Shiraz University
Journal of *Poetry Studies*
Quarterly, ISSN: 2980-7751
Vol 18, Issue 1, Ser 67, 2026

OPEN ACCESS

Extended Abstract

DOI: 10.22099/jba.2025.52526.4616

Analyzing the Themes of the Final Lines of Ghazals: An Examination of the Themes of the Final Lines of Mir-e Kermani, Khaju-ye Kermani, Emad-e Faqih-e Kermani, and Hafez-e Shirazi's Ghazals

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Introduction

Theme or subject matter is one of the most important semantic aspects of poetry, defining the poet's thought and worldview and conveying the poet's message to the reader. Theme is "the most fundamental and relatively abstract idea that takes concrete expressive form in a literary work" (Modarresi, 2011: 157). The theme of a work is not its topic but the central and main idea that can be expressed directly or indirectly (Cuddon, 2019). This article examines the theme of the final lines (maqta') in the ghazals of three Kermani poets and Hafez-e Shirazi, the great 8th-century poet. It is noteworthy that since Hafez is a stylistic and one of the greatest writers of ghazal in the history of Persian literature, his poetry is used here as a standard and criterion for the eloquence of expression. Determining the theme of a ghazal and researching it is a challenging task because ghazal writers often use imagery and fill the ghazal's

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Article Info: Received: 2025-04-28, **Accepted:** 2025-10-28
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atmosphere with frequently repeated themes, sometimes causing confusion between love and mysticism. Furthermore, due to the artistic ambiguity and aesthetic aspect of the ghazal, the theme is not expressed explicitly.

Method, Review of Literature

In this study, the themes of the final lines of the ghazals written by Mir-e Kermani (comprising 423 couplets), Khwaju-ye Kermani (932 couplets), Emad-e Kermani (699 couplets), and Hafez-e Shirazi (486 couplets) were examined using descriptive-analytical method to answer the following questions:

1. What themes appear in the final lines of the ghazals by Mir-e Kermani, Khwaju-ye Kermani, Emad-e Kermani, and Hafez-e Shirazi?
2. What similarities and differences exist in the quantity and quality of these themes among these four poets?

A review of prior research showed that themes of the final lines are referred to in *tazkirah* (biographical works) and literary history books and discussed generally in specialized ghazal studies such as Shamisa's *The Course of Ghazal in Persian Poetry* (1990), Sabour's *Horizons of Ghazal* (2003), and Rouzbeh's *The Evolution of Persian Ghazal from the Constitutional Era to the Revolution* (2000). There are also studies examining the themes of ghazals of individual poets. Some articles focus on a single ghazal theme, such as Ishani's *The Evolution of Praise Ghazal in Persian Literature* (2014) and Qaderi & Shamsi's *Genre Study of Qalandari Ghazal with Emphasis on Attar and Araqi* (2022). Borgel, quoting Arberry, sees ghazal as having a main theme and a sub-theme, stating that "the final couplet with its distinct subject and theme (which he calls the final or concluding motif) is added to them" (Borgel, 1990, pp. 176–190, cited by Salahi, 2008, p. 39). Another related study is Ahmadipour Anari's (2015) article on "Semantic Use of the Pen Name Shams in Rumi's Ghazals." According to the review, no prior research has directly addressed the thematic focus of the final lines as in the present article.

Discussion

In the final lines of the ghazals by Mir-e Kermani, Khwaju-ye Kermani, Emad-e Kermani, and Hafez-e Shirazi, the following themes are observed:

1. Love: Mir-e Kermani discusses love, the lover, and the beloved in more than 70 percent of his final couplets, while Khwaju concludes 54 percent and Emad 55 percent of their ghazals with the theme of love. In Hafez, however, only 31 percent of the final couplets have the theme of love, as he is a poet who strives to address realistic and meaningful topics, such as advice and criticism, in the closing couplet, rather than combining romantic themes.

2. Mysticism: The three Kermani poets employ mystical themes to a remarkably similar extent, with each dedicating approximately 4 to 5 percent of their work to such subjects; however, Hafez dedicates less than 2 percent of his final couplets to mystical content. Due to the feature of "independence of

couplets" or "pashani," Hafez presents diverse themes and meanings in his ghazals, so there is a much greater thematic variety in his final lines.

3. Boasting (Mofakhareh): All four poets allocate a significant percentage of their final couplets to boasting, with Mir-e Kermani's high proportion being linked to his "unsuitable living conditions" and his need to attract the favor of patrons.

4. Rendaneh Poems: The theme of "rendaneh" in this article refers to verses where poets, under the guise of criticism or advice, seemingly express words that counter social or religious norms. Khwaju writes more rendaneh couplets than the other Kermani poets, resembling Hafez, because he lived in the same environment as Hafez did and observed similar hypocrisies and corruptions. Furthermore, Khwaju's connection to Hafez in this regard is notable. However, both personality and disposition matter; Emad was an ascetic and recluse, unlikely to compose rendaneh poetry involving words like wine or drinking as opposites to piety. Mir-e Kermani, a poet of literal and thematic expression, naturally does not write rendaneh poetry, so this theme comprises less than 1 percent of his final lines; but Khwaju, with his mystical inclination (not ascetic), opposes hypocrisy through rendaneh couplets.

5. Praise: Praise in Hafez's ghazals exceeds that of his three contemporaries by over ten percent, a notable figure indicating Hafez's social standing and acceptance within the ruling courts.

6. Mention of Homeland: Hafez refers to the homeland far less frequently in his final lines compared to the three Kermani poets, as he traveled little and therefore had less need to express love and praise for it.

7. Expression of Personal State: Personal expression in Hafez's final lines is far more frequent than in the three Kermani poets', a key element noted by others and possibly a reason for Hafez's enduring popularity, as personal expression resonates with contemporary readers and is also evident in modern poetry.

8. Prayers: Due to his ascetic and recluse nature, Emad-e Kermani devotes over three percent of his final couplets to prayers, more than the other three poets.

This thematic analysis provides insight into the diversity and proportions of themes in the closing couplets of these four 8th-century poets' ghazals and offers criteria for literary critique accordingly.

Conclusion

By examining the thematic content of the final couplet in the ghazals of three Kermani poets and Hafez, the following results were obtained: The last couplet of a ghazal holds the potential to serve as a research basis for exploring the theme of a poet's ghazals, as it often enjoys semantic independence. This allows, to some extent, accessing the overall theme of the poet's ghazal by studying the theme of the final lines. Another point is that in the final lines, the poet sometimes goes beyond usual ghazal motifs and speaks about themselves, their state, and their era. Therefore, the thematic content is diverse and varied. In

addition to love, the poet addresses themes such as boasting, praise, rendaneh themes, mention of homeland (with praise or blame), personal states, and prayers.

Themes of the final lines can be divided into two categories: "thematic-content themes" and "realistic themes." Thematic-content themes often comprise lyrical themes, while realistic themes express realities or quasi-realities concerning the poet (boasting, personal states, mention of homeland), the praised (praise), or the poet's times (including rendaneh themes). The strength and significance of the final lines lie in these realistic themes, which are not found in other couplets of the ghazal. Hence, in historical, sociological, and psychological research, the final lines have a special place.

An examination of the themes of the final lines in the ghazals of four eighth-century poets showed that the diversity and proportion of the usage of various themes can serve as criteria for the critique of ghazals.

Keywords: Emad-e Kermani, Hafez, Khwaju-ye Kermani, Mir-e Kermani, ghazal, final couplet, theme.

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