

Rūmī's Antinomian Poetic Philosophy

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Abstract

Western reception of Rūmī in the last few decades is intriguing, as he is commonly considered a gentle Muslim, different from other sages that Islamic culture produced. Rūmī's otherness is often based on his powerful and peerless poetry, deploying rich wine imagery, homoerotic love metaphors, and an emphasis on the superiority of the heart and spiritual growth, and dismissing the outward and orthodox tenets. This paper argues that Rūmī belongs to a millennium-old Persian Sufism, and these poetic tropes derive from a firm antinomian tradition, functioning as strong metaphors to express religious piety by transcending all temporal dualities such as unbelief and belief, the profane and the sacred, purity and impurity, and so forth.

Keywords

love mysticism – piety – Persian poetry – transgression – pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*) – Qalandar – reception

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تا مدرسه و مناره ویران نشود
اسباب قلندری بسامان نشود
تا ایمان کفر و کفر ایمان نشود
یک بنده حق به حق مسلمان نشود

So long as Madrasa and minaret are not destroyed,
The Qalandarī accoutrements will not be in order.

So long as belief has not turned into disbelief and disbelief into belief,
A servant of God will not truly be a Muslim.¹



1 Introduction²

The antinomian motifs in Rūmī's *oeuvre* have created confusion about his piety, both during his life and in his modern reception history. Ever since Rūmī became a best-selling poet in the US and Canada back in the 1980s, Western media have been giving considerable attention to this Persian Sufi sage. My colleagues Alan Williams and Fatemeh Keshavarz, and the Iranian translator Shahram Shiva participated in a BBC discussion about Rūmī in 2015.³ During the discussion, the BBC moderator Ernie Rea said of Rūmī, 'He seems to offer

1 Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī, *Kullīyyāt-i Shams yā Dīwān-i kabīr az guftār-i Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad mashhūr bi Mawlawī, bā taṣhīḥāt va ḥawāshī*, ed. Badī' al-Zamān Furūzānfar, 3rd ed. (Tehran: Sipīhr 1363 A.Hsh./1984), vol. 8, p. 136 (quatrain 804). All subsequent citations are from this edition. This quatrain is also attributed to Abū Sa'īd Abī'l-Khayr, and the second couplet also appears in Shams-i Tabrīzī's *Maqālāt*, ed. M.'A. Muwaḥḥid (Tehran: Dībā, 1369 A.Hsh./1990), p. 160. See also Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī, *The Quatrains of Rūmī*, trans. Ibrahim Gamard and Rawan Farhadi (San Rafael, CA: Sufi Dari Books 2008), p. 580. All translations in this essay are mine, unless indicated otherwise in the footnotes. Leonard Lewisohn offered the following poetic translation of this quatrain in his handouts during the conference *Antinomian Movements in Islam* in 2015:

'Until the mosque and minaret are laid to waste
Never will the qalandar's state of spirit prosper.
Not until faith becomes infidelity, infidelity faith,
In truth, there'll be not one true Muslim devotee.'

2 This essay is part of some ongoing research I have conducted in recent years. I would like to express my gratitude to all participants of the following conferences, especially Leonard Lewisohn, Alan Williams, Ahmet Karamustafa, Mohammad-Reza Shafī'i-Kadkani, Nasrollah Pourjavady, and Rokus de Groot, who generously shared their perceptive ideas and original thoughts on the topic during these conferences: *Antinomian Movements in Islam* (June 2015); *Prince of Physicians: Avicenna's Legacy in the Islamic World and the West* (January 2012); and *The Wise Fool: Asceticism on the Cross-Roads of Islam and Christianity* (February 2010).

3 See 'Beyond Belief: Rumi', BBC Radio 4 (Broadcast 7 September 2015): <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b068tsvj> (accessed 5 July 2018). The host was Ernie Rea. The participants were Professor Fatemeh Keshavarz (Director of the Roshan Institute for Persian Studies at the University of Maryland), Alan Williams (Professor of Iranian Studies and Comparative Religion at the University of Manchester, UK), and Shahram Shiva (Rūmī translator and writer).

a gentle, loving version of Islam', while Shiva firmly held that Rūmī writes for all people and goes beyond religions, emphasizing that Rūmī repeats ideas such as 'God is not found in any mosque', and implying that he is criticizing Islam. Such discussions arise in part from Rūmī's use of antinomian tropes, which Shiva misinterpreted as un-Islamic, without considering at all that these were simply part and parcel of the venerable tradition of antinomian piety in Persian Sufi mysticism. Williams and Keshavarz, both acclaimed Rūmī specialists, tried in vain to convince Shiva that Rūmī's entire poetic universe is Islamic, as evidenced in his innumerable citations of the Qur'ān and Hadith. Surely, it is not without reason that Rūmī's *magnum opus* is called 'the Qur'ān in Persian', and thus undeniably his ideas are very much rooted in the Islamic tradition.⁴ Repeatedly Rūmī emphasizes the essential role of the Sharī'a to arrive at mystical illumination, and compares the Sharī'a to a candle light.⁵

But Shiva is by no means alone in separating Rūmī from his Islamic context: many believe that Rūmī's usage of such tropes reveals him to be a poet and mystic weary of Islam and fleeing from its formalities, ritual duties, and institutions such as the mosque, or that he presents an atypically gentle version of Islam. Rūmī's antinomian ideas about religion generated stories in Persian literature even in medieval times. Some orthodox Muslims even doubted Rūmī's faith. One of these stories occurs in the hagiographical account of Sufi saints *Nafahāt al-uns* by the prolific Persian Sufi master and poet 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (1414–1492), which reads as follows:⁶

مولانا سراج الدین قونیوی صاحب صدر و بزرگ وقت بوده، اما با خدمت مولوی خوش نبوده. پیش وی تقریر کردند که مولانا گفته است که من با هفتاد و سه مذهب یکی ام. چون صاحب غرض بود خواست که مولانا را برنجاند و بی حرمت کند. یکی را از نزدیکان خود، که دانشمندی بزرگ بود،

4 On Rūmī's intimate familiarity with and reliance on the Qur'ān throughout his verse, see Maryam Musharraf and Leonard Lewisohn, 'Sahl Tustarī's (d. 283/896) Esoteric Qur'ānic Commentary and Rūmī's *Mathnawī*: Part 1', *Mawlana Rumi Review* v (2014), pp. 180–203; and 'Sahl Tustarī's (d. 283/896) Esoteric Qur'ānic Commentary and Rūmī's *Mathnawī*: Part 2', *Mawlana Rumi Review* vii (2016), pp. 106–27.

5 On Rūmī's opinion on the necessity of Sharī'a for spiritual growth see ch. 13 in 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Zarrīnkūb, *Sirr-i nay: naqd va sharḥ-i taḥlīlī va taṭbīqī-yi Mathnawī* (Tehran: 'Ilmī 1374 A.Hsh./1995), pp. 651–83; and again, 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Zarrīnkūb, *Baḥr dar kūza: naqd va taḥsīr-i qīssa-hā va tamthīlāt-i Mathnawī* (Tehran: 'Ilmī 1368 A.Hsh./1989), pp. 14, 22, 28–30.

6 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, *Nafahāt al-uns*, ed. Maḥmūd 'Ābidī (Tehran: Ittilā'āt 1370 A.Hsh./1991), pp. 462–63.

بفرستاد که بر سر جمع از مولانا پرس که تو چنین گفته ای؟ اگر اقرار کند او را دشنام بسیار بده و برنجان. آن کس بیامد و بر ملا سؤال کرد که شما چنین گفته اید که «من با هفتاد و سه مذهب یکی ام»؟ گفت: «گفته ام». آن کس زبان بگشاد و دشنام و سفاهت آغاز کرد. مولانا بخندید و گفت: «با این نیز که تو میگوئی هم یکی ام». آن کس خجل شد و بازگشت.

Mawlānā Sirāj al-Dīn Qūnyawī possessed high status and was a great man of his time, but he was unhappy with Rūmī. People reported to him that Rūmī had said: 'I am one with seventy-three creeds.'⁷ As Qūnyawī had [ill] intentions, he wanted to hurt and vilify Rūmī. He sent one of his close friends, who was a great scholar, to Rūmī's public preaching assembly, saying: 'Ask him, "Did you say such and such?" If he confesses, you should hurl invectives, cast aspersions on him and offend him.' The man came and publicly asked Rūmī: 'Did you say in fact that "I am one with seventy-three creeds"?' Rūmī answered: 'I did.' The man loosened his tongue and started to hurl insults and slurs at him. Rūmī laughed and said: 'I am also one with all that you are saying now.' The man became ashamed of himself and turned away.

In recent years, such anecdotes have been increasingly used to depict how Rūmī differs from other medieval Muslim sages, as if he were a unique humanist in Islamic intellectual history.⁸ Rūmī is being introduced as an ambassador of Islam in the Western world at a time in which deviant ideologies, manifested under the flag of Islam, are being criticized in many Islamophobic media outlets. Rūmī is the personification of a different version of Islam, centring on love and humanism, which could co-exist harmoniously with Western Judeo-Christian tradition. While, of course, he is unique in his personality, his religious aspirations, and poetic genius, he can also be placed in a long line of Persian mystics who inspired and invited people to the Sufi Path and spiritual

7 This alludes to a prophetic ḥadīth in which the Prophet Mohammad states that his community will be divided into 73 sects and none will find salvation except one group. Discussions on this topic were favourite among mystics and theologians. See, for instance, Muḥammad Jawād Mashkūr, *Haftād-u sih millat yā i'tiqādāt-i madhāhib: Risāla'i dar fraq-i islām az āthār-i qarn-i hashtum-i hijrī* (Tehran: 'Aṭā'i 1337 A.Hsh./1958), pp. 6–7.

8 See K. Heminski's essay in which he argues why in this Islamophobic era, Rūmī's message should be heard and studied, 'The Contemporary Relevance of Rumi's Language of the Soul', in Leonard Lewisohn (ed.), *The Philosophy of Ecstasy: Rumi and the Sufi Tradition* (Bloomington, Ind.: World Wisdom 2014), pp. 127–42.

growth. Love and divine love are the key elements in this call, as well as compassion, kind-heartedness, altruism, and humility. As Shahab Ahmed states, the 'ultimate conceptual and experiential goal [of Sufism] is the freeing of the individual from the bonds of prescriptive authority/orthodoxy – as Rūmī said, "We have become gold and are delivered from the theory and practice of alchemy: we are God's freemen."⁹ Some of the greatest Persian mystical poets, such as Aṭṭār (d. 618/1221), Sanā'ī (d.c. 525/1131), Niẓāmī (d.c. 598/1202), Sa'dī (d. 691/1292), Ḥāfiẓ (c. 715–792/1315–1390), and Jāmī (817–898/1414–1492), to name only the most famous, are part of this tradition.

One reason that Rūmī's Islam is characterized as a 'gentle version' or even as un-Islamic stems from Rūmī's philosophy of love, which is at the centre of his writings. As we shall see, Rūmī subordinates even holy Islamic laws, rituals, and tenets to the law of love. It might seem that Rūmī even mocks Islamic sacred rituals such as the pilgrimage to Mecca, by referencing 'the Ka'ba of the heart' and giving it a higher value than the Ka'ba in Mecca. Rūmī's frequent use of themes and motifs related to wine and homoeroticism supports this reading, but such themes are part and parcel of the antinomian tradition of paradoxical piety, with roots going back to at least the tenth century, when there was a crisis of piety.¹⁰ People were asking: Who is a good Muslim? What are the characteristics of a good Muslim? Is being a good Muslim dependent on genealogy, skin colour, or ascetic abstinence? It was recognized that Islam had introduced the concept of *umma* (the wider Muslim community), yet there were discussions about who was the more pious Muslim. While the concept of *taqwā* (piety) was based on the fear of God and abstinence, mystics centred it instead on the love for God, and God's love for mankind. Other connotations such as 'uprightness' and 'dutifulness' were also added.¹¹ Mystics pushed their ideas from the periphery to the centre, where *'ulamā'* (religious scholars) had positioned themselves. In the course of these debates on piety, a new school came into being, which was called *madhhab-i 'ishq* (the religion of love).

The purpose of this article is to analyse the antinomian motifs in Rūmī's ghazals. To my knowledge, no systematic study has been conducted on Rūmī's poetry and erotic spirituality, and although this short essay cannot do justice

9 Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2016), p. 283.

10 On the rise and decline of various religious movements in Persia see the outstanding study by Wilferd Madelung, *Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran* (Albany, NY: Bibliotheca Persica 1988).

11 See Leonard Lewisohn, 'Takwā', in *EI*², vol. 12 (supplement), pp. 781–85; also see Leonard Lewisohn, *Beyond Faith and Infidelity: The Sufi Poetry and Teachings of Mahmud Shabistari* (Richmond: Curzon Press 1995).

to his work, I hope to inspire other scholars to undertake a comprehensive analysis of Rūmī's antinomianism in connection with his popularity in the West.¹²

Scholars of Persian literature and Islamic mysticism have studied the origins of the concept of the 'religion of love' and its essential characteristics. Shahab Ahmed convincingly shows that this religion of love was, after the four official *madhhab*, one of the most influential schools that inspired people in a vast area from the Balkans to Bengal.¹³ This religion of love was developed by mystics such as Ḥusayn Manṣūr Ḥallāj (executed in 922), Aḥmad Ghazālī, Sanā'ī, and 'Aṭṭār. Rūmī is an heir to this tradition.¹⁴ Sanā'ī and 'Aṭṭār played enormous roles in Rūmī's intellectual development. As Rūmī states, Sanā'ī was his ears and 'Aṭṭār his eyes.¹⁵ Sanā'ī imbued the Persian erotic ghazal, which was mainly used in a courtly context, with a religious layer, and also introduced Qalandarī themes into Persian poetry.¹⁶ Groups known as 'qaladandarīs' were wandering vagabonds who rejected the orthodox Islamic laws. The quintessence of Qalandarī thought is that public piety and religiosity are easily earned and thus can lead to hypocrisy, which is an impediment on the spiritual path. The only way to avoid hypocrisy, they maintained, is to hide one's true faith and piety by transgressing the holiest religious laws, which are so dear to the orthodox religious scholar. Qalandars travelled long distances from city to city exhibiting provocative behaviour. With their overwhelming charisma and passion,

12 Franklin Lewis and William Chittick are among the few scholars who have devoted some attention to various aspects of this topic. See Franklin D. Lewis, *Rūmī: Past and Present, East and West: The Life, Teaching, and Poetry of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī* (Oxford: Oneworld 2000), pp. 21–37, and for discussions of wine, pp. 324–26; sexuality (including homosexuality/homoeroticism), pp. 320–24; and on *samā'* and the propriety of using poetry, pp. 309–13. See also William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teaching of Rumi* (Albany: State University of New York Press 1983).

13 Ahmed, *What is Islam?* pp. 38–46.

14 For an excellent introduction to this concept see Leonard Lewisohn (ed.), *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry* (London: I. B. Tauris 2010), pp. 31–73 and also the chapter in the same volume by H. Elahi-Ghomshei, 'The Principles of the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry', pp. 77–106. See also L. Lewisohn, 'Sufism's Religion of Love, from Rābi'a to Ibn 'Arabi' in *The Cambridge Companion to Sufism*, ed. Lloyd Ridgeon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2014), pp. 150–80. On the contribution of Sanā'ī and 'Aṭṭār to Sufism see 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Zarrīnkūb, *Justujū dar taṣawwuf-i Irān* (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr 1388 A.Hsh./2009), pp. 236–71. Zarrīnkūb's next chapter (pp. 273–307) is logically on Rūmī, dealing with the impact of Sanā'ī and 'Aṭṭār and Rūmī's entire *oeuvre*.

15 On which, see the essay by Sassan Zand Moqaddam and Mehdi Nourian, 'Seek that Radiance which Sanā'ī Expounded' in this volume of the *Mawlana Rumi Review* [– Ed.].

16 On which, see Matthew Miller, 'The Poetics of the Sufi Carnival: The "Rogue Lyrics" (*Qalandariyāt*) of Sanā'ī, 'Aṭṭār, and 'Erāqi', PhD Thesis (University of Washington 2016).

they attracted great attention. The Qalandars provoked the Islamic community by mocking sacred traditions, rituals, and laws. They shaved all bodily hair, which they called *chahār darb* (the four blows). They would appear naked in public, with nothing more than a few rags around their waist, and stay in bars and brothels, where plenty of wine was served and beautiful young men were present.¹⁷ Although their provocations served to attract criticism and reproach, they believed that this acted as a shield from the temptations of hypocrisy. These Qalandars contrasted themselves with the orthodox religious scholars and the organized Sufis who publicly displayed their piety. There are sketches and paintings of these wandering dervishes, walking half-naked in the desert, sometimes with piercings in their noses, ears, and genitals.¹⁸ The Qalandars wanted to show that they had renounced earthly existence by paying no attention to the external aspects of religion,¹⁹ believing that the outward piety of Islamic jurists, preachers, and the orthodox was false and insincere. True piety could only be attained by hiding one's spiritual aspirations behind a veil of sinful behaviour.

17 See J.T.P. de Bruijn, 'The *Qalandariyyāt* in Persian Mystical Poetry, from Sana'i Onwards', in *The Heritage of Sufism*, vol. 2: *The Legacy of Mediaeval Persian Sufism (1150–1500)*, ed. L. Lewisohn (Oxford: Oneworld 1999), pp. 75–86; also J.T.P. de Bruijn, *Persian Sufi Poetry: An Introduction to the Mystical Use of Classical Poems* (Richmond: Curzon 1997), pp. 74–75; Franklin D. Lewis, 'Reading, Writing and Recitation: Sanā'ī and the Origin of the Persian Ghazal', PhD Thesis (University of Chicago 1995), pp. 364–69, 559–78; and Hellmut Ritter, 'Philologika XV', *Oriens* 12 (1959), pp. 1–88; as well as Hellmut Ritter, *Das Meer der Seele: Mensch, Welt und Gott in den Geschichten des Fariduddin Attār* (Leiden: Brill 1955), in which see the index s.v. 'Qalandariyya'. For an English translation of the latter, see Ritter, *The Ocean of the Soul: Man, the World, and God in the Stories of Farid al-Din Attār*, trans. John O'Kane and Bernd Radtke (Leiden: Brill 2003). See also Fritz Meier, 'Abū Sa'īd-i Abū l-Ḥayr (357–440/967–1049), Wirklichkeit und Legende', *Acta Iranica*, 3/4 (Tehran/Liège: Bibliothèque Pahlavi 1976), pp. 494–516; Ashk Dahlén, 'The Qalandar in the Persianate World: The Case of Fakhroddin 'Araqi', in *Holy Fools and Divine Madmen: Sacred Insanity through Ages and Cultures*, ed. Albrecht Berger and Sergey Ivanov (Neuried: Ars Una 2018), pp. 125–53; and finally, Muḥammad-Riḍā Shafī'i-Kadkanī, *Qalandariyya dar tārikh: Digardisihā-yi yik idrūlūzhī* (Tehran: Sukhan 1387 A.Hsh./2007).

18 See Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period 1200–1550* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press 1994), pp. 50ff. Also see the fascinating essay of Heghnar Z. Watenpaugh, 'Deviant Dervishes: Space, Gender, and the Construction of Antinomian Piety in Ottoman Aleppo', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37/4 (2005), pp. 535–65.

19 See de Bruijn, 'The *Qalandariyyāt* in Persian Mystical Poetry', pp. 75–86; Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*, pp. 50–52; and Ahmet Karamustafa, 'Antinomian Sufis', in *The Cambridge Companion to Sufism*, ed. Lloyd Ridgeon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2014), pp. 101–24; see also Zarrīnkūb, *Justujū dar taṣawwuf*, pp. 359–79.

The Qalandars may be a continuation of the *Malāmatī* Sufis ('those who incur blame'), although there are big differences.²⁰ These *Malāmatī* mystics were extremely pious, but feared that social respect for their piety would distract them from the spiritual path, for instance by causing them to become proud of their saintly status. They therefore avoided distractions by deliberately acting in an impious fashion in order to draw reproach. They would drink wine publicly. As Franklin Lewis remarks, such behaviour would in the long run 'have the converse effect of making debauchery appear religiously permissible in the pursuit of mystical insight'.²¹

2 Qalandarī Literary Themes and Motifs in Persian Poetry

Qalandarī themes can be roughly divided into two categories: motifs revolving around love, and those related to wine and wine-drinking. These motifs were repeatedly utilized by Persian poets from the twelfth century onwards (although some allusions can be found in older texts) and became part and parcel of the Persian poetic tradition and other vernacular Persianate literary traditions from the Balkans to Bengal.²²

The first group of motifs centre around the behaviour and beliefs of the Qalandar. The word *Qalandar* can be translated as 'tramp' or 'vagabond'. Two other figures associated with the Qalandarī tradition in Persian poetry and Sufism may be mentioned in this context in particular: the *malang*²³ ('detached dervish') and the *rind*²⁴ ('inspired libertine'). Metaphors are used to describe how the Qalandars denounce false piety, radically renouncing the world. Other main characteristics are the Qalandars' debaucheries in public

20 See F. de Jong, H. Algar, and C. H. Imber, 'Malāmatiyya', *EI*², vol. 6, pp. 223–28; and Zarrīnkūb, *Justujū dar taṣawwuf*, pp. 335–57.

21 Lewis, *Rūmī: Past and Present*, p. 36.

22 See Ahmed, *What is Islam?*, pp. 73–75.

23 See the unsigned entry, 'Malang', *EI*², vol. 6, pp. 228–29; and also Katherine Ewing, 'Malangs of the Punjab: Intoxication or Adab as the Path of God?', in *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of (Adab) in South Asian Islam*, ed. Barbara Daly Metcalf (Berkeley: University of California Press 1984), pp. 357–71.

24 See Leonard Lewisohn, 'Prolegomenon to the Study of Ḥāfiẓ 2 – The Mystical Milieu: Ḥāfiẓ's Erotic Spirituality', in *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (London: I. B. Tauris 2010), pp. 31–43; see also Franklin Lewis, 'Hafez viii. Hafez and Rendi', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*; and Jan Wojciech Skalmowski, 'Le qalandar chez Ḥāfēz', in *Pand-o sokhan: Mélanges offerts à Charles-Henri de Fouchécour*, ed. Christophe Balaÿ, Claire Kappler, and Živa Vesel (Tehran: Institut Français de Recherche en Iran 1995), pp. 275–82.

and the celebration of wine and drunkenness, which have developed into a complex of motifs in which wine, the act of quaffing it, the dregs, and the cup are all individually described in the most dazzling and detailed fashion. The Qalandars' appearance in taverns, their guzzling of wine, and their embracing of young boys were all part of their conduct. They sought refuge from the mosque and school in a tavern, which is also called a *kharābāt* (ruined place), or in other places of ill repute.²⁵ The mosque and religious seminary college or school (Madrasa), were establishments where *ulamā'* (religious scholars), *wu'āẓ* (preachers), and *fuqahā'* (jurists of Islamic law) could be found. These institutions represent and are used as symbols in Persian Sufi poetry of a one-dimensional reading of Islam focusing on outward religiosity, while the tavern functions as a symbol of the locality where the inner meaning of religion and true piety can be found. Drunkenness is the Qalandar's pride, as it reminds him of the moment his soul first met God. The moment of creation is depicted in terms of drunken ecstasy. On the day of *alast* ('Am I not your Lord?'), also called the primordial Covenant, the souls of Adam were so captivated by God's beauty that they answered affirmatively, 'Yes, we witness, You are!'²⁶ Mystic poets emphasize that the word *balā* (yes) also means 'affliction', by which they refer to their suffering in this world, yearning for their soul's reunion with the Creator.

Another principal motif is related to renouncing Islam and questioning who is a good Muslim. In this context, other religions such as Zoroastrianism and Christianity are praised. If there is no reference to other religions, *kufī* (unbelief) is mentioned in a positive sense in contrast to being Muslim, by which the poet deprecates conventional piety as hypocrisy. The taverns in Islamic societies were on the periphery of towns, and were frequented by non-Muslims, such as Christians and Zoroastrians. The Qalandar frequented these places, where he would find his spiritual guide, a *pīr-i muḡhān* (Magian Elder).

This complex of themes and motifs appeared suddenly in the ghazals of Sanā'ī, who discusses them in detail.²⁷ We do not know whether Sanā'ī actually witnessed these Qalandars and recorded their behaviour and opinions in his poetry, or whether he created these metaphors, which then inspired people to follow the Qalandar ways.²⁸ We know that similar but less extreme movements

25 See J.T.P. de Bruijn, 'Hafez', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.

26 The reference is to this verse in the Qur'ān VII: 172, where God asked Adam, 'Am I not your Lord?' (*Alastu birabbikum*), to which Adam replied 'Yes'.

27 See Franklin D. Lewis, 'Reading, Writing and Recitation: Sanā'ī and the Origin of the Persian Ghazal', especially pp. 364–69; 595–78.

28 On which, see Nicholas Bolyston, 'Reminding Scholars What It Means To Be Muslim: Themes of Religious Identity in the Poetry of Sanā'ī of Ghazna', in *Sufis and Mullahs: Sufis*

such as the Malāmatiyya and Karrāmiyya existed from the tenth century. We also know that scholars such as Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad Ghazālī wrote a treatise on antinomianism, warning of the dangers of such aberrant behaviour and wondering why their lifestyle was so attractive to people.²⁹ According to de Bruijn:

[The Qalandarī themes and motifs were] probably no more than a literary ploy of which preachers and mystics availed themselves in their admonitions, but from the thirteenth century onwards the *Qalandar* is also known as the appellation of a dervish practising extreme forms of ascetism and living in a group of the like-minded.³⁰

While the phenomenon of the Qalandar appears in the works of mystics such as Abū Saʿīd-i Abī l-Khayr (357–440/967–1049) and Bābā Ṭāhir-i ʿUryān (fifth/eleventh century), it was Sanāʾī and later ʿAṭṭār who made Qalandars an integral part of Persian mystical poetry.³¹ Although it is hard to provide evidence of a genuine Qalandarī fellowship in society during the eleventh and the early twelfth centuries, we have evidence of actual Qalandars from the thirteenth century onwards.

3 Qalandars in Rūmī's Ghazals

Rūmī composed over 3,000 ghazals on diverse subjects, using an unprecedented variety of metres. The mystical ghazal, which started with Sanāʾī in the twelfth century, had developed into a complex poetical form by Rūmī's era a century later.³² Various literary themes and motifs were ingeniously interwoven

and Their Opponents in the Persianate World, ed. Reza Tabandeh and Leonard Lewisohn (forthcoming) [– Ed.]

- 29 Muḥammad Ghazālī, 'Ḥimāqat-i ahl-i ibāhat', in Nasrollah Pourjavady, *Du mujaddid: pazhūhishhāʾ dar bāra-yi Muḥammad-i Ghazālī va Fakhr-i Rāzī* (Tehran: Markaz-i Nashr-i Dānishgāhī 2002), pp. 146–210; see also Otto Pretzl, 'Die Streitschrift des Ḡazālī gegen die Ibāḥijā', in *Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Abteilung* (München: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 1933); Wilferd Madelung and Marshall G.S. Hodgson, 'Ibāḥa', *EI*², vol. 3, pp. 662–63; and also Alexandre Papas, 'Antinomianism', *EI*³.

- 30 J.T.P. de Bruijn, 'Hafez, III. Hafez's Poetic Art', *Encyclopædia Iranica*.

- 31 Meier, *Abū Saʿīd-i Abū l-Khayr*, pp. 494–516.

- 32 For the development of the Persian Ghazal see J.T.P. de Bruijn, 'Ġazal i. History', *Encyclopædia Iranica*, 10/4, pp. 354–58; see also Julie S. Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1987), pp. 237–98; Alireza Korangy,

into individual couplets to convey a thought or idea related to love, both earthly and heavenly. Rūmī's *ghazals* are rich in erotic love and wine, as well as many philosophical reflections.³³ Many of the themes, motifs and metaphors derive from the profane homoerotic poems of court poets from the tenth and eleventh centuries. Although wine and physical homoerotic relationships, even back then, were strongly forbidden in Islam, wine was served in abundance and homoeroticism was in vogue at Persian courts. Persian poetry is a rich repository for stories about gatherings in which wine and love play a central role.³⁴ Persian poets describe these courtly homoerotic love celebrations in detail. The mystics adopted and integrated the courtly erotic tradition into their poetry but added extra religious dimensions to it.

Rūmī's sources of inspiration for the Qalandarī motifs are Sanā'ī and 'Aṭṭār. But casting a glance at Rūmī's large collection of ghazals, one cannot easily find the specific Qalandarī references that are an essential part of Sanā'ī's and 'Aṭṭār's ghazals. Sanā'ī, for example, wrote several ghazals rhyming on 'O boy' (*ay pīsar*), and Sanā'ī frequently mentions the word 'Qalandar' and similar terminology.³⁵ 'Aṭṭār time and again names the word 'Qalandar' and its concomitants. He provokes the orthodox in his ghazals, such as the following, which has been commented upon many times:³⁶

Development of the Ghazal and Khāqānī's Contribution: A Study of the Development of Ghazal and a Literary Exegesis of a 12th c. Poetic Harbinger (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag 2013), pp. 149–52; Dāryūsh Šabūr, *Āfāq-i ghazal-i fārsī: pazhūhishī intiqādi dar taḥawwul-i ghazal va taghazzul az āghāz tā imrūz* (Tehran: Guftār 1370 A.Hsh./1991), ch. 5, pp. 181–316.

- 33 There are a large number of philosophical ideas in the ghazals. For an excellent study see M. Aminrazavi, 'Rūmī on Tolerance: A Philosophical Analysis', in *Mawlana Rumi Review* 11 (2011), pp. 47–60; Cyrus Masroori, 'An Islamic Language of Toleration: Rūmī's Criticism of Religious Persecution', in *Political Research Quarterly* 63/2 (2010), pp. 243–56; see also Jalāl al-Dīn Humā'ī, *Mawlawī-nāma: Mawlawī chi migūyad?* (Tehran: Nashr-i Humā 1385 A.Hsh./2006).
- 34 See Franklin D. Lewis, 'Sexual Occidentation: The Politics of Conversion, Christian-love and Boy-love in 'Attar', *Iranian Studies*, 42/5 (2009), pp. 693–723; and also Ali-Asghar Seyed-Gohrab, 'Aardse wortels van de mystieke liefde: Perzische poëzie uit de Middeleeuwen', in *Liefdesessen: Verleidingskunst en erotiek van schepping tot verlichting*, ed. P. Gerbrandy, M. Heerink, and C. de Jonge (Amsterdam/Antwerpen: Uitgeverij Atlas Contact 2017), pp. 141–60.
- 35 See Sanā'ī, *Dīwān-i Ḥakīm Abū'l-Majd Majdūd b. Ādam Sanā'ī Ghaznavī*, ed. Mudarris-i Raḍawī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Kitābkhāna-yi Sanā'ī 1362 A.Hsh./1983), pp. 891–96. 'Aṭṭār also wrote two ghazals with the rhyme *pīsar* ('boy'). Farid al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār, *Dīwān-i 'Aṭṭār*, ed. M. T. Tafaqḍulī, 3rd ed. (Tehran: Markaz-i Intishārāt-i 'Ilmī va Farhangī 1362 A.Hsh./1983), pp. 326–28, ghazals 406–7.
- 36 For an extended discussion of the symbolic significance of this ghazal in Persian Sufism, see Leonard Lewisohn, 'Sufi Symbolism and the Persian Hermeneutic Tradition:

منم آن گبر دیرینه که بتخانه بنا کردم
 شدم بر بام بتخانه درین عالم ندا کردم
 صلاهی کفر در دادم شما را ای مسلمانان
 که من آن کهنه بتها را دگر باره جلا کردم
 از آن مادر که من زادم، دگر باره شدم جفتش
 از آنم گبری خوانند که با مادر زنا کردم
 به بگری زادم از مادر از آن عیسی می خوانند
 که من این شیر مادر را دگر باره غذا کردم
 اگر عطار مسکین را درین گبری بسوزانند
 گوا باشید ای مردان که من خود را فنا کردم³⁷

That ancient Zoroastrian
 I am. It's me who raised on high
 The idol-house – pagoda – then
 Up on its roof I gave a cry,
 Declaimed to all the world's folk,
 Sounding 'infidelity' abroad:
 'O Muslims! Those idols I've rebuilt,
 Put varnish on their fusty paint
 Again. I'm born again, have wed
 My mother as my mate again!

Reconstructing the Pagoda of Attar's Esoteric Poetics', in *The Art of Spiritual Flight: Farid al-Din 'Attar and the Persian Sufi Tradition*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn and Christopher Shackle (London: I. B. Tauris 2006), pp. 255–308.

- 37 'Aṭṭār, *Dīwān*, ed. Tafāḍḍulī, p. 405, ghazal 504. A literal translation reads as follows:
 I am the ancient Zoroastrian who has built a temple for idols,
 Climbing to its roof, calling to this world:
 O Muslims, I call you to the prayer of disbelief,
 As I have polished the old idols again.
 I became again the partner to the mother who gave birth to me,
 I am called a Zoroastrian because I fornicated with my mother.
 People call me Jesus because I was born from a virgin mother;
 As I fed upon my mother's milk again.
 If people burn the poor 'Aṭṭār for his Zoroastrianism,
 O people! Be my witness, for I have offered myself.

With her I've had a liaison
 Once more – hence I'm called, 'Zoroastrian'
 Through mother-incest.³⁸ I was born
 By virgin birth from her, and this
 Is why my name is 'Jesus', since
 My mother's milk I've sipped up twice.
 If 'Attar, this wretch, hapless, piteous
 You'd set alight and burn to ashes
 In such a Zoroastrian state –
 That's proof, O men, that I've effaced
 Myself, my ego made annihilate.³⁹

Rūmī usually makes little direct use of the term 'Qalandar' and related names in his ghazals, but rather treats the complex of Qalandarī motifs without naming them. Antinomian motifs are so deeply integrated in Rūmī's philosophy that they are a natural feature of his poetry and opinions. Although Rūmī highlights that Sanā'ī and 'Aṭṭār were his teachers, he apparently wrote no poetry before his meeting with the wandering dervish Shams of Tabriz, whose outward description and mystical orientation seamlessly locates him in the hierarchy of the Qalandarī tradition of his day, and who activated Malāmatī motifs. The charismatic character of Shams has fascinated scholars.⁴⁰ Nicholson compares him to Socrates in three respects, 'strong passions, his poverty, and his violent death'.⁴¹ Shams transformed Rūmī's life so intensely that, from a theologian, he became a mystic whose feverish longings for union with the divine are expressed in matchless love lyrics. In several of his poems, as in the following quatrain, Rūmī alludes to this change:

زاهد بودم ترانه گویم کردی سر فتنه بزم و بادمجویم کردی
 سجاده نشین با وقارم دیدی بازیچه کودکان کویم کردی

38 Although this line is not in Tafaḍḍulī's edition of the *Dīwān*, it occurs in many other editions, and is commented upon and cited as being 'Aṭṭār's by both Ṣafī al-Dīn Ardabilī and Ṣā'īn al-Dīn Turka.

39 Translation by Leonard Lewisohn in *'Aṭṭār and the Persian Sufi Tradition: The Art of Spiritual Flight*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn and Christopher Shackle (London: I.B. Tauris 2006), p. 268.

40 For Shams's impact on Rūmī see Lewis, *Rūmī: Past and Present*, ch. 4, pp. 134–202.

41 As cited by Lewis, *Rūmī: Past and Present*, p. 135.

I was an ascetic; you turned me into a singing poet;
 You made me the instigator of troubles at feasts, languishing for wine.
 You saw me sitting with authority on a prayer mat;
 You made me a toy of the children on the street!⁴²

In this quatrain Rūmī describes the contrast in his life before and after his meeting with Shams. He characterizes himself as an ascetic, a respectable pious man who turns into a poet and even a singer of songs. The respectable theologian and dignified ascetic has here suddenly turned into a person whom children ridicule.

Although in dealing with Persian ghazals one should distinguish of course between the poet's person and his poetic persona, in the case of Rūmī, most of his ghazals are emotional eruptions in which he refers to the lover's qualities that are mostly easily identifiable with Shams as his beloved master. The question is, of course, whether many of these ghazals should be seen as expressing autobiographical testimonies. As these poems do not have specific dates, and social contexts are usually missing, it is problematic to investigate and approach them as potential sources of his autobiography.⁴³ Moreover, these poems oscillate between earthly and heavenly love, and are therefore expressions to lift the reader/listener to a heavenly plain.⁴⁴ Although the Persian ghazal was usually sung during seances of mystical audition (*samāʿ*), we do not know precisely how Rūmī's individual ghazals were performed and who their audiences/listeners were.⁴⁵ With this caveat in mind, I would say that Rūmī often addresses Shams in his ghazals as his beloved friend. Their relationship was so intense that Rūmī renounced his own identity and took over the identity of Shams. He often uses 'Shams' or similar appellations related to Shams as his own pen name. Without going into their fascinating relationship, it seems that Shams' appearance as a Qalandarī dervish had an enormous influence on

42 Rūmī, *Kullīyyāt-i Shams*, vol. 8, p. 289 (quatrain 1716). Also see *The Quatrains of Rūmī*, p. 478.

43 On which, see Annemarie Schimmel, *As Through a Veil: Mystical Poetry in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press 1982), pp. 86–91, and the excellent essay by Franklin Lewis, 'Towards a Chronology of the Poems in the *Dīvān-i Shams*: A Prolegomenon for a Periodization of Rūmī's Literary Oeuvre', in *The Philosophy of Ecstasy: Rumi and the Sufi Tradition*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (Bloomington, Ind.: World Wisdom 2014), pp. 145–76.

44 For an excellent study of Rūmī's lyrics see Fatemeh Keshavarz, *Reading Mystical Lyric: The Case of Jalal al-Din Rūmī* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press 1998), who analyses various levels and perspectives of Rūmī's ghazals, showing the convoluted nature of these poems.

45 For a study of which, see Amir Artaban Sedaghat, 'Rūmī's Verse at the Crossroads of Language and Music', in this volume of the *Mawlana Rumi Review* [– Ed.].

Rūmī's ideas on practising Sufism and experiencing Islam. Rūmī's references to Qalandars cannot therefore always be separated from his relationship with Shams. Although we are not sure which poems were written for Shams, many refer to an aspect of Rūmī's relationship with this wandering dervish. The following quatrain, for instance, alludes without doubt to Shams:⁴⁶

آن رند و قلندری نهان آمد فاش در دیده من بچو نشان کفِ پاش
یا اوست خدا یا که فرستاد خدایش ای مطرب جان، یکی نفس ما را باش

That rascal with a hidden Qalandar-nature has come into the open;
Seek the sign of the sole of his feet on my eyes
Either he is God or God has sent him;
O Musician of the Soul, be mine for just one moment.

In the following poem, Rūmī describes how he became drunk by the wine a Qalandar, probably Shams, had poured:⁴⁷

یار شدم یار شدم با غم تو یار شدم
تا که رسیدم بر تواز همه بیزار شدم (...)
تا که بدیدم قدحش سرده او باش منم
تا که بدیدم گلکش بی دل و دستار شدم
تا که قلندر دل من داد می مُذهِل من
رقص کنان، دلق کشان، جانب خمار شدم

I've become a lover, I've become a lover, I've become a lover of your
sorrow;
for when I came to you, I became wearied of all else....
When I saw his wine cup, I became the chief of profligates;
When I saw his hat, I lost my heart, I lost my turban.
When my friend, a Qalandar at heart, offered me delightful wine,
I grew drunk: dancing, with my cloak trailing on the ground,
I went towards the vintner.

46 Rūmī, *Kullīyyāt-i Shams*, vol. 8, p. 169 (quatrain 999).

47 Rūmī, *Kullīyyāt-i Shams*, vol. 3, p. 180 (ghazal 1392, lines 1, 6, 7).

As in many other ghazals, the poet pours out his feverish emotions, showing how rapturous he has become on seeing the beloved. The repetition of the phrase 'I've become a lover', underlines how Rūmī has annihilated his own personal qualities, taking over his beloved's identity. His headgear (a turban, or *dastār*), which in medieval times indicated hierarchical positions in society, is tossed away. The poet joyously celebrates losing his social status, falling into a trance as he has lost his heart to the beloved. Such a radical renouncement of the ego, one's personal identity, and drunkenness neatly correspond to the Qalandarī lifestyle espoused (according to contemporary historical records) by Shams.

In the following poem, Rūmī associates his beloved with a Qalandar:⁴⁸

مست می عشق را حیا نی
وین باده عشق را بها نی ...
پس ما چه زنیما ای قلندر
اندر گره و گره گشا نی ...
مخدومی شمس دین تبریز
چون خورشیدش در این سما نی

One drunken with love's wine has no shame
And this wine of love is priceless ...
O Qalandar! What can we drink [to give us peace]
To unpick these knots, when they can't be undone? ...
We are the servants of Shams al-Din of Tabriz
Whose sun has no likeness in the sky.

Many of Rūmī's allusions to Qalandars point to his relationship with Shams; the poet calls Shams a Qalandar, or Shams becomes the speaking persona advising Rūmī, as in the following poem, which I translate in full to show how Rūmī integrates such Qalandarī motifs into the poetic fabric of his ghazals:⁴⁹

48 Rūmī, *Kullīyyāt-i Shams*, vol. 6, pp. 88–89 (ghazal 2758, lines 1, 18, 20).

49 Rūmī, *Kullīyyāt-i Shams*, vol. 5, pp. 235–36 (ghazal 2508).

مرا آن دلبر پنهان همی گوید به پنهانی
 «به من ده جان به من ده جان، چه باشد این گران جانی
 یکی لحظه قلندر شو، قلندر را مسخر شو
 سمندر شو، سمندر شو، در آتش رو به آسانی
 در آتش رو، در آتش رو، در آتش دان ما خوش رو
 که آتش با خلیل ما کند رسم گلستانی
 نمی دانی که خار ما بود شاهنشاه گلها؟
 نمی دانی که کفر ما بود جان مسلمان؟»
 سراندازان! سراندازان! سراندازی سراندازی
 مسلمانان! مسلمانان! مسلمانان، مسلمانان!
 خداوندا، تو می دانی که صحرا از قفس خوشتر
 ولیکن جغد نشکبید ز گورستان و ویرانی
 کنون دوران جان آمد، که دریا را درآشامد
 زهی دوران، زهی حلقه، زهی دوران سلطانی
 خمش! چون نیست پوشیده فقیر باده نوشیده
 که هست اندر رخس پیدا فر و انوار سبجانی

The hidden robber of the heart repeats to me secretly
 Give me your soul, give me your soul – why are you so niggardly?
 Be a Qalandar for a moment, be a victorious Qalandar
 Be a salamander, be a salamander, step easily into fire.
 Step into fire, step into fire, step merrily into our fire,
 For fire will treat our friend as if he were in a rose garden.
 Don't you know that our thorn is the king of roses?
 Don't you know that our heresy is the soul of the Muslim faith?
 O giddy head! O giddy head! Go lose your head! Go lose your head!
 O Muslims! O Muslims! – Be Muslim! Be Muslim!
 O God, you know that the wide plain is more pleasant than the cage
 But no owl can bear to live save in a ruin and graveyard.
 Now is the soul's season, when the soul swallows the whole sea
 What a season! What fraternity! All hail to the season of kingship!
 Silence! For it's hidden from none that the fakir has drunk wine
 Since divine glory and the lights of God are shining from his face.

This is not the place to analyse the entire poem, but one aspect of the poem that deserves attention is how the poet's persona advises the audience to behave like a Qalandar, that is, to prove himself a worthy lover, to renounce Islam, and to devote his life to the beloved. It is in *kufṛ*, meaning both infidelity and heresy or unbelief, that true Islam is found. The lover should be ready to accept all the dangers and hazards this love entails, even if this love undermines his good reputation and formal religion. Love is like a fire and the lover has to be willing to go into this fire like a salamander.⁵⁰ Only when the lover is cleansed by the fire of love, can he transcend himself and stand above the limiting predicates of exoteric belief and disbelief, whether of a Muslim or non-Muslim appearance, for it is only at this point that the poet's exhortation to 'Be Muslim!' makes any sense. By referring to such Qalandarī behaviour, the poet points to a higher level of piety where sanctimonious, hypocritical appearances of outward faith and piety are all eradicated.

Persian mystics have concocted a plethora of metaphors, anecdotes, and stories to express this idea. One famous story recounts the love of the Sufi Shaykh Ṣan'ān for a Christian girl. In this story, the poet 'Aṭṭār emphasizes the importance of eradicating outward religiosity as well as the essential features of an ideal lover.⁵¹ Shaykh Ṣan'ān is a great religious scholar and Sufi master, who lives near the Ka'ba in Mecca, is the key-holder of the House, and has thousands of Sufi disciples. 'Aṭṭār emphasizes the Shaykh's high religious position in the opening lines. He dreams for several nights that he is worshipping facing Rome. As the dreams keep coming, he decides to go to the Christian realm. After a long journey, he meets a Christian girl and falls deeply in love with her.⁵² He declares his love to her, but the girl refuses to reciprocate. She

50 For the imagery of the salamander in Persian mystical poetry see Annemarie Schimmel, *A Two-Coloured Brocade: The Imagery of Persian Poetry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1992), p. 199.

51 Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār, *Manṭiq al-ṭayr*, ed. Sayyid Ṣādiq Gawharīn (Tehran: Shirkat-i Intishārāt-i 'Ilmī wa Farhangī 1368 A.Hsh./1989), pp. 67–88; for an English translation see *The Conference of the Birds*, trans. Dick Davis and Afkham Darbandi (Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics 1984; repr. 2011). For an analysis of this story see Dick Davis, 'The Journey as Paradigm: Literal and Metaphorical Travel in 'Aṭṭār's *Manṭiq al-ṭayr*', in *Edebiyât: The Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures* 4/2 (1993), pp. 173–83. On the translations of this story see Christopher Shackle, 'Representation of 'Aṭṭār in the West and in the East: Translations of *Manṭiq al-ṭayr* and the Tale of Shaykh Ṣan'ān', in *'Aṭṭār and the Persian Sufi Tradition: The Art of Spiritual Flight*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn and Christopher Shackle (London: I. B. Tauris 2006), pp. 165–93.

52 On the symbolism of Christianity in 'Aṭṭār see Leonard Lewisohn, 'Sufi Symbolism in the Persian Hermeneutic Tradition: Reconstructing the Pagoda of 'Aṭṭār's Esoteric Poetics', *'Aṭṭār and the Persian Sufi Tradition: The Art of Spiritual Flight*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn and Christopher Shackle (London: I. B. Tauris 2006), pp. 255–308.

asks him what such a pious ascetic Muslim wants from loving a Christian girl like herself. After a long discussion she proposes four conditions for their union. The Shaykh must drink wine, kneel before idols and images, burn the Qur'ān, and renounce Islam. The Shaykh says that he is willing to drink wine but the other three conditions are a step too far. The girl takes him to a tavern where he drinks old wine with his new love. He becomes heavily drunk and emphatically declares his love to the girl.

Subsequently the Shaykh does accept the other conditions such as burning the Qur'ān, idol worshipping and even renouncing Islam for the sake of love. Even then the girl does not surrender herself, asking the Shaykh to take care of her pigs before she will reciprocate his love. When the Shaykh's followers come to visit him and try to persuade him to return to Mecca, he hurls stones at them, driving them away. Later the Shaykh's disciples have a dream in which the prophet Muḥammad promises them that the Shaykh will return to the Sufi Path and the Islamic faith. This soon happens: the Shaykh sets out for Mecca, bringing the girl with him. As is usual in this genre of Sufi stories, the girl converts to Islam, but on the way to Mecca, she dies.

This story is used in the mystical context to convey several lessons. The first question is: what is the spiritual significance of the Shaykh, who possesses the highest religious authority, leaving the House of God and becoming totally captivated by a Christian girl, a heretic? 'Aṭṭār shows that romantic love internalizes religion and transforms one's faith into an intimate matter of personal feeling. The Shaykh had achieved everything in religious terms but he had missed out on love. The sort of love that 'Aṭṭār is referring to is a purgative force that burns everything until only Love itself remains. All outward show – even a show of religious piety – must be eradicated, because as long as any traces of sanctimonious piety remain, love does not show itself. Love's conditions are far more demanding than those of normative devotional piety, which in Shaykh Ṣan'ān's case were based on conventional ascetic forms of exoteric Islam. Love thus appropriately demanded of him that he become a swineherd in a Christian realm, the most humiliating act possible for a Muslim religious scholar.

Yet this is the typical Qalandarī way of practising love: the lover should welcome ill-fame and having a 'bad name' (*bad-nāmī*)! The concept of a 'bad name' also points to the distinction between easy and difficult love. In easy love, everything goes according to one's wishes, personal whims, and passions, whereas difficult love brings shame on the lover. The joys and woes of difficult love cannot be understood by anyone but the lover himself, for they are ultimately a secret between himself and his Beloved. God has called humans to spiritual love, hidden in man's heart. Realization of such love always involves

much hardship and tribulation. Without acquiring a bad name, it is impossible to attain unconditional spiritual love, which is the highest mystical station. To attain union with the beloved, one has to be able to fully identify oneself with the beloved and efface one's own identity. As Persian poets emphasize, the lover should remove all colours (*rang*) in order to be 'without colour' (*bi-rang*) and become 'one colour' (*yik rang*) with the beloved. The resulting compound will reveal the obliteration of the lover's identity in the beloved and finally in Love itself.

In Persian mystical love theories, love devours everything, even the lover and the beloved themselves. Aḥmad Ghazālī emphasizes time and again how love destroys everything until only 'Love' itself remains. Shaykh Ṣanʿān was the greatest religious scholar and Sufi master of his time, but his spiritual realization lacked any living experience of love; to obtain that he needed to fully internalize his devotion to God through undergoing the difficult trials and tribulations of romantic love. Through his experience of earthly love, he learned how to love God. An inseparable part of this love is the elimination of one's ego. Love is often depicted as fire that burns away the lover's ego, in such a way that he accepts the beloved fully and unconditionally.

Qalandarī motifs pervade all of Rūmī's lyrical poetry. In some places, Rūmī applies the term 'Qalandar' to his own heart. His poetic persona in the following line exhorts the reader not to go to a tavern:⁵³

ای دل تو مرو سوی خرابات هر چند قلندر جهانی

O heart! Do not go to the tavern,
Although you be a Qalandar of world fame.

This association of the Qalandar with the tavern appears several other times in his poetry, as in the following verses:⁵⁴

بزم و شراب لعل و خرابات و کافری
ملک قلندرست و قلندر از او بری
گویی قلندرم من و این دلپذیر نیست
زیرا که آفریده نباشد قلندری

53 Rūmī, *Kullīyyāt-i Shams*, vol. 6, p. 74 (ghazal 2733, line 5).

54 Rūmī, *Kullīyyāt-i Shams*, vol. 6, p. 234 (ghazal 3004, lines 1–2).

A feast, ruby wine, the tavern, and heresy
 Are the Qalandar's kingdom yet the Qalandar transcends them.
 You say, 'I am a Qalandar' but this is not agreeable,
 For the Qalandar is uncreated.⁵⁵

Other Qalandarī poems refer to the mystic's exertion on the path. In the following poem, Rūmī employs the rhyme *fāriḡh* (the *radīf* that rhymes being *-ār*) to enumerate various qualities of a Qalandar. While in Sanā'ī and 'Aṭṭār's *Qalandariyyāt* the poets choose a provocative stance against organized Sufis and the orthodox, Rūmī's Qalandarī poems focus on the Qalandar's effort to attain the spiritual goal. The word *fāriḡh* means, among other things, 'free; ceasing from labour, detached, being at ease; free from care; unrestrained', and his emphasis on the carefree lifestyle of Qalandars merely refers to their outward behaviour. This carefree attitude forms a shield to protect them against hypocrisy so that they remain engaged solely with their spiritual quest.⁵⁶ Interpreting this ghazal within the context of Sufi love mysticism, Rūmī starts the poem by reiterating that the mystic must be engaged with the beloved at all times. The word *kār* (work, labour, affair) points to mystic exertion, emphasizing that the mystical quest is an arduous enterprise, during which the mystic could not be inattentive to his goal even for a moment. Rūmī compares the Qalandar to an industrious ant who gathers provisions.⁵⁷ The reward for the ant is that it grows into a Solomon.⁵⁸ Rūmī then compares the Qalandar to an ocean, which is at times busily teeming with waves and at times calm and serene, yet never stops being generous, incessantly offering all it has to creatures. The ocean is of course the locality for the mystic's epiphany. He must dive into the sea, going into the depths of the waters to find the peerless pearl, a symbol for the mystic secret. In his sea imagery, Rūmī is apparently following Sanā'ī, who in his *Ḥadīqat al-ḥaqīqa* (The Garden of the Truth) employs a similar maritime metaphor.⁵⁹

55 That is to say, the Qalandar's mystical state transcends temporal being (time, place, and circumstance). This verse paraphrased the renowned adage: *Al-ṣūfī ḡhayru'l-makhlūq* (The Sufi is uncreated). On which, see Bāqir Ṣadrīniyā, *Farhang-i mātḥūrāt-i mutūn-i 'urfānī* (Tehran: Surūsh 1380 A.Hsh./2001), p. 301.

56 Francis J. Steingass, *Persian – English Dictionary* (London: Routledge 1963), s.v. 'Fāriḡh'.

57 For the imagery of the ant in Persian poetry see Seyed-Gohrab, 'Insects in Classical Persian Literature: The Case of the Ant', in *Persica: Annual of the Dutch-Iranian Society* 16 (2000), pp. 77–112.

58 See Qur'ān, xxvii: 18–19.

59 Sanā'ī, *Ḥadīqat al-ḥaqīqa wa sharī'at al-ṭarīqa*, ed. M. Ḥusaynī (Tehran: Markaz-i Nashr-i Dānishgāhī 1382 A.Hsh./2004), p. 228 (lines 3895–99).

سرکشتی ز آرزو دان پر
 قعر دریاست جای طالب در
 عزم خشکی براسب و بر خرکن
 چون به دریا رسی قدم سرکن
 مرد در جوی را به دریا بار
 جان و سر دان همیشه پای افزار
 سفر آب را به سر شو پیش
 اندر آموز هم ز سایه خویش

Know that although the ship is loaded fully with desires
 the place of the seeker of the pearl is the depth of the ocean.
 When travelling on dry land, go by horse or donkey;
 When you arrive at the ocean, use your head as a stepping stone.
 When the ocean grants him admission, the seeker of the pearl
 should always use his soul and head as footwear.
 The journey to the sea should be undertaken by the head;
 learn from your own shadow.

While the mystic is on the boat, the ocean should grant him audience (*bār*). So both the captain and the ocean are ready to receive the mystic, but the mystic should dare to embark on the perilous journey. While true Qalandars are in the middle of the ocean, others are idly on the land, dreaming of the sea journey. In the following ghazal, Rūmī implicitly refers to the contrast between the easy and safe stay on land, the realm of the intellect and reason, and the risky journey on the ocean, the realm of love and spiritual illumination.⁶⁰

مدارم یک زمان از کار فارغ
 که گردد آدمی غمخوار فارغ
 چو فارغ شد غم او را سخره گیرد
 مبادا هیچ کس ای یار فارغ

60 Rūmī, *Kullīyyāt-i Shams*, vol. 3, p. 124 (ghazal 1297).

قلندر گر چه فارغ می نماید
 ولیکن نیست در اسرار فارغ
 ز اول می کشد او خار بسیار
 همه گل گشت و گشت از خار فارغ
 چو موری دانه ها انبار می کرد
 سلیمان شد شد از انبار فارغ
 چو دریاییست او پرکار و بی کار
 از او گیرند و او ز ایثار فارغ
 قلندر هست در کشتی نشسته
 روان در راه و از رفتار فارغ
 در این حیرت بسی بینی در این راه
 ز کشتی و ز دریا بار فارغ
 به یاد بحر مست از وهم کشتی
 نشسته احمق بسیار فارغ

Let me not be free from labour one moment,
 For the carefree man becomes sorrowful.
 When he becomes carefree, sorrow will deride him;
 O friend! May no one be without care.
 Although the Qalandar appears to be carefree,
 He is not in his inmost secret heart at all carefree.
 From the beginning, he suffers many a thorn,
 Till he becomes all a rose, free from thorns,
 Just like the ant who stores up grains,
 Who, becoming Solomon, is needless of any store;
 Just like the ocean, tranquil yet tempestuous;
 All receive benefits from its blithe generosity.
 A Qalandar is the one who sits in the boat,
 Speeding on his way, but careless how he fares.
 Perplexed, you will see many on this road,
 Without care for the boat and the sea's granting audience.
 With drunken fantasies of the ocean, the boat but foolish conjecture
 For them, look how many idiots are idly sitting by.

4 The Ka'ba as a Barrier for Piety

Another favourite Qalandarī motif in Rūmī's poetry revolves around the Muslim ritual pilgrimage to Mecca, visiting the House of God (Ka'ba). According to antinomian mystical convictions, sacred Islamic places, including the Ka'ba, have no value. What matters is worshipping and loving God himself. The Ka'ba is a symbol of the outward religious experience while the heart is the sanctuary of the inward. As an outward symbol, the Ka'ba may distract the lover from his contemplation of the beloved. This is why Persian mystics often deride the Ka'ba as being merely a building made of water and clay. A distinction is thus often made between the *ka'ba-yi gil* (Ka'ba of clay) and the *ka'ba-yi dil* (Ka'ba of the heart). In this respect, the Sufis often cite the *Ḥadīth qudsī* (prophetic tradition in which the speaker is God) to emphasize the superior quality of the heart, such as the following: 'Neither heaven nor My earth contain Me, but the heart of my believing servant does contain Me.'⁶¹ Worshipping at the Ka'ba reminds the mystic of the pagan Arab ritual of worshipping the idols that were kept inside the House. Mystics told many anecdotes to display their disapproval of worshipping the outward house, because a physical journey to the Ka'ba was a mark of hypocrisy.⁶² The great Sufi Shiblī (d. 946) ran with a torch in his hand to set the Ka'ba on fire. When people asked him about his motivation, he replied that people were so occupied with worshipping the House, they had forgotten the Owner.⁶³

The Ka'ba was pictured as a bride wearing the *astār* (black veil), waiting for her lover, the black stone being the beauty spot on her face and the door-ring her curly locks.⁶⁴ If the House were to distract the mystic lover from the Owner of the House, the lover would be worshipping in two directions, an act of polytheism. These mystics were so afraid of the slightest diversion from God, which would impair their piety, that they rejected even the holiest Islamic site, loved and venerated by Muslims. Although such condemnations of the House and

61 The tradition also appears in the writings of Shams. See Shams al-Dīn Tabrizī, *Maqālāt*, vol. 1, pp. 125, 213, 267, 284, and vol. 2, p. 79; also see Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Tabrizī, *Me & Rūmī: The Autobiography of Shams-i Tabrizī*, trans. William C. Chittick (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae 2004; Lahore: Suhail Academy 2005), pp. 126–27. The translation of the hadith is based on Chittick's.

62 A. A. Seyed-Gohrab, *Laylī and Majnūn: Love, Madness and Mystic Longing in Nizāmī's Epic Romance* (Leiden/Boston: Brill 2003), pp. 227–34.

63 'Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyā*, ed. M. Isti'lāmī (Tehran: Zawwār 1386 A.Hsh./2007), p. 539. This story is also ascribed to Rābi'a by Aflākī in his *Manāqib al-'arīfīn*. See J. Nūrbakhsh, *Zanān-i šūfī* (London: Intishārāt-i Khāniqāh-i Ni'matollāhī 1363 A.Hsh./1984), p. 48.

64 A.L.F.A. Beelaert, 'Mānī ba 'arūs-i ḥaḡla-basta / dar ḥaḡla-yi čār-sū nišasta: The Ka'ba as a Woman: A Topos Classical Persian Literature,' in *Persica: Annual of the Dutch-Iranian Society* 13 (1988–89), pp. 107–123.

the pilgrimage were intentionally provocative, they served as effective metaphors to emphasize how easily one can fall into hypocrisy, so as to remind Muslims that true piety lies within the heart.

In Shams's *maqālāt* (discourses), there is an anecdote about a man who wants to buy a mill. Shams tells him to give the money intended for the purchase of the mill to Shams, who will then turn round him like a mill, and so give the man wheat of the spirit beyond all material measure and estimation.⁶⁵ Rūmī tells a similar story in the second book of his *Mathnawī* about the great mystic Bāyazīd from Bisṭām (d. 234/848 or 261/875) and relates this to the Ḥajj.⁶⁶ On his way to Mecca, Bāyazīd meets a wandering dervish who asks him where he is going. He replies that he is going to the House of God, at which the dervish asks what kind of provisions he carries. Bāyazīd replies that he has two hundred silver coins. The dervish says: "Circumambulate seven times around me and consider this act more valuable than the ritual performed around the House of God."⁶⁷ Subsequently, the dervish asks him to leave his money behind, for his wish to go to Mecca has already been fulfilled.⁶⁸

کعبه هرچندی که خانهٔ برّ اوست
 خلقت من نیز خانهٔ سِرِّ اوست
 تا بکرد آن خانه را در وی نرفت
 و اندرین خانه به جز آن حی نرفت
 چون مرا دیدی خدا را دیدهای
 گرد کعبهٔ صدق برگردیدهای
 خدمت من طاعت و حمد خداست
 تا نپنداری که حق از من جداست
 چشم نیکو باز کن در من نگر
 تا ببینی نور حق اندر بشر

65 Shams al-Dīn Tabrizī, *Maqālāt*, p. 127.

66 On Rūmī's treatment of Bāyazīd in the *Mathnawī* see Annabel Keeler, 'Rūmī and Bāyazīd: Hagiographical Moments in the *Mathnawī-yi ma'nawī*', in *Mawlana Rumi Review* viii (2017), pp. 110–35.

67 My translation is based on Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī, *The Mathnawī of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī*, ed., trans., and comm. Reynold A. Nicholson (London: Gibb Memorial Trust 1925–40), II: 2241. For the background of this particular scene see Keeler, 'Rūmī and Bāyazīd', pp. 117–20.

68 Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, ed. Nicholson, II: 2245–49.

Although the Ka'ba is the House of His religious service,
 The creation of me is also the House of his secrets.⁶⁹
 Since God has made the Ka'ba, He has not gone into it,
 While no one except the Living has entered in my house [heart].
 When you see me, you have seen God;
 You have circled round the Ka'ba of sincerity.
 To serve me is to obey and glorify God:
 Beware, do not think that God is separate from me.
 Open your seeing eyes and gaze on me,
 That you may see the Light of God in man.

For Persian mystics, love has a prominent place, even higher than religious tenets and rituals. Rūmī writes:⁷⁰

جمع تو دیدم پس از این هیچ پریشان نشوم
 راه تو دیدم پس از این همه ایشان نشوم
 ای که تو شاه چنی، سیرکن صد چومنی
 چشم و دلم سیر کنی سخره این خوان نشوم
 کعبه چو آمد سوی من جانب کعبه نروم
 ماه من آمد به زمین قاصد کیوان نشوم

I've seen your gathering, from which I won't be driven off;
 Now that I've seen your way, I'll not pursue another's way.
 O you, king of meadows, gratify a hundred men like me;
 If you gratify my eyes and heart, I won't be a toy at banquets.
 If the Ka'ba comes to me, I will not go to the Ka'ba,
 My moon has descended to earth, I won't be Saturn's messenger.

Perhaps the most famous of Rūmī's poems on pilgrimage is the following, which has been sung by several artists in the Persian-speaking world in recent times. The ghazal's message is typically antinomian, advising the reader not to go to the House of God, as the beloved is in one's heart. Fatemeh Keshavarz

69 See Badī' al-Zamān Furūzānfar, *Aḥādith va qīṣaṣ-i mathnavī* (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr 1381 A.Hsh./2002), p. 216, para. 336.

70 Rūmī, *Kullīyāt-i Shams*, vol. 3, p. 185 (ghazal 1398).

rightly says that this ghazal is an example showing how Rūmī distances himself from convention and moves 'in the direction of closeness and personal contact'.⁷¹ It is indeed due to this intimacy and plain language that after seven hundred years, Persian-speaking people still read such ghazals and apply them to their personal situations. As in his other poems on the Ka'ba, Rūmī's Sufi message is aimed at concentrating the heart, yet such ghazals have often been used in international political contexts, as indeed they are today: this ghazal was recently cited by an Iranian politician exhorting citizens not to go to Saudi Arabia due to current political tensions between the two countries. The air of antinomianism and the emphasis on philanthropy may easily convince some readers that such ghazals are literally opposed to the performance of the Muslim rite of pilgrimage to Mecca.⁷²

ای قوم به حج رفته بجایید بجایید
 معشوق همین جاست بیایید بیایید
 معشوق تو همسایه و دیوار به دیوار
 در بادیه سرگشته شما در چه هوایید
 گر صورت بی صورت معشوق ببینید
 هم خواجه و هم خانه و هم کعبه شما بید
 ده بار از آن راه بدان خانه برفتید
 یک بار از این خانه بر این بام برآید
 آن خانه لطیفست نشانهاش بگفتید
 از خواجه آن خانه نشانی بنمایید
 یک دسته گل کو اگر آن باغ بدیدید
 یک گوهر جان کو اگر از بحر خدایید
 با این همه آن رنج شما گنج شما باد
 افسوس که بر گنج شما پرده شما بید

71 For a discussion of this ghazal see Keshavarz, *Reading Mystical Lyric*, p. 158.

72 Rūmī, *Kullīyāt-i Shams*, vol. 2, p. 65 (ghazal 648).

Pilgrims On The Way! Where are you?
 Here is the beloved, here!
 Your beloved lives next door
 wall to wall
 why do you wander
 round and round the desert?
 If you look into the face of Love
 and not just at its superficial form
 You yourselves become the house of God
 and are its lords

Ten times
 you trod the trek unto that house
 For once
 come into this house
 climb onto this roof
 That sweet house of sanctity –
 you have described its features in detail
 but now give me some indication
 of the features of its Lord
 If you have seen that garden,
 where is your bouquet of souvenirs?
 If you are from God's sea,
 where is your mother pearl of soul?

And yet, may all your troubles
 bring you treasure!
 Too bad that you yourselves are veiling
 the treasures hid within⁷³

73 This is a poetic and accurate translation of the poem by Franklin D. Lewis in *Rumi: Swallowing the Sun: Poems Translated from the Persian* (Oxford: Oneworld 2008), p. 26. My literal translation runs as follows:

Where are you, where are you, you pilgrims returned?
 The beloved is here, so come back, come back.
 Your beloved is your neighbour, you share one wall,
 What are you searching for, lost in the desert?
 If you could see the beloved's formless face
 You'd realize you are the Lord, the house, and the Ka'ba.
 Ten times you went on that road to the House,
 Come once from this house to the roof.
 That house is subtle, you spoke of its features

In the following ghazal, the outward pilgrimage to Mecca is associated with reason and intellectual ratiocination (*‘aql*), which Rūmī and other Sufis contrast with love. The domain of reason is limited to this world, whereas love goes beyond all boundaries. The poem teaches the renunciation of reason and utter reliance on love, enumerating several contrasting features of love and reason. While reason is still entangled in deliberations and pondering, love has already reached the spiritual destination:⁷⁴

در میان عاشقان عاقل مباد
 خاصه در عشق این لعین قبا
 دور بادا عاقلان از عاشقان
 دور بادا بوی گلخن از صبا
 گر درآید عاقلی گو راه نیست
 ور درآید عاشقی صد مرحبا

May no intellectual ever remain among the lovers!
 Especially when it's love of one in this red-ruby gown
 May the intellectuals stay far from the lovers!
 May the reek of the furnace be far from the Zephyr!
 If a man of intellect come by, tell him, 'no entrance!'
 And if a lover comes, say, 'a hundred times, welcome!'

The House of God has become a transparent, even a cliché topos in Rūmī's poetry, referring to his relationship with his beloved, indicating his constancy, piety, and absolute devotion. In a few references, the beloved is put on an equal footing with the House of God, and Rūmī depicts himself as a mad pilgrim walking devotedly around the beloved. Such references show Rūmī's feverish longing for the beloved, which is emphasized both through such imagery and in the poem's rhythm, the internal rhyme in each hemistich, and the final

Show the signs of the Lord of that house.
 If you've seen the garden, where is your bouquet of roses?
 If you are from God's ocean, where is the pearl of your soul?
 Despite all this, may your exertions yield your treasure;
 Alas that you are the veil over your own treasure.

74 Rūmī, *Kullīyāt-i Shams*, vol. 1, p. 103 (ghazal 172, lines 1–3).

rhyme *ṭawāf* ('walking around'), the formal lexicon used for the circumambulation of pilgrims during their Ḥajj (pilgrimage to the Ka'ba):⁷⁵

کعبه جانها تویی گرد تو آرم طواف
 جغد نیم، بر خراب هیچ ندارم طواف
 پیشه ندارم جزین، کار ندارم جزین
 چون فلکم، روز و شب پیشه و کارم طواف
 بهتر از این یار کیست؟ خوشتر از این کار چیست؟
 پیش بت من سجد، گرد نگارم طواف
 ...

چونک بر آرم سجد باز رهم از وجود
 کعبه شفیع شود چونک گزارم طواف
 حاجی عاقل طواف چند کند؟ هفت هفت
 حاجی دیوانه‌ام، من نشمارم طواف

You are the Ka'ba of the souls, I will revolve round you.
 I am not an owl in the ruin, not knowing how to circle round.
 I have no other occupation, no other job but this:
 Like the spheres, my task is to circle round day and night,
 Who is a better beloved? What work is better than this?
 Than prostrating before my idol, circling round my love?
 ...
 When I prostrate myself, I am released from existence,
 The Ka'ba will intercede for me as I start circling round.
 How many times does a reasonable pilgrim circle round? Seven, seven!
 I am a demented pilgrim, I do not count my circling round.

Like other Persian mystics, Rūmī often looks askance at the rite of pilgrimage to the outward Ka'ba. Conventional pilgrims are sometimes called 'worshippers of stones' (*sang-parastān*) by Rūmī, and he asks them to turn their faces to mystics such as Rūmī himself:⁷⁶

75 Rūmī, *Kullīyyāt-i Shams*, vol. 3, pp. 129–30 (ghazal 1305, lines 1–3, 6–7).

76 Rūmī, *Kullīyyāt-i Shams*, vol. 1, p. 292 (ghazal 503, line 8).

کعبه چو از سنگ پرستان پُرسِت روی به ما آر که قبله خداست

As the Ka'ba is full of worshippers of stones,
Turn your face towards us, for this is the Qibla of God.

In the following couplet, Rūmī advises his readers to circumambulate their heart instead of going to Mecca:⁷⁷

طواف کعبه دل کن اگر دلی داری دلست کعبه معنی، تو گل چه پنداری

Circle round the Ka'ba of the heart, if you have a heart;
Your heart is the real Ka'ba, why do you think it's but mudbrick?

In the next couplet of the same ghazal, the rites of circumambulation and pilgrimage to the Ka'ba are said to have a specifically moral purpose: to win hearts. By 'winning hearts' he means creating friendships and cultivating love relationships, so as to better understand one's fellow human beings. In the deepest spiritual sense, Rūmī argues here that winning the heart of one single person is ultimately more important in the eyes of God than the formal pilgrimage to Mecca by which one may attain the rank of 'being a pilgrim' (*Hājji*):⁷⁸

طواف کعبه صورت حقت از آن فرمود که تا به واسطه آن دلی به دست آری

God asks you to go on a pilgrimage to the physical Ka'ba
So that through that act you may conquer and win one heart.

In couplet three of the same ghazal, Rūmī warns the pilgrims not to hurt or break another person's heart, for if they do, their pilgrimage cannot be accepted:⁷⁹

هزار بار پیاده طواف کعبه کنی قبول حق نشود گر دلی بیازاری

Though you may circle round the Ka'ba a thousand times on foot,
God will not accept your pilgrimage if you hurt one single heart.

77 Rūmī, *Kullīyyāt-i Shams*, vol. 6, p. 298 (ghazal 3104, line 1).

78 Rūmī, *Kullīyyāt-i Shams*, vol. 6, p. 298 (ghazal 3104, line 2).

79 Rūmī, *Kullīyyāt-i Shams*, vol. 6, p. 298 (ghazal 3104, line 3).

According to Rūmī, the truest pilgrimage is that which is internal to man, in the hierocosmos of the heart, compared to which the outer pilgrimage is of secondary importance. In one verse he even speaks of the Ka'ba itself as coming to visit the realized Sufi. This reminds me of 'Aṭṭār's report about the female mystic Rabi'a al-'Adawīyya (d. 801), who set out for Mecca, but in the desert saw the Ka'ba coming to meet her. 'Rabi'a said: "I crave for the Owner of the House. What should I do with the House? I crave for [God's promise,] 'whoever approaches me by a hand's span, I will approach him by an arm's span.' Why should I look at the Ka'ba? I cannot have the Ka'ba, why should I be happy with its beauty?"⁸⁰ Rūmī's allusion to the Ka'ba circumambulating the mystic is apparently based on such reports about the high spiritual status of the Sufi, in which materiality, even of the House of God, become secondary.⁸¹

متقیان به بادیه رفته عشا و غادیه
کعبه روان شده به تو تا کندت زیارتی

Pious believers fare through the desert dawn and dusk,
While the Ka'ba hastens to visit you.

One finds exactly the same doctrine in the great Sufi theologian known as the 'Proof of Islam' Abū Ḥamid Muḥammad Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), who distinguished between two types of travellers: those who physically travel to the Ka'ba and those who experience the journey in their hearts (*saḡar-i bāṭin saḡar-i dil-ast*). While the former reach the Ka'ba and walk seven times around the House, the latter are visited by the Ka'ba, which circles the mystic seven times.⁸²

5 Conclusion

Rūmī's antinomian philosophy is deeply rooted in the Persian poetic and Islamic Sufi tradition. Rūmī did not invent the Qalandarī themes and motifs but he contributed immeasurably to this tradition. Contemporary Western readings of Rūmī as a non-Muslim or as a rare example of a gentle version of Islam relate largely to the non-institutionalized religiosity and spirituality that

80 'Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyā*, ed. Isti'lāmī, p. 63.

81 Rūmī, *Kullīyyāt-i Shams*, vol. 5, p. 216 (ghazal 2476, line 20).

82 *Kīmīyā-yi sa'ādat*, ed. Husayn Khadīvjām (Tehran: 'Ilmī wa Farhangī 1364 A.Hsh./1985), vol. 1, pp. 456–57.

have sprung up in secular Western society over the last few decades. Rūmī's antinomian religious ideas thus make a perfect fit for people who have turned their backs on orthodox religion, wishing to push the centre to the extreme periphery or to reject it altogether. Although like very many other Persian Sufis, Rūmī transgresses Islamic laws to create a new definition of piety, such transgressions do not mean that he has denounced Islam or that he equates all religions as equally valid. Using wine, homoerotic love, and other things forbidden by orthodox Islamic law, Persian mystics brought doctrines that lay at the periphery of Shari'a-oriented Islam into the centre of religiosity. These transgressions complement but do not necessarily contradict the existing laws and doctrines of Islam. As Jenks states, transgression is 'a deeply reflexive act of denial and affirmation'.⁸³

Persian poets, including Rūmī, relied heavily on Qalandarī motifs and themes in their poetry, which allowed them to create a higher space of ambiguity where all types of esoteric realities could be discussed and elaborated in purely symbolic terms. In several poems, such as the one below, the poet exhibits how he transgresses the boundaries to create new room for piety and union with the beloved, going beyond limiting concepts such as belief and unbelief.⁸⁴

از کفر و ز اسلام برون صحرائیست
 ما را به میان آن فضا سودائیت
 عارف چو بدان رسید سر را بنهد
 نه کفر و نه اسلام و نه آنجا جائیت

Outside Islam and unbelief, there is a plain,
 In the midst of this space we have longed for love.
 When the mystic arrives here, he lays down his head,
 As here there is no place for either Islam or unbelief.⁸⁵

83 See Chris Jenks, *Transgression* (London: Routledge 2003), p. 3; see also John Jervis, *Transgressing the Modern: Explorations in the Western Experience of Otherness* (Oxford: Blackwell 1999), p. 4.

84 Rūmī, *Kullīyyāt-i Shams*, vol. 8, p. 67 (quatrain 395).

85 See also Rūmī, *The Quatrains of Rūmī*, trans. Gamard and Farhadi, p. 407. It is interesting to note that such quatrains have been crudely exploited by the novelist Khaled Hosseini and the Hollywood star Brad Pitt, who tattooed the following (mis-)translation of the poem onto his arm, to characterize Rūmī's religious ideas: 'There exists a field, beyond all notions of right and wrong. I will meet you there', which is probably based on Khaled Hosseini's dedication in his book *And the Mountains Echoed*: 'Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and right doing, there is a field. I'll meet you there.' For an analysis of this poem and

In such a space, all dualities are removed. The space itself becomes the site of ambiguity, a poetic trope in which the All, the Infinite, can be contained. 'He lays down his head' (*sar rā binahad*, literally 'placing one's head') points to the realized gnostic or mystic (*ʿārif*) relinquishing the limitations of his ratio-cinative intellectual faculty, which as part of the Whole can never fathom the Whole. Even the imagination falls short in its attempt to imagine the Whole.

The phrase also alludes to the mystic's radical submission, going beyond anything he can imagine. By transgressing the conservative boundaries of exoteric religious convention, mystics created ambiguities within familiar polarities: the centre and periphery (exemplified by jurists and wandering mystics respectively), the profane and the sacred, good and evil, purity and impurity, and so forth. These ambiguities allowed the Sufi poets to emphasize that such dichotomies are not absolute, but rather paradoxes to be deeply contemplated and reflected on. They thereby highlighted the complexity of the ideas framing the specific exoteric laws, tenets, and precepts of Islam. In fact, the dualities are required to create the paradox that creates an epistemological space wide enough to then remove and transcend all temporal dualities. Moreover, in the above quatrain the word *ṣaḥrā*, translated here as 'plain', may also mean 'desert', which is often the locality where the mystic finds illumination.⁸⁶ In the following quatrain, Rūmī names several dualities, but these become secondary and even trivial when the mystic lover reaches his destination.⁸⁷

در راه یگانگی چه طاعت چه گناه
در کوی خرابات چه درویش چه شاه
رخسار قلندری، چه روشن، چه سیاه
بر کنگره عرش، چه خورشید چه ماه

On the path of Oneness, what is the difference between obedience and sin?

In the tavern lane, what is the difference between a beggar and a king?

a history of its translation see Ibrahim Gamard, 'The Popularization of Rumi' (available at <https://aalequtub.files.wordpress.com/2018/04/apparently-irreligious-verses.pdf>), accessed 27 July 2018.

86 For an excellent treatment of the subject see B. McGinn, 'Ocean and Desert as Symbols of Mystical Absorption in the Christian Tradition', in *The Journal of Religion*, 74/2 (1994), pp. 155–81.

87 Rūmī, *Kullīyāt-i Shams*, vol. 8, p. 267 (quatrain 1585).

What does it matter if the face of the Qalandar be light or dark?
On the highest turret of heaven what is the difference between sun and
moon?⁸⁸

All boundaries such as those between the sacred and secular, the lover and the beloved, obedience and disobedience are removed when the object of desire is to attain union with God.

In addition, the ubiquitous antinomian themes and motifs can be considered as expressions of diverse identities in Islamic society, which is often depicted as homogenous with regards to its religious, political, moral, and ethical rules. Antinomian themes allowed mystics to raise questions about the relationships between the centre and the periphery, the normal and the deviant, the profane and the divine. Their elaboration of antinomian concepts has led some modern readers to characterize a mystic such as Rūmī as an atypical Muslim presenting a gentle, loving version of Islam, as I mentioned at the outset of this article. But medieval Islamic society was not homogenous, and poets such as Rūmī used antinomian motifs deliberately to change the hierarchy of values defining the centre and periphery.⁸⁹ The same dynamic has been happening in Western societies: the outward aspects of 'the Church' are criticized to advance an ideal of inner growth. The unorthodox and unruly character of the Qalandar can today easily be detected in role models such as the pop divas Madonna (an admirer of Rūmī's poetry) and Beyoncé (who named her son Rumi).

Although classical Persian poets such as Sa'dī, Ḥāfiz, and 'Umar Khayyām have enjoyed much popularity in the West since the seventeenth century,⁹⁰

88 The quatrain is also included in Gamard and Farhadi's *Quatrains of Rūmī*, p. 408, on which I have largely based my translation of this quatrain.

89 See Roderick Grierson, "One Shrine Alone": Christians, Sufis, and the Vision of Mawlānā', in *The Philosophy of Ecstasy: Rumi and the Sufi Tradition*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (Bloomington, Ind.: World Wisdom 2014), p. 92.

90 Ḥāfiz was greatly appreciated by Goethe, who was inspired by Ḥāfiz's poems in writing his *Westöstliche Divan*. While many translations of Rūmī were available in several European languages, he was not known outside the specialist circles of the Orientalists. Rūmī only became popular in the last two decades of the twentieth century, when translations by Coleman Barks unleashed a Rūmī mania in the US. The message of love in his work and the unorthodox way in which he combines love and religious emotions has contributed to his popularity. For the reception of Persian poets in the UK and the US see J. D. Yohannan, *Persian Poetry in England and America: A 200-Year History* (New York: Caravan Books 1977); for Rūmī's reception see ch. 14 and 15 of Lewis, *Rumi, Past and Present*, pp. 564–634; idem, Franklin Lewis, 'Rumi's *Masnavi*, Part 1: World Figure or New Age Fad?' in *The Guardian*, 30 November 2009 (available at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentis-free/belief/2009/nov/30/rumi-masnavi-muslim-poetry>), accessed 27 July 2018; see also

Rūmī was quite unknown in Europe and North America until the late eighteenth century. However, it is only in recent decades that Rūmī has become internationally renowned in the West. In this era in which there seems to be an increasing gap between Muslims and the so-called Judeo-Christian-humanistic Westerners, we can only hope that the increasing appreciation of Rūmī's work and the tradition to which he belongs will bring people of diverse ethnicities and religions together. As Rūmī's himself says:⁹¹

تو برای وصل کردن آمدی یا برای فصل کردن آمدی

Have you come to lead people to union
Or have you come to tear them apart?

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Jerome W. Clinton, 'Rūmī in America', in *Edebiyât: Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures* 10 (1999), pp. 149–54; Elana Furlanetto, 'The "Rūmī Phenomenon" between Orientalism and Cosmopolitanism: The Case of Elif Shafak's The "Forty Rules of Love"', *European Journal of English Studies* 17/2 (2013), pp. 201–13.

91 Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, ed., trans., and comm. Nicholson, 11: 1755.

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