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FROM NIMA YUSHIJ TO SOHRAB
SEPEHRI

A Development of Modern Persian Poetry

*Behnam M. Fomeshi***Nima and Modern Persian Poetry: The Form of Nimaic Poetry**

The first modernist poems of Nima Yushij (1897–1960) emerged when the debate over poetic change was very hot.¹ In 1921, Nima wrote “Afsaneh,” and in the following year some parts of it were published in *Qarn-e Bistom*, a progressive magazine established and run by Mirzadeh Eshqi (1893–1924). During the productive period that began with “Afsaneh,” Nima was experimenting with various Persian poetic forms. But from 1934 on, a period of experimentation started; then Nima, contemplating the formal and theoretical aspects of new poetry, wrote a significant number of poems but did not publish them. The successful outcome of this period of serious experimentation was the publication of “Ghorab” (Crow) and “Qoqnus” (Phoenix), respectively published in 1939 and 1940, along with the article series *The Value of Feelings in the Life of Artists* (Arzesh-e Ehsasatdar Zendegi-ye Honarpishegan), published from December 1939 to November 1940.² The two poems were the development of the process of poetic experimentation that began with “Afsaneh” in the early 1920s.

At the same time that Nima was experimenting with Persian poetic forms he tried to develop his theory of modern Persian poetry; the outcome of his poetic endeavors, the first two instances of (what was later called) Nimaic Poetry and the article series, was all published in the magazine *Majalleh-ye Musiqi* (La Revue musicale).³ The magazine established a forum for the discussion of art and literature and it “must in fairness be considered an outstanding achievement, perhaps the culmination of half a century of debate on the nature and function of the arts.”⁴ Nima published fifteen poems of his in the very magazine and tried to theorize modern Persian poetry in the afore-mentioned article series.

In classical Persian literature prose and poetry were easily distinguishable. Poetry, unlike prose, was symmetrical in its form and music. Even in the works that juxtaposed lines of poetry and prose readers and listeners could easily distinguish the two. Nima developed a different idea of the form and music of poetry. Nima’s innovation in the metrics was the most significant contribution to the form of modern Persian poetry. Throughout the history of Persian poetry, each and every line of a given poem had the same number of feet. This was the reason behind the symmetrical shape of Persian poetry. Nima’s innovation was not a total break with tradition; Nimaic meter follows the traditional ‘*aruz*. Like classical Persian poetry, Nimaic poetry employs only one metric pattern in each individual poem. Nimaic poetry is different from

classical Persian poetry in the number of the *arkan* (metric foot). While the latter follows the same number of *arkan* in each and every line of a poem, the former employs various numbers of *arkan* in the lines of a poem. Traditional poets strictly followed the “quantity” of *arkan* and “its symmetric presentation throughout the poem.”⁵ For Nima “quality” is fixed while “quantity” depends on the line. He realized that fixed quality and different quantity would preserve the musicality of poetry and at the same time the idea, not the restrictions of quantity, would determine the length of each line.

Nima’s formal innovations also cover rhyme, a significant part of the form and music of Persian poetry. Since almost the beginning of Persian poetry rhyme was a central characteristic of poetry. “The division of the *bayt*, a single poetic unit, into two hemistiches of equal metric value has made the mechanistic nature of the rhyme scheme in Persian poetry highly visible.”⁶ Rhyme in Persian poetry had lost its function and turned into a mechanical feature of poetry. Nima’s notion of rhyme and its function are different from those of the traditional poetic practice; his innovation revitalized rhyme in Persian poetry. Classical Persian poetry was based on *bayt*, and rhyme formed an integral part of each *bayt*. However, in Nimaic poetry, there is no conventional *bayt* as the fundamental unit of poetry.⁷ To Nima, rhyme was a musical element to connect related ideas, rather than conventional *bayts*, in a poem. He developed Nimaic poetry, a poetic form that was not symmetrical in its shape and music and that was partly free from restrictions of traditional rhyme and meter.⁸

The Leftist Literary Movement and Nima: The Dominant Interpretation of Nimaic Poetry

In May 9, 1943, Tabari⁹ (1917–1989), an Iranian intellectual and a theoretician of the Tudeh party, published “Omid-e Palid,” a poem by Nima, in *Nameh-ye Mardom*, a leftist periodical. Tabari also wrote an introduction to the poem. Not a popular figure in the early 1940s, Nima was in fact attacked by the literati and ignored by the intellectuals. Tabari wrote

No doubt those having prejudices against the new styles will make fun of these phrases. Speaking on behalf of Mr. Nima I should confess that their ridicules and fallacies will be very funny and ridiculous. They can simply look right with this hubbub and prove others wrong. The emergence of Romanticism in France faced the same situation and the first person who dreamed of inventing a plane was a target of ridicule and called crazy by the critics of their own time. However, today you can find nobody who does not praise their courage.¹⁰

Tabari continued,

One should not consider the old concepts the criteria to evaluate these poems. These poems should be evaluated according to new measures of thought and judgment and their imperfection and fault must be revealed through these new measures and not any other.¹¹

He was the first major figure to support Nima’s modernist innovations and to explain the difference between his poetics and the traditional Persian poetics.

Tabari continued to support Nima in one of the most significant literary events of the 20th-century Iran. Held in 1946, the first Iranian Writers’ Congress gathered the significant literary figures of the period.¹² Nima attended the Congress, introduced himself, expressed his ideas,

and recited his “ĀyĀdam-ha.”¹³ By 1946 Nima’s reputation had increased among the young generation. Despite or perhaps due to this fact, the distinguished poets of the time, mostly suspicious of poetic “revolution,” expressed their hatred and animosity toward Nima. Dissatisfied with the speakers’ ignorance of Persian literary modernism and the poets’ recitation of works in the traditional forms at the Congress, Tabari said,

The first change a poet should bring about is to free themselves reasonably from the many restrictions that the inanition of form, content and expression has imposed on them. To do so, one should not act crazy or hasty . . . the new poet should come into close contact with the life and the nature.¹⁴

To Tabari, slavishly following the great masters of classical Persian poetry led to “unimaginative Ghazals and insipid Qasidehs.”¹⁵ Tabari justified the philosophy behind the poetic innovation and asserted that “today Nima and others are just the forerunners” and “if the philosophy behind this innovation is justified, it should be supported.”¹⁶ Tabari’s clarification of Nima’s poetic endeavors at the Congress contributed to not only Nima’s reputation among the recognized literary figures, but also to Persian poetic modernism more broadly.¹⁷

The trajectory of the Left’s growth in Iran up to the 1979 Revolution can be divided into four phases.¹⁸ September 1941 to October 1946 formed the period of the formation and expansion of Tudeh Party of Iran. During this period, Tudeh grew rapidly through sponsoring a radio station and trade unions, rallying Iranian liberals, and recruiting in both northern and southern Iran.¹⁹ “Tudeh’s political clout was short lived”; the 1953 coup put an end to it. However, “its intellectual and cultural influence endured.”²⁰ Being an intellectual in Iran in the decades following 1940s was tantamount to having leftist, if not exactly pro-Tudeh, inclinations. For instance, in the Congress where some eighty literary figures, along with significant number of Iranian officials, scientists, and intellectuals, participated, representing all literary movements and tendencies of the country, the political inclination was dominantly leftist. Starting with the early 1940s, the literary activities of the Tudeh Party of Iran not only contributed to creating the leftist literature but also provided a leftist interpretation of almost all literature, including medieval Persian literature.²¹

In the history of Persian poetry, patronage defined the relationship of the poets to the court.²² In the modern period, as the relationship changed, poets could express their genuine feelings toward the court and its policy. This oppositional position was reinforced in the constitutional period, and it was represented in the so-called *Adabiyat-e Mashruteh*.²³ In fact, the interwoven discourses of poetry and politics in the constitutional period led to the emergence of the oppositional political stance of Iranian literary modernism. “Nima and his followers articulated the concept of poetic modernity primarily in terms of an oppositional political stance.”²⁴ New Poetry from beginning was hailed as the poetry of “rebellion,” “negation,” “objection” and the “slogan” of those opposing the regime.²⁵ Nima’s oppositional political stance can be traced in his poetry. His sensitivity toward the sociopolitical issues of his time is indicated in the poems such as “*Sarbaz-e Fuladin* (1928).”²⁶ Poems such as “*Padshah-e Fath*” indicated his trust in the power of the people and his optimism toward the victory over despotism.²⁷

In the period following Reza Shah’s forced abdication in 1941, the freedom of press significantly increased. Registered as a legally recognized political party in 1942, the Tudeh Party of Iran was leading the literary movements through its publications. To compensate the loss of his audience after the stop of *Majalleh-ye Musiqi* in 1941, Nima came closer to the Party. There was an association between oppositional stance and poetic innovation in general and New Poetry in particular.²⁸ Tudeh Party realized, reinforced, and took advantage of this association and

approached the intellectuals and innovative artists and writers; it also contributed to Nima's widespread popularity.²⁹ Nima published "MadarivaPesari," "Vay bar Man," and "Padshah-e Fath" in *Nameh-ye Mardom. Andisheh-ye Now*, another leftist periodical, published Nima's poetry.³⁰ After a few years and with Nima's rising popularity, leftist periodicals referred to Nima in their pieces or published his poetry to support their ideology. *Kabutar-e Solh*, a leftist periodical first published in 1951, called him "Maestro Nima" to use his reputation to further its political aims.³¹ One can argue that the magazine was using Nima's popularity for its leftist ideology rather than supporting Nima's poetic innovation through publishing poems that best manifested Nimaic poetry.

In the Persian poetic tradition, "night" had "spiritual," "mystical" and "personal" connotation; it conveyed separation from the beloved. In his introduction to Nima's "Omid-e Palid," Tabari read the "morning" in the poem as "the dawn of a new society and a modern life system" and the "night" as "reaction, backwardness, ignorance and corruption of the contemporary society." This "added metaphorical dimension totally new to the semantic field of that concept in Persian poetry"³² turned the "night" into a sociopolitical communal concept in 1940s. Nima could "recover and reinvent the symbolic world of the night for darker and more uncertain despair of our age."³³ Although Nima was not the first poet to grant such a meaning to the "night,"³⁴ it was through Tabari's reading of Nima's poetry that the word came to be read as an allusion to the sociopolitical situation. Nima was so pleased with Tabari's interpretation of "Omid-e Palid" that he wrote a letter to Tabari and thanked him for it. That reading of "Omid-e Palid," along with several other poems published in the same period, "signaled a new strategy of signification, which gradually came to be known as 'social symbolism'."³⁵ This "new strategy of signification" was supported and publicized by leftist critics.

Two early supporters of Nima's poetic modernism, Tabari and Āl-e Ahmad were also major Iranian leftist thinkers. According to Tabari, Nima revolutionized Persian poetry in both the form and content; "Nima's personality was a combination of that of Victor Hugo who took the fortress of rhymes and that of Vladimir Mayakovsky who put poetry at the service of the revolutionary class of the history."³⁶ According to Āl-e Ahmad, "to defend Nima is to defend the revolutionary poetry."³⁷ Such comments, from major leftist writers supporting Nima, contributed to reading Nima's modernist poetry in the light of the leftist (revolutionary/oppositional) ideology. The early definition of modern Persian poetry was the poetry free in form and "politically-engaged" in content. This interpretive practice, initiated in 1940s, formed the dominant poetic discourse of the country up to 1979 Revolution.

A Breath of Fresh Air: Irani Introducing European Surrealism and Eastern Mysticism

Hushang Irani (1925–1973) studied mathematics; his PhD dissertation, "Time and Space in Indian Thought,"³⁸ shows his engagement with the Indian philosophy, which later entered his poetry. He knew foreign languages, but he was not familiar with classical Persian poetry. This (lack of) knowledge contributed to creating a fresh poetry. Irani's earliest poems were published in the magazine *KhorusJangi*. After the magazine stopped publication, he got three volumes of poetry published, perhaps due to lack of any venue for his radical poetry in other periodicals.

Irani's first collection of poetry, *Benafsh-e Tond bar Khakestari* (Deep Purple on Grey) (63 pages, 200 copies), was published in September 1951. It included thirteen poems, an epilogue entitled "Dar Shenakht-e Nahofte-ha" (On the Appreciation of the Intangible), and a number of black-and-white drawings that Irani referred to as "designs." Featuring an unconventional and peculiar typeface, the volume had no publisher, page numbers, or table of contents. The majority

of the poems in the collection, although not in line with either classical or Nimaic meters, enjoy a melodic quality. “The repetitive appearance of strange words and vague phrases is among the distinguishing features of the collection.”³⁹ *Shenakht-e Honar: Dar Rah-e YekJahanbini-ye Honari* (Appreciating Art: In Search of an Artistic Worldview), a collection of articles on aesthetics and the nature of art, was published in January 1952. His second collection of poems, *Khakestari* (Grey) (22 pages, 110 copies), with a cover featuring Irani’s “design,” and eight prose poems in modern mystical overtones, was published in 1952. The first poem in the collection, “Unio Mystica,” featuring “Sanskrit letters and sounds in a particular geometrical arrangement unintelligible in Persian, can be categorized among the first examples of concrete or visual poetry in Persian poetry.”⁴⁰ Irani’s third collection of poems, *Sho’le-i Pardehrah Bargereftva Eblis be Darun Amad* (A Flame Embraced the Curtain, and Satan Entered in, 24 pages, 110 copies), was also published in 1952. The poems and Irani’s prologue to the collection indicate his deep immersion in mysticism. “Rahrow” (Wayfarer) depicts the mystical journey of the modern man, and “E’teraf” (Confession) provides a conversation with Buddha. From 1952 on, he wrote fewer poems and translated several works, including Goethe, Henri Michaux (1899–1984), Rabindranath Tagore, and T. S. Eliot’s *Ash Wednesday*. Irani’s final collection of poems, *Akun be Tu Miandisham, Be Tu-ha Miandisham* (I Think of You Now, I Think of All Like You, 24 pages, 230 copies), was published in 1955.

A modern Persian poet, Irani was not following Nima; in form he was not following Nimaic poetry, and in content he was not a proponent of social symbolism or “politically-engaged” poetry. He was not a religious person; nevertheless his poetry was mystical. His poetry was not descriptive or realistic but rather surrealist, closely related to his mystical thought. While Nimaic poets called Persian poetry “traditional,” meaning apolitical and formalist, Irani called Nimaic poetry “traditional,” meaning “politically-engaged” and social. That was a radical definition of “tradition” even for the modern Persian poets. To Irani, poetry was anything but “politically-engaged” and social. Less than a decade after the rise of Nimaic poetry, Irani revolted against the dominant interpretation of modern “politically-engaged” Persian poetry.⁴¹ Up until Irani, poetic modernism was concomitant with “politically-engaged” poetry; with Irani, poetic modernism signified a revolt against such “engaged” poetry. Irani revolted against whatever was established, including the dominant theory of modern Persian poetry, modern “politically-engaged” poetry.

The magazine *KhorusJangi* (The Fighting Rooster) is significant in the study of Irani’s poetic career. It was published in two periods; one during 1949–1950 in five issues and the other during spring 1951 in four issues. In the first period, the title suggested the unconventional and revolutionary art the magazine supported. However, unlike its title, the magazine published poems, including several by Manuchehr Sheybani, which were not different from other periodicals of the time. Nevertheless, its approach to fiction was different; it published much more unconventional fiction. The people involved in the first period are Manuchehr Sheybani, poet and painter; Jalil Ziapur, painter; Hasan Shirvani, playwright; and Gholamhoseyn Gharib, writer and musician.⁴²

KhorusJangi’s significance lies in the second period starting from April 22, 1951. It was published in spring 1951 in four issues when Sheybani and Ziapur left the group, and Irani joined it. Its publication in the second period was almost entirely ignored and sometimes ridiculed. Nevertheless, the aesthetics introduced by Irani in this period influenced modern Persian poetry in the decades to come. All modern Persian poetry defines itself in relation to Nima. The first period of *KhorusJangi* opened with “Az Shahr-e Sobh,”⁴³ a poem by Nima, and the second period started with “Sallakh-e Bolbol,” an attack on Nimaic poetics. The change in the magazine’s approach to Nima was a consequence of Irani replacing Sheybani.

KhorusJangi was against any kind of “engaged” literature. Up to the start of the second period, those who attacked Nima belonged primarily to the more traditional front of Persian poetry, who considered Nima’s innovation too much. However, from this point on, Nima was also seriously criticized by Irani, who himself strongly supported poetic innovation.⁴⁴ Irani disapproved of the political groups’ endorsement of Nimaic poetry in their periodicals, which published modern poetry following Nima. He believed those political groups, who had no deep understanding of Nima’s poetic innovations, turned Nimaic poetry into a rhythmic political manifesto, journalism, and tool at the service of political parties. His understanding of modern Persian poetry was different from the dominant leftist interpretation of Persian literary modernism developed around Nima’s poetry in the 1940s.

According to Irani, “For the artist everything is just a pretext to express their art; they never succumb to the restrictions of morality, society or old traditions.”⁴⁵ The following lines show his theory of art.

Art never aims at proving anything or producing anything that mechanical wants of the society deem useful. Art is created to satisfy the [artistic]pleasure of the artist; as the artist loves it, they put it aside and look for something more fresh to satisfy the inner desire for pleasure, which is moving and changing every minute. The artist has no objectives except this, i.e. bringing pleasure to the self.⁴⁶

“Sallakh-e Bolbol” (Nightingale Butcher), Irani’s radical piece in *KhorusJangi*, summarizes his theory.

- 1 Art in *KhorusJangi* is the art of the alive. This uproar will silence all the voices mourning over the grave of the old art.
- 2 In the name of the new artistic era we have started a fierce fight against all the artistic conventions and rules of the past.
- 3 The new artists are the people of their time; the right to life in the arts belongs only to the forerunners.
- 4 The first step in each new movement is to destroy the idols of the past.
- 5 We call worshipers of the old in all arts, including theatre, painting, novel, poetry, music, and sculpture, doomed to death; we destroy both the idols of the past and their scavenger-like imitators.
- 6 The new art, which considers intimacy with the inner self the path to artistic creation, has all the flush and gush of life and the former is inseparable from the latter.
- 7 The new art moves from the grave of the idols and their evil imitators toward breaking the chains of traditions and improving the freedom of expression for emotions.
- 8 The new art breaks with the old conventions and announces newness as the origin of beauty.
- 9 The essence of art lies in motion and moving forward. The artists whose thought is based on new knowledge are the only living artists.
- 10 The new art is different from the claims of those supporting art for the society or art for art or art for whatever.
- 11 To develop new art in Iran all circles supporting the old art must be destroyed.
- 12 The creators of artistic works should be informed that the artists in *KhorusJangi* will fight fiercely with publishing old and banal works.⁴⁷

Here, Irani did not mention Nima or Nimaic poetry. However, “the old art,” “all the artistic conventions and rules of the past,” “the old conventions,” and “old and banal works” include

Nimaic poetry as well as traditional poetry. And “the idols of the past” refers to Nima as well as the major classical poets. In the next issue, Irani directly criticized Nima.

Nima wrote prefaces for only two poets, one being Esma’ilShahrudi, whose first collection of poetry, *AkharinNabard* (The Last Battle), was published in 1951 with a lengthy praising preface by Nima. Starting with “collection of your works reminds me of the people,” Nima’s preface manifested his defense of “engaged” poetry. Furthermore, the language and the form of poetry in *AkharinNabard* were Nimaic too. In fact, Nima praised the young poet, whom he considered his follower.⁴⁸ Nima’s preface led to Irani’s “Enteqadaz Nima Yushij” (Criticizing Nima Yushij) (1951). It was the first modern coherent critique of Nimaic poetry. The critiques by traditionalist poets were not modern and those by Tondar Kia were not coherent. While Nima can be called the father of modern “engaged” Persian poetry, Irani can be called the father of modern formalist apolitical poetry.⁴⁹ Irani criticized Nima’s preface to *AkharinNabard*:

Any inertia is doomed to failure with the passage of time; exactly at the moment that the artists pause and do not move forward with the time, they are thrown to the ruins of the old and deprived of the artistic life even if they were forerunners for a long period of time or even if they started the movements.⁵⁰

He continued,

A few decades ago Nima Yushij understood his time and removed many restrictions. Then he lived his time and was valued due to his contribution to the development of the art. However, today his art has succumbed to inertia and obsolescence. Although his followers have not realized the obsolescence of his art, Nima Yushij has failed to understand the present time and he lives in the past (although a very recent one).

Nima Yushij’s preface to poems which have not the least of artistic value (or do not even deserve deep analysis) indicates the obsolescence of his art due to his false, old and traditional points. . . . Nima looks for the reception of the artist where he should not i.e. among the social classes. Nima does not show the death of Shahrudi’s art during his life time and more horribly he congratulates the success of the poet in distancing from the self and celebrates *AkharinNabard*. . . . However time is still moving forward . . .

Nima Yushij will always be remembered respectfully as he was the forerunner of a valuable movement. Nevertheless, the right to life in the arts belongs only to the forerunners.⁵¹

In 1951, more than ten volumes of modern Persian poetry were republished, the most significant of which are by Irani, Ahmad Shamlu, Esma’ilShahrudi, Sohrab Sepehri, and Hushang Ebt-e-haj. All of these five volumes were more or less under the influence of Nima, except for the volume by Irani. Iranian society was not ready for Irani’s poetry. He published his poetry when “politically-engaged” literature was the dominant definition of literature. At a time when modern Persian poetry was “politically-engaged” poetry in Nimaic metrics, Irani’s apolitical surrealist poetry, free from any metrics, was too radical to be well received by even the most progressive audience, let alone the traditionalists who could not accept even Nima’s innovations.

In the issue one of volume two (*Khorus Jangi*), a poem by Irani was published. It was not only different from classical Persian poetry but also radical compared to Nimaic poetry. “Kabud,” the most (in)famous poem by Irani, was published in the next issue. There, he wrote of a cave and its “jigh-e banafsh” (purple scream). He was severely criticized for the “meaninglessness” and “absurdity” of his poetry epitomized in “purple scream.” For decades his critics used it not

only to attack him but also to criticize radical poetic experimentation. Ignorant of surrealism in Irani's poetry, they evaluated it according to the conventions of Persian poetry, either classical or Nimaic. Such instances of synesthesia coming from his surrealism were not acceptable to literary critics. It was markedly different not only from classical Persian poetry but also from the social symbolism of Nimaic poetry. The surrealism of his poetry and the lack of "political engagement" were not received well even by the most radical poets of the time.

KhonusJangūn introduced surrealism into Iran. Due to his education in Europe, Irani was the link between this school and the board of the magazine. His innovations include lines with meaningless made-up words just for the sake of their sound and witting poetry with no central meaning or image. The former was a revolt against all Persian poetry, and the latter was a revolt against Nimaic poetry, whose best examples revolved around a central image. Irani's poetics was different from that of Nima not only regarding the content but also the form of poetry; he was among the first to focus on complete freedom of poets from rhyme and meter. As already mentioned, Nima removed regular rhyme and equal lines from poetry, and as a result the parallel shape of Persian poetry was distorted. However, it was still musical according to Nimaic metrics. What Irani did was completely remove metrics from Persian poetry. Inspired by him, Gholamhoseyn Gharib, in issue one of the second period, wrote a piece on automatic writing.⁵²

Irani was familiar with European poetry and Eastern mysticism rather than Persian poetry and Islamic mysticism. His poetry, a combination of European Surrealism and Eastern Mysticism and free from any political engagement and metrics, including Nimaic metrics, was considered by many a break from Persian poetry, both traditional and modern, which probably contributed to the attacks on his poetry as foreign and meaningless. However, he influenced modern Persian poetry, particularly the works of Ahmad Reza Ahmadi, Yadollah Royayi, and Sohrab Sepehri.

Sohrab's Legacy: Incorporation of Irani's Poetics Into Nimaic Metrics

Sohrab Sepehri (1928–1980) seriously began writing poetry in high school. *Dar Kenar-e Chaman ya Aramgah-e 'Eshq* [Along the Grass or Love's Resting Place], a masnavi depicting a love story, was published in 1947. Very quickly he stopped writing poetry in the classical forms; not even a single example of these early poems exists in *Hasht Ketab* [The Eight Books], the final collection of his poems. *Dar Kenar-e Chaman* was an early attempt of a novice poet. The emotional poem indicates that Sohrab, a beginner poet not living in Tehran but the small town Kashan, was not involved with the poetic movements of his time, including Nima's innovations. Its form was traditional and its content trite.

Almost a decade prior to the publication of Sohrab's poem, Nima elaborated on the "romantik" contagious diseases of the Persian poetry; *Dar Kenar-e Chaman* suffered from the very disease. In *The Value of Feelings in the Life of Artists* (Arzesh-e Ehsasatdar Zendege-ye Honarpishegan), while offering his critical reading of Walt Whitman,⁵³ Nima considered him a poet who "perceived the attributes of this [modern] life full of motion."⁵⁴ To Nima, Whitman "had to approach experience and reason to the same extent that he receded from the romantik contagious diseases."⁵⁵ "The rise of despair and pessimism which led to resignation"⁵⁶ may be the symptom of the social "disease" Nima wrote about. Here Nima was not discussing Romanticism, which might have concerned Whitman, but the "romantik" disease Persian poetry suffered from. Once more Nima was criticizing the themes of contemporary Persian poetry. There was no Romanticism as a literary movement or literary school in Persian poetry; in the Persian literary context, the adjective "romantik" concerned the content, not the form, of poetry, and it was a derogatory term signifying a range of adjectives from "sentimental" to "sensational," "fanciful," and "unrealistic." Unlike European Romanticism, "romantik" in an Iranian literary context

referred to poetry on love with emotion-dominated content. That explains why “reason” was the exact opposite of “romanticism” to Nima. It was this “romantik” quality of Persian poetry that was a contagious disease to Nima.⁵⁷

In 1948, Sohrab met the poet and painter Manuchehr Sheybani (1924–1991), who introduced him to the works of Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890) and Nima.⁵⁸ His first poem following the model of Nima, entitled “Bimar” (The Patient), was published in September 1948 in the magazine *Jahan-e Now*.⁵⁹ It was followed with “Zendegi” (Life), “Jazireh-ye Talayi” (The Golden Island), and “Sham ‘-e Balin” (Bedside Candle), all published in spring 1949. *Marg-e Rang* [The Death of Color], the first collection of his poems, was published in 1951. Reflecting the socio-political situation of the country, fourteen out of twenty-two poems were about night. This is not only Sohrab’s first experience with modern Persian poetry but also the first collection of poetry in Nimaic metrics published in Iran.

Zendegi-ye Khab-ha [The Life of Dreams], a collection of sixteen poems, was published in 1953. The atmosphere in this collection was not as dark as it was in *Marg-e Rang*. Under the influence of Far Eastern mysticism, his poetry lost the sociopolitical color of the first collection. *Avar-e Aftab* [The Downpour of Sunshine], a collection of thirty-one poems, came out in 1961. The introduction to the first edition of the collection mentioned addressed ideas from Sufism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. The influence of mysticism on Sohrab is evident in his treatment of nature and death in his poetry.⁶⁰ His familiarity with Buddhism became more evident in *Sharq-e Anduh* [East of Grief] (1961). “Due to their ambiguity and punning, the mysticism of the previous works was hard to grasp for many readers,” while the mysticism in *Seda-ye Pa-ye Ab* [The Water’s Footfall], a collection of twenty-five poems published in 1964, was “more readerfriendly.”⁶¹ *Seda-ye Pa-ye Ab*, it was a turning point in his poetic career. “From this poem on, the poet found a prophet-like tone and achieved the Sepehrian style, consisting of the juxtaposition of familiar images and unfamiliar ones to create new meanings.”⁶²

As previously mentioned, *Marg-e Rang* was the earliest collection in Nimaic metrics published in Iran. However, the influence of Nima on Sohrab’s first collection of poetry exceeded beyond metrics; various lines in this first collection are reminiscent of Nima. Even the titles of the poems in this first collection remind one of Nima’s poetry. Nima was the first to insert local color into modern Persian poetry; he used various terms both from the lifestyle, beliefs, and nature of his birthplace and from Tabari, the language spoken in the northern Iran, while he spent the larger part of his life not in his birthplace but in Tehran. Sohrab followed “the father” of modern Persian poetry; he referred to the birds, trees, fruits, historical sites of Kashan, his birthplace, while he spent a significant amount of his lifetime in other places. The collection indicated Sohrab’s dependence upon Nima’s poetry.⁶³ What distinguishes *Marg-e Rang* from Nima, however, is “the absence of Nima’s urgent sense of social commitment, which is replaced in Sepehri’s work by an introspective self-contemplation.”⁶⁴

Nimaic poetics formed the general atmosphere and the overall tone of *Marg-e Rang*, which is, as the title implies, dark and gloomy. The word “night,” one of the most dominant words in the poetry of Nima, was used forty-six times in the collection. As already mentioned, the dominance of “night,” as an allusion to the sociopolitical situation, was a result of Nimaic poetics. The dominance of “night” on Sohrab’s first collection of poetry indicates the influence of Nima. “Night” is not only the most frequently used noun in *Marg-e Rang* but also the second most frequently used one in Sohrab’s poetry.⁶⁵ A point worth mentioning is the difference in the connotations of this very word throughout *The Eight Books*. While the negative connotation of the word is intended in this first collection, the connotation is different in later collections such as *Seda-ye Pa-ye Ab*.

The diction in the first two collections, *Marg-e Rang* and *Zendegi-ye Khab-ha*, indicates the influence of Nima. However, as already mentioned, starting from the second collection, under the influence of mysticism, Sohrab's poetry moves away from the gloomy atmosphere of Nima's poetry. The movement is evident in the titles of the two collections: from *Marg* to *Zendegi*. Sohrab in the first collection oscillates between the self and society; in the second collection, the oscillation ends, with Sohrab resorting to the self. In the second collection, negative adjectives are less frequently used, and words such as "light," and "sun" create a different atmosphere. Therefore, the movement from the first collection to the second is from social and gloomy to personal and positive.

Gradually the diction also became distinctly Sepehrian, particularly after turning from Nima's realism toward surrealism. From 1961 on and accompanying the publication of *Avar-e Aftab*, Sohrab tended philosophically to Buddha and from a literary point of view to surrealism.⁶⁶ From the publication of *Avar-e Aftab* on, the influence of Irani is seen in Sohrab both through mysticism and surrealism. Nevertheless, Sohrab was different from Irani.⁶⁷ Irani was a fighter, as *KhorusJangi*, the titles of the magazine he was involved with, and "Sallakh-e Bolbol," its manifesto, indicated. However, Sohrab was calm and peace seeking; he got to know Nima, followed him, and moved away from him but never attacked him.

The words "night," "dark," "darkness," "gloom," "sunset," and "black" are used 202 times in *The Eight Books*, out of which sixty-six belong to the first collection, *Marg-e Rang*. In the last four collections, *Seda-ye Pa-ye Ab* [The Water's Footfall], *Mosafer* [The Traveler], *Hajm-e Sabz* [The Green Volume], and *Ma Hich, Ma Negah* [We Nothing, But Look], positive adjectives are used more frequently than negative ones.⁶⁸ It is a move from a more gloomy Nimaic tone toward a more mystical (positive) one.

As a result of meeting Sheybani in 1948, Sohrab went to Tehran and began studying at the Faculty of Fine Arts. By the early 1950s, Sohrab had gradually integrated himself into Tehran's modernist literati, gravitating most towards members of *KhorusJangi*. As already mentioned, the first issue of *KhorusJangi* opened with a poem by Nima. The magazine's original promotion of Nimaic poetry made it a natural niche for Sohrab. When Irani joined the magazine, Sohrab followed his call for a new poetic language and published *Zendegi-ye Khab-ha* (1953).⁶⁹ Although one can trace the influence of Far Eastern mysticism in this collection, it was not until eight years later with the publication of *Avar-e Aftab*, in whose introduction Sohrab openly wrote about his interest in non-Islamic Eastern mysticisms, that his involvement with mysticism became evident. That introduction to the first edition of *Avar-e Aftab* in 1961 with its poetic prose was reminiscent of Irani's writings.⁷⁰

Ma Hich, Ma Negah [We Nothing, But Look], the last collection of Sohrab's poetry, was published in 1977. This collection of fourteen poems had such vague and complicated language that one wonders if the poems were intended for anyone beyond the poet himself.⁷¹ However, the legacy of Sohrab is mystical surrealistic poetry that is not very hard to grasp. And this is best manifested in a few of his collections of poetry just prior to the last one. Sohrab gradually turned

Table 10.1 Negative/positive adjectives

	Positive adjectives	Negative adjectives	Total
<i>Seda-ye Pa-ye Ab</i>	132	8	140
<i>Mosafer</i>	146	5	151
<i>Hajm-e Sabz</i>	199	11	210
<i>Ma Hich, Ma Negah</i>	126	10	136

from Nima's poetics to that of Irani, i.e., mystical surrealist poetry. Although Sohrab left Nimaic poetics, he did continue to write in Nimaic metrics. Nevertheless, he did not limit himself to the restrictions of Nima's metrics; his inventiveness made him expand the frontiers of that metrics.

As previously discussed, the image of the poet established around Nima's modern poetry was that of the poet-political activist as a result of Nimaic poetics and the leftist literary activities in the 1940s. However, with Irani's apolitical surrealist mystical poetry and his attack on the poetics formed around Nima's poetry, the image of the poet changed to that of the poet-artist in the 1950s. Both Irani and Sohrab were poets and painters, and the image of Sohrab the poet was that of the poet-artist.⁷² During the dominance of "politically-engaged poetry" in the decades prior to the 1979 Revolution, he was harshly criticized and made fun of exactly for the same image.

In *Marg-e Rang*, Sohrab is most Nimaic. From *Avar-e Aftab*, he gradually moves away from Nima, first turning to mysticism, then creating a different atmosphere and diction, turning to surrealism and expanding Nimaic metrics. As Sohrab moves away from Nima, he gets closer to Irani. Irani's mysticism, along with surrealism, synesthesia, and personification, found its place in Sohrab's poetry. However, Sohrab's poetry, borrowing from both Nima and Irani, had its own specific combination of qualities, which was different from those of either Nima or Irani.

While Sohrab moved away from Nima to Irani, he was rather well-received compared to the latter. The reasons lie in both Sohrab's poetry and its context. First, the surrealism in Sohrab's poetry, particularly in the most successful poems, did not render it meaningless to his readers, unlike Irani's hard-to-grasp surrealism. Second, Sohrab's familiarity with Iranian literary and cultural heritage, as indicated in the rich allusions of *Mosafer* [The Traveler], a long philosophical poem published in 1966, showed the strong connection of his poetry to its cultural roots, unlike Irani's foreignness. Finally, the different context of Sohrab's poetry should be taken into consideration: the majority of Irani's poetry was published when "politically-engaged" poetry was the dominant discourse of poetic modernism. In such a context, surrealist non-political poetry was attacked by the readers, both those interested in traditional poetry and those supporting poetic modernism. The majority of Sohrab's poetry was published after 1960, when the post-1953 atmosphere moved a significant part of readers away from political poetry although "politically-engaged" poetry was still the dominant discourse. Furthermore, as the result of Mohammad Reza Shah's modernization programs, a group of middle-class readers of poetry was formed that favored modern, not "politically-engaged," poetry. Such readers found the mystical surrealist apolitical poetry of Sohrab more interesting than the "political" poetry dominant in the previous decades. Sohrab's *Avar-e Aftab*, ready for publication in 1958, was not published until 1960; perhaps familiar with Irani's experience, Sohrab was waiting for the right time to get his mystical surrealist poetry published.⁷³

Irani, a major figure of modern Persian poetry and a sensitive poet, produced a limited number of poems and entirely gave up writing poetry after his innovations were harshly rejected in the 1950s. Irani's contribution to modern Persian poetry, including surrealism, non-Islamic mysticism, and deviance from "politically-engaged" poetry, would have been forgotten if it had not been for Sohrab's incorporation of Irani's poetics into (an expanded version of) Nimaic metrics a decade later.

Translations into English:

An Anthology of Modern Persian Poetry, tr. Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1978.

The Expanse of Green: Poems of Sohrab Sepehry, tr. David, L. Martin, Kalimat Press and UNESCO, 1988.

- Modern Persian Poetry*, tr. Mahmud Kianush, Rockingham Press, 1996. *The Water's Footfall and The Green Volume*, tr. Abbas Zahedi and Ismail Salami, Tehran: Zabankadeh, 1999. *The Lover is Always Alone: Selected Poems*, tr. Karim Emami, ed. Shaul Bakhsh, Tehran: Sokhan, 2004. *The Water's Footfall: Selected Poems*, tr. Ismail Salami and Abbas Zahedi, Tehran: Zabankadeh, 2004.
- The Traveler and We Nothing But Look*, tr. Abbas Zahedi, Tehran: Zabankadeh, 2004.
- Tarjome-ye Sher-haye Hushang Irani*, tr. Said Saidpur, *Gowharan*, 7–8: (1384/2005), 85–86.
- The Water's Footfall*, tr. Ismail Salami and Abbas Zahedi, Richmond, CA: Omnidawn, 2007.
- Water's Footfall*, tr. Kazim Ali and Mohammad Jafar Mahallati, Omnidawn Pub., 2011.
- Sohrab Sepehri: A Selection of Poems from the Eight Books*, tr. Bahiyeh Afnan Shahid, Bloomington, IN: Balboa Press, 2013.
- The Oasis of Now: Selected Poems*, tr. Kazim Ali and Mohammad Jafar Mahallati, Rochester, NY: BOA Editions, 2013.
- The New Verse: A Selection of Modern Persian Poetry*, tr. Geoffrey Squires, Costa Mesa: Mazda, 2021.
- The Eight Books: A Complete English Translation*, tr. Pouneh Shabani-Jadidi and Prashant Keshavmurthy, Leiden: Brill, 2021.

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Notes

- 1 For more on the debate, refer to Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, *Recasting Persian Poetry: Scenarios of Poetic Modernity in Iran* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1995).
- 2 Later in 1955 and in 1972, it was published as a book.
- 3 In 1938, the State Bureau of Music asked Gholam Hoseyn Mimbashian (1907–1978) to establish the first magazine devoted to music in Iran, *Majalleh-ye Musiqi*. He invited Sadeq Hedayat (1903–1951), Abd al-Hoseyn Nushin (1906–1971), Zia Hashtrudi, and several others to contribute to the magazine. *Majalleh-ye Musiqi*, which ran for thirty-five issues and stopped in 1941, introduced Nima and his works.
- 4 Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, “Nima Yushij: A Life,” in *Essays on Nima Yushij: Animating Modernism in Persian Poetry*, eds. Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak and Kamran Talattof (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 53.
- 5 Mahmood Khoshchehreh, “The Structure of Authoring in Nima Yushij’s Poetry: A Bakhtinian Reading” (PhD diss., McMaster University, 2011), 38. <https://macsphere.mcmaster.ca/bitstream/11375/11436/1/fulltext.pdf>
- 6 Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, *Recasting Persian Poetry: Scenarios of Poetic Modernity in Iran* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1995), 311.
- 7 In fact, in Nimaic poetry, several lines can form a bayt, a poetic unit.
- 8 For more on Nima’s innovations, refer to Behnam M. Fomeshi, “Walt Whitman’s and Nima Yushij’s Literary Innovations: A Study in Comparative Poetics” (PhD diss., Shiraz University (Iran), 2015).
- 9 In his youth Ehsan Tabari came to know Taqi Arani and turned to Marxism. Tabari was one of the “Fifty-Three.” After the fall of Reza Shah, he was released, along with the other political prisoners of the time. He contributed to the establishment of the Tudeh party. After the attempted assassination of Mohammad Reza Shah on February 4, 1949, and the consequent banning of the Party, he was sentenced to death. Then, he left Iran for Russia. He was fluent in several languages and translated poetry and did linguistic and literary research. He returned to Iran after the 1979 Revolution; was arrested in 1983 along with other leaders of the Tudeh; and died on April 29, 1989, under house arrest in Tehran.
- 10 Shams Langerudi, *Tarikh-e Tahlili-ye She’r-e Now*, Vol. 1 (Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, 1377/1998), 248.
- 11 Shams Langerudi, *Tarikh-e Tahlili-ye She’r-e Now*, Vol. 1 (Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, 1377/1998), 247.
- 12 The first Iranian Writers’ Congress was organized by the Iranian Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR. Ahmad Qavam, the prime minister (January 28, 1946–December 18, 1947), and the Russian ambassador attended the opening ceremony. Sadeq Khan Mostashar (1863–1953), the president of the Iranian Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR, opened the Congress with his talk. G.M.

- Kalish'ian's talk followed that of Mohammad-Taqi Bahar (1886–1951), the Minister of Culture and Education. Kalish'ian, the VOKS (Vsesoiuznoe Obshchestvo Kul'turnoi Sviazi s zagranitsei/All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries) commissioner in Iran, hoped for an increasingly friendly relationship between Iran and Russia. Two Soviet artists, Vera Inbar and Alexander Surkov, were also present. James Pickett, "Soviet Civilization through a Persian Lens: Iranian Intellectuals, Cultural Diplomacy and Socialist Modernity 1941–55," *Iranian Studies* 48, no. 5 (2015): 812.
- 13 Nima's "Autobiography" and three poems, "Shab-e Qoroq," "ĀyĀdam-ha," and "MadarivaPesari," were published in the proceedings of the Congress.
 - 14 Shams Langerudi, *Tarikh-e Tahlili-ye She'r-e Now*, Vol. 1 (Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, 1377/1998), 305.
 - 15 Shams Langerudi, *Tarikh-e Tahlili-ye She'r-e Now*, Vol. 1 (Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, 1377/1998), 306.
 - 16 Shams Langerudi, *Tarikh-e Tahlili-ye She'r-e Now*, Vol. 1 (Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, 1377/1998), 306.
 - 17 For more on Tabari's contribution to Nima's popularity, refer to Behnam M. Fomeshi, *The Persian Whitman: Beyond a Literary Reception* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2019).
 - 18 The first phase (1906–1937), the second phase (1941–1953), the third phase (1954–1970), and the fourth phase (1970–1978), Ali Mirsepassi, *Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization: Negotiating Modernity in Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 161.
 - 19 Patrick Clawson and Michael Rubin, *Eternal Iran* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 58.
 - 20 Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 112.
 - 21 Behnam M. Fomeshi, *The Persian Whitman: Beyond a Literary Reception* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2019), 123.
 - 22 The poets depended upon the court as the source of power in the country.
 - 23 Behnam M. Fomeshi, "Walt Whitman's and Nima Yushij's Literary Innovations: A Study in Comparative Poetics" (PhD diss., Shiraz University (Iran), 2015), 244.
 - 24 Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, *Recasting Persian Poetry: Scenarios of Poetic Modernity in Iran* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1995), 5.
 - 25 Abd al-hoseyn Zarrinkub, "Negahi be Nima," in *Padshah-e Fath*, ed. Milad 'Azimi (Tehran: Sokhan, 1388/2009), 232.
 - 26 The poem glorified Colonel Mahmud Khan Puladin, who tried to overthrow Pahlavi, but he was betrayed and executed in February 1928. Sirus Tahbaz, *Kamandar-e Bozorg-e Kuhsaran* (Tehran: Nashr-e Saleh, 1387/2008), 159.
 - 27 His oppositional political stance was explicitly expressed in the early period of his poetic career, but later it tended to be indirect.
 - 28 The magazines that supported the constitutional movement often published modern Persian poetry, and those that supported the monarchy either opposed or ignored such poetry.
 - 29 Mohammad Ali Eslami, "Chand Nokteh Darbare-ye Adab-e Mo'aser-e Iran," in *Padshah-e Fath*, ed. Milad 'Azimi (Tehran: Sokhan, 1387/2008), 91.
 - 30 In 1947 some major figures of the Tudeh Party, including Khalil Maleki, left it. He established *Andisheh-ye Now*, a leftist monthly, which ran for three issues during 1948 and 1949. It published an old poem by Nima, which he wrote in 1929, and a more recent poem written in 1941.
 - 31 Run by Ahmad Sadeq and Mohammad Ja'far Mahjub, *Kabutar-e Solh* published its first issue on May 6, 1951, and introduced itself as a magazine at the service of peace and new art.
 - 32 Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, *Recasting Persian Poetry: Scenarios of Poetic Modernity in Iran* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1995), 80.
 - 33 Paul Losensky, "'To Tell another Tale of Mournful Terror': Three of Nima's Songs of the Night," in *Essays on Nima Yushij: Animating Modernism in Persian Poetry*, eds. Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak and Kamran Talattof (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 172.
 - 34 More than a decade prior to Nima, Dehkhoda, in his poem "Yad Ar" (Remember, 1909), granted the "night" a meaning absent from the Persian poetic tradition.
 - 35 Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, "Nima Yushij: A Life," in *Essays on Nima Yushij: Animating Modernism in Persian Poetry*, eds. Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak and Kamran Talattof (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 54.
 - 36 Shahriar Khosravi, *Madkhal-e She'r-e Mo'aser-e Farsi (1285–1392)* (Tehran: Fatemi, 1396/2017), 114.
 - 37 Shahriar Khosravi, *Madkhal-e She'r-e Mo'aser-e Farsi (1285–1392)* (Tehran: Fatemi, 1396/2017), 116.
 - 38 Shams Langerudi, *Tarikh-e Tahlili-ye She'r-e Now*, Vol. 1 (Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, 1377/1998), 497–498.
 - 39 Sayeh Eghtesadnia, "IRANI, HUSHANG"," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2015, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/irani-hushang> (accessed on 16 December 2019).
 - 40 Sayeh Eghtesadnia, "IRANI, HUSHANG"," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2015, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/irani-hushang> (accessed on 16 December 2019).

- 41 Shahriar Khosravi, *Madkhal-e She'r-e Mo'aser-e Farsi (1285–1392)* (Tehran: Fatemi, 1396/2017).
- 42 Shams Langerudi, *Tarikh-e Tahlili-ye She'r-e Now*, Vol. 1 (Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, 1377/1998), 389.
- 43 The poem is about a rooster, which corresponded with the magazine's title and the singing rooster on the front cover, a work by Ziapur.
- 44 Such critiques in fact had started earlier with Tondar Kia. However, his objections were not well developed as was Irani's.
- 45 Irani quoted in Shams Langerudi, *Tarikh-e Tahlili-ye She'r-e Now*, Vol. 1 (Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, 1377/1998), 453.
- 46 Irani quoted in Shams Langerudi, *Tarikh-e Tahlili-ye She'r-e Now*, Vol. 1 (Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, 1377/1998), 453.
- 47 Irani quoted in Shams Langerudi, *Tarikh-e Tahlili-ye She'r-e Now*, Vol. 1 (Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, 1377/1998), 457–458.
- 48 In his later poetry, he deviated from Nima.
- 49 Shahriar Khosravi, *Madkhal-e She'r-e Mo'aser-e Farsi (1285–1392)* (Tehran: Fatemi, 1396/2017). 1990s saw the development of such poetry and the prominence of form as the foremost aspect of poetry.
- 50 Irani quoted in Shams Langerudi, *Tarikh-e Tahlili-ye She'r-e Now*, Vol. 1 (Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, 1377/1998), 458.
- 51 Irani quoted in Shams Langerudi, *Tarikh-e Tahlili-ye She'r-e Now*, Vol. 1 (Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, 1377/1998), 459.
- 52 Ghahreman Shiri, "Az Jigh-e Banafsh ta Mowj-e Now," *Ketab-e Mah-e Adabiyat* 124 (Februar 2008): 28.
- 53 This article series (later published as a book) was originally published from December 1939 to November 1940 in the magazine *Majalleh-ye Musiqi* (La Revue musicale).
- 54 Nima Yushij, *Arzish-e Ehsasat dar Zendegi-ye Honarpishigan* (Tehran: Gutenberg, 1355/1976), 38.
- 55 Nima Yushij, *Arzish-e Ehsasat dar Zendegi-ye Honarpishigan* (Tehran: Gutenberg, 1355/1976), 38.
- 56 Nima Yushij, *Arzish-e Ehsasat dar Zendegi-ye Honarpishigan* (Tehran: Gutenberg, 1355/1976), 38.
- 57 For more on romantik Persian poetry, refer to Behnam M. Fomeshi, *The Persian Whitman: Beyond a Literary Reception* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2019), 95–97.
- 58 Houman Sarshar, "Sohrab Sepehri," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, August 15, 2009, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/sepehri-sohrab> (accessed on 27 January 2018).
- 59 Houman Sarshar, "Sohrab Sepehri," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, August 15, 2009, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/sepehri-sohrab> (accessed on 27 January 2018).
- 60 Behnam M. Fomeshi, "Sohrab Sepehri," *The Literary Encyclopedia*, March 7, 2018, <http://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&UID=14018> (accessed on 7 March 2018).
- 61 Behnam M. Fomeshi, "Sohrab Sepehri," *The Literary Encyclopedia*, March 7, 2018, <http://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&UID=14018> (accessed on 7 March 2018).
- 62 Behnam M. Fomeshi, "Sohrab Sepehri," *The Literary Encyclopedia*, March 7, 2018, <http://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&UID=14018> (accessed on 7 March 2018).
- 63 Kamyar Abedi, *Az Mosahebat-e Āftab* (Tehran: Sales, 2007), 96.
- 64 Houman Sarshar, "Sohrab Sepehri," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, August 15, 2009, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/sepehri-sohrab> (accessed on 27 January 2018).
- 65 Mohammad Reyhani, *Sepehri: Mofasser-e Āyeh-hayh Qadimi* (Mashahd: Ahang-e Qalam, 2006).
- 66 Bahram Meqdadi, *Hedayatva Sepehri* (Tehran: Hashemi, 1999), 122.
- 67 Shams Langerudi, *Tarikh-e Tahlili-ye She'r-e Now*, Vol. 2 (Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, 1377/1998), 643.
- 68 The numbers in the table are from Mohammad Reyhani, *Sepehri: Mofasser-e Āyeh-hayh Qadimi* (Mashahd: Ahang-e Qalam, 2006).
- 69 Houman Sarshar, "Sohrab Sepehri," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, August 15, 2009, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/sepehri-sohrab> (accessed on 27 January 2018).
- 70 Shams Langerudi, *Tarikh-e Tahlili-ye She'r-e Now*, Vol. 2 (Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, 1377/1998), 644.
- 71 Behnam M. Fomeshi, "Sohrab Sepehri," *The Literary Encyclopedia*, March 7, 2018, <http://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&UID=14018> (accessed on 7 March 2018).
- 72 Shahriar Khosravi, *Madkhal-e She'r-e Mo'aser-e Farsi (1285–1392)* (Tehran: Fatemi, 1396/2017).
- 73 Shams Langerudi, *Tarikh-e Tahlili-ye She'r-e Now*, Vol. 3 (Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, 1377/1998), 33.

SAMPLE LITERATURE FOR CHAPTER 10

“Manali” by Nima Yushij

Translated by Kamran Talattof

I am innocent.
 Fishing in water is my business.
 In the hope of finding my daily bread,
 my whole life is gone with the wind.
 No one is more distressed than I,
 in a world where I live miserably.
 My suffering, however, is the greatest,
 a poor and powerless man
 I am one who has the least.
 Be brave, man.
 Do not turn away from your path.
 Pass through this tight circle,
 have no fear and no concern.
 No, you are a beautiful, decent person. Don't worry.
 On this path on which you tarry
 your work, too, in turn is fine and graceful.
 It benefits you and the others.
 Ridicule and contempt do not lessen the value of one's work.
 Everyone has a way.
 He who knows the ways of other folk,
 is well informed and not deceived.
 It takes the insight of a heart,
 to give meaning to each hue.
 Why do you think about
 what you have cultivated and what you will harvest?

If you don't have enough livelihood,
 you have something else instead.
 You have come a long way.
 Do not look here –

Look to the horizon.
Cry less, we all have a load to carry. . . .
Unless there is an attraction
You don't give your heart to distraction.
Ah! I know why you have acquired this outlook.
Since you have not found anything,
you join sorrow with the good and bad of the world
You are immensely hard to please
one who has decided to rise up to the summit.
Even if you have not gained anything yet,
what better than a new world
which will gain a meaning from you,
which will be established by you?
Touched by another flame since the beginning
You are in the smoke of another fire
This alone will be sufficient for you,
even though not everyone
knows of your suffering.
No one has been delayed as long as I,
no one has suffered as much as I,
how I kept my suffering and my joy hidden!
What made me take the wrong path?
I am so disheveled now.
At the end of my life, I am so perplexed.
Where are these words coming from?
Who is it that watches over wretched me.
What magic is in the water
that is affects me so movingly?
And makes me see things differently . . . ?

Talattof, Kamran. "Ideology and Self-Portrayal in the Poetry of Nima Yushij," in *Essays on Nima Yushij: Animating Modernism in Persian Poetry* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).