

Islamic Mystical Poetry 2

General Reading

J T P de Bruijn, *Persian Sufi Poetry* (London, 1997)

A basic overview of the classical period of Persian poetry, focusing upon the poems rather than the poets. It has a chapter devoted to each of the four main genres of the tradition: the epigram, the homiletic poem, love poetry and symbolic narrative.

A. J. Arberry, *Classical Persian Literature* (London, 1958)

A very good overview from the beginnings of Persian literature and Firdawsi up to Jami in the 15th century. There are chapters on Sa‘di and Rumi and plenty of information on 12-14th century poets and authors.

Annemarie Schimmel, *A Two-coloured Brocade: the Imagery of Persian poetry* (Chapel Hill, 1992).

An excellent study of the main themes in Persian poetry, which developed out of a lecture series she gave at Harvard for more than 20 years. It covers a huge range of periods (from Rudaki in 10th century up to 1958) and geographical areas (from the Persian heartlands to Turkey and Muslim India).

A. J. Arberry, *Persian Poems: An Anthology of Verse Translations* (Everyman, 1954)

An old book, but Arberry was a great expert on and wonderful translator of Persian literature, and this is a good selection of poems, many of which he translated himself. It divides into a different set of categories than Bruijn: Quatrain, Lyric, Ode, Didactic, Idyll and Epic.

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Week 1: Nizāmī Ganjavī

There are few translations of Nizāmī which are really recommendable, and even fewer good studies. Here are just some ways of exploring his works.

Haft Paykar: A Medieval Persian Romance

Translated by Julie Scott Meisami (Oxford, 1995)

The best translation of any of the poems, in rhymed verse, with a good introduction.

Layla and Majnūn

Translated by Rudolph Gelpke (Omega Books, 1997)

The most widely read prose version.

The Poetry of Nizami Ganjavi: Knowledge, Love, and Rhetoric

Ed. Kamran Talattof and Jerome Clinton (Palgrave MacMillan, 2001)

A series of short studies. You can read the introduction, and the first article, which is a comparison of Layla and Majnun with Romeo and Juliet by Jerome Clinton, by going to:

<http://www.google.co.uk/search?tbm=bks&hl=en&q=nizami&btnG=>

Here you will also find a prose version of the stories in ‘Mirror of the Invisible World’, translated by Peter Cholkowski, which are available for reading.

You will also find a section on Nizami and other poets on the course, giving substantial translations taken from the major works on:

<http://persian.packhum.org/persian/main>

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Week 2: Farīd al-dīn ‘Attar

The Conference of the Birds (*Mantiq al-tayr*).

Trans. Afkham Darbandi and Dick Davies (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1984)

A full translation in rhyming couplets of ‘Attar's masterpiece, which was hugely influential on other poets such as Rumi

Fifty Poems of ‘Attar (from the *Dīwān*)

Trans. Kenneth Avery and Ali Alizadeh (Melbourne, 2007)

Persian texts and translation of ‘Attar's ghazals (love poems), with a good introduction to his life and writings

Muslim Saints and Mystics (*Tadhkirat al-awliya* ‘)

Trans. A. J. Arberry (London, 1979)

The only prose work that has survived, this is a rich source of stories about 97 famous earlier Sufis

‘Attar and the Persian Sufi Tradition

Ed. Leonard Lewisohn and Christopher Shackle (London, 2006)

A collection of studies that formed part of a conference in London, giving a broad range of approaches to ‘Attar's work.

Useful links for further information and discussion:

<http://www.amptoons.com/blog/2009/12/13/translating-classical-iranian-poetry-farid-al-din-attar/>

<http://www.amptoons.com/blog/2009/12/30/translating-classical-persian-poetry-why-retranslate-attars-ilahi-nama/>

<http://www.amptoons.com/blog/2009/12/28/translating-classical-persian-poetry-farid-al-din-attars-ilahi-nama/>

<http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/illahi-nama-book-of-god/>

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Week 3: Awhad al-dīn Kirmānī

Heart's Witness: The Sufi Quatrains of Awhādaddīn Kirmānī

Translated by Bernd Manuel Weischer and Peter Lamborn Wilson (Tehran, 1978).

The only major collection of the quatrains, in a sensitive translation.

Sufi Aesthetics: Beauty, Love and the Human Form in the Writings of Ibn ‘Arabī and ‘Irāqī

By Cyrus Ali Zargar (University of South Carolina Press, 2011)

An excellent new book which tackles the question of contemplation of the Divine Image in the forms of the world within the circle of Ibn ‘Arabī. It has a section on Kirmānī with some alternative translations of the poems.

Week 4: Muhyī al-dīn Ibn ‘Arabī: The *Dīwān*

Translations:

Ralph Austin, ‘Two poems from the *Diwan* of Ibn ‘Arabi’ (*JMIAS* VII, 1988)

idem, ‘The Lady Nizam: an image of love and knowledge’ (*JMIAS* VII, 1988)

idem, ‘Three one-line poems from the *Diwan*’ (*JMIAS* XV 1994, XVI 1995, and XVII 1996)

(from this date all *JMIAS* issues have a poem at the beginning, mostly from the *Futuhat*)

Studies:

Claude Addas, ‘The Ship of Stone’, *The Journey of the Heart* (*JMIAS*, 1996)

<http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articles/shipofstone.html>

Ibn ‘Arabī’s Mystical Poetics

By Denis McAuley (Oxford, 2012)

The first extended study of the *Dīwān*, putting Ibn ‘Arabī within the context of the Islamic poetic tradition. With many new translations of the poems.

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Week 5. Muhyī al-dīn Ibn ‘Arabī: *Tarjumān al-Ashwāq*

The *Tarjumān al-Ashwāq*

Translated by R. A. Nicholson (London, 1911 and 1978)

A good, albeit rather old-fashioned, translation of the poems with selections from the commentary and the Arabic text alongside.

Stations of Desire

By Michael Sells (Jerusalem, 2000)

A more modern rendering of some of the poems, with a section of Michael’s own poems inspired by the *Tarjumān* in the middle.

The Zephyrs of Najd

Jaroslav Stetkevych (Chicago, 1993)

A detailed study of the classical Arabic *nasīb* upon which *Tarjumān* is based.

Useful links for articles by Michael Sells on particular poems:

<http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articles/poemtarjuman11.html>

<http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articles/sellswaystations.html>

<http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articles/sellstarjuman.html>

and poems translated in *JMIAS* vol. 50 (2011) and vol. 51 (2012)

as well as a podcast of his talk at the MIAS USA Symposium (2011), entitled

‘Ibn ‘Arabi’s lyric mysticism and the Persian-Arabic love affair’

<http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/podcasts/index.html>