

Modernity and Modernism in Persophone Literary History

Project leaders: [PD Dr. Roxane Haag-Higuchi](#) and [PD Dr. Christine Nölle-Karimi](#)

The early twentieth century witnessed an intensified debate over the role of Persian literature. The search for new literary forms came together with the attempt to describe and assess the literary heritage and its limitations. Our working group formed in collaboration with the Institute for Iranian Studies at the Austrian Academy of Sciences (Vienna) aims at capturing the spirit of this debate.

The focus will be on the manner in which modernity was perceived and reflected by the literary actors themselves. How did the protagonists of modernity define the thematic scope of modern literature, what formal and stylistic standards did they delineate? In which ways was the search for modern forms and themes linked to and justified by social and political agendas? In this context, the questions to be raised may roughly be grouped according to four categories,

a) Form and Content

- The reception and construction of Western literature (prose and poetry)
- The definition and description of traditional literature (prose and poetry)
- The development of new literary genres
- The congruence/divergence of modernist themes and new literary forms
- The significance and resilience of classical formats
- The avant-garde

b) Social and Political Agendas

- The delimitation of national literatures
- “Proper” and “appropriate” language; language purification
- The interaction between literature and ideology (nationalism, social criticism)
- The formation of a literary canon

c) Exchange, Organization and Dissemination

- Literary Debates, Schools of Thought
- Literary Societies
- Literary Magazines

d) Political Reactions and Repercussions

- Censorship
- Imprisonment, Exile, Emigration

As a first step, we plan to compile an English reader of relevant texts produced in the Persophone world in the early twentieth century. This project was inaugurated during our first workshop held at the Institute of Iranian Studies at the Austrian Academy of Sciences on December 11, 2010. The next meeting will take place at the Department of Iranian Studies at Bamberg University on October 1, 2011. Presently, the working group consists of scholars representing different fields of Persophone literary history:

Amr Ahmed (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna),
Roxane Haag-Higuchi (Otto-Friedrich University, Bamberg),
Justine Landau (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna),
Thomas Loy (Humboldt University, Berlin),
Christine Nölle-Karimi (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna),
Stephan Popp (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna),
Florian Schwarz (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna).