

Iran Colloquium Presents

**The Word, the World and the Wonderful Life:
Notes on the Aesthetics of Early Persian Poetry**



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Persian poetry, an aesthetic system now over 1100 years old, emerged in the steppes of Central Asia, known then as Khorasan, through the ninth century AD. Using some of the earliest specimens of this emerging poetic tradition, I argue that it laid the foundation for an aesthetic of *joie de vivre*, a worldly worldview that, while acknowledging the many “slings and arrows” of human life, lamenting the advent of old age, and expressing dislike of death as much as any succeeding thematic focus, this body of work is unique in the annals of Persian poetry in its commitment to “the good life”. Themes of *carpe diem* and a variety of ideas seemingly based on a healthy hedonism seem to have given this early poetry a simple sophistication that remained unparalleled in the generations of poets that followed. While modern historians of early Persian poetry have written tomes on the style and diction, themes and motifs, and the historical significance of this pioneering poetic utterances, much of it based on rather artificial assumptions about a “regional” style known as *sabk-e khorasani* (Khorasani Style), there has been scant attention paid to the relationship between this poetic posture and its possible genealogy or its fortunes through the millennium of classical and modern creativity. The talk will offer tentative ideas on these and other related feature of Persian poetry in the ninth and tenth centuries.

Friday, February 22

12:00 - 1:30 pm

Luce 202, 34 Hillhouse

Light lunch will be provided

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