

Carla Petievich Domestic Travel Grant - Narrative Report

I presented the paper, “*From Court to Public Sphere: How Urdu Poetry's Language of Romance Shapes the Language of Protest*” as part of a panel on “*Listening to Texts in Islamicate South Asia*” (abstract below). I also attended several other panels whose focus was Urdu poetry and poetics and/or the culture of Urdu composition and recitation as it evolved over several centuries. Following on the insights provided by Nathan Tabor’s work on the cultural institution of *musha’ira* (poetic assembly) in 18th-century Mughal India, in this paper I discussed how the *adab* of listening to classical Urdu poetry can be adapted to public *musha’iras* in contemporary Pakistan. While the “subject” of the classical ghazal is generally understood to be romantic, modern poets and their audiences have proved adept at re-working its conventions and employing the power of its rhetoric to make the “subject” of poetry political. In this paper I showed how two poems (*nazm*), by Faiz Ahmed Faiz, create powerful political messages when recited publicly, while ostensibly staying within the rhetorical boundaries of classical poetry.