

Arabic, Persian, and Turkic Poetics: Towards a Post-Eurocentric Literary Theory is a pioneering book that offers a fresh perspective on Arabic, Persian, and Turkic literature in their interrelations. The authors challenge Eurocentric paradigms while creating a framework for exploring these traditions on their own terms. Authored by an international team of scholars, the chapters centre the conceptual foundations of their respective literary traditions, with a focus on the discipline of comparative poetics (*‘ilm al-balāgha*) in the Islamic world.

By liberating the study of Islamicate literary texts from Eurocentric theoretical paradigms, the book paves the way for a more inclusive global discourse in literary studies. Specifically, the roots of this collaborative research in comparative poetics and in the rhetorical traditions of the Arabic, Persian, and Turkic worlds will foster new methods of close reading that are in line with the aesthetic standards intrinsic to these texts and their traditions. Engaging and insightful, this book is essential reading for anyone interested in broadening their understanding of world literature and literary theory.

Cover: detached album folio, recto, youth reading, Bukhara, 16th century; reproduced with permission from the National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution, Freer Collection, purchase – Charles Lang Freer Endowment, F1931.14



Published for The British Academy
by Oxford University Press
Part of the *Proceedings of the British Academy* series



RASHWAN
GOULD
ASKARI

ARABIC, PERSIAN, AND TURKIC POETICS

PBA
266



ARABIC, PERSIAN, AND TURKIC POETICS

Towards a Post-Eurocentric Literary Theory



Editors

Hany
Rashwan

Rebecca
Ruth Gould

Nasrin
Askari

ARABIC, PERSIAN, AND TURKIC POETICS

A generation ago it could still be written in an authoritative work on comparative poetics that ‘Neither Arabic nor Persian literature has an originitive poetics per se. But they obviously establish a lyric tradition, and the highly developed rhetorical studies seem to serve as surrogates for poetics.’ If one thinks that Aristotle’s *Poetics* and the traditional Western trinity of drama, lyric, and epic must apply universally, one does not do justice to the Middle Eastern tradition. For Arabic, Persian, and Ottoman Turkish literature a different set of standards is valid, and those literatures must be studied on their own terms. This is done in the present volume, the first of its kind: an excellent and coherent collection of studies of literary theory and poetics in the premodern Islamic world, where each language has a literary tradition with its own character, but where central critical concepts are held in common.

*Geert Jan van Gelder, Laudian Professor of Arabic Emeritus,
University of Oxford*

Arabic, Persian, and Turkish poetics are too often studied in isolation from one another, or in the stifling shadow of European poetics and European literary theory. This volume does the very opposite. It brings a series of important studies – by a wide-ranging, international cadre of scholars – of distinctive works from the Arabic, Persian, and Turkish traditions into conversation *with each other*. And, by excavating and foregrounding literary-theoretical terms native and inherent to Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, it posits a literary theory that is both post-Eurocentric and non-Eurocentric. This will be required reading for anyone wishing to work within any of or across Arabic, Persian, and Turkish literature and poetics.

*Shawkat M. Toorawa, Professor of Arabic and of Comparative Literature,
Yale University*

In a world where the literary dialogue has long been dominated by Eurocentric perspectives, this volume emerges as a beacon of enlightenment, daringly challenging the status quo and charting a revolutionary course in the study of Islamic poetics. With unparalleled depth and an unyielding commitment to the rich terminologies and concepts inherent to Arabic, Persian, and Turkic literary traditions, the authors collectively herald a new dawn for post-Eurocentric literary theory. This is not merely a book; it is a clarion call to scholars, inviting them to venture beyond familiar horizons and immerse themselves in the majestic and multifaceted realm of Islamicate literary cultures. By resolutely placing indigenous poetics and theoretical frameworks at the forefront, this volume paves the way for a future of scholarship that honours the profound cultural distinctions of these traditions, while boldly engaging with the wider world of literary discourse. This volume, therefore, is not just groundbreaking – it is indispensable for scholars, students,

and enthusiasts aspiring to truly comprehend Islamic poetics and champion a more inclusive and representative global literary theory.

*Mohammad Salama, Professor and Associate Dean of Faculty,
George Mason University*

This volume launches from urgent questions in the field of comparative literature: What does it mean to compare? Who compares? Why and when? It highlights rich traditions of premodern comparative practices which challenge the modernist, Eurocentric biases of the field. The volume also transcends, through serious expert engagement with literature and theory in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, the chronic inferiority complex towards Euro-American literary theory, which has for a long time kept these literary traditions captive, framed by imposed Western theoretical frameworks. These long, rich traditions have always theorised themselves, offering pioneering insights into language, poetics, and rhetoric. The groundbreaking work in this volume resets the entire field of comparative literature, recognising the urgency of studying the literature of the Islamicate world on their own terms, not merely as passive subjects of study but as active and significant participants in the so-called field of World Literature and the study of the Humanities at large. The work here announces the welcome advent of a post-Eurocentric, decolonised literary and critical practice.

*Huda Fakhreddine, Associate Professor of Arabic Literature,
University of Pennsylvania*

In this groundbreaking volume, the reader encounters a superb collection of studies that detail and illuminate the distinctive characters of the Arabic, Persian, and Turkish literary traditions as well as the numerous and subtle ways in which they have interacted with one another. With depth and nuance, the thirteen chapters convey the integrity and logic of a wide range of types of literary expression, with examples drawn from the tenth to the twentieth centuries, in the three languages. In elucidating the conceptual and aesthetic underpinnings of these varied modes of expression in their own terms, the volume represents a pioneering and much needed post-Eurocentric exploration of central literary categories of the Arabic, Persian, and Turkish traditions and elucidates what might be termed an Islamicate comparative poetics – and thereby enriches the repertoire available for developing a transnational and global literary theory.

*Louise Marlow, Professor of Religion,
Wellesley College*

For over 100 years the *Proceedings of the British Academy* series has provided a unique record of British scholarship in the humanities and social sciences. These themed volumes drive scholarship forward and are landmarks in their field. For more information about the series, please visit www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/proceedings.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BRITISH ACADEMY • 266

ARABIC, PERSIAN, AND
TURKIC POETICS

TOWARDS A POST-EUROCENTRIC
LITERARY THEORY

Edited by
HANY RASHWAN, REBECCA RUTH GOULD, AND
NASRIN ASKARI

Published for THE BRITISH ACADEMY
by OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford University Press, Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

© The British Academy 2024

Database right The British Academy (maker)

First edition published in 2024

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of the British Academy, or as expressly permitted by law, by licence, or under terms agreed with the appropriate reprographics rights organisation. Enquiries concerning reproduction outside the scope of the above should be sent to the Publishing Department, The British Academy, 10–11 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AH

You must not circulate this book in any other form and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer

*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data available*

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data available*

*Typeset by Newgen Publishing
Printed in Great Britain by CMP, Dorset*

ISBN 978-0-19-726779-0 (hardback)

ISBN 978-0-19-726801-8 (ebook)

ISBN 978-0-19-726802-5 (online)

ISSN 0068-1202

Contents

<i>List of Figures and Tables</i>	ix
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	x
<i>Appreciation</i>	xiv
<i>Note on Transliterations</i>	xv
Introduction: The Challenges of Comparison REBECCA RUTH GOULD	1
1 The History of Literary Theory in Medieval Arabo-Islamic Cultures HANY RASHWAN	20
2 The Arabic Commentary Tradition on Aristotle's <i>Rhetoric</i> : A New Space for Greek Logical and Rhetorical Terminology LAHCEN EL YAZGHI EZZAHER	52
3 'The Central Jewel': The Poetics of the <i>Khuṭba</i> , <i>Khiṭāba</i> , and <i>Balāgha</i> According to Ibn 'Abd Rabbih of Córdoba (d. 328 AH/940 CE) LINDA G. JONES	63
4 The Poetics of Preposing and Postposing (<i>Taqdīm</i> and <i>Ta'khīr</i>) in the <i>History of Bayhaqī</i> LEILA SEYED-GHASEM	85
5 The Beauty of Misleading: Ambiguity in Persian Poetics and Ghazal Poetry NATALIA CHALISOVA	115
6 The Science of Poetics and Persian Literary Riddles: The Case of Majd al-Dīn Hamgar ASGHAR SEYED-GOHRAB	141
7 A Maghribī Poetics of Ageing? Ibn Rashīq, al-Qartājannī, and Ibn Ḥamdīs on <i>al-shayb wa-l-shabāb</i> NICOLA CARPENTIERI	158

8	Beyond Eurocentric Turkology: Turkic Poetry, Persian Prosody, and the Making of a Non-Language-Specific System MARC TOUTANT	180
9	Exploring the Arabic and Persian Concept of Imitation (<i>Tettebbu'</i>) in 16th-Century Ottoman Biographies of Poets AIŞE HANDAN KONAR	199
10	The Proof of God's Eloquence in the Poetics of Şeyh Gâlib (d. 1213 AH/1799 CE) BERAT AÇIL	215
11	Metaphorical Literalism and the Poetics of Reality: Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī, Figuration, and the World of Images TODD LAWSON	236
12	From <i>Balāgha</i> to <i>Intiqād</i> : Politicising the Science of Literature in Modern Arabic Literary Thought HAIFA ALFAISAL	274
13	Arabic Poetics and Prosody in Practice: Najīb Surūr's Experimentalism in 'Kalimāt fī-l-ḥubb' ('Love Words') CHIARA FONTANA	304
	<i>Index</i>	339