

Aria Fani

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Professional Appointment

- 2025- Associate Professor
- Director of the Middle East Center (2024-2026)
 - Director of PISP (2022-)
- 2019-2025 Assistant Professor of Persian and Iranian Studies
Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Professorship
Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures, University of Washington, Seattle
- Adjunct in Comparative History of Ideas

Education

University of California, Berkeley
Ph.D., Near Eastern Studies; 2019

Diss. title “Becoming Literature: The Formation of Adabiyāt as an Academic Discipline in Iran and Afghanistan (1895-1945)”

Adviser: Wali Ahmadi

Publications

Reading across Borders: Afghans, Iranians, and Literary Nationalism (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2024).

Persian translation خواندن فراسوی مرزها، افغان ها، ایرانی ها و ملی گرایی ادبی (Tehran: Shirazeh Press, 2024).

Winner of the ACLA’s 2025 René Wellek Prize for the Best Monograph in Comparative Literature

Shape of Extinction: Poems by Bijan Jalali. Co-translated with Adeeba Talukder (Toronto: Asemana Books, 2025).

Winner of the Lois Roth Translation Prize in Persian Literature (Modern Poetry)

Blind-reviewed

Forthcoming 2026 “Parsing the Nation: Bahār and the Rise of Adabiyāt,” *Cambridge History of Middle Eastern Modernism*.

2023 “Shadow Texts of National History: Poetic Participation in Iran and Afghanistan,” *Philological Encounters* 8(2): 150-175.

- 2022 “Disciplining Persian Literature in Twentieth-century Afghanistan,” *Iranian Studies* 55(3): 675-695.
- 2021 “The Allure of Untranslatability: Shafi‘i-Kadkani and (Not) Translating Persian Poetry.” *Iranian Studies* 54(1–2): 95–125.

Peer-reviewed

- 2025 “Pathways to Persotopias,” *PMLA*. Co-written with Kevin Schwartz and Samuel Hodgkin.
- 2021 “文学是什么?一种全球性文学话语的兴起.” *Journal of Foreign Languages and Cultures* 5(1): 42–49.
* Published in Mandarin Chinese
- 2020 “Iran’s Literary Becoming: Zokā’ ol-Molk Forughi and the Literary History That Wasn’t.” *Iran Namag: A Quarterly of Iranian Studies*, 5(3): 114–144.
- 2017 “Basmala: Translating an Iconic Phrase.” *TRANS: Revista de Traductología* (21): 213–219. Co-authored with John Hayes.
- 2014 روایت تعهد ادبی در شعر مقاومت افغانستان, *Iran Namah*, 29(1): 108–120.
* Published in Persian

Special issue

- 2022 “Persianate Pasts; National Presents: Persian Literary and Cultural Production in the Twentieth Century.” *Iranian Studies* 55.3. Co-edited with Kevin L. Schwartz.

Chapters in edited volumes

- 2022 “What Does Translation Mean in the Age of Colonial Modernity?” In *The Routledge Handbook of Persian Literary Translation*. Edited by Michelle Quay, Patricia Higgins, and Pouneh Shabani-Jadidi, Routledge, 286-298.
- 2020 “What Is Asylum? Translation, Trauma, and Institutional Visibility.” *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Activism*. Edited by Rebecca Gould and Kayvan Tahmasebian, 397-407.
- 2016 “Poet as Citizen in a Contested Nation: Rewriting the Poetry of Soviet-occupied Afghanistan,” In *Artistic Citizenship: Artistry, Social Responsibility, and Ethical Praxis*. Edited by David J. Elliott, Marissa Silverman, Wayne Bowman, Oxford University Press, 392-414.

Textbook

- 2009 *Advanced Persian for Heritage Learners*. Persian Cultural Center of San Diego (Library of Congress: TX 7-321-587).

Review

- 2025 Review of *Persianate Verse and the Poetics of Eastern Internationalism*, Comparative Literature Studies
- 2025 Thinking Iranian Nationalism with the Persianate: A [Review](#) of Alexander Jabbari's *The Making of Persianate Modernity*, Cultural Critique
- 2019 *Culture of Encounters: Sanskrit at the Mughal Court*. Iranian Studies. 52(1–2): 231-237
- 2016 *Writing Self, Writing Empire*. The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences, 33(3): 106–110.
- 2016 *Bud u nimud-i sukhan*. Nigah-i naw, 110: 248–251.

Teaching

Content Courses

- Seminar: Orientalisms and World Literature (Winter 2023 & Winter 2026); Cross-listed with Comparative Literature
- Afghanistan Beyond the Headlines (Winter 2023); Cross-listed with Comparative History of Ideas
- The Politics and Poetics of Translation (Fall 2021); Cross-listed with Comparative Literature
- Roads to Mecca: Pilgrimage Writings from the Islamic World (Winter 2022); Course, cross-listed with Comparative Literature
- Middle of What? East of Where? The Middle East through Travelogues (Spring 2020); Cross-listed with Comparative Literature
- The Middle East Through Cinema (Summer 2020)
- Mystical Literature in English Translation (Winter 2021); Cross-listed with Comparative Literature

Persian Language and Literature

- Critical Readings in Modern Persian (Fall 2019)
- Survey of Classical Persian Literature (Winter 2020)
- Media Persian (Spring 2020, Fall 2021)
- Modern Persian Literature (Fall 2020, Winter 2022)
- The Persian Ghazal (Winter 2021)
- The Epic Tradition in Iran (Spring 2022)
- Sufi Thought and Expression (Spring 2024)

Service to the Profession

(Inter)national Service

Deputy editor
Iranian Studies (Cambridge University Press)
 June 2021 - July 2024

Associate editor for modern literature / book review

Iranian Studies

March 2018 - May 2021

UW/MELC Service

Co-principal investigator

Translation Studies Hub (Simpson Center for the Humanities)

June 2022 - Present

MELC Graduate Program Coordinator

September 2023 - Present

MELC Diversity committee

September 2019 - March 2023

Co-organizer

The Pacific Northwest Adab Society (link [here](#))

October 2020 - Present

Community Service

Immigration Rights Advocate

East Bay Sanctuary Covenant, Berkeley, CA

January 2017 - Present

Reviewer

Iranian-American Scholarship Fund

June 2022 - Present

Fellowships & Awards

- Society of Scholars, Simpson Center for the Humanities, 2023-2024
- Research Royalty Fund Scholar Award, Spring 2021
- Townsend Center for the Humanities Dissertation Fellowship, 2019-2020 (declined)
- CMES Mellon Research Grant, University of California, Berkeley, 2018
- Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor Award, University of California, Berkeley, 2016-2017

Advising

~ Ph.D.

Anna Learn, adviser (PhD in NMES)

Bahar Saadat, adviser (PhD in NMES)

Solmaz Shakerifard, adviser (PhD in NMES)

Ilsa Abdul Razzaq, committee member (PhD in History)

Farzaneh Ebrahimzadeh Holasu, committee member (Michigan State University)

~ MA

Caro Reed-Ferrara, adviser (MA in MELC, June 2023)

Nathan Mark, committee member (MA in MES, June 2023)

Brianna Voss, committee member (MA in MELC, June 2025)

Conferences & Talks (abridged)

Organized Symposia & Lecture Series

- 2022 “Afghanistan through Afghan Voices: Society, Literature & Arts,” Six lectures from January to June in collaboration with UCLA and Stanford University (link [here](#))
- 2022 “Is There a Persianate Modernity?” University of Washington, Seattle; hosted by the Simpson Center for the Humanities, January 28 (link [here](#))

Talks

- 2024 Book talk on *Reading across Borders: Afghans, Iranians, and Literary Nationalism* at Brown University (April 23), Harvard University (April 24), University of Minnesota (April 26), UCLA (May 7).
- 2022 “The Formation of *Adabiyat* as a Modern Discourse,” Princeton University, December 14.
- 2022 “Teaching Translation Literacy: Why Translation Matters to the Humanities,” University of Puget Sound, November 5.
- 2022 “Afghan-Iranian Literary Connections and Romantic Nationalism,” U.T. Austin, November 2.
- 2022 “Teaching Translation Literacy,” Comparative Literature Research Seminars, King's College London; King's College, London, March 9.

Organized Panels

- 2019 “The Dialogic Persianate: Historical Models of Literary Production and Cultural Exchange (1700-1950).” MESA, New Orleans, LA.
- 2018 “After the Persianate? The Contours of Twentieth-century Persian literature.” Association for Iranian Studies. Irvine, CA.

Panel & Workshop Participation

- 2023 “Literary Nationalism and Early Twentieth-century Persian Periodicals,” *Conference Paper, Empires of Language in Islamicate Eurasia*, Simon Fraser University. June 9-10.

- 2022 “The Formation of *Adabiyāt*,” *Philology in Persian*, U.C. Berkeley, April 16.
- 2021 “Institutionalizing Persian Literature: The Case of Afghanistan,” ACLA.
- 2019 “*Eqterah* and the Proliferation of *Adabiyāt* as a New Discourse of Literature in Iran and Afghanistan (1916-1949).” MESA, New Orleans, LA.

Public-facing lectures

- 2021 “A Brief History of Iranian Studies in the US,” San Diego Persian Cultural Center
- 2020 “Mohammad Hosayn Foroughi and Disciplining Literature in Iran,” Bellevue, WA
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Academic Activities & Projects

- Analyst for the Metanet Project
International Computer Science Institute, Berkeley, CA, April 2014 - January 2015
Based on cognitive linguists, primarily the theories of George Lakoff, *Metanet* sets out to build a system capable of understanding metaphors used in text. I primarily analyzed metaphors extracted from Persian.
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Professional certificates

- Summer 2024 Institute on Translation Across the Curriculum, University of Iowa, June 24
 - TESOL International Training, San Diego, CA (120-hour training, 2010)
 - New York University/STARTALK for Teachers of Persian and Arabic, New York, NY (140-hour training, 2010 & 2012)
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Languages

Persian: Superior fluency

Spanish: Conversational and reading knowledge

Pashto: Basic reading, intermediate low speaking

Arabic: Basic reading skills

Professional Memberships

- American Comparative Literature Association
- Association for Iranian Studies
- Middle East Studies Association

Skills

- Failed stand-up comedian

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