



# Canticle of the Birds: Illustrated Through Persian and Eastern Islamic Art

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Edited by Diane de Selliers

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- Featuring 207 Persian, Turkish, Afghan and Indo-Pakistani miniatures from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries, from public and private collections from around the world

A masterpiece of Persian literature written in the twelfth century, *The Canticle of the Birds* is the poetic expression of a universal initiatory quest, for Love, Truth and Unity. The journey of the birds beyond the seven valleys to meet Simorgh, the legendary bird and allegory of the Supreme Being, symbolises the voyage of every human soul. The translation by Dick Davis and Afkham Darbandi, published by Penguin Classics in 1984, was the first verse translation in English of Attar's work. His passionate and scholarly translation fluidly renders the poet's thought, as well as the beauty and musicality of his language. For this edition, Dick Davis has translated the prologue and epilogue, and has also reworked several passages. More than two hundred Persian, Turkish, Afghan and Indo-Pakistani works, chosen from the most beautiful manuscripts of the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries - from the banks of the Bosphorus to those of the Ganges - complement the poem. The choice of works benefited from the inestimable contribution of Michael Barry; he has written over two hundred commentaries on the works, presented facing each painting. These commentaries will provide the reader with keys to understanding and interpretation.