

Wilderness House Literary Review 10/3

translated by Dennis Daly
Five Ghazals by Alisher Navoiy
Versions from the Uzbek

Fortune's wheel halts heavily before your dark eyes:
My soul suspended in the absence of those eyes.
Life-promising potions concocted into poison
Bringing me nearer to death, unveil your dark eyes.
A world of suitors entranced as you at your loom weave
A dream of self. They love you, your ravishing eyes
That once held me close in their wondrous draw
Now alien beyond my borderland. Your eyes
Burn into mine until brimmed with salt-spiked tears
Which flow, unburdened, into the channels of your eyes.
My very soul solidifies what once was vapor
And vapor becomes friend—your body, your dark eyes.
When Navoiy wrote his poems of yearning love,
Lovers heard him, his songs of dark, infinite eyes.

Lost in my love's absence, I feel her in my heart:
Her teasing words touch the pulse of my lonely heart.
My eyes redden and blur forever the outside world.
The pain of loss does not recede from a helpless heart.
A nightingale, I swooped from flower to flower;
Now your tresses have snared me, held me to your heart.
In the center of this garden, a lovely cypress,
Long-limbed haven, found in flight by trembling bird-heart.
Breathless, I search in vain for love's lost tokens,
Remember Farhad and Majnun, death's secrets in one heart.
Those who suffer, lovers all, are no different,
Unseen her melody touches those of a same heart.
Navoiy, why do you complain of meetings and partings?
Give thanks for those long moments that still fill your heart.

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Tulip fields blaze the face of my soul's fire.
Sunssets sear across the sky, touch the earth with fire.
Light radiates through that flesh-façade to essence.
Without fortune and prospect, I ignite with the fire
Of impatience—the guards of prudence have vanished:
My caravan defenseless to the coming fire.
A lightning flash has struck and changed me utterly
As rushes burst and spread in a sea of fire.
Did a whirlwind seize and scatter the flower's life?
Did heaven's treachery envelope in fire
The tapering cypress? How could you do it:
Unveil your countenance, unleash my passion's fire?
Understand, Navoiy, I deny my suffering
As the Masandaran forests turned red with fire.

God of grief, my love has left, oh my beloved!
She has taken my life, left her distraught beloved—
Propelled through the sky as an arrow leaves the bow,
The long bow of my timid soul. My beloved
Has fled, the strong seeking out the stronger.
Was it my weakness that lost me my beloved?
Take this lesson: avoid the cruelty of love.
I lived love as a beggar to my beloved.
Tell this tale, you who share this suffering with me,
If, in this world of tears, you have found your beloved.
Know this well, Navoiy, your wanderings are to blame:
The same road is now companion to your beloved.

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She carries infinite worlds of woe and trouble,
The lightness of her eighteen years—all trouble.
Twice eighteen, her beauty will continue to shine
From her dark imaginings, roiling with trouble.
A hundred times her age and a monarch of beauty,
She'll still complain and see only doom-like trouble.
Her looks ordained as only God could ordain them:
A lovely handiwork, untouched by flaw or trouble.
Ravishing aura of silver and moon color,
But a stone heart of profane, reasonless trouble!
Wine! Give me more wine to face these solemn wonders
And duck the diving bats in this world of trouble.
Navoiy, you cannot control your tears that pour forth—
Each tear encompasses her splendor, your trouble.