FATHER OF PERSIAN VERSE
RUDAKI AND HIS POETRY
SASSAN TABATABAI

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Father of Persian Verse

Rudaki and his Poetry

Sassan Tabatabai

Leiden University Press
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In the tenth century CE, Nasr ibn Ahmad II (r. 914-943), the Sāmānid Amir who ruled north-eastern Persia from his capital in Bukhārā, had a habit of spending the spring and summer in Herat (present-day Afghanistan) away from the heat and dust of his capital. One year, he was so charmed by the temperate climate and the beautiful maidens of Herat that he failed to return to Bukhārā as expected. Many months passed and the Amir showed no sign of leaving Herāt. Knowing that the poet Rudaki was one of the Amir’s intimates, the courtiers and army captains approached him and offered him five thousand dinārs if he could persuade the Amir to return to Bukhārā. At their request, Rudaki, who was considered an excellent musician as well as a poet, traveled to Herat. There, in the Amir’s presence, Rudaki plucked his harp and recited this poem:

Juye-Muliyān’s scent drifts my way,
As do memories of a kind friend.
The Āmuy is hard to cross, but its stones
Feel silken soft beneath our feet.
Thrilled to see a friend, the Jayhun’s waves
Leap halfway up our horses’ flanks.
O Bukhārā, be happy, live long:
The cheerful Amir is returning to you.
The Amir is the moon, Bukhārā, the sky;
The moon is returning to the sky.
The Amir is a cypress, Bukhārā, the garden;
The cypress is returning to the garden.

According to the story, upon hearing the last line of the poem, the Amir became so homesick for Bukhārā that he mounted his horse without putting on his riding boots and started galloping towards Bukhārā. Out of gratitude, Rudaki received twice the amount promised to him.\(^1\)

Abū ‘Abdollāh Ja‘far ibn Mohammad Rudaki is believed to have been born around 880 CE and died around 941 CE. Unfortunately, very little has been recorded about his life; much that is known must be pieced together from his own poetry. For many years, Rudaki enjoyed the patronage of the Sāmānid Amir, Nasr ibn Ahmad II and any discussion of Rudaki’s poetry must be contextualized within the framework of the court. Rudaki prospered at the Amir’s court and at the height of his glory was said to have possessed two hundred slaves and needed one hundred camels just to carry his luggage.\(^2\)

However came honor and riches for some,
For him they came from the house of Sāmān:
Forty thousand from the Amir of Khorāsān,
Another five from the Amir of Mākān. (…)
When my words fell on the Amir’s ears,
He gave generously, as did the others’.

---


Apparently, Rudaki had made his way into the Sāmānid court before the reign of Nasr II. Proof of this can be found in a poem written by Rudaki for Nasr II’s predecessor, Amir Ahmad ibn Ismā’il (r. 907-914). In the poem, Rudaki is trying to console Ahmad after the death of his father, Amir Ismāʿīl-ibn Ahmad, who died in 907.

You who are sad, who suffer,
Who hide your eyes that flow with tears
For him, whose name I don’t mention
For fear of more sorrow and hardship:
Went what went and came what came,
Was what was, why grieve in vain?

Rudaki’s position as the Sāmānid court poet can be considered the most significant aspect of his life. Traditionally, the court poet, whose function went far beyond that of a mere entertainer, was an integral part of the Persian court. Ardeshir Bābakān, the founder of the Sāsānian dynasty in the third century, considered the poet a “part of government and the means of strengthening rulership.”

Other than praising the ruler and his realm, the poet was expected to be a source of counsel and moral guidance. As such, a poet like Rudaki would have to be well-versed in tradition. He would have to be familiar with the body of didactic literature of the past and draw upon it when necessary.

Take action. Don’t sit idle for too long,
Even though your sacks of gold reach the moon.

---

The relationship between poet and patron was one of mutual benefit. The poet would glorify his patron, preserving his name and reputation. In return, the poet would gain wealth and influence, enjoying the luxuries of courtly life. Nizâmi Aruzi describes the poet-patron relationship in *Chahâr Maqâleh* (1155-1157), a discussion in four discourses of the four influential professions of medieval Persia: the civil service, poetry, astrology and medicine. “A king cannot dispense with a good poet, who shall conduce to the immortality of his name, and shall record his fame in *diwâns* and books,” writes Aruzi. “For when the king receives that command which none can escape (death), no trace will remain of his army, his treasure, and his store; but his name will endure forever by reason of the poet’s verse.”

Praise the Amir. May the whole world praise him.
Beauty, virtue and order spring from him.

As the center of court life, the Amir enjoyed total devotion from the poet who would praise his strength and valor.

On the day of battle, of hate, of bravery,
If you see him clad in helmet and armor,
He will make an elephant seem small,
Even a drunk, roaring elephant.

We can see the influence of the court’s culture and sensibilities even in Rudaki’s love poems. The lover’s unconditional devotion to his beloved parallels the loyal service expected of the poet or courtier.

If I’m not unlucky, how did I get involved

---

4 As quoted in Meisami, p. 10.
With this quick-to-anger woman of easy virtue?
She likes it if I’m thrown to the lions.
I can’t stand it if a fly sits on her.
She tortures me. But my love for her
And loyalty to her never leave my heart.

In another poem he writes:

If only you’d place one foot upon this ground,
I’d make a thousand prostrations to its dust.

Many of the images in Rudaki’s love poems have become staples of Persian poetry: the moon as the beautiful face of the beloved, the narcissi as eyes with which to see the beloved, the tulip as the cheeks of the beloved, and the agate as a tear of blood shed because of heartache.

You’ve stolen color and scent from the rose:
Color for your cheeks, scent for your hair.
The stream turns rose-colored when you wash your face.
The street smells of musk when you let down your hair.

The relationship between poet and patron, however, was a precarious one. When addressing the patron, whether praising or giving advice, the poet had to be careful not to offend. Offending the ruler could be costly to the poet who could easily lose his livelihood and quite possibly his life. The poet’s position at court was also influenced by the internal politics and power struggles within the court. Rudaki’s fortune was to a large extent dependent on the support of his main benefactor, Abolfazl Mohammad ibn Abdollah Bal’ami, the vizier to Amir Nasr ibn Ahmad II. Bal’ami, who was one of the central figures in the Sâmânid court, has been credited, to a large extent, with the blossoming of Persian literature
in the tenth century. As the Amir’s vizier from 922 to 938, he drew literary talent to the Sāmānid court by commissioning works of literature and offering lavish rewards to poets.

Bal’amī considered Rudaki to be unrivaled among both Persian and Arab poets. He commissioned Rudaki to translate the Kalila va Dimna, the collection of Indian “Bidpai” fables into Persian from an Arabic translation of the Pahlavi translation of the Sanskrit original. Unfortunately, no more than a few couplets have survived from Rudaki’s translation.⁵

Rudaki’s fortune took a turn for the worse with the death of Bal’amī in 937. Soon after, Rudaki fell out of favor with the Amir and was expelled from court. This traumatic event in Rudaki’s life was followed by the death of the poet Shahid Balkhi, a close friend of Rudaki who had also enjoyed the patronage of the Sāmānid court. In a moving elegy on the death of Balkhi, one can sense Rudaki’s anguish at his own situation:

Shahid’s caravan has left before ours.
Believe me, ours will also leave.
Count the eyes, there is one pair less,
Measure the wisdom, thousands less.
Reap all that enriches your soul
Before death comes to bind your legs.

With his connection to the court severed, Rudaki spent the rest of his life in poverty and died a blind and desolate man in 941. In the poems written towards the end of his life, he complains about his miserable condition and his sad predicament.

My teeth are all worn down and falling out.

⁵ For a discussion of the role of Bal’amī as Rudaki’s patron, see Zabihollāh Safā, Tārikh-e Adabiyyāt dar Iran vol. 1 (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1977), pp. 376-381.
They weren’t just teeth, they were as bright light.

He reminisces about his youth, health, strength and vitality, and mourns their loss:

My dark-haired beauty, you can’t possibly know,
What shape I was in a long time ago!
You can caress your lover with your curls,
But never saw him with curls of his own.

Finally, he resigns himself to his pitiable state:

But times have changed, so have I. Bring me my staff.
It’s time for the cane and the beggar’s purse.

In one sad example, he seems to long for the days of comfort and luxury at court and helplessly asks for an explanation for his sudden change of fortune:

I was always intoxicated in this house.
Like the Amir and nobles, my place was secure.
Now, I am the same, the house and town are the same.
Then tell me, how has happiness turned to sorrow?

Rudaki was thought to have been blind from birth, but most scholars agree that he was not born blind but lost his sight later in life. The physical descriptions of shapes and colors in Rudaki’s poetry make it highly unlikely that he was blind from birth. The imagery and the vivid depiction of nature in his poetry suggest that it is the work of someone who had a visual experience of the world. In one poem he compares a curl of his beloved’s hair to a letter of the alphabet, and the mole on her cheek to the dot of that letter.
Who curled your hair into a “j”?
He who made your mole the dot of the “j”.
And your mouth is so small, as if someone
Has split a pomegranate seedlet in half.

In another poem, he not only describes a particular bird, he actually uses the verb “to see.”

I saw a hoopoe near Sarakhs
Whose little song reached the clouds.
She was wearing a little cloak
Of many different colors.

Rudaki borrows most of his imagery from the physical world. He treats nature as if it is a person and superimposes human characteristics on it, which often results in dynamic portraits:

The mighty heavens have fielded an army:
An army of dark clouds led by the zephyr,
Lightning its artillery, thunder its drummer.
I have seen a thousand armies, never so fierce.

A cloud that rains becomes a broken-hearted man, and the sun hidden behind clouds becomes a prisoner avoiding the guard:

Look at that cloud, how it cries like a grieving man,
Thunder moans like a lover with a broken heart.
Now and then the sun peeks from behind the clouds
Like a prisoner hiding from the guard.

Even wine is alive with human characteristics. Rudaki describes the “emotions” of the crushed grape inside a cask:
But when aware of what has happened,
It will froth. It will moan from heartache,
Sink to the bottom with sadness,
Boil to the surface with sorrow.

Rudaki’s poetry also resonates with references to a pre-Islamic orientation towards life. By the tenth century, although Islam had become deeply entrenched, the Persians still identified with a deep-rooted Zoroastrian past. One dominant theme in pre-Islamic Persian literature is *andarz*, moralizing and ethical teachings, admonitions and advice for proper behavior in both the private and public spheres of life. In *andarz* texts, a central concept is that of moderation, and man is urged to assume his proper place in cultured society by acquiring good manners and good speech.\(^6\)

People aren’t required to be generous and kind,
But they are required to be thankful for grace.
My lord bestows much that isn’t required of him.
How can I neglect what is required of me?

One must work hard and avoid laziness, falsehood and injustice; and must act virtuously by being honest, generous and kind. Rudaki invokes this pre-Islamic Zoroastrian ethos when describing the qualities of his patron.

With hand and tongue he spreads gold and pearls.
Not in vain, has his name spread through the world.
He planted the branch of kindness in our hearts.
It’s no joke that he has turned his back on wealth.

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\(^6\) For a concise discussion of *andarz*, see Z. Safā, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Andarz. ii. Andarz literature in new Persian.
Much of Rudaki’s poetry is devoted to moral exhortation and is loaded with references to Zoroastrian culture and ancient Iranian themes, rather than Islamic and Semitic ones.

It’s a puzzle, describing his grace and will:
He is the Avestā in wisdom, the Zand in essence. (...) 
His essence is the Vahi-nāmeh to Kasrā.
His ways have filled the Pand-nāmeh with guidance.
The essence of this king is the real Pand-nāmeh, 
So that fortune itself can take counsel from him.7

The absence of Islamic references in Rudaki’s work and his preoccupation with pre-Islamic Iranian themes provide an important clue regarding his orientation toward Persian culture. In fact, there are several instances in Rudaki’s poetry where he all but dismisses the conventions of religious practices and Islamic life. Usually, such references are shrouded, as in a poem where he puts love before religion.

What use is facing the House of God, when the heart 
Faces Bukhārā and the beauties of Tarāz? 
God will accept your devotion to love, 
But he will not accept your prayers.

In other poems, he talks openly about drinking wine and getting drunk, disregarding Islam’s insistence on abstention. It must be noted that unlike later Persian poetry where wine and drunkenness take on mystical connotations and can be interpreted as

7 Here, Rudaki is evoking Zoroastrian virtues as laid out in pre-Islamic sacred texts. The Avestā is the sacred writings of Zoroastrianism and the Zand is the interpretation of the Avestā. The Vahi-nāmeh (Letter of Revelation) and the Pand-nāmeh (Letter of Guidance) are pre-Islamic moral injunctions.
divine intoxication, for Rudaki, wine meant nothing more than wine, and drunkenness meant nothing more than being drunk.

Now we are drunk, so let’s drink wine.
Let’s drink from the hands of beauties.
They call us crazy and senseless.
We are not crazy. We are drunk.

Perhaps one of the most telling examples of Rudaki’s disregard for Islamic conventions is the poem in which he consoles the Amir for the death of his father. Interestingly, there is no mention of religion in this poem. Rudaki’s remedy for the Amir’s grief is to drink wine.

To break the siege of sorrow on your heart
It is better to fetch the wine and drink.
Out of great disasters, there will appear
Virtue and grace and nobility.

Note that in the last couplet, Rudaki returns to some of the pre-Islamic andarz themes and emphasizes what he considers to be the hallmarks of Persian identity, namely virtue and honor.

Rudaki was also an innovator of poetic form. Aside from writing in forms inherited from Arabic poetry, namely the qasida and the qit’a, he is thought to be the first poet to have written in the rubā’i (pl. ruba’iyāt) form. The rubā’i is a quatrain (two couplets), which usually contains a succinct meditation on love. There is a historical anecdote associated with Rudaki’s “discovery” of the rubā’i. As the story goes, while Rudaki was taking a stroll through the streets of Bukhārā, he came across a group of children at play. They were rolling walnuts on the ground and singing a childhood
jingle. The jingle caught Rudaki’s ear who later wrote a poem in the same meter. The rest, as they say, is history.\(^8\)

When you find me dead, my lips apart,
A shell empty of life, worn out by want,
Sit by my bedside and say, with charm:
“It is I who killed you, I regret it now.”

By most accounts, Rudaki was a prolific poet. He has been said to have composed 1,300,000 couplets.\(^9\) Even if we take this number to be a gross exaggeration, his poetic output was undoubtedly much more than has survived to this day. The loss of much of Rudaki’s poetry, who holds such a prominent position in the history of Persian literature, is puzzling. Jan Rypka attributes the loss of Rudaki’s work to the nature of the poetry itself. “His verse is adorned by a simplicity which the completely antithetical taste of the periods of mannerism that followed were incapable of comprehending,” proposes Rypka. “Since Rudaki had nothing to offer to satisfy the increasing demands of a literary taste intent on artificiality, the *divān* [collected poems] was lost.”\(^10\)

The poems that have survived have been preserved in the works of others, like Mohammad ‘Auﬁ’s thirteenth century anthology of poetry, *Lobāb al-Albāb* (Quintessence of Hearts), which is one of the earliest sources in which we find Rudaki’s poetry; Nizāmi Aruzi’s twelfth century *Chahār Maqāla* (Four


\(^9\) Arberry, pp. 33-34.

II. ON TRANSLATING THE POETRY OF RUDAKI

I faced several obstacles while translating Rudaki’s poetry into English. My first priority in translating Rudaki has been to convey the meaning of his poems. Even when certain liberties had to be taken in order to bring my English lines to life, they have never been at the expense of the overall meaning of the poem. A translation that in any way alters the sense of the original poem ceases to be a translation altogether and becomes nothing more than an imitation.

Regarding its form, the most important outward features of Persian poetry are its quantitative prosody (measurement of syllables according to length) and its rhyme. The translator who tries to carry the forms of the Persian poem over into English is faced with monumental difficulties. The basic structure of English poetry is accentual, relying on stress rather than the length of syllables. When translating a classical Persian poem into English, if the translator insists on presenting the Persian poem to the English reader within the framework of Persian metrics, the result can be a clumsy poem sounding forced and unnatural.

Trying to bring the rhyme scheme from Persian over into English presents a similar problem. Persian poetry allows a liberal manipulation of language in order to satisfy its poetical forms. It is not unusual to find lengthy poems that use the same rhyme throughout. For example, we find in Rudaki’s work a poem like “The mother of wine,” in which each of the poem’s 94 couplets end

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in the same rhyme. In the poem “What my soul was like,” 34 couplets not only end in the same rhyme but in the same word.

My decision to translate Rudaki’s poems into couplets stems from the outward form of classical Persian poetry. The unit of the Persian poem is a bayt or distich, which is divided into two misrāʾ or semi-distichs. The two semi-distichs are of equal weight (they have the same number of feet). They are mirror images of each other and the same thought usually runs through both. I find this balance and symmetry to be an important aspect of Persian poetry, which I have tried to reflect in my translations. I have presented each distich as a couplet in which I have tried to maintain symmetry in both lines.

You can caress your lover with your curls,
But never saw him with curls of his own.
The days are past when his skin was silken-soft.
The days are past when his hair was raven-dark.
Beauty and charm were once his darling guests,
Guests who will not come back, nonetheless.

Another consideration of form can be seen in the language I have used for my translations. The language in Rudaki’s poems is relatively simple, free of the ornamentation we find in later Persian poetry. To a large extent, the beauty of Rudaki’s poetry lies in its simplicity. I have, therefore, tried to avoid using inflated English, which would alter the stylistic substance of the original.

Day raises its banner in your name.
The crescent moon is like your cup.
Destiny imitates your strong will.
Your charity is daily bread for all.
The translator of Persian poetry is faced with a variety of choices he will inevitably have to make in the English renderings. In particular, the nuances of a language such as punctuation, pronouns, articles, prepositions and gender, that are often absent from the Persian, must be inserted into the English translation if it is to make any sense.

The problem of punctuation can be relatively straightforward. In the original Persian, punctuation is inferred by the context, making a close and accurate reading essential. Translating pronouns, however, can be a delicate business, which often requires an active choice on the part of the translator. Persian pronouns lack gender, something that often needs to be added to the English translation. Once again, the translator must make a decision based on the context in order to attribute gender to the English pronouns. Granted, in many cases, the gender is quite evident; “Turks with pomegranate breasts,” are undoubtedly female.

But designating gender to pronouns is not always as obvious. In classical Persian poetry, it is not uncommon for young boys to be the objects of amorous discourse. Furthermore, at times it is unclear whether the poet is talking about himself or his beloved. In the following couplet by Rudaki, the pronoun in the first line is pivotal to the meaning:

Beauty and charm were once his darling guests,
Guests who will not come back, nevertheless.

The problem is exacerbated when Rudaki refers to himself in the first person in one couplet and in the third person in the next couplet:

My dark-haired beauty, you can’t possibly know,
What shape I was in a long time ago!
You can caress your lover with your curls,
But never saw him with curls of his own.

Articles and prepositions present a different kind of difficulty for the translator of Persian poetry. Here, the problem isn’t the translatability of [missing] articles and prepositions but their effect on the English line. Inserting articles and prepositions into the English translation inflates the line, destroying the distilled character and conciseness of the original. I have made a consistent effort to avoid, as much as possible, inflating my lines with articles and prepositions. Rolfe Humphries faced a similar problem when translating from the Latin. “Latin does not have to use all those miserable little space-taking pronouns, articles, prepositions — he, she, it, the, an, a, of, to,” complains Humphries, “words that, before you know it, creep in, like the termites they are, to eat away the whole fabric of the line.”

One dilemma facing the translator is whether or not to clarify something in the translation that is vague in the original. Should you impose clarity on the translation for the sake of the reader or should you leave it vague, the way you found it? I have tried to present Rudaki’s poems with as little embellishment, explanation or elaboration as possible. For the most part, wherever there has been imagery that would make sense to the Persian reader but perhaps not to an English reader, I have allowed the poem to stand on its own without artificial support. The imagery usually becomes apparent through the context of the poem.

How can I sew my gaze shut? To see my love
Only narcissi grow on my grave, not weeds.

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In Persian poetry, narcissi represent eyes with which to see the beloved. I think the imagery comes across without the need for any elaboration on my part. Wherever the need has arisen for some kind of elaboration for the imagery to make sense, I have tried to keep my additions to a minimum.

I want to stroke your amber-scented hair,
Paint with kisses the jasmine petals of your face.

The “face” at the end of the couplet is my addition. The Persian reader has no problem identifying “jasmine petals” as the soft, pale cheeks of the beloved, but the English reader, faced with the line: “Paint with kisses your jasmine petals,” might have difficulty deciphering the imagery from the context of the poem.

In other cases, the original is vague in the sense that it lends itself to different interpretations. In such poems, I have tried to stick to the original as much as possible, maintaining the ambiguity of the original to allow for the possibility of different readings. Consider the following couplet:

Stop, like a period. Because the lord
Has struck your name from the book of speech.

This couplet is open to two interpretations centered around “the lord” and “the book of speech.” The word “Lord,” (capitalized) would imply God. The “lord” (not capitalized) can be understood as “god” or as “ruler.” Hence, if “lord” is read as “god,” the line is understood as: “god has removed you from the world.” If, on the other hand, “lord” is read as “ruler,” the line is understood as: “the Amir has erased your name from the court divān (thrown you out of court).”

In another poem, Rudaki writes:
My eyes are a sea. The fire in my heart roars.
How can the pupil survive between sea and fire?

Here, once again, I have tried to maintain the ambiguity of the original, which makes the couplet open to different interpretations. The second line should be vague enough so that “the pupil” can be interpreted as a person (the poet himself), or the pupil of the eye.

When translating a work that is culturally and chronologically removed from our own, every twist and turn in the translator’s road reveals new and unexpected obstacles. Should we attempt to translate every feature peculiar to the space and time of the work that is being translated? In tenth-century Bukhārā, the prevalent monetary unit was the dirham. Should dirhams be translated as dollars or cents (or pounds or shillings) for the English reader? William Arrowsmith faced a similar conundrum while translating from the ancient Greek. “How do we translate a currency made of talents, minas, drachmas and obols?” he wondered.13

In order to maintain the exotic feel of a poem written over a thousand years ago in a foreign land with a different culture, some aspects of the original poem need to be transferred into the English, not translated. To translate dirhems into dollars, for example, would take away from the alien and alluring qualities of the poem. The key is to transfer the poem, along with its social, cultural and historical context, into English. Tenth-century Bukhārā, must never become twentieth-century New York, just to make things more familiar for the reader. To translate such cultural and historical nuances as the currency, is to translate too much. This would only hinder the translation by distancing the original poem from its context. Hence, dirhams are left as dirhams.

When he found Turks with pomegranate breasts,  
He appraised and counted out the dirhams.

The exotic nature of this poem stems from the fact that it is set in medieval Bukhārā, a place where slaves and concubines are part of the social tapestry. Rudaki is choosing a slave girl for his evening pleasure in tenth century Bukhārā. He is not soliciting a prostitute in Times Square in 2008. Arrowsmith also tries to avoid such over-translating. “[Italian] Lire may be more familiar to modern ears,” he writes, “but a little shaping and emphasis by the translator, even an intruded gloss where required, will make of drachmas and obols a perfectly acceptable convention.”14

A similar problem is posed by proper names, which Humphries considers to be stumbling blocks for the translator. “Should we bring over the name of every single ... river and mountain?” he asks. The question is a valid one, especially when many geographical names have an equivalent modern name which the reader can immediately identify. “Some names, whether of place or person,” contends Humphries, “mean nothing to us in illusion or connotation, and one of our obligations to the original author is not to bore his audience.”15

The poem “Juye-Muliyān,” offers an interesting case. In consecutive couplets, Rudaki mentions the Āmuy and the Jayhun, rivers that the Amir must cross on his way to Bukhārā. In fact, the Āmuy (or Āmu Daryā) and the Jayhun are the Persian and Arabic names, respectively, of the same river in Central Asia: the Oxus. My initial impulse was to substitute the Oxus for the other names. After all, the Oxus is more readily identifiable by the western reader, whereas the mention of the Āmuy or the Jayhun would send one scrambling for an atlas of Central Asia.

14 Ibid., pp. 124-125.  
The dilemma arises, not in the actual choice of the river’s name, but the fact that Rudaki uses two different names for the same river. Since this is one of Rudaki’s best known and most often-translated poems, we have several examples to consider. Arberry chooses to use Oxus in both couplets:

The sands of Oxus, toilsome though they be,  
Beneath my feet were soft as silk to me.  
Glad at the friend’s return, the Oxus deep  
Up to our girths in laughing waves shall leap.\(^{16}\)

Jackson opts for a different method. He changes Āmuy to Oxus but leaves the Jayhun as is:

The sandy road by Oxus’ banks, that rugged way,  
Silk-soft beneath my feet to me appears to-day:  
And Jihun’s waves, for very joy at their friend’s face,  
Rise to our waists in blithesome mood with fond embrace.\(^{17}\)

Rudaki himself decided to use two different names, Arabic and Persian, for the same river. Since the two words, “Āmuy” and “Jayhun,” are metrically identical, we know Rudaki did not use different names in different lines merely to satisfy the meter. Some thousand odd years later, we can only speculate as to why he chose two different names for the same river. Hence, in my translation, I have decided to maintain the two different names as they appear in the original.

The Āmuy is hard to cross, but its stones  
Feel silken soft beneath our feet.

\(^{16}\) Arberry, p. 33.  
Thrilled to see a friend, the Jayhun’s waves
Leap halfway up our horses’ flanks.

I feel that a quick reference to the notes by the reader is not too much trouble for the worth of maintaining the names chosen by Rudaki himself.

Translating Persian months into English is yet another troublesome feature. The Persian calendar is seasonal, based on the natural cycles of nature. The Persian New Year takes place on the first of Farvardin, the first day of the first month of the Persian calendar. The first of Farvardin falls on the first day of spring, the vernal equinox, which roughly corresponds to the 20th or 21st of March. The first of Tir is the first day of summer; the first of Mehr is the first day of autumn; and the first day of Day is the first day of winter. To look at it another way, each month of the Persian calendar corresponds exactly to a sign of the zodiac.

The Persian months and their approximate equivalent dates in English are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persian Month</th>
<th>English Equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farvardin</td>
<td>March 21 — April 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordibehesht</td>
<td>April 21 — May 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khordād</td>
<td>May 22 — June 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tir</td>
<td>June 22 — July 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mordād</td>
<td>July 24 — August 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shahrivar</td>
<td>August 24 — September 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mehr</td>
<td>September 24 — October 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ābān</td>
<td>October 24 — November 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Āzar</td>
<td>November 23 — December 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day</td>
<td>December 23 — January 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahman</td>
<td>January 21 — February 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esfand</td>
<td>February 20 — March 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each Persian month can be presented to the English reader in three different ways. One option is simply to approximate the English equivalent of its Persian month. For example, Farvardin, the first month of spring, can be approximated as April since almost two-thirds of Farvardin falls in April. Āzar, the last month of autumn, can be translated as November since most of the last month of autumn falls in November.

This option poses several problems. Rudaki, as a poet of nature, was fond of using the imagery of the natural world. Much of his poetry resonates with his concern for the natural cycle of things: life, death, aging, the seasons. Very often, he uses months in order to place his poems within the proper cyclical framework of nature. When he mentions Āzar, the last month of autumn, not only is he mentioning the end of autumn, but he is hinting at the start of winter. The problem with translating a month like Āzar, which runs approximately from November 23rd to December 22nd, is that neither November nor December can adequately convey Āzar. November is at least twenty days away from the end of autumn and December, already loaded with winter’s baggage, conjures a completely different feeling.

A second option is to translate the Persian months according to their corresponding seasons. The obvious problem here is that three months correspond to each season; for example, Mehr, Ābān and Āzar, can all be translated as “autumn.” When a specific month is translated as an entire season, the translation is diluted, presenting something as general where the original is specific. The seasonal approach to translating the names of months would need an additional qualifier (a part of the season: beginning, middle or end) if it is to represent a specific month. Āzar, for example, represents “late autumn.”

A third option is simply to use the Persian names of the months in the English translation. For the reader who does not know what the Persian name of each month signifies, each time the name
of a Persian month is used it must be accompanied by a note of explanation.

As with all other self-imposed guidelines in translating, it quickly becomes evident that it is impossible to stick to one particular method, because much of translation is dictated by the context of the original. In translating Persian months into English, I have used all three options outlined above, depending on the context in which the Persian months were used.

In “The mother of wine,” referring to grapes ripening on the vine, Rudaki writes that a baby (grape) must drink the mother’s milk (ripen on the vine) for seven months, from the beginning of Ordibehesht until the end of Ābān. Ordibehesht and Ābān are the second and eighth months, respectively, of the Persian calendar. His use of Ordibehesht and Ābān are primarily to indicate a span of time, the seven non-winter months it takes for the grapes to ripen. Therefore, I didn’t find it necessary to make direct references to the specific months.

But it isn’t fair to separate
A baby from its mother’s breast,
Before it has suckled for seven months,
From early spring until late fall.

Similarly, in “Winter’s breath,” I have translated “Day” as “winter” because the main function of “Day” in the poem is to conjure a cold winter wind that is blowing on the field:

This grass field, tinged by winter’s breath
Like the tails of tigers and wolves,

However, in “Mehregān,” a poem about the Persian celebration of autumn, I have kept “Āzar,” the last month of autumn, as it appears in the Persian original. In this poem, Āzar is
used for a more specific purpose than the examples noted above. It conveys the end of autumn and the beginning of winter. In a poem about Mehregān, which was originally a Zoroastrian celebration, specific months and their places within the seasons assume a more distinguishing role. Replacing Āzar with autumn would, in my opinion, dilute the line.
The Poetry of Rudaki

برگزیده دیوان رودکی
Elegies

On the death of the Amir’s father

You who are sad, who suffer,
Who hide your eyes that flow with tears
For him, whose name I don’t mention
For fear of more sorrow and hardship:
Went what went and came what came,
Was what was, why grieve in vain?
You want to give harmony to the world?
The world will not accept harmony from you.
Don’t complain, it doesn’t heed complaints.
Stop wailing, it doesn’t hear you wail.
Even if you wail until the day of reckoning,
How can wailing bring back the one who is gone?
You will see more torment from this wheel
If you are tormented at every turn.
It’s as if disasters have been assigned
To whomever you give your heart.
There are no clouds, there’s no eclipse,
But the moon is covered, the earth is dark.
Accept it or not, I am sorry to say
You will not be able to conquer yourself.
To break the siege of sorrow on your heart
It is better to fetch the wine, and drink.
Out of great disasters, there will appear
Virtue and grace and nobility.¹

¹ This poem was written for the Sāmānid Amir Ahmad ibn Ismā‘il (r. 907-914) on the death of his father, Amir Ismā‘il-ibn Ahmad (d. 907).
ای آن که غمگنی و سزاواری
وندر نهان سرشفت همی باری
از بهر آن کچا برم نامنش
ترسم ز سخت انده و دشواری
رفت آن که رفت و آمد آنک آمد
بود آن که بود، خپره چه غم داری
هموار کردن خواهی گتی را
گتی است، کی پذیرد همواری
مستی مکن، که نشنود او مستی
زارت مکن، که نشنود او زارت
شو، تا قیامت آید زارت کن
کی رفتی را به زارت بازار؟
ازار بیش زین گردون بینی
گر تو بهره بهاوه بیزاری
گویی: گماشتن بلایی او
بر هر که تو دل برو بگماری
ابری پدید نی و کسوفی نی
بگرفت ماه و گشت جهان تاری
فرمان کنی و یا نکنی ترسم
بر خویشتن ظفر ندهی باری
تا بشکنی سباه غمان بر دل
آن به که می بیاری و بگساری
اندر بلای سخت پدید آرند
فضل و بزرگ مردی و سالاری
The death of Morādi

Morādi has died, but is not really dead.  
Such a great man’s death is not trivial.²  
His precious life he returned to his father,  
His dark body entrusted to his mother.  
What belonged to the angels has gone with them.  
The man you say has died has just begun to live.  
He was no hay to blow away in the wind.  
He was no water to freeze in the cold.  
He was no comb to be broken by hair.  
He was no seed to be crushed by the earth.  
He was a golden treasure in this world,  
Both worlds were worth a grain of barley, to him.  
His earthen shell was cast back into the earth.  
His soul and wisdom rose to the heavens.  
The second life, of which people don’t know,  
He polished and entrusted to God.  
He was clear wine mixed with sediment,  
Which settled while he rose to the top.  
They all take the trip together, my dear,  
The Marvazi, Rāzi, Rumi and Kurd.³  
In the end, each returns to his own home.  
How could satin be equal to rough cloth?  
Stop, like a period. Because the lord  
Has struck your name from the book of speech.

² Abol Hasan Mohammad ibn Mohammad Morādi was a poet who lived during the same time as Rudaki. Very little remains of his works.
³ Marvazi, Rāzi, Rumi and Kurd are the inhabitants of Marv, Ray, Rum (in Turkey) and Kurdistan, respectively.
مرد مرادی، نه همانا که مرد
مرگ چنان خواهی، نه کاریست خرد
جان گرامی به پدر باز داد
کالبد تیره به مادر سپرد
آن ملک با ملکی رفت باز
زندگی کلون شد که تو گویی: بمرد
کاه نبود او که به بادی پرید
آب نبود او که به سرما فسرد
شانه نبود او که به موهی شکست
دانه بود او که زمینش فسرد
گنج زرگی بود درین خاکدان
کو دو جهان را به جوی میشمرد
قابلل خاکی سوی خاکی فگند
جان و خرد سوی سماوات برد
جان دوم را که ندانند خلق
مصاف یاسی کرد و به جانان سپرد
صاف بد آمیخته با درد می
بر سر خم رفت و جدا شد زدرد
در سفر افتند به هم، ای عزیز
مروزی و رازی و رومی و کرد
خانه خود باز رود هر یکی
اطلس کي باشد همتای برد
خامش کن چون نقطه، ایرا ملك
نام تو از دفتر گفتن سترد
Shahid’s Caravan

Shahid’s caravan left before ours.\(^4\)
Believe me, ours will also leave.
Count the eyes, there is one pair less,
Measure the wisdom, thousands less.
Reap all that enriches your soul
Before death comes to bind your legs.
...........................
All you have struggled to find,
You must not lose easily.
Profit turns friend into stranger.
Pay him less to ward off that day.
...........................
No wolf is as fierce as a lion.
The sparrow’s cry does not reach the hawk.

---

\(^4\) This poem is an elegy for the poet Shahid Balkhi (d. 940), a friend and contemporary of Rudaki who also enjoyed the patronage of the Sāmānid Amir, Nasr ibn Ahmad.

\(^5\) The breaks indicate fragments missing from the poem.
کاروان شهید رفت از پیش
و آن ما رفته گیر و می‌اندیش
از شمار دو چشم یک تن کم
وز شمار خرد هزاران بیش
توشه‌های خوشش از و بربای
پیش کاپید مارک پای آگیش

آن چه با رنگ بافتیش و به ذل
تو به آسانی از گزارش می‌شین
خوشش بی‌گانه گردید از پی سود
خواهی آن روز مزرد کم‌تر دیش

گرگ را کی رسید صلابت شیر
پاز را کی رسید نهیب شخیش
Panegyric poems

*The mother of wine*

You must sacrifice the mother of wine,
Take away and imprison her child.
But you cannot take away her child
Before crushing her and taking her life.
It is not just to separate
A baby from its mother’s breast,
Before it has suckled for seven months,
From early spring until late fall.⁶
Then, in all fairness, it is just
To imprison the child, kill the mother.
Once securely locked away, the child
Roams, confused for seven days and nights.
When it realizes what has happened,
It will froth. It will moan from heartache,
Sink to the bottom with sadness,
Boil to the surface in sorrow.
To purify gold you must boil it
In fire, but it will not boil from sorrow.
A camel drunk with rage
Foams at the mouth, throws its rider.
The guard will wipe away the froth,
Remove the darkness, reveal its brilliance.
Finally, when it has stopped struggling,
The guard will secure the lid.

---

⁶ Ordibehesht and Ābān are the second and eighth months, respectively, of the Persian calendar.
مادر می‌رَا بکرد یا باید قربان
بِچَه او را گرفت و کرد به زندان
بِچَه او را از و گرفت ندادی
تاش نکویی نخست و زو نکشی جان
جز گَه نباشد دل دُور بکَردِن
بِچَه کوچک ز شیر مادر و پستان
تا نخورد شیر هفت مه به تمامی
از سر ازدهشت تا بن آبان
آنگه شاید ز روی دین و ره داد
بِچَه به زندان تنگ و مادر قربان
چون بسپاری به حبیس بچه او را
هفت شباروز خیره ماند و حیران
باز چو آید به هوش و حال ببیند
جوش بر آرد، بنالد از دل سوزان
گَه زبر زبر گردِد از غم و گَه بَاز
زبر زبر، هم چنان زانده جوشان
زر بر آش کجا بخواهی پالود
جوشَد، لیگن زِ غم نجوشَد چَندان
بِاز به کردار اشتری گه بود مست
کفک بر آرد ز خشن وراند سلطان
مرد حرس کفکه‌هاش پَلک بِگیرد
تا بشود تیر گیش و گردِد رخْشان
آخر کارام گیرد و نَخْد تیز
درش كن دَستوَر مرد نگهبان
When completely calmed and clear,
It becomes red like a ruby, like coral,
Red like a carnelian from Yemen,
Or a precious ring from Badakhshān.\(^7\)
If you smell it you would say it is a rose
Scented with ambergris, myrobalan and musk.
Inside the jar it will ferment
Until mid-April, early spring.\(^8\)
Remove the lid at midnight,
You will see a burning sun.
And when you see it in a glass, you will say
Moses, son of Amram, holds a gem in hand.
The miser becomes generous, the weak becomes brave.
After one sip, a rose garden will bloom on pale cheeks.
And he who drinks a cup with joy
Will feel no pain or sorrow.
Ten-year-old sorrow will be banished to Tanjeh.\(^9\)
New hope will arrive from Ommān and Ray.\(^10\)
With such wine, so well aged,
Its shirt worn threadbare for fifty years,
We will have a feast fit for kings,
Adorned with mallow, jasmine and roses.
Heaven spreads its grace in all directions,
Builds something no one can copy:

\(^7\) Badakhshān, currently in Afghanistan, was known for its rubies.
\(^8\) Nisān is the first month of the Syrian calendar, corresponding roughly to April.
\(^9\) Tanjeh, a port in current Morocco was considered at the time to be one of the farthest western inhabited places in the world.
\(^10\) Ray is a city near current Tehran. Ommān is in the south-eastern Arabian Peninsula.
چون بنشیند تمام و صافی گردد
گونه‌های قوت سرخ گیرد و مرجان
چند از او سرخ چون عقیق یمانی
چند از او لعل چون نگین بدخشان
ورش ببویی، گمان بری که گل گل سرخ
بوی دواء داد و مشک و عنبر با بان
هم به خم اندر همی گذاءزد چونین
تا به گه نوبهار و نیمه نیсан
انگه اگر نیم شب درش بگشاپی
چشمه خورشید را ببیني تابان
ور به بلور اندرون ببینی گویی
گهر سرخست به کف موسی عمران
زفت شود رادمرد و سست دلاور
گر پچش زوی و روی زرد گلستان
و آن که به شادی یکی قدح بخورد زوی
رنج نبیند ازان فراز و نه احزان
اگنده ده ساله را به طنجه رماند
شادی نو را زرى بیارد و عمان
بامی چونین که سالخوردته بود چند
جامه بکرده فراز پنجه خلفان
مجلس باید بساخته، ملکانه
از گل و از پایسئی و خیرى الوان
نعمت فردوس گستردیده زهر سو
ساخته کاری که کس نسازد چونان
Clothes of golden threads, newly-woven rugs,
Exotic flowers, and seats in plenty;
‘Isā’s harp, which makes the heart blush,
Madaknir’s lute, Chābak-e Jānān’s fife.¹¹
Seated in rows are the Amirs, Bal’ami,
The nobles, and respected elders.¹²
Up front, on his throne sits the king,
Lord of all kings, Amir of Khorāsān.
A thousand Turks stand ready to serve,
Each, a dazzling two-week moon.
Each wears a scented wreath,
Has cheeks of rosy wine, and hair in braids.
The cup bearer is fairer than the fair,
Child of a Turkish beauty and the Khāqān.¹³
The wine is happily passed around,
The king of the world is content, he laughs,
Taking wine from a dark-haired, angel-faced Turk,
With the body of a cypress, and hair in waves.
He raises a glass of wine,
Salutes the king of Sistān.
He drinks and cheers, as do his friends.
All are happy with wine in hand.
They drink to the health of Ahmad ibn Mohammad,
The greatest of free men, the pride of Iran,
The lord of fairness, the sun of his times
Through whom justice thrives and brightens the world.

¹¹ Apparently, ‘Isā, Madaknir and Chābak-e Jānān were court musicians. There is no mention of their names in any of the histories.

¹² It is unclear whether “Sāleḥ” is a name or is used as “righteous” or “noble.” Abolfazl Mohammed ibn Abdollāh Bal’ami (d. 937) was the vizier (minister) to the Sāmānid Amirs Ismail ibn Ahmad, Ahmad ibn Ismail and Nasr ibn Ahmad.

¹³ Khāqān is the Turkik title for “ruler” or “leader” (used by the Chinese and Mongols).
جامعه زرین و فرش‌های نو آبین
شهره ریاحین و تخت‌های فراوان
بربط عیسی و فرش‌های فوادی
چنگ مدل نیرو نای چابک جابان
یک صفح میران و بلعی بنسته
یک صفح حنی و پیر صالح دهقان
خسرو بر تخت پیشگاه نشسته
شاه ملک جهان، امیر خراسان
ترک هزاران به پای پیش صفح اندرا
هر یک چون ماه بر دو هفته در فشان
هر یک بر سر باسک مورد نهاده
روش می سرخ و زلف و جعدش ریحان
باده دهنده بچه بدخواه
بچه خاتون ترک و بچه خاقان
چونش بگردند نبیذ چند به شادی
شاه جهان شادمان و خرم و خندان
از کف ترکی سیاه چشم پریوی
قامت چون سرو و زلفکن جوگان
زان می خوشبوی ساغری بستناد
یاد کند رود شهیر سگستان
خود به خورد نوش و اولیاش همیدون
گوید هر یک چو می بگیرد شاوان
شادی بو جعفر احمد بن محمد
آن مه آزادگان و مفسیر ایران
آن ملک عدل و آقتاب زمانه
زنده بدو داد و روشنایی گیهان
There has been no man like him, and will never be
(If you don’t accuse me of boasting).
He is proof of God. He is God’s shadow.
“Submit to him,” says the Koran.
Man is made of earth, water, fire and wind.
This king is from the sun of the line of Sāsān.14
This dark land has found glory through him.
This wrecked world has become Eden through him.
If you have a way with words, speak of his grace.
If you write well, write only his praise.
If you are a philosopher and seek his path,
Then know his nature, learn his creed.
When it comes to wisdom, you will say
Before you stand the Greeks: Plato and Socrates.
If you profess to be a man of God,
Before you stand Shāf‘i, Abu Hanifeh and Sofyān.15
If he talks of science or philosophy,
Listen to the wisdom of Loqmān.16
A literate man gains knowledge and wisdom.
A wise man will gain manners and faith.
If you are looking for an angel,
Before you stands Rezvān, that is clear.17
Look closely at his soft, beautiful face,
You will see the proof of what I say.

14 Sāsān is the grandfather of Ardeshir Bābakān, founder of the Sāsānian dynasty in the third century.

15 Faqih is a religious authority who is versed in Islamic jurisprudence. Sharia is Islamic law. Mohammed ibn Idris, known as Imām Shāf‘i (767-820) was a theologian and a founder of the Shāf‘iyyah sect. Abu Hanifeh No‘mān ibn Sābet (696-767) was the founder of the Hanafi school of Islam. Sofyān ibn Sa‘īd Suri (713-778) was a theologian.

16 Loqmān is a man known for his wisdom and piety. His name appears several times in the Koran.

17 Rezvān is heaven’s door keeper.
انکه نبود از نزاد آدم چون او
نیز نباشد، اگر نگویی بهتان
حجت یکتا خدا و سایه اوى بست
طاعت او کرده واجب آیت فرقان
خلق ز خاک و ز آب و آتش و بادند
وین ملک از اقتاب گوهر ساسان
فرید و یافت ملک تیره و تاری
عدن بدو گشت تیر گیتی ویران
گر تو فصیحی همه مناقب او گوی
ور تو دیبری همه مداچ او خوان
ور تو حکیمی و راه حکمت جویی
سیرت او گیر و خواب مذهب او دان
آن که بدو بنگری به حکمت گویی
اینک سقراط و هم فلاطن یونان
ور تو فقیهی و سوی شرع گرایی
شافعی اینکت و بو حنیفه و سفیان
گر بگشايد زفان به علم و به حکمکت
گوش کن اینک به علم و حکمکت لفمان
مرد ادب را خرد فزايد و حکمکت
مرد خرد را ادب فزايد و ایمان
ور تو بخواهی فرشته ای که ببنی
اینک اوری است آشکارا، رضوان
خوب نگه کن بدان لطافت و آنروی
تا تو ببنی برين که گفتپم برهان
He is kind-hearted. He is real. He is noble and forgiving. If his words fall upon your ears, It will reverse the bad luck of Saturn. If you see him sitting on his throne, You will say Solomon has come to life. He rides like Sām, and while stars still shine, No horse shall see a rider like him. On the day of battle, of hate, of bravery, When you see him clad in helmet and armor, He will make an elephant seem small, Even one that is roaring and drunk. During battle, even Esfandiyār trembles and runs from his spear. At times of peace, his mountain of a body Is Mount Siyām; nobody sees him move. Facing his spear, even a dragon Melts like wax, as if facing fire. Even Mars if he comes to his battle, Will become a meal for his sword. Then again, when he takes the wine in hand, No spring cloud could rain like him. Spring clouds only shower dark rain, He rains parcels of silk and sacks of gold. He gives and gives, with both hands, Making the storm seem mundane. It is surely his grace That gives value to praise.

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18 Sām was the father of Zāl and the ancestor of Rostam, the mythical Persian hero. Sām is known for being an expert rider.
19 Esfandiyār is a mythical Persian hero.
20 Mount Siyām is in Transoxiana.
پاکی اخلاق او و پاک نزادی
با نیک و با مکارم احسان
ور سخن اور رسد به گوش تو یک راه
سعد شود مر ترا نحوه فیان
ورش به صدر اندرو نشسته بینه
جزم بگویی که زنده گشت سلیمان
سام سواری که تا سباره بتا
اسب نبیند چن سوار به میدان
پاز به روز نبرد و کین و حمیت
گریش بینی میان مغر و خفتان
خوار نمایدن زنده پیل بانگه
ورچه بود مست و نیز گشت و غران
ورش بیدی سفندیار گه رزم
پیش سنانش جهان دویدی و لرزان
گرچه به هنگام حلم کوه تن اوی
کوه سیام است که کس نبیند جنبان
دشمن ار ازدهست، پیش سنانش
گردد چو موم پیش آتش سوزان
ور به نبرد آید ستاره بهرام
توشه شمشیر او شود به گرگان
پاز بدان گه که می به دست بگیرد
ابر بهاری چن نبارد باران
ابر بهاری جز آب تبیره نبارد
او همه دیبا به تخت و زرر به انبان
با دو کف او، ز بس عطا که ببخشد
خوار نماید حديث و قصه توفران
لاجرم از جود او از سخاوت اوری است
نرخ گرفته مديح و صامتی ارزان
شاعر زی او رود فقیر و تهیدست
با زر بسیار بازگردید و حملان
The poet, poor and empty-handed,  
Goes to him and returns with much gold.  
He caresses the poet with praise.  
A learned man gets hired at court.  
As for fairness and justice,  
There is no one like him, so honest and fair.  
Both weak and strong get justice from him.  
He displays no tyranny or hatred.  
His grace is spread all over the world,  
From which no one is deprived.  
Those troubled by the world find comfort in him.  
The heart-broken find a remedy in him.  
The mercy of this glorious king,  
Like a rope, binds all deserts and fields.  
He accepts remorse, pardons sin,  
Will not anger, and strives to forgive.  
He is lord of Sistān, a victorious king.  
His is the tiger’s luck, his foe, a moaning deer.  
Amr Lays is reborn in him,  
With his entourage and times.\(^{21}\)  
The name of Rostam is grand, but  
Rostam, son of Dastān lives because of him.\(^{22}\)  
O Rudaki, put aside praise of all others.  
Praise him and receive prosperity’s seal.  
No matter how hard you try  
Or sharpen your wit on a file,  
You cannot write poems worthy of him. Go, bring  
What you have, however inadequate.

\(^{21}\) Amr Lays is the second Saffārid king (887-900).  
\(^{22}\) Rostam is perhaps the most famous mythical Persian hero.
مرد سخن را از محاورت و بر
مرد ادب را از وظیفه دیوان
باز به هنگام داد و عدل بر خلق
نیست به گیتی چنین نبیل و مسلمان
داد بیانید ضعیف همچون قوی زوی
دور نبینی به نزد او و به عدوان
نعمت او گسترده بر همه گیتی
آنچه کس از نعمت یکی عریان
بسته گیتی از بیابد راحت
خسته گیتی از بیابد درمان
با رسن عفو آن مبارك خسرو
حلقه تنشگست هر چه دشت و بیابان
پورش پذیرد و گناه ببخشد
خشم نرند، به عفو کوشد و غفران
آن ملک نمروز و خسرو پیروز
دولت او بوز و دشمن آهون نالان
عمرین الليث زندگی گشت بدو بغاز
با خشم خویش و آن زمانه ایشان
رستم را نام اگر چه سخت بزرگ است
زنده بدوی است نام رستم دستان
رود کیا برند مدح همه خلق
مدحت او گوی و مهر دولت بستان
ورچه بکوشی به جهد خویش بگوی
ورچه کنی تیزلهم خویش به سویده
گفت ندایی سزاش و کَیز و فراز آر
آنک باگفتی چنان که گفتند نتوان
Here is a eulogy, it’s the best I could do.
It has good words and is easily understood.
But I don’t know words that befit the Amir,
Although my poems rival Jarir’s, Tā’i’s and Hassān’s.23
Praise the Amir. May the whole world praise him.
Beauty, virtue and order spring from him.
I complain because my poems reveal my weakness
Although I have the gift like Sari and Sahbān.24
At this time, I present his eulogy,
I, who am expert at praising kings.
There is a limit to praising all men
But praising him has no limit, no end.
It is no surprise that at a time like this,
Rudaki becomes lifeless and confused.
Had Bu ‘Omar not given me the courage,
Had Minister Adnān not allowed me,25
How could I find the nerve to praise the Amir,
For whose sake God has created the world?
If I were not weak and helpless. If I
Didn’t have orders from the Amir of the East,
I myself would run like a page
To his presence, with the poem in my teeth.
This poem will apologize for me.
The word-wise Amir will realize:
Your servant’s excuse is frailty and old age.
That’s why yours truly has not come as your guest.

23 Jarir ibn ‘Attieh (d. 727), Abu Tammām Tā’i (d. 727), and Hassān ibn Sābet Ansāri (d. 670) were famous Arab poets.
24 Sari Alghavāni (d. 814) was an Arab poet. Sahbān Vā’el (d. 670) was an Arab orator.
25 Bu ‘Omar and Adnān were among the notables in the Sāmānid court, possibly nobles or ministers.
اینگ مدحی چنانکه طاقن من بود
لظ همه خوب و هم به معنی آسان
جز به سخاور میر گفت ندانم
ورچه جبریم به شعر و طالی و حسان
مدح امیری که محج زوست جهان را
زینت هم زرى و فر و نزهت و سامان
سخت شکوه که عجز من بناشد
ورچه سریع ابا فصاحت سحجان
برد چنین مدح و عرض میر کرد زمانی
ورچه بود چه مزیت شاهان
مدح همه خلق را کرائه پیداست
مدحت اور را کرائه نى و نه پایان
نبست شگفتی که رودکی به چنین جای
خیره شود بیروان و ماند حیران
ورنه مرا بو عمر دلاور کردى
وانک دستوری گزیده عنان
زهره کجا بودمی به مدرج امیری
کر په او آفرید گیتی یزدان
ورم ضعیفی و بی بیدم نبودی
وان گه نبود از امیر مشرق فرمان
خود بهوندی پسان پیک مرتب
خدمت او را گرفته چامه به دندان
مدح رسولست، عذر من یرساند
تا بشناد درست میر سخندان
عذر رهی خویش و ناتوانی و پیری
کر به تن خویش ازین نیامد مهمان
May the glory of my Amir always soar,
That of his enemies always fall.
May his head reach as high as the moon,
His enemies, buried under the fish.
May his face be more brilliant than the sun,
His grace more lasting than Mount Judy and Sahlān.  

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26 Judy is Mount Ararat in Turkey, where Noah’s Arc is supposed to have landed. Sahlān is a mountain in Arabia.
دولت میرم همیشه باد برافزون
دولت اعداى او همیشه به نقشان
سرش رسیده به ماه بر به بلندی
و اى معداى بزرر ماهى پنهان
طلعت تابندمر ز طلعت خورشید
نعمت پایندمر ز جودى و ثهلان
May the Amir live long

May he live long, our glorious lord.
May my precious life be added to his.
I always worry about his life, since
The mother of the free bears few like him.
Of all kings there has never been a youth like him,
Forgiving, literate, brave and wise.
Can anyone know how much he tries?
Can anyone know how generous he is?
With hand and tongue he spreads gold and pearls.
Not in vain, has his name spread through the world.
He planted the branch of kindness in our hearts.
It’s no joke that he has turned his back on wealth.
It’s a puzzle, describing his grace and will:
He is the Avestā in wisdom, the Zand in essence.\(^\text{27}\)
No matter how much the poets try,
They cannot praise him the way they should.
His essence is the seed, his grace is water.
The poet’s talent is his fertile ground.
His essence is the Vahi-nāmeh to Kasrā.\(^\text{28}\)
His ways have filled the Pand-nāmeh with guidance.\(^\text{29}\)
The essence of this king is the real Pand-nāmeh,
So that fortune itself can take counsel from him.
Whoever turns his back on the king’s advice
Sets the foot of happiness into sorrow’s trap.

\(^{27}\) The Avestā, written in Avestan (an ancient Eastern Iranian language) is the sacred writings of Zoroastrianism and the chief source for the teachings of Zoroaster. The Zand is the interpretation of the Avestā.

\(^{28}\) Vahi-nāmeh is a “Letter (book/document) of Revelation.” Kasrā is the title of Khosrow Anushirvān (531-579), the twenty-first Sāsānian king. The prophet Mohammad was born during his reign.

\(^{29}\) Pand-nāmeh is the “Letter of Guidance.” There is a Pand-nāmeh attributed to Anushirvān, a copy of which is in the British Museum.
دیر زیاد آن بزرگوار خداوند
جان گرامی به جانش اند یوند
دارم بر جان او بزرگ، زیراک
مادر آزادگان کم ارد فرزند
از ملکان کس چنوب نبود جوانی
راد و سخندان و شیرمرد و خردمند
کس نشستاد همی که کوشن و چون
خلق نداند همی که بخشش او چند
دست و زبان زر و در پراگند او را
نام به گیتی نه از گزاف پراگند
در دل ما شاخ مهربانی بنشاست
دل نه به بازی ز مهر خواسته برقند
همچه مماستو فخر و همت او شرح
همچه ابستانت فضل و سیرت اوزند
گر چه گوشند شاعران زمانه
مدح کسی را کسی نگوید مانند
سیرت او تخم کشت و نعمت او آب
خاطر مداه او زمين برومند
سیرت او بود و حي نامه به کسری
چون که به آبينش پندانمی بیاگند
سیرت آن شاه پندانم اصلی است
ز اندکه همی روزگار گیرد ازو پند
هر که سر از پند شهریار پیچید
پای طرب را به دام گرم درافگند
Who in this world is the raw dough of defeat?
Anyone who is not pleased at his prosperity.
To anyone who does not wish splendor for him,
Say: You just try to tie fortune’s hands.
Dear angels, be proud of the glory of his friends.
Dear heavens, laugh at the misery of his foes.
At the poem’s end, back to what I said at first:
May he live long, our glorious lord.
کیست به گیتنی خمیر مایه ادب
آن که به اقبال او نباشد خرسند
هر که نخواهد همی گشايش کارش
گو بشو و دست روزگار فروند
ای ملك، از حال دوستانش همی ناز
ای فلك، از حال دشمنانش همی خند
آخر شعر آن کنم که اول گفتم
دیر زیاد آن بزرفگوار خداوند
Generosity

You killed many, broke the enemy’s courage.
You gave so much, there isn’t one beggar left.
Many have lamb and sweets on their table,
Others, not enough bread to ease their hunger.
Take action. Don’t sit idle for too long,
Even though your sacks of gold reach the moon.
همی بکشتی تا در عدو نماند شجاع
همی بدادی تا در وی نماند فقیر
بسا کسا که بره است و فرخشه بر خوانش
بسا کسا که جویین نان همی نیاد سیر
میادرس کن و خامش مباش چندینا
اگر بذره رساند همی به بدر منیر
Juye-Muliyan scent drifts my way,  
As do memories of a kind friend.\(^{30}\)  
The Āmuy is hard to cross, but its stones  
Feel silken soft beneath our feet.\(^{31}\)  
Thrilled to see a friend, the Jayhun’s waves  
Leap halfway up our horses’ flanks.  
O Bukhārā, be happy, live long:  
The cheerful Amir is returning to you.  
The Amir is the moon, Bukhārā, the sky.  
The moon is returning to the sky.  
The Amir is a cypress, Bukhārā, the garden.  
The cypress is returning to the garden.

\(^{30}\) Juye-Muliyan was a very lovely estate on the outskirts of Bukhārā.  
\(^{31}\) Āmuy (Āmu Daryā) and Jayhun are the Persian and Arabic names, respectively, of the river Oxus in Central Asia. Traveling from Herāt to Bukhārā, one would have to cross the Oxus.
یاد پار مهربان آید همی
ریگ آمو و درشتی راه او
زیر پایم پرثنی آید همی
آب جیبون از نشاط روی دوست
خنگ ما را تا میان آید همی
ای بخارا شاد باش و دیر زی
میر زی تو شادمان آید همی
میر ما هست و بخارا آسمان
ماه سوی آسمان آید همی
میر سروست و بخارا بوستان
سرو سوی بوستان آید همی
بوی جوی مولیان آید همی
The Poetry of Rudaki

The pen and the harp

Life is a horse, you are the trainer, your choice to gallop.
Life is a ball, you are the mallet, your choice to play.
Although the harp player has delicate hands,
May they be sacrificed to the hand that holds the pen.
There is less oppression, less jealousy because of you.
There is more justice, more generosity because of you.
زمانه اسب و تو رایبض به رأی خویشت تاز
زمانه گوی و تو چوگان برای خویشت باز
اگرچه چنگ نوازان لطیف دست بوند
فدای دست قلم باد دست چنگ نوار
تویی که جور و بخیلی به تو گرفت نشیب
چنانکه داد و سخاوت به تو گرفت فراز
Your justice

There is no drunkenness but that of love.
Love is enough misery, even for you.
If thoughts of war run through your enemy’s heart,
Fear of your blade will cut him, limb from limb.
Your justice lets hawk and finch share the sky.
By your will night and day embrace.
From now on be happy, the winds of death
Will uproot the trees of malicious lives.
While a trace of this world still remains,
While the wheels of this grand universe turn,
Joy to your well-wishers, may they feast in bliss.
May those jealous of your glory moan from grief.
جز آن که مستی عشق‌ست هیچ مستی نیست
همین بلات بس است، ای به‌هر بیلا خرسند
خیال رزم تو گر در دل عدو گذرد
ز بیم تیغ تو بندش جدا شود از بند
ز عدل تست به هم باذ و صعوه را پراز
ز حکم تست شب و روز را به هم پیوند
به خوش‌دیل گذران بعد ازین، که پد اجل
درخت عمر بداندیش را را در کنگ
همیشه تا که بود از زمانه نام و نشان
مدم تا که بود گردش سه‌پر بلند
به بزم عش و طرب باد نیک خواه تو شاد
حسود جاه تو بادا ز غصه زار و نزند
May the world please our lord. May he live long.
May no accidents befall him.
May God make this proverb come true for him:
If one door is closed, a thousand will open.
The lord of the heavens has built the world like this;
Joyous one moment, grieving the next.

May God turn the evil eye away from your realm.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{32} The first half of the final couplet is missing.
جهان به کام خداوند باد و دیر زیاد
برو به هیچ حوادث زمانه دست مداد
درست و راست کناد این مثل خدا و را
اگر ببست یکی در هزار در بگشاد
خدای عرش جهان را چنین نهاد نهاد
که گاه مردم شادان و گه بود ناشاد

خدایی چشم بد از ملک تو بگردداناد
Your friendship

If I take your friendship with me to the grave,
Screaming your praise, I will still find virtues in you.
I don’t want the Amir’s legacy to remain.
I want the Amir himself to remain, as legacy.
He who has gone, you must consider him gone.
He who has died, you must consider him dead.
گر من این دوستی تو بیرم تا لب گور
بزنم نعره و لیکن ز تو بیانم هنر
اثر میر نخواهم که بمانند به جهان
میر خواهم که بمانند به جهان در اثر
هر کرا رفت همی باید رفته شمردی
هر کرا مرد همی باید مرده شمرا
What my soul was like

My teeth are all worn down and falling out.
They weren’t just teeth, they were as bright light,
Rows of white silver, coral and pearl,
Bright as raindrops or morning star against night.
They have all worn down, each in its turn.
Such bad luck! The bad luck known as Saturn’s.
Was it Saturn or the long years? I will
Tell you what: It was surely divine will.
The world’s like an eye, round and rolling,
Ruled by an axiom, the cycles revolving.
It’s the cure that alleviates our pain, or
The pain yet again supplanting the cure.
It makes old what was new, rejuvenates
What’s been worn down with the years and with age.
Many lush gardens are dry deserts now,
And lush gardens grow where desert once sprawled.
My dark-haired beauty, you can’t possibly know,
What shape I was in a long time ago!
You can stroke your lover with your curls,
But never saw him with curls of his own.
The days are past when his skin was silken-soft.
The days are past when his hair was raven-dark.
Beauty and charm were once his darling guests,
Guests who will not come back, nonetheless.
There were many beauties who bewildered all,
And their beauty always bewildered my eyes.
مرابیسَ و فرو ریخته هرچه دندان بود
نبود دندان لابل چراغ تابان بود
سپید سیم رده بود و مرجان بود
ستاره سحری بود و قطره باران بود
یکی نماند کنون زان همه، بسود و بريخت
چه نحس بود همانا که نحس کیوان بود
نه نحس کیوان بود و نه روزگار دراز
جو بود منت بگویم قضایی بیزان بود
جهان همیشه چو چنین گرد گردان است
همیشه تا بود آین گرد، گردان بود
همان که درمان باشد، به جای درد شود
و باز درد، همان کز نخست درمان بود
کهن کند به زمانی همان کجا نو بود
و نو کند به زمانی همان که خلقان بود
بسا شکسته بیابان که باع خرم بود
و باع خرم گشت آن کجا بیابان بود
همی چه دانی ای ماهروی مشکین موی
که حال بنده ازین پیش بره سامان بود
به زلف چوگان نازش همی کنی تو بدو
ندیدی آنگه او را که زلف چوگان بود
شد آن زمانه که رویش بسان دیبا بود
شد آن زمانه که مویش بسان قطران بود
چنان که خویی، مهمان و دورست بود عزیز
بشک که پازنیامد، عزیز مهمان بود
بسا نگار که حیران بدلی بدو درچشم
به روى او درچشم همیشه حیران بود
Gone are the days when he was happy,
When joy was plentiful and sorrow was slight.
When he found Turks with pomegranate breasts,
He appraised and counted out the dirhems.
Many a lovely slave girl sought him out
And came to him by night, hidden from all,
Who dared not come to him by light of day,
For fear of their masters and fear of jail.
Costly was the wine and each lovely face,
But they were always inexpensive for me,
For my heart was a treasury of riches,
Of words we call Love and Poetry.
I was happy, my soul was a meadow
Filled with joy, never having known sorrow.
My songs served to soften many a soul
That before was hard and heavy as stone.
My eyes watched for sweet, delicate curls,
My ears listened to the words of the wise.
No wife, no child, and no expenses,
I was weighed down by none of these burdens.
I, sweet, you’ve seen only Rudaki of late,
You never saw him in his greater state,
Never saw him when he used to tell tales
And sang songs that rivaled the nightingales’.
He’s no longer the friend of nobles. The days
Are past when he was favored by princes.
At the king’s court, his volumes of verse
Were held in high esteem, when he held sway.
Gone are the days when everyone knew his lines
And he was the poet of Khorāsān.
شدنزمانهکواشادبودوخرم بود
نشاطأوهفرونبودوپیمنقصانبود
همیخریدوهمیسختبیشماردرم
بهشهرهرکهیکیترکنارپستانبود
بساکتیزکنیکهمیلداشتبدو
بهشبدوزیاری اوزنجدجملهپنهانبود
بهروزچونکنیارستشدبیدن او
نهیبخواجاءبودوبیمزندانبود
نبیزروشنویدیارخوبورویلفیف
اگرگرانبد؛زیمنهمیشهارزانبود
دلمخزانهبرگنجبودوگنجسخن
نشاننامهمامهروشعرعنوانبود
همیشهشادوندانستیکهغمچبود
دلننشاتوطربرافرامیدانبود
بسادلا،کبهسأنحرکردهبهشعر
ازآنپسکهبهکردارسنگوسندانبود
همیشچشمزمیزلفکنچلابکبود
همیشگومشزیمردنفسندانبود
عیالنه،زنوفرزندنه،معونتنه
ازینهمهتنمآسودهبودوأسانبود
نورودکیرا،ایماهرو،کتونبینی
بدانزمانهندیدیکهاینچنینبود
بدانزمانهندیدیکهدرجهانرفتی
سرودگویان،گوییهزارستانبود
شذآنزمانکهباواسنرادمتردانبود
شذآنزمانهکوهاپیشکارمیرانبود
همیششوشرورازیملوکدیواناست
همیششوشرورازیملوکدیوانبود
شذآنزمانهکهشکرشمههجهانبنوشت
شذآنزمانهکاوشاعرخراسانبود
When the noble dehqan\textsuperscript{33} was still of this world,
I received much gifts and silver at his house.
However came honor and riches for some,
For him they came from the house of Sāmān:\textsuperscript{34}
Forty thousand from the Amir of Khorāsān,
Another five from the Amir of Mākān.\textsuperscript{35}
And from his retinue eight thousand for me.
Life was good then. Those were the days.
When my words fell on the Amir’s ears,
He gave generously, as did the others.
But times have changed, so have I. Bring me my staff.
It’s time for the cane and the beggar’s purse.

\textsuperscript{33} A prominent landowner.
\textsuperscript{34} The house of Sāmān refers to the Sāmānids who ruled Khorāsān in the 10th century.
\textsuperscript{35} Amir of Mākān refers to Mākān-e Kāki (d. 945) who ruled part of Tabarestān.
کجا به گیتی بودست نامور دهقان
مرا به خانه او سیم بود و حملان بود
کرا بزرگی و نعمت زاین و آن بودی
ورا بزرگی و نعمت ز آل سامان بود
باد میر خراسانش چل هزار درم
درو فروتی، یک پنج میر ماکان بود
زا اولیاش پراگنه نیز هشت هزار
به من رسد، بدان وقت، حال خوب آن بود
چه میر دید سخن، داد داد مردی خویش
زا اولیاش چنان که امیر فرمان بود
کنون زمانه دگر گشت و من دگر گشت
عسلا بیار، که وقت عسیا و انبان بود
The poet’s change of fortune

I was always intoxicated in this house.
Like the Amir and nobles, my place was secure.
Now, I am the same, the house and town are the same.
Then tell me, how has happiness turned to sorrow?

The poet in old age

The black mountain is now covered with snow.
The cypress in the garden is bent like a bow.
What used to taste good no longer does.
What used to be harmless now quickly harms.
بسا که مست دریب‌های خانه به‌دم و شادان
چنینکجاه من افزون بد از امیر و ملوك
کنون همان و خانه همان و شهر همان
مرا نگوینی کر چه شده است شادی سوک

سپید برف برآمد به کوه‌های سیاه
و چون درون شد آن سرو بوستان آرا
و آن کجا بگوارید ناگوار شدست
وان کجا نگرایست گشت زود گزای
Meditations on life, death and destiny

_Destiny’s door_

All is as it is supposed to be:
There is happiness now, be happy.
Why are you sad? Why do you worry?
Destiny does what it must for you.
The viziers’ ways won’t work for you,
Fate will decide what is best for you.
Life’s wheel won’t create another like you.
Your mother won’t bear another like you.
God will never close a door on you,
Before opening a hundred better doors.
کار همه راست، آن چنان که باید
حال شادی است، شاد باشی، شاید
اندله و اندیشه را دراز چه داری
دولت خود همان گونه که باید
رای وزیران ترا به کار نیابد
هر چه صواب است بخت خود فرماید
جرخ نیازید بدل تو ز خلایق
و آنکه ترا زاد نیز چون تو نزاید
ایزد هرگز دری نبندید بر تو
تا صد دیگر به بهتری نگشاید
It is useful to repent

Dear friend, when will you stop saying “where is happiness?”
No one will deprive himself of warm halva.\textsuperscript{36}
Today, it is useful for me to repent,
Just as it is useful for a sick man to sneeze.\textsuperscript{37}

The way of the world

O world, this is how you treat your children:
At times like a mother, at times a stepmother.
You don’t need wall braces or columns.
You don’t need brick walls or iron doors.

This world is like a dream

This world acts completely like a dream,
He whose heart is open will realize it.
Its kindness replaces cruelty.
Its happiness replaces sorrow.
Why are you so content with this world,
When everything is not in order?
It has a nice face but has bad habits.
It has charm but has bad manners.

\textsuperscript{36} Halva is a traditional Middle Eastern dessert.
\textsuperscript{37} It was believed that sneezing helped in the recovery of a sick person.
رفيقا، چند گویی کو نشاطت
بنگزید کس از گرم آفروشته
مرا امروز توه سود دارد
چنان چون دردمدان را شنوشه

جهان‌های چنین تو با بچگان
که گه مادری و گه مادندرا
نه پذیر باید ترا نه ستون
نه دیوار خشت و نه زاهن درا

این جهان پاک خواب کرداراست
آن شناد که دلش بیداراست
نیکی و به جایگاه بدایست
شادی و به جای تیماراست
چه تشنجی بدين جهان هموار
كه همه کار اونه هموار است
کشن اونه خوب و جهش خوب
زشت کردار و خوب دیدار است
Prey for this world

Dear boy, we are nothing but prey for this world.  
We are mere finches; death is a hunting bird.  
Sooner or later, every rose will die.  
Death will crush us under a grinding stone.

Life, short or long

Life, be it short or long,  
Does is not end in death?  
This cord must pass through  
The ring despite its length.  
You can choose labor and hardship.  
You can choose comfort and safety.  
You can take little from this world  
Or take all from Tarāz to Ray.  
Your whole being is a dream,  
But dreams are not real.  
When death comes, everyone’s the same,  
You can’t tell one from the other.  
If only beauties can be coquettish,  
Then no one can be coquettish but you.
جمله صید این جهانیم، ای بسر
ما چو صعوه، مره ی سران زغن
هر گلی پُرمرده گردد زونه دیر
مره بفسارد همه در زیر گن

زندگانی چه کوته و چه دراز
نه به آخر بمرد باید بز
هم به چنبر گذار خواهد بود
ابن رسن را، اگر چه هست دراز
خواهی اندرعنا و شدت زی
خواهی اندر آماده نعمت و ناز
خواهی اندکتر از جهان پذیر
خواهی از ری بگیر تا به طراز
ابن همه باد و بود تو خواب است
خواب را حکم نی، مگر به مجاز
ابن همه روز مره ی پكسانند
نشناسی ز یکگرگشان باز
ناز، اگر خوب را سزاست به شرط
نسرد جز ترا کرشه و ناز
This transient life

The great men of this world have all died.
They have all bowed their heads to death.
Even those who built palaces
Now lie covered with earth.
From the thousands and thousands of comforts
Were they left with anything but a shroud?
From their blessings they enjoyed what they wore,
What they ate and what they gave away.

The world is a deceiving game

Don’t be fond of this transient life,
This world is a deceiving game.
Think of its kindness as fiction.
Tighten your belt at its hardships.
مهران جهان همه مردن
مگر را سر همه فرو کردن
زیر خاک اندرون شدند آنان
که همه کوششها براورند
از هزاران هزار نعمت و ناز
نه به آخر به جز کفن برندن
بود از نعمت آنچه پوشیدند
و آنچه دادند و آنچه را خوردند

مهر مفگن برین سرای سپنج
کین جهان پاک بازبی نیرنج
نیک او را فسانه واری شو
بد او را کمرت سخت بتنج
There was much to be sorry for

I didn’t have the chance to apologize
For it all, but he pardoned me anyway.
I worship God. He is my creator.
My tongue did not rest from praising his servants.
Life’s wheel is all trickery and bondage:
Poison mixed with nectar, gold-plated zinc.
Many, many new violets have blossomed,
Like a flame, bruised, when it touches sulfur.
Bring out the sun, pour it, drink from it.
It passes the lips and shines through the cheeks.

Thirteen-year-old bride

At times lightning laughs, at times thunder moans
Like a mother who mourns a thirteen-year-old bride.
Leaves on the old willow have turned to green silk.
Dew sits on the tulip, like tears shed by parted lovers.
اگر چه عذر بسی بود روزگار نبود
چنان که بود به ناچار خویشت‌تین بخشود
خدای را استودم، که کرده‌گار من است
زبانم از غزل و مدح بندگانش نسود
همه به تنبل و بند است بازگشت‌ن او
شیرنگ نوش آمیز است و روی زراندود
بنفش‌های طری خیل خیل بر سرکرد
چو اتشی که به گوگرد بردوید کبود
بیاروهان بده آن اقتباس کش بخوری
ز لب فروشود و از رخان براید زود

زماتی برق پر خنده، زمانی رد برناله
چنان چون مادر از سوک عروس سیزده ساله
و گشته زین پرند سیز شاخ بید بنساله
چنان چون اشک مهجوران نشسته زاله برلاله
The Poetry of Rudaki

The song of the zir

At dawn, the song of a moaning zir
Soothes my ears more than prayer.38
No wonder, the wail of the zir
Lures the prey out of the field.
It always pierces the heart
Although it has no arrows.
At times it weeps, at times it wails,
From morning till night, and again till dawn.
It speaks but it has no tongue.
It recites the story of lovers.
At times, it can sober up a mad man.
At times, it can put a sober man in chains.

The pen

It’s a cripple who walks, has no ears but talks.
It’s an eloquent mute, sees the world without eyes.
It is sharp as a sword. It moves like a snake.
It has a lover’s body and a darkened face.

38 Zir is a high-pitched note. It is also the name of an ancient musical instrument. Takbir, part of the Muslim “call to prayer,” is the proclamation of faith: Allah-o-Akbar (“God is great”).
وقت شب‌گیر بانگ ناله زیر
خوش‌تر آید به گوشم از تک‌بیر
زاری زیر و این مدار شگفت
گر ز دشت اندر آورد نخجیر
تن او تیر نه، زمان به زمان
به دل اندر همی گزارد تیر
گاه گریان و گه یتالد زار
بامدادان و روز تا شب‌گیر
آن زبان‌آور و زبانش نه
خبر عاشقان کند تفسیر
گاه دیوان‌هه را کند هشیار
گه به هشیار برنهد زنجیر

لنگ رونده است، گوش نی و سخن یاب
گنگ فصیحست، پچشن نی و جهان بین
تیزی شمشیر دارد و روش مار
کالبد عاشقان و گونه غم‌گین
Love and its afflictions

This breeze from Bukhārā

This wind that blows my way from Bukhārā
Smells of roses and musk, a jasmine breeze.
Any man or woman caressed by this wind
Says: maybe this wind blows from Khotan.\(^{39}\)
No, no. Such luscious wind could not blow from Khotan.
This wind blows from the bosom of my love.
Each night I look to Yemen until you appear
Because you are Canopus rising from Yemen.\(^{40}\)
My dear, I try to hide your name from people,
Keep it from falling in the public mouth.
Want to or not, with whomever I speak,
When I speak, it’s your name that comes to mouth.

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\(^{39}\) Khotan, a city in Central Asia (currently in Chinese Turkistan) was famous for its musk.

\(^{40}\) Canopus, a star in the constellation Carina, is brightest when it appears from the direction of Yemen, which is south-west in the Bukhārān sky.
هر باد که از سوی بخارا به من آید
با بی و گل و مشک و نسیم سمن آید
بر هر زن و هر مرد، کجا بروزد آن باد
گویی مگر آن باد همی از ختن آید
نی نی، ز ختن باد چند خوش نوزد هیچ
کان باد همی از بر معشوق من آید
هر شب نگرانم به یمن تا تو برآی
زيرا که سهیل و سهیل از یمن آید
کوشم که بیوشم صننا نام تو از خلق
تا نام تو کم در دهن انجمان آید
با هر که سخن گویم، اگر خواهم وگر نی
اول سخنم نام تو اندر دهن آید
Devotion to love

What use is facing the house of God, when the heart
Faces Bukhārā and the beauties of Tarāz?
God will accept your devotion to love,
But he will not accept your prayers.

My heart is a grain

Dear heart, why are you so selfish?
Why do you love the enemy in vain?
Why do you seek faith from the unfaithful?
Why do you strike iron that is cold?
And you, whose cheeks are like the lily,
The lily is jealous of your beauty.
Go down this dead-end street just once,
You’ll light a fire under its residents.
My heart is a grain, your love, a mountain.
Why crush the grain under the mountain?
Forgive me dear boy, forgive me.
Don’t needlessly kill a lover like me.
Come now, take a look at Rudaki,
If you want to see a lifeless body walk.
روی به محراب نهادن چه سود
دل به بخارا و بتان تراز
ایزد ما وسوسه عاشقی
از تو پذیرد، پذیرد نماز

دلا تا کی همی جویی منی را
چه داری دوست هرزه دشمنی را
چرا جویی وفا از بی وفایی
چه کوبی بی‌هده سرد آهینی را
ایا سوسن بناگوشی که داری
بر شک خویشت هر سوسنی را
یکی زیب برزن نا راه برشو
که بر اتش نشانی برزنی را
دل می ارزنی عشق تو کوهي
چه سایی زیر کوهی ارزنی را
بخشا، ای پسر بر من ببخشا
مکش در عشق خیره چون مینی را
بیا اینگ گنه کن رودکی را
اگر بی جان روان خواهی تنی را
In praise of the beloved

A hundred-petaled rose, musk, ambergris,
Apples, white jasmine and fragrant leaves,
It contains all of these, your beauty,
O Beauty, who captivate kings.
Your lover’s night is the Divine Night,\(^{41}\)
When the veil is removed from your face.
The sun hides its face behind a veil
When the veil reveals your two tulips.
And your chin is just like an apple,
An apple with a mole made of musk.

\(^{41}\) *Lailat al-qadar*, which I have translated as “The Divine Night,” is the night when the prophet Mohammad received the first revelation of the Koran.
گل صدبرگ و مشک و عنبر و سیب
یاسمین سپید و مورد بزیب
این همه یکسره تمام شده است
نزن توا بیت ملود فریب
شب عاشقت لیلة القدرست
چون تو بیرون کنی رخ از جلیب
به حجاب اندرون شود خورشید
گر تو برداری از دو لاله حجاب
آن زنخدان بسب ماند راست
اگر از مشک خال دارد سیب
Crying for the beloved

I have the right to moan for my love’s absence,
As the nightingale moans for the red rose, at dawn.
If fate does not deliver you to me,
I will burn fate with the flames in my heart.
When you brighten your face, a thousand
Butterflies will burn around you, as I do.
I will not fit under the tombstone, if
For one moment you sit grieving by my grave.
The world is as it has always been,
And will be the same for ever, my dear.
With one turn it will make a king,
With a throne, a crown and earrings.
O world, you make them rot under ground,
And the ground piles more torment on them.
Now, bring some of that life-giving wine,
And crush the past under a grinding stone.
به حق نالم ز هجر دوست زارا
سحر گاهان چو بر گلبین هزارا
قضا، گر داد من نستاند از تو
ز سوز دل بسوزانم قضا را
چو عارض برفروردی می‌پسند
چو من پراوانه بر گردت هزارا
نگنجم در لحد، گر زانکه لختی
نشینی بر مزارم سوكوارا

جهان این است وچونین است تا بود
و همجونین بود اینند، پارا
به یک گردهش به شاهنشاهی آرد
دهد دیهیم و تاج وگوشوارا
توشان زیر زمین فرسوده کردی
زمین داده برشان بر زگارا
از آن جان تو لختی خون فسرده
سرده زیر پای اندر سپارا
Tortured by the beloved

If I’m not unlucky, how did I get involved
With this quick-to-anger woman of easy virtue?
She likes it if I’m thrown to the lions.
I can’t stand it if a fly sits on her.
She tortures me. But my love for her
And loyalty to her never leave my heart.

The cruel beloved

My eyes are a sea. The fire in my heart roars.
How can the pupil survive between sea and fire?
She has a crocodile’s bite. She tears at the heart.
She is cruel. I will suffer if I give my heart.

Ayyār’s message

Ayyār sent a secret message to me:42
“Don’t mention me in your poems so much.
This old man abuses me because of you.
I wish God would save me from his tyranny.”

---

42 Ayyār means shrewd or sneaky. Nafisi claims that Ayyār is the name of one of Rudaki’s favorite concubines.
گر نه بذختمی، مراکه فگند
به یکی جاف زود غرس
او مرا پیش شیر بپسنند
من نتاوم برو یکه مگس
گرچه نامردم است، مهر و وفاش
نشود هیچ ازین دلم یرگس

دریا دو چشم و آتش بر دل همی فزاپد
مردم میان دریا و آتش چگونه پاید
نیش نهنگ دارد، دل را همی خساید
ندهم، که نگوارد، گایدون نه خرخداید

کس فرستاد به سر اندر عیار مرا
که، مکن یاد به شعر اندر بسیار مرا
وین فؤه پر ز بهر تو مرا خوار گرفت
برهاناد از و ایزد جبار مرا
When the beloved drinks wine

Flowers bloom on her cheeks, it’s no wonder:
Flowers always bloom when she drinks wine.
Her hair falls in curls but she stands up straight.
She has a healthy body but feverish eyes.\(^{43}\)

Submission to the beloved

I want to stroke your amber-scented hair,
Paint with kisses the jasmine petals of your face.
If only you’d place one foot upon this ground,
I’d make a thousand prostrations to its dust.
I’ll kiss the seal on your letter a thousand times
If I see the mark of your signet ring upon it.
Tell them to cut off my hand with an Indian blade,
If one day I try to raise a hand to you.
I was silent when I should have recited poems.
But my tongue now turns with compliments for you.

\(^{43}\) “Feverish eyes” imply sleepy, half-closed eyes, which are a sign of the beloved’s beauty.
اگر گل آرد بار آن رخان او، نه شگفت
هر آینه چو همه میخورد گل آرد بار
به زلف که ویکن به قد و قامت راست
به تن درست ویکن به چشمکان بیمار

گرفت خواهم زلفین عنبرین تورا
به بوسه نقش کند برگ یاسمین تورا
هر آن زمین که تو یک ره برو قدم بنهی
هزار سجده برم خالق آن زمین تورا
هزار بوسه دهم بر سخای نامه تو
اگر بیشتر مهر اور نگین تورا
به تیغ هندو گودست من جدا بکنند
اگر بكیر روزی من آستین تورا
اگر چه خامش مردم که شعر باید گفت
زبان من به روان گردد آفرين تورا
The beloved’s beauty

Song, rose-colored wine, and beauties like the moon,
Would make an angel fall in the well.\footnote{In this line, Rudaki is making reference to the story of Hārūt and Mārūt, which has pre-Islamic roots (“Ho’avrutāt” and “Amrotāt” in Avestan literature) and is retold in the Koran. As the story goes, the angels Hārūt and Mārūt were sent to earth to guide mankind. They were seduced by the beautiful Nāhid (“Zohreh” in Arabic) and engaged in singing, drinking wine and merry-making. As punishment, God threw them into the well of Babylon.}
How can I sew my gaze shut? To see my love
Only narcissi grow on my grave, not weeds.\footnote{Narcissi represent eyes. Narcissi growing on the grave implies that the poet will see his beloved even after his death.}
For the man who knows love’s drunkenness,
It’s a shame to be sober for a moment.
Your eyes can’t make out the ceiling beams by day.
But you spot a straw in someone else’s eye at night.\footnote{The last couplet seems disjointed from the rest of the poem.}

The beloved’s curls

Who curled your hair into a “j”?\footnote{I have translated the Persian letter \[جر] “jim” as a “j”. \[ج] is similar to a “j” in English has a dot. The dot in the [ج], however, is on the inside of the body of the letter, unlike the dot on top of the “j”. The physical description of the dot being the mole surrounded by a curl of the beloved’s hair makes more sense in Persian since the dot is surrounded by the body of the letter. The dot on the “j” as the mole, and the body of the letter as a curl of hair, demands a bit of a stretch in the imagination of the English reader. Nevertheless, it’s an interesting coincidence that the [ج] and the “j” are similar sounding letters with similar physical shapes. Both are dotted letters with a curved body.}
He who made your mole the dot of that “j”.
And your mouth is so small, as if someone
Has split a pomegranate seedlet in half.\footnote{A small mouth is a sign of feminine beauty.}
سماع و باده گلگون و لعبان چوماه

اگر فرشته بیند در افس طاریه
نظر چگونه بدورم که بهر دیس دوست
ز خاک من همه نرگس دمده به جای گیاه
کسی که آگهی از ذوق عشق جانان یافته
ز خویش حیف بود، گر دمی بود آگاه
به چشمه اندر بالار ننگری توه به روز
به شب به چشمش کسان اندران ببینی کامل

زلف ترا چیمی که کرد آن که او
خال ترا نقطه آن چیمی کرد
و آن دهن تنگ تو گویی کسی
دانگکی نار به دو نیم کرد
Spring

A lush spring has arrived, colorful and effervescent,
With thousands of delights and decorations.
It is fair that the old man becomes young,
In a world that supplants old age with youth.
The mighty heavens have fielded an army:
An army of dark clouds led by the zephyr,
Lightning its artillery, thunder its drummer.
I have seen a thousand armies, never so fierce.
Look at that cloud, how it cries like a grieving man,
Thunder moans like a lover with a broken heart.
Now and then the sun peeks from behind the clouds
Like a prisoner hiding from the guard.
The world, which had been in pain for some time,
Has found a cure in this jasmine-scented wind.
A shower of musk streams down in waves,
On leaves, a cover of shiny new silk.
Snow covered crevices now bear roses.
Streams that had been dry now swell with water.
Upon the field, thunder howls like the wind.
Lightning cracks its whip from among the clouds.
On the meadow, a distant tulip smiles
Like the henna-painted nails of a bride.
The nightingale sings from the willow;
The starling answers from the cypress tree;
The ringdove’s old song echoes from the cypress;
The nightingale serenades the red rose.
Now, drink wine. Now, be happy.
Now is the time for lovers.
آمد بهار خرم با زنگ و بوى طيب
با صد هزار نزهت و آرايش عجیب
شاد که مرد پير بدين گه شود جوان
گيتى بدل یافت شباب از پس مخیب
چرخ بزرگوار یکي لشکري بكرد
لشکرش ابر تيرو و باد صبا نقيب

نفاق برق روشن و تندرش طبل زن
ديدم هزار خيل و نديند چنين مهيب
آن ابر بین كه گريد چون مرد سوکوار
و آن رعد بین كه نالد چون عاشق كنیب
خورشيد را ز ابر دماد روی گاهگاه
چون حصاربي كه گذر دارد از رقيب
یک چند روزگار، جهان دردمند بود
به شد كه يافت بوى سمن باد را طبيب

پايان مشکبوي بياريد نو به نو
وز برگ بر كشيدي یکي حله قصيب
کنچي كه برف پيش همی داشت گل گرفت
هر جو يكي كه خشك همی بود شد رطبيب
تندير ميان دشت همی باد بردمد
برق از ميان ابر همی بركند قضيب
لالة ميان كشت بخندب همی ز دور
چون پنجه عروس به هنا شده خضيب
بليل همی بخواند در شاخسار بيد

سار از درخت سرو مراو را شده مجيب
صلصل به سرو بن بر، با نغمه كهن
بليل به شاخ گل بر، با لحنگ غريب
اکتون خوريد باده و اکتون زبيد شاد
کانون برادر نصيب حبيب از بر حبيب
Choose the cup bearer and the wine. Drink. Sing
Like the starling or the nightingale.
Even though this young spring is a sight to see,
It pales before the pleasure of seeing my lord.
In your old age, as throughout your youth,
Everyone has always marveled at you.
You have had many dreams, and fulfilled them all.
You are the source of majesty, splendor and joy.
ساقی گردن و باده و می خور به بانگ زیر
کز کشت، سار نالد و از باغ، عندلیب
هر چند نوبهار جهان است به چشم خوب
دیدار خواجه خوب تر، آن مهتر حسیب
شیب تو با فراز و فراز تو با نشیب
فرزند ادمی به تو اندر به شیب و تیب
دیدی تو ریز و کام بد اندرون بسی
بارید کان مطرب بودی به فرّ و زیب
Mehregān

Dear lord, the feast of Mehregān has come.\(^{49}\)
The feast of kings and nobles has come.
It’s time for fur instead of silk, a tent
Instead of the garden and the meadow.
The myrtle has replaced the lily,
Wine has replaced the Judas-tree.
You are generous and your reign is young.
Such luck: the wine has ripened in your youth.

\[ \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \]
The flower has returned to the garden.
It’s time for the garden and the meadow.
The flames of Āzar have died down.\(^{50}\)
The flames rise up now in the tulip.\(^{51}\)

---

\(^{49}\) *Mehregān* is a Zoroastrian celebration of autumn, in the month of *Mehr*, the first month of autumn according to the Persian calendar.

\(^{50}\) *Āzar*, which means fire, is also the last month of autumn in the Persian calendar.

\(^{51}\) The last two couplets are not separated from the rest of the poem in the Nafisi manuscript. Here, I have chosen the Sho’ar and Anvary version, which has presented the second fragment separately. There is no thematic transition between the two fragments and the *radif* in the opening couplet of the second fragment indicates that it could be the opening couplet of a separate poem.
ملکا، جشن مهرگان آمد
جشن شاهان و خسروان آمد
خزبه جای ملحم و خرگاه
بدل باغ و بوستان آمد
مورده به جای سوسن آمد باز
می به جای ارغوان آمد
تو جوانمرد و دولت تو جوان
می به بخت تو نوجوان آمد

.................................
گل دگر ره به گلستان آمد
واره باغ و بوستان آمد
وار آذر گرشت و شعله او
شعله لاله را زمان آمد
Hoopoe

I saw a hoopoe near Sarakhs
Whose little song reached the clouds.
She was wearing a little cloak
Of many different colors.
O ugly and inverted world,
I stand before you in awe.

Winter’s breath

This grass field, tinged by winter’s breath\(^{52}\)
Like the tails of tigers and wolves,
Is now dyed and designed like the *Arzhang*,
In a spring that bears Mani’s mark.\(^{53}\)
Don’t feel too safe on the ship of life,
The Nile is full of crocodiles.

\(^{52}\) According to the Persian calendar, *Day* is the first month of winter.
\(^{53}\) Māni or Manes (c. 216-276) was the Persian founder of Manichaeism. Māni was also a painter and his scripture, the *Arzhang*, is illustrated with colorful paintings.
پویک دیدم به حوالی سرخس
بانگک بر برده به ابر اندرا
چادرکی دیدم رنگین برو
رنگ بسی گونه بر آن چادرا
ای برگونه و پازگونه جهان
مانده من از تو به شکفت اندرا

آن صحن چمن که از دم دری
کفتنی دم گرگ یا پلنگ است
اکنون ز بهار مانوی طبع
پرنقش و نگار همچو رنگ است
بر کشتی عمر تکیه کم کن
کین نیل نشیمن نهنگ است
Wine poems

On drunkenness

Now we are drunk, so let’s drink wine.
Let’s drink from the hands of beauties.
They call us crazy and senseless.
We are not crazy. We are drunk.

The virtues of wine

Wine brings out the dignity in man,
Separates the free from the man bought with coins.
Wine distinguishes the noble from the base:
Many talents are bottled in this wine.
It’s joyous, when you are drinking wine,
Especially when the jasmine is in bloom.
Wine has scaled many fortress walls,
Broken many newly-saddled colts.
Many a mean miser, having drunk wine,
Has spread generosity throughout the world.
بد تأخیریم باده که مستانیم
وز دست نیکون می بستانیم
دیوانگان بیهش مان خوانند
دیوانگان نهایم که مستانیم

می ارد شرف مردی پدید
آزاده نزدیک از درم خرد
می آزاده پدید ارد از بداصل
فروان هنرستان اندرين نبید
هرانگه که خوری می خوش آنگه است
خاصه چگل و باشم دمید
بسا حصن بلندا که می گشاد
بسا کره نوزین که بشکنید
بسا دون بخیالا که می بخورد
کرمی به جهان در پراگند
Rubā‘iyāt

I
Her hair, down, is a long dark night;
Parted: a pair of open claws.
Disentangled braids, through each twist and turn
Cast wave upon wave of Tarāzian musk.

II
Day raises its banner in your name.
The crescent moon is like your cup.
Destiny imitates your strong will.
Your charity is daily bread for all.

III
No one seeks me out but misfortune.
Only my fever asks about my health.
If I’m on the brink of death, no one spares
A drop of water, except my eyes.

IV
She came to me. Who? The beloved. When? At dawn.
Afraid of whom? The guardian. Who is that? Her father.
I gave her two kisses. Where? On her moist lips.
Lips? No. What, then? Carnelian. How was it? Like sugar.
زلفش بکشی شب دراز اندارد
ور بگشایی چنگل باز اندارد
ور پیچ و خمش ز یک دگر بگشايند
دامن دامن مشک طراز اندارد

جوان روز علم زند به نامت ماند
جوان یک شبه شد ماه به جامت ماند
تقدیر به عزم تیز گامت ماند
روزی به عطا دادن عامت ماند

جز حادثه هرگز طلبم کس نکنند
یک پرسش گرم جز تیم کس نکنند
ورجان به لب آیدم، به جز مردم چشم
یک قطره آب بر لبم کس نکنند

آمد برم، که؟ یار، کی؟ وقت سحر
ترسندز که؟ ز خصم، خصمش که؟ پدر
دادمش دو بوسه، بر کجا؟ بر لب تر
لب بده؟ نه، چه بده؟ عقیق، چون بده؟ چو شکر
V
Greedy one, don’t seek fruit in this orchard,
This two-door garden is full of willows.\textsuperscript{54}
Don’t rest idle, the Gardener is behind you.\textsuperscript{55}
Be still like the dirt, and pass like the wind.

VI
When you find me dead, my lips apart,
A shell empty of life, worn out by want,
Sit by my bedside and say, with charm:
“It is I who killed you, I regret it now.”

VII
People aren’t required to be generous and kind,
But they are required to be thankful for grace.
My lord bestows much that isn’t required of him.
How can I neglect what is required of me?

VIII
I eagerly place your letter before me.
Teardrops pattern the Pleiades on my shirt.
Replying, when I take pen in hand,
I want to fold my heart in the letter.

\textsuperscript{54} The two-door garden emphasizes the transience of life.
\textsuperscript{55} The Gardener is the Angel of Death.
هان تشه جگر، مجوا زین باغ ثمر
بیدستایی است این ریاض بدو در
بههوده ممان، که باغبانت به قفاست
چون خال نسته گیر و چون باد گذر

چون کشته بیین‌ایم دو لب گشته فراز
از جان تهی این قابل فرسوده به آز
بر بالینم نشین و می‌گوی بناز
کای من تو بکشته و پشیمان شده بز

واجب نیبود به کس برافضال و کرم
واجب باشد هر آینه شکر نم
نقصیر نکرد خواجه در نواجب
من در واجب چگونه تقصریر کنم

در پیش خود آن نامه چو بلکم نهنم
پروین ز سرشعک دیده بر جامه نهنم
بر پاسخ تو چو دست بر خامه نهنم
خواهم که دل اندر شکن نامه نهنم
IX
We’ve spread our rug in sorrow’s house,
Shed tears. Ours is a heart on fire.
We’ve endured the world’s tyrannies,
We, playthings of evil days.

X
As with Rudaki, love has made me tired of life.
Tears of blood have turned my lashes to coral.
I fear the pain of separation. I burn
With jealousy, like those who live in hell.

XI
She sold a tryst for a heart, a fair price.
She sells a kiss for a soul, and it’s cheap.
It’s true, when this beauty is the merchant,
She sells trysts for hearts, kisses for souls.

XII
You’ve stolen color and scent from the rose:
Color for your cheeks, scent for your hair.
The stream turns rose-colored when you wash your face.
The street smells of musk when you let down your hair.
در منزل غم فکنده مفرح ما‌پیم
وز آب دو چشم دل پر آتش ما‌پیم
عالم چو ستم کند ستم‌کش ما‌پیم
دست خوش روزگار ناخوش ما‌پیم

در عشق چو رودکی شدم سیر از جان
از گربه‌های خونین مژوم شد مرجان
القصه که از بیم عراب هجران
در آتش رشکم دگر از دوزخیان

دیدار به دل فروخت، نفوخت گران
بوسه به روان فروشند و هست ارزان
آری، چه چه آن ماه بود بازرسان
دیدار به دل فروشند و بوسه به جان

ای از گل سرخ رنگ بر واده و بو
رنگ از پی رخ بوده بو از پی مو
گل رنگ شود، چو روی شویی همه جو
مشکین گردد چو مو فشنای همه کو
XIII
Fate felt no remorse when killing you,
No soft heart for your elegance and youth.
I am amazed at the Taker, shameless
Before such beauty, stealing your life.

XIV
Each agate of sorrow you draw from my eyes, pierces
My cheek, opening a thousand roses of secrets.\textsuperscript{56}
Secrets my heart had kept hidden from my soul,
In rapture’s language, are revealed by my tears.

\textsuperscript{56} Agate, because of its dark red color symbolizes tears of blood, tears of sorrow. Agate boring into the face can be read as tears rolling down the cheeks.
تقدیر که بر کشتنت آزرم نداشت
بر حسن و جوانیت دل نرم نداشت
اندر عجبم زجان ستان کز چو تویی
جان بستد و از جمال تو شرم نداشت

چشمم ز غمت به هر عقیقیی که بسفت
بر چهره هزار گل ز رازم بشکفت
رازی که دلم ز جان همی داشت نهفت
اشکم به زبان حال با خلق بگفت
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