



Night Journey and Ascension by Ahmed Moustafa

# Faces of the Infinite: Neoplatonism and Poetics at the Confluence of Africa, Asia and Europe

**A Three-Day Conference**

**Thursday 9 & Friday 10 November at the British Academy**

**Saturday 11 November at SOAS**

**BRITISH ACADEMY**



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What links Dante, Rumi, the Golden Age poetry of Spain, Ottoman panegyrics, Hebrew devotional verse and the musings of Muhammad Matar, one of the finest poets of modern Egypt? Very little, one would have thought. And yet these works carry the imprint of a common heritage which, through a range of intermediaries, can be traced back to Neoplatonism and its founding father Plotinus.

The Conference *Faces of the Infinite* represents a unique opportunity to get to know how the system of thought Plotinus devised merged with the literary traditions of Europe and the Middle East and came to be woven into texts which are acknowledged to this day as foundational and integral to their identities.

Proceedings begin with a keynote address by Prof. Richard Taylor which explains the tenets of Neoplatonism and the decisive influence they have had on mysticism and the arts in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. This is followed by some 20 papers given by international experts on classical and modern poetry in Arabic, Greek, English, Hebrew, Italian, Persian, Spanish and Turkish. Each paper introduces the authors and texts to be discussed for the benefit of a non-specialist audience.

In seeking to bring this great literary panorama together for the first time, the Conference aims to explore to what extent these very different traditions are interconnected by a shared spiritual legacy. What does it mean for us today? Does it continue to carry to a message for an age of migration in which different cultures intermingle and are called upon to co-exist in the face of increasing challenges? Taken together, the conference papers will provide ample scope for reflection and debate on this most crucial of issues.

## The Songs of Songs: A Musical Evening

As part of the conference proceedings there will be a musical rendering of poetry in Castilian, Hebrew and Persian performed by Leili Anvar, Frédéric Ferney, Renaud Garcia-Fons and Solea Garcia Fons.

Time and venue: Friday 10 November at 19:30 at the SOAS Brunei Gallery.

Free entry for conference delegates.

Event sponsored by the Iran Heritage Foundation and the AHRC Project *Language Acts and Worldmaking*

## List of Speakers

**Professor Walter Andrews**, University of Seattle

**Professor Leili Anvar**, INALCO, Paris

**Dr James Binns FBA**, University of York

**Dr Abigail Brundin**, University of Cambridge

**Dr Alessandro Cancian**, Institute of Ismaili Studies, London

**Professor Trevor Dadson**, Queen Mary University, London

**Professor Cristina D'Ancona**, University of Pisa

**Dr. Yorgos Dedes**, SOAS, University of London

**Dr Neslihan Demirkol**, Ankara Social Sciences University

**Professor Ziad Elmarsafy**, King's College London

**Professor Carl W. Ernst**, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

**Professor Ferial J. Ghazoul**, The American University in Cairo

**Dr Didem Havlioğlu**, Duke University

**Dr David Hernández de la Fuente**, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, Madrid

**Professor Mehmet Kalpaklı**, Bilkent University, Ankara

**Professor Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak**, University of Maryland

**Dr Alexander Matthew Key**, Stanford University

**Dr Kazuyo Murata**, King's College, London

**Professor Johannes Niehoff-Panagiotidis**, Freie Universität Berlin

**Professor Terence O'Reilly**, University College, Cork

**Professor David Ricks**, King's College, London

**Professor Peter Robinson**, University of Reading

**Professor Claudio Rodríguez Fer**, University of Santiago de Compostela

**Professor John Roe**, University of York

**Professor Stefan Sperl**, SOAS, University of London

**Dr Adena Tanenbaum**, Ohio State University

**Professor Richard Taylor**, Marquette University

**Professor Colin Thompson**, University of Oxford

**Professor Julian Weiss**, King's College, London

**Dr Joachim Yeshaya**, University of Leuven

## Sponsors for Day Three of Proceedings

British Comparative Literature Association (BCLA)

Office of Cultural and Scientific Affairs of the Embassy of Spain in the United Kingdom

Private Donor

Queen Mary University

SOAS

## Conference Venues and Further Details

Registration fee: £115, £46 concessions. Day rates are available.

For registration and the conference programme see [www.britishacademy.ac.uk/conferences](http://www.britishacademy.ac.uk/conferences)

British Academy, 10-11 Carlton House, London SW1Y 5AH

SOAS, 10, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG