

# Goethe and Sa‘dī: Christian Wurm’s interpretation of “Selige Sehnsucht” revisited

Judith Pfeiffer

## Introductory remarks\*

Johann Wolfgang (von) Goethe’s (1749-1832) *West-östlicher Divan* was inspired by Persian and, to a lesser degree, Arabic and Turkish poetry, and readings in and on literature in these languages.<sup>1</sup> In the *Divan*’s prose part, entitled *Noten und Abhandlungen zu besserem Verständnis des West-östlichen Divans*, Goethe drew the final sum of the insights of Enlightenment Europe on Islam.<sup>2</sup> The *Noten und Ab-*

---

\* The original draft of this paper was written for a seminar on “Persian Lyric Poetry,” held at the University of Chicago during the Winter Quarter 1995. I wish to thank Sunil Sharma for various invaluable discussions during and also long after this seminar that stirred my interest in this topic.

<sup>1</sup> Goethe writes in the *Noten und Abhandlungen* that “ihre Dichtungen [i.e. die Dichtungen der Perser] eigentlich diese Arbeit veranlaßten,” HA 2, 134; for Goethe’s treatises on Persian poets see Hamburger Ausgabe <sup>4</sup>1958 (in the following HA) 2, 153-162. In the *West-östlicher Divan* the names of the “seven chorages” “Ferdusi,” “Enweri,” “Nisami,” “Dschelâl-Eddîn Rumi,” “Saadi,” “Hafis,” and “Dschami” stand out in comparison to other Oriental poets (Table 1). Goethe had also made himself acquainted with Arabic poetry – his *Noten und Abhandlungen* give an account of his interest in and knowledge about this topic. Notably, the poems “Vier Gnaden” (HA 2, 10-11) and “Berechtigte Männer,” evoking the Battle of Badr (HA 2, 107-109), are mainly inspired by Arabic poetry, and from the Weimar Library readers’ records we know that Goethe borrowed Johann Jahn’s 1796 *Arabische Sprachlehre* as well as Golius’ 1653 *Lexicon Arabico-Latinum* (von Keudell, *Goethe als Benutzer der Weimarer Bibliothek* 1931, 155, 189, 193). Like Hammer-Purgstall, however, who seems to have been his most important mediator for Arabic, Persian and Turkish poetry, he showed a strong preference for Persian poetry. Goethe was also enthusiastic about the “Persian religion,” but characterized Islam as “dull” (eintönig) and “somber” (düster) (e.g., HA 2, 130; 143-44). Katharina Mommsen estimated that “in Goethes Divan türkische Elemente einen nicht ganz unbeträchtlichen Raum einnehmen,” without, however, adducing examples. “Goethe und Diez. Quellenuntersuchungen zu Gedichten der Divan-Epoche,” 1961, 5. All in all, it has to be stressed, however, that Goethe never studied Arabic or Persian in depth – he simply did not have the time to do this next to his other obligations. However, he was sufficiently inspired to pursue calligraphic exercises, which extended over several years. On Goethe’s “orientalische Schreibübungen” see Wilhelm Solms, *Goethes Vorarbeiten zum Divan*, 1977, 230. Goethe practiced Arabic, Turkish and Persian calligraphy in September and October 1815 (Solms, 1977, 355-356), and repeated exercises in Persian calligraphy in November 1818 (Solms, 1977, 358). “Aufzeichnungen in arabischer Schrift” are to be found for the last time in 1822 (Solms, 1977, 360).

<sup>2</sup> The *West-östlicher Divan* consists of two parts, one containing poetry, and the other prose. Despite the lukewarm reception of the *Divan* in its own time, its lyrical part is nowadays considered to be “un des grands recueils lyriques du XIXe siècle,” (Claude David, “Note sur le ‘Divan’: D’un prétendu mysticisme.” 1951, 221). The *Divan* was written in the years

*handlungen* are both an explanatory introduction to the *Divan* and its background, i.e., the history, literature, and religions of the Middle East, and the analytical work Goethe himself needed to satisfy his curiosity for the “Orient.”<sup>3</sup> The emotional ‘Anverwandlung,’ however, took place in the *Divan*’s lyrical poems. Here the poet Ḥāfīz (d. 792/1390) must be considered Goethe’s primary source of inspiration.<sup>4</sup>

Ḥāfīz, however, was not the only Oriental author Goethe read, even though the scholarly literature has paid far more attention to his contribution than to that of any other Oriental author. The 13<sup>th</sup> century poet Sa’dī (d. 691/1292) was another source of inspiration for Goethe.<sup>5</sup> The extent to which Sa’dī had made an impression on Goethe was pointed out as early as 1834 by Chr. Wurm, who had collected and collated parallel passages from Goethe’s *Divan* and his Oriental sources in his *Commentar zu Göthe’s west=östlichem Divan*.<sup>6</sup> Yet Sa’dī’s place has been largely ignored ever since in the otherwise abundant literature on the *West-östlicher Divan*.<sup>7</sup> This paper draws attention to the relationship between Sa’dī and Goethe, and investigates why it has been relatively neglected since Wurm’s initial study.

---

1814-1816 and first published in 1816. The publication in its final form followed in 1819. For detailed information on the different stages of publication see Hamburger Ausgabe 12/1981 2, 550-704. Annemarie Schimmel, 1989, 9, calls the *West-östlicher Divan* “die klassische, diese [aufklärerische] Periode der Auseinandersetzung des Abendlandes mit dem Islam abschließende Stellungnahme.”

<sup>3</sup> “Mittlern Orient” is how Goethe calls “Persien und seine Umgebung;” HA 2, 152. Goethe himself did not think that any of his works was self-explanatory. This is the reason why he added the “Noten und Abhandlungen zu besserem Verständnis des West-östlichen Divans” to the poems which constitute the second half of the *Divan*: “Ich habe die Schriften meiner ersten Jahre ohne Vorwort in die Welt gesandt, ohne auch nur im mindesten anzudeuten, wie es damit gemeint sei... Nun wünscht’ ich aber, daß nichts den ersten guten Eindruck des gegenwärtigen Büchleins hindern möge. Ich entschieße mich daher zu erläutern, zu erklären, nachzuweisen, und zwar bloß in der Absicht, daß ein unmittelbares Verständnis Lesern daraus erwachse, die mit dem Osten wenig oder nicht bekannt sind.” *West-östlicher Divan*, HA 2, 126.

<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the original title of the *Divan* was “*Versammlung deutscher Gedichte mit stetem Bezug auf den “Divan” des persischen Sängers Mahomed Schemseddin Hafis.*” HA 2, 550. On Ḥāfīz and Goethe see, e.g. Jan Rypka *et al.*, *Iranische Literaturgeschichte*, 1959, 256-265, and for more recent literature the 1994 bibliography on the *West-östlicher Divan* in: *Johann Wolfgang Goethe. Sämtliche Werke. Briefe, Tagebücher und Gespräche*, Vierzig Bände; eds. Friedmar Apel, Hendrik Birus *et al.*, Frankfurt/Main: 1994, *West-östlicher Divan* II, pp. 1894-1956.

<sup>5</sup> Sa’dī completed his *Būstān* in 654-55/1256-57; the *Gulistān* followed in 656/1258. Rypka *et al.*, *Iranische Literaturgeschichte* (1959), 241-245.

<sup>6</sup> *Commentar zu Göthe’s west=östlichem Divan, bestehend in Materialien und Originalien zum Verständnis desselben herausgegeben von Chr. Wurm*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed., Nürnberg/Leipzig: 1834. For a positive re-appraisal of Wurm’s work, see Solbrig, *Hammer-Purgstall und Goethe*, 1973, 150-51, esp. fn. 164.

<sup>7</sup> The 1994 bibliography in Hendrik Birus *et al.*, eds., contains more than 750 titles of works on and interpretations of the *West-östlicher Divan*, of which only one (Faramarz Behzad, *ādam Olearius’ “Persianischer Rosenthal.” Untersuchungen zur Übersetzung von Saadis “Golestan” im 17. Jahrhundert*, 1970) refers to Sa’dī, without, however, focusing on Sa’dī’s importance for Goethe. There exist, by contrast, several studies on other sources of Goethe’s knowledge and inspiration, such as monographs and studies on Goethe and Ḥāfīz (e.g., Hans

## *Goethe's oriental experience: The West-östlicher Divan*

While Goethe is best known for his literary works, the scope of his occupations was much broader: He was also a critic, journalist, painter, theatre manager, statesman, educationalist, natural philosopher, library superintendent, and much more. His diverse occupations provide keys to his literary work, too: as Goethe himself pointed out, his life and works cannot be separated.<sup>8</sup>

When Goethe first became interested in Persian poetry, the Oriental fashion in Europe had entered into competition with the long standing interest in classical Greek and Latin arts and literature among the educated elites, though it never succeeded in replacing them as the imagined 'ancestors' of modern western literature and thought. This recent shift of interest from the classical to Oriental authors can also be observed in Goethe as an individual. After a disappointing second journey to Italy he turned away from this region to a much farther East where he could not hope to ever travel physically. Whereas the journey to Italy showed him how much he had aged since his first visit there, the escape to imagined Persia permitted the 65-year-old Goethe to rejuvenate. That he experienced these new discoveries together with a new love, Marianne von Willemer, gave his poems the fire and inspiration they might have lacked had the occupation with Persian poetry been purely intellectual.<sup>9</sup>

---

Robert Roemer, 1951, and Nushafarin Arjomand-Fathi, 1983), Goethe and Diez (e.g., Katharina Mommsen, 1961), Goethe and Hammer-Purgstall (e.g., Ingeborg Hildegard Solbrig, 1973), etc. For further literature see the bibliography in Hendrik Birus *et al.*, eds. (1994), *West-östlicher Divan* II, pp. 1894-1956.

<sup>8</sup> As Goethe communicated to Cotta on February 20, 1819, "lassen sich meine Schriften vom Leben nicht sondern," HA 14, 364. See also his comments in his "Buch des Unmuts" (HA 2, 197-200), where he expressed that he was incapable of emulating the Persian poets' critique of the ruling classes because his own position in society was too privileged: "In die unerfreuliche Anmaßung gegen die höheren Stände konnte der Dichter [i.e., Goethe – J.P.] nicht verfallen. Seine glückliche Lage überhob ihn jedes Kampfes mit Despotismus." HA 2 <sup>12</sup>1981, 199. Goethe's interest in the morphology of rocks, clouds and plants is reflected in the famous poem "Wanderers Nachtlied," and he wrote his *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, where possible, on the basis of written sources in front of him. Thus, Goethe asked Zelter to return to him the letters he had written to him after 1800 in order to be able to write a more authentic autobiography (on 21 May 1825; HA 14, 367-68).

<sup>9</sup> HA 2, 556-557. That Goethe was as well inspired by love can be gleaned from the contents of his poems: He wished he could condense his "Buch Suleika," but he was incapable to do so: Love made him deviate and expand. "Ich möchte dieses Buch wohl gern zusammenschürzen,/ Daß es den andern wäre gleich geschnürt./ Allein wie willst du Wort und Blatt verkürzen,/ Wenn Liebeswahnsinn dich ins weite führt?" "Buch Sulaika," HA 2, 77. Claude David went as far as to claim – contrary to the majority of interpretations – that there existed merely friendship between Goethe and Marianne, and that Goethe was too wise to hope for more. According to David, any other allegation is an "exquisite mystification." He rejects the possibility of any love relation between the two whatsoever, even for the "Buch Suleika:" "Suleika, c'est d'abord la Bien-Aimée idéale...." "Note sur le 'Divan': D'un prétendu mysticisme." *Études Germaniques* 6 (1951), 221-22.

Even though the occupation with the “Orient” was more philologically than politically oriented in Germany, political events had a direct impact on Goethe’s personal and literary activities.<sup>10</sup> By the first decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, soldiers from the Russian regiment of Bashkirs were stationed in Weimar, Goethe’s residence, and held Muslim services in the local “Gymnasium,” which Goethe observed with great interest. One of the Weimar contingent’s soldiers who had fought for Napoleon in Spain returned with a leaf of an old Arabic codex, and Goethe, who fell in love with the Arabic script, started to apply himself to Arabic calligraphy at once.<sup>11</sup> The collection of antique books recently acquired by the University of Jena attracted Goethe’s interest, and he followed closely the latest developments in the field of Oriental philology, consisting mainly of translations.<sup>12</sup>

In his infatuation with the “Orient” Goethe was not a forerunner, though it shows that even the old Goethe was perfectly in touch with the currents of his time.<sup>13</sup> In 1814 Josef Hammer’s translation of “The Divan of Muhammad Shems-ed Dín Háfiz” became available, which gave Goethe’s *Divan* its name and the poet

<sup>10</sup> “...at no time in German scholarship during the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century could a close partnership have developed between Orientalists and a protracted, sustained *national* interest in the Orient. There was nothing in Germany to correspond to the Anglo-French presence in India, the Levant, North Africa. Moreover, the German Orient was almost exclusively a scholarly, or at least a classical, Orient: it was made the subject of lyrics, fantasies, and even novels, but it was never actual, the way Egypt and Syria were actual for Chateaubriand, Lane, Lamartine, Burton, Disraeli, or Nerval. There is some significance in the fact that the two most renowned works on the Orient, Goethe’s *Westöstlicher Diwan* and Friedrich Schlegel’s *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier*, were based respectively on a Rhine journey and on hours spent in Paris libraries.” Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, London: Penguin Books, 2003 [1978], 19. For a particularly insightful analysis of Orientalism in German-speaking countries, see Bert G. Fragner, *Oriental Studies, Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies in Germany (An Overview)*. Islamic Area Studies Working Papers Series No. 24, Tokyo: The University of Tokyo, 2001, esp. 1-5. Muhammad Iqbal’s *Payām-i Mashriq* (1922) was one of the late and rare reactions from ‘the East’ to European literature, in this case Goethe’s *Divan*.

<sup>11</sup> Examples of Goethe’s calligraphical exercises can be found in Hendrik Birus *et al.*, eds., 1994, *West-östlicher Divan II*.

<sup>12</sup> Katharina Mommsen has written an astute study on the rivalry between Hammer and Diez in this area, which is also reflected indirectly in Goethe’s works. “Goethe und Diez. Quellenuntersuchungen zu Gedichten der Divan-Epoche,” *Sitzungsberichte der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin. Klasse für Sprachen, Literatur und Kunst*, 1961, Nr. 4, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1961.

<sup>13</sup> In the *Noten und Abhandlungen* Goethe alludes to the recently intensified occupation with the “Orient,” pointing out that the influence of the “Orient” itself is much older than the current ‘trend’: “...in einer Zeit, wo so vieles aus dem Orient unserer Sprache treulich angeeignet wird, mag es verdienstlich erscheinen, wenn auch wir von unserer Seite die Aufmerksamkeit dorthin zu lenken suchen, woher so manches Große, Schöne und Gute seit Jahrtausenden zu uns gelangte, woher täglich mehr zu hoffen ist.” HA 2, 128. See also, Diethelm Balke, “Orient und orientalische Literaturen (Einfluß auf Deutschland und Europa).” *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturgeschichte*. Vol. 2, Werner Kohlschmidt, ed.. Berlin: <sup>2</sup>1965, 816-869.

his inspiration.<sup>14</sup> However, Goethe's readings in Oriental literature date back to a much earlier period. The extensive tools of the "Goetheforschung," such as the inventory of his private library,<sup>15</sup> reader inventories from the Weimar library with the titles and dates when Goethe borrowed and returned books over a period of more than fifty years,<sup>16</sup> and his diary entries and the extensive correspondence he maintained with his contemporaries,<sup>17</sup> permit us to trace his readings and to date and follow up on the development of his interests over time. Goethe's first occupation with Islam reaches back to the 1770's. He took notes from the Qur'ān as early as 1772 and again in 1815.<sup>18</sup> In 1772 he reviewed Megerlin's translation of the Qur'ān in the *Frankfurter Gelehrten Anzeigen*.<sup>19</sup> He took notes from the *Mu'allaqāt* in 1787 and again in 1815 for the *Divan*.<sup>20</sup> Goethe translated Voltaire's drama "Mahomet" (1772-73), which Napoleon criticized as unbalanced when he met with Goethe in 1808.<sup>21</sup> Especially between 1814 and 1819, while he was working on the

<sup>14</sup> While the dates of publication on the first and second part were "1812" and "1813," the book was probably not printed before 1814; as soon as it appeared, the publisher Cotta gave a copy to Goethe. Hammer also sent a copy of the translation to Goethe, with the dedication "dem Zaubermeister das Werkzeug" – 'to the magician the tool,' which Ingeborg Hildegard Solbrig chose as a subtitle for her study on *Hammer-Purgstall und Goethe*. The idea to translate Ḥāfiẓ's *Dīvān* into German first came to Hammer in 1799 in Constantinople, while witnessing Derwishes who were reciting Ḥāfiẓ. Solbrig, *Hammer-Purgstall und Goethe*, 1973, 93-94.

<sup>15</sup> Hans Ruppert, *Goethes Bibliothek. Katalog*, Weimar: Arion Verlag, 1958.

<sup>16</sup> Elise von Keudell, *Goethe als Benutzer der Weimarer Bibliothek. Ein Verzeichnis der von ihm entliehenen Werke*, Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1931. Goethe's first borrower entry (in Latin) dates to May 1778; the last entry (in German) is dated 8 March 1832.

<sup>17</sup> Relevant for the period during which Goethe composed the *Divan* is, e.g., *Johann Wolfgang Goethe. Napoleonische Zeit. Briefe, Tagebücher und Gespräche vom 10. Mai 1805 bis 6. Juni 1816. Teil II: Von 1812 bis zu Christianes Tod*. Ed. Rose Unterberger, Frankfurt/Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag: 1994. The volume is part of the 40-volume edition *Johann Wolfgang Goethe. Sämtliche Werke. Briefe, Tagebücher und Gespräche*, eds. Karl Eibl et al., Frankfurt/Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag: 1994.

<sup>18</sup> Goethe's earliest phase of intensive study of the literatures of the Near East dates back to the 1770's, when he read a biography of Muhammad, followed by the German translation of the Qur'ān. Johann Christoph Bürgel, "Goethe und Hafis," *Drei Hafis-Studien*, Bern and Frankfurt/M.: Herbert Lang/Peter Lang, 1975, 8-9. See especially Wilhelm Solms, *Goethes Vorarbeiten zum Divan*, München: 1977, 351 and 353. According to Katharina Mommsen, Goethe's excerpts from the Qur'ān date as far back as 1771/72; *Goethe und die arabische Welt*, Frankfurt am Main: 1988, 179-80.

<sup>19</sup> Mommsen, *Goethe und die arabische Welt*, Frankfurt am Main: 1988, 176.

<sup>20</sup> Solms, *Goethes Vorarbeiten zum Divan*, 1977, 351 and 353.

<sup>21</sup> We only possess a fragment of this piece, which had already been lost during Goethe's lifetime: "Diese Hymne hatte ich mit viel Liebe gedichtet; sie ist verloren gegangen, würde sich aber zum Zweck einer Kantate wohl wieder herstellen lassen... Im zweiten Akt versucht er selbst [Muhammad], heftiger aber Ali, diesen Glauben in dem Stamme weiter auszubreiten. Im Stücke sollte Ali, zu Ehren seines Meisters, auf dem höchsten Punkte des Gelingens diesen Gesang [the poem "Mahomets Gesang"] vortragen..." *Dichtung und Wahrheit* III, 14. Buch. HA 10, 40-41; see also 39 and 602. According to Goethe, Napoleon characterized the "Mahomet" as a "bad piece." "Er [Napoleon] fügte sodann hinzu, daß ich auch aus dem Französischen übersetzt habe und zwar Voltaires "Mahomet". Der Kaiser versetzte: "Es ist

*Divan*, Goethe borrowed from the Weimar Library various primary sources,<sup>22</sup> which had been translated by Josef von Hammer and Friedrich von Diez into German, and which Goethe actively sought to read whenever a translation became available.<sup>23</sup> Goethe's interest in the "Orient" did not stop with the publication of the *West-östlicher Divan*: He completed the *Chinesisch-deutsche Jahreszeiten* as late as 1832, shortly before his death.

### Goethe and Sa'dī

Hundreds of articles and monographs are published yearly on Goethe, and by 1994, some 750 titles on the *West-östlicher Divan* alone were available.<sup>24</sup> Very few among these deal with Sa'dī's works, mostly touching Goethe's relationship with him rather indirectly.<sup>25</sup> However, sporadic references to Sa'dī in the literature on Goethe's *Divan* indicate that he might deserve more attention than he is normally afforded. Thus, Katharina Mommsen listed Olearius' (d. 1671) translation of Sa'dī's *Gulistān* as the third most important source of Goethe's *Dīvān* after Joseph Hammer's translation of Ḥāfiẓ's *Dīvān* and Heinrich Friedrich von Diez's "Spruchgedichte."<sup>26</sup> Muhammad Iqbal named Sa'dī explicitly as one of Goethe's main sources of inspiration. Chr. Wurm collected various citations from Sa'dī's *Gulistān* and *Būstān* which provided the themes of several of the poems in Goethe's *Divan*. An example of these will be investigated below.

Among Sa'dī's works it was particularly his didactic poems, the *Būstān* and the *Gulistān*, that left an impression on Goethe. He borrowed Olearius' 1654 transla-

---

kein gutes Stück", und legte sehr umständlich auseinander wie unschicklich es sei, daß der Weltüberwinder von sich selbst eine so ungünstige Schilderung mache." "Autobiographische Einzelheiten. Unterredung mit Napoleon. 2.10.1808." HA 10, 545.

<sup>22</sup> On the books Goethe borrowed during this time, see also Ursula Wertheim, *Von Tasso zu Hafis. Probleme von Lyrik und Prosa des "West-östlichen Divans"*, Berlin und Weimar: 1983, 240; 444-447; HA 2, 247 (on the *Qābūs-nāma*); 249-252.

<sup>23</sup> Wolfgang Lentz, *Goethes Noten und Abhandlungen zum West-östlichen Divan*, Hamburg: [1958], 49. Goethe regarded Hammer-Purgstall's *Geschichte der schönen Redekünste Persiens* as important and adopted its categorization and evaluation of the seven Persian Poets Firdawsī, Anvarī, Nizāmī, Rūmī, Sa'dī, Ḥāfiẓ [Vaṣṣāf] and Jāmī for his *Noten und Abhandlungen*. Solbrig, *Hammer-Purgstall und Goethe*, 1973, 179, 186.

<sup>24</sup> See the bibliography in Hendrik Birus *et al.*, eds., *West-östlicher Divan* II, pp. 1894-1956. The latest current "Goethe-Bibliographie" in the *Goethe-Jahrbuch* 121 (2004) comprises 504 new titles that appeared in 2003 alone, of which thirteen are dedicated to the *West-östlicher Divan*, and one to "Selige Sehnsucht."

<sup>25</sup> See, e.g., Faramarz Behzad, *Adam Olearius' "Persianischer Rosenthal." Untersuchungen zur Übersetzung von Saadis "Golestan" im 17. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen 1970 (= Palaestra 258). An article on Sa'dī and Goethe ("Gūta dar āyina-yi Sa'dī") by Heshmat Moayyad appeared in *Īrānshināsī* 11 (1999), 36-58.

<sup>26</sup> "An dritter und vierter Stelle [der Quellen für Goethe's *West-östlichen Divan*] stehen die Reisebeschreibungen des Adam Olearius mit angehängter Übersetzung von Saadis Gulistan und die Fundgruben des Orients," Katharina Mommsen, "Goethe und Diez," 1961, 1.



tion of Sa'dī's *Gulistān* ("Persianischer Rosenthal") from 8 January to 19 May 1815 and again from 28 September to 16 December 1818,<sup>27</sup> and his *Vermehrte Neue Reisebeschreibung der Muscowitischen vnd Persischen Reyse* with appended translations from Sa'dī's *Gulistān* and *Būstān* from 11 March to 1 April 1815 and again from 15 April to 8 June 1819.<sup>28</sup> Goethe was sufficiently taken by Sa'dī – and perhaps also little attracted by Olearius' 17<sup>th</sup> century baroque style – to recommend that Hammer prepare a new translation of Sa'dī's *Gulistān* or *Būstān*, or both, suggesting also that such a fresh translation of his didactic works would find a better acceptance among German readers than translations of his love poetry (*ghazals*).<sup>29</sup>

To investigate Goethe's relationship with Sa'dī – and to which extent this relationship has been neglected in the scholarly literature – I have chosen the poem "Selige Sehnsucht." As the most frequently interpreted poem of the *West-östlicher Divan* it is an excellent tool to investigate the tradition of literary criticism as applied to Goethe and Sa'dī. Most scholars were apparently mainly attracted by direct citations or references in Goethe's work, and abundant material is indeed available: As the table below demonstrates, Ḥāfiz is mentioned many more times in the *West-östlicher Divan* than any other author writing in either Persian or Arabic, and it is therefore to Ḥāfiz that most of the scholarly attention was dedicated.

	Mutanabbī	Firdawsī	Anvarī	Nizāmī	Rūmī	Sa'dī	Ḥāfiz	Jāmī
"Moghanni Nameh. Buch des Sängers."	-	-	-	-	-	-	8, 8, *12, *13, 14, *15, 17	-
"Hafis Nameh. Buch Hafis"	-	-	-	-	-	-	20, 20, *21, 22, 23, 24, 25	-
"Uschk Nameh. Buch der Liebe."	-	-	-	28	-	-	28, *29	-
"Tefkir Nameh. Buch der Betrachtungen."	-	41	-	41	-	-	-	-
"Rendsch Nameh. Buch des Unmuts."	-	-	-	-	-	-	44, *45	-

→

<sup>27</sup> von Keudell, *Goethe als Benutzer der Weimarer Bibliothek* 1931, 151; 187.

<sup>28</sup> von Keudell, *Goethe als Benutzer der Weimarer Bibliothek* 1931, 154; 197. The second (1663) and the third (1696) edition contain, among others: "Scheich Saadi, Der Persische Rosen Thal übersetzt von Olearius; Lokmans Fabeln; Arabische Sprichwörter; Scheich Saadi, Persischer Baumgarten." HA 2, "Anmerkungen des Herausgebers. West-östlicher Divan," 549. See also Mommsen, *Goethe und die arabische Welt*, Frankfurt am Main: 1988, 596, footnote 1.

<sup>29</sup> Solbrig, *Hammer-Purgstall und Goethe*, 1973, 123.

	Mutanabbī	Firdawsī	Anvarī	Nizāmī	Rūmī	Sa‘dī	Ḥāfiẓ	Jāmī
“Hikmet Nameh. Buch der Sprüche.”	-	-	53	-	-	-	*57	-
“Timur Nameh. Buch des Timur.”	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
“Suleika Nameh. Buch Suleika.”	72	*72	-	78	-	78	78	78
“Saki Nameh. Das Schenken- buch.”	-	-	-	-	-	-	90	-
“Mathal Nameh. Buch der Parabeln.”	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
“Parsi Nameh. Buch des Parsen.”	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
“Chuld Nameh. Buch des Paradieses.”	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 1: Citations of Persian and Arabic writing authors in Goethe’s *West-östlicher Divan*<sup>30</sup>

This internal evidence pointing to a strong preference for Ḥāfiẓ on Goethe’s part is backed up by the historical circumstances under which the *West-östlicher Divan* was written. Goethe composed the first poems of what was going to become the *West-östlicher Divan* on his journey to Wiesbaden in late July and early August 1814, among them the first version of the poem that became later known as “Selige Sehnsucht.” During this journey, Goethe did not have physical access to the Weimar Library, and there is no evidence that he borrowed Olearius’ translations of Sa‘dī during this time. By contrast, he carried with him Hammer’s translation of the *Dīvān* of Ḥāfiẓ which he had received from the publisher Cotta only a few weeks before embarking on his trip.<sup>31</sup>

On the other hand, the books which Goethe read while he was working on the *West-östlicher Divan* subsequently to this journey show that he occupied himself intensively with whichever Oriental authors that had become available in translation: The readers’ records of Weimar Library show that during this time, Goethe borrowed the works of Rūmī,<sup>32</sup> Sa‘dī,<sup>33</sup> Firdawsī,<sup>34</sup> Nizāmī,<sup>35</sup> al-Mutanabbī,<sup>36</sup> Jāmī,<sup>37</sup> and others,<sup>38</sup> several times from the Weimar library.

<sup>30</sup> A star \* preceding a page number means that the poet’s name is used in the last stanza or couplet similarly to a *takhalluṣ* (poet’s pen name).

<sup>31</sup> Solbrig, *Hammer-Purgstall und Goethe* 1973, 94.

<sup>32</sup> Goethe checked out Rūmī’s *Mathnavī* from 9 February to 27 November 1815; von Keudell, *Goethe als Benutzer der Weimarer Bibliothek* 1931, 153.



It is during this time – between his return from the Rhine journey in 1814 and the publication of the final version of the *Divan* in 1819 – that Goethe wrote most of the poems contained in the *West-östlicher Divan*, reworked some of the earlier ones substantially, and re-named some of them, while also re-arranging their order within the *Divan* – among them “Selige Sehnsucht,” which he named and re-named altogether four times and placed in various positions of the *Divan* until it finally assumed the place towards the end of the “Moghanni Nameh” as it is known today. As will be proposed below, an analysis of “Selige Sehnsucht” in the light of Goethe’s readings in Sa’dī appears to support earlier suggestions that the fifth stanza of “Selige Sehnsucht” was not part of the first, original, version of the poem. It will also be suggested that the poem was completed during this time, very soon after the 11<sup>th</sup> of March 1815, when Goethe borrowed Sa’dī’s *Gulistān* and *Būstān* from the Weimar Library and took intensive notes from them.

Much of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century scholarship on Goethe’s engagement with his Oriental sources is based on an explicitly or implicitly applied dichotomy between ‘eastern influence’ (expressed in the use of ‘Oriental’ motifs and metaphors such as the rose and the nightingale, the moth and the flame, and many others) and ‘western contents and depth of thought’ (supposedly provided by Goethe).<sup>39</sup> If we look beyond the motifs and symbols Goethe employed in the *West-östlicher Divan*, we

<sup>33</sup> Goethe borrowed Olearius’ 1654 translation of Sa’dī’s *Gulistān* (“Persianischer Rosenthal”) from 8 January to 19 May 1815 and again from 28 September to 16 December 1818; von Keudell, *Goethe als Benutzer der Weimarer Bibliothek* 1931, 151; 187. He also borrowed it in the translation appended to the 1663/1796 edition of Olearius’ *Vermehrte Neue Beschreibung der Muscowitischen vnd Persischen Reyse* from 11 March to 1 April 1815 and again from 15 April to 8 June 1819; *ibid.*, 154, 197.

<sup>34</sup> von Keudell, *Goethe als Benutzer der Weimarer Bibliothek* 1931, 160.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>38</sup> These include, e.g., Friedrich Heinrich von Diez’ *Denkwürdigkeiten von Asien* (borrowed from 8 January to 19 May 1815; *ibid.*, 151); the *Buch des Kabus* (*Qābūs-nāma*; borrowed from 8 January to 22 May 1815; *ibid.*, 151). Goethe also borrowed “Persische, Arabische, Türkische Mscpte. [Manuscripte] Nr. 1-39” from 10 January to 27 November 1815. Unfortunately, as the call numbers of these changed over the years, these cannot be identified. *Ibid.*, 151. Others include Hammer’s *Fundgruben des Orients* (*ibid.*, 152, 158, 184, 189, 191, 193, 199), the Turkish didactic poem “Tuhfeti šāhidī” (*ibid.*, 153), the *Mu‘allaqāt* in English, Latin, and German translations (*ibid.*, 153), the Koran (*ibid.*, 160, 186, 190). He also borrowed numerous travel accounts as well as the secondary literature available at his time, such as d’Herbelot’s *Bibliothèque Orientale, and others*. Earlier, Goethe had borrowed the *1001 Nights* in Galland’s translation (from 23 April to 6 May 1807, from 12 October 1808 to 26 January 1809 and again from 5 February to 8 November 1813); von Keudell, *Goethe als Benutzer der Weimarer Bibliothek* 1931, 82, 88, 133. A good overview over the Oriental literature available in translation by Goethe’s times can be gained from Karl Goedeke’s *Grundriss zur Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung*, vol. VII (1900), 581-589.

<sup>39</sup> An example will be discussed below. See also Johann Christoph Bürgel, “Goethe und Hafis,” *Drei Hafis-Studien*, Bern and Frankfurt/M.: Herbert Lang/Peter Lang, 1975, 17-20.

may also discern similarities in world view, spirituality, and philosophy which the abovementioned dichotomy obscures.

Hammer had singled out Sa'dī as an unsurpassed "moralischer Didaktiker" in his *Geschichte der schönen Redekünste Persiens*, and Goethe agreed with this.<sup>40</sup> In the "Zahme Xenien" Goethe identified himself as "one of his [Sa'dī's – J.P.] order."<sup>41</sup> The statement "ich bin doch von seinem Orden" should mean that Goethe saw himself as an 'adept' of Sa'dī in a philosophical sense – an admirer of his didactic works, rather than any religious order, which the German term "Orden" also denotes: Goethe generally rejected mysticism as "abstrus" and "obscurantist," in a similar way in which he saw Islam as obscurantist.<sup>42</sup> In his eyes, a prophet must be monotonous to be convincing; Goethe called the Qur'ān a "repetitious" book that he found "repulsive" time and again when he turned to it, though he also admitted that it ultimately commanded his "adoration."<sup>43</sup> In poetry Goethe preferred a simple style over what he called the "artificial," "oriental," style, and he refused to adopt the form of the latter for adaptation or emulation.<sup>44</sup> Unlike Rückert, he did

<sup>40</sup> "Saadi [...] steht vergleichungsweise mit den übrigen großen Dichtern [...] als moralischer Didaktiker unübertroffen in seiner Sphäre, wie Firdussi als epischer, Dschelaeddin als mystischer, Hafis als erotischer, Enweri als panegyrischer, Nisami und Dschami als romantische Dichter einer der sieben Chorageten der himmlischen Sphären, aus denen die Musik der persischen Dichtkunst ertönt." (*Geschichte der schönen Redekünste Persiens*, 205). Hendrik Birus *et al.*, 1994, *West-östlicher Divan* II, 1462-63. See also HA 2, 161, and Solbrig *Hammer-Purgstall und Goethe* 1973, 123.

<sup>41</sup> "Bei Saadi gedenk' ich mich,/Ist hundert sechzehn Jahr alt worden./Er hat mehr ausgestanden als ich,/Und ich bin doch von seinem Orden." ("Zahme Xenien" FA I 2, 735), Hendrik Birus *et al.*, 1994, *West-östlicher Divan* II, 1463.

<sup>42</sup> The *Mu'allaqāt* "geben uns einen hinlänglichen Begriff von der hohen Bildung des Stammes der Koraischiten, aus welchem Mahomet selbst entsprang, ihnen aber eine düstre Religionshülle überwarf und jede Aussicht auf reinere Fortschritte zu verhüllen wußte." HA 2, 130. "... die mahometanische [Religion] läßt ihren Bekenner nicht aus einer dumpfen Beschränktheit heraus..." HA 2, 149.

<sup>43</sup> HA 2, 143f. "... fabelhafte Geschichten jüdischer und christlicher Religion, Amplifikationen aller Art, grenzenlose Tautologien und Wiederholungen bilden den Körper dieses heiligen Buches, das uns, so oft wir auch daran gehen, immer wieder von neuem anwidert, dann aber anzieht, in Erstaunen setzt und am Ende Verehrung abnötigt." Christianity, however, is seen by Goethe as the highest of all religions – higher than Islam, Hinduism or the Old Greek Polytheism (HA 2, 149), though he also occasionally characterized himself as "decidedly non-Christian" or "pagan." Friedenthal, 1965, 14.

<sup>44</sup> "Zuvörderst also darf unser Dichter wohl aussprechen, daß er sich im Sittlichen und Ästhetischen Verständlichkeit zur ersten Pflicht gemacht, daher er ... nur von weitem auf dasjenige hindeutet, wo der Orientale durch Künstlichkeit und Künstelei zu gefallen strebt." HA 2, 127. In the poem "Nachbildung," Goethe is explicit about his dislike of the form of Persian poetry, which was alien to him: "In deine Reimart hoff' ich mich zu finden,/Das Wiederholen soll mir auch gefallen,/Erst werd' ich Sinn, sodann auch Worte finden..." and, more critical: "Zugemeßne Rhythmen reizen freilich,/Das Talent erfreut sich wohl darin;/Doch wie schnelle widern sie abscheulich, Hohle Masken ohne Blut und Sinn./Selbst der Geist erscheint sich nicht erfreulich,/Wenn er nicht, auf neue Form bedacht,/Jener toten Form ein Ende macht." Not the contents alone, the form of a good poem has to be 'alive,' has to be "fähig zu ständiger Erneuerung." *West-östlicher Divan*, HA 2, 23-24. It is no coincidence that Goethe, one of the most prolific 'imitators' of Oriental poetry, should not be represented in

not attempt to copy the repeated rhyme at the end of every verse, which did and does not correspond to the German taste of 'good' poetry. In this Goethe followed Hammer-Purgstall, to whom it was more important to grasp the sense of a poem and to render its meaning, mood, and allusions than to emulate its form. In only a few poems did Goethe write in a form close to the *ghazal*, and each time there was a special reason for it which underlined the meaning.<sup>45</sup>

There seems thus to be a certain amount of inconsistency in Goethe's relationship with his Oriental sources, which is in itself consistent, if we take into account Goethe's own worldview: The world is "mannigfaltig:" one can try to understand it, but there are certain aspects one cannot grasp. How one interprets and presents it is what makes the difference between a poet and a prophet: Both are divinely inspired, but whereas the poet strives for versatility "in Gesinnung und Darstellung," the prophet defends one single opinion to "unite the peoples:" "Hiezu bedarf es nur, daß die Welt glaube; er [der Prophet] muß also eintönig werden und bleiben, denn: 'das Mannigfaltige glaubt man nicht, man erkennt es'."<sup>46</sup>

Goethe as a "Dichter" is thus capable of appreciating both Ḥāfiẓ, for whom, in his understanding, not the "meaning," but the "mood" of his writings was important,<sup>47</sup> and the more rational Sa'dī, who, according to Goethe, wanted "to instruct," and to whom Goethe ascribed precedence in his works' "fertile impact" on "us Westerners."<sup>48</sup>

---

this volume with more than one contribution. The form of the *ghazal* was not one of his favorites.

<sup>45</sup> HA 2 <sup>12</sup>1981, 553. – According to Goethe's understanding, there are three types of translation: prosaic translation (translation into prose), parodistic translation (translation in form, but not in its meaning), and the creation of a third form in the middle between the strange and the own in the form of appropriation (Anverwandlung; 'translation' in form and meaning). This last was the kind of translation Goethe ultimately strove for. *West-östlicher Divan*, "Übersetzungen," HA 2 <sup>12</sup>1981, 255-58.

<sup>46</sup> HA 2, 143. Thus, Goethe also did not appreciate Rūmī's mysticism which he called "abstrus" and adhering to an "Einheitslehre" (HA 2, 157), whereas he admired the "Mannigfaltigkeit" in Nizāmī's work (HA 2, 155). And on Jāmi he wrote: "Denn was tut der Mystiker anders, als daß er sich an Problemen vorbeischiebt oder sie weiterschiebt, wenn es sich tun läßt?" HA 2, 160.

<sup>47</sup> "Sobald man ihn [i.e. Ḥāfiẓ] aber gefaßt hat, bleibt er ein lieblicher Lebensbegleiter... keineswegs um des Sinnes halben, den er selbst mutwillig zerstückelt, sondern der Stimmung wegen, die er ewig rein und erfreulich verbreitet." HA 2, 162.

<sup>48</sup> "Leser und Hörer zu unterrichten, ist sein entschiedener Zweck." HA 2, 157. Sa'dī "fühlt die Notwendigkeit, sich zu sammeln, überzeugt von der Pflicht, zu belehren, und so ist er uns Westländern zuerst fruchtbar und segensreich geworden." HA 2, 161. Indeed, Goethe appreciated Sa'dī for his didactic writings, his *Būstān* and *Gulistān*, not so much for his poetry. Solbrig, *Hammer-Purgstall und Goethe*, 1973, 123.

## The poem “Selige Sehnsucht”

Goethe’s “Selige Sehnsucht” is the most often interpreted poem of the entire *Divan*.<sup>49</sup> Goethe wrote it on July 31, 1814<sup>50</sup> – before he met Marianne von Willemer.<sup>51</sup> This is important, as Goethe’s love for Marianne is often seen as the main impetus and inspiration for the *West-östlicher Divan*. The poem was a challenge for Goethe in that he used in it the image of the moth attracted to the burning candle, the repetitious use of which he adduced in his *Noten und Abhandlungen* as an example for the monotony (“Eintönigkeit”) of Persian poetry, which he rejected.<sup>52</sup> The poem’s original title was “Buch Sad, Gasele I,” which Goethe replaced subsequently with the titles “Selbstopfer” and “Vollendung,” before finally naming it “Selige Sehnsucht.”<sup>53</sup>

Sagt es niemand, nur den Weisen,  
Weil die Menge gleich verhöhnet,  
Das Lebend’ge will ich preisen,  
Das nach Flammentod<sup>54</sup> sich sehnet.

In der Liebesnächte Kühlung,  
Die dich zeugte, wo du zeugtest,  
Überfällt dich fremde Fühlung,  
Wenn die stille Kerze leuchtet.

Nicht mehr bleibest du umfassen  
In der Finsternis Beschattung,  
Und dich reißet neu Verlangen  
Auf zu höherer Begattung.

Keine Ferne macht dich schwierig,  
Kommst geflogen und geannt,  
Und zuletzt, des Lichts begierig,  
Bist du, Schmetterling, verbrannt.

Und so lang du das nicht hast,  
Dieses: Stirb und werde!  
Bist du nur ein trüber Gast  
Auf der dunklen Erde.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Edgar Lohner in: *Idem*, ed., *Interpretationen*, 1973, “Einleitung,” VIII. The list in Birus *et al.*, eds. 1994, *West-östlicher Divan* II, 973-74 and 1894-1956 comprises not less than 49 interpretations of this poem; in the 2004 *Goethe-Jahrbuch*, the poem has its own entry in the annually published “Goethe-Bibliographie.”

<sup>50</sup> HA 2, 582.

<sup>51</sup> Goethe met the then not yet married Marianne Jung for the first time on August 4, 1814, Claude David, “Note sur le ‘Divan’: D’un prétendu mysticisme,” 221.

<sup>52</sup> HA 2, 165.

<sup>53</sup> HA 2, 552; Birus *et al.*, eds. 1994, *West-östlicher Divan* II, 965. Note that ‘selig’ has a wide range of meanings, including ‘obviously happy’ as well as ‘deceased.’

<sup>54</sup> The earliest draft had “Flammenschein” instead of “Flammentod.” *Goethe, West-östlicher Divan, Eigenhändige Niederschriften*, ed. Katharina Mommsen, 1996, vol. 1, 24, and vol. 2, 23. See also Birus *et al.*, eds. 1994, *West-östlicher Divan* I, 500.

<sup>55</sup> HA 2, 18-19.

In the most recent and complete edition of Goethe's works (1994, 40 volumes) the commentary on "Selige Sehnsucht" cites in full length the translation of the Persian poem to which Goethe is thought to have been most indebted. This poem, which became accessible to Goethe in Hammer's translation in late May/early June 1814, was long ascribed to Ḥāfīz and was only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century identified as a later forgery, a detail which is of little relevance in this context:

Keiner kann sich aus den Banden  
Deines Haars befreien,  
Ohne Furcht vor der Vergeltung  
Schlepp'st du die Verliebten.  
Bis nicht in des Elends Wüsten  
Der Verliebte wandert,  
Kann er in der Seele Innern  
Heiligstes nicht dringen.  
Deiner Wimpern Spitzen würden  
Selbst *Kustem* <recte: Rustem> besiegen  
Deiner Brauen Schütze würde  
Selbst *Wakaß* beschämen.  
Wie die Kerze brennt die Seele,  
Hell an Liebesflammen  
Und mit reinem Sinne hab' ich  
Meinen Leib geopfert.  
Bis du nicht wie Schmetterlinge  
Aus Begier verbrennest,  
Kannst Du nimmer Rettung finden  
Von dem Gram der Liebe.  
Du hast in des Flatterhaften  
Seele Gluth geworfen,  
Ob sie gleich längst aus Begierde  
Dich zu schauen tanzte.  
Sieh' der Chymiker der Liebe  
Wird den Staub des Körpers,  
Wenn er noch so bleiern wäre,  
Doch in Gold verwandeln.  
*O Hafis!* kennt wohl der Pöbel  
Großer Perlen Zahlenwerth?  
Gieb die köstlichen Juwelen  
Nur den Eingeweihten.<sup>56</sup>

Several verses of this poem have parallels in "Selige Sehnsucht," such as the idea that higher knowledge should only be shared with the initiated few,<sup>57</sup> and most no-

<sup>56</sup> Birus *et al.*, eds. 1994, *West-östlicher Divan* II, 964-65. See also, in modernized orthography, HA 2, 582-83.

<sup>57</sup> Weise-Eingeweihte; Pöbel-Menge in the last four verses in 'Ḥāfīz' poem and the first two verses in "Selige Sehnsucht" build obvious couples, though the aspect of "verhöhnern" (to mock) and its antonym "preisen" (to praise) is absent in the poem ascribed to Ḥāfīz. Note that an element of mockery is implied in comparable passages in Sa'dī (see below: "Armes Blut;" "niemand wird sagen, Du hättest wohl gethan").

tably the central image of the moth and the candle, as well as the attraction of the former to the latter, which ends inevitably in death. But is it inevitable? If “Selige Sehnsucht” ended after the fourth stanza – and there are a number of scholars who have argued that the original poem ended here<sup>58</sup> – then this is what the poem would convey. However, stanza five introduces a new idea, that of an alternative, implicit in the “solong Du das nicht hast,” and the juxtaposition of the “Trüber Gast auf der dunklen Erde” with the “Lebend’ge, das nach Flammentod sich sehnet.” The comparison of the moth who is attracted to the light with his sister who isn’t is clearly decided in favor of the former: Striving for the light – the ability to experience “Selige Sehnsucht” – and accepting death, and renewal, through burning in it, is better than life without it. Indeed, in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Goethe expressed a very similar idea: “ruht [...], wie man sagt, in der Sehnsucht das größte Glück, und darf die wahre Sehnsucht nur auf ein Unerreichbares gerichtet sein.”<sup>59</sup> The poem ascribed to Ḥāfiẓ does not contain this idea; there is no alternative to the moth who feels attracted to the flame and who ultimately and inevitably burns in it. Stanzas 1-4 of “Selige Sehnsucht” convey a similar message. It is only when re-read in the light of stanza 5 that they acquire a second, deeper meaning, and stanza 5 is therefore the part of the poem that has often been quoted as revealing Goethe’s true depth of thought.

Already in 1834 Wurm had pointed out the following parallel to a passage in Sa’dī’s *Būstān*:

Verbrennet die Mücke nicht im Lichte und ist das nicht besser vor sie, als wenn sie ohne die Kerze sonst in einer Ecke sterben sollte?<sup>60</sup>

The parallels to “Selige Sehnsucht” are obvious: The element of comparison – expressed in “besser,” and implied in the deprivative “ohne die Kerze,” and the idea of the possibility of the existence of something like a mosquito/moth dying in a dark corner, a moth *without* a candle, is absent from (Pseudo-) Ḥāfiẓ, but central to Sa’dī: Sa’dī’s mosquito who dies in a dark corner – and who is *judged* as *less well off* than the moth who is torched in the light of the candle – is Goethe’s “trüber Gast auf der dunklen Erde.”

Importantly, this idea does not occur in a love poem, a *ghazal*, but in Sa’dī’s didactic poem *Būstān*, and likewise significant for the present discussion is that the motif is not that of the moth and the candle/fire, but that of the mosquito and the candle, light, and fire. In “Selige Sehnsucht,” Goethe transformed the motif, but he quintessentially articulated the same thought as is expressed in the above verse

<sup>58</sup> For a discussion of the principal literature, and the arguments for and against such a view, see Birus *et al.*, eds. 1994, *West-östlicher Divan* II, 965-66; and especially Ewald Rösch, “Goethes ‘Selige Sehnsucht’ – eine tragische Bewegung,” in: Edgar Lohner, ed. *Interpretationen* 1973, 228-49.

<sup>59</sup> Birus *et al.*, eds. 1994, *West-östlicher Divan* II, 966.

<sup>60</sup> Ch. Wurm, *Commentar zu Goethe’s west=östlichem Divan*, 1834, 58 [Sa’dī’s *Baumgarten*, 40]. References are to the German translation which was used by Goethe.



from the *Būstān*: The mosquito who dies in the flame of the candle, but who has at least experienced this 'higher' attraction, has lived a better life than his sister mosquito who dies "in a corner," without ever having been attracted to the light, or indeed torched by it.

A structural analysis of the defining semantic elements in the poems in question reveals further differences between the poem ascribed to Ḥāfīz and "Selige Sehnsucht," and confirms affinities between the latter and the verse by Sa'dī. Where the poem ascribed to Ḥāfīz refers to the candle's *burning* and *fire* ("Wie die Kerze *brennt* die Seele"), "Selige Sehnsucht" refers to its *light*: "Wenn die stille Kerze *leuchtet*..." This is significant, as the light and the fire are two very different qualities of the candle, especially from the perspective of the moth: While light attracts it, fire destroys it. Goethe was keenly aware of this: On 12 December 1814, he noted in his diary: "Hundert Jahre bete das Feuer an, falle einen Augenblick hinein, und du verbrennst (Scheich Saadi) Hyde 343."<sup>61</sup>

It is the light of the candle that Sa'dī referred to as the primary attraction of the mosquito, though he was also aware that the elements of fire and light *together* define the candle: ("*Verbrennet* die Mücke nicht im *Lichte*"). This Sa'dī's verse shares with "Selige Sehnsucht," whose first and fourth stanza refer to fire (Flammentod; verbrannt), but which otherwise refers to light and its antonyms throughout (leuchtet, Licht; Finsternis, Beschattung, trübe, dunkel). The poem ascribed to Ḥāfīz, by contrast, does not refer to light even once – the image used throughout is that of fire and burning (brennt, Liebesflammen, verbrennest, Gluth).

Wurm referred to yet another passage in Sa'dī's *Būstān* which provides the background and formal setting for Goethe's poem. As implicit in "Selige Sehnsucht," two possible positions one can take towards the attraction of the candle are discussed in a dialogue:<sup>62</sup>

Die Mücke wurde einst von einem Manne also angeredet: Armes Blut! suche jemanden zu lieben, der deines Gleichen ist. Du und das Licht, deine Geliebte, sind so weit voneinander als Tag und Nacht; du bist ja kein Salamander, was hast du denn mit dem Feuer zu schaffen? Die Fledermaus scheuet das Licht der Sonnen. Es ist Thorheit einen offenkundigen Feind vor seinen Freund anzunehmen. Du gibst dein Leben in seinem Dienst zum Besten und niemand wird sagen, du hättest wohl gethan. So wie die Kerze andere erfreuet und fröhlich machet, so wird sie dich anhitzen und verbrennen.

<sup>61</sup> This was after borrowing from the Thomas Hyde Library, *Historia religionis veterum Persarum, Oxonii 1720*; HA 2 <sup>12</sup>1981, 583.

<sup>62</sup> Ch. Wurm, *Commentar zu Göthe's west-östlichem Divan*, 1834, 59 [Sa'dī's *Baumgarten*, 47]. In "Selige Sehnsucht" the dialogue form is not as explicit as in the *Būstān*, but it is clear that two positions are deployed: The position of the initiated, the "wise men," who, like Goethe, understand the moth's desire to give himself up in the flame, who like the moth strive for "höhere Begattung" and are ready to die to live, and the position of "die Menge," who does not understand, who is "umfassen in der Finsternis Beschattung" and who, without striving for the light, will always remain "trübe Gäste auf der dunklen Erde."

The mosquito feels more attracted to the light/flame than to his equals; the “fremde Föhlung” has already overcome him, and he defends himself against the interlocutor, Goethe’s “Menge [die] gleich verhöhet:”<sup>63</sup>

Darauf antwortete die verliebte Mücke: Was ist daran gelegen, wenn ich sterbe. Mit Willen werfe ich mich nicht selbst ins Feuer, aber die Ketten der Liebe zu der Kerzen ziehen mich dahin; da ich ferne davon war, brannte ich schon und nicht eben jetzo, da du die Funken um mich fliegen siehest. Wer kann mir wohl die Liebe gegen meinen Freund verweisen? ich bin gesinnet in ihren Banden zu sterben, laß ihre Flamme mein Herz durchstechen und mich zu Asche verbrennen; es ist mein geliebter Freund, der’s thut.<sup>64</sup>

The mosquito burns already far away from the fire (“da ich ferne davon war.”) He is lit by striving desire itself. Both Goethe and Sa’di display the dichotomy between light and darkness, convey the distance that comes about through this space: “Keine Ferne macht dich schwierig;” “Du und das Licht, deine Geliebte, sind so weit voneinander als Tag und Nacht;” and leave space for an alternative to the attraction by the light or flame, represented or indeed explicitly proposed by “the Menge”/“einem Manne,” an alternative which the poet/the mosquito rejects. What the poem ascribed to Ḥāfiẓ expresses, by contrast, is only half of the idea, namely that the lover, burning from fire for the beloved, will only find rest and quench his thirst when joined with the beloved; there is no space for an alternative:

Bis du nicht wie Schmetterlinge  
Aus Begier verbrennest,  
Kannst Du nimmer Rettung finden  
Von dem Gram der Liebe.

This is very much the idea also expressed in the first four stanzas of “Selige Sehnsucht,” but the fifth transgresses it. It introduces moral, religious and transcendental dimensions to the poem, in the light of which the other four stanzas can also be re-read and acquire a second, deeper meaning. It introduces the idea of the ideal man, not merely man in love. Goethe’s ideal man is of a Faustian nature: On a perpetual quest beyond the known, beyond the self, beyond this world, he represents by implication the quasi-divine: the man who strives to know ever more, never tiring, never satisfied with the here and now, who has pledged his soul to the devil should he ever stop and say “I am content,” but who, as long as he is on that

<sup>63</sup> Goethe’s use of the word “Menge” in his “Buch des Unmuts” in the *Noten und Abhandlungen* is highly suggestive: It is the “Menge” who corners him and prevents his poetic soul from unfolding its true genius: “Von *oben* herein ist er [der Dichter, i.e., Goethe – J.P.] nicht beengt, aber von unten und von der Seite leidet er. Eine zudringliche, oft platte, oft tückische *Menge* mit ihren Chorföhren lähmt seine Tätigkeit [...] Sodann aber werden wir ihm zugestehen, daß er mancherlei Anmaßungen dadurch zu mildern weiß, daß er sie, geföhlvoll und kunstreich, zuletzt auf die Geliebte bezieht, sich vor ihr demütigt, ja vernichtet.” (HA 2, 200; emphasis added – J.P.). The parallels to “Selige Sehnsucht” and to Sa’di’s didactic story cannot be overlooked.

<sup>64</sup> Ch. Wurm, *Commentar zu Göthe’s west=östlichem Divan*, 1834, 59 [Sa’di’s *Baumgarten*, 47].

quest, embodies the antithesis to the devil: he is the ideal man. The *ghazal* ascribed to Ḥāfiẓ does not have any of this: the aim of the lover is to join his beloved and to quench his thirst thus: it will bring him death, but also satisfaction. No comparison between the ideal man and the ordinary is attempted, and the idea of satisfaction as the ultimate aim is not questioned. The poem ascribed to Ḥāfiẓ identifies burning in the candle as the ultimate remedy to the pains of love, the aim of “Selige Sehnsucht” is to recognize the value of the act of striving: life itself.<sup>65</sup> “Kannst Du nimmer Rettung finden/Von dem Gram der Liebe.” There is no trace of an “Und solange Du das nicht hast...”

Sa'dī, by contrast, had introduced the comparison of the ideal with the ordinary that is also found in “Selige Sehnsucht,” and like Goethe, though less subtly than he, Sa'dī passed judgment on the ordinary: The mosquito who strives to die in the flame (“das Lebend'ge, das nach Flammentod sich sehnet”) is “better” than his brother who prefers to die in a dark corner.

Some of the most often reproduced interpretations as well as some very recent literature have neglected Sa'dī to a surprising extent. Wilhelm Schneider's article, selected among several dozens of interpretations of “Selige Sehnsucht” to be reproduced in the renowned “Wege der Forschung” anthology on interpretations of the *West-östlicher Divan*, is rather representative for the approach of the “intrinsic method” or “werkimmanente Methode.” In his study, he identified “antike Denker und Dichter (Platon, Horaz),” unnamed “oriental poets,” as well as the Sermon on the Mount as possible sources for the first stanza.<sup>66</sup> For the far more central symbol of the moth no such stern scholarship was deployed with regard to Goethe's Oriental sources. Schneider explained entire passages – even single words – in great detail by referring to other passages or words in the *West-östlicher Divan*, but not with regard to Goethe's own readings in these times, among others precisely Ḥāfiẓ and Sa'dī. It is worthwhile to cite Schneider's interpretation at length to show the extent to which both earlier scholarship (Wurm 1834) and Goethe's own readings are largely bypassed:

Die “Führung”, die dann den Menschen in der Liebesnacht überfällt ..., setzt die schrankenlose Hingabe des Liebenden voraus, die Selbstaufgabe, die in der Vereinigung mit der Geliebten sich erwiesen hat. Die stille Kerze ist das Sinnbild dieses höheren Wesens ... Das Beiwort “still”, das für die Deutung vom Schmetterling aus belanglos ist, offenbart jetzt

<sup>65</sup> While the “stirb und werde” can be and has been interpreted as referring to a single event of transition (death) as the beginning of afterlife (“werde”), it can also be interpreted as a cyclical part of the human condition and part of life in this world: It is through repeated experiences of “Sehnsucht” and death (joining the beloved) and the ability to find new objects of desire and renew one's experiences of “Sehnsucht” that life in this world becomes meaningful: “ruht [...] in der Sehnsucht das größte Glück” (see above). Indeed, it is through “dying and becoming” *auf der dunklen Erde* that one can become more than merely a colorless, sad guest (“trüber Gast”) in this world.

<sup>66</sup> Schneider, “Goethe: ‘Selige Sehnsucht,’” 1973, 73.

seine tiefe Bedeutung. In dem bereits genannten Gedicht ‘Vermächtnis altpersischen Glaubens’ lesen wir:

Werdet ihr in jeder Lampe Brennen  
Fromm den Abglanz höheren Lichts erkennen.

Das ewige göttliche Licht flackert und loht nicht, es leuchtet in ruhiger beständiger Klarheit. Das neue Verlangen nach “höherer Begattung”, wozu der Mensch aufgerissen wird, ist das Verlangen nach der Vereinigung mit dem göttlichen Licht, nach der Selbstaufgabe an und in Gott. Die irdische Liebe wandelt sich in die himmlische Liebe, wozu sie Vorstufe ist.<sup>67</sup>

The intrinsic method is essentially ahistorical: In this case, Schneider did not take into account that by referring to the poem “Vermächtnis altpersischen Glaubens” to explain “Selige Sehnsucht,” he reversed the order in which Goethe wrote these poems: The first version of “Selige Sehnsucht” was written on 31 July 1814, whereas Goethe composed “Vermächtnis altpersischen Glaubens” on 13 March 1815.<sup>68</sup> Nonetheless, the connection pointed out by Schneider is a valid one: It shows that Goethe worked on the image of the moth and the candle – and potentially on a revision of “Selige Sehnsucht” – around March 13, 1815, only two days after he had borrowed Sa‘dī from the Weimar Library. I shall return to this issue below.

Schneider was content to interpret the symbol of the moth rather narrowly as religiously “fromm,” without making concrete references to Goethe’s Oriental sources, or, indeed, other possible interpretations to which the poem is also open. Schneider continued stating that the “deeper meaning” (“tiefere Bedeutung”) of the symbol of the moth is attributable to Goethe alone:

Der Schmetterling als Sinnbild der menschlichen Seele ist keine Neuschöpfung Goethes. Schon den Griechen was das Symbol geläufig (Psyche als zarte Mädchengestalt mit Schmetterlingsflügeln), und aus der persischen Lyrik war Goethe auch das Motif des Schmetterling (oder der Mücke) bekannt, der im Kerzenlicht verbrennt, als Gleichnis des Menschenherzens, das im Liebesfeuer sich verzehrt. *Neu aber ist die tiefere Bedeutung, die das Gedicht “Selige Sehnsucht” in das Gleichnis hineinlegt* [emphasis added – J.P.].<sup>69</sup>

Anyone familiar with the quotations from Sa‘dī discussed above would challenge such a statement. However, it is interpretations such as this that have apparently led to the omission of the parallels with Sa‘dī from more recent editions altogether.

<sup>67</sup> Wilhelm Schneider, “Goethe: ‘Selige Sehnsucht,’” in: Edgar Lohner, ed., *Interpretationen*, 1973, 76.

<sup>68</sup> HA 2, 552; Birus *et al.*, eds. 1994, *West-östlicher Divan* II, 965. On the “Vermächtnis altpersischen Glaubens,” first called “Glaubensbekenntnis des Parsen,” see HA 2, 582; HA 2<sup>12</sup>1981, 662.

<sup>69</sup> Wilhelm Schneider, “Goethe: ‘Selige Sehnsucht,’” in: Edgar Lohner, ed., *Interpretationen*, 1973, 75. It is evident that Schneider in his interpretation is strongly influenced by his own readings and literary background, namely in Greek, not Persian, literature. He does thus not bother with details like the names of Persian poets, or the philosophy expressed in their works. It is not surprising that in Schneider’s view the “deeper meaning” (“tiefere Bedeutung”) of the parable is to be attributed to Goethe alone.

Thus, the 1994 edition of Goethe's collected works in 40 volumes by Birus *et al.* does not quote or refer to the passages from Sa'dī which Wurm had identified in 1834 and which are cited above – the commentary only mentions Goethe's "earlier readings of Sa'dī," where he "might have" read about the mosquito consuming himself in the flame. By contrast, the poem ascribed to Ḥāfiz is quoted in full. This uneven presentation of possible sources of inspiration is all the more misleading in the context of an otherwise rather extensive and inclusive array of sources and works from the primary and secondary literature cited in this edition.<sup>70</sup>

Moreover, and rather ironically, the intrinsic method and a more socio-historical approach may in this case yield similar results, at least on the surface of it, as Goethe's potential inspiration by Sa'dī is rather more difficult to establish than his inspiration by Ḥāfiz if we assume that a) Goethe was only capable of emulating Persian poetry with a written poem in front of him to which he could respond (as opposed to the mere recollection from memory of poetry he had previously read), and b) if we assume that he wrote indeed all five stanzas of "Selige Sehnsucht" on 31 July 1814.

The dated copies of Goethe's *Divan* indicate that Goethe composed the first version of "Selige Sehnsucht" on the 31<sup>st</sup> of July 1814, with Hammer's translation of Ḥāfiz' *Dīvān* at hand.<sup>71</sup> He only borrowed Olearius' *Reisebeschreibung*, which contains translated passages from Sa'dī's *Būstān* and *Gulistān*, from the Weimar Library from 11 March to 1 April 1815,<sup>72</sup> and he had checked out the *Rosengarten* from 8 January to 19 May during that year.<sup>73</sup> On the other hand, nothing speaks against the possibility that Goethe had become acquainted with both in the Library of Weimar, which he had frequented since 1778, and whose superintendent he had become in 1797,<sup>74</sup> or that he had become acquainted with Sa'dī's works through Herder, with whom he had spent time in Strasburg, who loved Sa'dī's didactic works over those of all other Persian poets, and who had indeed translated some of them.<sup>75</sup> The absence of a borrowing entry before the composition of "Selige Sehnsucht" in July 1814 does not mean that Goethe did not know or read Sa'dī prior to that date.

<sup>70</sup> On the methodological level, this approach follows the path of "Quellenforschung," insinuating by the juxtaposition of the Pseudo-Ḥāfiz poem to that of Goethe's that this was its 'source,' and that Goethe was more or less a translator, which would do him wrong. This paper suggests that we should go beyond this kind of interpretation.

<sup>71</sup> For a facsimile reproduction of the earliest version of this poem, including the term "Flammenschein" instead of "Flammentod," see *Goethe, West-östlicher Divan, Eigenhändige Niederschriften*, ed. Katharina Mommsen, 1996, vol. 1, 24, and vol. 2, 23. See also Birus *et al.*, eds. 1994, *West-östlicher Divan I*, 500.

<sup>72</sup> von Keudell, *Goethe als Benutzer der Weimarer Bibliothek* 1931, 154.

<sup>73</sup> von Keudell, *Goethe als Benutzer der Weimarer Bibliothek* 1931, 151.

<sup>74</sup> von Keudell, *Goethe als Benutzer der Weimarer Bibliothek* 1931, viii.

<sup>75</sup> HA 2 <sup>12</sup>1981, 551.

What is more, several scholars have asserted in the past that based on the meter, stress, form, style, and contents of “Selige Sehnsucht” the last, fifth, stanza is so different from the rest of the poem that it must have been written at a different time.<sup>76</sup> While other scholars have argued against it,<sup>77</sup> it is worth while pursuing the question in this context. As we have seen, stanzas 1-4 echo Ḥāfiẓ’ *ghazal*, the fifth does not.

If “Selige Sehnsucht” ended after the fourth stanza, it would still be a ‘complete’ poem. Indeed, stanza four alludes several times to a certain ‘end’ and closure, and could therefore very well have been the final stanza of an earlier, four-stanza version of “Selige Sehnsucht.”

Keine Ferne macht dich schwierig,  
Kommst geflogen und gebannt,  
Und zuletzt, des Lichts begierig,  
Bist du, Schmetterling, verbrannt.

“Keine Ferne macht dich schwierig” refers to someone or something ‘approaching;’ the “kommst geflogen” announces an arrival and “gebannt” declares it; the connotation of “zuletzt” is clearly that of an “end,” and the “verbrannt” has an even stronger connotation of an “ending,” as *verbrannt* expresses an irreversibly completed action or process (as in *verbannt*, *verlassen*, *verjagt*, *verlobt*, etc.). That the earliest, 1814, version of “Selige Sehnsucht” had the word “Flammenschein” in the last verse of stanza 1 instead of “Flammentod” would further support this: While the earlier “*Flammenschein*” in stanza 1 is echoed in the last word of stanza 4 (“verbrannt”), the later emendation “*Flammentod*” is echoed in the “stirb” of stanza 5.

That Goethe re-thought and probably also re-worked the poem several times can be assumed: He gave it four different titles between 1814 and 1819, and that he exchanged “Flammentod” for “Flammenschein” in the earliest version is evidenced by his autograph copies of the poem, as well as the version contained in the “Wiesbadener Divan” of May 1815.<sup>78</sup> If we were to assume that stanza five was not part of the original poem, it may have been added between July 1814 and May 1815, and

<sup>76</sup> See Ewald Rösch, “Goethes ‘Selige Sehnsucht’ – eine tragische Bewegung,” in: Edgar Lohner, ed. *Interpretationen* 1973, 228-49, especially 229-31.

<sup>77</sup> Rösch, “Goethes ‘Selige Sehnsucht’ – eine tragische Bewegung,” in: Edgar Lohner, ed. *Interpretationen* 1973, 228-49, especially 229-32. Rösch states that the final version must have been completed before the establishment of the “Wiesbadener Register” on 30 May 1815, which, for the purposes of the argument proposed above, would accommodate a revision and final redaction in March 1815. The assumption of an even earlier terminus of completion (August 1814; *ibid.*, 232, fn. 10), based on the fact that the folio size paper on which Goethe copied the poem in his own hand (R<sup>1</sup>) was never folded, and that Zelter, who copied it in R<sup>2</sup> (i.e. before 30 May 1815), could only have received it during a personal meeting with Goethe in August 1814, as the leaf should have shown signs of folding if it had reached Zelter by mail, is not compelling. A transport of special documents in scroll form was certainly an option in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For the “Wiesbadener Register,” where “Selige Sehnsucht” is listed under the title “Selbststopfer” as no. 52 on the list, see Birus *et al.*, eds. 1994, *West-östlicher Divan* I, 453-56.

<sup>78</sup> Birus *et al.*, eds. 1994, *West-östlicher Divan* I, 500.



most probably in March 1815. Indeed, the strong resonances between “Vermächtnis altpersischen Glaubens” (composed on 13 March 1815) and “Selige Sehnsucht” pointed out by Schneider and others, indicate that Goethe was in a productive mode during this time, and that he was working precisely on the candle and light imagery (“Werdet ihr in jeder Lampe Brennen/Fromm den Abglanz höheren Lichts erkennen”). The fact that Goethe had borrowed Sa’dī’s *Būstān* only two days earlier, on 11 March, from which he took intensive notes between 11 and 13 March, among others on “Die verliebte Mücke,”<sup>79</sup> also points into this direction, and so does the final position of “Selige Sehnsucht” in Goethe’s *Divan*. Here it is immediately followed by the undated final stanza of the “Buch des Sängers” (“Tut ein Schilf sich doch hervor...”), whose inspiration has also been ascribed to Sa’dī in addition to Ḥāfiẓ.<sup>80</sup> This as well would point to a final recension of “Selige Sehnsucht” at a later date, potentially when Goethe had immediate access to the printed copies of Sa’dī, which he borrowed in March 1815 while he worked intensively on the *Divan*.

The thesis proposed here is thus that Goethe wrote stanzas 1-4 of “Selige Sehnsucht” during his Rhine journey, on 31 July 1814, with Hammer’s translation of Ḥāfiẓ in front of him, and that he returned to the poem and added stanza five in March 1815 under the fresh impression of (re-)reading Sa’dī. A remnant of the projected earlier, four stanza version of the poem is found in versions containing the term “*Flammenschein*” in stanza one, which foreshadowed the final word of stanza four (“verbrannt.”) In order to accommodate the new addition, and to connect it better to the rest of the poem, Goethe subsequently changed “*Flammenschein*” to “*Flammentod*” in stanza one, thus making it part of the ‘bracket’ that encloses the poem: In its final version, the “*Flammentod*” in stanza one is beautifully echoed in the “*stirb*” of stanza five.

While much of this is speculation, and while Goethe may have written the fifth stanza earlier, from the memory of previous readings in Sa’dī, and while he may even have done so without any inspiration from Oriental sources (which, given his deliberate quest for such inspiration during this time of his life is rather unlikely), there is no reason why a quotation of the above verses from Sa’dī should be excluded from an otherwise comprehensive 40-volume edition, such as that by Birus *et al.*

If one reduces Goethe’s ‘Oriental inspiration’ to the appropriation of topoi and motifs rather than an actual or perceived affinity in philosophy or course of thoughts, and if one assumes that the referential matrix of metaphors and allegories in Persian poetry is intrinsically concrete and carnal rather than spiritual and philosophical, then Goethe’s “Selige Sehnsucht” and the thought expressed in Sa’dī’s *Būstān* do not have much in common: a mosquito is not a moth, and didactic po-

<sup>79</sup> Birus *et al.*, eds. 1994, *West-östlicher Divan* II, 684 and 1825, where the editors state that Goethe had made an excerpt on the “verliebte Mücke” from Sa’dī’s *Gulistān* and *Būstān*, with the comment that this is “Eine nachträgliche Parallele zum Gedicht *Selige Sehnsucht*.”

<sup>80</sup> HA 2, 584.

etry is not love poetry or devotional poetry. The reverse side of such an approach is the resulting dichotomy referred to above: One can ascribe “motifs” to Oriental authors, and the “deeper meaning” to Goethe alone. I believe the above example has shown that Sa’dī may have provided more than bare motifs to a Goethe whose ever-attracting ‘poetic flame’ was represented during these years exactly by poets such as Ḥāfiz, Sa’dī, and others. To acknowledge his debt to these authors is not to diminish Goethe’s genius.

### *Summary and conclusions: Reasons for the neglect of Sa’dī*

Given the extent of Goethe’s readings of Sa’dī via Olearius’ and Herder’s translations over the years and the readily available study of Wurm, Sa’dī has played a surprisingly small role in the abundant secondary literature on Goethe’s *West-östlicher Divan*. One reason might be that Sa’dī’s influence was eclipsed by Goethe’s particular interest in Ḥāfiz, which is not meant to be detracted from in this paper. The word *Divan*, used in the German title without translation, refers clearly to Ḥāfiz’s *Dīvān*, as expressed also in the original title of the *West-östlicher Divan*. All of the “books” of Goethe’s *West-östlicher Divan* have both German and Persian titles, and one of these is indeed called “Hafis Nameh – Buch Hafis,” containing, moreover, a poem addressed to Ḥāfiz (“An Hafis”).<sup>81</sup> In addition, there are several passages in the prose part of the *West-östlicher Divan*, the *Noten und Abhandlungen zu besserem Verständnis des West-östlichen Divans*, where Goethe explicitly expressed his indebtedness to Ḥāfiz. These references seem to have led those who are interested in Persian poetry as a source of inspiration for Goethe to infer that Ḥāfiz was Goethe’s main or even sole source of inspiration, and to relegate Sa’dī and other Persian poets to the second and third ranks.<sup>82</sup> This is not evident: Not only was Ḥāfiz preceded (and certainly influenced) by Sa’dī, but Sa’dī was translated into German more than a hundred and fifty years earlier than Ḥāfiz, whose *Dīvān* Hammer translated into German only in Goethe’s later life, during the years 1812-1813. Goethe’s access to Persian poetry only through translation might explain his preference for Ḥāfiz over Sa’dī: Sa’dī had originally been translated in 1647 for a 17<sup>th</sup>-century audience, whereas Hammer’s translation of Ḥāfiz’s *Dīvān* in 1812-13 was closer to Goethe’s own time and taste. Indeed, Goethe’s recommendation that Hammer prepare a new translation of Sa’dī’s *Būstān* and *Gulistān* suggests that he did not approve of Sa’dī’s translator, Olearius’, ‘baroque’ style. Furthermore, Goethe said explicitly that he preferred Sa’dī’s didactic writings over his other poetry, and among those of Sa’dī’s works which informed Goethe’s *Divan* it was his didactic works that left a lasting impression.

<sup>81</sup> HA 2, 25.

<sup>82</sup> Muhammad Iqbal, by contrast, did not emphasize the relationship between Goethe and Ḥāfiz, but that between Goethe and Rūmī, by writing a poem on the two in his *Payām-i Mashriq*.

Another reason why Sa'dī has been largely neglected in literary criticism is that scholars in Oriental philology rarely cultivate a strong interest in German literature, and that scholars in German studies are generally not well acquainted with Persian literature. The depth and width of Goethe's insight into both literatures is difficult to match.

A third reason for the neglect of Sa'dī's impact on Goethe lies in the history of literary history itself, with the tendency to reductionism inherent in the "werkimmanente Methode" that was so fashionable for a while in 20<sup>th</sup> century scholarship, combined with a latent cultural chauvinism that favors Greek, Latin, and Christian sources as roots of Western literary genius and inspiration over Oriental ones. Early hints to Sa'dī by Wurm in 1834 were largely ignored in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and nowadays it is not very fashionable to write about the "influence" of one author on another. After Ḥāfiẓ was discovered as the main inspiration behind the *Divan*, this question seemed to have been solved and was not further pursued in great detail.<sup>83</sup> Also, scholarly literature has focused on the lyrical part of Goethe's *Divan*. In *Faust*, we read "Gray is all theory, green is life's glowing tree."<sup>84</sup> The *Noten und Abhandlungen* cover the theoretical side of Goethe's occupation with 'the Orient.' The lyrical poems, on the other hand, were an outlet for his emotional discovery of 'the East.' Ḥāfiẓ was characterized as "erotic" by Goethe's contemporary and mediator Hammer, which might explain why Goethe and Marianne von Willemer chose Ḥāfiẓ as their patron and why they took his *Dīvān* as the device for the codes of their clandestine correspondence. Sa'dī, whom Goethe characterizes as intentionally "instructive," might have been too 'intellectual' to appeal to Goethe emotionally. Yet, Sa'dī's image of the mosquito preferring to get torched in his insatiable thirst for the light over leading a peaceful life in a dark corner strongly appealed to the author of *Faust* as well as to the man in love, Goethe. Goethe integrated the image of the moth *and* – here I strongly disagree with Schneider's interpretation – the philosophy behind the image, namely the strife for ever new experiences and knowledge as we also find it in *Faust*, into "Selige Sehnsucht." Sa'dī's image expresses this philosophy, and to claim that "the depth behind the image" is to be credited to Goethe and Goethe alone is yet another expression of what since Edward Said has become known as "Orientalism." This is an interpretation Goethe himself might not have approved of. In his Announcement of the *West-östlicher Divan* in the "Morgenblatt" of 1816, he wrote:

Das Buch der Liebe, heiße Leidenschaft zu einem verborgenen, unbekannten Gegenstand ausdrückend. Manche dieser Gedichte verleugnen die Sinnlichkeit nicht, manche aber können, *nach orientalischer Weise*, auch *geistig* gedeutet werden."<sup>85</sup>

<sup>83</sup> There are some exceptions; see Solbrig, *Hammer-Purgstall und Goethe*, 1973, 150-51, esp. fn. 164.

<sup>84</sup> Quoted in William Barrett, *Irrational Man*, 1962, 128.

<sup>85</sup> HA 2, 268. Emphasis added – J.P.

## Bibliography

### A. Sources

- Goethes Werke* <sup>4</sup>1958. Hamburger Ausgabe in 14 Bänden. Ed. Erich Trunz. Hamburg: Christian Wegner Verlag. [HA, used as a reference throughout this paper unless otherwise indicated].
- Johann Wolfgang Goethe. Sämtliche Werke. Briefe, Tagebücher und Gespräche.* 1994. Vierzig Bände. Eds. Friedmar Apel, Hendrik Birus *et al.* Frankfurt/Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag.
- Goethes Tagebücher; Goethes Werke.* 1919. III. Abtheilung, 15. Band, ed. Großherzogin Sophie von Sachsen. Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger.
- Goethe in vertraulichen Briefen seiner Zeitgenossen.* 1982. Zusammengestellt von Wilhelm Bode. Vol. III, 1817-1832. Ed. Regine Otto und Paul-Gerhard Wenzlaff. Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag.
- Goethe. West-östlicher Divan. Eigenhändige Niederschriften.* 1996. Ed. and comm. Katharina Mommsen. 2 vols. Frankfurt/Main: Insel Verlag.

### B. Secondary Literature/Interpretations

- Arjomand-Fathi, Nushafarin 1983: *Hafez und Goethe: Studien zum literarischen Einfluß und zu Goethes Hafez-Bild.* University of California, Los Angeles. Phil. Diss.
- Balke, Diethelm <sup>2</sup>1965: "Orient und orientalische Literaturen (Einfluß auf Deutschland und Europa)." *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturgeschichte.* Vol. 2, ed. Werner Kohlschmidt. Berlin. 816-869.
- Barrett, William 1962: *Irrational Man. A Study in Existential Philosophy.* Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books.
- Behzad, Faramarz 1970: *Ádam Olearius' "Persianischer Rosenthal." Untersuchungen zur Übersetzung von Saadis "Golestan" im 17. Jahrhundert.* Göttingen (= Palaestra 258).
- Bürgel, Johann Christoph 1975: "Goethe und Hafis." *Drei Hafis-Studien.* Bern and Frankfurt/M.: Herbert Lang/Peter Lang. 5-41.
- David, Claude 1951: "Note sur le 'Divan': D'un prétendu mysticisme." *Études Germaniques* 6 (1951). 220-230.
- Fragner, Bert G. 2001: *Oriental Studies, Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies in Germany (An Overview).* Islamic Area Studies Working Papers Series No. 24. Tokyo: The University of Tokyo.
- Frenzel, H.A. und E. <sup>4</sup>1967: *Daten deutscher Dichtung. Chronologischer Abriß der deutschen Literaturgeschichte.* Band I. Von den Anfängen bis zur Romantik. München: dtv.

- Friedenthal, Richard 1963: *Goethe, His Life and Times*. Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company. [Originally published in German as *Goethe – Sein Leben und seine Zeit*].
- Goedeke, Karl (ed.) 1900: *Grundriss zur Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung*. Vol. VII.
- Greiner, Bernhard 1993: “Allâh: al-Asmâ’ al-Hasnâ’.” *Arcadia* 28 (1993). 256-275.
- Sir Muhammad Iqbal 1963: *Botschaft des Ostens (als Antwort auf Goethes West-östlichen Divan)*. Aus dem Persischen übertragen und eingeleitet von Annemarie Schimmel. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.
- von Keudell, Elise 1931: *Goethe als Benutzer der Weimarer Bibliothek. Ein Verzeichnis der von ihm entliehenen Werke*. Weimar: Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger.
- Lentz, Wolfgang 1958: *Goethes Noten und Abhandlungen zum West-östlichen Divan*. Hamburg: Augustin.
- Lohner, Edgar. (ed.) 1973: *Interpretationen zum West-östlichen Divan Goethes. (Wege der Forschung 288)*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- “Einleitung.” In: Edgar Lohner (ed.) 1973: *Interpretationen*. VII-XVII.
- “Hatem und Suleika: Kunst und Kommunikation.” In: Edgar Lohner (ed.) 1973: *Interpretationen*, 1973. 277-304.
- Mommsen, Katharina 1961: “Goethe und Diez. Quellenuntersuchungen zu Gedichten der Divan-Epoche.” *Sitzungsberichte der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin. Klasse für Sprachen, Literatur und Kunst*. Jahrgang 1961. Nr. 4. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag.
- 1988: *Goethe und die arabische Welt*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed., Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag.
- 1991: “‘West-östlicher Divan’ und ‘Chinesisch-deutsche Jahres- und Tageszeiten’.” *Goethe-Jahrbuch* 108 (1991). 169-178.
- Roemer, Hans Robert 1951: “Probleme der Hafizforschung und der Stand ihrer Lösung.” *Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur*. [Mainz] *Abh. d. Kl. d. Lit.* 3. Wiesbaden.
- Rösch, Ewald 1973: “Goethes ‘Selige Sehnsucht’ – eine tragische Bewegung.” In: Edgar Lohner (ed.): *Interpretationen*. 1973. 228-249.
- Ruppert, Hans 1958: *Goethes Bibliothek. Katalog*. Weimar: Arion Verlag.
- Rypka, Jan 1959: *Iranische Literaturgeschichte*. Unter Mitarbeit von Otakar Klíma, Věra Kubícková, Jirí Becka, Jirí Cejpek, Ivan Hrbek. Leipzig: VEB Otto Harrassowitz.
- Said, Edward W. 2003 [1978]: *Orientalism*. London: Penguin Books.
- Schaeder, Hans Heinrich (1942): “Die persische Vorlage von Goethes ‘Seliger Sehnsucht’.” *Geistige Gestalten und Probleme. Eduard Spranger zum 60. Geburtstag*. Ed. Hans Wenke. Leipzig. 93-102.
- Schimmel, Annemarie (1989): *Der Islam. Eine Einführung*. Stuttgart: Reclam.
- Schneider, Wilhelm (1973): “Goethe: ‘Selige Sehnsucht’.” In: Edgar Lohner (ed.): *Interpretationen*. 73-83.

- Solbrig, Ingeborg Hildegard 1973: *Hammer-Purgstall und Goethe. "Dem Zaubermeister das Werkzeug."* Stanford German Studies. Vol. 1. ed. California Department of German Studies, Stanford University. Bern und Frankfurt/Main: Verlag Herbert Lang.
- Solms, Wilhelm 1974: *Interpretation als Textkritik. Zur Edition des West=östlichen Divans.* Heidelberg: Lothar Stiehm Verlag.
- 1977: *Goethes Vorarbeiten zum Divan.* München: Fink.
- Wertheim, Ursula 1983: *Von Tasso zu Hafis. Probleme von Lyrik und Prosa des "West-östlichen Divans."* Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag.
- Wurm, Ch[ristian] 1834: *Commentar zu Göthe's west=östlichem Divan, bestehend in Materialien und Originalien zum Verständnisse desselben herausgegeben.* 1<sup>st</sup> ed., Nürnberg/Leipzig: J[ohann] L[eonhard] Schrag.