International Conference

A Boundless Ocean:
Rumi's Philosophy and Reception

Utrecht University
Sweelinckzaal
Drift 21, room 0.05

Thursday 23 and Friday 24 November 2023
From 09.00 to 18.30

Image: metmuseum.org

A Boundless Ocean: Rūmī's Philosophy and Reception

The year 2023 marks 750th anniversary of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's death (1207-1273), one of the mostly read authors in the Islamic world, and a best-selling poet in the United States, praised for his aesthetics, his wisdom, practical advice, and passionate love. Why is Rūmī so appealing to people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds? What is his timeless message that attracts both Muslims and non-Muslims alike? Is his modern appreciation merely to do with his non-conformist and transgressive ideas? How are his transgressive ideas used as a counter to the violent ideas of Islamist ideology, emphasizing a different Islam? Rūmī composed an impressive amount of works, his poetry consists of about 120.000 lines. His *magnum opus*, the *Spiritual Poem* (*Masnavī-yi ma'navī*) is called the Koran in the Persian language as he comments on the Koran in an attractive fashion, adorning his message with metaphors and illustrative anecdotes. His opening lines about the complaint of a reed cut from the reedbed is a metaphor for the separated human soul, longing to return to the original home.

This conference brings together scholars who have worked or are working on various aspects of Rūmī as a mystic, a religious scholar, and a poet. We would like to invite scholars who are working on Rūmī to present a paper on any aspects of this medieval sage who has become a source of inspiration for many people around the world today. The conference is organized to encourage discussion on understudied aspects of Rūmī's poetry, personality, legacy and his reception history. His oeuvre is unmatched. In Professor William's words, "It is perhaps the single most influential piece of mystical writing ever conceived." Therefore, we would like to analyse new aspects of Rūmī's mystical philosophy.

Programme Thursday November 23 2023

09.00u   Welcome and opening Asghar Seyed-Gohrab & Maarten Holtzapffel

Session One: Chair Arash Ghajarjazi

09.05   **Alan Williams (keynote)**
Open-Heart Surgery: The Operations of Love

10.00   **Fariba Enteshari**
Chalice of Love: How Rūmī's Language of Love affects His Readers Today

10.45   Break

Session Two: Chair Maarten Holtzapffel

11.00   **Safa Kamdideh**
*Exploring Rūmī's Popularity Across Cultures: A Dramaturgical Analysis of Coleman Barks'
Interpretations of Rūmī's Ghazals*

11.45   **Alexandra Nieweg**
Rūmī the Master-Storyteller: About the Parrot in the Grocery Shop and the Passing Dervish

12.30   Lunch (Only for speakers)

Session Three: Asghar Seyed-Gohrab

13.30   **Kasper Tromp**
Rūmī's Mystical Re-Orientation of Contemporary Aesthetic Practices

14.15   **Amin Ghodratzadeh**
*Rūmī and Folly: An Analysis of the Story about the Beggar and
an Eminent Man Who Feigned to be Mad*

15.00   Break

Session Four: Zhinia Noorian

15.15   **Abolfazl Moshiri**
Estranged Sun? Rūmī's Relationship with Shams-i Tabrīzī

16.00   **Asghar Seyed-Gohrab**
Sulṭān Valad's Depiction of his Father Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī

16.45   **Rokus De Groot**
Rūmī and Poetry, Music, and Dance

17.30   **Roman Seidel**
The Conceptual Metaphor of WAY in Moulānā Rūmī's Maṣnavi as Qur'anic Tafsīr. The Tale
of The Parrot and the Merchant *and its Metaphorical Significance*

Programme Friday November 24 2023

<u>Session Five: Chair Amin Ghodratzadeh</u>

09.00 **Eliza Tasbihi (keynote)**
Sufi Hermeneutics: Commentary tradition on Rūmī's Mathnawī

10.00 **Fatemeh Naghshvarian**
Problematizing Truth-Writing: The Elephant in the Dark Parable

10.45 Break

<u>Session Six: Chair Leila Rahimi Bahmany</u>

11.00 **Zhinia Noorian**
The Story of the King and the Concubine: Is Rūmī As Forgiving in Love as He is Depicted Online?

11.45 **Maarten Holtzapffel**
Rūmī and the Friends of God: The Story of Moses and the Shepherd

12.30 Lunch (Only for speakers)

<u>Session Seven: Chair Fatemeh Naghshvarian</u>

13.30 **Ewa Dynarowicz**
Intertextual References to Muslim Mysticism as a Discursive Strategy: Rūmī and other Sufi Poets in the Work of Kader Abdolah

14.15 **Arash Ghajarjazi**
Coming to Terms with Trauma: An Analysis of Rūmī's Youth-in-Fire Poem

15.00 Break

<u>Session Eight: Chair Alexandra Nieweg</u>

15.15 **Gökçen Beyinli**
Reading Rūmī in Turkish: Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı and his Invisible Legacy

16.00 **Leila Rahimi Bahmany**
Rūmī and His Technique of Madness

16.45 **Lloyd Ridgeon (keynote)**
Rūmī's Reflections on Handsome Young Boys: Shāhid-Bāzī *and the case of Awḥad al-Dīn Kirmānī*

The Heights and Depths of the Masnavi:
An Examination of the Dynamic Structure of Book Three
(Alan Williams)

My most recent work has been to complete a new metrical translation of the third book of the *Masnavi*. In this lecture I attempt to test my own theory of the dynamic composition structure of the *Masnavi*, which I outlined in the Introductions to my translations of the first and second books (both published 2020). My theory posits that the author of the work repeatedly modulates the register, or 'voice' of the text, moving in a progression that is repeated, or reverted to, in the course of a passage of a few verses, in a story or, indeed, in a whole sequence of stories that are often nested within other longer stories. This progression is cyclical, according to this theory, in that it seems to be Rūmī's style repeatedly to make these switches of register. I have ventured to suggest that there are seven fundamental registers or voices, that allow for a polyphony in the mind of the audience/reader, taking them through a series of plays of the imagination: the analogy with music is apposite, as his composition tends towards the climactic, after which a resolution or pause is declared, before resuming a story or beginning a new one.

Half-way through the journey of translating all six books of the text, I too wish to pause for reflection, and question whether the text continues to be conducted in the manner I proposed for the first two books. The 'mood' of Book Three, which is considerably longer than either of the two previous books, is graver and darker. My main question is: does Rūmī continue to speak to his audience in the fashion I previously identified, or has it, itself, changed and developed as he progresses through the work?

Alan Williams is Professor of Iranian Studies and Comparative Religion in the University of Manchester. He has published many books and articles on ancient, medieval and modern literature, history of religions and translation studies, both in Iranian studies and in the comparative study of religion and literature. Having been funded by a British Academy Wolfson Foundation and the Leverhulme Trust, he is currently engaged in publishing all six volumes of Rūmī's Masnavi for IB Tauris / Bloomsbury, in English metrical translations and commentary, along with the accompanying Persian text.
(https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/en/researchers/alan-williams(9249cd21-9e83-4578-92a4-07f4a29bce05)/projects.html?period=running)

Chalice of Love: How Rūmī's Language of Love affects His Readers Today
### (Fariba Enteshari)

In the last 20 years, I have witnessed and studied the effects of Rūmī's mystical poetry on this current generation. Through a phenomenological inquiry, I have aimed to understand the effects of Rūmī's poetry on cross generational and international groups of various faiths. Through a grounded approach, I have analyzed the testimonies, interviews, and reflections of diverse groups of participants to show the effects of their engagement with Rūmī's masterpiece, *Masnavi*. In this time of division among different religious traditions, Rūmī's poetry invites readers to transformational paths of love, compassion, and peace. The research results have shown that the learners not only felt drawn to the aesthetic of Rūmī's poetry but also came to a deeper and more essential understanding of Rūmī's pluralistic views reflected in the stories. Rūmī's ability to combine stories from the Quran, the Bible, the Torah and other spiritual texts available to him in the 13th century provided a well-known foundation that is attractive, appealing and fascinating to a wide variety of readers today. The participants in this study were able to remove their bias toward their own religious background and become more accepting of other religious traditions. Today, through my teaching at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and my engagement with Rūmī Educational Centre, I continue to witness a thirst by students for in-depth understanding of who we are and how we can better relate to each other through meaningful spiritual inquiry. Out of the diversity of Rūmī's inclusive views, Rūmī evolves a divine language of love that expresses his belief and faith in humanity in the highest form.

You are the Soul and Spirit of Universe
and your name is Love
(Rūmī, *Divan*, translation by Fariba Enteshari, poem 908, line 10)

Fariba Enteshari, EdD, Founder and Director of Rūmī Educational Center (R.E.C.) is an international educator, specializing in the work of Jalal al-Din Rūmī. At the University of California, Santa Barbara she has taught Persian Language and Literature. Her early education bridged several disciplinary worlds when she earned her B.S. in Biochemistry & Molecular Biology through Mississippi State University and the University of Düsseldorf, and later, an M.A. in German Studies from the University of Southern California. She received her Doctorate in Education from Fielding Graduate University in Santa Barbara, presenting her dissertation, Rūmī's Poetry: The Journey Toward Meaning and Transformation. Dr. Enteshari has taught *Mathnawi* for 20 years. Born in Iran, she is fluent in Rūmī's native language and culture, allowing her to share the original melody and cadences of his language. Through her nonprofit and interfaith organization R.E.C., she encourages participants to draw from the many cultural and religious traditions expressed in Rūmī's poetry.

Exploring Rūmī's Popularity Across Cultures:
A Dramaturgical Analysis of Coleman Barks' Interpretations of Rūmī's Ghazals
(Safa Kamdideh)
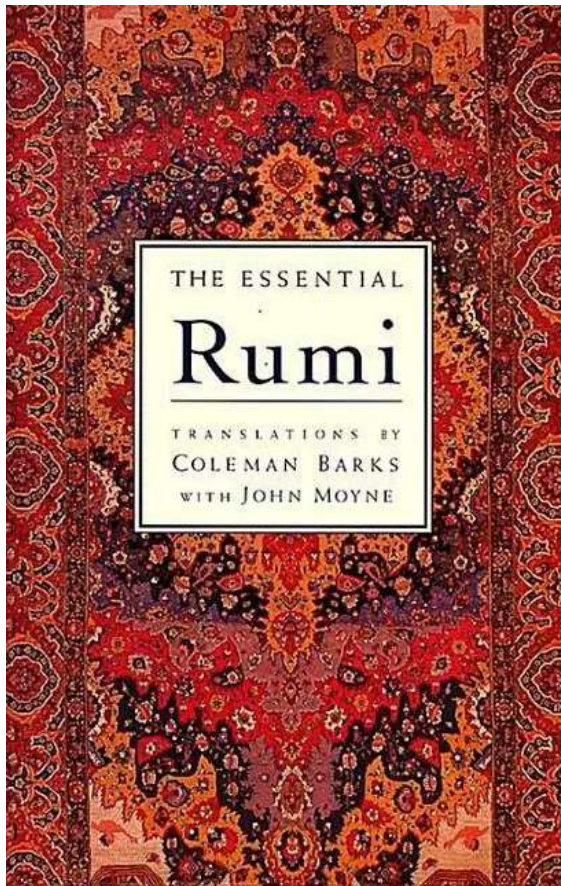
Rūmī is not only one of the most revered authors in the Islamic world, but also one of the most popular figures in new age religion and contemporary spiritual currents. This paper aims to examine Rūmī's culturally appropriated reception through the English translations/interpretations of the American new-age writer Coleman Barks. The focus is on Rūmī's *ghazal*s (lyric poems) from his *Divan* or *Collected Poems* – which comprise most of Barks' work - and the Sufi spiritual practice that inspired this poetry.

The majority of Rūmī's ghazals were a result of him achieving *fanāʾ fi al-Sheikh*, or annihilation of the ego-self in his Sufi master, Shams; these ghazals were often set to music to accompany his meditative whirling dance or *samāʿ*, which is still widely practiced today. This performative aspect of Rūmī's ghazals necessitates an examination of one's embodied engagement with their form and content, through a theatre studies perspective. To do so, dramaturgical analysis is used to explore Barks' engagement with *ghazal*s of the *Dīvān* to provide a broader understanding of their reception history.

The methodology of dramaturgical analysis distinguishes three components - and their interplay - to examine this performative engagement: (1) Principles of Composition, or how various aspects of *ghazal*s (e.g., literary form, symbolic content, musicality, etc.) generate meaning (2) Modes of Engagement, or how Barks as interpreter is involved in the process of meaning-making and (3) Immanent Context, examining the societal and cultural context which the Muslim scholar Rūmī, and the new-age writer Barks are situated in.
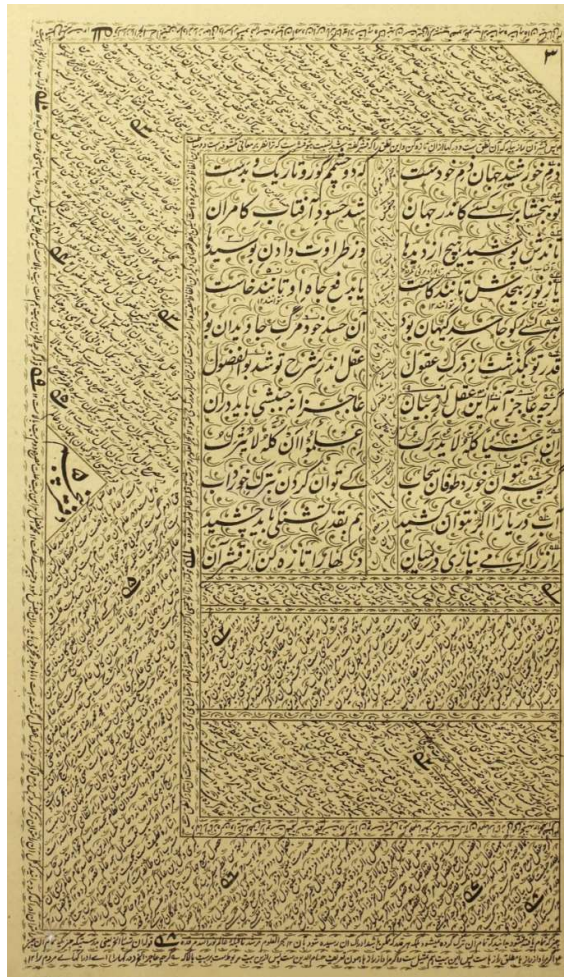
Examining the spiritual function of Rūmī's *ghazal*s in Sufism, the ways in which Barks has adapted this function for his new-age ideologies, and the societal context that has shaped these interpretations, lead to a more comprehensive understanding of Rūmī's popularity across cultures.

Safa Kamdideh is a trans-disciplinary artist and researcher with a passion for exploring the intersections of art, culture, and mysticism. In addition to two MAs in Cinema and Theatre studies, she has honed her skills through various artistic projects in Tehran and the Netherlands, delving into performance art, digital media and technology. Upon immigrating to the Netherlands, Safa embarked on a research journey focused on Western Esoteric traditions and Sufi Persian poetry. Currently based in Amsterdam, she dedicates her efforts to analysing, deconstructing, and decolonizing the appropriation of Middle Eastern culture by Western Esoteric currents. As an artist, Safa utilizes her talents to decipher, translate and perform an embodied interpretation of the symbolic Persian poetry of Rūmī and Hafez. Through her research and art, she embraces the aesthetics and methodologies of Queer art,

pushing boundaries and challenging conventional norms. Her latest project 'HafezKhani/Reciting Hafez' was premiered at Utrecht Café Theatre Festival last March.

Rūmī the Master-Storyteller: About the Parrot in the Shop and the Passing Dervish
(Alexandra Nieweg)

Not everyone can retell an ancient narrative in an interesting way, but Rūmī certainly could. In his parrot tale, part of his *magnum opus* the *Masnavi-ye Maʾnavi*, he transformed a storyline, then already centuries old, into a comical tale comprising important religious and practical instruction. This way of working is typical for Rūmī, as it is how most of the poems in his *Masnavi-ye Maʾnavi* have been created. Research shows that the tale of the parrot and the dervish stems from a literary tradition already centuries old in Rūmī's time and how Rūmī managed to make it his own in a unique way, more than others in this tradition, uncovering the first few layers of interpretation this poem offers. What has not been studied previously is how, beyond those initial layers, lies a wealth of deeper interpretation when one studies the text through the lens of Sufi antinomianism prevalent in Rūmī's world and works. By taking on this perspective, I will show how Rūmī, using narrative techniques that are typical for his work, retold the narrative of the parrot tale in a way that incorporates his main theological and moral views, like only *Mowlana*, "Our Master," Rūmī could.

Alexandra Nieweg is a PhD candidate and works on 'Literary Qalandars' within the ERC-Advanced Grant *Beyond Sharia: The Role of Sufism in Shaping Islam*. Here, Alexandra shall explore religious and antinomian motifs, metaphors, imagery, and stories in Persian poetry from the 12th century onward. To this day, this poetry has had a great appeal to Muslims in the Persianate world. She also analyses how *qalandarī* themes in this poetry impacted social, political, and religious developments in subsequent centuries. Throughout her studies, Alexandra has had a keen interest in the way Islamic traditions feed into contemporary ideologies and their cultural expression in the Turco-Persian world in general, and in relation to Sufi-Shiism in Iran and Afghanistan and Sufism in Central Asia in particular.

Rūmī's Mystical Re-Orientation of Contemporary Aesthetic Practices
(Kasper Tromp)

Over the centuries, Rūmī's poetry has inspired visual art from medieval manuscript paintings to twentieth-century works by artists like Mahmoud Farshchian. These remain adaptations insofar as they faithfully illustrate poetic narratives. During fieldwork in Tehran however, I found that Rūmī remains an important presence in aesthetic practices by artists who engage with his poetry in ways alternative to faithfully adapting its stories.

This article examines creative practices by Iranian artists for whom Rūmī's stories, rather than sources of illustration, constitute conceptual starting points for creatively re-imagining the world. The artist Rene Saheb told me '[Rūmī's poem] *Elephant in the Dark* is not just a story, but a vehicle through which to embark on the creative journey.' She thereby suggests that Rūmī's imaginative potential transcends the historical context of his poetry to guide aesthetic practices in the contemporary age. Saheb's attitude to inspiration, by which poetry mystically enters subjectivity and (re)orients perception, will be examined in the terms of 'inward mimesis' as conceptualised by Wendy Shaw. Interviews with artists will elucidate particular poetry reading practices, conceptual interpretations and the specific circumstances and modes of artistic production.

The discussion will cover works by three artists: Gohar Dashti's photographs re-examine *Neynameh*'s home/separation dichotomy within the spaces of overgrown house interiors. Homa Arkani's paintings imagine the process of spiritual actualisation (Rūmī's 'wings of love') as an emancipatory force in relation to sexual and orientalist politics of visuality/covering. Rene Saheb explores intercultural (un)translatability in animal symbolisms during the various international residency projects she participated in. Locating Rūmī within these various aesthetic practices, as a mystical orientation onto the contemporary world, challenges persistent secularist ideas which relegate the agency of spiritual poetry to the premodern past, and overflows the boundlesness of Rūmī's ocean onto our times.

Kasper Tromp is an art historian educated at Leiden University. In 2018 he completed his Master's in the specialization of Art of the Contemporary World / World Art Studies. He has conducted fieldwork in Tehran as part of his research internship at the Aaran Gallery, and in Istanbul as a participant in the Forces of Art project. Kasper has published articles about contemporary art in Iran, Türkiye and Saudi Arabia. In his work on cultural production in the MENA region, he shows a particular interest in the ways artists engage Islamic literary traditions in order to construct modern subjectivities and navigate intercultural encounters. He lives and works in the Netherlands.

Rūmī and Folly: An Analysis of the Story about the Beggar andan Eminent Man Who Feigned to be Mad
(Amin Ghodratzadeh)

The character of the wise fool is repeatedly used in mystic poetry. The wise fool is an individual who, on the surface, appears foolish, eccentric, or irrational but possesses hidden wisdom and profound insights. Rūmī utilizes these figures, such as ʿAṭṭār (d. ca. 1221), in order to challenge the conventional norms in society and convey mystic ideas. In Rūmī's second book of the *mathnavī-yi maʿnavī*, there is a story about how a beggar persuades a prominent person who is feigning madness to converse. This story consists of two parts and begins with a beggar who is seeking for a wise person to help him with a matter. He inquires whether such a person is present in that town, to which someone responds that there is a wise man, but he is mad or at least pretending to be mad. As the story unfolds, the role of this wise madman and the reason of his feigned insanity also gradually unfolds. The character of the wise fool is central to this story. Rūmī utilizes the wise fool as a mouthpiece to convey certain ideas, therefore the function of the wise fool is crucial in communicating mystic ideas to the audience. Hence, in this contribution, I would like to shed light on this topic. I will provide a brief summary of the story, and then address several questions, such as: Who are wise fools? What is their function? How do they manifest themselves in stories? Finally, I will present an analysis of this story in order to develop a possible comprehension of the ideas Rūmī wants to convey through the role of the wise fool.
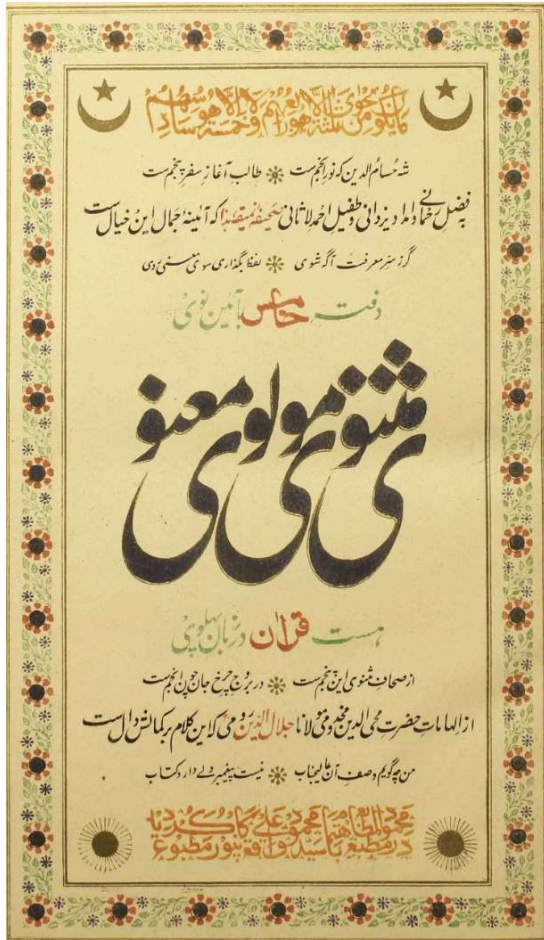
Amin Ghodratzadeh is PhD candidate in the ERC Advanced Grant project entitled *Beyond Sharia: The Role of Sufism in Shaping Islam* at Utrecht University, focusing on his research about *Wise Fools and the Interrogation of God*. Amin studies the phenomenon of the wise-fools, as a possible forerunner of qalandar mystics, between the 9th and 12th century. Amin obtained his Research MA in Middle Eastern Studies at Leiden University, specialising in the Persian-speaking world. In his thesis, he examined Muḥammad-Taqī Bahār's (1886-1951) poetry, addressing Great Britain's occupation of Iran, Afghanistan, and India. From 2010 to 2014, Amin served as a student-assistant and library cataloguer. From 2016 to 2018, he taught Persian at both Leiden University and Leiden University Campus in The Hague for students of International Studies. In addition to his academic career, Amin served as an intern at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Leiden municipality, exercising his other expertise which lies in International Relations. He has a special interest in Islamic mystical philosophy, Persian poetry, and philosophical treaties.

Estranged Sun? Rūmī's Relationship with Shams-i Tabrīzī

(Abolfazl Moshiri)

From the time when Rūmī's son Sultan Valad wrote his *Ibtidā-nāma* until the modern era, there has been an endless debate about the nature of relationship between Rūmī and Shams-i Tabrīzī. Rūmī's unbridled love for Shams has become the stuff of legends and myth. In his *Dīvān-i kabīr*, Rūmī dedicated around 2000 ghazals to Shams, expounding on his most inner feelings and thoughts about this mysterious and itinerate mystic.

Yet within those ghazals one may come across rare verses in which Rūmī indicates that Shams is nothing more than an excuse, and that instead of looking for Shams, he must search within himself to find the true beloved; even claiming that he himself is Shams. With a more detailed and deeper examination of various literary sources by and about Shams and Rūmī, some evidence appear which suggests their relationship might not have been as rosy and romantic as the legends, hagiographies and even Rūmī himself had depicted it to be. For instance, it seems that Rūmī was well aware of Shams's intention to depart from Konya when he left the city for the first time and did little to stop him.

The aim of this paper is to re-evaluate the relationship between these two mystics during the Shams's residency in Konya with the hope to propose a new paradigm for Shams-Rūmī relationship and the extent of influence which the former had on the later. While this investigation will assess all the textual evidence, from hagiographical works of Sipahsālār and Aflākī to Rūmī's *Dīvān-i kabīr* and *Fīhi mā fīhi*, the main sources for this study will be Shams-i Tabrīzī's own *Maqālāt* in which there are numerous invaluable anecdotes about the nature of his relationship with Rūmī.

Abolfazl Moshiri received his PhD in 2021 from the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, University of Toronto. His PhD dissertation, entitled "The Devil's Advocates: The Exoneration of Iblīs in Persian Mysticism," explores the portrayal of Satan, known in Perso-Islamic sources as Iblīs, not as a demonic figure, but as an ardent monotheist, a hidden saint, and an unapologetic lover of God, in pre-fourteen century Persianate sources, especially the mystical ones. Moshiri's specialization is classical Persian literature with focus on mystical, and antinomian literature of the medieval Persianate world from the tenth to sixteenth century. He currently serves as a research associate on "Women Poet Iranica" project at the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Institute of Iranian Studies, University of Toronto. His published works include "The Ishraqi Path: Toward Systematization of Suhrawardi's Sufism," published in *Iran Namag: Quarterly Journal of Iranian Studies* 6, no. 3, 4. (2021): 154–78. He has also written a chapter entitled "Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī; It is in it what is in it," which will be published in *Christian-Muslim Relations: Primary Sources, Vol. 1, 600–1500*, edited by David Thomas. London: Bloomsbury, (summer 2023). He also had written the following book review: Jawid Mojaddedi. *Beyond Dogma: Rūmī's Teachings on Friendship with God and Early Sufi Theories* in *Iranian Studies* 47, no. 4 (2014): 658–62.

Sulṭān Valad's Depiction of his Father Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī
(Asghar Seyed-Gohrab)

In this paper, I shall analyse *Valad-nāma* by Bahā al-Dīn Sulṭān Valad (623-712/1226-1312), Rūmī's celebrated son who wrote several epics, among which was a *mathnavī* entitled *Valad-nāma*, (also called the *Ibtidā-nāma*, 'The Book of Beginning'), containing some 10,000 couplets. He had a close bond with his father, and Rūmī told him, "You are among all people the one who is most like me in character and physical appearance" (De Bruijn, *Persian Sufi Poetry*, 112). He followed his father's example, leading the community of Mevelvi dervishes and writing religious treatises and a large number of poetic works in Persian. I shall examine how Sulṭān Valad depicts his father and the wandering dervish, Shams al-Dīn Tabrīzī, as the *Valad-nāma* is the oldest and most trustworthy source of Rūmī's life, depicting how people viewed Shams and other individuals in Rūmī's life.

Ali-Asghar Seyed-Gohrab is Professor of Iranian and Persian Studies at Utrecht University in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies. He has published extensively on Persian literature, mysticism and religion. His publications range from Persian poetry to Sufism and the role of religious and mystical motifs and metaphors in Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) and how peaceful religious injunctions are used to justify violence. He authored *Soefisme: een levende traditie* (Amsterdam: Prometheus/Bert Bakker, 2015 third print), *The True Dream: Indictment of the Shiite Clerics of Isfahan*, (London: Routledge, 2017, with S. McGlinn), "Rūmī's Antinomian Poetic Philosophy," in *Mawlana Rūmī Review*, IX, No. 1-2, (2018), 159-99, "'This Being Human is a Guest House': Reflections on Colman Barks's Translations of Jalal al-Din Rūmī's Poetry," in *The Routledge Handbook of Persian Literary Translation*, ed. Pouneh Shabani-Jadidi, Patricia J. Higgins and Michelle Quay, (London: Routledge, 2022, 312-333). His recent publication is *Martyrdom, Mysticism and Dissent: The Poetry of the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the Iran–Iraq War (1980-1988)* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2021). He is a member of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW). At the moment he is the Principal Investigator (PI) of an ERC-Advanced Grant entitled *Beyond Sharia: The Role of Sufism in Shaping Islam* (www.beyondsharia.nl

Rūmī and Poetry, Music, and Dance
(Rokus De Groot)

Poetry, music and dance played an essential role in Rūmī's life as an expression of surrender to the divine, especially after he met his spiritual guide and friend Shams al-Din of Tabriz in 1244. This meeting transformed him from a scholar to an ecstatic lover. Poetry, music and dance were not just art forms to Rūmī, as aesthetic endeavours, they were united in *samā ʿ*, 'listening' in a spiritual sense. To him it was, in particular, 'listening back' to the primordial *Rūz-i Alast*, 'the Day of the Covenant,' which counted to him, according to Islamic belief, as the original life-giving moment of the meeting of God with the soul by sound. This also implies that Rūmī's poetic language is not meant as metaphoric but as resonant to that moment. In this presentation, examples will be given of Rūmī's approach to poetry, music and dance. One of the key expressions is 'intoxication'. It is not the intake of external means, like alcoholic drink, which is responsible for such a state of mind, which would imply some planning of the intoxication: it is by grace that it may unpredictably happen, without control by the person:

برخیز و دهل بزن که ما منصوریم
از هر چه خیال کرده‌ای ما دوریم

بی دف بر ما میا که ما در سوریم
مستیم نه مست بادهٔ انگوریم

Do not come to us, for we are feasting;
Rise and beat the drum, for we are Manṣūr (Ḥallāj);
We are drunk but not of wine made of grapes,
We are far from anything that comes to your imagination.
(*Dīvān*, Vol. 8, p. 223, quatrain 1322)

Rokus de Groot, musicologist and composer, conducts research on music of the 20th and 21st centuries, especially about aesthetics and systems of composition, about the interaction between different cultural and religious traditions, and about musical concepts as a metaphor (polyphony, counterpoint). He had a personal chair "Music in the Netherlands since 1600" at the University of Utrecht, and is Professor Emeritus of Musicology at the University of Amsterdam. In 2009 he was invited to deliver the Edward Said Memorial Lecture at the American University in Cairo. Among his publications are: "Rūmī and the Abyss of Longing," in *The Mawlana Rūmī Review* Vol. 2, ed. L. Lewisohn, Cyprus: Rūmī Institute, Near East University, and Exeter: the Rūmī Studies Group of the Institute for Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter, 2011, pp. 60-93. "Edward Said and Polyphony," in A. Iskandar and H. Rustom (eds.), *Edward Said: A Legacy of Emancipation and Representation*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010, pp. 204-228. "Music, Religion and Power: Qawwali as Empowering Disempowerment," in M.B. ter Borg and J.W. van Henten, *Powers, Religion as a Social and Spiritual Force*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2010, pp. 243-264. He composes music theatre for singers, musicians and dancers from different traditions, such as *Song of songs: The Love of Mirabai* (New Delhi 2005), *Layla and Majnun: A Composition about the Night* (Amsterdam 2006), *ShivaShakti* (Chennai, 2009) and *Hosgeldin* (Ankara and Burdur, 2014, 2015). These are examples of mutual learning and intercultural polyphony.
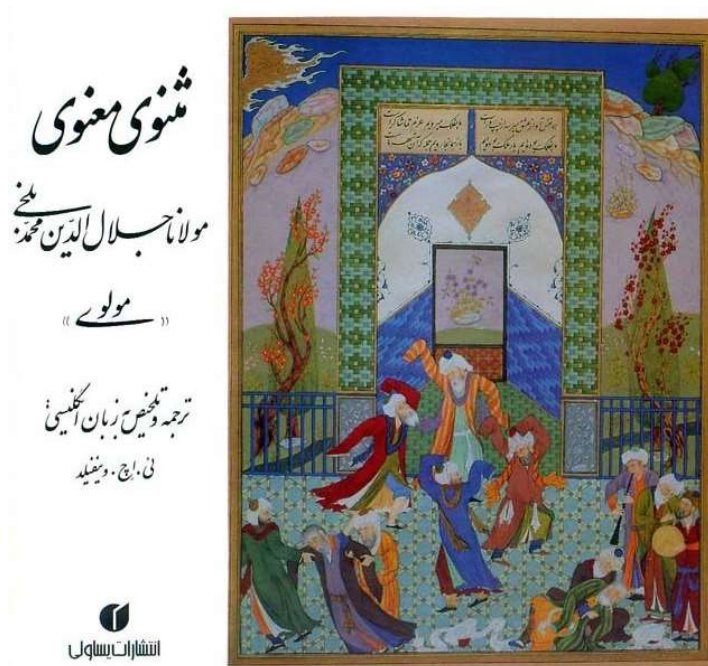
The Conceptual Metaphor of WAY in Moulānā Rūmī's Maṣnavi as Qurʾanic Tafsīr. The Tale of The Parrot and the Merchant *and its Metaphorical Significance*
Roman Seidel

In Moulānā Rūmī's Maṣnavi the WAY of the soul between the material and the spiritual world is among its central themes. The specific features of this WAY are portrayed in a sophisticated web of multilayered metaphorical images, that are based on both the Qurʾān as a Hypotext of the Maṣnavi and Moulānā's mystical world view. In this talk I shall discuss some preliminary ideas and perspectives of a project on the Conceptual Metaphor of WAY in the Maṣnavi which I am pursuing with my colleague Nayereh Mirmousa (Beheshti Univ. Tehran/Univ. Bochum). It is a spinoff to the project "Path and Guidance: Interpretations of Qur'anic Metaphors of Space and Movement in the Tafsīr Literature," on which I am working within the Cooperative Research Centre "Metaphors of Religion" (Ruhr-Univ. Bochum). I will therefore first briefly outline the main rationale and methods of the research centre, which based on conceptual metaphor theory investigates metaphorical language in religious texts as a means for religious meaning making. I will also introduce shortly some central methodological aspects of the Project "Path and Guidance", such as "Quranic Lead Metaphor" and "Explicative Metaphors in Tafsīr" and outline in what way the Maṣnavi can be considered as a qurʾānic Tafsīr of its own kind. In the main part, I shall discuss Moulānā's understanding of the WAY in the Maṣnavi, which is conceived as horizontal, vertical, and circular and which can occur both on the level of target and source domain. Finally, I shall illustrate, how we approach Moulānā's use of metaphors for WAY by taking a closer look at some passages of one of the

most famous stories of the Maṯnavi, the Merchant and the Parrot, and show how the WAY plays a central role in a variety of prominent conceptual metaphors in this Work.

Roman Seidel, since Sept. 2022 senior researcher at the Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies at Ruhr-University Bochum, works in the field of philosophy and intellectual history of the Islamic world, with a particular focus on Iran and the Persianate world from the nineteenth century to the present. As Principal investigator of the research project "TransIranIdea" (funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research), he worked on the intellectual "micronarrative" of Mīrzā Āqā Khān Kermānī (d. 1896). He is one of the main authors of the Iran section of the "Geschichte der Philosophie in der islamischen Welt" Vol IV.2, 19th and 20th century (Turkey, Iran, and South Asia). As PI and co-initiator, he runs the DFG network "Philosophy in the Modern Islamic World" (https://philosophy-in-the-modern-islamic-world.net/). Currently he also works on Metaphors in Qur'anic Exegesis in a sub-project of the Collaborative Research Centre SFB 1475 "Metaphors of Religion" based at Ruhr Univ. Bochum. After receiving his doctorate in 2011 from the University of Zurich with the study "Kant in Teheran. Anfänge, Ansätze und Kontexte der Kantrezeption in Iran" (De Gruyter 2014), he worked as researcher and lecturer at various Universities in the fields of Islamic Studies and Philosophy, such as University of Zurich, Freie Universität Berlin, Humboldt University Berlin and the Universities of Bern and Siegen.

Sufi Hermeneutics: Commentary tradition on Rūmī's Mathnawī
(Eliza Tasbihi)

Rūmī's (d.1273) *Mathnawī*, was among the popular sources for translation and commentary. It is amongst the rich Islamic sources, which has been translated into different languages. The commentary tradition on the *Mathnawī* has been quite intensive since Rūmī's own time. Numerous commentaries on the *Mathnawī* were composed in Persian, Turkish, Arabic and Urdu throughout the medieval and pre-modern periods, which indicates the importance of Rūmī's teachings and views on Sufism and the Islamic sciences. It was a source of inspiration for Iranians, Ottomans and Indo-Persian writers and Sufi masters, who taught his teachings in *madrassas*, Sufi centers or had their disciples recite his poems accompanied by mystical music and dance. Sufi scholars wrote Persian commentaries on the *Mathnawī*, which helped Persian language to continue its flourishing in the Ottoman society and the Indian Subcontinent, while in Iran, the commentary on the *Mathnawī* targeted different audience and provided more opportunities for scholarly studies of Rūmī's doctrine.

Commentators have taken different approaches to understanding the *Mathnawī* and have interpreted Rūmī's Sufi teachings in accordance with their own knowledge and the particular school they belong to. Some Ottoman [Anqarawī (d.1631), Shemʿī (d.1595)] and Indian [Akbarābādī (d.1760), Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, d.1810)] commentators have taken the Sufi

approach and interpreted the verses merely from a Sufi perspective; they have provided comprehensive explications for all the terms and phrases mentioned in the *Mathnawī* and explained Rūmī's teaching according to Ibn Arabī's (d.1240) doctrine. On the other hand, some commentators such as Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī (d.1881) took a philosophical approach and presented Rūmī's poetry through the prism of Suhrawardī (d.1191), while contemporary scholars such as Furūzānfar (d.1970) and Esti'lami are interested in scholarly approach and literal interpretation of Rūmī's poetry. They all aim at interpreting Rūmī's doctrine according to their belief and targeting specific audience, which has resulted in promoting Rūmī's Sufi teachings.

The paper attempts to answer the following questions while analyzing different genres of commentary written on Rūmī's *Mathnawī*: how important is the commentary in understanding Rūmī's teachings; what is the role of the commentator in understanding Rūmī's poetry? To what extent the commentators remain faithful to the original text? To which audience they present their work? What is the significance of Akbarian school (attributed to Ibn Arabī) in the commentary tradition on Rūmī's *Mathnawī*?

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(image is taken from: The legacy of Rumi at the Aga Khan Museum | Foyer (readfoyer.com))

Problematizing Truth-Writing: The Elephant in the Dark Parable
(Fatemeh Naghshvarian)

Rūmī's parable of the elephant in the dark has captivated readers from different times and settings due to its visually descriptive and figurative language. This parable has been interpreted in different ways to convey different didactic messages, finding application in various fields such as psychology, ethics, and philosophy. The variations of this parable have been utilized by theologians and philosophers in the Sufi tradition, showcasing its homiletic quality.

Reportedly, the prototype of the elephant in the dark originated in ancient India. It was first adopted in the Islamic cultural sphere in the 12th century by Muḥammad Ghazzālī and later by the Persian poet Sanāʾī. These early adaptations focussed on the insufficiency of the intellect in dealing with religious questions and emphasized the need to transcend sensory perception to acquire higher mystical knowledge. In the thirteenth century, Rūmī adapted the parable to comment on the failure of senses in attaining spiritual enlightenment. Rūmī uses the symbolism of the darkness to illustrate the limits of human senses when confronted with metaphysical questions. He highlights the dangers of the material world and the illusory nature of knowledge acquired from it, drawing parallels to Plato's allegory of the cave.

To escape from the confines of materiality, Rūmī advocates for experimentational practices culminating in spiritual enlightenment. Resting on symbolic expressions, Rūmī criticizes the rationalist approach to theological questions that leads to disputes among different religious sects, asserting that Truth transcends the trivial differences derivative of worldly knowledge. Rūmī's epistemology differs from traditional theologians as he calls for personal experience and the awakening of the soul to verify Truth. Rūmī builds his theory of knowledge upon the rejection of sense perception arguing that it limited to the lower levels of knowledge and incapable of grasping the intensity of spiritual knowledge. In this vein, Sufism, with its focus on spiritual practices and purification of the soul, leads to spiritual enlightenment, while theology becomes an obstacle to Truth.

Fatemeh Naghshvarian is a PhD candidate in the ERC Advanced Grant *Beyond Sharia: The Role of Sufism in Shaping Islam*, working on the project Qalandars in the 'Divine Religion' in India. In this project, she investigates the formation of "Divine Religion" (*dīn-i ilāhī*) at the Indian Mughal court of Emperor Akbar relying mainly on the works of the poet laureate Feyżī (1547-1595). By conducting an inquiry into the applicable influences of antinomian movements and heterodox religious thinking within Islam, she aims to explore the traces of Islamic critical thinking on shaping the political concomitants of Divine Religion and "Universal Peace" in 16th-century Mughal India. For her Cultural Studies Master thesis, Fatemeh focused on the independent cinema of Ramin Bahrani exploring the aesthetic experimentations and the socio-cultural questions concerning the representation of the migrant body on the screen.

The Story of the King and the Concubine:
Is Rūmī As Forgiving in Love as He is Depicted Online?
(Zhinia Noorian)

Love is believed to be one of the central concepts in Rūmī's poetry. In many poems, Rūmī uses anecdotes of love as a frame story for his mystic-didactic anecdotes and tales. One of these cases is the story of The Concubine and the King is one of these well-known stories in the *Mathnavi*. In this story, Rūmī teaches submission to the Divine and patience in the face of hardships. He advocates the belief that although a believer might not find any logic behind what unfolds in life, s/he should remain calm and trust the Divine.

However, for a reader of this day and age, it may sound as if for Rūmī the end justifies the means. On the surface layer of the story, there is too much violence or injustice or even manipulation of the characters' lives. The jeweller is deceived to come to the court only to be murdered and the slave girl is treated as if she is an object to fulfil the king's desires. Countless social media posts presumably quote Rūmī's poetry on love. Normally, these posts bear merely the name of "Rūmī" at the end to indicate that it is taken from his poetry; no page numbers nor the original version in Persian is provided. This paper juxtaposes the concept of love in The Concubine and the King with the take of social media users on love in Rūmī's poetry. The aim is to investigate how social media users assign different connotations to the concept by changing the context in which they use the poems.

Zhinia Noorian is a Postdoc candidate for the ERC-Advanced Grant *Beyond Sharia: The Role of Sufism in Shaping Islam*, working on the project *Feminising Masculinity: Negotiating Gender Norms*. In this project, she investigates the gender-related aspects of heresy/antinomian beliefs in Islam. She is focused on the poetry of Jahān Malik-Khātūn (d. ca. 1393), a contemporary poetess of the renowned Persian poet, Ḥāfiẓ (d. 1390). For her PhD dissertation, Zhinia studied the poetry and reception of Parvīn Iʿtiṣāmī (1907-1941), as an Iranian female poet (published as *Parvin Etesami in the Literary and Religious Context of Twentieth-Century Iran: A Female Poet's Challenge to Patriarchy*, Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2023). She investigated the enduring mark that Iʿtiṣāmī left on the literary and religious culture of Iran in the early 20th century through transgressing the socio-cultural norms of her patriarchal society. Her research demonstrated Iʿtiṣāmī's prowess in using the classical genre of Persian debate poetry and Persian mystical tradition as safe spaces to express her thoughts on the socio-politically sensitive issues of her times.

Rūmī and the Friends of God: The Story of Moses and the Shepherd
(Maarten Holtzapffel)

Rūmī's story of Moses and the Shepherd is one of the most popular stories from the *Masnavi*. In the story, Rūmī presents the prophet Moses, one of the most recurring figures in the *Masnavi*, as an orthodox theologian who rebukes a simple shepherd for speaking about God in a simplistic manner. As can be read in the opening lines of the story, the shepherd expresses his devotion to God in an anthropomorphic fashion, asking, among other things, if he may "comb God's hair" and "wash His clothes." Moses does not believe his ears when he hears this talk from the shepherd and orders him to stop, but as can be expected from Rūmī, at the end of the story it becomes clear that Moses is wrong here and not the shepherd.

The story is known today as a clear example of Rūmī's unsurpassed religious tolerance and is used to emphasize the image of Rūmī as a champion of religious pluralism. However, due to the popularity of the broad religious tolerance expressed in the story the religious teachings Rūmī attempts to convey are often neglected. This paper aims to pay attention to the literary and religious context in which Rūmī's narration of the story of Moses and the Shepherd emerged. By examining the introduction of the story in his *Masnavi*, and contextualizing the story in the literary tradition Rūmī is part of, this paper attempts to show how Rūmī's message of love and tolerance relates to the Islamic intellectual tradition of his time, and is grounded in the Persian literary tradition.
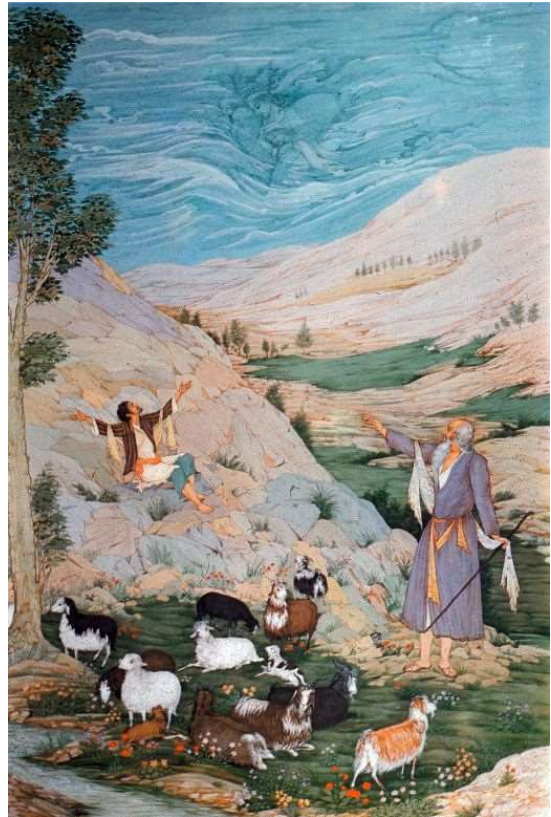
Maarten Holtzapffel is a PhD candidate for the ERC Advanced Grant *Beyond Sharia: The Role of Sufism in Shaping Islam*, working on the project *Of Love and Wisdom: Rūmī's Transgressive Ideas and the Rise of Humanism*. In this project, he investigates Rūmī's reception in the modern world, examining how the antinomian ideas expressed in his poetry are interpreted as a humanist philosophy, transcending religious boundaries. For his Research Master thesis he conducted a study on the appropriation of Rūmī's mystic poetry in contemporary Iranian politics, in particular by the political philosopher and theologian Abdolkarim Soroush (b. 1945).

Intertextual References to Muslim Mysticism as a Discursive Strategy:
Rūmī and other Sufi Poets in the Work of Kader Abdolah
(Ewa Dynarowicz)

In my contribution I would like to explore the discursive role of intertextual references to Sufi poets, Rūmī being a central example, in the work of Kader Abdolah (1954), an internationally successful Dutch author of Iranian origin. At first glance many of these references seem to be merely responsible for creating an exoticism effect. When looked at from a rhetorical perspective, however, they can be assumed to fulfil an important discursive purpose. Following into the footsteps of such writers as Salman Rushdie, Abdolah employs Sufi mysticism as a strategy to present his Western audience with a spiritual alternative to orthodox Islam and to battle the negative image of Islam prevailing in the Netherlands in the aftermath of the 9/11 events. The intertextual references to Rūmī and other Sufi poets can also be seen as a way to enhance Abdolah's position in the Dutch literary field, presenting himself as a descendant of a classical literary tradition. Finally, by referring to Sufi poets Abdolah positions himself in the Dutch literary field as a writer-refugee, thus seeking connection with a tradition that is commonly positively received by a West-European readership.

The Masnavi, Konya G Manuscript, the oldest copy of the text, kept at the Mevlana Museum in Konya. Image: courtesy Dr Naci Bakırcı, Assistant Director of the Mevlana Muzesi, Konya, from [Rumi: Operation of Divine Love | Beshara Magazine](#)

Ewa Dynarowicz studied English Language and Literature at the University of Wroclaw, Poland and Dutch Language and Literature at Universities of Wroclaw and Utrecht. She obtained her PhD in Dutch and South African Studies from Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland on a dissertation *South African transformation: Truth and Reconciliation Commission and literary representations of reconstructing and negotiating identity* (2008). Since 2012 she has been an assistant professor of Dutch literature and culture at the University of Wroclaw, Poland. She publishes regularly on Dutch literature and culture by authors with a migrant background and on Dutch literature on South Africa. She is currently preparing a monograph on literary output of Kader Abdolah and his position in Dutch literature.

Coming to Terms with Trauma: An Analysis of Rūmī's Youth-in-Fire Poem
(Arash Ghajarjazi)

In this paper presentation, I examine a short poem by Rūmī in the thirty-eighth chapter of *Mathnavī-yi maʿnavī*. In this poem, a Jewish king throws a child into the fire and asks the mother and others present at the sacrificial scene to denounce their belief. The dying child speaks back to the mother, and through the medium of this poem, it also speaks back to the reader at the threshold of life and death. Departing from Roland Barthes' well-known maxim, "the death of the author", I ask, what could the poem do for the people who perceived the burning of a child *not* symbolically but symptomatologically?

In this sense, the question is about Rūmī's intentions, nor even about the true meaning of those poems. Instead, I want to understand the kind of symptomatologic mechanism that it might operationalise in a traumatised subject. The entry for my analysis is that there is an evil Jewish king who asks his subjects to yield to his heretical command. Casting Rūmī's own preferred symbolism aside – which he prescribes in the preceding poem – I want to first know what the function of this antagonist is in the poems. What does it do for the communities of Muslim believers? How does it help the poem portray the trauma? By giving attention to both the semantics of the poem as well as its broader social-intellectual context embedding the poem, I read the poem as a psychosocial formula that promotes fatalistic pacifism.

Arash Ghajarjazi received his PhD from the department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Utrecht University. His work deals with the relations between Islam, sciences, and media technologies in the Middle East from the 19th century onwards. More broadly, trained both as a cultural analyst and a historian, he explores how Islamic traditions have evolved in and as media. He approaches histories of Muslim material cultures and ideas together. His work seeks a balance between historical contextualisation and philosophical conceptualisation. He is currently working as a postdoc researcher in the ERC funded research project *Beyond Sharia*, where he studies the intellectual genealogies and the shifting popularity of ʿUmar Khayyām's quatrains from the thirteenth to the twentieth century.

Reading Rūmī in Turkish: Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı and his Invisible Legacy
(Gökçen Beyinli)

Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı (1900-1982) is one of the most influential scholars of religion in Turkey who translated Rūmī's works, and wrote extensively on him and the Mevlevi order, as well as on Shiite, Alevi and Bektaşi traditions and poets. Although his works have been - and continue to be - widely read and reprinted, his distinctive approach and preferences in writing the history of religion in Turkey remained largely invisible. This is not surprising given that, according to Gölpınarlı, himself a Mevlevi, neither Rūmī and Shams nor their Mevlevi followers are exclusively Sunni, "orthodox" Muslims, but were influenced by Shiite, Qalandari and Melami teachings. Although highly praised for his contributions to translation activities in Turkey, he has been accused of being Shiite or pro-Batıni, and ideologically criticised for his close contact with left-wing intellectuals and for collaborating with some of them in his work (e.g. with Pertev Naili Boratav on Pir Sultan Abdal). This presentation will examine the ambivalent role of Gölpınarlı in the historiography of religion in Turkey by focusing on his works on Rūmī and the Mevlevi order. After giving an overview of the dominant perspective in Turkey, which sees Rūmī as a Sunni, orthodox and national Sufi, I will briefly discuss Gölpınarlı's life. I will especially shed light on his invisible legacy through a critical analysis of his biographical works, and the introductions and footnotes in his translations. This analysis aims to contribute to Rūmī's reception with an alternative and "objective" view of a Turkish scholar that transcends the Shiite-Sunni divide.

Biography: Gökçen Beyinli is Senior Research Fellow at the German Research Foundation's Humanities Centre "Multiple Secularities"/University of Leipzig and TÜBİTAK Postdoctoral Fellow at the Asia-Africa Institute/University of Hamburg. Her current project examines how "superstition" was influential in shaping Alevi-Muslim difference in the Republic of Turkey from 1923 to 1966. She holds a PhD in History from Humboldt University, Berlin, and an MA in History from Istanbul Bilgi University. She is the author of two books and several articles on gender and religious history of Istanbul and modern Turkey. She has taught at Humboldt University Berlin, Izmir University of Economics and is currently teaching at the University of Hamburg. She has also worked as a full-time journalist and continues to work as a freelancer.
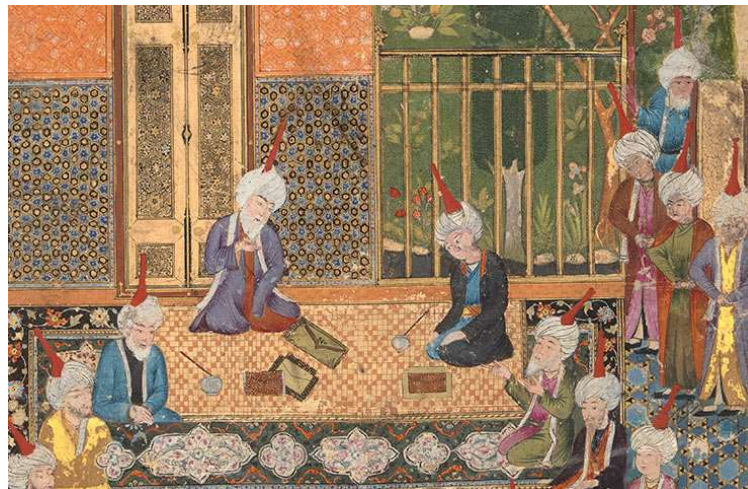
Rūmī and His Technique of Madness
(Leila Rahimi Bahmany)

Rūmī, in his *Maṣnavī-e Maʿnavī*, endorses madness in terms of an art or a technique (*fann*) for breaking free from the boundaries of rationality. In this presentation, some aspects of madness (*dīvānagī*), prevalent in premodern Islamic tradition, are discussed; concepts such as love-madness, at the time when physician-philosophers regarded love as a sort of mental derangement or madness; the poetic madness, tracing its root back to the qur'anic tradition of the mad poet; and madness as a stigma, a tool for the punishment of the dissidents and for keeping the social order. Rūmī presents all these concepts in his poems and propagates madness as an acquired technique to be used by the Sufi in his spiritual path. To him, madness offers emancipation from the suffocating confines of the intellect, sanity, and cultural normality as well as the scholasticism of dogmatic religion.

Leila Rahimi Bahmany is a senior researcher for the ERC Advanced Grant *Beyond Sharia: The Role of Sufism in Shaping Islam* at Utrecht University. She obtained her doctorate from the Free University of Berlin, working on a literary comparative study. Her first book, *Mirrors of Entrapment and Emancipation: Forugh Farrokhzad and Sylvia Plath* (Leiden University Press, 2015), received a Latifeh Yarshater Award. Rahimi Bahmany's publication list includes articles and book chapters on Sufi orders, figures, and literature in Iran and Azerbaijan.

Rūmī's Reflections on Handsome Young Boys:
Shāhid-Bāzī and the case of Awḥad al-Dīn Kirmānī
(Lloyd Ridgeon)

Rūmī's works have the ability to divide his readers: the example of *shāhid-bāzī* provides a case in point. One of the most famous critics in modern Iran, Aḥmad Kasravī, castigated Rūmī for a three-month period of isolation spent with Shams-i Tabrīzī. "Contemplate well on this," says Kasravī, "Two people for three months in isolation, what did they do?" The inuendo is clear, especially in the context of Kasravī writing about *shādid-bāzī.* In the West too, Rūmī commentators have speculated on the possibility of Rūmī's homosexual inclinations: Andrew Harvey, author of *Teachings of Rumi*, is reported to have commented on Rumi's homosexuality in a public talk in the 1990s. Yet others have remarked on how Rūmī disapproved of *shāhid-bāzī.* For example, in his well-known work, *Shāhid-bāzī dar adabiyāt-i fārsī,* Shamīsā states that "Copying the inclinations of Shams-i Tabrīz and his father Bahā Valad, Mowlanā did not have a positive view of *shāhid-bāzī,* and he understood it as an excuse of the Sufis to engage in reprehensible acts." In this presentation, I will seek to assess Rumi's attitude to *shāhid-bāzī* and address the complicated issue of his remarks about Awḥad al-Dīn Kirmānī (d. 1238), who earned a reputation as one of the most infamous practitioners of *shāhid-bāzī* of the age, perhaps as a result of the comments attributed to Rūmī. In this manner, it is hoped that we can approach a more nuanced and sophisticated understandings of an aspect of Rūmī's worldview, or at least, that attributed to him in the generations after his death.

Lloyd Ridgeon lectures at Glasgow University, offering courses mainly on modern Islam. His research focuses on the Persian world, and recent publications have investigated the

thought of "dissident" clerics, such as Ahmad Qabil and Mohsen Kadivar. He also researches medieval Persian Sufism and the tradition of *javanmardi.*