Farrokhi Yazdi's career as a poet first and foremost, a journalist, and finally a Parliament deputy has generally been identified with the more radical trends of outlook during the post-Constitutional era and into the reign of Reza Shah. By virtue of subjects such as freedom, patriotism, syndicalism, and the class struggle—recurrent themes both in his poetry and in the articles which appeared in his well-known newspaper Tufan, he has been classified amongst the pioneers of revolutionary literature in modern Iran. Therefore, in any discussion of literature and society in Iran between the two world wars, he deserves special attention. His political life fits almost exactly into the period mentioned: having begun his political and journalistic activities in the years prior to the First World War, he died in prison shortly before the beginning of the Second. But apart from brief references in standard histories of literature, there has been no specific study of his life or works in the West.

His life and works have also been chronicled by some historians and commentators. Yet here, too, there has been no systematic attempt at an overall consideration of his place in the literary and intellectual formation of the period. In this paper, an attempt is made to sketch Farrokhi's career as a poet and journalist, hoping that in light of future discussions on the cultural and literary climate of the time, he will be placed in a broader context. His parliamentary career, however, is included as part of the biographical section below.

**Biography**

Mirza Mohammad, better known by his pen name of Farrokhi Yazdi, was born of modest origins in Yazd in 1889. His father, Mohammad Ebrahim (or Ebrahim), was a Semsar—a small trader in mostly second-hand items. He was also known earlier as Ta’ al-Sho’ara (Crown of the Poets), a title which, in view of his political posture, was forsaken before long.

As a young boy, he spent a few years in the traditional schools (maktabs) and followed their basic elementary curriculum. Around the age of fifteen, he enrolled in a modern school founded by English missionaries in Yazd, but soon left that school. Early in life, he showed much interest in Persian literature, especially in classical poetry, and grad-
ually began to write verses in traditional style. It has been suggested that the young Farrokhi was in fact dismissed from the missionary school for composing provocative poems against its foreign staff.

Although he might have felt distanced from the school by some of its rules and procedures, such as daily Bible readings and prayers, in retrospect this experience proved to be only a beginning of a life-long chronicle of anguish and exile. It was also an early instance of his tendency to refrain from a more involved interaction with established authority and express himself instead through agitation and denunciation which, as we shall see, became a dominant style later in his life.

Having left school, Farrokhi worked temporarily for a weaving workshop, and later in a bakery, in order to earn his living. With the advent of the Constitutional movement, he joined the progressive Democrat faction. In 1909, around the age of twenty, he composed his famous mosammat-e vatani (patriotic mosammat) which enraged Zayqam al-Dawlah Qashqa'i, the governor of Yazd.

Farrokhi’s subsequent refusal to show any signs of repentance or compromise further infamed the governor who ordered the sewing together of the poet’s lips with thread and needle. For the rest of his life Farrokhi bore the scars of this violence. The event caused a major uproar both in Yazd and in Tehran. A telegram of protest was cabled to Tehran expressing dismay and horror that such an action could still take place in a supposedly constitutional society.

In Tehran Fahim al-Molk, a Parliament deputy, raised the issue in the Parliament, only to be rebuffed by the ministry of the interior, while Farrokhi, with injured lips, was still under custody in the Nazmiyah (police) of Yazd. Meanwhile, pictorial details of the story were lithographed on broadsheets and circulated widely. While in jail, Farrokhi composed another mosammat in which he referred to his sewn lips and sent it to his fellow Democrats in Tehran. In that period, the more radical Constitutionalist activists were centered in the Democrat Party.

In late-1910 Farrokhi escaped from prison at Yazd and left for Tehran where he published his poems in the radical press in such periodicals as Azadi (Liberty). Eventually, Zayqam al-Dawlah was removed from office and the new governor of Yazd, Hajj Fakhr al-Molk, made some compensation to Farrokhi. It was in this period that he was influenced by socialist ideas (or rather by metaphors of a socialist utopia, which had reached Iran via Russia), and began to display this tendency in his poetry.

It is worth mentioning that, especially after the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, such a tendency gained wider ground among Iranian activists who viewed Russian revolutionaries (most notably Lenin) with admiration and praise.

Moreover, when in February 1921 the Soviet government signed a treaty of friendship with Iran canceling all previous concessions obtained from Iran by the czarist Russia, the admiration and sympathy of many Iranians towards the new socialist regime increased further.

During the First World War, Farrokhi was among those journalists who, with a party of Democrats, left Tehran in November, 1915, and joined the komitah-ye defa-e melli (Committee of National Defense) in Qom which later moved to the western province of Kermanshah where it founded the dawlat-e movaqqat-e melli (National Provisional Government) under the premiership of Nezam al-Saltanah Mafi.

Upon Russian assumption of control over western Iran and the subsequent suppression of the Provisional Government, with most of its members escaping to Istanbul, Farrokhi went to Iraq, only to be harassed by the British army. He escaped from Baghdad to Karbala and from there to Mosul, but eventually returned to Iran, where he was briefly taken into Russian custody on suspicion.
After his release, he was still at risk. In Tehran, an attempt was made on his life, but he survived unscathed. During the premiership of Vosuq al-Dawlah and following his ill-fated 1919 agreement with the British, Farrokhi joined the popular trend and wrote virulent poems in opposition to that agreement. As a result, he was arrested and spent some time in prison. Farrokhi was also among those arrested on grounds of opposition to Reza Khan’s coup d’état of 1921. This time, after his release, he founded his famous newspaper Tufan (Storm or Tempest) on clear socialist and revolutionary lines. Publication was often interrupted and Farrokhi himself was regularly harassed and taken into custody under various governments. But upon regaining his freedom, he resumed publication along the same lines.

Following the coup d’état of 1921, Farrokhi printed critical articles which were usually accompanied by his own poems of a similar nature, attacking Reza Khan’s autocratic style in issue no. 53, 8 March 1922.

At this stage, Farrokhi sensed a threat to his life and took refuge in the Soviet embassy where he not only publicized his opposition but also had the opportunity to receive visitors from outside. Shortly afterwards, Reza Khan, then minister of war with an appetite for publicity, paid a visit to Farrokhi and persuaded him to abandon his sit-in.

In the very same period, however, Farrokhi favored Reza Khan’s short-lived bent towards republican propaganda. Later in 1927, in his capacity as the editor of Tufan, Farrokhi was invited by the Soviet government to Moscow to attend the tenth anniversary of the Russian Revolution, together with ‘Ali Dashti, then a Parliament deputy and proprietor of the influential Shafaq-e sorkh (Red Twilight) newspaper, Mirza Abu Taleb Shirvani, another Parliament deputy and proprietor of the Mijhan (Homeland) newspaper, and Solayman Mirza Eskandari, also a Parliament deputy and leader of the Socialist Party, of being a British agent.

In the 7th session, however, that lobby consisted only of Farrokhi and Mahmud Reza Tolu’, a deputy from Lahijan and proprietor of the Tolu (Sunrise) newspaper (hence his surname). In view of the circumstances, the risks for both Farrokhi and Tolu in their persistence on being openly identified as the opposition were clear. Farrokhi’s few pre-agenda speeches were regularly interrupted by the pro-government members and his interventions were often suppressed by them. In spring 1930, the Parliament was debating a recent agreement between the Iranian government and the Imperial Bank of Persia, Farrokhi, though favorable to the initial idea of the agreement, spoke out against some of its details and finally cast the only negative vote.

Farrokhi’s opposition centered on two issues: first, the Bank being permitted to own land and real property in the country; and second, the arbitration procedure. He argued that both points were capitulatory and against the spirit of national sovereignty, the first being against the initial terms of the concession that the Bank could not own property in Iran beyond its offices, and the second undermining Iranian jurisdiction by introducing extra-territoriality in the operations of a foreign company. After two meetings, however, the agreement was ratified by the Parliament and became a law on 27 May 1930.

As a result of his critical stance, which at times bordered on sloganeering and heated opposition to state policies, Farrokhi’s safety even within the Parliament was not always guaranteed. Towards the end of his term, while he was delivering an impassioned speech, a member of the pro-government majority assaulted him physically. Farrokhi declared that if his situation inside the Parliament was such, he could not envisage a better fate outside; he then staged a sit-in inside the building.

At the end of the term of the Seventh Parliament (October, 1930), with no more parliamentary privilege to rely on, Farrokhi fled from Tehran and went to Moscow.
With the mediation of Soviet authorities, and on the condition that he would no longer remain in that country, he obtained a passport from the Iranian embassy and went to Berlin. There he published several articles critical of the political situation in Iran in Paykar (Battle), a Persian journal founded in 1930 by Iranian activists in Berlin, the chief coordinator of which was Morteza Alavi. As a result of its critical stance, the Iranian ambassador in Berlin (Mohammad Ali Farzin) took the journal to court on grounds of false accusations and offensive remarks against the Iranian regime and the person of the Shah. The ambassador further claimed that Iran was a fully constitutional country where the principles of civil liberty and parliamentary government were observed. Farrokhi attended the court, spoke in support of the journal and criticized the Iranian government. The court finally dismissed the ambassador’s case.

Nevertheless, shortly afterwards, Paykar was closed down by the German authorities; it was suspected that they had reached a separate agreement on this issue with the Iranian embassy. In 1931, Farrokhi himself founded another paper called Nehzat (Movement). But this paper suffered the same fate, and this time Farrokhi was ordered to leave Germany.

Meanwhile, Abd al-Hosayn Taymurtash, minister of the royal court, who was now returning to Tehran following his visit to London, met with Farrokhi in Berlin and advised him to return to Iran, assuring him of safety.

Faced with financial and psychological pressures, Farrokhi accepted the offer and in 1932 returned to Iran.

It has been said that following his return to Tehran, Farrokhi had a brief audience with Reza Shah, a policy of appeasement that, if true, did not seem to have produced any lasting result. In Tehran, after a year of destitution, he was arrested on charges brought against him by a paper merchant called Aqa Reza Kaghaz Forush, to whom Farrokhi owed some money for his previous purchases of paper for Tufan.

Unable to meet the debt himself, he turned down offers of help and went to prison. Although the initial charge against him was of a civil nature, his blunt agitations inside the prison against the regime, expressed at times in passionate poems, soon turned him into a political prisoner and led to his constant transfer from one jail to another. Once, on 3 April 1937, he tried to commit suicide by chewing opium, but was saved by prison authorities.

Nevertheless, he did not give up his remonstrations and was again put on trial while still in prison. Subsequently, his term was extended first to twenty-seven months, then to thirty months, and finally to three years. This period coincided with the arrest of the famous Group of Fifty-Three.

Farrokhi’s intellectual character can also be observed in relation to his national sentiments.

In his recently published memoirs, Anvar Khamahi, a member of that group, reminisced about Farrokhi’s behavior inside the prison: [Farrokhi] talked openly to all prisoners, even to those who were known police informers, and he was constantly criticizing the regime and making abusive comments about the Shah, and finally he lost his life in this way. Khamahi also recalls an occasion when a group of political prisoners failed to pay a special new year’s visit to the sensitive Farrokhi, who had assumed a relatively senior status among inmates.

 Apparently, on one occasion his keepers, who were now authorized to kill him, added poison to his food, but he found out and refused to eat. Finally, he was transferred from Qasr prison to the infamous clinic at the police headquarters in Tehran where on 18 October 1939, he was murdered by the prison’s notorious medical practitioner, Pezeshk (physician) Ahmadi, by the injection of air into his veins.

Following the fall of Reza Shah (in September 1941); the same Pezeshk Ahmadi fled to Iraq but was soon captured and extradited to Iran. Together with a number of prison officers and police officials of the Reza Shah period, he was tried in a criminal court and subsequently condemned to death for his direct role in the murder of Farrokhi Yazdi and Sardar As’ad Bakhtiari. He was hanged on 15 October 1943 in Maydan-e Tupkhanah, a central square in downtown Tehran. It may be of interest to note that the controversial scholar jurist, and essayist Sayyid Ahmad Kasravi agreed to act as Ahmadi’s attorney in court. Apparently, Kasravi centered his defense on the argument that Ahmadi was merely an executioner (mirghazab) who was following orders and therefore could not be tried as a murderer.

Khamahi further recalls the day Farrokhi was transferred from Qasr prison, leading other prisoners to suspect his imminent death.
Constitutional Movement—patriotism, civil liberties, modernism, social justice, and individual rights are expressed in his verse. Moreover, the arrival in Iran of socialist ideas left new marks on his poetry and gave it a more pronounced orientation, to the extent that he has been described by later critics as the only poet during the early years of Reza Shah’s reign with a clear socialist tendency.

Whereas in poetic style Farrokhi, by observing the principles of prosody (‘aruz), was a traditionalist, in the general content and in the message of his poems he used every opportunity to express contemporary social and political topics. In this respect, his contribution in the composition of the political ghazal is noteworthy.

- Compared with other poetry of the Constitutional period (Nasim-e shomal, Aref Qazvinî, and Iraj Mirza) which, while preserving traditional meters and patterns of ‘aruz, expressed contemporary social and political issues through a language closer to that of popular expressions, Farrokhi’s poetry was less colloquial in form yet at times more like versified prose. Perhaps this quality made his poetry less attractive for the ordinary people to memorize and thus deprived it of a wider audience, though it was neither indigestible and heavy nor superficially obscure.

Another point to note is the condition under which Farrokhi’s poems were written. The majority of them were composed almost instantly either minutes before going to print (e.g., in Tufan), or in prison.

Therefore, the element of speed and spontaneity is of considerable importance in his poetry.

As mentioned above, Farrokhi’s works (both in poetry and journalism) were explicitly colored by his ideology which, during the two decades following the Constitutional Movement, shifted from parliamentary democracy towards syndicalism and, ultimately, a classless society.

However, his ideological orientation, and especially his sympathy for the Third International, did not make him a stooge of Soviet influence.

And that was still during the period when revolutionary dynamism in the Soviet Union had not yet lost its momentum.

During the later years of his life when the cult of Stalinism produced a rigid étatisme, Farrokhi was in prison. Amongst his contemporaries who had also turned, albeit more devotionally, to similar ideology, was the Kermanshahi poet Abul-Qasem Lahuti, who later in life emigrated to the Soviet Union. Unlike Farrokhi, the latter wrote many propagandist pieces in praise of various symbols and personalities of the Russian Revolution in the manner reminiscent of medieval eulogies. As a poet, however, Lahuti was rather skillful both in traditional style and in modernist experimentations. In the latter sense he can even be regarded as one of the pioneers of modern Persian poetry.

Farrokhi’s intellectual character can also be observed in relation to his national sentiments. Although he was attached to the Iranian heritage both ancient and Islamic, reminders of which he often cited, his turn from patriotism to chauvinism was less frequent than some of his contemporaries (e.g., Eshqi or Aref).

Another characteristic of Farrokhî’s verse—a characteristic which he shares with contemporaries like Aref, Iraj, and Bahar—though often not as successful, is the seemingly effortless ease with which he manages to incorporate current political idioms and phrases into his poetry without violating its formal structure or introducing any note of incongruity.

**Journalism**

In 1921 in Tehran, Farrokhi founded Tufan, which had obvious socialist tendencies. The executive manager of the paper was Musavizadah, and its first issue appeared on Friday, 26 August 1921. Although the paper was initially classified as a daily, in the first year of its publication it appeared only twice a week (Mondays and Fridays), and in subsequent years three times a week (Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays).

Because of its ideological orientation and critical stance, the paper was banned and confiscated several times by different governments.

During the eight years of its life, the paper was suppressed more than fifteen times; yet, each time it was banned, Farrokhi would publish his articles and poems in other papers and periodicals such as Setarah-ye sharq (Star of the East), Paykar, Qiyam, and Tafi’ah-ye a’zam-ye afkar (The Primal Mirror of Ideas), all published in Tehran.

Taking as an example the first time Tufan was suppressed, when its 22nd issue was due, Farrokhi published Setarah-ye sharq (no. 1, Monday, 28 November 1921). Also from the first issue, there appeared a series of articles entitled "Suggestions of the Study-Committee of the British and Iranian Systems," aimed at preparing an overall report.

This began with a fairly detailed account of the internal conditions of the
country, ranging from economic to military and political aspects.

Apart from reporting news and current events, one of the major merits of Tufan was its commentaries and, at times, lengthy articles on more fundamental topics of political economy and social theory. In this respect, the paper can be regarded as one of the first examples of its kind to have dealt with a more coherent and systematic introduction and analysis of political themes, especially as regards socialist ideas. An example was "Workers' Independence" (vol. 1, no. 13, Monday, 10 October 1921), which held capitalism ownership of the means of production responsible for the misery, ignorance, and poverty of the working classes, and suggested that workers should have a share in the fruits of their labor.

The article was also in favor of workers' councils which would give more control to the workers in the management of a factory and thus turn it from "despotism monarchy" to "soviets rule." Another example is the article "The Importance of Socialism" which appeared in vol. 1, no. 42, Thursday, 9 February 1922. It begins by outlining the principles of class analysis, and then goes on to state that Iran, too, is subject to similar principles, which are, accordingly, universal. It concludes that, as in many other countries, the working classes in Iran would soon achieve their rights and liberties.

The second installment of the article appeared in the next issue of the paper, vol. 1, no. 43, 12 February 1922; it was signed "A-B." Like its predecessor, this article went into further details about the history of socialism, and explained different aspects of a socialist government. Although the expositions were general, the author tried to indicate the relevance of socialism to Iranian society and culture.

Among other examples is a leading article (vol. 2, no. 2, 13 September 1922) on the opposition between capitalism and socialism. Another leading article, in vol. 2, no. 39, 13 February 1923, entitled "Mobarezah-ye senfi," deals with the question of syndicalism.

Farrokhi's Tufan, in its style and direction, can be said to have paved the way for such later journals as Mohammad Mas'ud's Mard-e emruz (Modem Man), and its consistent political stance is also reminiscent of later party organs like the Tudeh Party's Mardom (The People). Yet it contained neither the bitter nor at times obscene invectives of Mard-e emruz, nor the always predictable attitude of the later communist papers.

In addition to the overtly political Tufan, in March, 1928, Farrokhi also published Tufan-e haftegi (Weekly Tufan) with a more historical and literary orientation. Here, he initially benefited from the collaboration of Sayyid Fakhr al-Din Shadman who helped to create its distinct character as a quality Persian periodical. Also, frequent contributions by Bahar added much to its credit. Among other contributors were Ahmad Kasravi, Sayyid Abd al-Rahim Khalkhali, Mehdi Bahrami, Rassam Arzhangi, Hosayn Taherzadah Behzad, and Abul-Qasem Sahab.

Farrokhi was among those modern politicized poets whose recognition, both during their life and posthumously, was due largely to their opposition to autocracy. His popularity can, therefore, be attributed to an over-politicization of contemporary aesthetic-cultural views, such willing martyrs.

His contribution to political poetry and journalism after the Constitutional Movement is noteworthy. In poetry he can be placed in the long tradition of the poetry of protest against usurpers and arbitrary rule, instances of which can be traced in the long history of Persian literature (e.g., the works of Mas'ud Sa'd Salam and Sayf Farqani). The outright political orientation in Farrokhi's poetry, wrapped in the mist of his hapless career and tragic end, contributed to its reputation among later generations who took it as a symbol of radical literature.

Notwithstanding its relatively inferior literary merit as compared to the work of contemporaries such as Bahar, Arfe or Iraj whose topical, satirical, and political verse had a certain wit, verve, elegance and imagination that is rarely found in Farrokhi, it is also a poetry of clear allusions, appealing to universal sentiments. It can, therefore, be contrasted with later modern poetry, which apart from the obvious differences in form, tended to adopt a much more intentionally abstract and ambiguous diction with the persona of the poet at its core.

In fact, Farrokhi may be an interesting test-case for the form-content dichotomy. Reading his more politically-colored poems, one has the feeling that only by breaking out of the traditionalist format could he have avoided writing doggerel and immediately appearing dated and quaint.

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He was a man of compassion, mercy and inclined towards the welfare of his subjects but had a weak personality.

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In December of each year, elaborate commemoration ceremonies are organized around the world to celebrate the prominent 13th-century Persian-speaking, Islamic mystic, poet, thinker and philosopher Mowlana Jalal-ud-Din Mohammad Balkhi known as Rumi. Many visitors from around the globe pay him tribute in Konya, Turkey where Rumi’s mausoleum is located.

Mowlana was one of the greatest Muslim mystics. He has also been hailed by Western scholars as the greatest mystical poet of all time. His doctrine advocates unlimited tolerance, positive reasoning, goodness, charity and awareness through love. To him, all religions were more or less followers of truth. His peaceful and tolerant teachings have appealed to men of all sects and creeds. In 1958, Pope John XXIII wrote a special message saying: “In the name of the Catholic World, I bow with respect before the memory of Rumi.”

Rumi died on 17 December 1273 in Konya; his body was interred beside that of his father, and a splendid shrine, was erected over his place of burial.

Parliament Library holds a rich treasure of books written in/translated to different languages on the life and works of the celebrated mystic poet using which the following article has been researched. The books include:


7. The life and work of Muhammad Jalal-ud-Din Rumi\ With a foreword by A.J. Arberry.- Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, [1964].


9. Me and Rumi : The autobiogra-


11. Masnavi i Ma'navi; The Spiritual Couplets of Maulana Jalal-ud-Din Muhammad Rumi\ Translated and abridged by E.H. Whinfield.- London: Trubner;Trench;K. Paul, 1898.


30. Rumi the Persian, the Sufi \ A. Reza Arasteh ; with preface by Erich Fromm.- London; New York: Routledge, 2008.


33. Sufi Studies: East and West; a Symposium in Honor of Idries Shah’s Services to Sufi Studies by Twenty -Four Contributors marking the 700th Anniversary of the Death of Jalalud-Din Rumi (A.D. 1207-1273) \ Edited by L.F. Rushbrook Williams.- New York: Dutton, [1973].


36. The Whirling Dervishes: Being an Account of the Sufi Order Known as the Mevlevis and its Founder the Poet and Mystic Mevlana Jalalud-Din Rumi\ by Ira Friedlander ; music section by Nezih Uzel.- London: Wildwood House, 1975.

Compiled by: Ms. Saeideh Imani, librarian of the Iranology Department of the Parliament’s Library, Tehran- Iran.

No.3 / Dec.-Jan. 2013-14
ut to go back again to the question of fact. If we want to see the consciousness of the One - not as with the Hindus split between the featureless unity of abstract thought, on the one hand, and on the other, the long-winded weary story of its particular detail, but - in its finest purity and sublimity, we must consult the Mohammedans.

If, e.g., in the excellent Jelaleddin Rumi in particular, we find the unity of the soul with the One set forth, and that unity described as love, this spiritual unity is an exaltation above the finite and vulgar, a transfiguration of the natural and spiritual, in which the externalism and transitoriness of immediate nature, and of empirical secular spirit, is discarded and absorbed.”

G.W.F. Hegel

In this age of globalization, Hegel’s words may once again serve as a motto, telling us that by recalling the cosmopolitan nature of Rumi’s oeuvre the recollection itself acquires new relevance, while our reflections on his cosmopolitanism should demonstrate that his philosophy of Love has gained even greater importance in the global world of today, particularly in our present-day Bosnian profiling of a plural European identity.

For this reason, the article attempts here to highlight the necessity of introducing cross-traditional, cross-cultural, cross-systemic, more integrative, more global cross-cultural studies of Rumi here in Bosnia and Herzegovina, by means of existing studies in European languages to which I draw attention here.

It is a regrettable fact that since Abdullah Bosnawi (d. 1644) and Sudi Efendi (d. 1595), another of our countrymen who wrote an outstanding commentary not only on the Mathnawi but also on Hafiz’s Divan (though his commentary has yet to be published), few here have written anything on Rumi: except, of course, the translation of the first two volumes of the Mathnawi from the original Persian and of the remainder from an English translation, R. Hafizovic’s translation of William Chittick’s fine study, and yet another translation of his Divan, plus a few inci-
dental texts in this field.

Rumi once again reminds us of that message of love, of embracing diversity and transcending the self, which is the true essence of Islam, though often forgotten these days. Love, warmth towards all beings as Rumi expressed it, is the outward expression of the deeply rooted divine Love.

Thus Rumi, whose nature was steeped in the draft drunk from the chalice of love, embraced all of creation with the projection of that love. He was involved in dialogue with all creatures, and all this was the result only of his deep love of God and relationship with the Beloved. In short, as Gülen was to say, "He was the blessed fruit of a hallowed family tree", and "Eventually, he became a central star, the North Star, in the sky which houses sainthood. He was like a bright moon that rotates on its own axis".

Thus Refik Can writes, in his "Fundamentals of Rumi’s Thought: A Mevlevi Sufi Perspective" that Rumi came to the conclusion that to love people means to love God (p. 147), quoting from his Divan in support of this assertion:

Come, come, get closer. Till when is this banditry going to continue? Since you are I and I am you, what is this “us and them”? We are God’s holy light; we are God’s mirror. So why are we struggling with each other? Why is one light running away from another light so much? We, all humans, are gathered like a body in the being of a mature person. But why are we squint-eyed? Although we are limbs of the same body, why do the rich look down on the poor? Why does the right hand look down on the left hand of the same body? Since both of them are hands of your body, what is the meaning of lucky and unlucky on the same body? We, all humans, are in reality all one essence. Our minds are one, and our heads are one.

The will of God

A thief asks a proprietor, "sir, the work I have done is the will of God..." the proprietor responds, "O my dear, what I do Is the wisdom of God and the will of God. If somebody steals a turnip from a store and this wise man claims that "it is the will of God", you hit him on the head with your fist twice/three times and say "this also the will of God". Now put the turnip back!"

(Mathnawi V / 250-3058-61)

The wise man is a person who learns a lesson by enduring trouble and from the death of his friends.

(Mathnawi I / 250 - 3114)
But we have seen one as two because of the curvature of the heavens. Come, liberate yourself from this selfishness and reconcile with everybody and be nice to people. As long as you are in you, you are a grain, a particle. But when you mix and unite with others, then you become an ocean, a mine. Every human carries the same soul, but the bodies are in hundreds of thousands.

Similarly, there are countless almonds in the world, but there is the same oil in each of them. There are many tongues and dialects in this world, but the meaning of all of them is the same.

Waters put in different containers unite when the containers are broken and start to flow together as one stream. If you understand what unity, tawhid, means, if you attain unity and if you rip and throw away meaning fewer words and thoughts, the spirit sends news to those whose hearts’ eyes are open and tells them the truth.

In fact, Rumi was always speaking of love and lovers; his focus was always on love, and for this reason he is also known as the Sultan of Lovers.

Throughout his work, he emphasizes and develops the concept of love over everything else, and he can truly be understood now only by those who place the unendurable pain of spiritual love above all other pain or joy. However, this is not love as seen today, love that is more about possessing whom or what one loves; rather, it is a true, selfless attitude towards the Beloved. It is not that love is lacking these days, but that it is misdirected, wrongly channeled. The love that Rumi speaks of is not metaphorical love (‘ishq majazi’) but real in nature. It is the love of the True, also known as divine Love (‘ishq ilahi), the love one feels for God.

Properly to understand Rumi’s all-important concept of Love, let us see how it has been addressed by one who actualized this Mevlevi Sufi perspective in his own 95 years of life on this earth - Refik Can (1910-2005), ser-tariq, until recently the leading Mevlevi shaikh and most authoritative spiritual figure of the order, the last Mesnevihan, and author of nine books on Rumi: “In order to understand the concept of love, we have to elaborate the concepts of Ishq Majazi and Ishq Ilahi, which also are known as real love. These two kinds of love are known in the teaching of Rumi.

The first one, Ishq Majazi, is related to the material world and bodily love, like the love between male and female. As the real love, Ishq Haqiqi, is the love which is felt toward God. In other words, the metaphorical love is transient and, therefore, fleeting. However, real love is eternal and infinite.” Rumi, for whom love, love of God and love of human kind as the manifestation of God’s love, is central, explains it thus:

Whenever I need to explain the concept of love and think of it, I feel repentant when I become influenced by love.
My pen moves over the paper, and the pen would not dare and splits.
Reason, as far as the explanation of love is concerned, is like a donkey stuck in the mud.
Finally, love has provided the explanation of love and the lover.

Guide to reading Rumi and Rumiyat
Where then are we to seek refuge in thought in an age of globalization and cross-cultural processes, and above all of our profiling of a plural European identity, if not with Rumi, the most glorious representative of the Sufi metaphysics of love, who did not see religion as settling for fundamentalism of any kind, but as our earthly garb, in which we clothe ourselves on our own personal path towards the Sublime, the Beloved. Religion is not a god, but a path, a way, truly leading to God, the Beloved.

Prompted by the approach of Rasoul Sorkhabi, then I resolved to offer this audience something similar, which will make Rumi’s thinking, life and poetry a little more accessible to our modern European recipient. The colleague I refer to here has quite rightly entitled this Rumiyat - everything that belongs to or concerns Rumi.

1) Diwân Shams Tabrizi
(Also known as the Diwân Kabir or Kulliyât Shams Tabrizi) consists of Rumi’s lyrical odes (ghazal) (about 3,300 poems) and quatrains or rubâi’yât (almost 2,000 of them), or a total of more than 45,000 verses.

The authoritative version in print of the Diwân is the one published by the late Badi alZamân Foruzân-far (1900-1970), professor of literature at the University of Tehran (ten volumes, University of Tehran Press, 1336-1346/1957-1967 and several times reprinted).

2) Masnawi Ma’nawi
(“Spiritual Couplets”), a work in six volumes consisting of more than 25,000 verses or couplets. Professor Reynold Nicholson (1868-1945) dedicated more than three decades of his life to a critical edition of an English translation and comm-
mentary on Rumi’s Mathnawi, published in eight volumes (London: Luzac, 1925-1940).

There are dozens of different editions of the Mathnawi in Persian, Turkish, Italian, French and English.

For those who wish to read Rumi in Persian, Badi al-Zamân Foruzânfar’s scholarly analysis of Rumi’s biography, Zendegâni-e Moulânâ Jalâluddin Muhammad (Tehran: Zovvâr, 1333/1954, several editions) is essential reading, while those who know Turkish could consult Abdolbâki Golpinârî’s work Mevlana Celaloddin: Hayati, Felsefesi, Eserlerinden Secmeler (İstanbul, 1951, 1985).

Nor should we overlook other works from Rumi’s oeuvre: Fihi ma fihî (discourses on a range of subjects), Majalis-i Sab’a (seven discourses given at various gatherings), and Maktubat (147 collected letters). Let us recall, however, that this body of brilliant universalistic and inclusivist literature was created at a very somber time, when the Mongols were laying waste the Muslim world. Despite the horrific extent of the destruction, Rumi is not pessimist, but speaks of Love and arouses hope. As a result, he influenced not only Muslim thinkers such as Ibrahim Hakki of Erzurum (d. 1780) and Muhammad Iqbal (d.1938), but also many others. Among those enchanted by the fragrance of his rose-garden of Love one may find European thinkers, poets and translators, such as Goethe, George Bernard Shaw (d. 1951) and many others, of whom only the most eminent will be referred to in the following paragraphs.

All that remains here is for me to reaffirm Refik Can’s observation that "A careful study will show that among all European nations, the Germans and the British are the nations that have concentrated most on Rumi. The disciplined, hardworking, skillful German nation has at the same time a mystical spirit." To this one might add the American context, where Rumi has acquired the status of most widely read author. Let us proceed in orderly fashion, however, and perhaps this paper will prompt other schol-

Which bite of food must be eaten?

A tiny black spot is easily seen on a very clean white cloth. If all sort of dirt is put on a white cloth it will turn black from dirt of any kind, neither the one who wears it, nor others will notice. Therefore a dervish must not eat the food of tyrants, ill-gotten and corporal people.

(Fihi Mafih / p.90)

If you trust in God, trust in working issue; firstly make it and then trust in God.

(Mathnawi I / 76-946)
ars to work on this in the Bosnian context.

Scholars & Studies on Rumi

German Scholars

Friedrich Rückert (1788-1866, pseudonym Freimund Raimar), German poet, translator and professor of oriental languages. Published a collection of poems, Östliche Rosen (Eastern Roses), in 1822; between 1834 and 1838, published his Gesammelte Gedichte (Collected Poems) in six volumes, a collection that went into several editions. Rückert, who knew about thirty languages, became known principally as a translator of oriental poetry and a poet who composed on the spirit of the oriental masters.

He was blessed with a brilliant imagination, giving him his intimacy with oriental poetry, and continues to influence studies in German (in particular, Annemarie Schimmel). Hegel, a great admirer of Rückert's translations, regarded Rumi as one of the greatest poets and thinkers the world had ever known (see the title quotation of this paper).

Hans Meinke

Twentieth-century German poet, who regarded Rumi's work as "the only hope for the dark times in which we live." Many people today might well agree with this, since Mowlana has influenced not only the East but also the West, given the large number of poets and thinkers who have written books about Mowlana and his thought.

Annemarie Schimmel (1922-2003)

Born in Erfurt, a delightful town in central Germany, boasting several Gothic cathedrals and in addition a center of horticulture. The great mediaeval mystic Meister Eckhart preached there; Luther was ordained into the priesthood there and lived there for a number of years; and Goethe met Napoleon in Erfurt, which is not far from the centers of classical German culture, Weimar and Jena.

Annemarie Schimmel was known the world over as an influential German Iranologist and scholar who wrote extensively on Islam and Sufism and who visited Sarajevo shortly before her death. She gained her doctorate in the field of Islamic languages and civilization at the University of Berlin at the age of 19.

At 23 she became professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of Marburg (Germany), where she gained her second doctorate in the history of religion in 1954. The turning point in her life was in 1954, when she was appointed professor of the history of religion at the University of Ankara in Turkey.

She spent five years there, learning Turkish and steeping herself in Turkey's culture and mystical tradition. She was also a great admirer of Muhammad Iqbal, and translated his Javidnama into German. She taught at Harvard from 1967 to 1992, and became professor emeritus of Indo-Muslim culture at the University of Bonn after taking retirement. She was also an honorary professor of the University of Bonn. She published more than one hundred books on Islamic literature, mysticism and culture, and translated Persian, Urdu, Arabic, Sindi and Turkish poetry and literature into English and German.

She received many prestige awards for her work. She was able to lecture without notes in German, English and Turkish, and with note in French, Arabic, Persian and Urdu. In this she was an apt disciple of her model, the late Romantic poet and orientalist Friedrich Rückert, who was at easy in at least six languages.

British Scholars

Sir James W. Redhouse (1811-1892)

He gained his master's degree at Magdalen College in Oxford in 1859. Served in the Bengali Civil Service, which no doubt gave him the opportunity to become acquainted with Rumi. Whinfield provided excellent notes, including references to quotations from the Qur'an and hadith, and to his other translations. This is invaluable in enabling the reader to locate the Mathnawi in the Islamic context. Finally, Whinfield remained extremely faithful to Rumi in his translations, rather than retreating the work in his own words.

Whinfield, E.H. (1836-1922)

He gained his master's degree at Magdalen College in Oxford in 1859. Served in the Bengali Civil Service, which no doubt gave him the opportunity to become acquainted with Rumi. Whinfield provided excellent notes, including references to quotations from the Qur'an and hadith, and to his other translations. This is invaluable in enabling the reader to locate the Mathnawi in the Islamic context. Finally, Whinfield remained extremely faithful to Rumi in his translations, rather than retreating the work in his own words.

Reynold Alleyne Nicholson (1868-1945)

He was an eminent orientalist who is widely regarded as the greatest Rumi scholar in the English language. He was for many years a lecturer at Cambridge University in England. He dedicated his life to the study of mysticism, and was able to study and translate major Sufi texts in Arabic, Persian and Ottoman...
Turkish to English. His monumental achievement was his work on Rumi’s Masnavi (done in eight volumes, published between 1925 and 1940). He produced the first critical Persian edition of Rumi’s Masnavi, the first full translation of it into English, and the first commentary on the entire work in English. This work has been highly influential in the field of Rumi studies, world-wide. Nicholson also wrote an abridged version of his work on the Masnavi, in two volumes, intended to introduce Rumi to a more general readership.

Arthur John Arberry (1905-1969)

French & Italian Scholars
Maurice Barres (1862-1923), French novelist and politician. Became a member of the Académie française in 1906.

Harry, Myriam (1869-1958), particularly worthy of mention is her Djelaledidine Roumi, Poète et Danseur mystique, Paris: Flammarion, 1947.

Inherited assets
There is someone who has inherited a fortune. He has squandered it all and is left without anything. Inherited assets have no fidelity. They are temporary and do not help, and the proprietor may become separate from them in a moment. The one who inherits the assets does not appreciate their value, because he acquires them easily he has not had any trouble, or had to struggle to obtain them. God has given you this soul free; therefore you do not appreciate the value of it!

(Mathnawi IV / 334)

The one who gives rain from the sky, has also the power to give soul with his mercy.

(Mathnawi I / 74 - 928)
Eternal Figures

Eva de Vitray de Meyerovitch (d. 2003)

Anna Masala, A professor of Turkish language and literature at La Sapienza University in Rome.

American Scholars
William C. Chittick
A renowned scholar of Sufi thought and literature and Islamic philosophy, as is his wife Sachiko Murata. Both are professors in the Department of comparative Studies at the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

Kabir and Camille Helminski

Coleman Barks (1937)
He is the author and translator of numerous studies on Rumi and other Persian mystics. He received an honorary doctorate from Tehran University in 2006.

Concluding Remarks
In conclusion, let us once again recall that Rumi wrote his verses more than seven centuries ago, in extremely turbulent times when the Mongols were laying waste almost the entire Muslim world. But despite these horrors, Rumi was not a pessimist.
As his Mathnawi and Divan reveal, he speaks of love and hope, thus creating the best of perspectives even for our present-day cross-cultural aspirations and the rush to cross-cultural studies at the start of the twenty-first century. In his day, the world was sinking into the harsh age of Mongol terror; now, we too are living in a new climate of terrorism and violence that threatens to destroy the cultural and civilizational achievements of the entire human race.
The Bosnian spiritual banquet spread before the readership by this brief paper is intended to draw attention to the immensity of Rumi’s ocean of Love, to bring us at least a hint of his fragrant rose-garden of Love, in the hope that we shall see that Mowlana’s feast of riches is now open to all comers, even though they may have breached their covenant a thousand times and more.
The fact that UNESCO has dedicated this year to Rumi, following W. A. Mozart, another sublime musical genius, is a praiseworthy act, the expression of our quest for what we hold in common, for a vision that could lead us through this millenium by building a better future for humankind, in line with Rumi’s philosophy of Love.
I sincerely hope that our ethnic folly, the cult of the nation that has swept over Bosnia and Herzegovina, will not be an obstacle to our efforts and commitment. Over and over again, Rumi reminds us of that message of love, embracing diversity and transcending the self, which is of the essence not only of Islamic spirituality, but of all true spirituality.

Come so we may speak to each other from spirit to spirit, talk to each other in a way hidden from eyes and ears. Let us laugh without lips and teeth just as the rose garden.
Let us discourse without lips and mouth just as the thought.
Let us tell the secret of the world completely with our mouth closed at the level of ‘Aql al-Awwal (the First Intellect) and in the awareness of God’s existence.
Nobody talks to himself with a loud voice. Since we are all one, let us call out to each other from our hearts without mouths or lips.
How can you say to your hand “Hold!” Is that hand yours?
Since our hands are one, let us talk about this issue.
Hands and feet are aware of the state of the heart. Let us give up conversation made with our tongues and vibrate our hearts.
Words of Wisdom

Come, come, whoever or whatever you are, come Unbeliever or idolater, still come Ours is not the lodge of despair Come even if you broke your repentance a hundred times

So long as I am alive, I am the servant of Kur'an I am the dust and the dirt on the path of Muhammad(pbuh), the chosen If anyone misinterprets my words I shall be complainant of both those words and of whoever misinterprets them.

I came here to unify Not to divide.

Do not look for my grave in the ground when I am dead! My grave will be in the hearts of the learned.

Quotations from the Persian language Poet, Islamic mystic, prominent thinker and philosopher Mowlana Jalal-ud-Din Mohammad Balkhi known as Rumi.
Stories From Masnavi Manavi

By the Persian Language Poet, Islamic Mystic, Prominent Thinker & Philosopher

Translated and abridged by: E.H. Whinfield

The Lion Who Hunted with the Wolf

A lion took a wolf and fox with him on a hunting excursion, and succeeded in catching a wild ox, an ibex and a hare. He then directed the wolf to divide the prey. The wolf proposed to award the ox to the lion, the ibex to himself, and the hare to the fox.

The lion was enraged with the wolf because he had presumed to talk of "I" and "thou" and "My share" and "Thy share," when it all belonged of right to the lion, and he slew the wolf with one blow of his paw.

Then, turning to the fox, he ordered him to make the division. The fox, rendered wary by the fate of the wolf, replied that the whole should be the portion of the lion. The lion, pleased with his self-abnegation, gave it all up to him, saying, "thou art no longer a fox, but myself."

The Merchant and his Clever Parrot

There was a certain merchant who kept a parrot in a cage. Being about to travel to Hindustan on business, he asked the parrot if he had any message to send to his kinsmen in that country, and the parrot desired him to tell them that he was kept confined in a cage. The merchant promised to deliver it to the first flock of parrots he saw. One hearing it one of them at once fell down dead. The merchant was annoyed with his own parrot no sooner heard the merchant’s tale than he too fell down dead in his cage. The merchant, after lamenting his death, took his corpse out of the cage and threw it away; but, to his surprise, the corpse immediately recovered life, and flew away, explaining that the Hindustani parrot had only feigned death to suggest this way of escaping from confinement in a cage.
The Villager Who Invited the Townsman to Visit him

A certain villager paid a visit to the town, and there received hospitality from the townsman. At his departure the villager was profuse of thanks, and pressed the townsman to come and see him in his village, and brings his family with him. The townsman hesitated long before accepting his invitation, having doubts as to his sincerity, but after ten years solicitation he at length yielded, and set off with his family to the village.

One his arrival the villager shut the door in his face, saying that he did not know him, and the townsman had to pass five nights in the cold and rain. At last, exhausted with suffering, he implored the villager to give him shelter, promising to render service in return. The villager granted it on condition that he would protect his garden from the wolves.

The townsman accepted this condition and taking bow and arrows, proceeded to patrol the garden, but, owing to the rain and the darkness, and his own fears, ended by shooting the villager’s pet ass in mistake for a wolf. The villager abused him roundly, saying that he himself would not have taken an ass for a wolf, even on the darkest night. The townsman replied, “If that be so, you are self-convicted of inhumanity, for you must have recognized me, your friend of ten year’s standing, the moment I knocked at your door.

As for me, I am ignorant of all about Allah, and, moreover, was unable to see in the darkness; and God has said, ‘No criminality is imputed to the blind.’ But your blindness in refusing to recognize me was willful, and your claims to humanity are thus proved to be false by the test to which you have been submitted.”

*Edward Henry Whinfield (1836-1922) was a translator of Persian literature. He composed the first well-commented English translations of Hafez and Rumi,[1] as well as a side-by-side translation of 500 quatrains of the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam in 1883.
**The Lament of the Reed-Flute**

Listen to this reed, how it makes complaint, telling a tale of separation: ‘Ever since I was cut off from my reed-bed, men and women all have laments my bewailing. I want a breast torn asunder by severance, that I may fully declare the agony of yearning. Everyone who is sundered far from his origin longs to recapture the time when he was united with it. In every company I have poured forth my lament, I have consorted alike with the miserable and the happy: each became my friend out of his own surmise, none sought to discover the secret in my heart. My secret indeed is not remote from my lament, but eye and ear lack the light to perceive it. Body is not veiled from soul, nor soul from body, yet to no many is leave given to see the soul.’

This cry of the reed is fire, it is not wind; whoever possesses not this fire, let him be naught! It is the surge of love that bubbles in the wine. The reed is the true companion of everyone parted from a friend: its melodies have rent the veils shrouding our hearts. Whoever saw poison and antidote in one the like of the reed? Whoever saw sympathiser and yearner in one the like of the reed? The reed tells the history of the blood-bespattered way, it tells the stories of Majnun’s hopeless passion. Only the senseless is intimate with the mysteries of this Sense; only the heedful ear can buy what the tongue retails. Untimely the days have grown in our tribulation; burning sorrows have travelled along with all our days; yet if our days have all departed, bid them be gone — it matters not; only do Thou abide, O Thou incomparably holy!

Whoever is not a fish is soon satiated with His water; he who lacks his daily bread, for him the day is very long. None that is inexperienced comprehends the state of the ripe, wherefore my words must be short; and now, farewell!

* It is a symbol of the soul’s sorrow at being parted from the Divine Beloved.

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**The Grammarian & The Boatman**

A Grammarian once embarked in a boat. Turning to the boatman with a self-satisfied air he asked him:

‘Have you ever studied grammar?’

‘No,’ replied the boatman.

‘Then half your life has gone to waste,’ the grammarian said.

The boatman thereupon felt very depressed, but he answered him nothing for the moment. Presently the wind tossed the boat into a whirlpool. The boatman shouted to the grammarian:

‘Do you know how to swim?’

‘No’ the grammarian replied, ‘my well-spoken, handsome fellow.

‘In that case, grammarian,’ the boatman remarked, ‘the whole of your life has gone to waste, for the boat is sinking in these whirlpools.’

You may be the greatest scholar in the world in your time, but consider, my friend, how the world passes away - and time!

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**The Man Who Said, 'It Is I'**

A certain man once came and knocked on the door of a friend. ‘Who are you, faithful one?’ his friend asked.

‘I,’ he answered.

‘Go away’, the friend said. ‘It is not the proper time. There is no place for such a raw fellow at a table like mine.’

What shall cook the raw, but he fire of banishment and separation? What shall deliver him out of hypocrisy?

That wretched man departed and wandered abroad for a year, burned as with sparks of fire in separation from his friend. So, scorched, he was cooked; then he returned and once more circled about the house of his companion. Fearful a hundredfold, he gently knocked at the door, anxious lest any unmannerly word should escape his lips.

His friend called, ‘Who is that at the door?’

He answered, ‘You also are at the door, heart-ravisher!’

‘Now,’ the friend cried, ‘since you are I, come in. O I! There is not room in the house for two Is.’

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**The Man Who Stole a Snake, & the Answer to Prayer**

A thief once stole a snake from a snake-catcher, and in his folly accounted it a rich prize. The snake-catcher escaped from the bite of the snake; the man who had stolen his snake was killed by it most miserably. The snake-catcher saw him, and recognized him.

‘Well, well,’ he remarked. ‘My snake has robbed him of life. My soul was begging and beseeching God that I might find the thief and take my snake back from him. Thanks be to God that my prayer was rejected. I supposed it to be a loss, and it turned out again.’

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**The Blind Beggar, On the Power of Compassion**

There was once a blind man who all the time cried, ‘Have pity! I am doubly blind, people of this passing time. Attend therefore, and show me double compassion, for I have two kinds of blindness, and exist between them.’

‘We see your one blindness well enough,’ remarked someone. ‘What may the other blindness be? Pray explain.’

‘I have an ugly voice an unpleasing tone,’ he replied. ‘An ugly voice, and blindness — there you have the double. My ugly cry makes people annoyed, so that their affection is diminished by my cry. Wherever my
ugly voice betakes itself, it becomes the source of anger, annoyance and hatred. Have double compassion upon my double blindness, make room in you hearts for one who id denied all room.’

The ugliness of his voice was lessened by this lament, so that the people with one heart took compassion upon him. By telling his secret, his voice was made beautiful the sweet accents of the voice of his heart. But the man whose heart’s voice is also evil, that triple blindness dooms him to everlasting exile.

Yet it may be that the bountiful ones who give without cause will lay a hand upon his hideous head. Since the beggar’s voice became sweet and plaintive, the hearts of the stony-hearted became soft as wax.

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The Mouse & the Camel, a Warning against Spiritual Pride

A little mouse once caught in its paws a camel’s head-robe and in a spirit of emulation went off with it. Because of the nimbleness with which the camel set off along with him the mouse was duped into thinking himself a champion. The flash of his thought struck the camel.

‘Go on, enjoy yourself,’ he grunted. ‘I will show you!’

Presently the mouse came to the margin of a great river, such as would have cast down any lion or wolf. There the mouse halted, struck all of a heap.

‘Comrade over mountain and plain,’ said the camel, ‘why this standing still? Why are you dismayed? Step on like a man! Into the river with you! You are my guide and leader; do not halt half-way, paralyzed!’

‘But this vast and deep river,’ said the mouse. ‘I am afraid of being drowned, comrade.’

‘Let me see how deep the water is,’ said the camel, and quickly set foot in it.

The water only comes up to my knee,’ he went on, ‘Blind mouse, why were you dismayed? Why did you lose your head?’

‘To you it is an ant, but to me it is a dragon,’ said the mouse. ‘There are great differences between one knee and another. If it only reaches your nee, clever camel, it passes a hundred cubits over my head.’

‘Be not so arrogant another time,’ said the camel, ‘lest you are con- sumed body and soul by the sparks of my wrath. Emulate mice like yourself, a mouse has no business to hobnob with camels.’

‘I repent,’ said the mouse. ‘For God’s sake get me across this deadly water!’

‘Listen,’ said the camel, taking compassion on the mouse. ‘Jump up and sit on my hump. This passage has been entrusted to me, I would take across hundreds of thousands like you.’

Since you are not the ruler, be a simple subject; since you are not cap- tain, do not steer the ship.

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The Prayer That Was Answered

A certain man one night was crying ‘Allah!’ till his lips were becom- ing sweet with the mention of his name.

‘Why now, chatterbox,’ said the Devil, ‘where is the answer “Here am I” to all this “Allah” of yours? Not one answer is coming to me!’

The man became broken-hearted, and laid down his head to sleep.

‘Look now,’ Khazir called, ‘why have you desisted from the mention of God? How is it you repent of having called upon Him?’

‘No answering “Here am I” is coming to me,’ the man replied, ‘and I therefore fear that I may be refused from His door.’

Khazir answered, ‘Your cry of “Allah” (God says) is itself My “Here am I”; your pleading and agony and fervor is My messenger. All your twisting and turnings to come to Me were My drawing you that set free your feet. Your fear and love are the lasso to catch My grace. Under each “Allah” of yours whispers many a “Here am I”.

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The Old man and the doctor, on inveterate wickedness

An old man said to a doctor, ‘My brain I giving me hell.’

The doctor said, ‘That infirmity of brain comes from old age.’

The old man said, ‘I see dark spot in front of my eyes.’

The doctor said, ‘That comes of old age, ancient one.’

The old man said, ‘I get terrible backaches.’

The doctor said, ‘That comes of old age, skinny old fellow.’

The old man said, ‘Everything I eat repeats on me.’

The doctor said, ‘A weak stomach comes from old age.’

The old man said, ‘I see dark spot in front of my eyes.’

The doctor said, ‘That infirmity of brain comes from old age.’

The old man said, ‘I get terrible backaches.’

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The old man said, ‘Everything I eat repeats on me.’

The doctor said, ‘A weak stomach comes from old age.’
The best way to understand the great Muslim poet of the 13th century C. E., Molana Jalaluddin Muhammad Balkhi-ye Rumi, is to know that the inward meaning of all of his verses and poems is faithful to the revelation of the Qur’an and to the Traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). He stated this clearly in a quatrain:

I am the servant of the Qur’an as long as I have life. I am the dust on the path of Muhammad, the Chosen one. If anyone quotes anything except this from my sayings, I am quit of him and outraged by these words.

Quatrain No. 1173

The meaning is that no one should interpret Molana Rumi’s speech and poetry as having meanings that do not conform to the revelation and practice of Islam.

And he described his great masterpiece of Islamic mystical teachings, the “Masnavi” as “the roots of the roots of the roots of the (Islamic) Religion... and the explainer of the Qur’an” (Masnavi, Book I, Preface).

In an article written by Seyyed Hossein Nasr entitled “Rumi and the Sufi Tradition,” he stated: “One of the greatest living authorities on Rumi in Persia today, Hadi Ha’iri, has shown in an unpublished work that some 6,000 verses of the Diwan and the Mathnawi are practically direct translations of Qur’anic verses into Persian poetry.” (From Chelkowski, editor, “The Scholar and the Saint,” 1975, p. 183)

Here is one example of many, that beautifully combines the meanings of two famous verses of the Qur’an (“And do not despair of the Mercy of God” (12:87); “I respond (with) an answer to the prayer of the supplicant when he calls (on Me)” (2:186)): “Don’t say, ‘There isn’t (any) entrance to the King for us.’ Matters (of concern) are not difficult with generous ones [karim-an]!” (Mathnawi, Book I: 221).

A major focus of my own translations of Molana’s poetry (see below in the section, “Recommended Translations”) has been to point out and explain his references to, and quotes and paraphrases from, the Qur’an and Traditions.

It is ironic that, although Molana’s poetry has been highly revered by Muslims for so many centuries in a variety of Muslim cultures, today many Muslims are skeptical and distrustful, as well as poorly uninformed, about his works—works that are a treasury of profound Islamic wisdom.

There are a number of reasons for this:

(1) Today there is a lack of knowledge among Muslims about the mystical dimension of Islam called “sufism”. This is largely due to many decades of anti-sufi propaganda spread largely by the externalist Wahhabi and Salafi movements. Although some kinds of popularized sufism have involved misguided and corrupted beliefs and practices, the extreme reaction during the last
century that has tried to eradicate sufism completely has been excessive. After all, many of the most learned Muslim scholars of the past centuries, such as Molana Rumi, have been pious sufis and most sufis have been pious followers of the four Sunni traditional schools of Islamic law. It is because sufis follow both Islamic Law [shari`at] and a spiritual path [Tariqat] that specializes in moral and spiritual purification as well as the practice of the remembrance of God--all of which are repeatedly emphasized in the Holy Qur'an--that sufism has often been called the "heart of Islam."

Just as the Protestant reform movement in Christianity led to excessive "purification" that led to the eradication of the traditional respect and love for Christian saints and mystics of the past (as models to emulate for Protestant Christians) in regard to cultivating moral and spiritual virtues, the Wahhabi and Salafi reform movements have led to a false purification that seeks to eradicate essential features of Islamic piety that are actually much more traditional and orthodox: the Islamic path of moderation called as-sunnah wa 'l-ijma’ that has always included well-respected scholars who were practitioners of sufism.

(2) Another factor is the lack of availability of either Molana Rumi's Arabic poetry or translations into Arabic from Persian of his "Mathnawi." He composed 90 ghazals and 19 quatrains entirely in Arabic. In addition, there are ghazals which are all Arabic except for the final verse; others are a mixture of Arabic and Persian verses. These Arabic poems from his "Diwan-e Kabir" deserve to be published together and made available in Arabic-speaking countries. There are a number of full translations into Arabic of his Mathnawi that are not well-known to Arabic-speakers, for example, an old one ("Manhaju 'l-qawi") by Yûsuf b. Ahmad al-Mawlawi), an interlinear one with the Persian text ("Jawahiru 'l-athar fi tarjamat Mathnawi Molana Khwudawandgar," University of Tehran, 1957), one in two volumes ("Al-Mathnawi" by Ahmad Kifafi, Lebanon, 1967), and a recent one (by Ibrahim al-Dasûqi Shita, Cairo, 1992-99).

(3) A major problem is the misleading books that popularize Molana Rumi's poetry in English written by authors who do not know Persian; these books mislead the public by claiming to be "translations." These are, more correctly, "poetic interpretive versions." Other books are by authors whose native language is Persian but who are deficient in knowledge of classical/medieval Persian, seem ignorant of the Islamic contexts, and who deliberately minimize the Islamic contents of Molana’s poetry.

For Americans, these popularized books have the benefit of making Molana Rumi's name so well-known in America that more people may be motivated to find accurate and reliable translations that reveal Molana’s Islamic spirituality than there would be if his name as a spiritual poet was not so familiar.

But, unfortunately, for Muslims who look at or read such versions, the result is likely to be that they will view both Molana and his spiritual teacher Shamsu 'ddin incorrectly as "indulgent romantics", "sensualists", "free-thinkers", "heretics", "unbelievers," advocates of alcoholic intoxication, and not true Muslims. In other words, for many Muslims, such pseudo-translations or versions are likely to result in negative attitudes toward Molana and toward sufism.

(4) The other major reason is the lack of information about reliable translations--especially because there are so many popularized books of versions that falsely claim to be "translations." The only reliable and authentic translations of the works of Molana Rumi are those done by scholars. There is simply no way to avoid disciplined study of Molana’s works (and commentaries are very helpful--hopefully, more will be available in English in the future). After a period of time, the superiority of genuine translations over interpretive versions will become apparent: As the reader becomes familiar with Molana’s authentic poetic metaphors and images, these will become increasingly attractive as they recur; soon it will become clear that, despite the non-poetic qualities of scholarly translations, they succeed in expressing a quality of spiritual wisdom that is far more profound, inspiring, and sincerely religious than the popularized versions are able to provide.

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