

Uncanny affinities: a translation of Iqbal's preface to *Payam-e Mashriq*

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Translator's preface

As Muhammad Iqbal's oeuvre is exhumed and reexamined today in the light of post-national energies and under imaginary postcolonial constellations,¹ it reveals itself to be illuminated by futures *passé* to which recent times have been more often than not simply blind. The decades since Iqbal's death in 1938 have not served his intellectual legacy well. If the body of his work lay strewn under the rubble of a single sovereign left on the subcontinent at the end of British imperial rule, then perhaps it could have been more easily reassembled and favourably received than has been its destiny. Instead, his legacy fell through the abyssal chasms of a fragmenting world whose categories have been unable to adequately encompass Iqbal's imaginary horizons or ways of inhabiting the world. Iqbal's literary corpus will thus have to overcome the nationalist appropriation to which it has been subjected in his posthumous Pakistan. His spiritual autonomy is frayed by its usurpation by the nation-state, belied and betrayed by the challenges that fall upon Pakistan's sovereignty with the regularity of drone missiles today. The gushing praise of *Iqbaliyat*—as the industry around this conscripted spirit is known in Pakistan—often drowns the alternative fields of possibility that Iqbal explored. On the Indian side, he has fared no better. The unending ostracization and oblivion that have been meted out to his legacy with the rise of the Hindu-majority state have only left an enigmatic ghostly presence, for a fragment of his Urdu *kalam* continues to serve there, ironically enough, as an unofficial and ever-popular national anthem.

To the list of obstacles that Iqbal's poetic imagination and political flourish have had to endure can be added several others. There is the fact that he wrote most of his poetic masterpieces in a language, Persian, which itself became reduced to a national language that celebrated its own to the general exclusion and demotion of those deceased bearers of the august tradition who fell far beyond Iran's official borders. Moreover Persian itself waned dramatically over the twentieth century in the subcontinent. The traditional Islamicate idioms, genres and styles Iqbal maintained became challenged, if not overwhelmed, by other languages, forms, media, and the general pressures of commerce, massification, plebianization and homogenization which characterize the incivility of contemporary capital. In appearing now across an epochal rift, Iqbal uncovers for us a different, partially submerged set of spatial and temporal coordinates of the modern imagination, especially

theories and practices of an infinite subjectivity and antagonistic form. An instance of this poetic/political practice is encapsulated in Iqbal's engagement with the Eastern *Vorstellung* of the *West-östlicher Divan* of the commanding European mind of Johann Wolfgang Goethe. Indeed, the uncanny mixture of distance and proximity, the infinite reflection of the self's other self in the othered self of the other, the echo of one's own spirit in the letter of the foreign tongue—all produce a peculiar affinity with contemporary affects, to the extent that the latter can be characterized as increasingly jaded or unenthused by imperial jingoism, national chauvinism, ethnic particularism, and religious complacency, or even a politics grounded in such accidents of birth as body and territory.

From within the fissures of a fragmented world, then, can come to light fossilized fragments that seem better to address new futures than old pasts. Iqbal's *Payam-e Mashriq* (Message of the East, 1922), especially his preface in Urdu to this collection of Persian poems intended as an answer to Goethe's *West-östlicher Divan*, testifies openly to Iqbal's attempt to forge a new future through an elaboration—indeed, as will be demonstrated, an innovative translation and infinite reflection—of a figure of a distant place and time. 'There are certainly resemblances', Iqbal offers in the preface, 'between the Germany of a hundred years ago and the state of the contemporary East.'² Iqbal's discovery of these resemblances between the Germany of Goethe's time and the colonized domains of the early twentieth century, between a secularizing West and Islamic awakening in the East, depended upon a particular historical conjuncture that is disclosed through the manner in which Iqbal encountered the great German (post-) romantic, delineating a process of transmission and translation of key concepts into new cultural frontiers. How did the specific historical conjuncture in which Iqbal found himself—if not the colonial world to which he sought to give voice in fashioning this missive—inflect his reading of Goethe? What was it about Goethe's work that lent itself to such theoretical travel in the distant world of the colonized East, especially in its Islamic spheres?

These rather simple yet consequential philological questions are key to any precise translation of the text. They are moreover meant to establish the ground for the more demanding enquiries of a concept-history (*Begriffsgeschichte*) focused on the elaboration of Romanticism as a framework for an antagonistic, indeed postcolonial, critique of modernity.³ In both of these cases, Iqbal proves decisive. As someone concerned with articulating a universalist romantic imaginary and with reanimating 'Creation' to construct 'from the ashes of [the contemporary] culture and society' and 'within the depths of Life' a 'new Adam and new world for him to live in', he marks an instructive moment in reconfiguring Romanticism and in distilling a postmodernist vision—*avant la lettre*, to be sure—of a possible future.⁴ In this context the central questions are: What light does this interaction between a thinker who inspired Islamic revivalism in the subcontinent and beyond, on the one hand, and the German theorist of the determinate limits of European Enlightenment, on the other, shed in *Nachträglichkeit* on contradictory patterns of modernity, and what speculations or aspirations

does this interaction help encourage for the future? What are the particular lessons that can be taken from this obscured moment of encounter and relayed for our own times, especially in fostering a postcolonial future? What possible futures are to be found only in translation? These queries broach again the question of political subjectivity premised on infinite reflection, the very question with which Iqbal experimented as if in organic connection with late colonial aporias.

Long stretches and significant dimensions of Iqbal's life remain hazy to this day. Among the dimmest and least researched moments of his experience is the one of greatest relevance to the genesis of *Payam-e Mashriq*: his voyage West, especially the period spent in Germany. At the encouragement of his philosophy professor at Government College in Lahore, the well-connected and influential Islamicist Thomas W Arnold, Iqbal sailed from Bombay on 7 September 1905, not to set foot in India again until 1908. Over the course of these years, he received training in an anomalous version of German idealism and metaphysics at the hands of the Cambridge philosophers John MacTaggart and F H Bradley, and immersed himself in German language, literature and philosophy in Heidelberg and Munich. In the final year of his sojourn in the West, he attained a doctorate from the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich upon submitting his dissertation on 'The Development of Metaphysics in Persia' under the supervision of the Orientalist Fritz Hommel. From the fragments that remain from his time in Germany, the stray comments that appear in his letters, the recorded observations of others, and the points that can be surmised from statements such as his preface to the *Payam-e Mashriq*, one attains an impression of just how deep and lasting the impact was of this journey West. Indeed, the internal unrest he experienced upon his return to India and which lingered for years suggests a mindset emboldened by exposure to the value systems, notions of romance, conceptions of liberty, languages of selfhood, as well as experiences of mobility, exchange, and perhaps even love, which occasionally betray a European tinge and which would continue to colour, one way or another, his modes of expression and inflect his understanding of the Islamic, colonial and non-European worlds for the remaining decades of his life. It is not surprising then to read of his internal tumult and discomfort with traditional social conventions after his return home. For instance, in a letter addressed to the famous Atiya Fayzee and dated 9 April 1909, Iqbal writes:

My life is extremely miserable. They force my wife upon me. I have written to my father that he had no right to arrange my marriage especially when I had refused to enter into any alliance of that sort. I am quite willing to support her, but I am not prepared to make my life miserable by keeping her with me. As a human being I have a right to happiness—if society or nature deny that to me, I defy both. The only cure is that I should leave this wretched country forever, or take refuge in liquor which makes suicide easier. Those dead barren leaves of books cannot yield happiness; I have got sufficient fire in my soul to burn them up and social conventions as well. A good God created all this, you say. Maybe. The facts of life, however, tend to a different conclusion. It is intellectually easier to believe in an eternal omnipotent Devil rather than a good God.⁵

The fact that the entirety of the quoted passage is excised from the Urdu translation and publication of this same letter in *Ruh-e Makatib-e Iqbal* (The Spirit of Iqbal's Correspondence) is telling of just how transgressive the sentiments Iqbal expresses were and continue to be.⁶

Though these sentiments need not be reduced to an exposure to a European experience of liberalism and modern practices of romance alone—as we shall see further below, Iqbal himself would most certainly not have considered his feelings to merely derive from the cultural spheres of the metropolitan powers—it is instructive to gather from the historical scraps of his time just what Iqbal's activities, especially amorous and intellectual, were in Germany. For what Iqbal made of Western, especially German, thought at this early moment helps to situate his reading of figures such as Goethe and sheds light on the imperatives Iqbal came to espouse later in his life regarding Islamic culture, imperial politics, and the relations between the metropolitan West and the colonized East. Though these historical artifacts remain fragmentary and the allusions in his literary oeuvre figurative, they can nonetheless be read in revealing ways. For instance, there seems to have always been an integral connection between the libidinal and the intellectual for Iqbal during his stay in Germany. His greatest confidant of this era, Atiya Faiyzee, describes thus his time in Munich:

Of all places in Germany Iqbal liked Munich best, partly because he had his first lesson there under the direction of the beautiful and charming daughter of Herr Professor Rann... We went to the home of Professor Rann and after a few words, the young beauty Fraulein Rann started examining Iqbal to find what deeper studies he was engaged in... Iqbal was completely lost in front of her... She seemed perfect in every branch of learning—apart from being a perfect piece of creation.⁷

The introduction to young educated women went literally hand in hand with an introduction to physical training of the body, dance, and music. Faiyzee's descriptions give the impression that the periods of long study and philosophical discussion followed by spontaneous dancing, singing and poetry made for a totally exhilarating experience for Iqbal. He would write nostalgically, even whimsically, of these days in his letters to Faiyzee—'ah, the days which will never come again'—after his return home where he faced the challenge of living once again in a culture which had very different expectations of what a woman ought to think and do.⁸ Just as his experiences in the West connected the libidinal to the intellectual, so did the struggle he wished to wage on the home front. His letters testify to a serious engagement with the emergent German scholarship on Islam, especially the works of Alfred von Kremer and Theodor Nödelke. We read as well of his desire to translate passages to upset the authority of the ruling 'ulama, despite averring that his own views do not accord completely with those of the European scholars.⁹ Over the course of the decades leading to the composition of the *Payam-e Mashriq*, Iqbal would continue to aesthetically cultivate the exilic perspective and emotional turmoil that not only the years abroad but a world

in constant tumult had wrought. He would define himself against the norms of the Urdu tradition, employing the tropes of its literary landscape, especially the garden, in countervailing ways; conversely, he would promulgate an antagonistic conception of selfhood, refuting in this instance the static conceptions of colonial, including Muslim, subjects, pushed by imperial ideology and often authorized by Orientalist scholarship.¹⁰ This sense of exile within his own tradition only exacerbated his longing for a homeland, leading him eventually to toy with the extreme options of communalist nationalism and fascist attempts to overcome modernity. Perhaps it was the location of the colonial backwater that put these options closest to hand.

Iqbal seems to have found his own condition mirrored in that of Goethe, as the latter had found his reflection in the *Vorstellungsbild* of the Persian tradition. Throughout the preface, emphasis is given especially to those dimensions of the German tradition of Orientalist poetry in which an acute sensation of exilic longing is given expression. 'In the elegant melodies of the nightingale of Sheraz,' goes the passage Iqbal translates and cites from German, referring to the Persian poet Hafiz, 'Goethe discovered his very own image. From time to time even the sensation came over him such that he began to think, "Perhaps my own soul has inhabited Hafiz's body and passed a lifetime in the lands of the East."'¹¹ Further, Heinrich Heine's own imaginary excursions along these lines complement those of Goethe. Iqbal notes how Heine fashioned himself in *Neue Gedichte* (New Poems) as an Iranian poet exiled to Germany, crying out 'Oh Firdausi! Oh Jami! Oh Sa'adi! Your brother is a prisoner in the cell of melancholia, longing for the flowers of Shiraz.' Several different reasons could be advanced to account for the appeal of such imagery for Iqbal. Foremost among them, I would like to suggest for reasons that will be further fleshed out below, is that what Iqbal saw reflected in the figure of the exiled or displaced European intellectual was a resemblance of his own imaginary exiled self. And what is generated in such instances, implicitly as well as explicitly, is the possibility for an infinitely dispersive and ever universalizing subjectivity disclosed through a poetic technique of infinite reflection. For someone who had already expressed the conceit in *Rumuz-e Bekhudi* (The Mysteries of Selflessness) that he is '[t]rained to fashion mirrors out of words', such potentials of mirroring can be imagined as a mystery buried like a treasure in his own poetry.¹² Iqbal sought to capture explicitly this very subjectivity through his elaborations on the concept of *khudi* (selfhood), yet more than his peripatetic and excursive formulations on such concepts, it is his poetic practice that mediates uncanny affinities. It is the practice of infinite mirroring of self and other that he finds in Goethe's own reflexive praxis.

The grounds for Iqbal's turn toward Goethe are symbolically laid out in *Payam-e Mashriq*. Though it is possible to draw out the underlying rationales for his affinity toward Goethe from implicit observations, tangential allusions, and associational assemblages strewn across his entire oeuvre, the most noteworthy indices are given in the preface as well as in the body of *Payam-e Mashriq* itself. For instance, in the penultimate section of this work, 'Images of Europeans', an encounter between Goethe and Rumi in heaven is

depicted.¹³ Goethe, alluded to as 'the German sage' (*nukta-dan-e almani*) is greeted by Rumi, who obviously has preceded him to such an exalted station. Goethe is praised by his Persian predecessor and is told to refashion the old world afresh, as he is privy to the potentials pregnant in the old. The aphoristic and paratactic nature of the poem allows it to suggest that integral to such a reconstruction of the world is the revelation of the secrets Goethe had acquired through his aesthetic and philosophical efforts. Embedded centrally within is the aphorism, the meaning of which is not known by all: 'zer ki'z 'iblis o 'ishq az adam ast' ('knowledge is of Satan come, of Adam love'). Goethe seems to have discovered independently the truths to which Rumi had ascended through his own previous efforts. Further light is shed on the association Iqbal makes between Rumi and Goethe here by the footnote Iqbal wrote to accompany this poem in Urdu: 'By "nukta-dan-e almani" is meant Goethe, whose dramatic work *Faust* is renowned. Through the classical trope of the pact between the scientist and Satan, the poet expressed all the levels of potential human development with such virtuosity that one cannot imagine any work of art surpassing it.'¹⁴ This praise coincides nicely with Goethe's parallel status alongside Rumi in heaven, for what the image of the two in conversation establishes for Iqbal's own work is a singular aesthetic telos. As Rumi will play the role of guide for Iqbal in a journey towards self-realization through the heavens in the latter's neo-epic *Javed-Namah* (Book of Eternity), composed a decade later, Goethe can be seen as an equal, yet invisible, guide as well for Iqbal. The point of such a telos is the disclosure through careful artistic practice underlying realities beyond the phenomenal constraints of identities. That is, heaven here as well as elsewhere in Iqbal's oeuvre symbolizes the space where an absolute subjectivity—*khudi* in his lexicon—is able to manifest itself and existential secrets are revealed as constitutive realities. As in Rumi's discourse in the poem, the message of the one is freed through the other. And not simply meaning, but the potentials for freedom enter into a process of actualization through a specific configuration: mediation by reflection. Though Rumi has preceded Goethe to this exalted station and is thus the one who speaks, it is through the presence there of Goethe that Rumi attains a measure of his own self. The other mediates the self-realization of the one. If we take the image of the two in heaven as a model of reflection and uncanny affinity in Iqbal's own relationship to Goethe, then we may say that Rumi is able to disclose the message deep within the other's work to the extent that Goethe himself was exploring an otherness of his own self in his explorations of Eastern, indeed Persian, traditions. For, as we will see, the self and the other together in reflective relationship mediate freedom as such.

To understand Goethe's presence as an invisible counterpart to Rumi in Iqbal's work, to grasp in what way Goethe served too as a guide towards a particular politically inflected aesthetic telos, it is worth retracing the history that led Goethe to Islam, to his way of imagining the Orient, and especially the Persian literary tradition. For the manner in which Goethe opened his own self to the *Unheimlichkeit* of Islam held magnetic attraction for Iqbal's own *unheimlich* Muslim-Indian self. Iqbal would himself realize new ways of

conceptualizing and valorizing Islam significantly beyond the mere narcissisms of identity and beyond the confines of traditional Muslim authorities.¹⁵ From his early twenties, Goethe consistently engaged himself in one way or another with the intellectual underpinnings of Islam, ultimately absorbing what he considered to be its major spiritual message within his letters, poetry, and worldview, whether or not he was talking about Eastern or Western themes. In sharp contradistinction to our times, Islam appeared for Goethe's eighteenth-century predecessors as the faith of reason. Though the austere Gestalt of Muhammad could be deployed as a guise for the critique of the existing Christian Church, as in Voltaire's influential play *Le fanatisme, ou Mohamet le prophete*, for the most part the founder of Islam and the religion itself were defended as bearers of reason and toleration, even by Voltaire himself. Goethe's own views on Islam and Muhammad were somewhat more nuanced and multidimensional. As the tragedy of *Faust* allegorizes the predicament of a culture that seeks infinite knowledge only to discover that such science comes at the cost of its most vaunted traditions and most stabilizing of beliefs, it should come as no surprise that Goethe experimented towards the end of his life with exits out of such a predicament, and seemed to find them in the most unlikely of places. In Goethe's eyes, Islam seems to have exemplified the perfect balance for ultimately overcoming contradictory forces: the infinite extension of God and the spatial and temporal limits of humans; the militant striving of Muhammad and the spiritual lesson of submission to one's own destiny; the unfathomable content of God's universal message and the mediation of such a message through the particularities of languages, figures, symbols, however iconoclastic these may be configured. The role of the poet as the one who urges and prods his community to attain its potential gave inspiration and orientation to Goethe's own poetic practice. Yet, at the same time, Goethe's expressions of a hard embrace of stoicism generally come with an Islamic flourish. Thus, Goethe had these words to address the grave illness of a daughter-in-law: 'Weiter kann ich nichts sagen, als dass ich auch hier mich im Islam zu halten suche.' ['I can say no more than that here too I seek to maintain myself in Islam.']¹⁶ Other examples abound. He even employed Islam as a standard by which to judge the efforts and goals of contemporary reformism within Christianity. By the time he was composing advertisements for the *West-östlicher Divan*, Goethe claimed astonishingly that the composer of the volume would not dismiss 'the suspicion that he is himself a Muslim'.¹⁷

Iqbal picked up on key potentials of Goethe's engagement with Islam and the imagination of the Orient, and sought to actualize them for his own times. He discovered in this uncanny past the grounds for anticipating a world beyond the categorical divisions and constricting identities characteristic of modernity, an anticipatory world in which a reconfigured Islam could be activated as the vehicle for arriving at a deracialized, post-national, and, indeed, truly post-Enlightenment world. The telos of Islam for him would be a new universalizing subjectivity premised on a shared acknowledgement of social and spiritual totalities. This post-Enlightenment dispensation would, in its best formulation, be made possible by a truce between reason, technology,

and human freedom, on the one hand, and nature, tradition, and the unknowable, on the other. As the logic of destruction wrought by the West on the colonies had reached the core of the metropolitan sphere, Iqbal imagined vast cultural reversals to be in the offing. Thus he writes towards the end of the preface that 'Europe has seen with its very own eyes the dreadful results of her own scientific, moral, and political vision... But it is regrettable that her clever yet conservative ministers were unable to accurately grasp this overwhelming revolution that is currently taking place in the heart of humanity [*insani zamir*].'¹⁸ Though the revolution (*inqilab*) of which Iqbal speaks here is given no name, the cumulative sum of his statements in the preface indicates what he anticipates as well as reveals, as if in hindsight, the rationale of his interest in the Orientalist streak in German *Geistesgeschichte*. A retrospective glance at all that has led up to this point in the preface provides clues as to what the nature of this revolution-to-come may be. The revolution would shatter the hierarchy of the imperial relationship and leave its pieces scattered. The pains Iqbal goes through to demonstrate the indebtedness of high metropolitan culture to the colonial domains of his times unsettles the most dominant ideology buttressing imperialism: the civilizing mission. Iqbal's account may be taken to be an allegory of the dependence of Western wealth on the resources of the East, and thus an attempt to undo the immediacy of understanding and to tend to the countervailing force of underlying realities. And perhaps most importantly, in projecting a future beyond Europe, all that which is constitutively foreclosed upon as possible forms of subjectivity within *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* can be reconstituted and reconfigured. As 'Islam' operates as an anticipatory, multiply determined category in Iqbal's work and not simply as a traditional form, it aids in imagining all that is excluded, unthought, and impossible within the governing terms of European society. In reflecting back what Goethe himself had sought to reflect of the East in *West-östlicher Divan*, a particular technique is set into motion for freeing an infinite or absolute subjectivity against the norms, barriers and divides of the imperial order: infinite reflection.¹⁹

The possibility of a future hangs, Iqbal remarks in passing at the conclusion of the preface, upon a mode of apperception and cultural becoming that would thrive through the creative elaboration of Eastern and Western qualities, colonial and metropolitan experiences, concretizations and abstractions. The physical location in which that future will unfold is a matter of conjecture. Yet, his very own practice, one may surmise, is what is to be taken as a technique for forging a future beyond the warfare, destruction, and ruin part and parcel of modern imperialism and entrenched belief in the West. The practice in question—the purposeful play with the trope of reflection to manifest, if not free, an absolute subject—is perhaps his most unique and most radically consequential contribution to the aesthetics of Romanticism understood widely. Whether he is conscious of the matter or merely embodies its contents in his rhetorical gestures here and elsewhere, there is little doubt that the perspective he brings to the question of the colonial present and postcolonial future concretizes the disturbing energies of

the subordinate within the realm of metropolitan society. As mentioned above, the overriding force of Iqbal's preface is to reverse the commonsensical understanding that the East is dependent upon the West, and equally, that the West is *sui generis*, autonomous, and complete in itself. Goethe's self-abandonment to uncanny affinities symbolizes for Iqbal the most open recognition to just such reversals. In attracting uncanny reciprocities (for example, Iqbal's visual self-portraits in the Western romantic fashion),²⁰ such experimental abandonments of reified selfhood bring out veiled truths. Such reciprocal reflections remind one of the degree to which true freedom is dependent upon being with oneself in another. The self that comes into being in the other through reflection is the absolute self: the total social self which enters into a relation with the infinite, and only ever comes into its own through freely dispersing and receiving intimately political energies to and from the other and the self up to and beyond the point where these lose all definition. Iqbal reflected in Goethe and vice versa indicate just how essential the overcoming of imperial and national divides was and continues to be for our freedom.

A note on the translation

As Adorno once wrote, 'treibt Liebe zu den Fremdwörtern'—'love drives us to foreign words'.²¹ The magnetic attraction towards the foreign that both Iqbal and Goethe display in their works is powerfully alluring in itself. The translator has no sooner begun his task than he is drawn to surveying the text as a multi-layered ground of translation, recognizing that his own translation is at once an unearthing of certain deeply enclosed elements at the same time as it becomes another deposit upon a variegated surface. The rich underlying language-complex that is produced by this to-and-fro and in-and-out movement is flagged by the foreign sign on the surface. This foreign element—the word *divan* in Goethe's title, for instance—reminds one that what one is translating is itself the product of the transfer of languages, ideas, and concepts. Capturing the movement outward of love and marking a striving against enclosure of one's being in the native tongue and other such accidents of birth, the switch to the foreign code works best, paradoxically, to convey the essential direction of the native motivation.

Unsurprisingly, the heteroglossic dimension of Iqbal's entire oeuvre, let alone the preface, presents several challenges. The referencing of works in German, English, Italian, Persian and Arabic tests the breadth of one's own linguistic capacities and often demands an acquaintance with obscure fragments of the past. The total project is one of rescuing a charged sentiment from oblivion. What one grasps is just how much such a sentiment was produced through or within translation itself. Iqbal reconfigures Western thought within Islamicate terminology, interpreting Spinoza's monism, for instance, as part and parcel of the *vahdat ul-vaujud*, or 'the unity of all existence', a central concept in Islamic, especially Sufi, thought. I have attempted to keep intact this translational dimension of the work, drawing

attention to the unexpected and somewhat unique turn of phrase in Iqbal's prose. This rendering was cross-checked with German and French translations, and is meant to be an improvement on them by remaining more faithful to the stylistic choices that Iqbal made. While at first the impetus for this undertaking was provided by the realization that the preface was neglected in the translations of parts of *Payam-e Mashriq*, research did uncover previous efforts to bring the preface out in English. The lack of a scholarly apparatus for such a complex work, not to mention the want of accuracy and the obscurity of the venues in which these previous publications appeared, assured that the present exercise was not superfluous. It is offered as the definitive translation for the time being.

Translation

Preface

The impetus for composing *Payam-e Mashriq* (Message of the East) was the *West-östlicher Divan* [The West-Eastern Divan], by the great German life-philosopher [hakim-e hayat] Goethe, in reference to which Germany's Jewish poet Heine writes: 'This is a bouquet of trust [aqidat] that the West has addressed to the East... With this Divan, testimony obtains that the West became dissatisfied with its own flaccid and frigid spirituality and turned to the warmth at the breast of the East.'^A

This collection of verses, among the best of his compositions, and to which he himself gave the appellation divan—by which impressions was it shaped and in which conditions was it penned? To give a response to these questions, it is necessary to make brief mention of that movement which in the history of German letters is remembered as 'Orientalism' [tahrík-e mashriq]. It had been my intention to discourse upon the movement mentioned in sufficient detail, but sadly many of the sources which this task would require could not be availed of within Hindustan. Paul Horn, author of *History of the Literatures of Iran* [*Geschichte der persischen Litteratur*, 1901], has discussed in one of his essays the extent to which Goethe was indebted to the poets of Persia. But the issue of the journal *Nord und Süd*^B [North and South] in which the article mentioned was published could not be attained from any collections [kutub-khana] in Hindustan or in Germany. Consequently I was forced to rely somewhat upon memory of previous study for the composition of this preface and somewhat upon Mr Charles Remy's abridged yet extremely helpful and useful publication which he devoted to this matter.^C

From the very beginnings of his youth, Goethe's all-embracing nature was inclined toward Eastern creativity. In Strasburg where he was immersed in legal studies he came into contact with the famous and admirable figure of German letters, Herder, the impact of whose company Goethe himself averred in his recollections. Herder did not know Persian, but because an ethical streak held sway over his nature, the works of Sa'adi were of the utmost interest to him. Thus, he even put into German several sections of the *Gulistan*. He was not much taken with Khavaja Hafiz. Directing attention

towards Sa'adi, he writes: 'We have sung the praises aplenty about the style [rang] of Hafiz. At this time, we require the delights of Sa'adi.'^D Yet, in spite of this interest of Herder's in Oriental literature, there is not a hint of Eastern literature in his poems or other works. Another great contemporary of Goethe's stature, Schiller, who died before the inception of Orientalism, was free of all Eastern influences [asarat]. However, it should not be forgotten that the plot of his play 'Turandot' was taken from Maulana Nizami's story 'Daughter of the Emperor' [dokhtar-e badshah-e aqlim-e chaharam] (The Seven Princesses [haft paikar]). Maulana began this work with this verse:

guft ki az jumlab-yi vilayat-e rus
bud shahari ba nikoi co 'urus

[He said that across the country of Russia wide
Was a city with the peerless beauty of a bride]

In 1812, von Hammer published the complete translation of the divan of Khavaja Hafiz and with this publication the Orientalist movement in German letters was inaugurated.^E At that time, Goethe's age was 45 and this was the era when the decline of the German people had reached a nadir in all respects. Taking an active role in the political movements of the country did not suit Goethe's nature and having become disgusted with the general tumult within Europe, the serene towering soul sought after a homeland for himself in the peace and quiet of the Oriental ambience. The melodic voice [tarannam] of Hafiz set off an overwhelming rush of creativity within him. Ultimately this took lasting expression in the form of the *West-östlicher Divan*, but von Hammer's translation was not merely a motivating factor, but also the source for his unique ['ajib o gharib] creativity. Time and again his poems appear to be free translations of the verses of Hafiz and in several places his creative powers shed light on life's extremely subtle and grave problems on account of having come upon a new path through the influence of some specific poetic turn of phrase [misr'a] or other. Goethe's well-known biographer Bielschowsky writes:

In the elegant melodies of the nightingale of Sheraz Goethe discovered his very own image. From time to time even the sensation came over him such that he began to think, 'Perhaps my own soul has inhabited Hafiz's body and passed a lifetime in the lands of the East. That very earthly exhilaration [masarrat], that very heavenly rapture [mohabbat], that very simplicity, that very profundity, that very drive and passion, that very range of temperament, that very candidness, and that very freedom from restrictions and customs [qaihud o rasum]!' Simply put, in each phenomenon we discover a correspondence to Hafiz. Just as Hafiz is the oracular voice of the heavens and the interpreter of mysteries, so is Goethe, and just as a world of meaning resides in the apparent simplicity of Hafiz's lexicon, in this very way elemental being [haqa'iq o asrar] flashes through Goethe's spontaneity [besakhtapan]. They both garnered the acclamation of the wealthy and the poor alike. Both impressed the great emperors of their respective times (that is, Hafiz influenced Timur, and Goethe Napoleon) and they both

maintained an inward peace and calm in an era of general destruction and ruin, thereby proving successful in keeping flowing the pourings of classical poetry.^F

Aside from Khavaja Hafiz, Goethe was deeply indebted to Sheikh Attar, Sa'adi, Firdausi, and Islamic literature in general for his own creative imaginings [takhaiyulat]. Here and there he even composed ghazals within the traditional mould of end rhyme [radif] and internal rhyme [qafiya]. He even employed with flair Persian tropes (such as 'the substance of poetry' [gauhar-e ashu'ar], 'the arrow of the eyelash' [tir-e mazgan], 'conquering by the braided tresses' [zulf-e girah-gir]). In his passion for the Persianate, he did not abstain from making references to the adoration of boys. The names of different sections of the divan are in Persian, such as 'Moganni Nameh' (Buch des Sängers), 'Saki Nameh' (Das Schenkenbuch), "Uschk Nameh' (Buch der Liebe), 'Timur Nameh' (Buch des Timur), 'Hikmet Nameh' (Buch der Sprüche) and so forth. Despite all of this, Goethe was no imitator of any Persian poet and his poetic nature is absolutely free. In the tulip gardens of the East, his melodic compositions are merely casual. He never wanted to abandon his Westernness and his glance fell only on those Eastern elemental truths [haqa'iq] to which his Western nature could attract him. He had absolutely no interest in Iranian Sufism and it was as if he knew that the poems of Hafiz were being interpreted through a Sufi lens. He was devoted to the literary absolute [taghazzul-e mahz] and had little sympathy for the Sufi exegesis of Hafiz's oeuvre. The philosophical ontology and gnosis [haqa'iq o ma'aruf] of Maulana Rumi struck him as vague. Though it may seem that he did not look deeply into Rumi's oeuvre it is not possible for one not to be a proponent of Rumi's who had become the eulogist of Spinoza (a philosopher of Holland who wrote on the problem of the unity of all existence [vahdat-ul vajud]) and who had raised his pen in support of [Giordano] Bruno (a pantheist [vaujudi] philosopher of Italy).

In brief, through the intervention of the *West-östlicher Divan* Goethe attempted to actualize the Eastern spirit ['ajami ruh] in German letters. The succeeding poets Platen, Rückert and Bodenstedt brought to consummation the Orientalist movement which was begun by Goethe's divan. Platen learned Persian out of literary motives. He wrote ghazals not merely with the customary refrain and rhyme scheme [qafiya radif] but even according to the rules of Iranian prosody. He wrote quatrains [ruba'iyān] and a eulogy [qasida] for Napoleon. Like Goethe, he employed Persian tropes such as 'bride of the rose' ['urus-e gul], 'raven tresses' [zulf-e mushkin] and 'tulip cheeks' [lala 'uzar], with flair even, and was committed to the literary absolute. Rückert was an adept at all three languages—Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit. He had great regard for Rumi's philosophy and most of his ghazals were in imitation of Rumi's style. As he was an erudite Orientalist, he had a wider range of Eastern poetry at his disposal—*The Treasury of Secrets* [makhzan ul-asrar] by Nizami, *The Spring Land* [baharistan] by Jami, *The Compendium of Poetry* [kulliyat] by Amir Khusrau, *The Rose Garden* [gulistan] by Sa'adi, *The Wonders of the Enlightened* [munaqib ul-'arafin] by 'Ayar Danish, *The Conference of the Birds* [mantiq ul-tair], *The Seven Seas* [haft qulzum]

and so forth. He would note down the pearls of wisdom wherever they could be found. Indeed, Iran's pre-Islamic traditions and tales took his oeuvre to a zenith. He even poetically rendered several events of Islamic history such as, for example, the death of Mahmud Ghaznavi, Mahmud's plunder of Somanath, the Empress Razia, and so forth. After Goethe, the most popular poet in the Oriental style was Bodenstedt,^G who published his poems under the pseudonym 'Mirza Shafi'. The small collection of poems became so popular that in a very short time span 140 editions were printed. He was able to draw out the Eastern spirit so well that people in Germany believed for a long time that the poems of Shafi' were translated from Persian. Bodenstedt also gained much from Mirza Ma'azi and Anvari.

In this context I purposefully made no mention of Goethe's famous contemporary, Heine. Although a Persian ['ajami] influence is evident in his collection of verses, titled 'New Poems' [ashu'ar-e taza],^H and though he exquisitely put into poetry the tales of Mahmud and Firdausi, he did not have any major connection to the whole of Orientalism, and aside from Goethe's *West-östlicher Divan*, he did not give much weight to any other Eastern composition [mashraqi kalam] by a German writer. Yet the heart of this free-spirit could not for long escape the clutch of the Eastern ['ajami] magic. Thus in one place fashioning himself as an Iranian poet who has been exiled to Germany, he writes:

Oh Firdausi! Oh Jami! Oh Sa'adi! Your brother is a prisoner in the cell of melancholia [gham], longing for the flowers of Shiraz.

Daumer, Hermann Stahl, Lösckke, Steiglitz, Leuthold and von Schack are among the lesser noteworthy poets who were the imitators of Khvaja Hafiz.^I The last among those mentioned ranked high in the intellectual milieu ['ilmi dunya]. His compositions *The Just Tale of Mahmud Ghaznavi* and *The Story of Marut and Harut* are well known, and on the whole of his oeuvre Omar Khayam's influence is estimable. To write a definitive history of the Orientalist Movement and to know the precise extent of Eastern influences on the basis of a rigorous [tafsili] comparison of German and Iranian poets, long study is required, for which neither the time nor the materials are available. Perhaps this rather brief sketch will give rise to the drive for investigation and fact-finding in the heart of some youth.

I have nothing more in particular to expound with respect to Message of the East, written some 100 years after the *West-östlicher Divan*. Readers will realize for themselves that for the most part it seeks to bring into view ethical [ikhlaqi], spiritual [mazhabi] and political [milli] realities which bear upon the inner cultivation of the individual and the collective. There are certainly resemblances between the Germany of a hundred years ago and the state of the contemporary East. But the truth [haqiqat] is that the innermost pressure of the collectivities of the world, the precise importance of which it is difficult for us to estimate since we are ourselves shaped by this pressure, is the harbinger of a great spiritual and civilizational revolution. The Great War of Europe [World War I] was a calamity which annihilated the state of the old

world in nearly every aspect and now from the ashes of culture and society Creation [fitrat] is constructing within the depths of Life a new Adam and a new world for him to live in, the vague outlines of which obtain in the works of Dr Einstein and Bergson. Europe has seen with her very own eyes the dreadful results of her own scientific, moral and political vision and has heard the heartrending epic of *The Decadence of Europe*^J from Francesco Saverio Nitti (former prime minister of Italy). But it is regrettable that her clever yet conservative ministers were unable to accurately grasp this overwhelming revolution that is currently taking place in the heart of humanity [insani zamir]. Should one look at this from a purely literary perspective, after the pummelling of the Great War [World War I] the vanishing of Europe's vitality was unfavourable for the development of a proper and firm literary vision. Rather there is the nagging doubt that the Eastern quality ['ajamiyat] which acts as an antidote to the withering, sluggishness, and difficulties of life, and which does not allow the feelings of the heart to be distinguished from the refulgence of the mind, will not hold sway over the natures of these nations. However America seems to be just the right element among the elements of Western culture and perhaps the reason for this is that this country is free from the bonds of ancient customs, and its collective rapture is able to adopt new ideas and influences.

The East, especially the Islamic East, has opened its eyes after centuries of perpetual sleep, but the nations of the East ought to feel that life cannot produce a revolution in its environs as long as first there is no revolution within its internal depths, as long as some new world cannot adopt external [khariji] existence, and as long as its being does not transform the inner spirit [zamir] of human beings. This firm law of Creation which the Quran expressed in these simple and eloquent terms

God changes not what is in a people, until they
change what is in themselves^K

applies to both the individual as well as collective aspects of life, and I have endeavoured to keep this truth in view in my Persian compositions.

At this moment, in the world and especially in the countries of the East every effort of this sort, whose purpose is to take the vision of individuated and collective subjects [afrad o aqwam] beyond geographical limits such that there be a growth and renewal of a proper and effective human Way, is worthy of respect. Upon this very basis, I have dedicated these few pages to the great sovereign of Afghanistan^L for on account of his natural sagacity and discernment he seems to be well apprised of this matter [nukta] and keeps his attention on the development of the Afghani people. May the Great Lord be his supporter and ally in this sublime task.

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Notes

- ¹ See Javed Majeed, *Muhammad Iqbal: Islam, Aesthetics and Postcolonialism*, London: Routledge, 2009.
 - ² See above, p 13.
 - ³ The present preface and translation make up parts of my forthcoming work entitled *Late Colonial Sublime: Neo-Epics and the Romantic Imagination in India*.
 - ⁴ See above, p 14.
 - ⁵ B A Dar (ed), *Letters of Iqbal*, Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 1978, pp 21–22.
 - ⁶ Muhammad Abdullah Qureshi (ed), *Ruh-e Makatib-e Iqbal*, Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 1977, p 86.
 - ⁷ Dar, *Letters of Iqbal*, pp 6–7. The entire letter as well as other writings by Faiyze on Iqbal are reproduced in Appendix 2 of Sunil Sharma and Siobhan Lambert-Hurley, *Atiya's Journey: A Muslim Woman from Colonial Bombay to Edwardian Britain*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010, pp 271–282.
 - ⁸ Dar, *Letters of Iqbal*, p 24.
 - ⁹ See, for instance, letter 37 in *Ruh-e Makatib-e Iqbal*, pp 86–87; and letter 19 in *Letters of Iqbal*, pp 186–187.
 - ¹⁰ This is a prominent thematic in Majeed, *Muhammad Iqbal*, especially ch 4, pp 58–89.
 - ¹¹ See above, p 11.
 - ¹² Muhammad Iqbal, *The Mysteries of Selflessness: A Philosophical Poem*, Arthur J Arberry (trans), London: John Murray, 1953, p 2. The original goes simply: 'az sukhan a'ina sazam kardehand'. See *Rumuz-e Be-khudi*, in Muhammad Iqbal, *Kulliyat-e Iqbal (Farsi)*, Lahore: Sheikh 'Ali aind Sanz, 1973, p 82.
 - ¹³ Iqbal, *Kulliyat-e Iqbal (Farsi)*, pp 376–377; a useful, though slightly off translation in a Western language can be found in Sir Muhammad Iqbal, *Botschaft des Ostens (als Antwort auf Goethes West-Östliche Divan)*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963, p 97.
 - ¹⁴ Iqbal, *Kulliyat-e Iqbal (Farsi)*, p 376.
 - ¹⁵ See, for instance, the letter to the educationist Sahibzadad Aftab Ahmad Khan in Dar, *Letters of Iqbal*, pp 151–156.
 - ¹⁶ As quoted in the richly researched and concise work by Katharina Mommsen, *Goethe und der Islam*, Stuttgart: Goethe Gesellschaft, 1964, p 17.
 - ¹⁷ As given in a passage by Mommsen: 'Eine von Goethe verfaßte Ankündigung dieses Werkes enthält sogar den erstaunlich Satz: der Verfasser des Buches lehne "den Verdacht nicht ab, daß er selbst ein Muselman sei"'. Mommsen, *Goethe und der Islam*, p 5.
 - ¹⁸ See above, p 14.
 - ¹⁹ This is a prominent theme in Walter Benjamin's *Der Begriff der Kunstkritik in der deutschen Romantik*, incorporated in the penetrating collection of interrelated writings by Walter Benjamin, *Aura und Reflexion: Schriften zur Ästhetik und Kunstphilosophie*, Hartmut Böhme and Yvonne Ehrenspeck (eds), Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2007. See also Winfred Menninghaus, *Unendliche Verdopplung: Die frühromantische Grundlegung der Kunsttheorie im Begriff absoluter Selbstreflexion*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1987.
 - ²⁰ See http://www.allamaiqbal.com/person/photographs/per_photo17.html.
 - ²¹ From 'Wörter aus der Fremde', in Theodor W Adorno, *Noten zur Literatur* Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2003, p 218.
- ^A 'Unbeschreiblich ist der Zauber dieses Buches: es ist ein Selam, den der Okzident dem Oriente geschickt hat, und es sind gar närrische Blumen darunter . . . Dieser Selam aber bedeutet, daß der Okzident seines frierend mageren Spiritualismus überdrüssig geworden und an der gesunden Körperwelt des Orients sich

wieder erlaben möchte.' Heinrich Heine, *Die romantische Schule*, in Hans Kaufmann (ed), *Werke und Briefe*, vol 5, Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1961, pp 57–58. I must thank my colleague Professor Loisa Nygaard for her help in tracking down this source.

- ^B Paul Horn, 'Was verdanken wir Persien?', in *Nord und Süd* 94, 1900.
- ^C A J F Remy, 'The Influence of India and Persia on the Poetry of Germany', Columbia University dissertation, New York, 1901. It is unclear how or why Iqbal gives him the name 'Charles'.
- ^D The original is pithier than Iqbal's rendition of it in Urdu: 'An Hafyz Gesängen haben wir fast genug; Sa'adi ist uns lehrreicher gewesen.' See Johann Gottfried Herder, *Adrastea* XI, in *Werke in zehn Bänden*, Günter Arnold (ed), Frankfurt am Main: Deutsche Klassiker Verlag, 2000, p 862.
- ^E The reference is to Josef Freiherr von Hammer-Purgstall (1774–1856), orientalist and diplomat in the Balkans and Near East, and from 1847 to 1849, the President of the Wiener Akademie der Wissenschaften. Von Hammer was editor of the *Fundgruben des Orients* and translator of *Der Diwan des Mohammed Schemsed-din Hafis; auf dem Persischen zum erstenmal ganz übersetzt von Joseph v. Hammer*, Stuttgart, Tübingen: J G Cotta'schen Buchhandlung, 1812–1813.
- ^F Albert Bielschowsky, *Goethe, sein Leben und seine Werke*, vol 2, Munich: C H Beck, 1896–1906, pp 341–342. The original passage reads as follows: 'Der Sänger von Schiras erschien wie sein leibhaftiges Ebenbild. Ob er vielleicht in der Persers Gestalt schon einmal auf Erden gewandelt? Dieselbe Erdenfreudigkeit und Himmelliebe, Einfachheit und Tiefe, Wahrheit und Gradheit, Glut und Leidenschaftlichkeit, und endlich dieselbe Offenheit und von keinerlei Satzung eingeschränkte Empfänglichkeit für alles Menschliche. Passte es nicht auch auf ihn, wenn die Perser ihren Dichter zugleich die mystische Zunge und den Dolmetsch der Geheimnisse nannten, wenn sie von seinen Gedichten sagten, sie wären dem Äusseren nach einfach und ungeschmückte, hätten aber tiefe, die Wahrheit ergründene Bedeutung und höchste Vollendung? Und genoss nicht Hafis wie er die Gunst der Niederen und Grossen? Ja, eroberte er nicht auch der Eroberer, den gewaltigen Timur? Und rettete er sich nicht aus allem Umsturz der Dinge seine heiterkeit und sang weiter wie vordem in Frieden, in den alten gewohnten Verhältnissen?—So wurde ihm Hafis ein geliebter Bruder aus der Urzeit, und gern trat er einmal in die verwandte Spuren und versuchte dem oestlichen Diwan einen westlichen entgegenzusetzen, der ein westoestlicher werden musste, da der westliche Dichter die Anschauungen und Formen des Ostens mit denen des Westens verschmolz und getrost die Maske des persischen Sängers anlagen konnte, ohne von der eigenen ausgeprägten Persoenlichkeit einen Deut aufzugeben. In dieser innerlichen angenommenen Maske reiste Goethe in Juli 1814 nach den Rhein-und Maingegenden. Das erste lakonische Wort des Reisetagesbuch ist: "Hafis."'
- ^G Friedrich Martin von Bodenstedt (1819–1892), German author and popularizer of the Persian poetry of Omar Khayam through his translations; composer of poetry in the orientazing vein in his pseudonymous work, *Die Lieder des Mirza-Schaffy*, Berlin: R v Decker, 1878.
- ^H The reference must be to Heinrich Heine, *Neue Gedichte*. For an accurate reprint see Heinrich Heine, *Neue Gedichte*, Stuttgart: Reclam, 1995.
- ^I Georg Friedrich Daumer (1800–1875); Heinrich Leuthold (1827–1879); Adolf Friedrich von Schack (1815–1894). The other figures referred to here have been difficult to trace and remain ambiguous.
- ^J Francesco Saverio Nitti, *La decadenza dell'Europa*, Firenze: R Bemporad, 1922; the work appeared in English as *The Decadence of Europe: Paths of Reconstruction*, F Brittain (trans), London: Unwin, 1923.
- ^K As translated by A J Arberry in *The Koran*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, p 240 (Surah 13.12).
- ^L Amanullah Khan (1892–1960), ruler of the Emirate of Afghanistan from 1919 to 1929, succeeded in attaining the independence of Afghani foreign affairs from the United Kingdom.