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The Temporality of Desire in Ḥasan Dihlavī's *ʿIshqnāma*

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For over a millennium, Persian poets have developed unique ways of conceptualizing the temporality of love and desire, both of which are epitomized by the word *ʿishq*. Many Persian poets have dedicated verse romances to the relation between love and death, some of which anticipate aspects of twentieth-century psychoanalysis. These narratives have shown how these two forces exist in proximate and necessary relation with each other. Yet contemporary theory has yet to grapple with the Persian legacy. Attending more closely to the Persian contribution to theories of love and desire, and in particular to the new inflection love received when Indian poets integrated Persian narratives into South Asian contexts, we aim in these pages to elucidate the new ways of thinking about love and desire that such narratives make possible. Such an investigation can help us probe the relation between love and death, and reconfigure what Freud referred to as the pleasure principle and the death drive for non-Eurocentric contexts.

In pursuit of this mandate, this article examines one of the earliest Indo-Persian reworkings of the Persian verse romance genre: the *ʿIshqnāma* (Book of Love), composed in 1301 by the Indo-Persian poet Ḥasan Sijzī, better known as Ḥasan Dihlavī.[1] While offering the first extended analysis of this work in English, we examine here the overlapping Indic, Arabic, and Persian narratives that feed into its master narrative of love and death.[2] We further relate these narrative techniques to Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1921), in which he presents his understanding of this driving force of the id, which compels us to seek pleasure in order to satisfy biological and psychological needs.

Our focus on narrative enables us to examine this text and the tradition from which it

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emerged as potential contributions to post-Freudian accounts of basic human drives. As we consider the philosophical themes in which the Persian romance genre is enmeshed, we explore the dialectic between love and desire in terms that resonate with, contest, and extend the psychoanalytical approaches that dominate twentieth-century thought. This work is intended as a contribution to our understanding of love within Persian literature, and to the post-Freudian anthropology of desire in a comparative context. Given its rich tradition of theorizing the metaphysics of desire, Persian poetry has much to offer as a source from which to draw for the philosophy of love and its expression in literature. Long before psychoanalysis, Persian poets were exploring the relation between desire and temporality in their encounter with a contingent, creaturely, life.[3] The pages that follow explicate these literary engagements in order to clarify their relevance for a contemporary audience.

We begin by reviewing the literary development of Ḥasan Sizjī Dihlavī in his Indo-Persian environment. We then turn to the conceptualization of love in Persian and Arabic texts that preceded *ʿIshqnāma*. Turning to *ʿIshqnāma*, we trace its narrative arc and recount its conceptualization of temporality and desire. Finally, we relate this Persian narrative to the Freudian and to the post-Freudian legacy of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. In bringing Freud's enigmatic treatise on the repetition compulsion and the death drive into conversation with a Persian verse romance, we aim to pave the way for new understandings of the self's yearning for its other from outside Euro-Anglophone canons.

Ḥasan Dihlavī and Indo-Persian Literature

Amīr Ḥasan Sizjī Dihlavī wrote during a transitional period in Persian literary culture. In its new Indo-Persian environment, the poetry of patronage (embodied in the *qaṣīda,* or panegyric ode) came to be overshadowed by the verse of mystic union that helped to develop a new language for love.[4] Ḥasan Dihlavī's lyric poems (*ghazals*) and quatrains (*rubāʿiyyāt*)

were shaped by this historical shift in the role of literary production and its increasing autonomy from the court. Although he regularly addressed royal patrons in his work, and was financially dependent on the rulers of his age, Ḥasan's themes and narratives bear the mark more of personal preference and intellectual predilection than royal fiat.

Born in the North Indian town of Badaun in 1253/4, Ḥasan Dihlavī moved to Delhi (the city with which he was therefore associated) in order to complete his education.[5] According to his own testimony, he began writing poetry at the age of thirteen. His talent was discovered when he met the most famous Persian poet of his age, Amīr Khusrow (d. 1325), near the baker's shop in Delhi where he had been making a living by selling bread. Struck by his intelligence and purity of his heart, Amīr Khusrow promptly developed a strong affection for his fellow poet. According to their contemporaries, the affection verged on love, and inspired the best work of both poets over the course of their long lives, including their discipleship with their Sufi master, Shaykh Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyāʾ. Over the course of many years of friendship, and perhaps incipient rivalry, Ḥasan Dihlavī's and Amīr Khusrow honed their talents within the politically fraught Delhi Sultanate as they authored lyric poems and verse narratives that expanded and restructured the horizons of Indo-Persian literature. In different yet parallel ways, Amīr Khusrow and Ḥasan Dihlavī reworked Persian narratives, producing new Indo-Persian verse romances that were inflected by specifically Indian customs and traditions.

Both witness and chronicler to the political intrigues of the Delhi Sultanate, Ḥasan died soon after Delhi Sultan Muhammad Tughluq relocated his capital to Deogir in South India in 1327. Amīr Khusrow and their spiritual leader to whom they both turned throughout their lives for guidance, Shaykh Niẓām al-Dīn, had also recently passed away. Ḥasan left behind a rich literary legacy, only a fraction of which is extant. He is said by his contemporary Baranī to have composed many verse narratives, yet only two have survived.[6]

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In addition to his verse narratives, he composed a number of *ghazals* and a prose compendium (*malfūẓāt*) of the sayings of Shaykh Niẓām al-Dīn entitled *Fawā'id al-Fu'ād* (Benefits for the Heart), a landmark work of Sufi spirituality that was to inaugurate a new literary genre with Sufi thought.[7] It was no doubt due to Ḥasan's ghazals that Shaykh Niẓām al-Dīn favorably compared Ḥasan to Amīr Khusrow. "Our Khusrow," he said, "is like a saltish river, while Ḥasan is like a sweetish rivulet."[8]

The relative obscurity of Ḥasan's poetic output today contrasts sharply to his influence on Indo-Persian literary culture. Ḥasan's poems were copied at the court of Akbar (r. 1542-1605), under whose reign Sanskrit literature was supported and Persian poems on Indian themes experienced a revival.[9] The fifteenth-century poet Jāmī of Herat (in present day Afghanistan) praised the elusive simplicity of Ḥasan's literary voice, in his version of the verse romance *Laylī and Majnūn*, which imitate the opening verses of *'Ishqnāma*:

> The world is the abode of decay;
> it's impossible to find comfort in it.
> It's a house of grief, gloomy and dingy;
> no one should trust in its faith.[10]

Bīdil, an eighteenth-century poet of Mughal India, called Ḥasan "the meadow of the world [*mazra'-i dahr*]" and the sower of the seeds of "goodness and fame [*nīkī u nīknāmī*]."[11] Other early modern poets influenced by Ḥasan include Kamāl Khujandī and the Mughal court poet Faiżī. Beyond South and Central Asia, Ḥasan influenced pioneers of the later Persian ghazal, including Ḥāfiẓ and Khvāju Kirmānī. Ḥasan's impact on subsequent literature was at once vast and underrecognized. In modern times, his legacy has been eclipsed by that of his contemporary Amīr Khusrow. Having introduced this understudied poet, the remainder of this article will move beyond biography in order, first, to situate Ḥasan's most important verse romance within the Persian literary canon, and subsequently, to reflect on its relevance to contemporary understanding of the temporality of desire.

'Ishq: A Master Narrative

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The Persian approach to love foregrounds an aesthetic defined less by pleasure than by selfless ecstasy. The image of being consumed by the fire of love was often expressed by the motif of "the candle and the moth [*parvāna va shamʿ*]" which is found in Persian lyric imagery (such as the poems of Indo-Persian poet Masʿūd Saʿd Salmān) as early as eleventh century.[12] According to the early twentieth-century litterateur and lexicographer Ali Akbar Dehkhoda, in Persian literature, love is a pathological condition characterized by extravagant desire (*ifrāṭ dar muḥabbat*). It is associated with "excessive friendship [*dar gudhashtan az ḥadd-i dūstī*]," as well as "blindness to the beloved's flaws."[13] Dehkhoda further describes *ʿishq*—a term that encompasses both love and desire—as a form of insanity "caused by looking into a beautiful face" (15900).

The etymological derivation of the word *ʿishq* indicates an ontology within which love preserves itself in the destruction of the lover. (This tension anticipates, in the present context, the Freudian interconnection between the pleasure principle and death drive.) As Shahāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (1154-1191) writes in his treatise on love, *ʿishq* "is derived from *ʿashaqa*, a plant that turns up in the garden in the tree's root; first it firms its root in the earth, then rises and twists around the tree so that it covers the whole tree. It tortures the tree by sucking all water in the trunk and ravishing all nutrient water and air until the tree is dried."[14] Allegorically, love is sustained by the effacement of the subject of desire; it requires the lover's readiness to sacrifice for the loved other. Such a conceptualization of love explains the metaphorical associations of love in Persian poetry with fire (*ātash*), burning (*sūzish*), and madness (*junūn*). For classical Persian poets, love entails self-destruction.

Persian romances, ghazals, and Sufi prose treatises utilize a range of metaphors for love: as light, as fire, as wine, as sea, as journey, and as sickness. However, as we will see, a delicate dialectic of death and desire, and an innovative temporality of love, are established by the Persian verse romance. In Persian Sufi discourse, the interrelation of love and mortality is most

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powerfully manifested in the notion of *fanāʾ*, the disappearance of the lover's existence into that of the beloved. In Persian romances, the tradition of *ḥubb-i ʿudhrī* (unconsummated love) destines true love to death. Beyond these literary and Sufi associations, even in contemporary colloquial Farsi, everyday idioms such as *qurbān raftan* and *fidā shudan*—both meaning "to be sacrificed"—are used to convey that the speaker is ready to lose their life in love for the other.

Over time, Sufi writings on love transitioned away from the ascetic Sufism (*taṣawwuf-i zāhidāna*) of the Arabic tradition to amorous Sufism (*taṣawwuf-i ʿāshiqāna*) in which the relationship of God to humanity is reconfigured in terms of love (*ḥubb* or *muḥabbat*) rather than fear (*khawf*). Love for God is identified as true love (*ʿishq-i haqīqī*) in contrast to all other forms of love, which are repudiated as illusory or deceptive love (*ʿishq-i majāzī*). God is identified as a transcendental object of desire due to His assumed timelessness and permanence which make Him irreplaceable compared to worldly objects of desire that are doomed to transience and mortality. Rūzbihān Baqlī (d. 1209), the author of *ʿAbhar al-ʿāshiqīn* (Jasmine of lovers), one of the earliest Persian Sufi treatises written on love, praises the sovereign beloved at the very beginning of his *Sharḥ-i shaṭḥiyāt* (Commentary on paradoxes). "Praised be the God who, eternal without beginning or end, is purified, in nature and in name, from the change of 'when's and 'where's of time and place," he writes.[15] In addition, Sufi love culminates ideally in the effacement (*maḥv*) of the duality between the lover and the beloved, and their enduring fusion in pure love. As the foregoing suggests, the Sufi conception of desire is permeated by multiple dualities: temporal vs. atemporal, and perishable vs. that which endures. Even when variations begin to appear within the concept of love (as for example between *ʿishq-i majāzī* and *ʿishq-i haqīqī*) the differences are temporally conceived: whereas true love (*ʿishq-i haqīqī*) is understood to pertain to an atemporal object of love, God, and to be eternal, (*ʿishq-i majāzī*) deceptive love pertains to a finite object, of limited duration, and is therefore perishable.

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Although human love is deemed permissible in Sufism and philosophy by recourse to the formula *al-majāzu qanṭarat al-ḥaqīqa* (the virtual is the bridge to the real), it becomes legitimate only as a preparatory movement toward divine love. This dialectic between mortality and immortality through the concept of love assisted theologians in explaining why, for example, the sacred text contained and even exalted as *aḥsan al-qiṣaṣ* (the best of stories), the Qur'ānic story of an earthly love between Yūsuf and Zulaikhā, above all others. For the Sufi, human love is only perfected by the lover's annihilation in and for the beloved. In the first Sufi treatise in Persian exclusively written on the subject of love, *Sawāniḥ al-ʿushāq* (Hardships of lovers) (circa 1114), Aḥmad Ghazālī writes that in the prime of love, the lover loves the beloved for their self, "loving one's self through the beloved without knowing it." However, "when perfect love shines, the lover wants their self to exist for the beloved […] and considers it insignificant to die for the beloved's satisfaction."[16]

The tradition of unconsummated love (*ḥubb-i ʿudhrī*) originating in Arabic tribal love stories and re-iterated in numerous medieval Persian romances, including by Ḥasan in *ʿIshqnāma*, is regarded by this tradition as the purest form of human love. Deriving its name from the Arab tribe, Banul-ʿudhrī, which was the birthplace of several famed Arab couples whose love remained unconsummated, this tradition conceives of the chaste disappointed lover's death as a form of martyrdom. It does not involve physical union and is devoid of sexual impulses. The religious basis for the exaltation of this form of love is found in the Prophetic *ḥadīth* according to which the one "who is in love, keeps chastity, conceals his love, and dies, dies as a martyr."[17] Henry Corbin's summary of this tradition succinctly formulates the mortal and contingent temporality of love contained in the concept of *hubb-i ʿudhrī*: "To love is to die."[18]

The Persian Romance from the Caucasus to South Asia

Before entering into the dialectic of desire and time in Ḥasan's *ʿIshqnāma,* we need

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to retrace the trajectory that connects *ʿIshqnāma*, via Persian romances, to the Arabic tradition of unconsummated love. For this purpose, we first show the certain elements of the Arab tradition that are borrowed by the Persian romances. Then we show how these are reworked within an Indian cultural framework in Ḥasan Dihlavī's *ʿIshqnāma*. The originality of *ʿIshqnāma* is best revealed through comparison with its literary antecedents, the most significant among which is *Laylī and Majnūn* (1188), by the twelfth-century poet Niẓāmī of Ganja in modern Azerbaijan in the Caucasus, the most famous author of verse romances in Persian literature.

As a Persian romance, Niẓāmī's *Laylī and Majnūn* engages with and transforms the Arabic discourse of unconsummated love. Specifically, this Persian text is modeled on an older Arabic narrative tradition concerning the passion that develops between two Bedouin shepherds from Najd in the Hejaz, Laylā and Qays (better known as Majnūn). Majnūn's poverty prevents the young lovers from marrying and consummating their desire.[19] The story's dominant plot device, of love-madness (contained in the literal meaning of *majnūn*), introduced a new term to the Islamic world that was forever after associated with the protagonist's name. As the Persian romance circulated beyond Arab domains, *majnūn* came to epitomize both love and madness in the contemporary and classical languages of the Islamic world from South Asia to the Balkans.[20]

The Majnūn-Leyla Arabic narrative cycle was historically connected to the seventh-century Arab poet Qays ibn al-Mulawwaḥ. Notwithstanding the canonical status of his poems, little is known concerning Qays' biography.[21] Niẓāmī's version of Majnūn's love-madness, itself based on Abū Bakr al-Wālebī's *Dīvān* of Qays b. al-Mulawwaḥ al-Majnūn, generated hundreds of imitations in Urdu, Georgian, Punjabi, Turkish, and many other languages in subsequent centuries.[22] Zolfaqari has enumerated eighty-six extant imitations of Niẓāmī's *Laylī and Majnūn*, the version that has formed the focal point of much subsequent scholarship on the

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Persian romance.[23]

Niẓāmī laid the groundwork for subsequent narratives on this theme. He opens his love story by reflecting on the Arab version of the Majnūn-Laylī story and lamenting his inability to make a decent poem from it because the original story lacks the element of joy (*nashāṭ*). In the verses quoted below, Niẓāmī speaks as himself, a father to his son Mohammad. He is explaining why he finds himself unable to craft a decent poem:

> Although this story is famous,
> its interpretation is distant from joy (*nashāṭ*).
> The discourse needs joy (*nashāṭ*) and grace.
> Discourse originates in these two elements.
> A plain discourse will be boring
> when it's only about frenzy, prison, and chains.[24]

In Niẓāmī's narrative, Majnūn's attraction to Laylī, combined with her inaccessibility, drives him insane. Obeying her parents' will, Laylī marries a rich Bedouin. As he slowly loses his mind, Majnūn composes poetry for his beloved Laylī. The death of Laylī's husband deprives the lovers of the opportunity to consummate their love because according to Arab rites, a widow must isolate herself for two years after her husband's death. Laylī dies in feverish grief. When Majnūn learns of Laylī's death, he follows her example and dies on her tombstone. This plot, refined by Niẓāmī on the basis of an Arabic source, became a master narrative for subsequent Persian writers, including Ḥasan Dihlavī. Almost universally, narratives in this tradition culminate in the lovers' deaths.[25]

The proximity of love and death in Niẓāmī's narrative anticipates Freud's account of the death drive that informs the sexual drive (*Lustprinzip*), whereby "the goal of all life is death" (*BPP*, 77).[26] Like many Persian poets, Niẓāmī is keen to contrast the transience of worldly desire with the atemporal afterlife into which Majnūn and Laylī are initiated upon their deaths. In concluding his account of Majnūn's death on Laylī's grave, Niẓāmī enumerates the lessons the reader should derive from his hero's material decomposition. Each lesson reflects the frailty of creaturely existence, and its susceptibility to death. The

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poet ends by declaring:

> Don't get entangled in the soil; it is a pile of dust [*ghubārīst*].
> Don't be content with passion; it is only sparks [*sharārīst*].[27]

Love is manifested in what Freud called "the time of the geologists," which far outlasts human existence.[28] Governed by the forces of conservation, geological time seeks to return all beings and all passions to their original state: of non-existence.

The preface of Niẓāmī's *Laylī and Majnūn* can be read as a treatise about the transience of worldly existence, underpinned by the terms *marg* and *ajal* (both meaning "death"). In the preface to his romance, before mentioning anything of Laylī and Majnūn's story, Niẓāmī introduces love as a means to overcome the transience and finitude of life, and as a passage to durability and permanence:

> Why should I fear when death arrives?
> I know it as the path to you.
> This is not death: it's a garden
> leading to beloved's abode.
> I yearn for the death that comes from the beloved.
> If I see it as I should,
> this is not the end, but a passage
> from a dining room to a bedroom,
> and from the bedroom to a royal feast.
> I never refuse the sleep
> that leads to your feast.[29]

Rather than presenting Majnūn's desire for Laylī as an intrinsic value, Niẓāmī advises his reader to focus on the more permanent reality (*baqā'*) to which that desire yields once both characters are gone. While Niẓāmī's formulations differ sharply from those of Freud, both authors juxtapose as complimentary opposites the self-preserving force that aims for survival (through desire) with the force that drives the living toward their annihilation. The difference, we shall see, is that Persian poets such as Niẓāmī conceived of death as a bridge toward the superior pleasure of union with God. As a result, Niẓāmī sees death in terms of survival rather than as the restoration to a previous state. Death for Niẓāmī does not interrupt the seeking of pleasure; instead it transmutes desire into a pleasurable love that transcends

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contingency.

Niẓāmī emphasizes the otherworldly dimension of desire, as a prelude to death in verses such as the following:

> They rested gracefully until the Judgement Day.
> Blame was removed from them.
> They passed some time in this world.
> Now they rest in the same bed in the other world.[30]

Within Niẓāmī's metaphysical entelechy, the narration of desire redirects the reader's attention away from sexual yearning and towards another form of longing. This otherworldly realm eludes narration: it exceeds the domain of language and exists outside contingency. Although it is made manifest as a rupture in the fabric of time, *ʿishq* remains external to the life cycle and does not enter history.

For Niẓāmī, then, Laylī and Majnūn's love entails its own negation. As per Corbin's pithy formulation, to love is to die. In his Persian romance, love attains its goal only when it has ceased to be permeated by time worldly. This is reflected not only in the lovers' inevitable deaths, but also in the philosophical lessons that Niẓāmī derives from their demise. When he learns that Laylī has died, Majnūn, who like his creator is a poet, reframes the entire preceding narrative of their love, placing it in the light of eternity. Before improvising an elegy on Laylī's death, Majnūn reflects on the bitterness of existence, and the poet narrates his grief: "He wept so bitterly. / Who has passed through the world without bitter tears?"[31]

When Majnun replies to an elder from his tribe who warns him of his love for Layli, Niẓāmī interjects that *ʿishq* has no permanence; it is merely a succession of passions (*shahvat*) (78):

> The love that is not eternal
> is a game of impassioned youth.
> Love is that which does not shrink,
> that does not change as long as it exists.
> That love is not a wily fantasy
> subject to eternal demise.
> Majnūn is a lofty paragon of love.

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His knowledge of love is perfect.[32]

Such affirmations result from Niẓāmī's understanding of *ʿishq* as a striving for timelessness.

The Persian concept of love received a new inflection when Indian poets undertook to localize Persian narrative conventions. The first extant imitation of Niẓāmī's romance, Amīr Khusrow Dihlavī's *Majnūn and Laylī* (1299), composed just two years prior to *ʿIshqnāma,* reiterates (with minor differences) the same story of chaste and unconsummated love. The Bedouin atmosphere is preserved in both narratives; however, in Niẓāmī the narrative is clearly influenced by Persian culture (for example, the *maktab-khāna,* or Persian primary school, where Laylī and Majnūn see each other as children and fall in love). In Ḥasan's *ʿIshqnāma*, Indian undercurrents are grafted onto the Arabo-Persian inflections of the love-death relation. Ḥasan acknowledges the influence of Niẓāmī and alludes to the lovers he has immortalized, Laylī and Majnūn, and Shīrīn and Farhād, all of whom are known for their unconsummated love.

Unlike most Persian romances, Ḥasan situates his *ʿIshqnāma* within a context that is almost contemporary to him. The action takes place twelve years prior to his birth, in 1266. 1266 is historically marked as in the narrative, when the release of prisoners is linked to the beginning of the reign of Balban (1266-1287); it precedes 1301, the year of its composition (which is noted in the text), by thirty-five years. The temporal markings embedded in the poem enable us to determine that *ʿIshqnāma* was written when Ḥasan was forty-seven, seven years before he embarked on his influential compendium of the sayings of Shaykh Niẓām al-Dīn. This is a poem with an unusually specific relationship to historical time.

Setting a precedent for later Indo-Persian poets to follow, Ḥasan Dihlavī inflects this Arabo-Persian story with an Indian dimension. Significantly, he makes the unnamed couple's love affair culminate in *sati*, a Hindu practice (literally meaning "chaste" in Sanskrit), in which a widow burns herself in her deceased husband's funeral pyre.[33] The practice of *sati* has long

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been praised by Persian poets as a sign of fidelity and proof of perseverance in love. An early example is found in Amīr Khusrow, who writes: “O Khusrow! When you’re in love, don’t be inferior to a Hindu woman / who burns herself alive for a dead person.”[34] In the same vein, Amīr Khusrow writes in his *Shīrīn and Khusrow*:

> You’re not inferior to a Hindu woman here
> who burns herself alive for her dead husband.[35]

Invoking Indian themes in an Iranian environment, sixteenth-century poet Sā’ib Tabrīzī writes:

> The fire of love rages from Indian ashes:
> in this land of flames, women burn for their dead husbands.[36]

ʿIshqnāma was the first Indo-Persian romance to make *sati* into a central element of its plot. As such, this romance was a precursor to a Persian genre of poems specifically about *sati* named *Satīnāma*, the most famous examples of which are Nawʿī Kahbūshanī’s (1563-1610) *Sūz u gudāz*, written at the Mughal court, and the *Satināma* of Vārasta (also known as Bīrbal Kāchrū, composed in nineteenth-century Kashmir).[37]

As a key text in introducing Persian narrative forms to South Asia, *ʿIshqnāma* opens new vistas on the temporality of desire within Persian literature. In part through his refashioning of Persian narratives for an Indian environment in *ʿIshqnāma*, Ḥasan offered a new take on older Persian and Arabic love narratives. His Indian metaphysics of *ʿishq* developed alongside a cosmological conception of desire that brings it into closer relation with the pleasure principle of Freud (discussed below), which is likewise rooted in a worldly concept of time.

While he builds on prior Persian romances, Ḥasan also pioneers new directions for the Persian verse romance, directions which were to greatly impact the development of Indo-Persian literature. In contrast with the atemporal and ahistorical idealism that undergirds Niẓāmī’s narrative, the historicity of the Indo-Persian text is manifested in the allusion to a law issued by Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Balban in 1266, at the beginning of his reign, freeing all

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prisoners. Unlike Niẓāmī, Ḥasan's protagonists are ordinary people: the lover is a scribe—a profession the poet knew first hand in his capacity as *davāt-dār* (person in charge of royal ink, a role similar to a scribe) at the court of Balban's son, Malik Muhammad Qa'ān. Likewise, the beloved is an ordinary woman who draws water from a public well and gets married to a camel-seller. While Niẓāmī outlines a diachronic concept of love which is conditioned on passing the test of time, Ḥasan seeks the synchronic actualization of a love that does not waste itself in the hope of endurance. The new environment in which Ḥasan creates enabled him to bring together the narrative of desire—refined by Niẓāmī and other predecessors—with the desire for narrative. This desire for narrative is also a desire for time, for the worldly existence in which love unfolds.

Having offered a brief genealogy of *ʿishq* in relation to the Persian romance that circulates across the Caucasus and South Asia,[38] it is time to turn to the text of *ʿIshqnāma*. The remainder of this article dwells on Ḥasan's poem, after which it links this work to the concerns of Freud and his interpreters, and makes the case for the contemporary relevance of premodern Persian conceptions of desire as part of a wider Freudian-inspired conversation.

ʿIshqnāma: Transforming the Persian Romance

ʿIshqnāma is set in Nagaur, a northern Indian town six hundred kilometers west of his place of birth, Badaun, and an important seat of power during the Sultanate period.[39] The narrative begins when Indian youth sees a girl passing by a well, and immediately falls in love with her. As it turns out, she is already married, to a wealthy camel merchant. Like all the characters in *ʿIshqnāma*, these individuals remain unnamed as the plot unfolds, thereby underscoring their status as archetypes more than individuals.[40] The youth loses control of his senses as he falls in love and plunges into madness, becoming a true paragon of Majnūn. A group of learned Brahmans advise the youth against falling in love. The alignment of the stars, they argue, foretells that, if he successfully suppresses his love, the youth will have a fortunate life. The youth nonetheless persists in his mad love. Eventually a constable is

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informed by the girl's relative of the scandal his love is causing. The constable places the young man under arrest. The youth is imprisoned for a year following a complaint by the girl's relative, for the scandal he has brought to the family by falling in love. His beloved does not visit him while he is in prison, and he appears to have been forgotten by the world.

Finally, with the accession of Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Balban to the throne in 1266 and the issuance of a law (*ḥukm*) freeing all prisoners, the youth is released. Ḥasan here interweaves history into a fictional plot with an attention to historical detail lacking from earlier Persian verse romances. The youth rushes to the well, where he finds the girl with whom he fell in love the year prior. She is indifferent to his pleas to unite with him. He threatens to commit suicide by throwing himself in the well. Onlookers prevent him and advise him to be patient. He persists in his love for fourteen years, at the end of which she finally promises that she will soon be his, once her husband leaves on a business trip. Soon after making this promise, the girl suddenly gets sick and dies.

In keeping with Hindu practice (*rasm-i hinduvān*), her dead body is immolated in a fire. The male lover follows suit, jumps into the pyre, and they die together, like Laylī and Majnūn. Hence, we have a gender reversal: whereas *sati* was an act either performed by the woman or forced on her, in this love narrative, it is the man who performs *sati* on himself. The narrative ends with a probing reflection on the universality of love, and its relation to faith and spiritual infidelity (in the sense of deviance from Islam), in which Ḥasan replies to critics who complain about his celebration of a love story among Hindus, given their status as religious infidels. Ḥasan counters by insisting that fidelity to the beloved is not inferior to fidelity to God.

ʿIshqnāma proposes a new archetype for the Persian master narrative of love. Ḥasan's polemical engagement with *Laylī and Majnūn* begins with the very title of his text, *ʿIshqnāma.* Many poets responded to Niẓāmī's injunction to "adorn with a worthy pen / the thousand love letters [*ʿishq nāma*] hovering above" (25) from across the Persian world. Ḥasan and Amīr Khusrow were the first poets to answer Niẓāmī's call from South Asia.

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Amīr Khusrow responded by retelling Niẓāmī's stories, but switching the order of names, such as that *Laylī and Majnūn* became *Majnūn and Laylī* and *Shīrīn and Khusrow* became *Khusrow and Shīrīn*. Ḥasan followed a different path: he crafted a new narrative that incorporated a number of specific references to the Laylī-Majnūn narrative tradition and to other love narratives in his poem. For example, one verse puns on the meaning of the name Majnūn (insane):

> I am Majnūn, submissive to my Laylī
> If you're Laylī, don't make me insane (Majnūn) any more.[41]

After the young man throws himself in the fire amid a wild frenzy, Ḥasan elaborates, bringing together the stories of Laylī and Majnūn and Shīrīn and Khusrow (the reference to Farhād alludes to the sculptor who falls in love with Shīrīn in the latter story):

> One was drunk in memory of Majnūn.
> The other was singing the story of Farhād.[42]

Ḥasan emphasizes the storytelling theme by framing the poem with motifs belonging to the *sāqī-nāma* genre (describing and addressing a wine-bearer). His poem is punctuated by direct addresses to a player (*muṭrib*), a singer *(shiʿr-khān),* a wine-bearer (*sāqī*) as well as the poet himself (Ḥasan) as if during a feast. This technique gives his poem a performative dimension that is lacking in preceding Persian narratives, which typically address only the reader for the purpose of giving moral instruction. It also creates the impression that the poem was composed for the accompaniment of singers and musicians in a public storytelling event (*naqqālī*).

While he developed the Persian master narrative of love, Ḥasan also incurred another debt, to Indian storytelling traditions. As Ḥasan writes:

> I did not contrive this poetic tale by myself,
> for it is a well-known story in that land.[43]

Read literally, this verse would appear to enhance the poet's claims to independence from his Persian predecessors. Yet, notwithstanding the text's numerous framing devices that gesture towards its performative context, there is no extant Indian narrative from which Ḥasan's

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story derives. With this first Persian verse romance to be situated in an entirely Indian environment, Ḥasan created a story with a view to its subsequent appropriation by later Indo-Persian poets. Rather than rewriting a preexisting text with a fixed plot as previous poets had done, Ḥasan Dihlavī incorporated a Persian narrative (that was itself a revision of an Arabic story) into an Indian milieu. He did this while claiming that his story (*qiṣṣa*) is "well known in that land [*ān būm*]." Together with the poetry of Amīr Khusrow, this creative appropriation, which built on an imagined tradition while generating something entirely new, laid the foundations for Indo-Persian literature.

Ḥasan Dihlavī's appropriation comprises many palimpsests. Even as he invokes an Indian genealogy to distinguish his narrative from its Persian predecessors, his unusual deixis (to borrow a term from linguistic anthropology referring to words with fixed semantic meanings that vary in their denotations according to time and place) adds another interpretive layer to his text. Ḥasan traces the tale to India through the indexical "that [*ān*]." In his narration, he refrains from using "this [*īn*]," the indexical that might have been expected, given the poet's location in India. Instead, he attributes his tale to a geography the text references as foreign. This tension between the location (India) and indexical signification (India's imagined exteriority from the vantage point of Persian literature) reflects the poet's desire for his narrative to remain continuous with the preceding Persian tradition. The disjuncture also suggests a desire to submerge the author's Indic innovation within a longer Persian tradition, and to write from the vantage point of an historically prior geography.

Although the protagonists are unnamed, the narrative world of *ʿIshqnāma* is dense with historicity. In Niẓāmī's *Laylī and Majnūn*, as in earlier texts such as ʿUnsurī's *Vāmiq and ʿAdhrā* and ʿAyyūqī's *Varqa and Gulshāh*, the protagonists are given names, but their behavior and characters are less realistic and more archetypal than those of the unnamed characters of *ʿIshqnāma*. Ḥasan Dihlavī's historical orientation enables him to retain the form

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of the Persian romance while revising its content from within. As shown above, story from which this Indo-Persian love narrative was formed is genealogically rooted in pre-Islamic Arabia (as mediated to the poet through a Persian narrative tradition) even as it opens up to a newly revealed Indian world. Having completed his apprenticeship, by the time he composed *ʿIshqnāma*, Ḥasan was ready to forge a new Indian style in a new milieu.

As has been shown thus far, Ḥasan Dihlavī can claim originality on literary as well as geographic grounds. Although the master narrative he was working in was more Persian than Indic in its genealogy, the introduction of the trope of *sati* changed this balance. Ḥasan Dihlavī's love story significantly reworks Niẓāmī's master narrative, which in turn reworked an Arabic tradition. Ḥasan's position at the inauguration of Indo-Persian literature, after the Persian master narrative had already evolved for centuries, inspired him to make *ʿishq* fresh (*tāza*) again. In this way, Ḥasan's verses reveal an intersection between the desire for narrative and the narrative of desire, and an overlapping of authorial consciousness with the Persian love narrative, as in the following verse:

> I'll end the story of love
> with love, as it was first begun.[44]

This verse initiates the process through which the Indian poet revised key aspects of the classical Persian master narrative of love. Whereas Niẓāmī contrasts desire's fleeting temporality in this world to love's eternity in a world beyond time, the temporality of desire—the desire for time, which, as we will see, also preoccupied Freud—sustains Ḥasan's narrative. And yet, there are as many similarities between the two Persian poets as there are differences. In Niẓāmī's *Laylī and Majnūn*, Majnūn delivers a beautiful elegy on Laylī's tomb in which he asks her dead body how she feels as she is buried in the earth, in the darkness of the other world. For both poets, the temporality of desire is contingent. Far from seeking to displace the worldliness of desire and the creatureliness of love, as did some Sufi poets prior to him, Ḥasan

vindicates desire until his narrative's end. The dynamic of borrowing and concealment that structures the poem is evident in Ḥasan's closing invocation of his literary master, Niẓāmī. While for Niẓāmī desire is a means to overcome mortality, for Ḥasan mortality is both the origin and the goal of desire. Love, for Niẓāmī, opens up to infinite time. For Ḥasan, love testifies to the finitude of time.

From the material that had been handed down to him from the Hijaz and the Caucasus, Ḥasan Dihlavī forged a new concept of love for an Indian milieu. While Niẓāmī adapted Bedouin Arab stories to the form of the Persian romance, Ḥasan Dihlavī drew on Persian narrative traditions to probe the temporality of desire, which also led him to reflect on the dialectical role of death. Having traversed the master narrative of love across its Persian and Indo-Persian trajectories, the following sections consider how, in the hands of Ḥasan, the love/death dialectic at once extends and contests the Freudian account of the pleasure principle as a force that is forever striving to merge with the death drive.

Freud and Ḥasan Dihlavī: Beyond Faith and Infidelity

Before proceeding with our analysis of Freud and his interpreters, we should note where we stand in relationship to his strikingly original text, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.[45] Freud inaugurates this work by denying its originality. "Priority and originality are not among the aims set for psychoanalytical research," he writes, adding that "the impressions underlying the establishment of the pleasure principle are so obvious that it is hardly possible to overlook them" (*BPP*, 51). Our effort to bring an Indo-Persian verse romance into conversation with Freud would hardly have surprised him. Freud was acutely aware that poets had trod the ground he was traversing for many centuries prior to him. Indeed, given his idiosyncratic denomination of Plato as a "poet-philosopher" (*BPP*, 95) and his efforts to conjoin Plato's account of the origins of human sexuality in the *Symposium* with the ruminations of the *Upanishads*, it seems likely that Freud would have found

precedents for his views in the Persian tradition as well. Perhaps not accidentally, Freud directly links his investigation into the pleasure principle with the Arabo-Persian narrative tradition when he concludes his treatise with a citation from the *Maqāmāt* (Assemblies) of al-Harīrī of Basra (d. 1122), in the German translation of Rückert:

> *Was man nicht erfliegen kann, muß man erhinken.*
> *Die Schrift sagt, es ist keine Sünde zu hinken.*
> (*BPP*, 99)[46]

> When we can’t fly we must limp.
> Scripture states that limping is no sin.

Given this citational trail introduced by Freud himself, our introduction of the relevant Persian intertexts can be seen as a continuation of Freud’s inquiry. Further, this dialogue between two traditions enables us to place Freud’s teaching in a framework it has not been situated within before, and thereby to uncover hidden dimensions of his account of human drives. Ultimately, it should be remembered that Freud was writing, not just about the pleasure principle, but also—and crucially—*beyond* it. Similarly to Freud’s conception of the unconscious as timeless (*Zeitlos*, *BPP* 69), the Persian master narrative of love locates *ʿishq* outside our temporal condition. This is the case for both Niẓāmī and Ḥasan Dihlavī, albeit in subtly different ways.

Ḥasan’s paean to *ʿishq* culminates in an epilogue (*tatimma*) that daringly situates desire outside conventional libidinal economies, notably including those associated with religious orthodoxy. This epilogue functions as a kind of counterpoint to *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*: it takes the concept of the “beyond” further than Freud was able to do within the confines of his psychoanalytical framework. The poet declares that he has adorned his narrative with love. Whereas the poem began by repeating prior formulations from the Persian literary canon, here the poet, speaking in an idiom that places special emphasis on the transgressive aspects of love, situates *ʿishq* outside the meanings of faith (*dīn*) and infidelity (*kufr*):

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> If you ask why this verse was composed,
> If you suggest that the exposition of infidel love is a mistake,
> [I'll say:] Not every tongue can express love;
> There's no harm if it is told by someone with a lively heart.
> A tongue can be moistened by a hundred springs.
> But love is a different sea.
> A lover's work is a matter of life and death.
> That meaning is beyond faith and infidelity.[47]

Moving from the temporal to the spatial, these verses pivot on a distinction between spring and sea. The poet says that you can moisten your tongue with springs (*chashma*) but not with the sea (love), which exists in a different temporal realm. This is the realm that Freud describes as *Zeitlos* (timeless). Julia Kristeva's comment on Freud is apposite here. "Freudian temporality," writes Kristeva, "relies on the linear time of consciousness in order to inscribe a rift there, a breach, a frustration: this is the scandal of the timeless (*Zeitlos*)."[48] As we will see, the scandal of the timeless is also the scandal of the text that looks both into and beyond the pleasure principle, gazing, on the back of its own literary tradition, into the hereafter. When read as a preposition, *jenseits*, the key term in the title of Freud's text, signifies "beyond" in the temporal and spatial sense. When read as a noun, this word can also be translated by "hereafter." In the meaning of "hereafter," *jenseits* references the world after death, outside the coordinates of space and time. In terms of this Persian poem, the temporality of *Zeitlos* confounds distinctions between faith (*dīn*) and religious infidelity (*kufr*) that undergird the social-theological order.

The difference between springs (*chashma*) and sea (*daryā*) can also be understood in terms of the difference between the one and the many. The sea is where all springs flow into and merge together. This is the realm of undifferentiated wholeness. While springs are described as differentiated and representable—tongues are able to describe a hundred springs—the sea remains beyond expression. Unlike springs that can be tasted cursorily, the sea calls for a deeper engagement, for plunging, not with your tongue but with life itself. Love is the sea where life and death merge, self and other, swimmer and the sea, the faithful

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lover and the infidel. Ḥasan identifies the lover's job as losing their life; this identification opens love up onto the timelessness of death.

In Ḥasan's epilogue, desire is a sea (*daryā*) that bestows life (*jān*), even on the dead. At the conclusion of the poem, we encounter a new narrative, and a new way of thinking about love. His story is bounded on all sides by *ʿishq*, just as love and desire are bounded on all sides by mortality. At the same time, there is also an atemporal realm that engages both Ḥasan and Freud, which is outside (*bīrūn*) the everyday realm in the Persian poem and beyond (*jenseits*) everyday existence in the German treatise. In this outside, *ʿishq* negates death, while also, paradoxically, achieving its fulfillment. *ʿIshq* thereby inculcates a unique relationship to time, a rupture in the fabric of everyday existence.

Ḥasan repeatedly states that his narrative originates in love, including love between non-Muslims:

> The story of love refreshes the soul (*jān*).
> He who does not lose his life (*jān*) is not in love.[49]

The self-immolation of Ḥasan's protagonists—the manifestation of their death drive—is devoid of meaning until it is incorporated into his master narrative for *ʿishq*, which epitomizes both love and desire. While mortality drives the Persian master narrative, it also opens up *ʿishq* into the radical atemporality of the "hereafter" of the pleasure principle, as delineated by Freud. In this hereafter, mortality achieves immortality through love, even at the cost of dying.

Ḥasan articulates his credo shortly after the young lover joins his beloved on the pyre. Just as Niẓāmī interjects his poetic persona into his narrative following the deaths of his heroes Laylī and Majnūn, so does Ḥasan address his reader once his protagonists are dead. These addresses are clustered around the concept of *jān*, a term that means "soul," "life," and "self." The poet first uses *jān* in the sense of "self" to emphasize the inevitability of death:

> We struggle so that this precious self [*jān*]

> will leave this body, clean or unclean.[50]

He then turns to *jān* in the meaning of "life":

> When life [*jān*] departs, what will come of the wailing body?
> When the donkey falls, what will come of the saddle?[51]

Turning to *jān* as "soul," the poet declares:

> For us, what pleases the heart
> is this soul [*jān*] in conflict.[52]

The three meanings of *jān*—as "soul," "life," and "self,"—in these verses are so closely intertwined that their separation in translation entails a kind of falsification, for even when *jān* in the meaning of "life" is opposed to the mortal body, the meaning of "life" is extended by this opposition. The tripartite signification makes *jān* untranslatable into languages like English, wherein "soul" and "life" map onto a mind/body dichotomy that posits the material realm as being beyond redemption. In Persian Sufi thought, the boundaries between the material and the spiritual are more fluid. In this regard, the structure of meaning that informs Freud's *jenseits*—both in the sense of hereafter and beyond—is closely reflected in the Persian concept of *jān.*

Having traced the temporal coordinates of desire in the Persian verse romance, we will now consider Ḥasan Dihlavī's narratology in terms of the oscillation between the pleasure principle and the death drive. Such an inquiry will assist in documenting how the Persian romance conceptualized love as a rupture in the fabric of everyday existence. In this way, both Freud and Ḥasan help us to see how "the radical metapsychology of the hereafter undercuts the merely prosaic psychotherapy of everyday life."[53] Stated otherwise, just as Freud helps us understand the workings of love in Persian poetry, so does Ḥasan help us discern the poetics of the "hereafter" that Freud hoped to bring to the fore with his reflection on the pleasure principle.

Love Beyond Mere Desire

Although there is a tension between Freud's pleasure principle and Ḥasan Dihlavī's

master narrative of *ʿishq*, their shared preoccupation with timelessness also brings their views into alignment. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud countered Spinoza's insistence (in the *Ethics*) that death is external to life, a postulate Spinoza expressed in the formula "nothing can be destroyed except by an external cause."[54] Rejecting Spinoza's postulate, Freud conceptualized death as internal to the life instinct. "Everything living dies for reasons internal to life itself," insisted Freud, countering Spinoza's figuration of death as a purely destructive force. Whereas Spinoza opposed death to life, Freud argued that "the aim of all life is death [*das Ziel alles Lebens ist der Tod*]."[55]

Although superficially they appear to be opposed to each other, Freud's pleasure principle and death drive constitute a single process. The dialectic leading from love to death is relational, and Ḥasan Dihlavī reworks the Persian master narrative of *ʿishq* to reveal their intertwinement. Both authors provoke the following question: if pleasure is primarily regressive in that it seeks to return to its original state of non-being, does not this orientation suggest that life is always necessarily on the path towards death? Paul Ricoeur's gloss on Freud's pleasure principle further illuminates this question: "if death is the aim of life, all of life's organic developments are but detours toward death, and the so-called conservative instincts are but the organism's attempts to defend its fashion of dying, its particular path to death."[56] If in Freud we have an account of life as a striving towards death, in the Persian narrative of *ʿishq* we have an account of the life that is born from the drive towards death. The death instinct generates the life instinct, and also calls on us to account for it.

The pursuit of death through life, which is interchangeable with the pursuit of life through death, inculcates the unique relationship to time that we witness in the theorizations of both Freud and Ḥasan Dihlavī. *ʿIshq* functions in the Persian love narrative as the pleasure principle functions in Freud's account of psychic life. While Freud's unconscious drives exist outside time, Ḥasan situates *ʿishq* beyond dichotomies of faith (*dīn*) and infidelity (*kufr*)

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(580), as well as, by implication, beyond the European dichotomy of love versus desire. The differential temporal relations also carry ethical implications: those who experience the death drive and *ʿishq* in their fullness are also liberated from the shackles of everyday morality, just as they are freed from everyday time.

As commentators have noted, the non-trivial duplication of meaning in the title of Freud's treatise—*jenseits* in the sense both of "beyond" and "hereafter," which functions analogously with Ḥasan's polysemic use of *jān*—"betrays the heady thrust of [Freud's] thinking."[57] That, in his English-language correspondence, Freud referred to the work that is today universally translated as *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* by the title *The Hereafter*, thereby complicating the translation of *jenseits* as "beyond," is significant for grasping Freud's conception of the temporality of desire and of its relationship to mortal life. Freud's concept of unconscious mental processes as *Zeitlos* (timeless) underpins his overall effort to transcend time.[58]

When Ḥasan locates *ʿishq* beyond faith and infidelity in his epilogue, he reorders the temporality of the Persian romance. While fidelity, as used in *ʿIshqnāma*, implies a timeless relationship to the object of desire, the infidel relates to love as to something that is subject to expiration. Far from opposing faith and infidelity, or using one to cancel out the other, Ḥasan Dihlavī uses *ʿishq* to replace the dualistic cosmology that reduces our beings to our mortal existence. He was surely assisted in his shift towards a pluralistic metaphysics by the Indian Sufism of his teacher Niẓām al-Dīn, that rejects absolute distinctions between death and life.

In an anecdote (*ḥikāyat*) that occurs near the end of *ʿIshqnāma*, the poet condenses the moral of his love story in allegorical form. The Ghaznavid king Maḥmūd is out hunting. Suddenly, he finds himself abandoned by his servants who have left in search of the shadow of the *humā* bird, which was thought to bring worldly happiness and kingdom. Surprised to see only his beloved servant, Ayāz, still with him, the king proposes that he leave him, as the

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others have done, in order to pursue happiness beneath the shadow of the *humā*. Ayāz replies that he is already in the shadow of the happiness of the king's love and then proceeds to advise the king on the impermanence of worldly desire:

> You trusted the world.
> You submitted your soul [*jān*] to it.
> while it intends to loot you,
> holding the rope around your neck.[59]

The impermanence of creaturely existence does not undermine *ʿishq* in Ḥasan's metaphysics. Pleasure consists in locating *ʿishq* both within and beyond worldly existence and in redeeming the soul (*jān*) of all desire for permanence. As he asks in the epilogue:

> Why attach your heart to the world and what exists in it?
> Seek the door of God and be free of begging at all other doors.[60]

In the act of revising Niẓāmī's love narrative for an Indian milieu, *ʿIshqnāma* traverses life and death with the same vigor with which it crosses geographies and temporalities. It subverts previous love narratives to offer what contemporary Swedish philosopher Martin Hägglund has termed a "chronolibidinal" account of human longing which locates "the fundamental drama of libidinal being *in the very bond to temporal life*."[61]

As Hägglund's chronolibidinal reading method aims to expose, the negation of temporality shifts the desire for another to the fear of our mortal selves. Meanwhile, the Persian love narrative interrupts the everyday progression of time in order to deploy *jān* in multiple significations, as a soul (inhabited by a mortal self), as life, and as self. In the above-quoted verses, *jān* is said to be precious (*khatarnāk*), and untethered to the body. Then, *jān* is contrasted to the body, as when the donkey—meaning the human body—falls and dies. Like the pleasure principle, which, in seeking absorption by another, also seeks its own mortality (*BPP*, 79), *jān* is *birūn* (outside) our mortal flesh, while also abiding within it. These uses of *jān* inject an otherworldly concept (the soul, analogous to Freud's conception of unconscious mental processes, which on his account are timeless) into a temporal realm (life), in parallel with the broader reframing of *ʿishq* that permeates this verse romance. In this way, *ʿIshqnāma*

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aligns life, soul, and self, the three core meanings of *jān* in classical Persian.

Hägglund argues that that "the fundamental trauma of libidinal being is that pain and loss are part of what we desire, pain and loss being integral to what makes anything desirable in the first place" (152). *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *ʿIshqnāma* both process this trauma by engaging with timelessness. *Jān* (as soul, life, and self) and *ʿishq* inhabit the same chronolibidinal domain, beyond the pleasure principle, yet also in dialogue with it. Even if love cannot arrest its progress, it can redirect its movement, towards the generation of life rather than in a cataclysmic rush towards death. It is through such subtle dialectics that the play of love, desire, and death in *ʿIshqnāma* bear the traces of Freud's most profound insights. While death clarifies the purpose of life in *ʿIshqnāma*'s master narrative, life (as *jān*) is also generated amid this striving towards death. It comes to constitute the transcendence of this poem, its rupture in the fabric of time. In biological terms, love is epiphenomenal; reformulating this insight for Persian poetics, we can say that *ʿishq*—as both love and desire—is a miracle that violates the natural order of things, and an epiphany that arrests the movement of time.

While its elucidation of the European literary canon has been widely praised, Hägglund's chronolibidinal method falls short when it is tasked to reveal the process through which we become vested in the objects of our affection, particularly when this process is viewed through the lens of the Persian romance. In particular, Hägglund's relational account of desire as a principle doubly structured by the fear of time (*chronophobia*) and the yearning for time (*chronophilia*) remains tethered to a temporal realm that both Freud and Ḥasan Dihlavī have broken through. Hägglund stipulates that the chronolibidinal economy "cannot be aligned with a teleological principle" because the "investment in survival does not itself have any given aim or direction" (13). Yet neither he nor Freud fully account for the genesis of love from within desire.

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Does it follow from Hägglund's compelling insistence that "only something that is subject to the possibility of loss—and hence temporal—can give one a reason to care" (9-10), that vulnerability to loss is the actual *source* of our desire? Do we love our mortal others not for their intrinsic qualities but for their fleetingness? Even if it is accepted that fleetingness is intrinsic to the desired object, can this dynamic exhaust the qualities that condition and inform our love? Hägglund writes as if death could of itself sustain desire, without requiring any other quality to give it life. Crudely stated, would we be speaking the truth if we were to tell those who figure most profoundly into our intimate lives: "I love you *because* you will die" rather than, "I love you because of who you are while alive"?

The chronolibidinal reduction of love to death thus fails to capture love's singular relation to time. We are left in need of an account that captures how love is experienced as a *surplus* to contingency—as a rupture in the fabric of every existence—rather than as its mere waste product. When love interrupts our lives, it also in overcomes—more precisely, it transforms—the death drive. To the extent that we only love because of mortality we love without specificity, since mortality is shared by everyone. However, experience suggests that a chronolibinidal condition is a necessary but insufficient condition for love: a loved other must be mortal to be loved but also must be distinguished by features other than mortality.

The chronolibinidal method critiques the chronophobic account of desire that reduces the pleasure principle to the death drive and thereby negates creaturely existence. Yet, in reducing love to desire—a sleight of hand more likely to occur in a European tradition that, unlike Persian, does not hold both concepts in tension by combining them in a single word, *ʿishq*—the chronolibinidal method fails to fully delineate the source, genesis, and *raison d'être* of love. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* teaches that the goal of life is death, but it does so without indicating the reasons for life's emergence. Meanwhile, *ʿIshqnāma* pioneers a new path, which, as the author puts it, lies "beyond faith and infidelity." Ḥasan engages with

ʿishq, not as a subordinate reflex of the drive towards death, but as a force that inverts the relation between the pleasure principle and the death drive, revealing love as a miracle that stands just as much in need of explanation as death.

"What fights against death is not something internal to life," Ricoeur explains in glossing Freud; rather it is "the combination of two mortal substances" (291). Desire is the result of two living entities having entered into a codependent relationship. Unlike the death drive, which absorbs life into itself, the pleasure principle imagines its own transcendence, insofar as it can access that which is timeless. Pleasure contradicts death not by constituting its mirror image, as with life, but by functioning as death's singular negation. Whereas the death instinct fights only for itself, the pleasure principle fights against death through an Other. Whereas the death instinct is structured singularly, the pleasure principle is structured as a duality; it exists only in relation to something else. This dualistic relation bears clear structural similarities with the Persian concept of *ʿishq*.

Beyond the Pleasure Principle offers insights into the concept of 'death' as intrinsically double. Death is typically conceived of as that which makes life finite, and which limits the life of an organism. Freud rejects the certainty of death as formulated in the proposition "all living matter must die from internal causes" (82). He believes that the view of death as an "inexorable law of nature" and "the sublime *Ananke* [Necessity]" is only "one of the illusions which we have created for ourselves *um die Schwere des Daseins zu ertragen* [to bear the weight of existence]" (82). Death could be, according to Freud, ascribed to "a chance event which could conceivably have been avoided" (82). In other words, it could be something external, in the way that primitive humans, according to Freud, believed in death only as an exterior "influence of an enemy or evil spirit": "the mortal half is the body in the narrower sense, the soma, which alone is subject to natural death. The gametes, by contrast, are potentially immortal: under certain favorable conditions they can develop into a new individual, or in other words, surround

themselves with a new soma" (83). While for Freud, "soma" is doomed to die, there is an immortal aspect to any living organism concerned with its reproduction. For Freud, sex drives relate to death as a protection against the vulnerability of life. Hence, Freud is dissatisfied with the "sharp distinction" between "ego drives" which press toward death and "sex drives" which press toward the prolongation of life (81). While ego drives "arise from the animation of the inanimate matter and seek to re-establish inanimacy" (81), sexual instincts are directed by external stimuli, towards the pleasure of the Other.

In revising the master narrative of the Persian romance, Ḥasan Dihlavī did more than perform an act of cultural transference from the Caucasus to South Asia. By Indicizing Persian (and Arabic) conceptions of *ʿishq*, Ḥasan introduced a metaphysics of love—and of desire—that keeps faith with finitude. This master narrative was to have a long afterlife in Indian Sufism and in Indo-Persian poetics. Placing *ʿishq* above faith—or rather regarding it as faith's highest manifestation—Ḥasan Dihlavī showed how binaries between self and other recapitulate the pleasure principle that anticipates its own annihilation. Contesting the solipsistic vision conveyed to him by conventional dichotomies between faith (*dīn*) and infidelity (*kufr*), Ḥasan Dihlavī used desire to deconstruct metaphysical binaries. When he reimagined *ʿishq* in a way that would save creaturely existence from its metaphysical negation, Ḥasan revealed its timelessness, which is also its timeliness: its ability to interrupt the flow of everyday life. By making the work of *ʿishq* congruent with the work of the soul, of the self, and of life itself, Ḥasan Dihlavī showed how love creates life from nothingness, and desire from death, in a mortal world.

Conceiving *ʿishq* beyond faith and infidelity, the Indo-Persian narrative of love and desire articulated in *ʿIshqnāma* enables readers today to see beyond the modern biological reduction of love to the pleasure principle, and to witness love's ability to arrest the death drive. Psychoanalysis has long acknowledged the role of finitude in shaping desire's psychic

life. Anticipating Freud centuries earlier in a way that only a poet could do, Ḥasan Dihlavī foregrounded the longing for another as a form of experience that outlives the body while also living within it. When read through the lens of its Indo-Persian reworking, the Persian romance develops the Freudian dialectic of death and desire, steering it in directions contemporary theories of love have yet to traverse, and stimulating us to see how love can become the fulfillment, rather than a negation, of our mortal existence.

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* This article constitutes the beginning of our work on Ḥasan Dihlavī's *ʿIshqnāma*, which will include a critical bilingual edition of this work, based on manuscripts to which we did not have access at the time of this writing (see n41), to be entitled: *Tale of a Lover from Naguar: A Medieval Persian Romance by Hasan of Delhi*. We would like to thank the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under ERC-2017-STG Grant Agreement No 759346 for supporting this research. We would also like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their feedback. Persian and Arabic words have been transliterated according to a modified version of the IJMES system, except for modern (twentieth- and twenty-first-century) persons and places, which have been spelled according to their contemporary pronunciations. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are our own.

[1] There is no exact equivalent in Persian for the genre we refer to as "verse romance" (following, among other scholars, Julie Scott Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014], 77). All Persian verse romances discussed here were composed in the *masnavī* (rhyming couplet) form, but this denomination captures only the genre's metrical form, not its thematic content. For further reflections on the verse romance genre, see Kayvan Tahmasebian and Rebecca Ruth Gould, "The Translatability of Love: The Romance Genre and the Prismatic Reception of *Jane Eyre* in Twentieth-Century Iran," *Close Reading a Global Novel: Prismatic Jane Eyre,* ed. Matthew Reynolds (Cambridge: Open Books, 2021). In Persian, see Jalal Sattari, *Ḥālāt-i ʿishq-i majnūn* (Tehran: Tus, 2006) and

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Hasan Zolfaqari, *Yikṣad manẓūma-yi ʿāshiqāna-yi fārsī* (Tehran: Charkh, 2013).

[2] Scholarship on Ḥasan Dihlavī is scarce and his *ʿIshqnāma* has been almost entirely ignored. See however the first discussion of this work in English: M.I. Borah, "A Short Account of an Unpublished Romantic Masnavī of Amir Ḥasan Dihlavī," *New Indian Antiquary* 2 (1939-40): 258-62, and more recently Parvindokht Mashhur, "Barrasī va tahlīl-i *ʿIshqnāma*-yi Amīr Ḥasan Sijzī Dehlavī," *Faslnāma-yi tahqīqāt-i adabī* 2.1 (2010): 165-178. Pranav Prakash's PhD dissertation, "Reimagining Sufi Poetics in South Asia: The Literary Works of Ḥasan Sijzī Dihlavī" (University of Iowa, 2020), also offers a wealth of resources.

[3] For an exploration of these themes in German literature that has helped to shape our understanding, see Eric L. Santner, *On Creaturely Life: Rilke, Benjamin, Sebald* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

[4] This schematic formulation should not be taken to imply that the panegyric as such ceased to dominate literary culture. Scholarship on the late medieval and early modern *qaṣīda* (such as Michael Glünz, "Poetic Tradition and Social Change: The Persian Qasida in Post-Mongol Iran," in *Classical Traditions and Modern Meanings*, ed. Stefan Sperl and Christopher Shackle [Leiden: Brill, 1996], 183-204) shows that this is not the case. We are however alluding to the emergence of new genres, oriented to the poet's subjective self.

[5] For an account of medieval Badaun, the town of his birth, see K. A. Nizami, *Tarikhi Maqalat* (Nadwatul Mussennefeen: Delhi, 1965), 39-44. The biographical details that follow are taken from M.I. Borah, *The life and works of Amir Hasan Dihlavi: a thesis on the famous Persian literateur Amir Hasan Dihlavi, 1253-1328 A.D., based on original Persian sources & approved for the Ph. D. Degree in the University of London* (Guwahati, Assam: Govt. of India in the Dept. of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, 2001).

[6] Żiyāʾ al-Dīn Baranī, *Tārīkh-i fīrūzshāhī,* ed. Sayyid Ahmad Khan (Calcutta, 1862), 359-60.

[7] For Ḥasan's *ghazals* and the *malfūẓāt* translated into English see, respectively, *After*

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Tomorrow the Days Disappear: Ghazals and Other Poems of Hasan Sijzi of Delhi, trans. Rebecca Ruth Gould (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2016) and *Morals for the Heart: Conversations of Shaykh Nizam ad-din Awliya*, trans. Bruce B. Lawrence (New York: Paulist Press, 1992).

[8] ʿAbd al-Haqq Muhaddith, *Muṣannifīn wa muṣannifāt-i hind*, Nadwat al-Ulama Library Lucknow, ms. no. 70, p. 8.

[9] For further background on Akbar's support for Indian literature, see Audrey Truschke, *Culture of Encounters: Sanskrit at the Mughal Court* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

[10] گیتی که نشیمن زوال است

آسوده دلی در او محال است

ماتمکده ایست تیره و تنگ

در وی ز وفا نه بوی نی رنگ

ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, *Bahāristān*, ed. Esmaʿil Hakemi (Tehran: Ettelaʿat, 2013), 106.

[11] For these influences, see the introduction to Ḥasan's *Dīvān*, ed. Salomatshoeva (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1990), 19.

[12] Mohammad Reza Shafiʿi Kadkani, *Ṣuvar-i khayāl dar shiʿr-i fārsī* (Tehran: Agah, 1996), 604.

[13] Ali Akbar Dehkhoda, *Lughat-nāma*, vol. 10 (Tehran: Mo'assesa-ye enteshārāt va chap-e daneshgāh-i Tehrān, 1998), 15900.

[14] Shahāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī, *Majmūʿa muṣannafāt-i shaykh-i ishrāq*, vol.3, ed. Sayyed Hossein Nasr (Tehran: Pazhuheshgah-e ʿolum-e ensani, 1993), 287.

[15] Ruzbihān Baqlī Shīrāzī, *Sharḥ-i shaṭḥiyāt*, ed. Henry Corbin (Tehran: Anjoman-e Iranshenasi-ye faranseh dar tehran, 1981), 2.

[16] Aḥmad Ghazālī, *Sawāniḥ al-ʿushāq*, edited by Nasr-allah Pourjavadi (Tehran: Entesharat-e

bonyad-e farhang-e Iran, 1980), 29.

[17] Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Dāvūd, *Al-Zuhra*, vol. 2, ed. Ibrahim Samirā'i (al-Zarqa', Jordan: Maktaba al-minar, 1985), 117.

[18] Henry Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, trans. Liadain Sherrard (London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1993), 199.

[19] The Arabic version is examined in I. Iu. Krachkovskii, *Laylī va Majnūn: pazhūhishī dar rīsha-hā-yi tārīkhī va talkhīṣ va sharḥ-i Laylī va Majnūn-i Niẓāmī* trans. Kamel Aḥmadnezhad (Tehran: Zavvar, 1997).

[20] For a magisterial study of the meanings of *majnūn* in Islamic culture, see Michael Dols, *Majnun: The Madman in Medieval Islamic Society*, ed. Diana E. Immisch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

[21] For a recent edition of Qays' poetry, see *Dīwān al-ʿUdhrīyīn: Jamīl ibn Maʿmar, Qays ibn al-Mulawwaḥ Qays ibn Dharīḥ* (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1992).

[22] Some of these versions are discussed in G. Iu. Aliev, *Temy i siuzhety Nizami v literaturakh narodov Vostoka* (Moscow: Nauka, 1985) and M. D. Kazymov, *Posledovateli Nizami: k problemam nazire v persoiazychnoi literature XIII-XVI vv.* (Baku: Azerbaidzhanskoe gos. izd-vo, 1991).

[23] Hasan Zolfaqari, "Muqāyesa-yi chār ravāyat-i laylī va majnūn: Niẓamī, Amīr Khusrow, Jāmī va Maktabī," *Pajūhish-hā-yi zabān va adabiyāt-i fārsī* I (2009): 61. For a close reading of Niẓāmī's text, see Ali Asghar Seyed-Gohrab, *Laylī and Majnūn: Love, Madness and Mystic Longing in Nezami's Epic Romance* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

[24] این آیت اگر چه هست مشهور

تفسیر نشاط هست ازو دور

افزار سخن نشاط و ناز است

زین هر دو سخن بهانه ساز است

بر شیفتگی و بند و زنجیر

باشد سخن برهنه دلگیر

(*LM* 27)

References to Niẓāmī's *Laylī and Majnūn* are to Vol. 2 of *Kullīyāt-i Niẓāmī Ganjavī*, ed. Hasan Vahid Dastgerdi (Tehran: Zavvar, 1388/2009-10), and are abbreviated as *LM*.

[25] See further Kayvan Tahmasebian and Rebecca Ruth Gould, "The Translatability of Love." For wide-ranging discussions of *ʿishq* in Middle Eastern literatures past and present (albeit without detailed discussion of the narrative genre focused on here), see Pernilla Myrne, *Female sexuality in the early medieval Islamic world: gender and sex in Arabic literature* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2020) and *The Beloved in Middle Eastern Literatures: The Culture of Love and Languishing*, ed. Alireza Korangy, Hanadi al-Samman, and Michael C. Beard (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017).

[26] All references are to *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, ed. Todd Dufresne, trans. Gregory C. Richter (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2011), and are abbreviated in the text as *BPP*. When citing from the German edition we refer to Sigmund Freud, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* in *Studienausgabe*, Bd. 3: *Psychologie des Unbewußten*, ed. Alexander Mitscherlich, Angela Richards, and James Strachey (Frankfurt: Fischer Verlag: 2000).

[27] در خاک مپیچ کو غباریست

با طبع مساز کو شراریست

(*LM* 266)

[28] Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, tr. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1961), 55.

[29] گر مرگ رسد چرا هراسم

کان راه بتست می‌شناسم

این مرگ نه، باغ و بوستانست

کو راه سرای دوستانست

تا چند کنم ز مرگ فریاد

چون مرگ ازوست مرگ من باد

گر بنگرم آنچنان که رایست

این مرگ نه مرگ نقل جایست

از خوردگهی به خوابگاهی

وز خوابگهی به بزم شاهی

خوابی که به بزم تست راهش

گردن نکشم ز خوابگاهش

(*LM* 8)

[30] خفتند به ناز تا قیامت

برخاست ز راهشان ملامت

بودند در این جهان به یک عهد

خفتند در آن جهان به یک مهد

(*LM* 268)

[31] گریان شد و تلخ تلخ بگریست

بی گریه تلخ در جهان کیست

(*LM* 254)

[32] عشقی که نه عشق جاودانیست

بازیچه شهوت جوانیست

عشق آن باشد که کم نگردد

تا باشد از این قدم نگردد

آن عشق نه سرسری خیالست

کورا ابد الابد زوالست

مجنون که بلند نام عشقست

از معرفت تمام عشقست

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(*LM* 78)

[33] For *sati* and the polemics relating to this practice, see Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

[34] خسروا در عشق‌بازی کم ز هندو زن مباش

کز برای مرده سوزد زنده جان خویش را

Amīr Khusrow, *Kulliyāt-i ghazaliyāt,* vol.1, ed. Iqbal Salah al-Din (Lahore: Packages Ltd., 1975), 581. For later Persian poets on *sati*, see Yunus Jaffery, "Satī dar shi'r-i Sā'ib-i Tabrīzī," *Armaghān-i adab* (Tehran: Mawqufat-e Doktor Mahmud Afshar, 1376/1997), 284-89.

[35] نئی کم زان زن هندو درینکوی

که خود را زنده سوزد بر سر شوی

Amīr Khusruw Dihlavī*, Shīrīn and Khusrow*, ed. Ghazanfar Aliev (Moscow: Anstitu Melal-e Asia-yi, 1961), 40.

[36] آتش عشق ز خاکستر هند است بلند

زن در این شعله ستان بر سر شوهر سوزد

Sā'ib Tabrīzī, *Dīvān* vol. 4, ed. Mohammad Ghahreman (Tehran: Elmi farhangi, 1367), 1644.

[37] The latter is discussed and translated in Girdhari Lal Tikku, "Satīnāma of Vārasta," *History of Religions* 7.2 (1967): 95-111. Sunil Sharma offers a close reading of *Sūz u gudāz* in "Novelty, Tradition and Mughal Politics in Nau'i's *Suz u Gudaz*," in *The Necklace of the Pleiades: Studies in Persian*: *Studies in Persian Literature Presented to Heshmat Moayyad on His 80th Birthday*, ed. Franklin Lewis and Sunil Sharma (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 251-65.

[38] Such trajectories of circulation are more fully explored in Rebecca Ruth Gould, "The Geographies of *ʿAjam*: The Circulation of Persian Poetry from South Asia to the Caucasus," *The Medieval History Journal* 18(1): 87-119.

[39] For background on this city, see B. S. Mathur, "Side Lights on the Medieval History of

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Nagaur," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 28 (1966): 139-144.

[40] The protagonists of *Sūz u gudāz* are also unnamed. For the relation between the two texts, which is less related to their plot than to their blending of Indian and Persian themes and their focus on *sati*, see Zabihollah Safa, *Tārikh-i adabiyāt dar īrān* (Tehran: Firdaws, 1364/1985), v.5: 2, 887.

[41] منم مجنون مطیع لیلی خویش

اگر لیلی تویی مجنون منم بیش

(564)

All references to *ʿIshqnāma* are taken from *Dīvān-i Ḥasan Sijzī Dihlavī: sada-yi haftum va hashtum*, ed. Ahmad Beheshti Shirazi and Hamid Reza Qelich Khani (Tehran: Anjoman-e Asar va Mafakher-e Farhangi, 2004), 557-580, with corrections to the Persian given there based on MS. Ouseley 122 (*Divān-i Ḥasan-i Dihlavī*, held in Oxford University's Bodleian Library). The problems with this edition will be explored in our forthcoming critical edition.

[42] یکی در یاد مجنون مست میراند

یکی افسانه فرهاد میخواند

(576)

[43] نه از خود کردم این افسانه منظو م

که مشهوراست این قصه درآن بوم

(580)

[44] حدیث عشق کز سر تازه شد باز

بعشق آرایم انجامش چو آغاز

(580)

[45] While we are not aware of any sustained reflection on Freud in the Persian tradition, Omnia El Shakry has carefully examined the influence of Freud modern Arabic thought by examining

translations of Freud into Arabic. See her book *The Arabic Freud: Psychoanalysis and Islam in Modern Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017) as well as her brief reflection on the affinities between Freud and premodern Sufi thought in "Every Sufi master is, in a sense, a Freudian psychotherapist," *Aeon* (17 Apr 2018).

[46] This translation corresponds to the Arabic text published in Ḥarīrī*, Les séances de Hariri: publiées en arabe avec un commentaire choisi*, ed. Antoine Isaac Silvestre de Sacy, Joseph Toussaint Reinaud, and Joseph Derenbourg (Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1853), 2: 38.

[47] کس ار گوید که این گفتن چرا بود

بیان عشق بی دینان خطا بود

بیان عشق کار هر زبان نیست

چو قایل زنده‌دل باشد زیان نیست

توان کردن بصد چشمه زبان تر

ولیکن عشق دریایست دیگر

شعار عاشقی کاریست جانی

ز کفر و دین برون است این معانی

(580)

[48] Julia Kristeva, *Intimate Revolt*, Volume 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 30.

[49] حدیث عشق خود جان می‌نوازد

نبازد عشق هر کو جان نبازد

(This *bayt* is not found in MS. Ouseley 122).

[50] در آن کوشیم این جان خطرناک

برآید زین تن ناپاک یا پاک

(576)

[51] چو جان رفت از تن نالان چه خیزد

چو خر افتاد از پالان چه خیزد

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(576)

[52] بر ما آنچه دل را می‌کند خوش

همین جانست آن هم در کشاکش

(576)

[53] Todd Dufresne, "Introduction," in Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2011), 16.

[54] Benedictus Spinoza, *Ethics: with The Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect and Selected Letters*, ed. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1992), 107 (Part 3, Proposition 4).

[55] Sigmund Freud, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* in *Studienausgabe*, Bd. 3: *Psychologie des Unbewußten*, ed. Alexander Mitscherlich, Angela Richards, and James Strachey (Frankfurt: Fischer Verlag: 2000), 248.

[56] Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 290.

[57] Dufresne, "Introduction," 15.

[58] E. Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth, 1957), 43.

[59] امین خویش دانستی جهان را

بدو دادی امانت نقد جان را

همه در بند غارت کردن توست

سر رشته‌اش طناب گردن توست

(577)

[60] به دنیا آنچه در وی دل چه بستی

در حق گیر از درها برستی

(577)

[61] See Martin Hägglund, *Dying for Time: Proust, Woolf, Nabokov* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard

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University Press, 2012), 13 (emphasis in the original).