Intimations of Immortality, An Evening of Persian Poetry 4th July 2019

The other of poems as read or discussed:

Dr Sarah Stewart:

1. Bundahishn (story of Creation), 1.13a (translated by Prods Oktor Skjaervo) with image of Gayomard from Illustrated mss. from Shahnameh.


5. Arda Viraf Nameh (story of the righteous Viraf) John Rylands Library [https://www.fihrist.org.uk/catalog/manuscript_6906](https://www.fihrist.org.uk/catalog/manuscript_6906)

Narguess Farzad links Sarah’s presentation to Bruce Wannell’s through the image of ‘Simurgh’ as seen in the *Conference of the Birds*, and the Hoopoe’s description of the Seven Valleys that the mystical seeker must traverse before attaining union with the ‘beloved’.

Translations by Dick Davis.

Bruce Wannell read the following poems:

Shakespeare Sonnet 65
Rubaiyat of Umar Khayyam
Ghazal (lyrics) of Hafez
Rumi
Ode by Vahshi-Bafqi
Ghazal by Bidel

Narguess Farzad concluded with:

Sepehri’s poems detailed below in,

She quoted W. B. Yeats:

‘The Cloths of Heaven

I have spread my dreams under your feet;

Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.’
I’d gone to the garden pond
To catch a glimpse of my loneliness, reflected in water…
But there was hardly any in the pond.
The fishes said:
“It’s not the fault of the trees,
Summer’s noon was boiling hot,
Water’s shimmering child
Was playing where the water slides over the edge,
The sun, eagle-like, dived, caught it, lifted it into the air, high and far away.”

“If you see God in the hear-beat of the garden,
Dare to tell him:
‘The fish, their pond is empty of water’…”

The breeze went off, to call on the plane tree,
And I, to call on God.
‘Asking the Way’, Sepehri

“Where is the House of My Friend?” it was dawn when the rider asked.
The sky stood still.
The bystander threw the stub of light from his lips, onto the darkness of the sand,
And, pointing to a white poplar, said:
“Before you reach the tree,
There is a lane between the orchards, greener than God’s sleeping dream:
there, love is blue as the feathers of sincerity.

Go to the end of the lane that emerges beyond the end of childhood,
Then turn towards the rose of Solitude;
Two steps before reaching the rose,
Stop, at the eternal fountain of earth’s age-old stories:
You will be flooded with a luminous fear.
In the overwhelming intimacy of that space,
You will hear a rustling sound;
You will see a child
climbing a tall pine tree, lifting a fledgling from the nest of light.
Ask him:
Where is the House of my Friend?”

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Excerpts from ‘Nowhere-land’

If you call by to see me,
I live on the far side of Nowhere-land.
Beyond Nowhere-land, there is a place where the veins of air are filled with dandelion seed-heads
Bringing news of buds as they open on rose bushes, far away.
In Nowhere-land, a waft of thirst runs down the leaf veins;
Immediately, bells of rain start ringing.
If you come calling-by to see me,
Come softly, come slowly,
Lest you crack the fine porcelain of my solitude.

All selected from Expanse of Green by Sohrab Sepehri
Translations by Narguess Farzad & Bruce Wannell
“Waiting” by Raymond Carver

Left off the highway and
down the hill. At the
bottom, hang another left.
Keep bearing left. The road
will make a Y. Left again.
There’s a creek on the left.
Keep going. Just before
the road ends, there’ll be
another road. Take it
and no other. Otherwise,
your life will be ruined
forever. There’s a log house
with a shake roof, on the left.
It’s not that house. It’s
the next house, just over
a rise. The house
where trees are laden with
fruit. Where phlox, forsythia,
and marigold grow. It’s
the house where the woman
stands in the doorway
wearing the sun in her hair. The one
who’s been waiting
all this time.
The woman who loves you.
The one who can say,
“What’s kept you?”