

## In Memoriam, Leonard Lewisohn (1953–2018)

*Founding Editor of the Mawlana Rumi Review*

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Leonard Lewisohn, the founding editor of this journal, passed away suddenly and unexpectedly on 6 August 2018 in northern California. The current issue of the *Mawlana Rumi Review*, which was largely curated by the late Lewisohn, therefore appears in some sense as a kind of literary memorial gathering, with each page, as it were, a mourner/celebrant in a scholarly procession of remembrance. In the following famous ghazal, Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, articulates a kind of will and testament, instructing family, friends, and well-wishers about the attitude and demeanor he wishes them to adopt at his funeral procession:

گن مبر که مرا درد این جهان باشد	روز مرگ چو تابوت من روان باشد
به دوغ دیو درافتی - دریغ آن باشد	برای من مگری و مگو دریغ دریغ
مرا وصال و ملاقات آن زمان باشد	جنازهام چو ببینی مگو فراق فراق
که گور پرده جمعیت جنان باشد	مرا به گور سپاری مگو وداع وداع
غروب شمس و قمر را چرا زیان باشد	فرو شدن چو بدیدی برآمدن بنگر
لحد چو حبس نماید خلاص جان باشد	تو را غروب نماید ولی شروق بود
چرا به دانه انسانیت این گن باشد	کدام دانه فرورفت در زمین که نرسد
ز چاه یوسف جان را چرا فغان باشد	کدام دلو فرو رفت و پر برون نامد

دهان چو بستی از این سوی آن طرف بگشا

که های هوی تو در جولا مکان باشد<sup>1</sup>

1 Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī, *Kullīyyāt-i Shams yā Dīvān-i kabīr az guftār-i Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad mashhūr bi Mawlawī, bā taṣṣīḥāt va ḥawāshī*, ed. Badī' al-Zamān Furūzānfar (Tehran: Dānīshgāh-i Tīhrān 1336–1346 A.Hsh./1957–1967; 3rd ed., Tehran: Sīpīhr 1363 A.Hsh./1984), vol. 2, p. 209 (ghazal 911).

No doubt Leonard Lewisohn has himself, somewhere among his many publications or unpublished papers, translated this ghazal-length poem of Rūmī, but he always encouraged others, myself included, to submit translations for these pages, and so he perhaps might not have objected to the following blank verse experiment:

The day I die, as my bier is borne grave-ward,  
 don't think I am missing this world at all.  
 Don't weep for me, do not cry out, 'Alas!'  
 The only cause to cry 'alas' would be  
 you sinking into grief's fiendish morass.  
 So don't look on my corpse and say, 'What loss!'  
 That is my hour of vision, my tryst with God!

Leave me in the earth, but do not bid 'Farewell!'  
 ~ the grave's a passageway to paradise.  
 You saw me lowered, now look for rising up!  
 What harm comes to the sun or moon by setting?  
 What seems to you like setting is a dawning.  
 The crypt's no prison, it's the soul's release.  
 Do seeds not sprout when planted in the earth?  
 Why doubt the seed of your humanity?  
 Your soul's a Joseph in the well! Why cry?  
 What bucket lowered does not come up full?  
 Your mouth is stopt down here, but open it  
 up there. Raise up your voice in Placeless realms!

Leonard, or Lenny as everyone called him, surely knew these lines well. Had Lenny been expecting to leave us so soon – just short of his sixty-fifth birthday and just shy of imminent retirement – I am confident he would have given his friends and well-wishers instructions similar to those given by Mawlānā Rūmī to his disciples. But alongside his wide-ranging knowledge of and abiding love for Persian metaphysical and mystical verse, Lenny also knew English verse copiously well. He had hundreds, perhaps thousands, of lines of both traditions by heart and may very well have chosen to quote a favorite English poet, William Blake for the occasion. Blake's poem on John Milton, as Lewisohn points out in one of his own articles,<sup>2</sup> seems to give us a parallel to the sufi

<sup>2</sup> Leonard Lewisohn, 'Correspondences Between English Romantic and Sufi Poets: An Essay in Anagogic Criticism', *Temenos Academy Review* 12 (2009), pp. 185–226; the quote appears on p. 208.

doctrine of *fanā'* (often translated as 'annihilation' of the Self), particularly in the following lines:

I will arise and look forth for the morning of the grave.  
 I will go down to the sepulcher to see if morning breaks  
 I will go down to self annihilation and eternal death,  
 Lest the Last Judgment come & find me unannihilate  
 And I be seiz'd & giv'n into the hands of my own Selfhood....

....

.... to put off

In Self annihilation all that is not of God alone,  
 To put off Self & all I have, ever & ever. Amen.<sup>3</sup>

But as in Rūmī's poem above, the story about death is not an ending; Blake goes on to imagine Milton beyond death:

THE NATURE of Infinity is this: That every thing has its  
 own Vortex; and when once a traveller thro' Eternity  
 Has pass'd that Vortex, he perceives it roll backward behind  
 His path, into a Globe itself enfolding, like a sun,  
 Or like a moon, or like a universe of starry majesty,  
 While he keeps onwards in his wondrous journey on the Earth,  
 Or like a human form, a friend with whom he liv'd benevolent.  
 As the eye of man views both the East and West, encompassing  
 Its vortex, and the North and South with all their starry host,  
 Also the rising sun and setting moon he views, surrounding  
 His corn-fields and his valleys of five hundred acres square.  
 Thus is the Earth one infinite plane, and not as apparent  
 To the weak traveller confin'd beneath the moony shade.  
 Thus is the Heaven a Vortex pass'd already, and the Earth  
 A Vortex not yet pass'd by the traveller thro' Eternity.<sup>4</sup>

When Leonard Lewisohn passed through the vortex last year, it left behind a tear in the warp and weft of the *Mawlana Rumi Review* and the Anglophone discourse on Sufism and Persian poetry. Lenny Lewisohn was born on

3 In quoting Blake, Lewisohn here followed the edition of G. Keynes, ed. *Blake: The Complete Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1966), pp. 495 and 530 (from Blake's poem on Milton), f. 14: 21–35.

4 William Blake, *The Selected Poems of William Blake*, ed. Bruce Woodcock (Hertsfordshire: The Wordsworth Poetry Library 1994), p. 322.

28 August 1953 to a distinguished and cultured New York family. He was named after his great grandfather, Leonard Lewisohn (1847–1902), who was born in Hamburg to a German Jewish household and sent to New York at sixteen years of age at the end of the American Civil War to open a branch of the family business along with his brothers, Julius and Adolph. Investments in the mining industry made the Lewisohns leading copper magnates, and the Lewisohn family became leading philanthropists in New York, supporting education and the arts.<sup>5</sup> Irene and Alice Lewisohn, the daughters of great grandfather Leonard Lewisohn (and the great aunts of our Lenny), founded the Neighborhood Playhouse at the Henry Street Settlement in Manhattan,<sup>6</sup> among their many other activities, which included riding on horseback through Iran and other parts of the Middle East in search of costumes for the Museum of Costume Art which Irene Lewisohn founded in 1937.<sup>7</sup> Alice Lewisohn belonged to the circle of Carl Gustav Jung and Aniela Jaffé's friends in Zurich, and arranged for Lenny to take classes there when he was still only a teenager. Lenny decided at age sixteen to become a poet, in which intention he was encouraged by his family, with their active involvement in the world of the theatre, dance, and alternative religion. He studied arts and letters for a time in the United States and Europe before deciding in 1973 at the age of twenty to go with his wife, Jane Lewisohn (who had trained in Fine and Studio Arts at the Silvermine School of Arts in Connecticut), from Vienna to Iran.

Jane and Leonard Lewisohn lived for the next five years – half of their twenties – in Shiraz, where Lenny taught English as a second language for the Iran-America Society. They studied together at the (then 'Pahlavi') University of Shiraz, alongside mostly Iranian students, and earned their Bachelor's degrees. Although much of the curriculum at the University of Shiraz was taught in English, the Persian literature courses were naturally enough taught in Persian, and the Lewisohns soon became fluent. Although Lenny's degree came from the department of International Relations, his studies in Shiraz focused on Persian Literature, Islamic Studies, and the history and sociology of the Middle East.

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5 See the obituary article ('necrology') for the great grandfather by L. M., 'Leonard Lewisohn', *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 11 (1903), pp. 199–201.

6 Founded in 1915 and still active. See the website: <http://neighborhoodplayhouse.org/about/our-history>.

7 Jane Lewisohn, personal communication with the author (two emails dated 23 September 2018). The museum in question was since folded into the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York as The Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum. See: [https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/cost/hd\\_cost.htm](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/cost/hd_cost.htm) and [https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/dreh/hd\\_dreh.htm](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/dreh/hd_dreh.htm).

Lenny had been introduced to Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī through the short survey by Reynold Nicholson, *Rumi, Poet and Mystic* (London: Allen and Unwin 1950),<sup>8</sup> and through the auspices of a friend of great Aunt Alice who was one of the members of the Jungian circle – a Franciscan monk named Edward Thornton, who had traveled widely and published on mysticism – the Lewisohns were able to make contact with mystically-inclined individuals in Iran.<sup>9</sup> Few Americans chose to do their undergraduate studies in Iranian universities, but Iran was no *terra incognita* in the wider Lewisohn family: Lenny had read the travelogue of the Cambridge Persian scholar, E. G. Browne's *A Year Amongst the Persians* (London: A. and C. Black 1893), in his father's well-stocked library, and Lenny's grandfather had been personally acquainted with the renowned Iranian art historian, Arthur Upham Pope (1881–1969).<sup>10</sup> Not long before Jane and Lenny arrived in Iran, Pope had been affiliated with the Pahlavi University in Shiraz, from 1966 until his death in 1969.<sup>11</sup> Arriving in 1973, the Lewisohns remained in Iran until December of 1978, when anti-American sentiment made it imprudent to stay longer. Years later, after returning from a month-long sojourn in Tehran in the summer of 2010, Lenny wrote nostalgically about what he referred to as 'my hometown Tehran'. He had felt in his element there because 'the *haqa'iq* and *daqa'iq* of poetry' (the subtle truths and observations revealed by poetry, the realm in which Lenny's thoughts resided) still held sway in the Persophone cultural imagination. This 'sophisticated and advanced' sensibility toward the realm of poetry made him feel at home, despite despair over the post-revolutionary religious rigidities and repression.<sup>12</sup>

Back in the United States, Lewisohn translated numerous works of Dr. Javad Nurbakhsh, a medical psychiatrist and leader of the Nimatullahi Sufi Order, who left Iran for London after the revolution. From 1988 to 1995 Lenny edited the Nimatullahi Order's English-language journal and translated several of

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- 8 Leonard Lewisohn, personal communication with the author (email dated 14 July 2010).
- 9 Thornton wrote a book about his quest: Edward Thornton, *Diary of a Mystic* (London: George Allen & Unwin 1967). Jane Lewisohn, personal communication with the author (email dated 23 September 2018).
- 10 Jane Lewisohn, personal communication with the author (email dated 23 September 2018).
- 11 Pope and his wife Phyllis Ackerman, a scholar of Iranian art, are buried together in Isfahan, but Phyllis survived her husband, living until 1977 in Shiraz, so the Lewisohns' time there overlapped with the waning years of her life. See Noel Siver, 'Pope, Arthur Upham', in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* online (last updated 20 July 2005): <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/pope-arthur-upham>; see also Cornelia Montgomery, 'Ackerman, Phyllis', in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* online (last updated 22 July 2011): <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/pope-arthur-upham>.
- 12 Leonard Lewisohn, personal communication with the author (email dated 28 August 2010).

Dr. Nurbakhsh's books.<sup>13</sup> When Nurbakhsh died in 2008, Lewisohn wrote the obituary notice in *The Guardian*,<sup>14</sup> and wrote in defense of the beleaguered Gonabadi Sufi community in Iran on the several occasions when its centers in Iran were attacked.<sup>15</sup>

Lewisohn studied Arabic as a non-degree student at UCLA in 1982 and then went to the University of London in 1984 to do a doctoral degree in Persian Literature at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). His Ph.D. dissertation, completed in 1988 under the direction of noted scholar of Persian and Turkish literature, Tourkhan Gandjei (d. 2005), took the form of a critical edition of the *Dīwān* of Shams-i Maghribī (d. 810/1408), which Lenny based on collation of five manuscripts of the work and one prior published edition.<sup>16</sup> Lewisohn then served as Research Associate in Esoteric Traditions in Islam, as well as Instructor in the Persian Language in the Department of Academic Research of the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London (1998–2005) until, in 2004, he became Iran Heritage Foundation Fellow and Senior lecturer in Persian and Sufi Literature at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies at Exeter University. Lewisohn taught courses on Sufism and Persian literature here, and in 2008 Exeter University established the Centre for Persian and

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- 13 Among the many works authored by Dr. Javad Nurbakhsh and translated or co-translated by Leonard Lewisohn to English and published through Khaniqahi-Nimatullahi Publications, we may count his poetry collection [*Dīwān-i Nūrbakhsh*, 1980]; *What the Sufis Say* [1980]; *Traditions of the Prophet*, 2 vols. [*Aḥādīth*, 1981]; *The Truths of Love* (Sufi Poetry, 1982); *Jesus in the Eyes of the Sufis* [*Īsā az dīdgāh-i šūfiyān*, 1983]; *Spiritual Poverty in Sufism: Including some Definitions of Spiritual Stations, Mystical States, Time, and Breath* [*Faqr va faqīr*, 1984]; *Sufi Women* [*Zanān-i šūfi*, 2nd revised ed. 1990]; and the 16-volume *Sufi Symbolism* [*Farhang-i Nūrbakhsh*, 1984–]. The journal was titled *Sufi: A Journal of Sufism* (it continues publication as *SUFI: Journal of Mystical Philosophy and Practice*; see the website at: <https://www.sufijournal.org/>). See also the publications page of The Nimatullahi Sufi Order website: <https://www.nimatullahi.org/khaniqahi-nimatullahi-publications/>.
- 14 See Leonard Lewisohn, 'Javad Nurbakhsh', *The Guardian*, 6 January 2009, available online at this address: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jan/07/obituary-javad-nurbakhsh>. Lewisohn confided to me (email dated 20 January 2009) that the newspaper's editor had severely chopped down the article he had written due to space constraints. Lewisohn also wrote a scholarly two-part 'Introduction to the History of Modern Persian Sufism' which, inter alia, details Nurbakhsh's role through the late 1980s (see below, footnote 19).
- 15 He posted to the email list 'Adabiyat' ([adabiyat@listserv.uchicago.edu](mailto:adabiyat@listserv.uchicago.edu)) on this issue in 2006 and 2007, and wrote a report entitled 'Suppression of the Activities, Persecution of Members & Confiscation of the Centres of the Ni'mat'ullāhi Sufi Order in the Islamic Republic of Iran: 1979–1996'.
- 16 Leonard Lewisohn, *A Critical Edition of the Divan of Muhammad Shirin Maghribi* (Tehran: Institute of Islamic Studies, Tehran University – McGill University, and London: School of African and Oriental Studies 1993).

Iranian Studies with Leonard Lewisohn and Michael Axworthy (who also sadly passed away in 2019) as its co-directors.<sup>17</sup> Lenny was about to retire from teaching, and looked forward to having more time for writing projects, including the editorial work for this journal.

Leonard Lewisohn was not a man shy about his opinions, which he would share exuberantly with his colleagues and defend tenaciously. But he listened to the counter-arguments of those who held views different to his own and worked constructively and collaboratively with a wide range of individuals, both as an intrepid organizer of conferences and as an editor of several excellent thematic volumes of articles and essays. He did not shy from hard work but disdained careerism and theoretical pretensions. Having imbibed the traditional values of the liberal arts, he chose the subjects of his study out of a humanistic quest for wisdom and beauty. Metaphysical thought and mystical poetry were for him a mode of being, and scholarship a praxis of understanding. Lenny possessed an impressive amount of Persian verse by heart (I have heard him recite impromptu in the course of conversation from Sanā'ī, 'Aṭṭār, Rūmī, Ḥāfiẓ, Shabistari, Nāṣir-i Khusraw, Nizārī Quhistānī, and Shams-i Maghribī). In this he perhaps followed the example of some of his erudite Iranian teachers, but he had also committed to memory long passages of English verse from the seventeenth century through the Romantics, which one would also hear him recite if it touched on the discussion at hand. With the poetic utterances of both languages thus etched on his heart and in his mind, it is little wonder that he possessed considerable skill as a translator; the terminological precision and creativity Lewisohn displays in rendering Islamic theological and theosophical (*'irfānī*) concepts and phrases in his study of Maḥmūd Shabistari, for example, delights the reader and invites emulation. Besides the many translated passages of Persian poems in his articles and books, Lewisohn also worked face to face with the American poet Robert Bly on translations of Ḥāfiẓ, a collaboration Lenny no doubt hoped would help Ḥāfiẓ win a wider American readership (Bly knows no Persian).<sup>18</sup>

Lewisohn wrote dozens of articles for academic journals and encyclopedias, including entries on individual authors and discrete concepts or practices of *taṣawwuf* for reference works like the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* and the

17 For the Centre for Persian and Iranian Studies see: <http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/iaais/research/centres/cpis/>.

18 Time spent translating with Bly resulted in the volume *The Angels Knocking on the Tavern Door: Thirty Poems of Hafez*, trans. Robert Bly and Leonard Lewisohn (New York: Harper Perennial 2009), but some individual poems also appeared in literary journals, e.g., 'Sit Down by the River (Ghazal #262): HAFEZ,' translated by Robert Bly and Leonard Lewisohn, *Agni* 58 (2003), pp. 225–226.



*Encyclopaedia Iranica* – too many to enumerate each of them here. We might single out among his most significant articles a thorough survey of the *samā'* tradition of devotional listening for the *British Journal of Ethnomusicology*;<sup>19</sup> an investigation into the evolution of the concept of reliance on/trust in God (*tawakkul*);<sup>20</sup> an overview of the history of Sufism in modern Iran;<sup>21</sup> an analysis of the sources of doctrinal positions reflected in the poetry of Nizārī Quhistānī,<sup>22</sup> or of the metaphysics reflected in a single *qaṣīda* by Nāṣir-i Khusraw;<sup>23</sup> a discussion of a hagiographical account of a lesser-known thirteenth-century sufi, Shaykh Kujujī;<sup>24</sup> an introduction to the life and work of the fifteenth-century poet Mashriqī Tabrīzī;<sup>25</sup> a study of Rabindranath Tagore's engagement with Hāfiz and Persian poetry (Lenny's great aunts Irene and Alice had hosted Tagore when he visited New York);<sup>26</sup> and an anagogic comparison of English Romantic poets with Persian mystical poets.<sup>27</sup>

Lewisohn's published books include the already mentioned edition of and introduction to the *Dīwān* of the little-studied Shams-i Maghribī,<sup>28</sup> and his ground-breaking monograph, *Beyond Faith and Infidelity: The Sufi Poetry and*

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- 19 Leonard Lewisohn, 'The Sacred Music of Islam: *Samā'* in the Persian Sufi Tradition', *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 6 (1997), pp. 1–33.
- 20 Leonard Lewisohn, 'The Way of *Tawakkul*: The Ideal of 'Trust in God' in Classical Persian Sufism', *Islamic Culture: An English Quarterly* 73/2 (Apr. 1999), pp. 2–62.
- 21 Leonard Lewisohn, 'An Introduction to the History of Modern Persian Sufism, Part I: The Ni'matullāhī order: Persecution, Revival, and Schism', *The Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 61/3 (Oct. 1998), pp. 437–64, and 'An Introduction to the History of Modern Persian Sufism, Part II: A Socio-cultural Profile of Sufism, from the Dhahabī Revival to the Present Day', 62/1 (Feb. 1999), pp. 36–59. Lewisohn further elaborated on the question of recent Nimatullahi history in a long review article of three books: Leonard Lewisohn, 'Theoretical Extremes of the Study of Mystic Man in Modern Iran: Review Article', *Iranian Studies* 42/2 (Apr. 2009), pp. 285–310.
- 22 Leonard Lewisohn, 'Sufism and Ismā'īlī Doctrine in the Persian Poetry of Nizārī Quhistānī (645–721/1247–1321)', *Iran* 41 (2003), pp. 229–251.
- 23 Leonard Lewisohn, 'Hierocosmic Intellect and Universal Soul in a Qasīda by Nasir-i Khusraw', *Iran* 45 (2007), pp. 193–226.
- 24 Leonard Lewisohn, 'Palāsi's Memoir of Shaykh Kujujī, a Persian Sufi Saint of the Thirteenth Century', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Third Series, 6/3 (Nov. 1996), pp. 345–366.
- 25 Leonard Lewisohn, 'The Life and Poetry of Mashreqī Tabrizī', *Iranian Studies* 22/2–3 (1989), pp. 99–127.
- 26 Leonard Lewisohn, 'Rabindranath Tagore's Syncretistic Philosophy and the Persian Sufi Tradition', *International Journal of Persian Literature* 2/1 (2017), pp. 2–41. The information about Alice and Irene Lewisohn was conveyed to me by Jane Lewisohn in personal correspondence (email dated 23 September 2018).
- 27 Leonard Lewisohn, 'Correspondences between English Romantic and Persian Sufi Poets: An Essay in Anagogic Criticism', *Temenos Academy Review* 12 (2009), pp. 185–226.
- 28 See footnote 16, above.



*Teachings of Mahmud Shabistari* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press 1995), which surveys the life and analyzes the symbolism of the author of the *Gulshan-i rāz*, the fourteenth-century versified exposition of sufi doctrine that proved an influential resource for many later poets. As already remarked above, in *Beyond Faith and Infidelity* Lewisohn provides a rich and sophisticated vocabulary of English terminological equivalents for concepts and ideas, as well as metaphors, that remain central in sufi usage throughout the Timurid period and beyond.<sup>29</sup> The three hefty volumes of the *Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism*, based on conferences Lewisohn organized in the 1990s in London and Washington, D.C., collect dozens of original and significant articles on a wide variety of topics and individual figures of theoretical and practical Sufism, written by both established and younger scholars.<sup>30</sup> Finally Lenny has edited three books about a trilogy of poets who are, each one in his own way, central to Lewisohn's own reading and thinking: 'Aṭṭār's *Spiritual Flight*;<sup>31</sup> Mawlānā Rūmī's *Philosophy of Ecstasy*;<sup>32</sup> and Ḥāfīz' *Religion of Love*.<sup>33</sup> Each of these volumes constitutes a rich resource, the legacy of which resides not solely in the contents of the articles published therein (important as these are), but also in the personal and professional relationships created by the act of bringing together scholars who share similar interests, but who might never have met in one place if not for Leonard Lewisohn's organization vision and determination.

Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī was central to Leonard Lewisohn's scholarly agenda, and beyond that to Lenny's understanding of life, but he published few of his own elegant and erudite translations in the pages of the *Mawlana Rumi Review*.

29 In a letter to the author (dated 21 April 2000), Lewisohn credited Henry Corbin for his attention to terminology. Lenny wrote that Corbin, 'more than any other scholar of the last 200 years in Islamic Studies ... demonstrated the similarities and intellectual fraternity between Western esoteric culture and Persian theosophy.'

30 Leonard Lewisohn, ed. *The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism* (London: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications 1992), and *Classical Persian Sufism: From its Origins to Rumi* (London: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications 1993). These were reprinted as part of a three-volume set, *The Heritage of Sufism*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oneworld 1999), which included an additional volume on a later period: Leonard Lewisohn and David Morgan, eds. *Classical Persianate Sufism: the Safavid and Mughal Period*. A selection of the best articles from *The Heritage of Sufism* was translated to Persian by Majd al-Din Keyvani under the title of *Mirāth-i taṣawwuf*, 2 vols. (Tehran: Nashr-i Markaz 2005).

31 Leonard Lewisohn and Christopher Shackle, eds. *Aṭṭār and the Persian Sufi Tradition: The Art of Spiritual Flight* (London: I. B. Tauris 2006).

32 Leonard Lewisohn, ed. *The Philosophy of Ecstasy: Rumi and the Sufi Tradition* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom 2014).

33 Leonard Lewisohn, ed. *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry* (London: I. B. Tauris 2010).

Lewisohn edited eight issues of the *Mawlana Rumi Review*,<sup>34</sup> in which he published five of his own translations from Rūmī,<sup>35</sup> along with one co-authored article.<sup>36</sup> Lewisohn much preferred to dedicate his editorial efforts at the *Review* to finding new work by others, and he proactively solicited work from younger scholars and from established professors alike, whether in America, Europe, Iran, or Turkey. He solicited all of the articles for the current issue, with the exception of his own. Leonard Lewisohn's article on 'Metaphysical Time' which appears in the current issue of the *Mawlana Rumi Review* is based on a paper he prepared for the Association of Iranian Studies conference in Irvine, California shortly before his untimely death. In retrospect, the theme he chose seems inspired, almost premonitory. It was delivered in his absence by Jane Lewisohn, to whom we are most grateful for helping piece it together from Lenny's computer files.

## 1 The *Mawlana Rumi Review*, Past and Present

The period of gestation leading to the birth of the *Mawlana Rumi Review* was long. In 1975 the late Professor Talât Sait Halman (1931–2014), a well known literary critic and translator who served as the Republic of Turkey's first Minister of Culture, had proposed the creation of an 'International Mawlana Institute, devoted to the study and dissemination of Rumi's mysticism, humanism, art, universalism, music and poetry',<sup>37</sup> as a way beyond the fragmentation of scholarly discourse, for too long shaped by the nationalist agendas of various nation-states of the Middle East claiming to be the heirs of Rumi's legacy, or

34 This tally includes the current issue (IX), but issue VI was guest-edited by Roderick Grierson.

35 From the *Mathnawī*, Lewisohn published the following translations in these pages: 'The Touchstone', *Mawlana Rumi Review* II (2011), p. 46; 'Free Will!', *Mawlana Rumi Review* III (2012), pp. 20–21; 'Riposte to Critics', *Mawlana Rumi Review* IV (2013), p. 84; 'The Music of the Spheres', *Mawlana Rumi Review* VII (2016), p. 197. He also contributed translations of a ghazal and two quatrains by Rūmī on the theme of 'The Religion of Love', *Mawlana Rumi Review* I (2010), p. 108.

36 Maryam Musharraf and Leonard Lewisohn, 'Sahl Tustarī's (d. 283/896) Esoteric Qur'ānic Commentary and Rūmī's Mathnawī: Part 1', *Mawlana Rumi Review* V (2014), pp. 180–203; and 'Sahl Tustarī's (d. 283/896) Esoteric Qur'ānic Commentary and Rūmī's Mathnawī: Part 2', *Mawlana Rumi Review* VII (2016), pp. 106–27.

37 Talât S. Halman, 'The Turk in Mawlana in Turkey', in *The Scholar and the Saint: Studies in Commemoration of Abu'l-Rayhan al-Bīrūnī and Jalal al-Din al-Rūmī*, ed. Peter Chelkowski (New York: Hagop Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies, New York University Press 1975), pp. 217–54, quoting p. 250.

by an orientalist sense of superiority in Europe. Halman envisioned ‘Moslem and non-Moslem countries’ contributing to this institute ‘through their governments, universities, foundations, cultural organizations, and private citizens ... in the spirit of creative scholarship and in recognition of Mawlānā’s internationalism.’<sup>38</sup>

A quarter century later, Gökalp Kâmil (d. 2012) responded to this call by forming the Rumi Institute at the Near East University in Nicosia/Lefkoşa. Gökalp’s energy and acumen, with the unflagging support of Prof. Dr. Şenol Bektaş, then Vice President of Near East University, and Roderick Grierson, helped bring the Rumi Institute at Near East University (Yakın Doğu Üniversitesi) into being.<sup>39</sup> In 2004, through the auspices of the Rumi Institute, Gökalp organized and hosted a conference in Nicosia that brought together a number of scholars interested in the academic study of Rumi, including Carl Ernst, Talât Sait Halman, myself, Leonard Lewisohn, and James Morris. I proposed that if a scholarly association such as the Rumi Institute were to hold annual conferences, the proceedings might be regularly published in a dedicated journal, as the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society had done since 1982.<sup>40</sup> In 2007, Gökalp, the Rumi Institute, and Prof. Bektaş arranged with the Konya Valiliği İl Kültür Müdürlüğü for a symposium in honor of the eight hundredth anniversary of the poet’s birth in 1207, to be held at the Mevlevihane where Rûmî and the close members of his circle are buried, which is to say the shrine of Mawlānā Rûmî, now functioning as a museum (Mevlâna Müzesi).<sup>41</sup> Once again the need for a journal dedicated to the serious study of Mawlānā Rûmî, a journal that could cultivate an ongoing conversation among a cadre of interested scholars from around the world, was discussed. Following up on the idea for a journal after the success of the 2007 conference, Gökalp Kâmil wrote to affirm his support, saying that it was ‘most essential for the continuity of the scholarly studies on Rumi to have a journal of Rumi studies’ which he proposed to support through the Rumi Institute in Cyprus and call *The Journal of Rumi Studies*.<sup>42</sup>

38 Halman, ‘The Turk in Mawlana in Turkey’, *ibid.*, p. 50.

39 See the webpage here: <https://neu.edu.tr/academic/research-centers/research-centers/rumi-institute/?lang=en>.

40 *The Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society* continues to appear to this day as an annual publication; its issues can be seen online: <http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/journals.html>.

41 See the website of the Mevlâna Museum here: <https://muze.gov.tr/muze-detay?DistId=MEV&SectionId=MEV01>.

42 Personal communication from Gökalp Kâmil (Rumi Enstitüsü) to the author (email dated 24 September 2008).

After talking with Lenny about this, who had secured the backing of Robert Gleave and Gareth Stansfield at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies at the University of Exeter for a sister Centre for Persian and Iranian Studies at Exeter, which might serve as a home base for the journal, I suggested that Gökâlþ ask Leonard Lewisohn to serve as the editor.<sup>43</sup> Lenny swiftly and energetically committed to launching such a journal, with Gökâlþ Kâmil and the Rumi Institute providing support.<sup>44</sup> He proposed an editorial and advisory board within days, asking for a vote on one of three potential titles, *Shams: Rumi Review*, or *Mawlana Rumi Review*, or *Sama: The Rumi Review*.<sup>45</sup> Lewisohn then set about arranging for marketing, copy-editing, design, printing and dissemination, and creating a budget.<sup>46</sup> Lewisohn modeled the *Mawlana Rumi Review* on the *Temenos Academy Review*, consulting with the latter journal's editor, John Carey, and the Temenos Academy administrator, Stephen Overy for advice on how to structure the *Mawlana Rumi Review*.<sup>47</sup> Patricia Salazar at Archetype, 'publishers of books and media on traditional wisdom',<sup>48</sup> also gave valuable advice and then agreed to publish the journal.

Lewisohn assembled an advisory council consisting of William Chittick, Carl Ernst, Husayn Muhyiddin Ghomshei, Talat Sait Halman, Mahmut Erol Kiliç, Jawid Mojaddedi, and Ian Netton; the editorial board was to provide more hands-on assistance, and was comprised of Leili Anvar-Chenderoff, myself, Paul Losensky, James Morris, Shahram Pazouki and Muhammad Isa Waley, with Roderick Grierson, Fatemeh Keshavarz and Alan Williams (moving from the advisory to the editorial board), joining later. As it turned out, however, Lenny shouldered most of the editorial and promotional work himself, including repeated public and private appeals for submissions to the journal.<sup>49</sup> His plea went as follows:

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43 Personal communication from the author to Gökâlþ Kâmil (email dated 26 September 2008). Lewisohn had communicated with Jawid Mojaddedi, James Morris, and myself with ideas for structuring the journal the day before (emails dated 25 September 2008).

44 Personal communication from Leonard Lewisohn to Jawid Mojaddedi, James Morris and myself (email dated 1 October 2018).

45 Personal communication from Leonard Lewisohn to Jawid Mojaddedi, James Morris and myself (email dated 8 October 2008).

46 Personal communication from Leonard Lewisohn to Jawid Mojaddedi, James Morris and myself (email dated 1 November 2008).

47 See Leonard Lewisohn, 'Editor's Note', *Mawlana Rumi Review* 1 (2010), pp. 11–15, quoting p. 15. For *The Temenos Academy Review*, see the webpage, here: [https://www.temenosacademy.org/temenos\\_journal.html](https://www.temenosacademy.org/temenos_journal.html).

48 See the Archetype webpage, here: <http://www.archetype.uk.com/home.htm>.

49 For example, in an email (dated 10 August 2009) from Lewisohn to various members of the advisory and editorial boards.

There are journals on almost every minor and major English poet. The journal on A. E. Housman, for instance, is now in its 33rd volume, and *The Merton Journal* (on the contemplative author and monk Thomas Merton) is now in its 16th volume/32nd issue!.... There are good journals devoted to major poets such as Blake, Dante, and Milton, each poet having its own specialist scholarly industry. Scores of theses and books appear each year on each of these poets, so there is no reason why the author of ‘the Koran in Persian’ should not have his own journal devoted to him, especially now that he has reached this extraordinary level of popular appeal in Europe and North America.<sup>50</sup>

Lewisohn published announcements about the journal and a call for papers in the bulletins of various professional societies. He arranged a public launch in May 2010 at the British Library to herald the appearance of the first issue of the *Mawlana Rumi Review*.<sup>51</sup> It was advertised on the website of the Centre for Persian and Iranian Studies at the University of Exeter.<sup>52</sup> Without a regular conference to provide ready-made articles, it took a good deal of work to keep a steady supply of viable submissions, but Lewisohn managed to do that for eight issues, taking a break only once, when Roderick Grierson took over as guest editor for a special issue (VI in 2015) on Rumi and the Mevlevi Sufi Tradition.

Under Lewisohn’s steadfast and indefatigable editorship, the *Mawlana Rumi Review* published eight annual issues, with contributions from a wide range of scholars and translators. Over the course of these eight years, the *Mawlana Rumi Review* has averaged seven or eight substantive articles per issue, five to six book reviews per issue, and three or four original literary translations of Rūmī’s poetry.

Lenny had called a meeting of members of the Advisory Council and the Editorial Board to announce an agreement with Brill to be the new home and publisher for the *Mawlana Rumi Review*.<sup>53</sup> This new relationship with Brill, a venerable institution based in Leiden, with a half-millennium of experi-

50 Lewisohn in the same email (dated 10 August 2009). He made similar remarks in his editorial preface to the first issue: Leonard Lewisohn, ‘Editor’s Note’, *Mawlana Rumi Review* 1 (2010), p. 13.

51 See for example the article Lewisohn wrote about it for *Jadid Online*: [http://www.jadidonline.com/story/27052010/frnk/rumi\\_journal\\_eng](http://www.jadidonline.com/story/27052010/frnk/rumi_journal_eng).

52 See the website here: <https://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/iaais/research/centres/cpis/rumireview/>.

53 For the new *Mawlana Rumi Review* webpage at Brill, see: <https://brill.com/view/journals/mrr/mrr-overview.xml>.

ence publishing scholarly tomes related to the study of the Middle East, will help raise the profile of the *Mawlana Rumi Review*, and make its back issues electronically accessible, thereby broadening its distribution and impact. Unfortunately, Lenny was unable to discuss this exciting development with us in person, as he passed away days before the meeting. Representatives of the Editorial Board did, however, meet with Kathy van Vliet and agreed to find a way forward. The Advisory Council and Editorial Board have since been restructured, and though no one can ever fill Leonard Lewisohn's empty place, a new editor has been agreed upon, *faute de mieux*, to assume his role and continue publication of the *Mawlana Rumi Review*, with the following scope and mission (and a somewhat revised transliteration system):

The *Mawlana Rumi Review* is an academic journal (est. 2010) devoted to the poetry, life, thought, and legacy of Jalal al-Din Rumi (d. 1273), the Islamic Sufi poet who authored some 60,000 lines of poetry, lectures, sermons, and letters in Persian and Arabic, and who founded the Mevlevi (Mawlawiyya) dervish order. The journal publishes original articles, translations of Rumi's poetry done from the original language, book reviews, and reports. The editors welcome articles in English, as well as in French, Persian and Turkish, on the following topics: Historical biography of Rumi and his circle, based on original sources; analysis and interpretation of Rumi's poetry; his adaptation of the literary and Sufi traditions; his narratology and story-telling techniques; hermeneutics; theology and prophetology; theosophy and mysticism; spiritual psychology; erotic spirituality; metaphysics and cosmology; epistemology; ethics; pedagogy; the history of the Mevlevi order; the commentary and interpretative tradition on his works (*The Masnavī*, *Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz*, *Fihī mā fih* and *Majālis al-sab'a*; and the reception and translation of Rumi's thought in modern and medieval literary history and thought.

Although we are now bereft of our founding editor, it is our firm intention that the solid roots planted by Leonard Lewisohn for the *Mawlana Rumi Review* will continue to produce new branches and copious fruit. As Mawlānā Rūmī puts it in one of his quatrains:<sup>54</sup>

54 *Kulliyāt-i Shams yā Dīvān-i kabūr*, ed. Badī' al-Zamān Furūzānfar, 10 vols. (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Tih-rān, 1342 A.Hsh./1963), v. 8, p. 313 (quatrain 1863).

در خاک آگر رفت تن بی جانی      جان بر فلک افرازد شادروانی  
در خاک بنفشه چون پایید بُرُست      چون بر ندمد سرو چنان بستانی

A corpse bereft of soul may sink in earth;  
that soul, though, strikes tent atop the sky!  
Plant violet in the soil awhile, it blooms;  
A rose like him must soon rise up a cypress!