

ALEXANDER KEY

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ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

Assistant Professor of Arabic and Comparative Literature, August 2012.

Associate Professor of Arabic and Comparative Literature (with tenure), September 2019.

EDUCATION

Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

Ph.D. (with distinction) Arabic and Islamic Studies, May 2012.

“A Linguistic Frame of Mind: ar-Rāḡib al-Iṣfahānī and what it meant to be ambiguous”.

Ph.D. Thesis, Harvard University, 2012. <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:9572090>

University of St. Andrews, Scotland, UK.

B.A. / M.A. (1st class Honours) Arabic and International Relations. 2001.

MONOGRAPH

Language Between God and the Poets: ma 'nā in the eleventh century. Oakland: University of California Press, 2018. (<https://doi.org/10.1525/luminos.54>)

PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES

“What are Neoplatonic Poetics? Allegory; Figure; Genre” in *Faces of the Infinite: Neoplatonism and Poetry at the Confluence of Africa, Asia, and Europe*. Proceedings of the British Academy. Volume 240. Oxford University Press, 2022, pp. 131-147.

“Notes Around Ambiguity: Ibn Sīnā’s logic, ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī’s poetics, Rāghib’s two-meanings-at-one-time, and the figures of *ibhām*, *istikhdām*, and *tawriya*.” In *Philosophy and Language in the Islamic World*, edited by Nadja Germann and Mostafa Najafi. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021. 77-99.

“Translation of Poetry from Persian to Arabic: ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī and Others.” *Journal of Abbasid Studies* 5:1-2, 2018, pp. 146-176.

“Kavya: Prospects for a Comparative Poetics” in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East (CSSAAME)* 38:1, 2018, pp. 163-170.

“Moving from Persian to Arabic” in *Essays in Islamic Philology, History, and Philosophy*, edited by William Granara, Alireza Korangy, and Roy Mottahedeh. Studies in the History and Culture of the Middle East. Volume 31. Walter De Gruyter, 2016. pp.93-141.

“Philosophy of Language in the Medieval Arabic Tradition” co-authored with Peter Adamson (LMU Munich) in *Linguistic Content: New Essays on the History of the Philosophy of Language*, edited by Margaret Cameron and Robert Stainton. Oxford University Press, 2015. pp. 74-99.

“The Applicability of the Term ‘Humanism’ to Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi”. *Studia Islamica* #100/101 (2005 appeared 2007) pp.71-112

FURTHER PUBLICATIONS

“Rāghib al-İşfahānī.” Solicited by *The Great Islamic Encyclopaedia [Dā`irat al-Ma`ārif-i Buzurg-i Islāmī]* Volume 24 (2019) pp.548-550.

Guest Editor of Special Issue of the *Journal of Abbasid Studies* 5:1-2 (2018) on ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī.

“Introduction” co-authored with Lara Harb in Special Issue of the *Journal of Abbasid Studies* on ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī. *Journal of Abbasid Studies* 5:1-2 (2018) pp.3-10.

Review of *The Rhetorical Fabric of the Traditional Arabic Qaṣīda in Its Formative Stages* by Ali Ahmad Hussein (Harrassowitz, 2015). Solicited by the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 139:2 (2019) pp.520-523.

Review of *Islam and Literalism* by Robert Gleave (Edinburgh University Press, 2013). Solicited by the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 74: 1 (2015) pp. 179-184.

“Arabic: acceptance and anxiety”. Solicited by the Editorial Board of *The American Comparative Literature Association Report on the State of the Discipline 2014-2015*, edited by Ursula Heise et al. <http://stateofthediscipline.acla.org/entry/arabic-acceptance-and-anxiety>.

Review of *Hardship and Deliverance in the Islamic Tradition* by Nouha Khalifa (I. B. Tauris, 2010). Solicited by the *Journal of Islamic Studies* 24:2 (2013) pp. 212-216. doi:10.1093/jis/ett022

“Al-Raghib al-İsfahani” in *Essays in Arabic Literary Biography I*, edited by Mary St. Germain and Terri de Young. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag (2011) pp. 298-306.

“Language and Literature in al-Raghib al-İsfahani” in *Reflections on Knowledge and Language in Middle Eastern Societies*, edited by Bruno de Nicola, Yonatan Mendel and Husain Qutbuddin. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing (2010) pp. 32-62.

PRESENTATIONS

“Sensing Feelings in Science?” Presented to the Annual Meeting of the American Comparative Literature Association. 17 June 2022.

“The Power Of Language: Language, Thought And Existence In Classical Kalam.” Invited webinar commentary for Güncel Kelam: Din-Felsefe-Bilim Üzerine Konuşmalar on 3 December 2021.

“Language Between God and the Poets.” Invited book talk at Yale University, Council for Middle Eastern Studies workshop. 26 March 2019.

“Translating Theory.” Presented to the Stanford *Trans:form* Symposium. 29 November 2018.

“*Al-kalām ‘alā l-kalām*: Genre or Formalism?” Presented to the Fourteenth Conference of the School of Abbasid Studies at Yale University. 10 July 2018.

“Describing and Using Classical Arabic Poetics.” Invited talk at the American University of Beirut workshop: *Post-Eurocentric poetics: new approaches from Arabic, Turkish and Persian Literature*. 21 May 2018.

“A Marginal Moment: Abd al-Qahir, Translation from Persian, and Ottoman Readership.” Presented to the Annual Meeting of the American Comparative Literature Association in Los Angeles. 30 March 2018.

“Are Neoplatonists Neoplatonic in their Poetics?” Invited talk at the British Academy conference: *Faces of the Infinite: Neoplatonism and Poetics at the Confluence of Africa, Asia and Europe* in London, 9 November 2017.

“What can we find in Ottoman Manuscripts?” Presented to the Stanford Primary Source Symposium on the Movement of Objects and Textual Mobilities, 3 November 2017.

“Core Conceptual Vocabulary for Science and Poetry: how *ma‘nā* got from the translations of Galen to ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Ġurġānī’s literary criticism.” Invited talk at Albert Ludwig University Freiburg in the conference: *Intention and Signification: Philosophy of Language Across Islamic Disciplines, 800-1200*. 1 June 2017.

“‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Ġurġānī’s Literary Theory.” Presented to the Poetics Workshop in the Division of Literatures, Cultures, and Languages at Stanford University. 25 April 2017.

“Persian Outcasts? The Deviation at the Heart of Classical Arabic.” Invited talk at the University of Haifa, Israel, in the conference: *Outcast Voices: Reflections on The Marginalized, The Exiled and The Secondary in Classical and Modern Arabic Culture*. 11 January 2017.

“Small Sets of (Very Important) Interrelated Terms in Eleventh-Century Arabic.” Invited talk at the University of Toronto in the workshop *Language in Motion: Editing, Translating and Adapting Theoretical Writing on Language*. 18 November 2016.

“Late Abbasid Perseo-Arabica: Fifth/eleventh-century theories of translation.” Presented to the Thirteenth Conference of the School of Abbasid Studies at Leiden University, The Netherlands. 14 July 2016.

“Do our texts of Classical Arabic Philology stand alone, or do they need contemporary theory to become accessible outside NELC?” Invited talk at the *Workshop on Arabic and*

Islamic Studies in the Center for Middle East Studies at Harvard University. 21 March 2016.

“‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Ġurġānī: Theory in Grammar Time.” Presented to the 226th Meeting of the American Oriental Society in Boston, Massachusetts. 20 March 2016.

“Poetics and Logic: ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī, Ibn Sīna, and *ma‘nā*.” Invited talk at *The History of Poetic Genre Working Group* at the Doreen B. Townsend Center for the Humanities at UC Berkeley, 3 March 2016.

“Old Arabic Theory.” Invited lecture to the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures at San Francisco State University. 5 November 2015.

“The Name and the Thing Named: some eleventh-century questions”. Presented to the Renaissance Workshop in the Division of Literatures, Cultures, and Languages at Stanford University. 11 May 2015.

“Thinking about *Ma‘nā* after Richard Frank”. Invited lecture in the *Islamic Studies Lecture Series* at Georgetown University’s Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies in Washington D.C. 18 March 2015.

“Arabic Theory and Practice”. Presented in the lecture series *Translation Matters: Applications in the 21st Century* in the Division of Literatures, Cultures, and Languages at Stanford University. 12 February 2015.

“Their Classics and Our Classics”. Presented to the Annual Meeting of the American Comparative Literature Association in New York. 23 March 2014.

“The Lexicon and the Image”. Presented to *Image as Animation: Mysticism, Magic, and Poetry in Byzantine Christian and Islamic Religious Experience*, the 2012/2013 Conference of the Sohaib and Sara Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies at Stanford University. 10 May 2013.

“Arabic Literary Theory: Poetics, Performance, and Metaphor”. Presented to the Annual Meeting of the American Comparative Literature Association in Toronto, Canada. 5 April 2013.

“Shedding Light on the Life and Times of al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī”. Presented to the 223rd Meeting of the American Oriental Society in Portland, Oregon. 17 March 2013.

“Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī’s (fl. ≤ 409/1018) philosophy of language”. Presented to the Eleventh Conference of the School of Abbasid Studies in Exeter, UK. 11 July 2012.

“Literary theory by al-Raghib al-Isfahani in MS Yale Landberg 165”. Presented to the *Colloquium on Conceptualizing Literary History: Foundations of Arabic Literature* at Yale University’s Whitney Humanities Center. 17 April 2010.

“Language and Literature in al-Raghib al-Isfahani”. Presented to the Annual Meeting of the Middle East Studies Association in Boston. 24 November 2009.

“The reception of Harun in *adab* compendia: a preliminary enquiry”. Presented to the *Journée Commémorative: Le calife Hârûn al-Rashîd, Histoire et légende: 809-2009* at the

Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales and Université Paris 8 - Saint Denis (Paris, France). 13 November 2009.

“The Outlines of Philosophy in al-Raghib al-Isfahani”. Presented to the Cambridge Symposium on Middle Eastern Societies: *Knowledge and Language in Middle Eastern Societies* at the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Science and Humanities, University of Cambridge, UK. 18 October 2008.

“Attacks on Grammar in the Twelfth-Century Islamic West: The Reply to the Grammarians by Ibn Mada”. Presented to the 217th Meeting of the American Oriental Society in Chicago. 15 March 2008.

“Quranic Revelation in the Prophet’s Sleep”. Presented to the Annual Meeting of the Middle East Studies Association in Montreal. 18 November 2007.

“Revelation In The Prophet’s Sleep?”. Presented to the Inaugural Session of the Islamic Intellectual History Workshop in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at Harvard University. 2 November 2007.

“The Applicability of the Term ‘Humanism’ to Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi”. Presented to the Annual Meeting of the Middle East Studies Association in Boston. 20 November 2006.

TEACHING

Stanford University.

Humanities Core: Ancient Knowledge, New Frontiers: How the Greek Legacy Became Islamic Science. Co-taught undergraduate introduction to science and reason around the Mediterranean. Winter 2021, Winter 2022.

Advanced Readings in Arabic Literature and Science I. Advanced training in Classical Arabic for PhD students, open to undergraduates. Autumn 2021, Spring 2022.

Advanced Readings in Arabic Literature and Science II. Advanced training in Classical Arabic for PhD students, open to undergraduates. Taught entirely in Arabic. Winter 2022, Spring 2022.

Great Arabic Poetry. Introduction to Arabic poetry from the sixth to the twenty-first century open to undergraduate and graduate students. Pre-requisite: two years of Arabic. Autumn 2014, Autumn 2015, Winter 2018, Winter 2019, Winter 2020.

Great Arabic Books. Introduction to Arabic prose from the sixth to the twenty-first century open to undergraduate and graduate students. Pre-requisite: two years of Arabic. Winter 2015, Spring 2016, Spring 2018, Spring 2019, Spring 2020.

Prospects for a Comparative Poetics. Graduate seminar on the prospects for comparative work with poetry and poetics beyond genre. Autumn 2018.

Senior Seminar for Majors in Comparative Literature. Winter 2019, Winter 2022.

Humanities Core: Middle East I—Ancient. Co-taught undergraduate course starting with *Gilgamesh* and ending with the *Quran*. The first of three courses in the Middle Eastern track, offering an unparalleled opportunity to study Middle Eastern history and culture, past and present. Autumn 2018.

Humanities Core: Middle East II—Classic. Co-taught undergraduate course on mysticism and rationality starting in 700 and ending in 1900. The second of three courses in the Middle Eastern track. Winter 2018.

Humanities Core: Middle East III—Future. Co-taught undergraduate course asking how we face the future, starting in 1850 and ending today. The third of three courses in the Middle Eastern track. Autumn 2018, Spring 2020.

Arabic in America: language immersion. Three-week Sophomore College, integrating language proficiency, literature, and culture in a team with two lecturers and two teaching assistants. September 2015 and 2016.

Ethics of Jihad. Undergraduate General Education Requirement (“Ethics Way” and “Program in Writing and Rhetoric 2”) seminar exploring Islamic history, politics, intellectual and ethical cultures from the 600s to the present day and focusing on communication skills. Winter 2014, Winter 2015, Spring 2016.

Readings in Avicenna and al-Jurjani. Classical Arabic reading course on logic and poetics open to undergraduate and graduate students. Pre-requisite: two years of Arabic. Spring 2014.

CompLit 101. Undergraduate gateway to the Comparative Literature Major surveying disciplinary debates, engaging with theory, and focusing on writing skills. Autumn 2013, 2014, 2015, 2019, 2020.

The Arab Spring in Arabic Literature. Seminar ranging from 1970s Arabic poetry to 21st century Arabic prose, open to undergraduate and graduate students. Pre-requisite: two years of Arabic. Spring 2013.

Philosophies, Literatures, and Alternatives. Seminar exploring disciplinary boundaries and theoretical accounts of intellectual endeavor, open to undergraduate and graduate students. Spring 2013.

Classical Arabic Poetry: an Introduction. Seminar reading Classical Arabic poetry and literary criticism in manuscript facsimile, open to undergraduate and graduate students. Pre-requisite: two years of Arabic. Winter 2013.

The Meaning of Arab Literature. Undergraduate seminar reading translated Classical Arabic texts. Autumn 2012.

University of St Andrews, School of History. Teaching Fellow 2010/2011

Key Texts in Islamic Religion and Society I for third-year undergraduates in Spring semester.

Key Texts in Islamic Religion and Society II for fourth-year undergraduates in Spring semester.

ACADEMIC SERVICE

Member of Search Committee for Assistant Professor (Islam) in Religious Studies. August 2022-.

Co-organized (with Betty Rosen and Lubna Safi) “The Five Senses Across the Premodern/Modern Divide: New Sciences of Literature?” at the American Comparative Literature Association’s Annual Meeting. June 16-18 2022.

Director of the Stanford Humanities Core IDP. January 2020-

Member of Search Committee for the Middle East Curator at Stanford Libraries. May – September 2020.

Faculty Director of the Translation Minor in the Division of Literatures, Cultures, and Languages. September 2019-.

Co-organized (with Shoshana Olidort) *Trans;form*, a two-day symposium at Stanford. 29-30 November 2018.

Member of Search Committee for Associate Dean and Director of The Markaz Resource Center. September 2018-January 2020.

Chair of Undergraduate Affairs Committee for the Division of Literatures, Cultures, and Languages. September 2018-.

Director of Undergraduate Studies for Comparative Literature. January 2017-.

Organized seminar “Theory and Practice of Poetry Translation: Persian and Arabic” at the American Comparative Literature Association’s Annual Meeting. March 29 – April 1 2018.

Member of Search Committee for Islam and the Arts, representing Comparative Literature at the Stanford Global Studies Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies. 2017-2018.

Faculty Leader of DLCL Focal Group *Persian, Arabic, Turkish, Hebrew (PATH)*. 2016-

Organized and chaired the panel “Islamic Near East XIII: ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Ġurġānī” at the 226th Meeting of the American Oriental Society in Boston, Massachusetts. 20 March 2016.

Faculty Director of the Minor in Middle Eastern Languages, Literatures, and Cultures (MELLAC) in the Division of Literatures, Cultures, and Languages. 2015-.

Member of Steering Committee of the Translation Studies Minor in the Division of Literatures, Cultures, and Languages. 2015-

Member of Search Committee for Assistant Professor of Persian Literature and Culture in Stanford Department of Comparative Literature. 2014-2015.

Stanford Sohaib and Sara Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies Faculty Advisory Committee 2013-present.

Member of Promotion Committee for Cintia Santana's appointment as Senior Lecturer in the Division of Literatures, Cultures, and Languages. 2013-2014.

Co-organized seminar "On The Classics: Debating a Concept Across the Premodern Mediterranean World" at the American Comparative Literature Association's Annual Meeting. March 20-23 2014.

Chair of Reading Committee for Vincent Barletta's appointment to Stanford Department of Comparative Literature. 2013.

Stanford Rhodes Marshall Panel. Autumn 2012, 2018.

Developed the "Middle East Institute" proposal for the 600th Anniversary Fundraising Committee at the University of St Andrews (UK). Fall 2010.

Founding Editor and Quick Studies and Literature Editor of New Middle Eastern Studies (a journal for early career researchers and graduate students at www.brismes.ac.uk/nmes). Fall 2008 – present.

Representative Committee Member for Harvard in the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies Graduate Section (UK). Fall 2008 – Spring 2012.

Organized the panel "Islamic Near East IV. Language: Revolutionary Grammar" at the 217th Meeting of the American Oriental Society. 15 March 2008.

Coached, counseled, supported, and oriented graduate students, and coordinated social activities and emergency responses as a Graduate Residence Halls Resident Advisor with the Student Services Office, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University. Fall 2006 – Spring 2008.

Member of Departmental Committee to Redraw Graduate Student Language Requirements in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University. 2007.