

books such as Lina Khatib's *Filming the Modern Middle East: Politics in the Cinemas of Hollywood and the Arab World* (2007) and Roy Armes' *Postcolonial Images: Studies in North African Film* (2005). Josef Gugler's *Film in the Middle East and North Africa: Creative Dissidence* (2011) takes a similar view of film-making as a form of political protest in the Arab world, as does Valérie Orlando's insightful book *Screening Morocco: Contemporary Film in a Changing Society* (2011), which focuses on Moroccan films since 1999.

This excellent study is accessible to students and enriching for scholars interested in North African studies. It will be sure to stimulate further scholarship on the rich production of Tunisian cinema.

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FATEMEH KESHAVARZ:

Lyrics of Life. Sa'di on Love, Cosmopolitanism and Care of the Self. (Edinburgh Studies in Classical Islamic History and Culture.) vii, 217 pp. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015. £70. ISBN 978 0 7486 9692 5.

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For her fourth major monograph, and ten years after *Reading Mystical Lyric: the Case of Jalal-al-Din Rumi*, Keshavarz discusses another giant of the Persian poetical tradition in this enthusiastic monograph on the thirteenth-century Persian poet Sa'di of Shiraz. The book consists of seven chapters, a bibliography and an index, it uses Forughī's Tehran 1366/1987 edition of Sa'di's *Kolliyat*, and targets a non-specialist readership, aiming at familiarizing them with several themes which the author wishes to discuss, documenting her arguments with generous excerpts of Sa'di works in her own English translations (unfortunately lacking the Persian original). The text flows easily and introduces notes of familiarity in authorial asides, in harmony with her perception of Sa'di's humorous ethics. Although Sa'di is among the towering figures of Persian poetry, his work (consisting of a *divan*, the *Bustan masnavi* and the *Golestan* prosimetric text) has not yet received the detailed scholarly attention it cries out for from the Western academic community. Keshavarz, by contrast, makes abundant use of monographs and articles written in Persian, as is obvious from her extensive bibliography.

This is an unusual study, the author argues, in which academic robustness goes hand-in-hand with "personal emotions and subjectivity" (p. 196). Chapter 1 (pp. 1–41) explains Keshavarz's traditional Iranian perception of the poet and his oeuvre, briefly discusses his life and background, and continues with an interesting examination of the modern and current reception of his poetry in Iran (where the critique appears most perilously built on the shifting sands of subjective social, political and moral principles (p. 14)). Influenced by D. Soelle's *The Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance*, Keshavarz meanders through Sa'di's poetic corpus and turns her back on academia's "hermeneutics of suspicion", favouring "a hunger for hearing and absorbing as many thoughts, images, ideas and rhythms as these texts and traditions have to offer" (pp. 26–7).

In the second chapter (pp. 42–78), Keshavarz challenges criticism of Sa'di's work by positing a cosmopolitan worldview shared by Sa'di and contemporary poets, which she coins as a "conceptual Silk Road of the imagination", but she is

careful to de-romanticize this concept. The poems show complementary centrifugal and centripetal energies, as an internal processing of external experiences.

Chapter 3 (79–107), studying Sa'di's strategies for the "care of the self", is innovative and challenging. It is based on his practical understanding of the games of power in the practice of freedom, with the help of Foucault's view of "the self as a practice rather than as a treasure" (p. 198). The author had not anticipated finding a wide range of overlapping ideas and practices between the two thinkers. Although this opens up exciting avenues of research on Sa'di's thoughts as partaking of universal processes, Keshavarz unfortunately restricts her analysis to Sa'di's immediate surroundings within the "conceptual Silk Road", thus cutting off this tradition from a wider and perhaps universal view on ethics of which Sa'di's thoughts seem to partake.

Chapters 4 (pp. 108–35) and 5 (136–65) focus on the *ghazals* and use garden metaphors in order to introduce a double analysis: Keshavarz experiences a "thematic scarcity surprise" as she examines how Sa'di manages to generate a "distinct sense of inventiveness and novelty working with familiar – if not overused – materials" (pp. 199–200). The fifth chapter explores Sa'di's strategies to encode his vision of love into the lyric poetry. The discussions show a refined perception of Sa'di's art, coupled with a robust grounding in the contemporary literary tools that are indispensable to allowing useful and meaningful analysis. Through her commendable use of present-day reference works in several passages of her book, while not losing sight of the traditional scholarship around Sa'di, Keshavarz produces a short but exemplary and innovative study of the poems.

Chapter 6 (pp. 166–94) opens with a few generalized considerations on the diverging moods expressed in Sa'di's poems, which show the author's familiarity with the poetical oeuvre and explain the chapter's focus on the *tarji'band*, as a "complete inventory, so to speak, of the voices of Sa'di the comedian" (p. 168). It contains the full translation of the *tarji'band*, accompanied by a perceptive commentary, as an attempt to let Sa'di "take over" (p. 202). It is regrettable that the original Persian text is not cited: readers must blindly base their understanding on the translator's no doubt enlightened choices.

The book is pleasant to read, giving useful insights and discussions on the translated poems. If the more rigid scholar will feel lost in the meandering structure and absence of explicit analysis and conclusions, Keshavarz's work is by no means lacking in interest and value. To the few critical remarks mentioned above, I will add an expression of slight personal unease about one of the basic tenets of this monograph. There are multiple ways in which to approach the study of a medieval poet's oeuvre: in this case, Keshavarz has made the express choice to amalgamate the biographical with the literary. Her research integrates the portrait of the medieval poet into his written work, thus considered the expression of his private thoughts. Because such an approach rests on the shaky ground of hypothesis and (necessarily subjective) projections into the past, I would favour an attempt to consider Sa'di's poems as art orphaned of its creator, and the creator as a professional who produces independent, sometimes contradictory, poems not meant to state his feelings, but aimed at pleasing the different moods of different patrons and audiences. This latter approach, rather than our assessment of his putative personality through his poetry, could then more reliably be enlarged as "one (though not the sole) window opened into a society to gather information on social conduct or to carry out cultural analysis" (pp. 197–8). But I might be over-fastidious.

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