

## Sa'di and Shakespeare: A Comparative Study of Some Common Themes

Shadi Mohyeddin Ghomshei<sup>[a],\*</sup>; Hossein Mohyeddin Ghomshei<sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>[a]</sup>Ph.D. Candidate in English Literature, Islamic Azad University, Central Tehran Branch, Iran.

<sup>[b]</sup>Ph.D. in Islamic Theology and Philosophy, University of Tehran, Iran.

\*Corresponding author.

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### Abstract

This paper aims at showing that although the two great world poets Muslih al-Din Sa'di (c.1184-1291) and William Shakespeare (1564-1616) hailed from far different historical eras and cultures and were the product of separate religious and social environments, in their basic ideas and ideals they shared so much in common that they seemed to be coming from the same realm of thoughts. To demonstrate this, we have narrowed down the subject of our study to a thematic comparison of key subjects that these two genius poets shared in common, concentrating on certain general topics that were beloved of both writers, *viz.* music, co-mpensation theory, love, the dignity of man and the immortality of the soul. In this manner, we hope to demonstrate how both poets acted as universal mirrors reflecting our common human nature and shared similar if not virtually identical ideas regarding basic issues of humanity.

**Key words:** Sa'di; Shakespeare; Comparative study; Music; Compensation theory; Love; Dignity

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### INTRODUCTION

Since its birth in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, comparative studies have received much thought and attention. Traditionally, comparative studies investigated the connection among

texts in different languages or explored the influence of one text or author over another. However, modern scholars such as Rene Wellek have observed that comparative literature today is in a state of crisis and requires a redefinition and reconsideration. Consequently, there is an evolving search for the present state of comparative literature and there is an ongoing debate on what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has called “the death of a discipline”. In order to avoid the contemporary controversies on the subject and prevent from stepping into dangerous waters, this paper abides by the traditional method of doing a comparative research in the sense that it will concentrate on parallels and similarities between the two writers compared. Considering that readers are already to some extent familiar with the background of Shakespeare, we shall commence with a very brief overview of Sa'di's heritage and then proceed with the discussion.

#### A. An Overview of Sa'di's Life and Works

Shaykh Muslih al-Din known as Sa'di, one of the greatest Persian classical poets, was born in 1184 in Shiraz in south-western Persia. He attended the famous Nizamiyya College in Baghdad, where the great Muslim theologian Abu Hamid al-Ghazali had taught a century earlier. He lived during a tumultuous time which began with the Mongols' conquest of Persia and Central Asia, and by mid-century had witnessed the downfall of Baghdad and the overthrow of the last Abbasid caliph. Sa'di was a great traveller who narrated many of his adventures in both his poetry and prose. In one of his key works, the didactic, moralistic and mystical poem in rhyming couplets known as the *Bustan* (Orchard, completed in 1257 in the poet's mature years), he tells us that he was an orphan from an early age: “Full well I know the pains that orphans bear, /For as a child I lost my father's care” (Arberry, 1994, p.188). His *Gulistan* (Rose-Garden)—probably his best-known work completed some time after that—features a variety of short parables on subjects ranging from admonition to monarchs, the

benefits of silence to the morals of dervishes, as well as featuring poems containing advice and humorous criticism both in prose and verse. The two works are closely interconnected in attitude and content. Sa'di was Persia's Muslim humanist *par excellence*, and his writings address universal issues faced by all mankind. Besides being a moralist and didactic preacher, Sa'di is also celebrated as one of the greatest lyric (*ghazal*) poets of Persia, who was the author of some of the greatest romantic love lyrics (*ghazals*) in any of the world's literatures.

### B. The Fraternity of Fame of Sa'di and Shakespeare

Shakespeare's supremacy in the world of English literature is indisputable. Numerous writers and philosophers of great eminence have praised Shakespeare as the zenith of genius in poetry and drama. It has been said that "every drop of the Thames is liquid history and almost every line of certain passages of Shakespeare is solid quotation." (Knowles, 1999, p.15). Ben Jonson famously celebrated his immortality by stating that "He was not of an age, but for all time." (Kemp, 2004, p.272). Shakespeare's fame also transgressed the borders of his native land and language. He was highly praised by Goethe (1749-1832) who acknowledged his supreme stature as follows "Shakespeare had already exhausted the whole of human nature in all its tendencies, in all its heights and depths, and that, in fact, there remains for him nothing more to do" (Axson, 1932, p.152).

Similar assertions very much in the same vein have been made regarding Sa'di. Reynold A. Nicholson (1868-1945), arguably the most eminent scholar, critic, and translator of Persian literature of his day, characterized him thus in verse:

O full of human wisdom, happy sage,  
A Persian Horace, mingling on thy page,  
Where childhood learns to read, age reads to learn,  
Moral with Gay and tale with truth in turn;  
Which as we read, our fancy so beguile,  
The matter pleases for the golden style,  
A style that softly winning, simply dressed,  
Endears the topic and refines the jest.

(Inglis, 1958, p.1141)

In order to show Sa'di's greatness in these verses, Nicholson has compared him to the great Roman critic, Horace (65-8 B.C.). He also mentions the one exclusive characteristic that marks Sa'di's style: his inimitable fluency of speech in both verse and prose.

Malek al-Shu'ara Bahar (1884-1951), the famous contemporary Persian poet, likewise celebrated the sublime literary and spiritual stature of Sa'di as follows:

Truly Sa'di's work is like a rose garden,  
His fine odes are like the tulip and sweet basil.

He himself is a prophet and his work is like unto the Qur'an.

Whosoever rejects him is like unto Satan.<sup>1</sup>

Bahar's encomium which compares the eloquence of Sa'di's writing to the inimitability of the Qur'an makes one recall that in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century many households in Europe and United States often had only two works on their shelves: *The Bible* and the plays of Shakespeare.

Whatever Shakespeare has written is quotable, whence the proliferation of so many anthologies of his sayings. There is a humorous anecdote told of two American ladies visiting London, who went to attend some plays by Shakespeare. Having read nothing but heard much about his plays, they were eager to witness at first hand the effect of his dramas performed live on the English stage. So they went to see *Hamlet* (c. 1599). After the play an interviewer asked them: "How was the play?" "What do you think of Shakespeare?" One of them answered: "After all, he is not such a great man; he has simply tossed together some popular quotations and turned these into a play!"

Similarly, Sa'di is the most quoted poet of Persia so that his complete work can properly be entitled "Quotations from Sa'di".

## 1. SELF-PRAISE IN THE WORKS OF SA'DI AND SHAKESPEARE

Most of the great poets of the world have praised themselves and their own works in their poetry. Although self-praise is not good moral practice, in poetry it is licensed and even appreciated. Sa'di and Shakespeare have both praised themselves to a high degree. Shakespeare in his sonnet 55, for instance, when talking to his beloved, states that none of these marble monuments will outlive my powerful poetry and you will shine in my poetry more brightly than that "unswept stone" (Duncan-Jones, 1997, p.221) that from the disrespect of time has become dirty. Before death that destroys everything, you will step forward and till the Judgement Day when you arise, you will stay immortal in my poem. At the end of sonnet 19 Shakespeare likewise reproaches devouring time for its ravage of all youth and beauty, but boldly continues to say: "Yet do thy worst, old Time, despite thy wrong/ My love shall in my verse ever live young" (p.149). In these verses (and many others) he praises his own poetry which he claims is immortal.

Sa'di similarly commends his own poetry in numerous verses. In one *ghazal* he attributes all his merit to divine grace: "No one can surpass my poetry, nor thy beauty/ This is the perfection of the art of speech and beauty"

<sup>1</sup> Translation is ours.

(Mosaffa, 2006, p.349).<sup>2</sup> In two other odes, he addresses himself as such “Sa‘di, there is no limit and measure to your speech’s sweetness / The garden of your poetical gift is full of sweet singing birds” (p.438), and

You have conquered the whole earth with the sword of your words,

Take no pride, that is nothing but a heavenly grace and gift

The river of your poetry has such a wide flowing in the world

That even the Tigris fails to compare. (p 635)

And just like Shakespeare, he vaunts his verse’s immortality: “The passion of Sa‘di is not a story that will remain a secret/ It is a tale found in every corner of the globe” (p.390).

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## 2. SA‘DI AND SHAKESPEARE ON MUSIC

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Music is one important theme common to both poets. They are both highly appreciative of music which they consider to be endowed with celestial grace and have a divine source. They also have emphasized the truth that the farther one goes from music, the farther one is taken from ethical refinement and morality. In *The Merchant of Venice* (c. 1596), Shakespeare remarks that a man who does not enjoy music certainly possesses a malevolent character; such a person is disloyal, treacherous, immoral and untrustworthy:

The man that has no music in himself,  
Nor is not mov’d with concord of sweet sounds,  
Is fit for treason, stratagem and spoils;  
The motion of his spirit are dull as night,  
And his affections dark as Erebus;  
Let no such man be trusted. Mark the music.

(Greenblatt, 1997, p.1140)

Since music, which is all harmony and beauty, is closely related to the Platonic sense of health and goodness, the farther one is from music, the nearer one is to all sorts of wickedness. In the second chapter of *Gulistan*, Sa‘di remarks in a similar fashion on the ability of music to transform and refine brutish humours into humane character: “See how the camel’s head is turned by music into a frenzy of joy/ If thou hast no taste for music thou art an ill-natured brute” (Sa‘di, 1998, p.52); and in the third chapter of *Bustan* he says that “Full of ecstatic melody’s the world, intoxication, frenzy too/ Yet what sees the blind man in the mirror?” (Sa‘di, 1974, p.188) In this respect, we can see how Sa‘di and Shakespeare shared virtually identical views

regarding the importance of music for elevating the moral sentiments of man. Both poets have made a lovely comparison between human life and a musical performance, suggesting that the slightest mistake or break of the just numbers of proper proportions in life’s conducts would turn the sweet music into sour cacophony, and the fair and dainty human relations to harsh and unbearable relations. Here is another relevant passage by Shakespeare:

Music do I hear.

Ha, ha! keep time! how sour sweet music is  
When time is broke and no proportion kept.

So is it in the music of men’s lives.

And here have I the daintiness of ear

To cheque time broke in a disorder’d string;

But for the concord of my state and time

Had not an ear to hear my true time broke.

(Greenblatt, 1997, p.1009)

Similarly, Sa‘di connects disharmony in the strings of an instrument with disharmony in moral conducts of the man and has expresses in refined imagery how the sufferings of the world are in fact a response to our untuned behaviours and how master nature is helping us thus to retune our instrument.

Be thou well behaved that a maligner  
May not find occasion to speak of thy faults  
When the harp is in proper tune  
How can the hand of musician correct it?

(Sa‘di, 1998, p.50)

Shakespeare has a similar passage in *Troilus and Cressida* (1602) confirming the relation between an untuned string and an immoral act which is nothing but to disregard degrees and criteria:

Take but degree away, untune that string,  
And hark what discord follows. Each thing meets  
In mere oppugnancy.

(Greenblatt, 1997, p.1847)

In this sublime and most insightful passage, Shakespeare foretells the complete destruction of man if he continues to play his harsh and horrible cacophony. The poets believed that life is a delicate art and all art depends on the proper and exact following of certain measures and criteria.

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## 3. SA‘DI AND SHAKESPEARE ON COMPENSATION THEORY

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Both poets deem that all our actions in this world, whether good or bad, will have consequences. The consequential

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<sup>2</sup> All translations from this book are ours.

nature of all action in the world has been famously described by Emerson in his essay on "Compensation" (1841), where he wrote that "every secret is told, every crime is punished, every virtue rewarded, every wrong redressed, in silence and certainty. What we call retribution is the universal necessity by which the whole appears whenever a part appears" (Sampson, 1900, p.55). In other words, if you do something good, you will receive goodness in return and if you commit an evil act, the outcome that you reap will not be good.

In Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (c.1603) the three witches in the opening scene of the play sing a sinister song, repeating this demonic phrase: "Fair is foul and foul is fair; hover through the fog and filthy air". Such a diabolic refrain, which is expressly contrary to all human values revered by mankind worldwide, can only be the chant of demons and witches. Shakespeare in this play, as well as in almost all his other plays, aims at disproving this devilish statement and reinstating the eternal truth that, on the contrary, fair is always fair and foul always foul. The main theme of *Macbeth* is Shakespeare's dramatic confirmation of what Emerson calls the theory of compensation, a universal law that is imprinted in the heart of every man.

Throughout several soliloquies in the first act, Shakespeare shows us how Macbeth and Lady Macbeth intuit, deep within their hearts, that they are acting amiss and that all their deeds are but misdeeds. That is why Lady Macbeth calls upon the devilish spirit, invoking:

Come, you spirits  
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,  
And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full  
Of direst cruelty. Make thick my blood,  
Stop up th'access and passage to remorse,  
That no compunctious visiting of nature  
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between  
The'effect and it. Come to my woman's breasts,  
And take my milk for gall, you murdering minister,  
Wherever in your sightless substances  
You wait on nature's mischief. Come, thick night,  
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,  
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,  
Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark  
To cry "Hold, hold!"

(Greenblatt, 1997, p.2572)

Macbeth is also fully aware that there is no way to "trammel up" the consequences of the murder. He contemplates the murder, saying "If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well/ It were done quickly. If th' assassination/ Could trammel up the consequences, and catch/ With his surcease success" (p.2574). In the second act, we find Macbeth filled with fear at the consequences of his murder of the king:

Whence is that knocking?  
How is't with me when every noise appals me?  
What hands are here! Ha, they pluck out mine eyes.  
Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood  
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand would rather  
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,  
Making the green one red. (p.2579)

In many of his other plays as well, Shakespeare reiterates the same moral truth. *King Lear* (c. 1603) is a perfect example of this: Lear was cruel and unjust to his third daughter and all the misfortunes and troubles he faced throughout the play were the bitter fruits of that initial injustice. Sa'di elaborates on the same issue. He states in one of his lyrics: "Dates shall not grow upon these thorns that we have sown/ A silken robe cannot be sewn out of this rough wool that we have spun" (Mosaffa, 2006, p.532).

Rather than narrating long stories to prove his point that the consequences of whatever you do in this world, good or ill, will come back to you as repayment in another form, Sa'di coined monumental maxims and memorable sayings, the supreme texture of his verses or well-organized phrases echoing with an incontrovertible ring of truth that more analytical prose based on rational arguments somehow lack. In every corner of his *Gulistan* and *Bustan*, lovely sayings to this effect abound: "Moses, upon whom be peace, thus advised Korah: "Do thou good as Allah has done unto thee. But he would not listen and thou hast heard of his end" (p.125).

In the *Bustan*, the following advice addresses the same theme as well: "Never in my life have I heard/ That good itself did offer to an evil man!" (Sa'di, 1974, p.44). In another anecdote Sa'di once again insists that

If evil you do, look not unto good,  
For the tamarisk never bears grapes for fruit;  
I think not, my friend sowing barely in autumn,  
That you will lift wheat at harvest time-time!  
.....  
Oleander-wood will not produce a fruit of ripe dates;  
As the seed you sow, so look unto the fruit! (p.45)

#### 4. SA'DI AND SHAKESPEARE ON LOVE

The main theme of both Shakespeare's sonnets and Sa'di's lyrics is love. However, in Shakespeare's sonnets the notion of love tends towards a Platonic vision of *Eros* similar in conception to Shelley's "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" (1817), that is, largely celebratory of a pure, abstract beauty—albeit a beauty always reflected in sentient human forms. Both the handsome young friend of Shakespeare and his Dark Lady are thus ciphers, symbols and manifestations of Platonic love. This is particularly evident in the sonnet 53 in which he praises



the eternal beauty omnipresent in all manifestations of natural scenery and reflected in all modalities and manifestations of humanity.

One of the most famous love sonnets of Shakespeare is sonnet 18 which starts with the following line: "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" (Duncan-Jones, 1997, p.147) In this poem Shakespeare reflects on his beloved, praising her (keeping in mind that in England summer is the pleasantest season of the year) as more beautiful and lovelier than a summer's day. Summer is too short and the strong winds shake the flower "buds of May". Sometimes the sun is too bright and shining; at other times its gold complexion darkened. Although fairness in all beautiful things is subject to diminution and decline, "thy eternal summer shall not fade." He concludes that "so long as men can breathe or eyes can see" (Duncan-Jones, 1997, p.147) she will live in his poetry and his poetry will give her life until all eternity.

In sonnet 116, which is, of course, the best known love sonnet in the English language, he remarks that love by definition is unchanging and constant, true love not fluctuating in devotion to the beloved, being "an ever-fixed mark" which despite the passage of time "alters not with his brief hours and weeks" (p.343).

Very similar, if not identical, ideas appear in Sa'di's seemingly erotic lyrics. As with Shakespeare, love in the lyric works of Sa'di mostly tends to be spiritual and intellectual, the beloved is in fact a ray of or a reflection cast by the pre-eternal beauty of God, and earthly love a reflection of divine love, with the imagery of physical love representing metaphysical aspirations, since as the Sufi doctrine goes, only by medium of earthly, human, "figurative love" (*'ishq-i majazi*) may anyone cross over the bridge to reach the farther shore of divine, "real love" (*'ishq-i haqiqi*). We can say that whereas in his *Gulistan* Sa'di mostly deals with earthly love, its intensity and sufferings, in the *Bustan*, love assume mystical and transcendental dimensions. Thus we read in the story of the (historically speaking purely) homosexual relationship of Sultan Mahmud and his slave Ayaz, Sa'di has Ayaz praise his love for Sultan Mahmud, comparing it to the love of the saints for God. The saints, he writes: "Do naught desire of God but God/ If to your friend's beneficence you have an eye, and not to him,/ To self you are in bondage, not bound by the friend" (Sa'di, 1974, p.112).

The lyrics of Sa'di are short poems called *ghazal* which etymologically refer to love and love making. *Ghazal* is almost of the size of a Shakespearean sonnet dealing with various themes and ideas. A *ghazal* follows a fixed rhyming pattern and can be composed in various different rhythms and meters and unlike a sonnet it is not bound to follow a unified thought or feeling, but every single couplet of which can be an independent expression of a complete idea; thus, we can hardly

compare one Shakespearean sonnet to a *ghazal* of Sa'di except for the general ideas about love and the beloved's beauty. Sa'di is a poet who takes a glance at from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven and so intermixes heaven with earth that satisfies all groups of lovers in a single *ghazal*. In one *ghazal* Sa'di has actually made earthly love a prerequisite of the heavenly and spiritual love; heavenly pleasures expressed in erotic language clearly indicates to Sa'di that those who expect such pleasures only in paradise and make no love here with a fair maid are losing both here and the hereafter: "What is going to do in paradise/ One who loves not a *hour*-like mistress here on earth?" (Mosaffa, 2006, p.415). But Sa'di's universal love is represented again in woman's beauty and is addressed by various symbolic references as, the Chinese idol, the singular friend, the Leyli, and many other proverbial mistresses in Persian and Arabic tradition. Sa'di, like Shakespeare, often addresses her with a mysterious "thou". "Roaming in the gardens and meadows,/ The sweet scent of roses and happy songs of the sweet birds inebriated me;/ But, when haply I remembered thee/ All thoughts of these beauties and pleasures were drowned in oblivion" (p.350). This reminds one of Shakespeare's ending part of the sonnet 29 where he says: "Haply I think on thee" (Duncan-Jones, 1997, p.169).

In the following *ghazal*, Sa'di reveals the secret and unveils all imagery and expressly declares that all his love and devotion is for the creator of all beauties: "I am verdant and blooming from the one who has created this verdant and blooming world/ I am in love with the whole world, for the whole world belongs to Him" (Mosaffa, 2006, p.381). We see the *ghazal* is a universal call to love and an exuberant expression of the beloved's incomparable beauty. This intellectual beauty is the much praised wine in Persian literature because the wine removes all selfishness and enables the pilgrim soul to contemplate eternal truth.

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## 5. SA'DI AND SHAKESPEARE ON THE DIGNITY OF MAN

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Sa'di and Shakespeare have both praised man as the paragon of perfection and the zenith of creation. Shakespeare's glorious commendation of man is repeatedly heard throughout his plays and poems, but is perhaps best crystallized in the following passage in *Hamlet*:

What a piece of work is man. How noble in reason.

How infinite in faculty, in form and moving how express and admirable,

in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a God—the beauty of the world—the paragon of animals!"

(Greenblatt, 1997, p.1697)

Likewise, Sa'di, the Middle Age forerunner of Humanism of Renaissance, has summed up all his lofty laudations of the dignity of man in a *ghazal* with the refrain "Humanity":

Man's body is noble because of its soul,  
the beautiful vest is not a sign of humanity,

Though wouldst hardly be called a man when thou art  
a captive to demon

Man can attain to such a lofty station where he sees  
nothing but God.

Behold then the height of humankind in greatness and  
grandeur. (Mosaffa, 2006, p.408)

This station has often been called by psychologists a cosmic or extended consciousness and a mystical experience. The main characteristic of this state of consciousness is a strong sense of unity and integration and an intuitive conviction that all is One, all is God. The seer, the seen and the sight become one.

In *Julius Caesar* (c. 1599), a man worthy to be called the name, is one who is noble, virtuous, honest and in the line of perfect golden mean which is so highly praised by mother nature and repeatedly confirmed by Shakespeare in different expressions such as "moderation" and "temperance":

*Anthony*: This was the noblest Roman of them all.

All the conspirators save only he  
Did that they did in envy of great Caesar.

He only in a general honest thought  
And common good to all, made one of them.

His life was gentle, and the elements  
So mixed in him that Nature might stand up  
And say to all the world, "This was a man".

(Greenblatt, 1997, p.1588)

Such a man worthy of the name is indeed a true man and this is a line of distinction between man and beast. Also Shakespeare in *As You Like It* (c. 1599), has bestowed such high elevation to man. Shakespeare believes that man, on the condition that he is exempted from commerciality, can achieve a state where he becomes conscious of the secrets of nature and can read the book of creation. This is indeed a lofty and noble quality of man praised by many philosophers and mystic poets such as Plato and Blake. "And this our life, exempt from public haunt,/ Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,/ Sermons in stones, and good in everything" (Greenblatt, 1997, p.1612).

## 6. SA'DI AND SHAKESPEARE ON THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

A main common theme of the two writers is "the immortality of the soul" and the firm belief that we, as human beings, are composed of two separate essences:

The temporal spatial body, and the immortal placeless soul which is like a meaning to the word of body. Shakespeare has created simple images to convey this duality and to introduce the death-event as the time when the body and the soul separate. In the well-known soliloquy of *Hamlet*, Shakespeare has likened death to a sort of sleep though not without dreams as some materialists have thought:

To die, to sleep-

To sleep, perchance to dream. Ay, there's the rub,  
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come  
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil

Must give us pause.

(Greenblatt, 1997, p.1705)

Here the fear of death is not, as the materialists believe, the fear of complete annihilation and disappearance of man's whole being, but rather a fear of the unknown sufferings and perils we may experience in our new life after death. Shakespeare says that if it was not for the dread of something after death,

Who would bear the whips and scorns of time,  
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,  
The pangs of disprized love, the law's delay,  
The insolence of office, and the spurns  
That patient merit of th'unworthy takes,  
When he himself might his quietus make  
With a bare bodkin? (p.1705)

So Shakespeare both confirms the life we have in front of us and explains why we bear the present innumerable sufferings and dare not to relieve ourselves from the chains of life. Hence from this single soliloquy we may get the idea of the duality of body and soul and that the body is just a mortal coil out of which our limitless soul creeps out like a snail to start a new life.

This is not all Shakespeare has said about immortality. There are many other passages in his works that affirm the same idea. We will just refer to a short passage in *Antony and Cleopatra* (c. 1606) as well as a longer piece from his sonnet 146 which is a dialogue between the soul of the poet and his mundane self. In the first passage we hear Cleopatra expressly talking of her longings of immortality: "Give me my robe, put on my crown; I have/ Immortal longings in me. Now no more/ The juice of Egypt's grape shall moist this lip" (Greenblatt, 1997, p.2704).

This longing which throbs in every man's heart is, according to Plato, a sure sign of the truth of immortality, otherwise who could have incited this deeply drenched feeling in man.

Sonnet 146 is a well-known and extensively discussed poem of Shakespeare on this subject:

Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth,  
Feeding these rebel powers that thee array,  
Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth,  
Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?  
Why so large cost, having so short a lease,  
Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?  
Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,  
Eat up thy charge? Is this thy body's end?  
Then soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss,  
And let that pine to aggravate thy store;  
Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross,  
Within be fed, without be rich no more:  
So shalt thou feed on death, that feeds on men,  
And death once dead, there's no more dying then.  
(Duncan-Jones, 1997, p.409)

The sonnet sums up all the ingredients of the belief in immortality such as the duality of body and soul, and the reference to the body as a "fading mansion". The last delightful expression that devouring death will finally be devoured by man and there would be no more death ever after is the zenith of a religious belief.

Sa'di, similarly, enjoys a rich repertoire of expressions on the ideas of immortality, the dualism of body and soul and the imperishability of the soul as the quintessence of man. One is the following line where he has likened death to the flight of a captive bird from a cage: "O Sa'di you think of the day when you break the Nature's cage/ And let the bird of thy soul fly back to her nest" (Foroughi, 2006, p.716).<sup>3</sup>

Duality of body and soul runs through all the works of Sa'di. Body is a substance we have borrowed from matter and soul is a divine breath that gives meaning to the word of body. The story of dust to dust is true and Sa'di repeatedly refers to it as an insightful event. But the soul like a bird flies back to the Elysian gardens, of course, if she has not hurt her wings. Yet, even in that case, according to the good god-like Sa'di, she will be recuperated by God's grace and prove worthy of the celestial dwellings. "This is the end of the story of the body (that turns to ashes)/ But who knows where the darling soul shall fly when it outsoars the body" (Mosaffa, 2006, p.453).

But despite such a warning look at death, both Shakespeare and Sa'di call people to enjoy life to the last moment and think not of death but as an edifying thought to keep them to the road of virtue. Sa'di has presented concrete images to depict the true relationship between the body and the soul and to portray delightful pictures of the event of death. The following lines are only a few examples of the same: "The world here is but a bridge to the world hereafter/ Who would settle down on the bridge" (p.594), "Thy soul is a traveler in a caravan

and this world is a pond where the travelers pause to quench their thirst and resume their journey to their final settlement in the next world" (p.583).

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## CONCLUSION

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In conclusion we wish to recapitulate the main ideas behind this project and offer some suggestions for students and scholars who may be interested in working on similar projects. This project guides us to an interesting fact that it is possible to have two great world geniuses from far off lands and cultures, divided by four centuries of critical time and yet find that: They are true universal mirrors to all humanity and well reflect their common ideals, likes and dislikes; they have left a rich heritage of stories, quotations and proverbs of deep wisdom and insight to peoples of various cultures; their lyricism touches the heart of man, exciting similar emotions on love, jealousy, ambition, etc.; the literary language and devices is engaging and delightful to a wide range of readers and can warm up their respective peoples despite cold filters of translations. All this will help us to concentrate on the common human nature whether in beauty, morality or love and therefore we can take all human literary heritages as one precious legacy which can be offered to all humanity as the true heirs of such treasures. The more we introduce our prominent literary figures to each other, the more we understand how true is the famous saying of Sa'di written on the gate of United Nations: "Human beings are like the members of the same body/ For they are all created of the same essence" (Mosaffa, 2006, p.18).

Rudyard Kipling, the great nineteenth century English writer, once famously commented that "East is east, west is west, and never the twain shall meet" (Browning, 1969, p.160), but as we have seen from this short study, they do meet in great poets like Sa'di and Shakespeare.

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<sup>3</sup> Translation is ours.

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