

Teaching Rumi in a Time of Revolution

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The more one is able to leave one's cultural home, the more easily is one able to judge it, and the whole world as well, with the spiritual detachment and generosity necessary for true vision. The more easily, too, does one assess oneself and alien cultures with the same combination of intimacy and distance. —Edward Said¹

This paper examines the use and utility of the study of the poet Rumi, his life, times, and legacy within the contentiousness of the contemporary cultural and academic environment. It also examines a particular iteration of a course on “Rumi and Revolution” that occurred in North Carolina during the 2016 elections, using discussions that emerged in that course to reflect more broadly on how teaching Rumi as a medieval Muslim poet and mystic can expose students to alternate modalities of human thought and experience. The study of Rumi, when framed in the context of “revolution”—whether political, cultural, or personal—simultaneously asks students to confront the limitations and contingency of their own circumstances and subjectivities. This paper also argues for an engagement-based approach to coursework and materials that embraces the aesthetic alongside the analytic, the digital fusing with the textual, in order to enliven the discussion of the medieval.

North Carolina, Islamophobia, Transphobia, and Electioneering

In the spring of 2015, three students at the University of North Carolina (UNC) were murdered in their apartment by a neighbor. The students—Deah Shaddy Barakat, Yusor Mohammad Abu-Salha, and Razan Mohammad Abu-Salha—were all Muslim. Within the university community, of which I was a member, many saw in their deaths evidence of the overwhelmingly Islamophobic climate in both the state and the country at large. The climate of suspicion and paranoia was crystallized in Donald Trump's proposal, during a campaign event in the winter of 2015, to ban *all* Muslims from entering the United States, until “we can figure out what the hell is going on.”²

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During the same time period of 2015 and early 2016, debate had been raging within the state over transgender individuals' rights—including their rights to use the bathroom of the gender with which they identified. While local municipalities such as Durham, where I lived, had passed local laws protecting transgender individuals, the state legislature reacted strongly against these laws and passed the Public Facilities Privacy & Security Act, known better by its infamous nickname of “HB2.” This law not only forced transgender individuals to use the bathroom that corresponded with the gender on their birth certificate, it also restricted the ability of municipalities to have their own local policies on these and other rights—specifically those of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or questioning) (LGBTQ)+ communities.

During this same period, there was ongoing debate and protest in North Carolina that attempted to grapple with the state's Confederate legacy. On UNC-Chapel Hill's campus, this led to the renaming of the building that housed the Department of Religious Studies (of which I was a member) from the name of a former Ku Klux Klan member to its current compromise name of Carolina Hall.³ In 2018, members of the student body and local activists managed to remove another symbol of the university's Confederate heritage, the “Silent Sam” monument. After years of negotiation and protest, a group of activists pulled the monument down during a demonstration; university personnel then moved “Silent Sam” to an undisclosed storage area. This monument had been dedicated at the height of the Jim Crow era. It proved to be a galvanizing object: even in its absence now from campus, debates about this monument's future continue to rage in the state.⁴

The protests against Islamophobia, the deprivation of LGBTQ+ rights, the legacy of the Confederacy, and the “Grand Old Party” (GOP) supermajority in state government all coalesced between 2015 and 2016. North Carolina, a so-called “purple state,” thus became fertile ground for the intersectional politics occurring in the country at large. This revolutionary moment of profound social, political, and cultural flux proved pressing within the classroom. As a graduate student, teaching fellow, and visiting instructor in North Carolina at this time, I was in a unique position to adapt my pedagogy to address the debates over identity, history, and power in which my students and I were enmeshed. I did so in two unique environments: the first was as a public employee within the state's flagship university system; the second was as a lecturer within a private, Quaker, liberal arts

college—one that did not allow for the display of American flags on its campus grounds. It was in this latter environment that I inherited a course, previously and perhaps prophetically titled, “Rumi and Revolution.” This course was originally titled, designed, and taught at Guilford College by Dr. Parveen Hasanali. What is included in this article is my own interpretation and execution of the course title that I inherited; any similarity to her original course is coincidental.

Contextualizing the Study of Rumi

My primary training is within the field of religious studies generally and the subfield of Islamic studies specifically. My research within these fields investigates social change through the lens of literary productions—as well as how literary and other cultural production act as agents of social change. I focus my research on context, on the interaction of change agents and sociopolitical networks, and on audience and reception. The particular context I address in my research is that of medieval Anatolia, within the Seljuk capital of Konya. I investigate, in my recently completed dissertation,⁵ how the group of Sufi disciples surrounding the poet and teacher, Jalal al-din Rumi, utilize different forms of cultural production in their negotiation of space and identity.

The thirteenth century in Anatolia was something of a melting pot, or at least a mixed bag, of ethnic, religious, and cultural identities. Migration of Turkish Muslim groups from the east met with the Mediterranean environs populated by Christian groups like the Byzantine Greeks, Armenians, and, on occasion, Crusaders from the European subcontinent. The waning power of the Abbasid empire was largely absorbed by the Seljuk sultans—some based in Konya—before they too were supplanted and/or turned into vassals by the Mongols and their descendants. Within these varied and often unstable contexts, Sufi orders provided an environment for shared communal experience through teaching and rituals, including the *samâ* whirling ceremony in which participants spin in circles while reciting mystical formulas. (This spinning ceremony provides the nickname to followers of Rumi as “The Whirling Dervishes” as well as the pun in the course title, “Rumi and Revolution.”⁶) The teaching and ceremonies within Sufi spaces were often led by notable, charismatic teachers—also known as *sheikhs*.⁷ The legacy of these teachers, including Jalal al-din Rumi, became enshrined in their *tekkes* and *khanaqahs* (meeting houses) and *madrasas* (schools for Islamic

instruction), and through the reproduction of their teaching in literary forms that could be easily transported throughout the greater networks of the Mediterranean and Central Asia.

A master poet and mystic teacher, Jalal al-din Rumi (1207–1273) is at once both familiar and unfamiliar. There are enough translations of his poems to fill multiple library shelves, yet the circumstances of his life and the intricacies of his teaching remain largely unexamined—except by a handful of scholarly experts and the committed faithful. His main writings that circulate in translation are selections from his *ghazal* poetry (a popular form of Arabic and Persian poetry, similar to an ode) as well as his longer-form, *masnavi* (rhyming couplet) poetry. Often, translations of Rumi tend to highlight, or at least centralize, the aesthetic tastes of the translators.⁸ Rumi himself observed this phenomenon in his own life, anticipating perhaps his future reception as well, when he wrote: “Everyone became my friend through their own opinion; none sought out my secrets from within me.”⁹

While Rumi’s words serve as a warning to those who think they may understand him, they also reflect precisely why he is such a productive person to study. His poetry contains a diverse range of narratives that touch on metaphysical, mystical, as well as social and political themes. At times, his writing is openly transgressive and erotic.¹⁰ Since he was a teacher himself, at times reading his poetry can be a lesson all on its own—or at least introduce a paradigm of ethics and spirituality that can be productive for class discussion. Teaching a diverse and inclusive Middle Ages necessitates the inclusion of groups found at the margins of existing studies. Rumi is a figure at those margins, as presently constructed, because he is writing as a Muslim in the Persian language for a Sufi audience at the geographical boundaries between the Mediterranean and Central Asia. Yet his writing proves “legible,” in many ways, as the narratives and themes he deploys have shown an ability to speak across time to a variety of audiences worldwide. In bringing Rumi to the classroom, I inevitably have to take my students from the familiar to the unfamiliar, and back again. In the process, we engage with “revolution”: both in the sense of a “turn” and “return” to something that existed previously, as well as in the sense of a radical transformation of the present circumstances. This process echoes the engagement Rumi had with his own followers, as he transformed their circumstances through his reinterpretation of Islamic and folkloric traditions.

Class Description and Methodology

While my circumstances and experiences at UNC-Chapel Hill took place largely as a graduate student and teaching assistant, I was asked in 2015 and 2016 to teach at a private, liberal arts college in Greensboro, North Carolina. This necessitated adjusting my thinking and teaching in order to engage with the new environment that I encountered: while the controversies in Durham and Chapel Hill were right in my backyard, the school to which I arrived was a seemingly more insular type of space. Guilford College is a liberal arts institution on the outskirts of Greensboro. It boasts of small class sizes as well as a diverse student body that draws from a variety of socioeconomic and racial backgrounds. The College's mission statement expresses that these are valued parts of the institution. According to their website:

Guilford's longstanding mission is clear and distinctive: to provide a transformative, practical and excellent liberal arts education that produces critical thinkers in an inclusive, diverse environment, guided by Quaker testimonies of community, equality, integrity, peace and simplicity and emphasizing the creative problem-solving skills, experience, enthusiasm and international perspectives necessary to promote positive change in the world.¹¹

In structuring the course, "Rumi and Revolution," I wanted to be attentive to the multiplicity of voices within the classroom and the unique skill sets that different students would bring to the course. This required being attentive to the fact that, as a cis-presenting, white, American male, I had to be self-reflexive about my own approaches and rhetoric within the classroom. One method that I undertake to interrogate and de-center my own authority within the classroom is by creating a space that encourages students to drive the discussion around their own interests and insights. I accomplish this through journaling and personal writing activities, as well as small group dialogue and debate. The course also incorporates activities expressly designed to counter logocentric thinking—constructing our primary modes of knowing and learning through texts and words—and what might be called the "supremacy of the now." By this latter phrase, I mean the inherent sense some students have that the present situation is either the result of inevitable processes, or somehow sits above other times and places in terms of societal evolution.¹² Through these

methods and activities, students are encouraged to be reflective about their own position within the historical moment, and to take responsibility for developing their own critical and considered reaction to it.

The approach that I developed emphasized hands-on creative activities expressly designed to engage with Rumi specifically and Islam more generally as an aesthetic tradition.¹³ As many of the students at Guilford possessed artistic and musical interests, I generated assignments that encouraged them to react to the subject matter via aesthetic means. Students then presented their results. These were largely based on their own visual interpretations of narratives found within Rumi's epic poem, *The Masnavi-e Ma'navi*. I received a crudely sketched drawing of a donkey, referencing a particularly infamous narrative in which the love of a donkey comes to be explained as a metaphor for the power of divine love. Another pair of students, who were learning guitar at the time, reworked some lines of Rumi's poetry into a classical American folk format, to the tune of the Grateful Dead song "Fire on the Mountain." Another student created a Rumi-inspired wine bottle, which at first appeared empty but expressed a mystical meaning through that emptiness, as Sufis emphasize that the outward (material) form is merely a metaphor for its inner reality. Wine and its attendant symptoms are thus worldly metaphors for spiritual intoxication. Another student wished to do an embodied performance by means of a face-to-face, silent staring session with a friend. This emphasized the language that goes unspoken yet still communicates between human beings. Another took a video as she performed a *samâ*-inspired dance to contemporary music. As a class, this variety of engagement and response to the source material opened up a new type of space: the students simultaneously made the material new while also expressing their own individuality through their diverse responses to it. In order to evaluate their contributions, I asked them to write summaries of their artistic process and their pieces' connection to Rumi's writing.

As a consequence of these and other activities, we were able to examine what Rumi was doing with his poetry and how we might tie it to contemporary artists, poets, and musicians—and to the contemporary debates with which these artists were in dialogue. Although they were hesitant to embrace the connection at first, I explained how Beyoncé's hit song "Drunk in Love" would not seem at all out of place alongside some Sufi poems that explore the themes of intoxication and love. We drew parallels between Rumi's responses to his medieval

sociopolitical circumstances and those of popular artists and musicians with which they were all familiar. This latter activity generated some pretty fierce discussion, as several artists (including Ani DiFranco and Bruce Springsteen) had announced a boycott of North Carolina due to the HB2 “bathroom bill,” which was put into force during the semester I was teaching. Students debated what role an artist could or should have in effecting social change, and what role they saw their own art and scholarship playing in that conversation. An emphasis of my own was to draw attention to the political and economic consequences some artists (and athletes) have faced in speaking out. The issues that Rumi addressed in his writings, ranging from a critique of materialism, to an overreliance on juridical Islam, to the hypocrisy of many of his fellow Muslims, proved excellent parallels in these conversations.¹⁴ Thus, we could move from the concerns that animated the world around us to investigate Rumi’s teaching or use Rumi’s teachings as a starting point for discussing the events of the day.

One advantage that reading and teaching Rumi presents in such discussions is the malleability of his metaphors. In one case, we looked at the story of the parrot in the grocery store, which is found within the first book of Rumi’s *Masnavi*.¹⁵ In the story, a parrot gets punished by its owner for knocking over some oil. The owner, in his rage over the oil, knocks a number of feathers off of the parrot’s head. Later, a bald Sufi walks by, and the parrot squawks at him, “Did you knock over some oil as well?” The Sufi, in no mood for such humor, chides the parrot for likening its state to that of the Sufi. Our discussion of this story highlighted the difficulty of comparing our own situations to that of Rumi and his followers. While there is value in comparison and in what history can teach us, there is also the necessity to be attentive to the nuances and deeper realities of our objects of study. The class thus sought to balance attention to Rumi and his specific teachings and historical circumstances, as well as to try to draw some lessons out of those for students in their own circumstances.

In teaching Rumi, I also draw upon critiques of the portrayal of Muslims, past and present, offered by scholars from Edward Said to Carl W. Ernst (et al.). Any discussion of Islam within the contemporary American classroom setting has been shaped by the legacies of colonialism and imperialism. The dominant paradigms that emerged from these legacies shape much of the contemporary discussion and representation of Islam and Muslims. As Said observes in *Orientalism*, the East is often portrayed at once a repository for the mystical and

exotic while also some form of threat to Western forms of knowledge and life.¹⁶ The portrayal of Rumi has often fed into these Orientalist tropes: he is at once a towering mystical figure to many of his modern interlocutors as well as some sort of exception to the otherwise rigid thinking many associate with (medieval) Muslims. The fact that many people who have read Rumi do not even know that Rumi *was a Muslim* is an example of the erasure and cooptation of what was formerly Islamic by contemporary American culture.¹⁷ Sufism itself has often been put forward as a safer, more tolerant, or even apolitical form of Islam (when it is described as Islamic at all). In the classroom, I have found it necessary to unpack what is latent in those discussions of Sufism in terms of cultural biases, while also demonstrating that Sufis were not always apolitical and were, in fact, often among the most fervent of Muslims.¹⁸ Rumi's appropriation into New Age and other spiritually oriented aspects of contemporary culture, and its subsequent erasure of his Muslim identity, demonstrates to students how Muslim identity is forced to accommodate in order to dominate paradigms. This provides a jumping-off point to consider and discuss how different racial and ethnic identities are forced to negotiate contemporary American culture.¹⁹

There has been a tendency, especially in the middle to late twentieth century, to enfold Rumi into "perennialist" approaches to religion, philosophy, and/or spirituality that see in his writing the universality of truth across space and time. In the course, we examine the aspects of his writing that lead people to see it as a proponent of that universalism, such as in the following quote from the first book of *The Masnavi*:

The spirit's world has no plurality,
 Division, individuality;
 The union of the lovers wait for you;
 Hold on, don't let its form obstruct your view,
 Melt stubborn form through hardship and be bold
 And you'll find unity beneath like gold!²⁰

These universalist-type statements certainly prove appealing to proponents of tolerance and inter-religious discourse—and they also present students with an example of a particularly Muslim form of tolerance that is so often lacking in representations of Muslims in the media.²¹ Despite his appeal to universalist-minded interlocutors, it should not be surprising that Rumi—who lived in a predominantly

Muslim society—was not some sort of pan-religious sage: his writing clearly and frequently demonstrates his theological commitments. In order to get at the particularly Islamic aspects of Rumi's life, I emphasize the importance that the Qur'an, hadith, and other Islamic traditions have in his teaching. In one famous quatrain, Rumi explains:

I am the servant of the Qur'an as long as I have life.
I am the dust on the path of Muhammad, the Chosen one.
If anyone quotes anything except this from my sayings,
I am quit of him and outraged by these words.²²

Emphasizing Rumi's Muslim identity allows us to again interrogate and examine the status of Muslims in the United States. Given that the murder of three Muslim students in Chapel Hill was relatively recent, students began to connect the erasure of Muslim identity historically to the precarious status that openly Muslim people have within contemporary culture.

Despite his explicit identification with Islamic traditions, Rumi has been embraced as a type of mystic saint among a variety of religious communities, including and especially New Age practitioners.²³ The class researched various iterations of this New Age embrace of Rumi. One activity that proved particularly productive was to watch videos of the poet Coleman Barks, who is an alumnus of UNC-Chapel Hill, in addition to being a top-selling poet through his translations of Rumi. On one occasion, Barks recited the poetry to the rapt attention of his audience, reading a poem called "Love's Dogs."²⁴ While Barks's original audience had been respectful and appreciative, the students had a more circumspect reaction: Barks's earnestness was not compelling to the youthful crowd.²⁵ Due to their critical reaction to Barks's performance, we did an activity wherein we studied Rumi's poetic voice through various translations, showing the inclusion and exclusion of religious themes as well as the formal structures of poetry (rhyme, meter, etc.) that are not so easily transferred from Persian to English.²⁶ I then asked students to create their own version of one of Rumi's poems and to share it with the class. These updated versions and their various antecedents provoked a remarkable response in the classroom. Students reacted with a range of emotion, from bemusement to sincere appreciation to frustration in their attempts to "translate" the past. In turn, the study of Rumi in translation opened up space for a discussion of the issue of cultural appropriation in the context of poetic production. This also turned into a moment of

personal reflection, as many students had never considered their own spiritual or aesthetic engagement with the material along those lines. Rather than pose a simple answer to these issues, I tried in the classroom to be receptive to the various forms of student reaction while also sharing critical perspectives from within the broader field of Islamic studies on these issues.²⁷ The “dual context” of Rumi generated by this translation assignment again generated a diverse and self-reflective response among the students, reinforcing key themes of the course in the process.

The class, then, engaged in historical contextualization, approaches to hermeneutics and translation, and the politics of a diverse and inclusive Middle Ages that includes Islamic traditions. Through creative activities that emphasize extrapolation and application, as well as critical analysis, students developed skills that transferred from the study of history, literature, and religion to their own understanding of and engagement with their contemporary context. As with many classes, some approaches and discussions were more successful than others; such are the perils involved when tackling hot-button issues, even in a relatively open-minded and respectful setting. For example, a conversation about gender that emerged from Rumi’s text and was then applied to a contemporary circumstance proved to be too charged for some students to maintain a calm and respectful atmosphere in the classroom. However, I did not view the eruption of passionate disagreement and the subsequent disruption to the classroom environment as a failure. Instead, it revealed part of the pedagogical purpose of presenting medieval paradigms: some of them, especially the patriarchal, have penetrated so deeply into the contemporary collective unconscious that they are capable of producing passionate reactions.²⁸ Despite the defamiliarization that the subject matter could and did affect, the more pressing circumstances of the revolutionary moment—one of both upheaval of the existing order and retrenchment into previous forms of power—demanded an account, even within the generally safe and tolerant environs of the liberal arts classroom.

Ultimately, the class asked the students to view the disruption and change going on within the state and country at large through a comparative lens, while also recognizing what was contingent to the historical circumstances we studied and to their own circumstances. Their daily lives as lived in the classroom, cafeteria, and dorms, as well as on social media, were in a state of flux, discord, and upheaval due to circumstances beyond their control, and those circumstances

were impacting their own perception of self and each other. Our engagement with a thirteenth-century Muslim mystic not only led to a more pluralistic understanding of the medieval past, it allowed us to use aspects of that past to embrace new perspectives on the latent social, religious, and political conversations driving the contemporary moment. As Walter Benjamin observes, “To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it ‘the way it really was.’ It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger.”²⁹ The class asked the students to use the past to understand their own subjectivities in this “moment of danger” and to see themselves as a product of the moment that they are in—not as a given or fixed state, but as both shaped by historical circumstance as well as having the potential for profound change. Or, to borrow from Rumi, to gain an understanding that their own station in life is just one along a path—and that that path stretches back into histories and forward into futures not yet discovered.

Outcomes

The “Rumi and Revelation” course aimed to lay the groundwork for a consideration of what the Middle Ages generally and the study of medieval Islam and Sufism specifically have to offer in terms of understanding and confronting the revolutionary period in which we were living and continue, to some degree, to occupy. Some aspects of social upheaval that we observed in that time have changed, some appear to have reached a type of status quo, and some are further entrenched. In North Carolina, the state simultaneously voted out the governor who sponsored the HB2 bill while voting for the presidential candidate he supported. Eventually, HB2 came to be repealed, in part because of pressure placed on the state by the National Basketball Association. The nationwide ban on visas for people from a number of Muslim-majority countries (and North Korea) has been upheld by the courts, and instances of Islamophobic violence reached record highs in 2017.³⁰ The race-based gerrymandering of North Carolina’s congressional districts went before the Supreme Court in the spring of 2019. It would stun no one to learn that the fractured politics of the last few years have left the country more divided on social issues.

In terms of the course, however, the outcomes seemed successful: it was generally well reviewed, and the final papers showed that many students had been deeply engaged with thinking through the materials and their consequences. In their final essay, I asked students

to explain how they saw the legacy of Rumi's writings and mystically inclined Islam influencing contemporary political and spiritual movements, including the Green Movement in Iran, the New Age spirituality movement, as well as any other situation they found fit to apply this legacy from Black Lives Matter to Occupy Wall Street. Students then used the material from class to discuss issues of race, gender, and politics in ways that were unexpected, yet demonstrated their increased competence to think through historical paradigms in order to inform their perspectives on the present. In later classes, I have used some of the best activities and discussions (as described above) from this course as part of teaching introductory courses in related subjects such as Islamic Studies and Sufism. From my experiences in these classes, I put forward the simple suggestion that courses examining the medieval period can and should build in more material from Islamic traditions, especially accessible literary traditions. This inclusion, then, will reduce its perceived marginality and demonstrate its direct applicability to our own revolutionary moment.

Notes

¹Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1979), 259.

²Jenna Johnson, "Trump calls for 'total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States,'" *Washington Post*, December 7, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/12/07/donald-trump-calls-for-total-and-complete-shutdown-of-muslims-entering-the-united-states/>. At a speech in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, Donald J. Trump read aloud from this statement and editorialized as he went: "Donald J. Trump is calling for a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country's representatives can figure out what the hell is going on." See Ali Vitali, "At South Carolina Rally, Donald Trump Defiant on Muslim Ban," *NBC News*, December 7, 2015, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/016-election/south-carolina-rally-trump-defiant-steadfast-muslim-ban-n475951>.

³The University of North Carolina's library published a guide to these monuments and building controversies. The history of Hurston/Carolina Hall can be found at the following: "A guide to Researching Campus Monuments and Buildings: Carolina Hall (formerly Saunders Hall)," UNC University Libraries, accessed 6/6/19, <https://guides.lib.unc.edu/campus-monuments/carolina-hall>.

⁴Compare to “The Rise and Fall of Silent Sam,” in Jonathan Zimmerman, “College Campuses Should Not Be Safe Spaces,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 17, 2019, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/College-Campuses-Should-Not-Be/245505>.

⁵Matthew B. Lynch, “A Persian Qur’an?: *The Masnavi-e Ma’navi* as Scripture” (doctoral dissertation, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, 2019).

⁶An excellent documentary to view in class is *Rumi: The Wings of Love*, directed by Shems Friedlander (*Parabola Books Studio*, 2002), VHS; (*Archetype Studio*, 2005), DVD.

⁷Compare to Omid Safi’s *The Politics of Knowledge in Premodern Islam*, Ethel Sara Wolper’s *Cities and Saints: Sufism and the Transformation of Urban Space in Medieval Anatolia*, and *The Seljuks of Anatolia: Court and Society in the Medieval Middle East*, edited by A.C.S. Peacock and Sara Nur Yildiz.

⁸Compare to Franklin Lewis’s *Rumi: Past and Present, East and West* (London: Oneworld, 2008). The fourteenth chapter of the book gives a copious analysis of the variety of translations, versions, etc. of Rumi’s poetry that is available to the contemporary Anglophone audience. The number of translations on the market has increased significantly since 2008, including Lewis’s own *Rumi: Swallowing the Sun* (London: Oneworld, 2013), as well as the nearly complete rhyming translation of *The Masnavi-e Ma’navi* by Jawid Mojaddedi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004–2017).

⁹From *The Mathnawi of Jalal al-din Rumi, Volume I*, trans. R. A. Nicholson (London: Gibb Memorial Trust, 1925), 5 (line 6).

¹⁰Compare with Mahdi Tourage, *Rumi and the Hermeneutics of Eroticism* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

¹¹From “Mission and Core Values,” *Guilford College*, accessed October 16, 2018, www.guilford.edu/weareguilford.

¹²Compare with Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1968), 261: “The concept of the historical progress of mankind cannot be sundered from the concept of its progression through a homogenous, empty time. A critique of the concept of such a progression must be the basis of any criticism of the concept of progress itself.”

¹³An excellent discussion on how aesthetics can be introduced into Islamic Studies classrooms can be found in Manuela Ceballos’s chapter, “Questions of Taste: Critical Pedagogy and Aesthetics in Islamic Studies,” in *Teaching Islamic Studies in the Age of ISIS*,

Islamophobia, and the Internet (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019).

¹⁴Compare with *The Seljuks of Anatolia: Court and Society in the Medieval Middle East*, ed. Andrew A. C. S. Peacock and Sara Nur Yildiz (London: I. B. Taurus, 2013). Peacock's chapter, "Sufis and the Seljuk Court: Politics and Patronage in the Works of Jalal al-Din Rumi and Sultan Walad," fills a gap in the study of Rumi and his followers in connecting his writings to the Seljuk and subsequent political systems of Anatolia in the thirteenth century.

¹⁵Jalal al-din Rumi, *The Masnavi-e Ma'navi, Book One*, trans. Jawid Mojaddedi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), ll. 251–62.

¹⁶Said, 11.

¹⁷Rozina Ali, "The Erasure of Islam from the Poetry of Rumi," *The New Yorker*, February 5, 2017, <https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-erasure-of-islam-from-the-poetry-of-rumi>.

¹⁸Carl Ernst, "Between Orientalism and Fundamentalism," in *Teaching Islam*, ed. Brannon Wheeler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 108–23.

¹⁹Compare to Zareena Grewal, *Islam is a Foreign Country: American Muslims and the Global Crisis of Authority* (New York: New York University Press, 2013). Grewal examines the negotiations that Muslim must make to be visible and acceptable within the American context.

²⁰Jalal al-din Rumi, *The Masnavi-e Ma'navi, Book Two*, trans. Jawid Mojaddedi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), ll. 681–83.

²¹One example of this tendency to emphasize Rumi's tolerance can be found in Cyrus Masroori's article, "An Islamic Language of Toleration: Rumi's Criticism of Religious Persecution," *Political Research Quarterly* 63, no. 2 (June 2010): 243–56.

²²Jalal al-din Rumi, *The Quatrains of Rumi*, trans. by Ibrahim Gamard and Rawan Farhadi (San Rafael, CA: Sufi Dari Books, 2008), 2.

²³A discussion of universalist and Sufi-inspired New Age movements can be found in William Rory Dickson's recent monograph *Living Sufism in North America: Between Tradition and Transformation* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2015).

²⁴The occasion of the "Love Dogs" performance was a conference called "Mythic Journeys" in Atlanta in 2006, accessed June 7, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UF4_KZflfVI.

²⁵Compare to Coleman Barks, *The Essential Rumi* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995).

²⁶An excellent discussion of these issues can be found on the Dar al Masnavi website maintained by Ibrahim Gammard, accessed June 7, 2019, http://www.dar-al-masnavi.org/corrections_popular.html.

²⁷Compare to Bruce B. Lawrence, “Islamicate Civilization: The View from Asia,” in *Teaching Islam*, 61–76.

²⁸An excellent discussion on Islam and gender in the American context can be found in Kecia Ali’s *Sexual Ethics in Islam: Feminist Reflection on Qur’an, Hadith, and Jurisprudence*, expanded and revised edition (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2016).

²⁹Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968).

³⁰Kaytoon Kishi, “Assaults against Muslims in U.S. surpass 2001 level,” *Pew Research Center*, November 15, 2017, accessed June 7, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/11/15/assaults-against-muslims-in-u-s-surpass-2001-level/>. The analysis here is based on data from the FBI’s hate crimes statistics.

