گلها خلیل  
لیک در هجران یاران جمله گلها آتش است

صائب  
Sa'ib

جان روشن را جهان در چشم بینا آتش است  
شبم بیتاب را گل در ته پا آتش است

چشمه تیغ است آب روشن این صیدگاه  
لاله بی داغ این دامن صحرا آتش است

در بساط سخت جانان غیر درد و داغ نیست  
خرده رازی که دارد سنگ خارا آتش است

روی گرمی برگز از گل عندلیب ما ندید  
ای خوشا پروانه کاورا کارفرما آتش است

نیست پروای شکایت حسن عالمسوز را  
طفل بازیگوش را دام تماشا آتش است

رحم بیرحمی است چون با نفس باشد کارزار  
در جهاد دشمن سرکش مدارا آتش است

تا نبینی چهره تاریک دنیادار را  
کی شود بر گز ترا روشن که دنیا آتش است

می دهد اندوختن داغ پشیمانی ثمر  
خانه زنبور را شهید مصفا آتش است

صحبت ما می کند صاحب‌دلان را گرم عشق  
این کباب خونچکان را سینه ما آتش است

چون سپند از بیم چشم بد همان در آتشیم  
گرچه چون مجمر متاع خانه ما آتش است

محض بیدردی است منع ما که نسالان ز عشق  
عشق در هنگام پیری چون به سرما آتش است

دل ز تاریکی نگردد اشک ریزان را سیاه  
مابیان را در دل شب آب دریا آتش است

عشق ذرات جهان را در سماع آورده است  
چون سپند افسردگان را کارفرما آتش است

رهنورد عشق را تا عقده هستی بجاست  
چون سپند خام بر جا می نهد پا آتش است

همسفر با جرأت پروانه می باید شدن  
برکه را از سینه گرمی تمنا آتش است

داستان شوق در هر نامه ای نتوان نوشت  
صفحه از بال سمندر کن که انشا آتش است

عشق عالمسوز صائب همچو گلزار خلیل  
باغها در پرده دارد گرچه پیدا آتش است



بیدل ۱  
Bedil I

بسکه امشب بیتو ام سامان اعضا آتش است  
گر بمه اشکی فشانم تا ثریا آتش است

شوخی آیم بدل سرمایه آرام نیست  
سوختن صهباست بزمی را که مینا آتش است

همچو خورشید از فریب اعتبار ما مپرس  
چشمه ما را اگر آبیست پیدا آتش است

بیتو چون شمعیکه افروزند بر لوح مزار  
خاک بر سر کرده ایم و بر سر ما آتش است

جوهر علویست از هر جزو سفلی موج زن  
سنگ هم با آن زمینگیری سراپا آتش است

شاخ از گلین جدا مصروف گلخن میشود  
زندگی با دوستان عیش است و تنها آتش است

رو سیاهی ماند هر جا رفت رنگ اعتبار  
در حقیقت حاصل این آبرو با آتش است

با دو عالم آرزو نتوان حریف وصل شد  
ما بجائی خار و خس بردیم کانجا آتش است

نیست سامان دماغ بیچکس جز سوختن  
ما همه سر گرم سودائیم و سودا آتش است

نشه صهبای نمی ارزد بتشویش خمار  
در گذر امروز از آبی که فردا آتش است

گریه گر شد بی اثر از ناله ما کن حذر  
آب ما خون گشت اما آتش ما آتش است

نیست جز رقص سپند آئینه دار وجد خلق  
لیک بیدل کیست تا فهمد که دنیا آتش است

بیدل ۲  
Bedil II

دل بیاد پرتو حسنت سراپا آتش است  
از حضور آفتاب آتئینه ما آتش است

بیکر ما بمچو شمع از گریه شادی گداخت  
اشک برجا بنگری آب است اینجا آتش است

تا نفس باقیست عمر از پیچ و تاب آسوده نیست  
می طپد بر خویشتن تا خار و خس با آتش است

گر می بنگامه آفاق موقوف تب است  
روز اگر خورشید باشد شمع شبها آتش است

عشق می آید برون گر و شگافی شینه ام  
چون طلسم سنگ نام این معما آتش است

بی ادب از سوز اشک عاجزان نتوان گذشت  
آبله در پا اگر بشکست صحرا آتش است

شمع تصویریم از سوز و گداز ما مپرس  
پرتوی از رنگ تا باقیست با ما آتش است

غرق وحدت باش اگر آسوده خوابی زیستن  
مابیان را برچه باشد غیر دریا آتش است

جز بگمنامی سراغ امن نتوان یافتن  
ورنه از پرواز ما تا بال عنقا آتش است

نیست بیدل بیقراریهای آهم بی سبب  
کز دل گرمم نفس را در ته پا آتش است

غالب  
Ghalib

سینه بگشودیم و خلقی دید کینجا آتش است  
بعد ازین گویند آتش را که گویا آتش است

انتظار جلوه ساقی کبابم می کند  
می به ساغر آب حیوان و به مینا آتش است

گریه ات در عشق از تأثیر دود آه ماست  
اشک در چشم تو آب و در دل ما آتش است

ایکه میگوئی تجلی گاه نازش دور نیست  
صبر مثنی از خس و ذوق تماشا آتش است

بی تکلف در بلا بودن به از بیم بلاست  
قعر دریا سلسبیل و روی دریا آتش است

پرده از رخ برگرفت و بی محابا سوختم  
باده باد است آتش او را و ما را آتش است

هم بدین نسبت ز شوخی در دلت جا کرده ایم  
فاش گوئیم از تو سنگست آنچه از ما آتش است

گریه ای دارم که تا تحت الثری آبست و بس  
نال ای دارم که تا اوج ثریا آتش است

پاک خور امروز و زنهار از پی فردا منه  
در شریعت باده امروز آب و فردا آتش است

راز بدخویان نهفتن بر نتابد بیش ازین  
پرده دار سوز و ساز ماست برجا آتش است

گشته ام غالب طرف با مشرب عرفی که گفت  
روی دریا سلسبیل و قعر دریا آتش است

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