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Advanced Seminar in Persian Literature (ISLA 610) (Fall 2012)

Monday and Wednesday: 14.35 – 15.55

Morrice Hall, Room 328

Professor: Prashant Keshavmurthy

Office: Morrice Hall 311

Office hrs: Tuesday 14.00 – 15.00 or by appointment

(514)398-4208 Ext. 09655

Email: via myCourses

Advanced Seminar in Persian Literature (ISLA 610)

Course description: Beginning in the early 1500s, across the lands in which Persian was a medium for literature, there arose a ghazal stylistics that its practitioners called “Speaking Anew” (*tāza-gu’yi*). This denomination formulated the recursive character of their temporal relations with the prior literary heritage of Persian. That is, they aimed by this new ghazal stylistics to renew the topoi (*maẓmūn*, pl. *maẓāmīn*) they considered the primordial bases of the heritage of the ghazal. This renewed or renewing ghazal practice never gained uncontested favor in Persian literary culture, thus giving rise to a variety of discourses explicating and defending this practice. This course will focus both on the ghazals that make up the corpus of Speaking Anew from roughly 1500 to 1869 as well as on the dictionaries, commentaries, treatises and polemics that addressed this corpus.

Week 1-2: Selections of Abdorraḥmān Jāmi’s masnavi *Yusuf o Zulaykhā* (Herat, 1483) read with an attention to how Jāmi models the exemplary reader in the character of Zulaykhā and thus anticipates the model reader of Speaking Anew (*tāza-gu’yi*). We will try to read this masnavi to its end over two weeks but focus mainly on chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 16, 18, 22, 23, 27, 34, 36, 41, 42, 45.

Week 3-4: Selected ghazals by Bābā Fighāni (Tabriz, Mashhad, d. 1519), Ṣā’eb Tabrizi (Isfahan, India, d. 1676), Shawkat Bokhārā’yi (Bokhārā, Isfahan, d. 1695), Nāser ‘Ali Serhindi (North India, d. 1696), Ghani Kashmiri (Kashmir, d. 1668-69), Bidel Dehlavi (North India, Delhi, d. 1720-21), Ghāleb Dehlavi (Delhi, d. 1869),

Shafi‘ā Asar (Isfahan, d. 1702) and Serāj-al-Din ‘Ali Khān Ārzu (North India, Delhi, d. 1755); all read alongside Serāj-al-Din ‘Ali Khān Ārzu’s dictionary of Speaking Anew poetic phrases, *Chirāgh-e Hidāyat* (The Lamp of Guidance, 1734-35).

Week 5-6: Prose pieces on scribal modifications by Ghani Kashmiri, Mirzā Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabā’i Isfahāni (Iran, North India, d. 1672) and Mollā Monir Lāhori (North India, d. 1644). We will read these texts with attention to how they expose the dependency of Persian literary authorship on the scribal habitus.

Week 7-8: Serāj-al-Din ‘Ali Khān Ārzu’s three introductions to his *Dād-e sokhan* (The Equitable Judgment of Poetry, composed between 1741 and 1750) read with an attention to their thematization of the distinction between spoken and literary Persian, a distinction that would not be collapsed until the novel; the relation of ethnicity to literary authorship; and seven interpretative attitudes corresponding to seven kinds of social identity.

Week 9: Selections from Mollā Monir Lāhori’s *Kārnāma* (Chronicle, 1640) read with an attention to temporal, ethnic and referential stakes in the criticisms of Speaking Anew.

Week 10: Selections from Serāj-al-Din ‘Ali Khān Ārzu’s *Serāj-e Monir* (A Lamp for Monir/A Shining Lamp) which was written in rebuttal to the previous week’s text by Monir. We will read these selections with a view to how and why Ārzu defended the temporal locality of Speaking Anew.

Weeks 11-12: Selections from Serāj-al-Din ‘Ali Khān Ārzu’s *Khiyābān: Sharḥ-e Golistān-e Sa’di* (The Flowerbed: a Commentary on Sa’di’s ‘The Rose Garden’). This commentary gave Ārzu contexts in which to implicitly legitimize Speaking Anew localizations of “linguistic purity” (*faṣāḥat*) by analogous demonstrations that Sa’di, too, had construed this originally Arabic trans-temporal and trans-spatial concept and criterion in ways local to Persian. We will focus in this context on Ārzu’s gloss of the word *khodā* (God) as an abbreviation of *khod-āyanda* (the Self-Originating), the Persian translation of the Arabic philosophical term *wājeb al-wojud* (the Necessary Existent) associated with Muslim Peripatetic philosophy.

Week 13-14: Two selections from ‘Abdol Qāder Khān Bidel’s autobiography, *Chahār ‘Unsur* (The Four Elements, 1705): a section describing the circumstances in which he composed his first verse; and an ekphrastic section from his fourth Element where he describes his portrait as painted by a painter prominent in the imperial Mughal ateliers of the time. We will read these selections with an attention, respectively, to the relevance of friendship to literary mimesis and to the iconoclastic conception of the imagination at work in Bidel’s ekphrasis.