

**“To Love is to Die”:  
Master Narratives of Love and Death in Ḥasan Dehlevī’s *Ishqnāma***

Persian literature is distinguished by its preoccupation with love and desire in their many manifestations. Over the centuries, countless Persian poets have developed a master narrative concerning the relation between love and death that anticipates much of twentieth century psychoanalysis by showing how these two forces exist in proximate and necessary relation with each other.<sup>1</sup> Yet contemporary theory has yet to grapple with the Persian legacy. Attending more closely to the Persian legacy, and in particular to the new inflection love received when Indian poets brought Persian narratives into conversation with South Asian contexts, can open our eyes to new ways of thinking about love in relation to death, and the relation of both love and death to what Freud referred to as the pleasure principle. In pursuit of this mandate, this essay examines one of the earliest Indo-Persian reworkings of the Persian verse romance (*masnavī*) genre: the *Ishqnāma* (Book of Love) composed in 1301 by the Indo-Persian poet Ḥasan Sijzī, better known as Hasan Dehlevī. 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.<sup>2</sup> Along the way, we examine Hasan’s unique mode of storytelling as an intervention within the Persian

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<sup>1</sup> “Master narrative” is used here, following Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979), to index the long Persian tradition of thinking about love in verse, and of using this tradition to “critique the institutional and ideological forms of knowledge.” As David Gress explains: “Narrative knowledge is knowledge in the form of storytelling” (“Grand Narrative,” *Café Philosophy*, 1998, available at <http://cafephilosophy.co.nz/articles/grand-narrative/>).

<sup>2</sup> Prior scholarship on Hasan Dehlevī is scarce and his *masnavī* is hardly studied at all. See however the first discussion of this work in English: M.I. Borah, “A Short Account of an Unpublished Romantic Masnavī of Amir Ḥasan Dihlavī,” *New Indian Antiquary* 2 (1939-40): 258-62, and more recently Parvindokht Mashhur, “Barrasī va tahlīl-i *Ishqnāma*-yi Amīr Ḥasan Sijzī Dehlevī,” *Faslnāma-yi tahqīqāt-i adabī* 2(1) (2010): 165-178.

tradition that locates the poet within the story by framing the romance through its performance of the player (*mutrib*), the singer (*shi' r-khān*), and the wine-bearer (*sāqī*). We further relate these narrative techniques to Freud's account of death and desire in his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1921).

Our focus on narrative enables us to examine this text and its tradition 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 death in terms that resonate with, contest, and extend the psychoanalytical approaches to love and desire 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 love and death while theorizing desire as an encounter with contingency. These pages explicate these literary engagements in terms that clarify their relevance for a post-Freudian context.

We begin by reviewing the literary development of Ḥasan Sizjī Dehlevī in his Indo-Persian environment. We then turn to the conceptualization of love in Persian and Arabic texts that preceded *Ishqnāma*. Turning to the text of *Ishqnāma*, we trace its narrative arc and recount its conceptualization of the relation between love and desire on the one hand, and love and death on the other. Finally, we relate this Persian master 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 that subtly shifted the Persian master narrative of love, we aim to activate undertheorized potentialities in Freud's way conceptualization of the self's

persistent yearning for its other.

### **Ḥasan Dehlevī and Indo-Persian Literature**

Amīr Ḥasan Sizjī Dehlevī began to make his mark on world literature during a transitional period in Persian literary culture. Following the siege of Baghdad in 1258, which ended the Abbasid Caliphate and shifted the centers of literary culture further eastwards, the old genres, fashioned to praise rulers and patrons whose power was in decline, ceased to fulfill their former functions. The panegyric could no longer encompass the aesthetics being birthed by Persian literary culture in the aftermath of the Mongol conquests. In its new Indo-Persian environment, the poetry of patronage gradually yielded to the verse of mystic union while developing a new language for love. Ḥasan Dehlevī's lyric poems (*ghazals*) and quatrains (*rubā'īyyāt*) were shaped by this historical shift in the function of literary production and its increasing distance from courtly contexts. Although he continued to address his work to royal patrons, and to be financially dependent on the rulers of his age, Ḥasan's themes and narratives appear to have been chosen more according to his personal preferences and intellectual commitments than by imperial dictate.

Born in the North Indian village of Badaun in 1253/4, Ḥasan Dehlevī moved to Delhi in order to complete his education.<sup>3</sup> 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 contemporary accounts, 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,

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<sup>3</sup> For an account of medieval Badaun, the town of his birth, see K. A. Nizami, *Tarikhi Maqalat* (Nadwatul Mussennefeen: Delhi, 1965), 39-44.

Shaykh Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyā'. Over the course of many years of friendship, and perhaps incipient rivalry, Ḥasan Dehlevī's and Amīr Khusrow honed their talents within the politically fraught Delhi Sultanate as they authored poems and verse narratives that expanded and restructured the literary horizons of Indo-Persian literature. In different yet parallel ways, Amīr Khusrow and Ḥasan Dehlevī reworked Persian narratives, producing new Indo-Persian *masnavīs* for an Indian environment.

Both witness and chronicler to the political intrigues of the Delhi Sultanate, Ḥasan died soon after Muhammad Tughluq relocated his capital to Deogir in South India in 1327. His death occurred shortly after the deaths of Amīr Khusrow and their spiritual leader to whom they both turned throughout their lives for guidance, Shaykh Niẓām al-Dīn. 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 (*masnavīs*), yet only two have survived.<sup>4</sup> In addition to his verse narratives, he composed a number of *ghazals* and a prose compendium (*malḡūzāt*) of the sayings of Shaykh Niẓām al-Dīn entitled *Fawa'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.<sup>5</sup> It was no doubt due to Ḥasan's *ghazals* that Shaykh Niẓām al-Dīn favorably compared Ḥasan to his rival, Amīr Khusrow. "Our Khusrow," he said, "is like a saltish river, while Ḥasan is like a sweetish rivulet."<sup>6</sup>

The relative obscurity of Ḥasan's poetic output today stands in sharp contrast to his impact on the development of Indo-Persian literary culture. Ḥasan's poems were copied at the court of Akbar (r. 1542-1605), under whose reign poems on Indian themes experienced a

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<sup>4</sup> Ziyā' al-Dīn Baranī, *Ta'riḡh-i Firūzshāhī*, ed. Sayyid Ahmad Khan (Calcutta, 1862), 359-60.

<sup>5</sup> For the *ghazals* and the *malḡūzāt* translated into English see respectively, *After 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).

<sup>6</sup> 'Abd al-Haqq Muhaddīth, *Musannifīn wa musannifāt-i hind*, Nadwat al-Ulama Library Lucknow, ms. no.70, p. 8.

revival. The fifteenth century poet Jāmī of Herat (in present day Afghanistan) praised the deceptive simplicity of Ḥasan’s literary voice, in his own version of *Layli and Majnun*, which imitate the opening two verses of *Ishq-nāma*:

گیتی که نشیمن زوال است  
آسوده دلی در او محال است  
ماتمکده ایست تیره و تنگ  
در وی ز وفا نه بوی نی رنگ

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 can trust in its faith.

Bīdel, 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 o nīknāmī*].”<sup>8</sup> Other early modern poets influenced by Ḥasan include Kamāl Khujandī and the Mughal court poet Faizī. Beyond South and Central Asia, Ḥasan influenced pioneers of the later Persian ghazal, including Hāfeẓ, 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.

### The Master Narrative of Persian Love

The Persian approach to love foregrounds an eschatology of love defined less by pleasure than by selflessness and ecstasy. The image of being consumed by the fire of love finds a stock expression in the motif of “the candle and the moth [*parvāna va sham*]” which is found in Persian lyric imagery (such as the poems of Indo-Persian poet Mas‘ūd Sa‘d Salmān) as early as 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>9</sup> According to the early twentieth century litterateur and lexicographer Dehkhoda, in Persian literature, love is a pathological condition characterized by extravagant

<sup>7</sup> ‘Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī, *Bahāristān*, ed. Esmā‘il Hakemi (Tehran: Ittilā‘at, 2013), 106.

<sup>8</sup> For these influences, see the introduction to Ḥasan’s *Divan*, ed. Salmatshaeva (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1990), 19.

<sup>9</sup> Mohammad Reza Shafī‘ī *Kadkani*, *Suvar-i khayāl dar shi‘r-i fārsī* (Tehran: Agah, 1996), 604. For a study on fire symbolism, see Jean-Pierre Bayard, *La symbolique du feu* (Paris: Éditions Vêga, 2009), especially the first chapter on fire as symbolizing death and resurrection.

desire (*ifrāt dar muhabbat*). It is associated with “excessive friendship [*dar guzashtan az had-i dūstī*],” as well as “blindness to the beloved’s flaws.”<sup>10</sup> Dehkhoda further describes ‘*ishq*—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 ‘*ishq* indicates the co-existence of self-preservation and destruction of the other. This tension gains prominence in the present context in light of the Freudian interconnection between the pleasure principle and death drive. As Shahāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (1154-1191) writes in his treatise on love, “‘*ishq* is derived from ‘*ashaqa*, 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.”<sup>11</sup> Allegorically, love is sustained by the effacement of the subject of desire and 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, as sickness. However, as we will see, a delicate dialectic of desire and death, and an innovative temporality of love, are established throughout classical Persian writings on love across different genres. In Persian Sufi discourses, the interrelation of love and mortality is most powerfully manifested in the notion of *fanā*, the disappearance of the lover’s existence into that of the beloved. In Persian romances, the tradition of *hubb-i ‘udhrī* (unconsummated love) destines true love to death. Beyond these

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<sup>10</sup> Ali Akbar Dehkhoda, *Lughat-nāma*, vol. 10 (Tehran: Mu’assisa-yi intishārāt va chap-i danishgāh-i tehrān, 1998), 15900.

<sup>11</sup> Shahāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī, *Majmū‘a musannafāt-i shaykh-i ishrāq*, vol.3 [Collected Works of Shaykh Ishraq], ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (Tehran: Pazhuheshgah ‘ulum ensani, 1993), 287.

literary and Sufi associations, even in contemporary colloquial Persian language, 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 *tasawuf-i zāhidāna* (ascetic Sufism) of the Arabic tradition to *tasawuf-i ‘āshiqāna* (amorous Sufism) in which the relationship of God to humanity is reconfigured in terms of love (*hubb* or *muhabbat*) rather than fear (*khawf*). Love for God is identified as true love (*‘ishq-i haqīqī*) in contrast to all other forms of love, which are repudiated as illusory or deceptive love (*‘ishq-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. Ruzbihān Baqlī (d. 1209), the author of *‘Abhar al-‘āshiqān* (Jasmine of lovers), one of the earliest Persian Sufi treatises written on love, praises the sovereign beloved at the very beginning of his *Sharh-i shathiyāt* (Commentary on ecstatic sayings). “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.<sup>12</sup> In addition, Sufi love culminates ideally in the effacement (*mahv*) 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: the amorous vs. the transcendent, the temporal vs. the atemporal, and the perishable vs. that which endures.

When human love is deemed permissible in Islamic Sufism and philosophy by recourse to the formula, *al-majāzu qantarāt al-haqīqa* (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 and interpreters who sought to

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<sup>12</sup> Ruzbihān Baqlī Shīrāzī, *Sharh-i shathiyāt*, edited by Henry Corbin (Tehran: Anjuman-i īrān-shināsī-yi farānseh dar tehrān, 1981), 2.

explain why, for example, the sacred text contained and even exalted as *ahsan al-qisas* (the best of stories) the Quranic story of an earthly love between Yūsuf and Zulaikhā, above all others. Even 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, *Sawānih al-'ushāq* (Hardships of Lovers) (circa 1114), Ahmad 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 for the beloved—this is the least—and considers it insignificant to die for the beloved's satisfaction."<sup>13</sup>

The tradition of *hubb-i 'udhri* (unconsummated love) originating in Arabic tribal love stories and re-iterated in numerous medieval Persian romances, including by Ḥasan in *'Ishq-nāma*, is regarded by this tradition as the purest form of human love. Deriving its name from the Arab tribe, Banul-'udhri, 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 *hadīth* according to which the one "who is in love, keeps chastity, conceals his love, and dies, dies as a martyr."<sup>14</sup> Henry Corbin's summary of this tradition succinctly formulates the relation of love and death in *hubb-i 'udhri*: "To love is to die."<sup>15</sup>

One of the best-known stories of *hubb-i 'udhri* is that of 'Urwa and 'Afrā'. This story narrates 'Urwa's falling in love, since childhood, to his cousin, 'Afrā', who is compelled to marry a Levantine rich man while 'Urwa is away on business. Despite all attempts to convince

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<sup>13</sup> Ahmad Ghazālī, *Sawānih al-'ushāq*, edited by Nasr-allah Pour Javadi (Tehran: Intishārāt-i bunyād-i farhang-i īrān, 1980), 29.

<sup>14</sup> Abū Bakr Muhammad Ibn Davūd, *Al-Zuhra*, vol. 2, ed. Ibrahim Samira'i (Al-zarqa': Maktaba al-minar, 1985), 117.

<sup>15</sup> Henry Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, trans. Liadain Sherrard (London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1993), 199.

him on return that ‘Afrā’ is dead, the lover finds out the truth, has a private meeting with the beloved where he preserves his chastity, refuses the invitation to stay with them extended by ‘Afrā’s husband, departs, and dies from a broken heart on the way home. The beloved returns from the Levant, mourns at his tomb, dies and is buried there with the lover. The story of ‘Urwa and ‘Afrā’ was versified into Persian by the 10<sup>th</sup> century poet ‘Ayyūqī. It became the first extant Persian verse romance: *Varqa o Gulshāh*.

### From Nizāmī to Ḥasan Dehlevī

Having reviewed the development of the Persian and Arabic conceptions of love and desire that shaped the composition of *Ishq-nāma*, alongside Ḥasan Dehlevī’s literary trajectory, we now turn to the story’s narrative precedents. The originality of Ḥasan Dehlevī’s text is best revealed through comparison with its literary antecedents, the most significant among which is *Laylī and Majnūn* (1188), a verse romance by the twelfth century poet Nizāmī of Ganja, the most famous author of verse romances in Persian literature.

As a Persian romance, Nizāmī’s *Laylī and Majnūn* engages with and transforms the Arabic discourse of *hubb-i ‘udhri* concerning love. Specifically, this Persian text is modeled after an older Arabic narrative tradition concerning the passion that develops between two Bedouin shepherds from Najd in the Hejaz, Layla and Qays (better known as Majnūn). Majnūn’s poverty prevents the young lovers from marrying and consummating their desire.<sup>16</sup> This story’s dominant plot device, of love-madness (the literal meaning of *majnūn*), introduced a new term to the Islamic world that was forever after associated with the name of the protagonist. As the Persian romance circulated beyond Arab domains, *majnūn* came to signify love and madness in equal measures in the contemporary and classical languages of

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<sup>16</sup> The Arabic version is examined in I. Iu. Krachkovskii, *Laylī va Majnūn: pazhūhishī dar rīshah’hā-yi tārikhī va talkhīš va sharḥ-i Laylī va Majnūn-i Nizām* trans. Kāmil Aḥmadnizhād (Tihārān: Zavvār, 1997).

the Islamic world from South Asia to the Balkans.<sup>17</sup>

The Majnūn-Leyla Arabic narrative cycle was historically connected to the seventh century Arab poet Qays ibn al-Mulawwah. Notwithstanding the canonicity of his poems, little is known concerning Qays' biography.<sup>18</sup> Niẓāmī's version of Majnūn's love-madness, itself based on Abu Bakr al-Wālebi's *Divān* of Qays b. al-Mulawwah al-Majnūn, generated hundreds of imitations in Urdu, Georgian, Panjabi, Turkish, and many other languages in subsequent centuries.<sup>19</sup> 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 Persian verse romance.<sup>20</sup>

Niẓāmī laid the groundwork for subsequent narratives on this theme. He opens his love story by reflecting on the Arab version of Majnūn-Laylī and lamenting his inability to make a decent poem from it:

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  
در مرحله که ره ندانم  
پیداست که نکته چند رانم  
نه باغ و نه بزم شهریاری  
نه رود و نه می نه کامکاری  
بر خشکی ریگ و سختی کوه  
تا چند سخن رود در اندوه

(LM 27)<sup>21</sup>

Although this story is famous,  
it's unlikely to be interpreted in happiness.  
The discourse needs happiness and grace.  
Discourse originates in these two elements.

<sup>17</sup> For a magisterial study of the meanings of *majnūn* in Islamic culture, see Michael Dols, *Majnūn: The Madman in Medieval Islamic Society*, ed. Diana E. Immisch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

<sup>18</sup> For a recent edition of Qays' poetry, see *Dīwān al-'Udhriyīn: Jamīl ibn Ma'mar, Qays ibn al-Mulawwah, Qays ibn Dharīh* (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1992).

<sup>19</sup> Some of these versions are discussed in G. Iu. Aliev, *Temy i siuzhety Nizami v literaturakh narodov Vostoka* (Moscow: Nauka, 1985) and Mehdi D. Kazymov, *Posledovateli Nizami: k problemam nazire v persoiazychnoi literature XIII-XVI vv.* (Baku: Azerbaidzhanskoe gos. izd-vo, 1991).

<sup>20</sup> Hasan Zolfaqari, "Muqāyesa-yi char ravāyat-i laylī va majnūn: Nizamī, 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).

<sup>21</sup> All references to Niẓāmī's *Laylī and Majnūn* are to the edition in Vol. 2 of *Kullīyāt-i Niẓāmī Ganjavī*, ed. Ḥasan Vaḥīd Dastgirdī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Zavvār, 1388/2009-10), and are abbreviated as *LM*.

A plain discourse will be boring  
when it's only about frenzy, ball and chains.  
I'm not sure how far I can ride  
on a path that is not familiar to me,  
without a garden without a royal feast  
without a river, without wine or making love.  
The dry sand and rough mountain  
only make the story dull.

In Niẓāmī's narrative, Majnūn's attraction to Laylī, combined with her inaccessibility, drives him insane. Obeying the will of her parents, 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 Dehlevī. Almost universally, narratives in this tradition culminate in the lovers' deaths.<sup>22</sup> Thus we have what may appear to be extended confirmation in Freud's account of the death drive that informs the sexual drive (*Lustprinzip*), whereby "the goal of all life is death" (*BPP*, 77).<sup>23</sup>

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. While, unlike in Freud, afterlife is situated beyond space and time, it also anticipates in certain respects Freud's concept of geological time.<sup>24</sup> In concluding his account of Majnūn's

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<sup>22</sup> For further reflections on the master narrative of the Persian romance, 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, 2020).

<sup>23</sup> 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 I refer to Sigmund Freud, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* in *Studienausgabe*, Bd. 3: *Psychologie des Unbewußten*, eds Alexander Mitscherlich, Angela Richards, and James Strachey (Frankfurt: Fischer Verlag: 2000).

<sup>24</sup> Freud, *The Future of an Illusion* (1927), 55.

death on Laylī grave, Nizāmī enumerates the lessons the reader should derive from his hero's material decomposition. Each of these lessons originates in the frailty of creaturely existence, and in its susceptibility to the death drive. For example, the poet ends by declaring:

در خاک میبچ کو غباریست  
با طبع مساز کو شراریست  
(LM 266)

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

Love is manifested in geological time when it stands for more than life itself. Governed by a conservative force, it seeks to return all beings and all passions to their original state: of non-existence.

The preface of Nizāmī'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"). For Nizāmī, love is a means to overcome the transience and finitude of life, and a passage to durability and permanence:

گر مرگ رسد چرا هراسم  
کان راه بتست می شناسم  
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 خوردگی به خوابگاهی  
وز خوابگی به بزم شاهی  
خوابی که به بزم تست راهش  
گردن نکشم ز خوابگاهش  
(LM 8)

Why should I fear when death arrives?  
Because I know it as the way to you.  
This is not death, it's a garden  
that leads to the beloved's house.  
I yearn for death if death 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.

Rather than presenting Majnūn's desire for Laylī as an intrinsic value, Nizāmī advises

his reader to focus on the more permanent reality (*baqā'*) to which that desire yields once both characters are gone: While Nizāmī's formulations differ sharply from those of Freud, they share in common a tendency to juxtapose as complimentary opposites the force that reproduces itself (through desire) with the force that seeks its annihilation. The difference, we shall see, is that, whereas Persian poets considered love as a rupture in the fabric of time, Freud located desire in the regressive death drive, in order to show that it was in the nature of this passion to seek to return to its original, pre-existent, state.

Nizāmī's narration below emphasizes the otherworldly dimension of *'ishq*, recognizing its alignment with its own negation in death, but on terms quite different than in Freud's account:

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)

They rested gracefully until the Judgement Day;  
Blame was removed from them.  
They spent a while in this world.  
Now they are resting in the same bed in the other world.

Within Nizāmī's metaphysical entelechy, the purpose of narrating desire is to redirect 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, *'ishq* remains external to the life cycle and does not enter history.

For Nizāmī, then, the plot of Laylī and Majnūn's love entails its own negation. As per Corbin's pithy formulation, to love is to die. In the Persian romance, love attains its goal only when it has ceased to be permeated by time, which is to say, only when it has been separated from the temporality of desire. This is reflected not only in the lovers' inevitable deaths, but also in the philosophical lessons that Nizāmī 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?”:

گریان شد و تلخ تلخ بگریست  
بی گریه تلخ در جهان کیست  
(LM 254)

Ruins, destruction, and other insignia of material decay permeate the lovers’ abodes. In narrating the ruinous materiality of physical love, Nizāmī joins his voice to a temporal aesthetic that was being elaborated during his lifetime in the medieval Latin *ubi sunt*, a genre of poems that open with the phrase *ubi sunt qui ante nos in mundo fuere* (“where are those who were in the world before us?”).<sup>25</sup> Nizāmī insists that *‘ishq* has no permanence (*baqā*’); it is merely a succession of passions (*shahvat*) (78).

عشقی که نه عشق جاودانیست  
باز بچه شهوت جوانیست  
عشق آن باشد که کم نگردد  
تا باشد از این قدم نگردد  
آن عشق نه سرسری خیالیست  
کورا ابد الابد زوالیست  
مجنون که بلند نام عشقتست  
از معرفت تمام عشقتست  
(LM 78)

The love that is not eternal  
is a game of passionate youth.  
Love is something that does not shrink,  
that does not change as long as it is.  
That love is not a playful imagination  
subject to eternal demise.  
Majnun is a lofty paragon of love  
because of his perfect knowledge of love.

Such affirmations result from Nizāmī’s understanding of *‘ishq* 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 Nizāmī’s romance, Amīr

<sup>25</sup> For this genre, see Carl Becker, “*Ubi sunt qui ante nos in mundo fuere*,” *Aufsätze zur Kultur- und Sprachgeschichte vornehmlich des Orients* (Breslau: Marcus, 1916), 87-105 and Mary Ellen Becker, “The Ubi Sunt: Form, Theme, and Tradition” (PhD dissertation, Arizona State University, 1981).

Khusrow Dehlevī's *Majnūn and Laylī* (1299), composed just two years prior to *Ishq-nāma*, reiterates (with minor differences) the same story of chaste and unconsummated love. The Arabic atmosphere is preserved in both narratives; however, in Nizāmī the narrative is clearly influenced by Persian culture (most importantly the *maktab-khāna*, where Laylī and Majnūn see each other as children and fall in love). With Ḥasan Dehlevī's *Ishq-nāma*, Indian undercurrents were grafted onto the Arabo-Persian inflections of the love-death relationship. Ḥasan Dehlevī acknowledges the influence of Nizāmī and alludes to his two well-known couples, who both experience unconsummated love: Laylī and Majnūn, and Shīrīn and Farhād.

Unlike most reworkings of the Majnūn-Laylī narrative, Ḥasan Dehlevī situates his *Ishq-nāma* within a context that is almost contemporary to him, with the action taking place twelve years prior to his birth, in 1266. 1266 is historically marked as a turning point in the narrative; it precedes the year of its composition, 1301, by thirty-five years. *Ishq-nāma* should be classed as one of Ḥasan Dehlevī's late works, written at the age of forty-seven, seven years before he embarked on his influential compendium of the sayings of Shaykh Nizām al-Dīn.

As later Indo-Persian poets were to do, Ḥasan Dehlevī 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.<sup>26</sup> The practice of *sati* has long 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."<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> For background on *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).

<sup>27</sup> خسرو در عشق‌بازی کم ز هندو زن مباش / کز برای مرده سوزد زنده جان خویش را  
Khusrow, *Kulliyāt-i ghazaliyāt*, vol.1, ed. Iqbal Salah al-Dīn (Lahore: Packages Ltd.: 1975), 581. For later Persian poets on *sati*, see Yunus Jaffery, "Satī dar shī'r-i Sā'ib-i Tabrīzī," *Armaghān-i adab* (Tehran: Mawqūfat-i Duktur Mahmud Afshār, 1376/1997), 284-89.

Ḥasan Dehlevī's *Ishq-nāma* was the first text to make *sati* into a central element of its plot. As such, this romance was a precursor to a Persian genre of individual poems on Sati named *Satīnāma*, the most famous examples of which are Naw'ī Kahbushanī's (1563-1610) *masnavī*, *Sūz o gudāz*, written at the Mughal court, and Mujrim Kashmīrī's *Satināma* (1856).<sup>28</sup>

As a key text in the introduction of Persian narrative forms to South Asia, *Ishq-nāma* opens new vistas on the relationship between the love and death drive in Persian literature. In part through his refashioning of Persian narratives for an Indian environment in *Ishq-nāma*, Ḥasan Dehlevī offered a new take on older Arabic and Persian love narratives. His Indian metaphysics of *'ishq* is developed alongside a cosmological conception of love that brings it into closer relation with Freud's pleasure principle, which is rooted in the worldly condition, even as the text of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is susceptible to ruptures in the fabric of time.<sup>29</sup>

While he builds on prior Persian romances, Ḥasan also pioneers new directions for the *masnavī* genre, 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 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 *davatdar* (person in charge of royal ink, a role similar to a scribe) at the court of Balban's son, Malik Muhammad Qa'an. Likewise, the beloved is an ordinary woman who draws water from a public well and gets married to a

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<sup>28</sup> The latter is discussed in Girdhari Lal Tikku, "Satīnāma of Vārasta," *History of Religions* 7.2 (1967): 95-111. Sunil Sharma offers a close reading of *Sūz o 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.

<sup>29</sup> See below, "Freud and the Persian Romance" and "Beyond Mere Desire."

camel-seller. While Nizāmī outlines a diachronic concept of love which is conditioned on passing the test of time, Ḥasan Dehlevī’s notion of love looks beyond pure potentiality; it seeks its synchronic actualization at any moment without wasting itself in the hope of endurance. The new environment in which Ḥasan Dehlevī creates enables him to bring together the narrative of desire refined by his predecessors such as Nizāmī—with the desire for narrative, which in the context of the present analysis is also a desire for time, for the worldly existence in which this love unfolds.

Having offered a brief genealogy of *‘ishq* in Persian poetry and reviewed its progression from Nizāmī to the beginnings of Indo-Persian literature, we will now turn to the text of *‘Ishqnāma*, before engaging with Freud and his interpreters, in order to understand, from a new vantage point, his understanding of desire in relation to time.

### ***‘Ishqnāma: Love Beyond Faith and Infidelity***

*‘Ishqnāma* is set in Nagaur, a northern Indian town which was an important seat of power during the Sultanate period.<sup>30</sup> An Indian youth sees a girl passing by a well, and immediately falls in love with her. Like all the characters in *‘Ishqnāma*, these individuals remain unnamed as the plot unfolds, thereby underscoring their status as archetypes more than individuals.<sup>31</sup> 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, arguing that the alignment of the stars forecasts that by avoiding this love, the youth will have a fortunate life. The youth nonetheless persists in his mad love. Eventually a constable is informed of the scandal this love is causing by a relative of the girl. The constable places the young man under arrest. The youth is imprisoned for a year following the complaint by the girl’s relative, for the scandal he brings to the family by

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<sup>30</sup> For background on this city, see B. S. Mathur “Side Lights on the Medieval History of Nagaur,” *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 28 (1966): 139-144.

<sup>31</sup> The protagonists of *Sūz o 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, *Tarikh-e Adabiyat dar Iran* (Tehran: Firdaus, 1364/1985), v.5: 2, 887.

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 Dehlevī 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 tell 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 is away 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 male 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).

*Ishq-nāma* stands as an archetypal summation of the Persian master narrative of love. Ḥasan Dehlevī's polemical engagement with *Laylī and Majnūn* begins with the very title of his text, *Ishq-nāma*. Countless poets responded to Nizāmī's injunction to "adorn with a worthy pen / the thousand love letters [*ishq nāmeḥ*] hovering above" (25) from across the Persian world. But Ḥasan and Amīr Khusrow were the first poets to answer Nizāmī's call from South Asia. Ḥasan also includes a number of specific references to the Laylī-Majnūn narrative tradition in his poem. For example, one verse offers a pun on the meaning of the name Majnūn (insane):

منم مجنون مطیع لیلی خویش  
اگر لیلی تویی مجنون مکن بیش

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

Additionally, after the young man throws himself in the fire, describing the frenzy of people,

Ḥasan elaborates, drawing parallels to prior texts in the love-narrative tradition:

یکی بر یاد مجنون مست می‌راند  
یکی افسانه فرهاد میخواند  
(576)

One was drunk in memory of Majnūn.  
The other was singing the story of Farhād.

Ḥasan emphasizes the storytelling theme by framing the poem with motifs belonging to the *sāqī-nāma* genre (describing and addressing a wine-bearer). His *masnavī* is punctuated by direct addresses to a player (*mutrib*), a singer (*shī'r-khān*), a wine-bearer (*sāqī*) as well as the poet himself (Ḥasan) as if during a feast. This technique gives his *masnavī* a performative oral aspect that is lacking in preceding Persian narratives, which typically address only the reader and for the purpose of giving moral instruction.

While he developed the Persian master narrative of love, Ḥasan Dehlevī also incurred another debt, to oral Indian narrative traditions, which enhanced his role as a storyteller. As Ḥasan writes:

نه از خود کردم این افسانه منظوم  
که مشهور است این قصه در آن بوم  
(580)

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

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

<sup>32</sup> All references to *Ishq-nāma* are taken from *Dīvān-i Ḥasan Sijzī Dihlavī: sadah-i haftum va hashtum*, eds. Aḥmad Bihishtī Shīrāzī and Ḥamīd Rīzā Qīlīch Khānī (Tehran: Anjuman-i Āṣār va Mafākhir-i Farhangī, 2004), 557-580.

later Indo-Persian poets. Rather than rewriting a preexisting text with a fixed plot as previous poets had done,<sup>33</sup> Ḥasan Dehlevī incorporated a Persian narrative (that was itself a revision of an Arabic story) into an Indian milieu. He did this by claiming that his story (*qiṣṣa*) is “well known in that land [*dar ān būm*].” Together with the poetry of Amīr Khusrow, this creative appropriation, which built on an imagined tradition while generating something entirely new, was to lay the foundation for a new Indo-Persian literature.

Ḥasan Dehlevī’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) 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 empirical situation (in India) and indexical signification (India’s imagined exteriority from the vantage point of the Persian tradition that he works in) 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 *‘Ishq-nāma* is dense with historicity. In Nizāmī’s *Laylī and Majnūn*, the protagonists are given names, but their behavior and the descriptions of their characters are more unrealistic and archetypal in than those of the unnamed characters of *‘Ishq-nāma*. Ḥasan Dehlevī’s historical orientation enables him to retain the form of the Persian master narrative while revising its content from within. Hence, the story (*qiṣṣa*) where this Indo-Persian master narrative of love was born is

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<sup>33</sup> See the references in n22.

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 *Ishqnāma*, Ḥasan Dehlevī was ready to forge a new style in a new milieu.

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

حدیث عشق کز سر تازه شد باز  
بعشق آرایم انجامش چو آغاز  
(580)

I’ll end the story of love  
with love, as it was first begun.

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 Dehlevī’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, love transpires in a contingent world. 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. His paean to *'ishq* culminates in an epilogue (*tatimma*) that daringly situates desire outside conventional libidinal economies, notably including those associated with religious orthodoxy.

In the act of revising Nizāmī's master narrative for an Indian milieu, *Ishqnāma* traverses life and death with the same vigor with which it crosses geographies and temporalities. It subverts previous master narratives of love to offer what contemporary Swedish philosopher Martin Hägglund has recently termed a "chronolibidinal" account of human longing.<sup>34</sup> The dynamic of borrowing and concealment that structures the text is evident in Ḥasan Dehlevī's closing invocation of his literary master, Nizāmī. From the material that had been handed down to him from the Hijaz and the Caucasus, Ḥasan Dehlevī forged a new concept of love for an Indian milieu. While Nizāmī adapted Bedouin Arab stories to the form of the Persian romance, Ḥasan Dehlevī drew on Persian narrative traditions to probe the dialectical relation between death and love on the one hand and love and desire on the other (both of the latter two concepts are entailed in the Persian concept of *'ishq*). Having traversed the master narrative of love across its Persian and Indo-Persian trajectories, the following sections consider how the 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 the Persian Master Narrative**

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*. 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

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<sup>34</sup> See Martin Hägglund, *Dying for Time: Proust, Woolf, Nabokov* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

underlying the establishment of the pleasure principle are so obvious that it is hardly possible to overlook them” (*BPP*, 51). Our effort to bring a fourteenth century 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 origin of human sexuality in the *Symposium* with the ruminations of the *Upanishads*, it seems likely that Freud would have expected to find precedents for his views in the Persian tradition as well. Indeed, and perhaps not fortuitously, 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 erhincken.  
Die Schrift sagt, es ist keine Sünde zu hinken.*  
(*BPP*, 99)<sup>35</sup>

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

While at a certain level there is nothing innovative in our efforts to outline precedents to Freud’s theory of pleasure and biological desire, 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 *ishq* outside our temporal

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<sup>35</sup> This translation corresponds to the Arabic text published in Ḥarīrī, *Les séances de Hariri: publiées en arabe avec un commentaire choisi*, eds., Antoine Isaac Silvestre de Sacy, Joseph Toussaint Reinaud, and Joseph Derenbourg (Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1853), 2: 38.

condition. This is the case for both Nizāmī and Ḥasan Dehlevī, albeit in subtly different ways.

Having traced the temporal coordinates of *ishq* in the Persian verse romance, we will now consider Ḥasan Dehlevī’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 *Ishqnāma* help us to see how “the radical metapsychology of the hereafter undercuts there merely prosaic psychotherapy of everyday life.”<sup>36</sup> Stated otherwise, just as Freud helps us understand the workings of love in Persian poetry, so does Persian poetry help us discern the poetic dimensions of the “hereafter” that Freud hoped to bring to the fore with his reflection on the pleasure principle (as discussed below).

In terms of understanding how Ḥasan conceptualizes love, we are well served by the epilogue (*tatimma*) that concludes his narrative. 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 narrative 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 *ishq* outside the meanings of faith (*dīn*) and infidelity (*kufr*):

اگر گویی که این گفتن چرا بود  
بیان عشق بی دینان خطا بود  
توان کردن بصد چشمه زبان تر  
ولیکن عشق دریابست دیگر  
که کار عاشقی کاریست جانی  
ز کفر و دین برون است آن معانی  
(580)

If you ask why this verse was composed,  
If you suggest that the exposition of infidel love is a mistake,  
[I’ll answer] A tongue can be moistened by a hundred springs.

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<sup>36</sup> Todd Dufresne, “Introduction,” in Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2011), 16.

But love is a different sea.  
A lover's work is life itself.  
That meaning is beyond faith and infidelity.

The meaning of these verses depends on a distinction between spring and sea. The poet says that you can moisten your tongue with springs (*chashmeh*) 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*)."<sup>37</sup> 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.

In Ḥasan Dehlevī's epilogue, desire is a sea that bestows life (*jān*), even on the dead. At the conclusion of Ḥasan Dehlevī's narrative, the Persian master narrative drives the poet's desire for a new narrative, and a new way of thinking about love. His story is bounded on all sides by *ishq*, just as life is 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 (*birūn*) the everyday realm in the Persian poem and beyond (*jenseits*) everyday existence in the German treatise. In this *birūn*, *ishq* negates death, while also, paradoxically, achieving its fulfillment. *Ishq* thereby inculcates a unique relationship to time, a rupture in the fabric of everyday

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<sup>37</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Intimate Revolt*, Volume 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 30.

existence.

For Ḥasan Dehlevī, narrative originates in love, including love between non-Muslims:

حدیث عشق خود جان می‌نوازد  
نبازد عشق هر کو جان نبازد

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

The self-immolation of Ḥasan Dehlevī’s protagonists—the manifestation of their death drive—is devoid of meaning until it is incorporated into his master narrative for *‘ishq*, which is the culmination of both love and desire. While mortality drives the Persian master narrative of *‘ishq*, it also opens up *‘ishq* into the radical atemporality of the “hereafter” of the pleasure principle, as delineated by Freud.

Ḥasan Dehlevī articulates his credo shortly after the young lover joins his beloved on the pyre. Just as Nizāmī interjects his poetic persona into his narrative following the deaths of his heroes Laylī and Majnūn, so does Ḥasan Dehlevī address his reader once his protagonists are dead. These addresses are clustered around the concept of *jān*, a term that means “soul,” as well as “life.” The poet notes that

در آن کوشیم این جان خطرناک  
برآید زین تن ناپاک یا پاک  
(576)

We struggle so that this dangerous self [*jān*]  
will leave this clean or unclean body.

and then alludes to death:

چو جان رفت از تن نالان چه خیزد  
چو خر افتاد از پالان چه خیزد  
(576)

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

In the same vein, the poet declares:

بر ما آنچه دل را می‌کند خوش  
همین جانست آن هم در کشاکش  
(576)

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

The three meanings of *jān*—as “self,” “life,” and as “soul”—in these verses are so closely

related that their separation in translation entails a kind of falsification, for even when *jān* in the meaning of “life” is opposed to the body, which is a mortal, lifeless object, 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 of being beyond redemption. In Persian by contrast, 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*.

As Hägglund’s chronolibidinal reading method aims to expose, the negation of temporality shifts the desire for another to the fear of our own mortality. Meanwhile, the Persian master narrative interrupts the everyday progression of time in order to deploy *jān* in multiple significations, as a soul destined for death, and as life. First, *jān* is said to be dangerous (*khatarnāk*). 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 death, also seeks its own mortality (*BPP*, 79), *jān* is *birūn* (outside) our mortal flesh, while also abiding within it. Ḥasan Dehlevī’s 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 to of *ishq* that permeates this verse romance.

Ḥasan Dehlevī’s master narrative 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 *Ishq-nāma* both bring us beyond this *aporia* through their engagements with timelessness *Jān* and *ishq* inhabit the same chronolibidinal domain, which is beyond the pleasure principle,

yet also able to engage with it, if not to arrest its development then to redirect its movement, towards the production of life rather than in a cataclysmic rush towards death. It is through such subtle dialectics that the play of love and death in *'Ishqnāma* bear the traces of Freud's most profound visions. While death clarifies the purpose of life in *'Ishqnāma*'s master narrative, life (as *jān*) is also generated amid this striving towards death. It comes to constitute the transcendence of this text, its rupture in the fabric of time. In biological terms, love is epiphenomenal; reformulating this insight for Persian poetics, we can say that *'ishq* is a miracle that violates the natural order of things, and an epiphany that arrests the movement of time.

In an anecdote (*hikāyat*) that occurs near the close of *'Ishqnāma*, the poet condenses the moral of his love story in allegorical form. The Ghaznavid king Mahmūd is out hunting. Suddenly, he finds himself abandoned by his servants who have left in search of the shadow of the *humā*, a bird whose shadow 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, just as the 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:

امین خویش دانستی جهان را  
بدو دادی امانت نقد جان را  
همه در بند غارت کردن توست  
سر دستش طناب گردن توست  
(577)

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

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

Why attach your heart to the world and what exists in it?  
Seek the door of truth if you want to be dismissed of all doors.

### Death in Life, Life in Death

Although there is a tension between Freud's pleasure principle and Ḥasan Dehlevī's master narrative of *'ishq*, 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."<sup>38</sup> 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*]."<sup>39</sup>

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 Dehlevī reworks the Persian master narrative of desire to reveal their intimate relation. 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 necessarily always on the path towards death? Paul Ricoeur's gloss on Freud's pleasure principle is also apposite: "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."<sup>40</sup> If in

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<sup>38</sup> 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).

<sup>39</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips in Studienausgabe*, Bd. 3: *Psychologie des Unbewußten*, eds Alexander Mitscherlich, Angela Richards, and James Strachey (Frankfurt: Fischer Verlag: 2000), 248.

<sup>40</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* trans. Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 290.

Freud we have an account of life as a striving towards death, in the Persian master narrative of *'ishq* 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 for explanation.

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 Dehlevī. *'Ishq* functions in the master narrative of the Persian romance as the pleasure principle functions in Freud's account of psychic life. While Freud's unconscious drives exist outside time, Ḥasan situates *'ishq* beyond dichotomies of faith (*dīn*) and infidelity (*kufīr*) (804). In both cases, the differential temporal relations also carry ethical implications; those who experience the death drive and *'ishq* in their fullness are also liberated from the shackles of everyday morality.

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.”<sup>41</sup> 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* is a key element in his overall effort to transcend time.<sup>42</sup>

Analogously with Freud's transmutation of the pleasure principle into a space beyond mortality, Ḥasan Dehlevī materializes mortality by means of a preposition. But by contrast with Freud, *birūn*, Ḥasan Dehlevī's term of choice for describing the space where his lovers

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<sup>41</sup> Dufresne, “Introduction,” 15.

<sup>42</sup> E. Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth, 1957), 43.

achieve their destinies and their dreams, is also a concrete term, a physical geography that does not necessarily entail figurative significations. As the precise inversion of *darūn* (inside), *birūn* denotes a physical location external to a given location. But unlike *jenseits*, *birūn* references the hereafter only metaphorically.<sup>43</sup> Poetry inevitably tears words from their semantic moorings, causing them to signify in new ways, and the *birūn* of *Ishqnāma* does begin as a metaphor. By contrast, Freud's account of the death drive in relation to the pleasure principle originates as a metaphor, borrowed from biology. As Freud acknowledges towards the end of his treatise: "the uncertainty of our speculation was greatly increased by the need to borrow from the science of biology" (*BPP*, 96). Drives are metaphors within Freud's metaphysics, while *Ishqnāma* renders them directly, in spatial terms.

Locating *ishq* beyond faith and infidelity, Ḥasan Dehlevī situates desire in a realm structured by metaphysical commitments that are in tension with each other. In his rendering, *ishq*'s contestation of everyday discursive distinctions between faith and infidelity reorders the temporality of the Persian master narrative. Although faith and infidelity, as used in *Ishqnāma*, primarily evoke a religious duality, their distinction in the context of love also outlines temporal structures that vary according to the terms and conditions implied in the relation with the loved object. While fidelity 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 Dehlevī uses *ishq* to replace the dualistic cosmology that threatens to reduce all life to mortal existence. He was surely assisted in his shift towards a pluralistic metaphysics by an Indian-influenced Sufiism that rejects any absolute distinction between death and life.

### **Beyond Mere Desire**

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<sup>43</sup> For a ghazal that similarly plays on the relation between *birūn* and *darūn*, see *Dīvān-i Amīr Ḥasan Sizjī Dihlavī*, 435.

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 Dehlevī 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.

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"?

A chronolibidinal approach that reduces love to death thus fails to capture its 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 certain respects, overcomes the death drive. To the extent that we only love because of mortality we love without specificity, since mortality is shared by everyone. But experience suggests that a chronolibidinal 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 tradition that, unlike Persian, does not combine love and desire in a single word, *'ishq*—a chronolibinidal method fails to fully delineate the source, genesis, and *raison d'être* of love. Meanwhile, in contrast to reductive modern accounts, *Ishqnāma* pioneers a new path, which, as the author puts it, lies “beyond faith and infidelity.” Ḥasan Dehlevī engages with *'ishq*, 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 in need of explanation just as much as death. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* teaches that the goal of life is death, but it does so without indicating the reasons for life's emergence.

“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 always 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. In the first instance, the death instinct is structured singularly. In the second instance, the pleasure principle is structured as a duality; it exists only in relation to something else. While it cannot be conflated with the Persian concept of *'ishq*, this dualistic relation creates clear structural similarities.

*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* offers insights into the concept of ‘death’ itself as

intrinsically double. Death is typically conceived of as that which characterizes life as necessarily 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 protection against the vulnerability of life. This also clarifies why 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, to the pleasure of the Other.

In revising the master narrative of the Persian romance, Ḥasan Dehlevī did more than perform an act of cultural transference from the Caucasus to South Asia. By Indicizing Persian (and Arabic) conceptions of *‘ishq*, Ḥasan Dehlevī 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 *‘ishq* above faith—or rather regarding it as faith’s highest manifestation—Ḥasan Dehlevī showed how binaries between

self and other recapitulate the death instinct that culminates in its own annihilation.

Contesting the solipsistic vision conveyed to him by conventional dichotomies between faith (*dīn*) and infidelity (*kufṛ*), Ḥasan Dehlevī used desire to deconstruct metaphysical binaries.

When he reimagined *‘ishq* 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 *‘ishq* congruent with the work of the soul, of the self, and of life itself, Ḥasan Dehlevī showed how love creates life from nothingness, and desire from death, in a mortal world.

Conceiving *‘ishq* beyond faith and infidelity, the Indo-Persian master narrative of *‘Ishq-nāma* makes it possible for readers 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 Dehlevī 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 master narrative of the Persian romance develops the Freudian dialectic of death and desire, steering it in directions modern theory has yet to traverse, and stimulating us to see how love can become the fulfillment, rather than a negation of, our mortal existence.