

# **Classics of Persian Poetry: A Primer for Students**

by

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### **Books by this author**

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## **Dedication and Acknowledgments**

### **For Iranian Lovers of Poetry Past and Present**

Between 1974 and 1998, the Department of Oriental Languages and Literatures at The University of Texas at Austin and its successor Department of Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures gave me free rein to design and teach the following courses in Persian poetry: Ferdowsi's *Shâhnâme* [(The) Book of Kings] and the Persian Epic Tradition, Omar Khayyâm and His Place in Literature, Sa'di's *Golestân* [(The) Rose Garden], Rumi and the Persian Sufi Tradition, Hâfêz's Ghazals and the Persian Lyric Tradition, and Nimâ Yushij and Modernist Persian Poetry. In addition, the Department and UT's Center for Middle Eastern Studies provided indispensable support for conferences on Persian poetry, the poetry of Forugh Farrokhzâd, and readings by Ahmad Shâmlu and Nâder Nâderpur, as well as sponsorship of the world literature journal *Literature East & West*, which featured special issues on modern Persian literature and the poetry of Farrokhzâd and Nâderpur. I thank Department Chairs Edgar C. Polomé, M. Ali Jazayery, Herman van Olphen, and Peter F. Abboud, and CMES Director Paul W. English for their support.

Although Persian poetry plays a lesser role in UT's Department of Middle Eastern Studies during the first two decades of the 21st century, including an end to Persian Studies graduate degrees, I have found time in recent years to develop lessons on Persian poetry that have become *Classics of Persian Poetry: A Primer for Students*, in part because of the opportunity that Dunwoody Press has given me to write a series of Persian readers and textbooks, among them the following books that contain units and lessons on Persian poetry: *Persian Listening* (2008), *Persian Reading and Writing* (2010), *Persian Grammar and Verbs* (2012), *Reading Iran Reading Iranians: Third Edition* (2012), and *Persian Vocabulary Acquisition: A Reader and Guide to Word Forms and the Arabic Element in Persian: Third Edition* (2012). I thank Dunwoody Press and its director Thomas Creamer for support of these books and for permission to adapt units and lessons therein for *Classics of Persian Poetry*.

I also thank *Literature East and West*, six special issues of which I had the pleasure of editing during the 1980s and 1990s, for permission to use adaptations of translations in *Major Voices in Modern Persian Literature* (1980), *False Dawn: Persian Poems by Nader Naderpur* (1986), and *Forugh Farrokhzad A Quarter-Century Later* (1988).

In the preparation of *Classics of Persian Poetry*, thanks are due Maryam Shariati for her keyboarding and editing expertise and for locating important recorded readings of poems featured in the book. Thanks also go to Maryam Sadeghi for her readings of texts.

One rationale behind *Classics of Persian Poetry*, which receives attention in the book's Preface, has to do with the place of Persian poetry in Iranian culture. I dedicate the book to those hundreds of non-academic Iranians who have talked about and recited Persian poetry in my presence over the years.

An equally strong motivating factor in the writing and compilation of *Classics of Persian Poetry* is the surprising fact that no such guide for English-speaking readers which presents texts, contexts, translations, and language notes heretofore existed. Of course numerous Persian-Persian guides for Persian-speaking readers exist that receive appreciative citation in individual units. And the second half of the guide's title, *A Primer for Students* is acknowledges A.J. Arberry's *Arabic Poetry: A Primer for Students* (1965), long a useful resource for English-speaking students of Persian poetry, for whom exposure to medieval Arabic poetry is a necessity.

I thank the following writers and scholars for help of various sorts, from inspiration through their writing to oral and written responses to my writing on the subjects treated in this book: Leonardo P. Alishan, Jerome W. Clinton, Hamid Dabashi, Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, William L. Hanaway, Jr., Julie Scott Meisami, Heshmat Moayyad,

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I also thank the following journals for allowing me to use material originally published therein and revised herein: *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, *Literature East & West*, *Edebiyat*, *Middle East Journal*, *Iranian Studies*, *Iranshenasi*, *World Literature Today*, and *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin*.

Final thanks go to....., ....., and .....

[names of students in Theory of Persian Poetry and Classics of Persian Poetry] for their feedback on the content of textbook units.

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