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 978-0-521-10150-9 - Fifty Poems of Hafiz
 Arthur J. Arberry
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INTRODUCTION

I

IT is two hundred years since the birth of Sir William Jones (1746–1794), the father of Persian studies in the west; one century and three-quarters since the publication of *A Persian Song*, his celebrated translation which introduced Ḥāfiz of Shīrāz to the literary world of London and Europe. The present is thus a peculiarly opportune time to review what his successors have done in furthering the study and interpretation of this, the greatest lyric poet of Persia; the more so since it has long been desirable to furnish students with a text-book appropriate to their needs as beginners in the appreciation of Persian lyrical poetry. The selection now presented has been made with the double object of exhibiting the various aspects of Ḥāfiz' style and thought, and of representing how English scholars have attempted to render his poetry in their own language. Lest it should be supposed that the work of two centuries has exhausted every aspect of the study of Ḥāfiz, and that the last word on his interpretation has been said, these introductory remarks will suggest fresh approaches to the subject, and propose a number of lines along which future research might with advantage be directed.

Ḥāfiz is by universal consent the supreme master of the art of the Persian *ghazal*—a literary form generally equated with the lyric; though perhaps the sonnet is in some respects a closer equivalent. When it is considered that literary critics of undoubted authority have estimated Persian poetry as an important contribution to the art of self-expression in metre and rhyme, and the Persian *ghazal* as a form unsurpassable of its kind, it may be readily conceded that Ḥāfiz is a poet eminently worth study; and it may without undue optimism be conjectured that as a master of a splendid art-form he can still teach useful lessons to all who are interested in the evolution of poetic expression. If it is added,

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as a personal opinion, that Ḥāfiz' technique can by modified imitation inspire new developments in western poetry, perhaps a claim so extravagant will not be rejected so summarily as similar claims less solidly founded; for Ḥāfiz is as highly esteemed by his countrymen as Shakespeare by us, and deserves as serious consideration.

The Persians were not greatly interested in the lives of their poets, and consequently we have little reliable information on which to construct a biography of Ḥāfiz; though modern scholars have displayed great learning and ingenuity in attempting to recover the salient facts of his career. The student is recommended to consult the charming preface to Gertrude Bell's *Poems from the Divan of Hafiz*; the section on Ḥāfiz in E. G. Browne's *Literary History of Persia*; the introduction to Ḥusain Pezhmān's edition of the *Divān*; and, above all, the voluminous and profound study of the poet by Dr Qāsim Ghanī (*Baḥṭh dar āthār u afkār u abvāl-i Ḥāfiz*) which is now appearing in Teheran. Not to duplicate what is readily accessible elsewhere, we confine ourselves here to the barest outline of the poet's life.

Shams al-Dīn Ḥāfiz of Shīrāz was born at the capital of the province of Fārs about the year 720/1320; some sixty years after the great catastrophe of Islamic history, Hūlāgū Khān's capture and sack of Baghdād; rather less than a century after the death of Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī (d. 638/1240), the greatest theosophist of the Arabs; and fifty years after the death of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 672/1273), Persia's most original mystical poet. He grew up in an age when the finest Arabic literature had already been written, and in the shadow of the reputation of his distinguished fellow-citizen, Shaikh Sa'dī (d. 690/1291 or 691/1292). Persian poetry had thus reached its consummation in the romantic epic (Nizāmī probably died in 599/1202), the mystical *mathnavī*, the *rubā'ī*, the *qaṣīda* (Anvarī died between 585/1189 and 587/1191), and gnomic verse; Ḥāfiz spent little time on the *qaṣīda* and *rubā'ī*, and none at all on the other classical forms, but elected to specialize in the *ghazal*, no doubt supposing—and not without

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cause—that he had something to contribute to this most delicate of all poetic forms.

As a student, Ḥāfiz evidently learned the Qur'ān by heart (for so his name implies), and his poetry proves that, like other Persian poets, he acquired a competence in all the Muslim sciences taught in his day; for the Persian poet must have learning as much as original genius. It seems likely that he was a man of no great substance, especially if we admit the evidence of a manuscript of the *Khamsa* of Amīr Khusrau of Delhi (d. 725/1325) now preserved in the State Library of Tashkent which bears a colophon stating that it was written by “the humblest of God’s creatures Muḥammad nicknamed Shams al-Ḥāfiz al-Shīrāzī” and completed on 24 Ṣafar 756/9 February 1355 (see A. A. Semenov’s note in *Sukhan*, vol. II, pp. 95–6); for only a relatively poor man would seek his bread by transcribing other men’s poems for pay. It remained for him therefore to develop and perfect his God-given genius for song, and by soliciting the favour of wealthy and powerful patrons to emulate in the fourteenth century those already legendary figures of the twelfth who had risen in the courts of princes to great eminence and abundant riches, and yet secured the highest prize of all, immortality in the hearts and on the lips of succeeding generations. Wealth, as it seems, was destined to elude Ḥāfiz’ grasp, for the age in which he lived was an age of insecurity and sudden catastrophe; but he achieved in full measure the ampler portion of eternal fame, even in lands whose very names were unknown in his day and among peoples speaking a language cognate with his own, yet never imagined in his mind.

Shīrāz, “a large and flourishing town with many riches and many inhabitants” (as the anonymous author of the *Ḥudūd al-‘ālam* called it, writing towards the end of the tenth century), capital of the province of Fārs from which Persia obtained her name in the West, at the time of Ḥāfiz’ birth formed part of the dominions of Sharaf al-Dīn Maḥmūdshāh of the Injū dynasty, a fief of the Mongol overlord Uljāitū and his successor Abū Sa‘īd.

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The territories about the city were infested with robber bands, to prevent whose depredations formed no small part of the cares of the ruler. The death of Abū Sa'īd in 736/1335 provided the youthful Ḥāfīz with his first personal experience of the transient nature of human glory; for his follower Arpa Khān had Maḥmūdshāh immediately put to death. There followed a struggle for power between his four sons, Jalāl al-Dīn Mas'ūdshāh, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Kaikhusrau, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad and Abū Ishāq Jamāl al-Dīn; Kaikhusrau was the first to pay the supreme penalty of unwise ambition (739/1339), to be followed to his grave the next year by Muḥammad. Meanwhile Shīrāz passed into the hands of Pīr Ḥusain, the Chupanid princeling with whom Muḥammad had conspired and who requited his confidence by slaying him; but the intruder had little joy of his filched possession; the infuriated populace drove him out, and when he would have returned the following year he fell out with a confederate and met his end. Mas'ūdshāh, the eldest of Maḥmūdshāh's sons, fell victim to an imprudent intrigue in 743/1343; and after a further bout of violence the youngest of the brothers, Abū Ishāq, at last succeeded in establishing his authority throughout Fārs. We have a fragment of Ḥāfīz (Brockhaus' edition of the *Divān*, no. 579), written many years after these events, in which the poet recalls the reign of "Shāh Shaikh Abū Ishāq when five wonderful persons inhabited the kingdom of Fārs"—the Shāh himself, the chief judge of Shīrāz Majd al-Dīn Ismā'il b. Muḥammad b. Khudādād (for whom see no. 50 of this selection), a certain Shaikh Amīn al-Dīn, the eminent theologian and philosopher 'Aḍud al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Aḥmad al-Ījī (d. 756/1355), and Ḥājji Qiwām al-Dīn Ḥasan, a favourite of the Shāh, whose death in 754/1353 Ḥāfīz celebrated with a necrology (Brockhaus no. 610).

Abū Ishāq was an ambitious man; having secured the mastery of Shīrāz and Fārs he sought to extend his dominion to embrace Yazd and Kirmān, and so brought himself into conflict with the neighbouring dynasty of the Muẓaffarids. This house, founded by

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Sharaf al-Dīn Muẓaffār (d. 713/1314) the fief successively of the Mongol Īlkhāns Arghūn, Ghāzān, and Uljāitū, had its capital at Maibudh near Yazd. Muẓaffār was succeeded by his son Mubārīz al-Dīn Muḥammad, at that time a lad of thirteen; he grew into a resolute and ruthless ruler, taking Yazd in 718/1318 or 719/1319 and holding his petty empire in the face of bloody rebellion; profiting by the chaos that resulted from the death of Abū Sa'īd, in 740/1340 he annexed Kirmān. Twice Abū Ishāq essayed to wrest Kirmān from the grasp of its new master, and twice he failed; in 751/1350-1 he tried his hand against Yazd, but was speedily repulsed; a third attempt at Kirmān ended in a signal defeat (753/1352). Mubārīz al-Dīn, encouraged by this final verdict, now took the offensive into the enemy's camp, and in 754/1353 he captured Shīrāz; he pursued his triumph, took Iṣfahān, and put his stubborn foe to death in 757/1356 or 758/1357.

It appears that Shīrāz did not greatly enjoy its change of rulers, for Mubārīz al-Dīn was a Sunni zealot; the story of the closing of the wine-taverns, and Ḥāfiz' supposed reference to the event, may be read in Browne (*Literary History of Persia*, vol. III, pp. 277-5). However, the conqueror did not long prevail in his new empire; for in 759/1358, while on a military expedition that had won for him the temporary possession of Tabrīz, he was made prisoner by his own son Shāh Shujā' and, after the barbarous fashion of those days, blinded; he died in 765/1364. Ḥāfiz does not appear to have esteemed it profitable to solicit the favour of the austere Mubārīz al-Dīn, though he has two poems in praise of his chief minister Burhān al-Dīn Faṭḥ Allāh (Brockhaus, nos. 400, 571).

Shāh Shujā' enjoyed a relatively long reign, though he saw his share of fraternal envy and neighbourly rivalries. His brother Shāh Maḥmūd, who ruled over Abarqūh and Iṣfahān, in 764/1363 seized Yazd; to be in turn besieged in Iṣfahān until the two princes came to an understanding. The reconciliation was short-lived; the following year Maḥmūd allied himself to Uwais, the Jalā'irid ruler of Baghdād since 756/1355, and after laying siege to Shīrāz for eleven months captured the city, only to lose it again in

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767/1366. Shāh Maḥmūd died in 776/1375, and thereupon Shāh Shujā' possessed himself of Iṣfahān. Uwais succumbed suddenly in the same year; and the lord of Shīrāz thought the moment opportune to enlarge himself towards Ādharbāijān at the expense of Ḥusain, the new sovereign of Baghdād. However, what success Shāh Shujā' achieved was soon undone when he found his nephew Shāh Yaḥyā conspiring against him; he renounced his spoils, made peace with Ḥusain, and married his son Zain al-Ābidīn to the Baghdādi's sister. This was far from the end of trouble between the two neighbours; and when Ḥusain was murdered by his brother Aḥmad in 783/1381 the latter, confronted by the inevitable succession of hopeful pretenders, was glad to solicit the friendly support of Shāh Shujā', and to repudiate it as soon as his throne seemed secure. But meanwhile a cloud was gathering on the horizon that would presently grow into a storm sweeping all these petty conspiracies into ruin and oblivion. Tīmūr Lang, born at Kash in Transoxiana in 736/1336, had won his way through blood to the throne as "rightful heir" to Chaghatāi and true descendant of Chingiz; after ten years' wars of consolidation, he invaded Khurāsān in 782/1380-1, and within two years mastered Gurgān, Māzandarān and Seistān. Shāh Shujā', recognizing the portents, bought the favour of the mighty conqueror with rich gifts and a daughter; death spared him further anxieties in 786/1384.

The reign of Shāh Shujā' saw the full blossoming of the flower of Ḥāfiz' genius. Being a man of more liberal views than his predecessor, he created the conditions indispensable to the free display of poetic talent; and though it is said that relations between the poet and his royal patron were at times lacking in cordiality (see Browne, *op. cit.* vol. III, pp. 280-2), Ḥāfiz immortalized him by name in four poems (cf. no. 28 of this collection and Brockhaus, nos. 327; 344, 346) and wrote a noble necrology for his epitaph (Brockhaus, no. 601); it is as certain as such conjectures can be that very many other poems in the *Divān*, though not naming Shāh Shujā' directly, were composed for him.

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Future researchers may recover much from the obscure hints scattered up and down the poet's verses to shed new light on the dark history of these years in the chequered fortunes of Shīrāz.

Shāh Shujā' shortly before dying nominated his son Zain al-Ābidīn 'Alī to rule over Shīrāz, and his brother 'Imād al-Dīn Aḥmad to govern Kirmān. 'Alī was immediately opposed by his cousin Shāh Yaḥyā b. Sharaf al-Dīn Muẓaffar (Ḥāfiz courted him by name in five poems) who although subsequently reconciled lost his command of Iṣfahān and fled to Yazd. In 789/1387 'Alī, learning that his nominee at Iṣfahān, Muẓaffar-i Kāshī, had yielded before the approach of Tīmūr, abandoned Shīrāz for Baghdād and left it to Shāh Yaḥyā to make what terms he could with the formidable invader. The people of Iṣfahān were so imprudent as to kill Tīmūr's envoys, and expiated their rashness in a fearful massacre. Tīmūr declared Sulṭān Aḥmad the governor of Fārs, as well as Kirmān; then followed a bewildering series of events, characteristic of the kaleidoscopic nature of the destinies of those times. Zain al-Ābidīn 'Alī on quitting Shīrāz had secured the friendship of his cousin Shāh Maṣṣūr b. Sharaf al-Dīn Muẓaffar at Shūshṭar, but was almost immediately attacked and imprisoned by him. Shāh Maṣṣūr (whom Ḥāfiz complimented in a number of poems, including, according to some manuscripts, no. 37 of this selection) now walked into undefended Shīrāz; and when 'Alī, released by his jailers, made common cause with Shāh Yaḥyā and Sulṭān Aḥmad against him, Maṣṣūr defeated the coalition and occupied all 'Irāq. 'Alī fled, but was captured by the governor of Raiy and handed over to Shāh Maṣṣūr, who ordered him to be blinded. Flushed with these successes, Maṣṣūr thought to match his fortunes against the dread Tīmūr's. It was an unlucky speculation. The mighty conqueror marched to the gates of Shīrāz, and there, after a desperate resistance, Maṣṣūr fell. The rest of the Muẓaffarids immediately declared their submission to Tīmūr; but their tardy realism secured them only a week's further lease of life, and in Rajab 795/March 1393 they were all executed.

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Ḥāfiẓ had not lived to see the final ruin of the house that had patronized his genius and been immortalized in his songs. In the year 791/1389 (or, according to some authorities, 792/1390) he passed to the mercy of God, and discovered at last the solution to the baffling riddle of human life. His death took place in the beloved city that had given him birth; he lies buried in the rose-bower of Muṣallā, on the banks of the Ruknābād, so often celebrated in his poems; his grave is marked by a tablet inscribed with two of his songs.

Such, in brief outline, were the main events of fourteenth-century Fārs, so far as they affected Ḥāfiẓ' life. The legends of his relations with distant rulers, of his intended journey to India, of his debate with Timūr Lang, may be read in Gertrude Bell and the other biographers, for what they are worth; it is sufficient to say that we have no contemporary evidence for them, and that they rest in all likelihood upon no securer basis than the intelligent speculation of his readers in after times; modern criticism is perhaps entitled to make its own guesses with equal measure of certainty and uncertainty. What is indisputable is that these were the times in which the poet lived, and these the verses (or as much of them as are genuine, of which more hereafter) in which he expressed his reactions to the world about him. Being a near and interested witness of many transactions of great violence, and the incalculable destinies of kings and princes, he might well sing:

“Again the times are out of joint; and again
 For wine and the loved one's languid glance I am fain.
 The wheel of fortune's sphere is a marvellous thing:
 What next proud head to the lowly dust will it bring?
 Or if my Magian elder kindle the light,
 Whose lantern, pray, will blaze aflame and be bright?
 'Tis a famous tale, the deceitfulness of earth;
 The night is pregnant: what will dawn bring to birth?
 Tumult and bloody battle rage in the plain:
 Bring blood-red wine, and fill the goblet again!”

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It is said that in the year 770/1368–9 Ḥāfiẓ prepared a definitive edition of his poems. What truth there is in this tradition it is impossible now to decide; in any case we possess no manuscripts based upon this archetype; for all our transcriptions—they must surely run into many thousands scattered all over the world—probably go back ultimately to the edition put out after the poet's death by his friend Muḥammad Gulandām with a florid but singularly uninformative preface. Unless therefore the unexpected should happen, and beyond all reasonable hopes a manuscript or manuscripts turn up representing a tradition anterior to Gulandām's edition, we cannot get any nearer to the poems as Ḥāfiẓ himself wrote them than the text authorized after his death by a friend whose piety is unquestionable, but concerning whose scholarship and accuracy we are not in a position to form any judgement. The only other slight chance of escaping from this impasse, a slender one indeed, is to examine all the commentaries on the *Divān* (four in Persian and three in Turkish are known), every *takhmīs* or *tasdīs* (poems incorporating an ode of Ḥāfiẓ) composed by later poets,¹ and every *juṅg* (commonplace book) and *tadhkira* (biographies) in which Ḥāfiẓ is quoted, as well as every poem written since his time in which his verses are introduced by the figure known as *taḍmīn*; and it might well be found, at the end of all these labours, that we had still not progressed far beyond Gulandām.

Certainly well over a hundred printed or lithographed texts of Ḥāfiẓ have appeared, since the *editio princeps* issued by Upjohn's Calcutta press in 1791. Of these all but a very few represent a completely uncritical approach to the task of editorship. The best

1 A *takhmīs* by Jamāl-i Lubnānī, a contemporary of Ḥāfiẓ, containing Brockhaus no. 59, was published by M. Minovi in *Rūz-gār-i Nau*, vol. III, pt. 1, pp. 43–4, using a British Museum manuscript dated 813–4/1410–1; the text there given has some remarkable variants not found in any copy of the *Divān*.

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European edition is no doubt that of H. Brockhaus (Leipzig, 1854-63) which is based on the recension of the Turkish commentator Sūdī (d. 1006/1598) and includes a considerable part of his commentary. Several critical texts have been prepared in recent years by Persian scholars; of these the most reliable is that published at Teheran in 1320/1941 under the editorship of Mīrzā Muḥammad Qazvīnī, E. G. Browne's friend and the *doyen* of modern Persian studies, and Dr Qāsim Ghanī, whose valuable and comprehensive monograph on the life and times of Ḥāfīz has already been mentioned. The most serious drawback to this otherwise admirable and beautiful text—it is a reproduction of an excellent original written in calligraphic *nasta'liq*—is its deficient critical apparatus. As this text—referred to hereafter as MQ—is based on a comparison of no fewer than seventeen manuscripts, several of them exceedingly old, and has been made by two of the most eminent Persian scholars now living, I have not hesitated to use it in editing these selections. At the same time I have mentioned in the notes such textual variants as are to be found in the editions of Brockhaus (B), V. R. von Rosenzweig-Schwannau (3 vols., Vienna, 1858-64), called hereafter RS, Ḥusain Pezhmān (=P, Teheran, 1318/1939), and (for a few poems, all so far published by this editor), Mas'ūd Farzād (=F).

The first and most fundamental problem attending the task of editing Ḥāfīz is to decide which of the poems attributed to him in the various manuscripts are genuine products of his pen. An indication of the complexity of this problem is provided by the following figures. The Calcutta 1791 edition contains 725 poems; Brockhaus printed 692; Pezhmān has 994 items, many of them marked as doubtful or definitely spurious. The editors of MQ have admitted 495 *ghazals* as unquestionably genuine, beside 3 *qaṣīdas*, 2 *mathnavīs*, 34 occasional pieces (*muqaṭṭa'āt*) and 42 *rubā'īs*—a total of 573 poems. Their austere editorship causes a number of popular favourites (popular rather in India and Europe than in Persia) to disappear, perhaps the best known of them being the jingle *tāza ba-tāza nau ba-nau* which