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Christine Nölle-Karimi, Thomas Loy, Roxane Haag-Higuchi (Eds.)

**Literary Modernity in the
Persophone Realm:
A Reader**



AUSTRIAN
ACADEMY
OF SCIENCES
PRESS

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INTRODUCTION

This book examines discussions on literary modernity that unfolded within the Persophone sphere, specifically across Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia in the early 20th century. It represents an attempt at “listening” to what the literati had to say in favor of or in opposition to a renewal (*tajdīd*, *tajaddud*) of prose and poetry.¹ Taking a transnational approach to the debates that took place at the time, we seek to offer a wide regional perspective on literary modernity. To enable comparisons between the individual literary settings, we have chosen the format of a Reader: it sets the stage for the literary actors to speak for themselves and at length.

The discourse about the future of Persian literature was informed by a common past, and the intellectuals in all three settings drew on compatible conceptual, stylistic and aesthetic toolkits. The new themes they adopted also resonated throughout the space under consideration in this volume. The following is an attempt to gauge the interplay between national trajectories and the vectors of cultural and literary exchange. We begin with a cursory look at the defining aspects of modernity and literary modernity, followed by a preview of the key issues discussed by the authors featured in this Reader. We then proceed to present-day approaches to literary modernity and the ways in which they relate to the discourse of the early 20th century.

Literary Modernity

Recent discussions of modernity typically deconstruct the notion of a precise definition and dwell on the amorphous frame, ambiguous concepts, and fleeting grounds of the term.² Following Michel Foucault’s concept of modernity as “a mode of relating to contemporary reality; a voluntary choice made by certain people; in the end, a way of thinking and feeling,” Alexander Jabbari has characterized it as “a discourse about what it means to be

¹ For the need to “listen to what is being said” about modernity in situ, see Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 115.

² Kamran Rastegar, *Literary Modernity between the Middle East and Europe: Textual Transactions in Nineteenth-Century Arabic, English, and Persian Literatures* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 11–12.

modern.”³ The attempt to capture the core of the idea often boils down to formulations that describe modernity as “the very act of change.”⁴ Concomitant phenomena were the dissolution of the sacred framework of human life and the increased importance of the individual. Processes of secularization, industrialization and its social consequences, along with technologization, rationalization, and scientification underpin this conceptual field.⁵

Embedded in this framework, literary modernity seeks new scopes and different modes of literary expression. The texts assembled in this volume do not stake out clear-cut and tangible delineations. Bound together by their orientation towards the future of Persophone literature and its role in society, they display a wide range of possible positions, connections, entanglements, and contradictions that emerged in the discursive field. Each author represented in this volume speaks from a specific vantage point. They all take in and respond to external literary worlds of varying scopes – “significant geographies”⁶ – and integrate them into their experience. The interactions are not merely lateral; each entry presents composite responses to a bundle of concepts associated with modernity. Nevertheless, certain broad developments may be outlined. Although the longstanding multilingualism characteristic of the region persisted, there was an increasing demarcation between language camps. Deviation from the national language was perceived as a sign of backwardness and as an obstacle to the onward development towards uniformity.⁷ Despite noticeable differences between the political cultures of Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Iran there also are connective features. The inward-looking drive for the definition and standardization of a truly homegrown and fitting language, literature and education was replicated across state borders. Throughout the region, the debates on the modernization of literature and its purposes evolved along similar paths. At stake were proper content and format, the intended audience, the pace of progress, and the role

³ Alexander Jabbari, “The Making of Modernity in Persianate Literary History,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 36,3 (2016), 418.

⁴ Rastegar, *Literary Modernity*, 12.

⁵ Klaus Peter Müller, “Moderne,” in *Metzler Lexikon Literatur- und Kulturtheorie*, ed. Ansgar Nünning (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2008), 509.

⁶ Francesca Orsini, “The Multilingual Local in World Literature,” *Comparative Literature* 67,4 (2015), 356–357.

⁷ Bert G. Fragner, *Die “Persophonie”: Regionalität, Identität und Sprachkontakt in der Geschichte Asiens* (Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 1999), 35, 40, 93–94, 101–102.

of literature in reflecting, achieving or expediting it. We further see symmetrical processes at work, such as the diversification of literary genres, the adoption of new ones, and the changing significations of classical formats, in particular poetry. The interplay of these topics results in a conglomerate called “literary modernity.” The aforementioned components vary in emphasis depending on the particular author and the social and political context. As the term modernity refers to a broader semantic outline, we prefer it to “modernism.” Although both terms are sometimes employed interchangeably, we reserve the usage of “modernism” for acts of aesthetic pioneering.⁸

The search for new devices and resources to shape literary modernity begins with the diagnosis – often paraphrased in metaphors like old or unfitting clothes – that in view of the social and political upheavals of the time the established literary encodings no longer seem appropriate for the exigencies of the period. Iranian, Afghan and Central Asian authors refer to Europe as the de facto instigator of the modernization process, and European genres and formats begin to figure as alternative models of literary expression. At the same time, the literati are aware of the danger of cultural alienation occasioned by the adoption of foreign patterns in lieu of familiar paths.

The genre associated most closely with European fiction is the novel, and it figures prominently as the most suitable vehicle for modern storytelling. The Afghan authors Maḥmūd Ṭarzī and Muḥyī al-Dīn Anīs as well as the Iranian writer Muḥammad ‘Alī Jamālzāda devote special sections to the novel in their essays. Jamālzāda’s plea for the novel as a medium for imparting knowledge and a tool for enhancing national cohesion is based on his familiarity with European literature. In addition, he focuses on the linguistic aspect, which is also embedded in the context of nation building: novels can serve as a repository for the manifold variations and multiple usages of the Persian language. Anīs likewise puts the novel into the service of national unity. He acknowledges the Western origins of the genre, but, anticipating skepticism

⁸ Hodgkin draws attention to this distinction in the case of the Iranian-Tajik poet Abū al-Qāsim Lāhūtī. He observes that Lāhūtī’s “sense of poetry’s functions emerged from an ideological commitment to the modern, but not to an aesthetic program resembling any historically specific contemporary ‘modernism,’ ‘futurism,’ or ‘avant garde.’” (Samuel Hodgkin, “Classical Persian Canons of the Revolutionary Press: Abū al-Qāsim Lāhūtī’s Circles in Istanbul and Moscow,” in *Persian Literature and Modernity. Production and Reception*, ed. Hamid Rezaei Yazdi and Arshavez Mozafari (London, New York: Routledge, 2019), 186).

about such a foreign literary import, locates it within the overarching context of storytelling and declares the novel a revival of the glorious but disrupted tradition of Afghan narrative art. Tarzī compares the new, realistic prose genres with traditional narratives and argues that only the novel's true-to-life narrative can adequately represent the contemporary technologized environment. In Central Asia, Ṣadr al-Dīn 'Ainī does not theorize the novel and other forms of prose writing, but, influenced by such Russian authors as Maxim Gorky (1868–1936), produces the first prose works for the newly proclaimed Tajik literature and thus sets the standard for all future Soviet-Tajik writers.⁹

If reflections on prose genres include indigenous textual traditions, this applies even more to poetry. Literary heritage is most often tantamount to poetry, and for the formation of modern literature the shared, though not entirely congruent corpus of classical Persian poetry figures as a common point of reference in the Persophone realm. It is considered a source of education and learning, a repository of valuable knowledge, a template for the mastery of language, and a stimulation of the interest in literature. The need to preserve canonical works as a ferment for the formation of national identity and a stronghold against foreign infiltration is an ongoing concern, and possible alterations to the longstanding poetic system are most fervently discussed. The Iranian author Vaḥīd Dastgirdī expresses an extremely conservative opinion; he holds that the classical works of Persian poetry embody the only true and acceptable modern innovations. Muḥammad Taqī Bahār connects literary history to the framework of evolutionary theory and promotes the gradual development of new literary modes of expression in harmony with the surrounding “milieu.” The Afghan poet Ghulām Jilānī A'zamī is among those who accept a dichotomy of form and content and opt for a poetry combining traditional poetic forms with novel contents. 'Ainī equally argues for pouring modern subject matters into the ancient molds of Persian poetics. He holds that classical works should serve as models fostering cultural progress among the younger generation. In practice, however, he also experiments with new poetic forms of Tajik poetry.

Some poets call for a sharp break with the past and propose the formation of new literary modes bearing no resemblance with the older works. In their view, modernity produces a literature that is (or will be) completely different

⁹ Jiří Bečka, “The New and the Traditional in the Writings of Sadriiddin Aīnī,” *Archiv Orientální* 48 (1980), 295.

from its predecessors in terms of form, topic, and expression. For some authors in Central Asia, the old works, representing a despotic and superstitious political and social order, have had none but harmful effects and are to be replaced by new high-standard *belles lettres* (Redkollegiia in Tashkent). The Soviet Persian poet Pirmuhammadzāda Dihātī also speaks out in favor of a radical break and a literary revolution. In Iran, Taqī Raf‘at argues in the same vein and engages in a literary debate with Bahār about whether changes in literature can be achieved by a revolutionary break rather than an evolutionary transformation. Nīmā Yūshīj likewise suggests far-reaching modifications that will eventually amount to a revolution in the poetic system.

Regarding the basis of all literature, whether prose or poetry, most authors agree that the language of modernity must be plain and simple. The requirement of a language comprehensible to the general public occurs in texts from all camps and is propagated as the adaptation of literary language to the “entrenched street language” (Bahār), as the approximation and even unification of colloquial and written language (Mīr Ghulām Muḥammad Ghubār), or as the praise of the “sweet and simple language” of the “Tajik toilers” (Dihātī). At the same time, it remains vague what this language – in Dihātī’s case, “Tajik” – is or should be in future. The literarization of plain and colloquial language is contrasted with the ponderous language of the ancient works: Nīmā Yūshīj claims a “wording ... so lightweight as compared to the ghazals of the ancients” for his own work.

The texts by themselves and their publishing format mark additional aspects of literary modernity. Most of them appeared in journals, which established themselves as a new venue for the presentation of literature. They are a station on the path to the scientification of literary studies and history, which resulted in the curricularization at the newly established universities. The “emergence of an autonomous field of literary production”¹⁰ – that is, the independence from former patrons and employers from the courtly or religious milieu – is regarded as a specific socio-political feature of literary modernity.

The above survey gives insights into the multifaceted nature of intellectual discourses in the Persophone realm in the early 20th century. This complexity is addressed by present-day approaches to literary modernity. There has been a general shift from previous monocausal Eurocentric models to more diversified perspectives. Recent scholarship strives to reveal the multiple cultural dynamics inherent in the unfolding of literary modernity. We will

¹⁰ Rastegar, *Literary Modernity*, 7.

conclude this section with a discussion of how, in retrospect, present-day scholarship relates to the future-oriented arguments expressed by the early 20th-century authors reflecting on literary modernity in their own time.

A common denominator of the postcolonial approach is the deconstruction of concepts that frame historical processes in terms of binary oppositions stemming from asymmetric, unidirectional power relations. Mohammad Mehdi Khorrami draws on standard works of Iranian literary historiography to demonstrate the extent to which the axiomatic assumption of Western-style literary modernity has shaped, channeled, and narrowed down the perception of literary history in the 19th and early 20th centuries.¹¹ As part of the new approach, Wali Ahmadi, referring among others to Afghan authors included in this volume, recognizes “a diverse and heterogeneous modernist literary movement”¹² in Afghanistan. He concludes that conceptions of tradition vs. modernity, autochthonous vs. foreign culture, and the teleological orientation towards a Western-defined vanishing point called modernity need to be replaced by dynamic theoretical approaches. Binary concepts can be detected in many texts in our volume, but most authors also argue for various incorporations, blends and mixtures, as they ponder the ideal compound of old and new.

Another paradigm that has been challenged is the notion of the novel as a signature genre of modernity and its close association with the nation. Benedict Anderson’s well-known study *Imagined Communities*, in particular its identification of an intrinsic nexus between nation and novel as a token of modernity has shaped and dominated the scholarly discourse since its publication in 1983.¹³ Recent approaches have occasioned a reassessment.

¹¹ Mohammad Mehdi Khorrami, *Modern Reflections of Classical Traditions in Persian Fiction* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2003), 9–14. The author refers to Yahyā Āryanpūr, *Az Šabā tā Nīmā* (Tehran: Kitāb-i Jībī, 1351/1972) and Ḥasan Mīr‘ābidīnī, *Šad sāl dāstān-navīsī-i Īrān* (Tehran: Chishma, 1377/1998); see also Rastegar, *Literary Modernity*, 5–9.

¹² Wali Ahmadi, *Modern Persian Literature in Afghanistan: Anomalous Visions of History and Form* (London: Routledge, 2008), 7.

¹³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 2006); for a synopsis and an insightful discussion of Anderson’s ideas, see Claus V. Pedersen, *The Rise of the Persian Novel: From*

From the postcolonial vantage point, the postulation of an essential correlation between the nation and the novel does not do justice to the complexity of the phenomena involved; it oversimplifies the concept of the nation and overlooks the hybrid and fluid character of the novel.¹⁴ In Arabic and Persian literary studies, Kamran Rastegar detects a “nationalist-novelist paradigm of literary criticism”¹⁵ that has resulted in a selective perception of literary production. According to Rastegar, only works suiting this paradigm have entered the narrative of the “emergence”¹⁶ of modern Persian literature. Seen through this lens, 19th-century Arabic and Persian literatures appear only as

a precursor to the discussions of ascendant forms such as the modernist novel or short story. Thus, the studies of nineteenth-century Arabic and Persian literary works have too often valued these texts only in accordance with their assimilation into the trajectories of novelistic writing as well as their legitimacy within frameworks of nationalist discourse.¹⁷

As a counterpoise to the eclectic perception through literary history and criticism Rastegar suggests the study of “transactional texts,” which he defines as “texts that are to a great extent formed through their circulation between social and linguistic arenas [...]”¹⁸ He takes his examples from travel literature or story collections like *Alf laila wa laila* (“The Arabian Nights”) that have been translated or rewritten in different languages and circulate in various societies. Based on these texts, Rastegar develops the idea of “contingent modernities,”¹⁹ which pluralizes modernity and allows for unpredictable processes. Looking at the texts in this volume, we can detect indicators both for the incriminated “nationalist-novelist paradigm” and for the incorporation of “transactional texts” as demanded by Rastegar. The novel is presented as the genre best suited to respond to the exigencies of modern

the Constitutional Revolution to Rezâ Shâh 1910–1927 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2016), 12–18.

¹⁴ Pedersen, *Rise*, 13–14; Hamid Rezaei Yazdi, “Rival Texts: Modern Persian Prose Fiction and the Myth of the Founding Father,” in *Persian Literature and Modernity: Production and Reception*, ed. Hamid Rezaei Yazdi and Arshavez Mozafari (London, New York: Routledge, 2019), 27.

¹⁵ Rastegar, *Literary Modernity*, 6.

¹⁶ Quotation marks by Rastegar, *Literary Modernity*, 5.

¹⁷ Rastegar, *Literary Modernity*, 6.

¹⁸ Rastegar, *Literary Modernity*, 7.

¹⁹ Rastegar, *Literary Modernity*, 4–5.

times and certain aspects of nation-building. At the same time, the new genre is linked to indigenous traditions of storytelling. As mentioned above, Anīs draws upon traditional prose narratives in order to endow the novel with an autochthonous background and root the genre in the national culture. His assessment can be either understood as an inclusion of “transactional texts” into a variegated complex of narrative genres or as their nationalization.

The debates about the nature of the transition from ancient to modern literary expression are reflected in successive academic discourses. The former assumption of a break with tradition in the course of modernization brought about by an individual author or poet (often dubbed as the “father” of the respective modern genre) has given way to an approach that focuses on the overlap of different textual domains and the repurposing and recharging of indigenous genres.²⁰ In the field of Persian poetry, Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak describes the breach between classical and modern formats as “more a rhetorical posture than an accurate description of modernism.”²¹ He outlines the transformation to modern poetry as a systemic process, where “at every stage we have one form or another of the old/new dichotomy” – an ambivalence which is “a constant feature of poetic texts.”²² Likewise, a closer look sometimes reveals inconsistencies in the theory and practice of individuals, as well as blurred divisions between the protagonists of literary modernization. In a study on Iranian intellectuals in the constitutional period, Ali Gheissari notes that an “uneasy coexistence of modernity and tradition lies behind many of the contradictions that characterized individual Iranian reformists and the reform movement as a whole.”²³ Recent research on Jadidism also indicates that the mere juxtaposition of modernity and tradition is not very helpful in understanding the worldview of the intellectuals involved, or cultural change in early 20th-century Central Asia in general.²⁴ In the field of literary reform, Ingeborg Baldauf observes that

²⁰ Rezaei Yazdi, “Rival Texts.”

²¹ Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, *Recasting Persian Poetry: Scenarios of Poetic Modernity in Iran* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1995), 1.

²² Karimi-Hakkak, *Recasting Persian Poetry*, 8.

²³ Ali Gheissari, *Iranian Intellectuals in the Twentieth Century* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 15.

²⁴ Ingeborg Baldauf, “Jadidism in Central Asia within Reformism and Modernism in the Muslim World,” *Die Welt des Islams* 41,1 (2001), 72; Devin DeWeese, Jeff Eden, and Paolo

[a]mong the Turkestani literati, there was no clear divide between “traditionalists” and “innovators;” many poets would mingle within circles dominated by one or the other basic outlook ..., were much more conservative in style than in thought ... [and] continued to appeal to the tastes of the audience.²⁵

The studies referred to above highlight the diversity of viewpoints, the ambiguity of attitudes, and the simultaneity of incongruent developments that likewise inhere the agendas of the early 20th-century intellectuals. Their programmatic texts reveal the complexity of the literary transformation process that unfolds according to its own dynamics within the different political settings in the Persophone realm.

“Persophone” versus “Persianate”

The authors discussed in this book were active in the linguistic space and literary frame of reference the late Bert Fagner has termed as *qalamrau-i zabān-i fārsī*, “the realm of the Persian language.”²⁶ Interestingly, Fagner’s groundbreaking essay and coinage of the term “Persophonia” only elicited muted resonance in comparison with Marshall Hodgson’s concept of the “Persianate,” which took on a life of its own from the mid-1990s onward and developed into an inclusive frame of reference. In what follows, we will briefly revisit the groundwork done by both scholars and state our reasons for describing the linguistic and cultural territory negotiated by the intellectuals of the time as “Persophone” rather than “Persianate.”

Fagner coined the term “Persophonia” in analogy to the understanding of “Francophonia” as pertaining to a population using French as its first or second language. He thereby aimed to highlight the role of Persian as a transregional contact language in the eastern Islamic world. The space-time Fagner had in mind was produced by the ongoing usage of Persian,

Sartori, eds., *Beyond Modernism: Jadidism in the Volga-Urals, Central Asia and Western China*, double theme issue, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 59 (2016); Keith Hitchins, “Jadidism,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica Online* (Brill); Adeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1998).

²⁵ Ingeborg Baldauf, “Educating the Poets and Fostering Uzbek Poetry of the 1910s to Early 1930s,” *Cahiers d’Asie centrale* 24 (2015), 184.

²⁶ Fagner, *Persophonie*, 2, 69, 73.

particularly the intensity and functional variegation of this usage. He traced the career of Persian as a medium of exchange, outlining its early beginnings as the first “Islamicized” language and its rise as an administrative, court and literary language from Samanid times onward.²⁷ His macro-historical frame of analysis opened up a panoramic view onto a linguistically based, common cultural context that evolved in the course of a pre-modern *longue durée* with varying intensities and shifting gravities. This concept enabled a switch from notions of a traditional cultural core to a polycentric setting and thus unhinged common Irano-centric assumptions and nationalist historical discourses.²⁸

Fragner’s emphasis is on the Persian language as a historical phenomenon and the conditions that allowed it to generate a shared realm of ideas permeating space and social rank. It was this complex and dynamic linguistic texture extending across space and time that constituted Persophonia, with achievements in literature, mysticism, and architecture as “accessory” achievements.²⁹ Through its role as *lingua franca*, Persian united an extensive region embracing the central and western reaches of the Silk Road and fused Central Asia, India and Iran into one zone of communication. From the 10th century onward, the usage of Persian was closely linked to the political, military and administrative power exercised by royal patrons, who had acquired Persian in addition to their Turkic mother tongue. Under the aegis of the Ghaznavid and Saljuq dynasties, it became the primary written medium of the bureaucracy. The literary transmission was textualized to a large extent, and the cultural memory began to rely on written texts. Bureaucratic usages, literary traditions, and everyday communication by non-native speakers mark the degree and extent of standardization Persian underwent at the time.³⁰ More recently, Nile Green has rediscovered the interplay between the spoken and written highlighted by Fragner and branded it as the overlapping “geographies of Persophonia and Persographia.”³¹

²⁷ Fragner, *Persophonie*, 27–28, 33–36.

²⁸ Fragner, *Persophonie*, 6.

²⁹ Fragner, *Persophonie*, 93, 96–99.

³⁰ Fragner, *Persophonie*, 76–78. See also Saïd Amir Arjomand, “A Decade of Persianate Studies,” *Journal of Persianate Studies* 8 (2015), 316.

³¹ Nile Green, “Introduction: The Frontiers of the Persianate World (ca. 800–1900),” in *The Persianate World: The Frontiers of a Eurasian Lingua Franca*, ed. Nile Green (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019), 26–27.

In Fragner's view, the concept of Persophonia takes on features of a living and active organism.³² He casts its development according to a logic of genesis, prime and demise. Persian reached maturity in the 10th century as a signifier of Islamic civilization, flourished between the 13th and 17th centuries and gradually disintegrated from the 18th century onward. One indication of this development was the decline in translations from and into Turkish and from Sanskrit. In the 19th century, Persian receded in a process that coincided with the growth of daughter languages and was further stimulated by colonial language policies. In India, Urdu became a new "Islamicate" literary language in its own right. In Central Asia, the Russian administration stimulated the use of Turki.³³

While Fragner used the term "Islamicate" in the sense coined by Hodgson in the 1960s, he did not take up the analogous expression "Persianate," which Hodgson used to distinguish cultural phenomena associated with Persian from the Persian language as such. After all, there was considerable overlap between the linguistic and literary processes both authors had in mind. Like Fragner, Hodgson held that the expansion of Persian as a literary and scholarly vehicle prepared the ground for the genesis of a specific cultural orientation and evolving tradition, which he named "Persianate." Both authors conjecture a transregional and multilingual contact zone, in which Persian served as a connective medium and abetted the development of further, locally based literary languages representing high culture.³⁴ Both concepts envision a space shaped by modalities, contours and frontiers. Hodgson distinguished between an "Arabic" and a "Persianate" zone, the latter extending from "the wide highlands north and east of the Tigris."³⁵ Fragner introduces his *Persophonie* with the question of whether "The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate" described by Guy Le Strange in 1905 may be understood as an enduring historical region.³⁶

³² Fragner, *Persophonie*, 8.

³³ Fragner, *Persophonie*, 90–91, 101.

³⁴ Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), vol. 1, 59; vol. 2, 293–294. See also Fragner, *Persophonie*, 9, 98–99.

³⁵ Hodgson, *Venture*, vol. 2, 293–294.

³⁶ Fragner, *Persophonie*, 5.

Despite these similarities it was Hodgson's terminology that grew and ramified in the anglophone world from the mid-1990s onward.³⁷ It has since become an inclusive frame of reference embracing modes of governance, socioreligious networks, literary production, and material culture.³⁸ A vital impetus has been to widen the purview of this concept beyond the high culture of courtly and scholastic élites termed by Green as the geography of "power, privilege, and authority."³⁹ Sam Hodgkin highlights the reach and impact of "low" Persianate registers associated with nomads, peasants, guild halls, Sufi lodges, marketplaces and teahouses.⁴⁰

This Reader opens a window on the literary activity coinciding with the breakup of the Persophone realm into the national languages of Farsi, Tajik and Dari. It focuses on the literary debates carried out in Persian in the early 20th century. Given this clearly delimited approach, the following texts revisit Hodgson's original intent of Persian as a literary vehicle and hardly do justice to the concept of the "Persianate" in its present, encompassing sense. Rather than attempting to retrieve Hodgson's groundwork from underneath the multifarious recent emanations and ramifications of the "Persianate," we find that the geographical and conceptual territory we have in mind is most accurately captured by Fragner's formulation of "Persophonia."

Transnational Contexts and National Trajectories

The protagonists of our Reader wrote at a time when Persian came to be identified with the modern political entities of Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan. In each of the three settings, concepts of language and literature were reframed and accentuated in the period up to the Second World War. These developments began with the Russian, Iranian, and Ottoman constitutional revolutions of 1905–1912. The concomitant burgeoning of the press allowed for active experimentation with content, format, and register.

³⁷ Arjomand, "A Decade of Persianate Studies," 312.

³⁸ Abbas Amanat, "Remembering the Persianate," in *The Persianate World: Rethinking a Shared Sphere*, ed. Abbas Amanat and Assef Ashraf (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 20–21, 50, 62.

³⁹ Green, "Introduction," 26–27.

⁴⁰ Samuel Hodgkin, *Persianate Verse and the Poetics of Eastern Internationalism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2024).