

Islamic Mystical Poetry 3

General Background to the Islamic Mystical Tradition

- **Eric Geoffroy** *Introduction to Sufism* (Indiana, 21010)

A good general overview of the ideas and the history of the Sufi tradition. There is maybe just a little bit too much emphasis on its relationship to Islam, but overall Geoffroy has a pretty balanced perspective.

General Reading on Islamic Mystical Poetry

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

A basic overview of the classical period of Persian poetry, focussing 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.

- Arberry**, *Classical Persian Literature* (London, 1958)

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 times (from Rudaki in 10th century up to 1958) and geographical areas (from the Persian heartlands to Turkey and Muslim India).

- Arberry**, *Persian Poems. An Anthology of Verse Translations* (Dent 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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Weeks 1 & 2: Ibn al-Fāriḍ

- 1) **Th. Emil Homerin** *'Umar Ibn al-Fāriḍ*, Paulist Press, NY, 2001.

The set text for this course. Homerin gives a biography and full translations with notes of *The Wine Ode*, *The Poem of the Way* and 'Alī Sibṭ al-Fāriḍ's early biography.

- 2) **Th. Emil Homerin** *Passion Before Me, My Fate Behind Me*, SUNY, New York, 2011.

A more recent work which is a study of Ibn al-Fāriḍ within the Arab poetic tradition. It has the advantage of covering the whole opus thematically – love, journeying, wine, etc – but does not on the whole include full translations of the poems. There are however substantial extracts which give a very good taste of the range of imagery and tone which Ibn al-Fāriḍ employs.

- 3) **A J Arberry** *Mystical Poems*, Chester Beatty Monograph, Dublin 1956

Translations of all the major poems, with note and summaries, including *The Wine Ode*, but not *The Poem of the Way*, which is dealt with separately in...

4) **A J Arberry, *Poem of the Way***, Chester Beatty Monograph, Dublin, 1952

Full translation with extensive notes.

5) **R A Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism***, Curzon, London, 1921/1994

This seminal work devotes more than 100 pages to Ibn al-Fārid, giving a summary of the underlying metaphysics, a full translation of *The Wine Ode* and about three-quarters of *The Poem of the Way*. Nicholson's translations, as with his rendering of Rūmī's *Mathnawī* and Ibn 'Arabī's *Tarjumān*, have aged very well if you can ignore the 'thee's and 'thy's, and if you want to look at an alternative to Homerin, I would recommend this rather than Arberry.

6) **Giuseppe Scattolin *The Diwan of Ibn al-Fārid***, Institute Français d'Archeologie Orientale, Cairo, 2004.

A full critical edition of all Ibn al-Fārid's poetry in Arabic, very carefully done.

7) **Th. Emil Homerin, *From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint: Ibn Al-Farid, His Verse and His Shrine***, The American University of Cairo, Cairo, 2001.

An excellent study of the life and work of Ibn al-Fārid which is at the same time a study of sanctity within the Islamic tradition.

Papers

<http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articlespdf/alfarghani.pdf>

Giuseppe Scattolin *The Key Concepts of al-Farhānī's Commentary on Ibn al-Fārid's Sufi Poem, al-Tā'īyyat al-Kubrā*

This is actually mostly concerned with the introduction of al-Farhānī's commentary, which is a metaphysical summary of Ibn 'Arabī's ideas, with just a small section on *The Poem of the Way* at the end.

Week 5: Jalal al-dīn Rūmī

Background Reading

Franklin D Lewis *Rumi: Past and Present, East and West* (Oneworld Publications, Oxford, 2000. Revised paperback edition, 2008/2011)

This is now the standard work of reference for the life and work of Rūmī. It is a massive piece of scholarship which has gone back to the original sources to piece together an historically accurate version of his life, the lives of his teachers and development of the Mevlevi order after his death. It also covers details of the poetic forms with which Rūmī was working and includes substantial sections of new translations of the poems, especially from *Dīwān*

Chittick *Sufi Path of Love*, (State University of New York Press (SUNY), NY, 1984)

This is now quite an old book, but it is still the only real attempt to outline the metaphysical foundation of Rūmī's point of view. It includes a lot of new translation, but this is gathered under theme headings and mostly consists of rather unsatisfying short selections from the poems rather than full versions.

Ahmed-e Aflaki, John O’Kane *The Feats of the Knowers of God*, (Brill, Leiden, 2003.)
This is a full and very accessible translation of the most famous biography of Rūmī, written about 100 years after his death. It is a fascinating read which gives a good picture of life in Seljuk Konya, but you should be warned that it is a very biased account of both events and people, largely concerned to establish Rūmī as the foremost spiritual teacher of his day. Those of you interested in Ibn ‘Arabī studies will notice that Alfākī is particularly concerned to elevate Rūmī in comparison with Ṣadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī and his circle.

William Chittick, *Me and Rumi*, (Fons Vitae, Louisville, 2004)
A full translation of the only surviving text by Rūmī’s teacher Shams al-Tabrīzī, giving his account of their extraordinary relationship.

Poetry

Badi‘ al-Zaman Foruzānfar *Kolliyāt-e Shams yā Divān-e Kabir*, (University of Tehran Press, Tehran, 1957-67.)

This is the standard critical edition of the whole *Dīwān* which is generally acclaimed as an excellent piece of scholarship. Abbreviated editions in two volumes are also available.

Franklin Lewis *Rūmī: Swallowing the Sun* (Oneworld Publications, Oxford, 2007.)
An English translation drawn mostly from *Dīwān*. It includes all the poems featured in *Rūmī Past and Present: East and West* plus more.

R A Nicholson *Selected Poems from the Divānī Shamsi-Tabriz*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1898) and ***Rumi, Poet and Mystic***, (George Allen and Unwin, London, 1950, paperback 1973.)

Nicholson was the earliest translator of Rūmī into English and his versions still stand up to scrutiny. The first of these books is probably unavailable now except from antiquarian bookshops, but if you can find it is useful because it has the Persian text (pre-Foruzānfar) as well as the English. The second book consists of a very interesting selection poems, mostly short sections drawn from the *Mathnawī*.

A J Arberry *Mystical Poems of Rumi*, Ehsan Yarshater (Editor), A.J. Arberry (Translator), Franklin D. Lewis (Foreword), Hasan Javadi (Annotations), University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2009.)

Although originally done in the 1950s and 60s, these are probably the best translations of *Dīwān* apart from Franklin’s, and as we saw in class, they have a much more traditional tone and style than his. Arberry originally published two sets of 200 poems, as *Mystical Poems of Rumi 1 & 2*, but this version seems to bring them together in one volume.

R A Nicholson *The Mathnawi of Jalalu'din Rumi: Volumes 1-3* (Gibb Memorial Trust; 2nd Revised edition (31 Dec 1982)

The first complete rendering of the *Mathnawī* into English, in a translation which is both rigorous and beautiful, although somewhat old-fashioned now.

Alan Williams ***Spiritual Verses: The First Book of the Masnavi-ye Ma'navi (Penguin Classics)***

An excellent new translation which unfortunately at the moment only covers the first of the six books. A version on tape, read by Anton Lester, is also available (through Amazon)

Other Material

Mawlana Rumi Review

A new academic journal devoted to work of Rūmī. Three volumes have now been produced. See http://www.archetype.uk.com/rumi_review.htm

For a taste of the famous Mevlevi ceremony of ‘turning’, there are some interesting clips on youtube:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UjSig4DxU_M which has a short commentary by Khabir Helminski, who has published a number of translations of the poems;

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNm76HwBHvM>. This gives a good idea of the music.