Redefining the Senses

Finally, there are two chapters that seek to unsettle the very notion of the senses. In his chapter, Ali-Asghar Seyed-Gohrab posits that Rumi's sensory philosophy was based on the premise that there were "five internal and five external senses" (50), the latter of which the thirteenth-century poet disparaged as a hindrance to achieving spiritual insight. Seyed-Gohrab's chapter, although persuasive as an independent article, is methodologically quite distinct from the rest of the volume's contributions. The chapter becomes more compelling, however, when put in dialogue with Domenico Ingenito's *Beholding Beauty*, a recent publication that employs a sensory approach to reading Saʿdi.[1] Whereas Seyed-Gohrab stresses that Rumi thought little of the material external senses, Ingenito puts forth the opposite argument about Saʿdi, claiming that the poet actually embraced the external senses for their aesthetic pleasure. This difference illustrates the potential of sensory studies to irradiate new realms of debate within Persian studies.

Shabnam Piryaei also makes a case for broadening our notion of the senses through her chapter on Forugh Farrokhzād's *Khāneh Siyah-ast* (The House is Black). Not content to limit her analysis of the 1962 film to "the body's senses," (146) Piryaei insists that Farrokhzad also makes use of emotional and psychological senses to affect the viewer. In this way, Piryaei argues that an expanded understanding of human perceptual capacity allows for us to cultivate a "radical openness" when critically approaching the film (136). Just as the editors of *Losing Our Minds* argue, Piryaei shows how a sensory approach can serve as a "rupture to the violence of an absolute and singular understanding" (136) of Persian literary and cultural products.

The application of a specifically sensory approach to Persian studies is a new practice, but departure from strict, exclusively sociopolitical readings is generally gaining more momentum in the field. In both *Persian Literature as World Literature* and *Persian Literature and Modernity*, scholars of Persian and Iranian studies have recently challenged the hegemony of the area studies–based approaches to Persian cultural and literary studies and have made strides toward opening up the hermeneutical conversation.[2] Overall, *Losing Our Minds, Coming to Our Senses* is an accessible, creative, and exciting addition to this expanding toolbox of methodologies, uneven though the volume's applications of this approach may be.

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Iran in Motion: Mobility, Space, and the Trans-Iranian Railway, Mikiya Koyagi, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2021, ISBN: 9781503613133 (hbk), 296 pages.

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Iran in Motion: Mobility, Space, and the Trans-Iranian Railway examines the history of the Trans-Iranian Railway from its early imaginings in the 1860s, during the late-Qajar period, to its construction and use in the two World Wars and their 1940s aftermath. Covering

[1] Domenico Ingenito, *Beholding Beauty: Sa'di of Shiraz and the Aesthetics of Desire in Medieval Persian Poetry* (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

[2] Mostafa Abedinifard, Omid Azadibougar, and Amirhossein Vafa, eds., *Persian Literature as World Literature* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2021); Hamid Rezai Yazdi and Arshavez Mozafari, eds., *Persian Literature and Modernity: Production and Reception* (London: Routledge, 2019).

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the approximately nine decades during which Iran faced massive infrastructure development and industrial transformations, Koyagi argues that the Trans-Iranian Railway was a central facet of a modernizing Iran, responsible not only for the production of nationalist subjects and a centralized state formation, but also a substantial reorganization of the movement of multiple constituents in a variety of complex configurations.

Perhaps the most significant contribution the book makes to the historiography of Iranian modernity is the de-centering of Reza Shah and his aggressive developmentalist campaign from the historical narrative of the Trans-Iranian Railway. As Koyagi points out, in traditional historiography of the early Pahlavi era, the Trans-Iranian Railway has appeared as an unproblematized centerpiece of the Shah's ambitious national integration plan, and key to creating a homogenized and centralized Iranian culture (p. 6). This is in large part because, unlike colonial contexts like Egypt and India where railways were built by imperial powers, in Iran it was the Pahlavi state, under the authoritarian rule of Reza Shah, who undertook the belated infrastructure project and thus presented it as a fundamental element of its national modernization project (p. 4). Throughout the book, Koyagi intervenes in traditional historiography by showing how the creation of Iran's railways, from conception to construction and usage upon completion, relied on a host of diverse and pre-existing transnational networks that created multi-scalar and multi-directional movements at each turn. In doing so, Koyagi insists that Reza Shah was but one of a vast network of local and transnational actors who contributed to the realization of this monumental project, as well as its triumphs and consequences. The task of the book is in many ways to re-write the history of the railway in a manner that includes the multiple constituents who contributed to and were affected by the project during nearly a century of its history.

Koyagi begins his story in 1860, nearly seven decades before the construction of the Tran-Iranian Railway, when railway networks began proliferating in neighboring regions such as India and the Caucasus. He argues that, much like other areas of imperial interest in the mid-19th century, understandings and imaginings of a national railway project in Iran developed in relation to preexisting mobility networks and competing local, national and imperial interests. His account features a diverse cast of global and local actors with various levels of investment in the project: competing European imperial officials; Iranian diplomats and elite 19th-century travelers, including Qajar monarchs, parliamentary deputies, foreign investors, technocrats, tribesmen, agriculture workers, construction and railway workers; and a range of passengers, including modern middle-class tourists and pious pilgrims. Through these characters, Koyagi reveals the ways in which the Trans-Iranian Railway represented the divergent aspirations, anxieties and consequences of modernity in Iran. Ideas about the Trans-Iranian Railway, he argues, were always contested, representing competing imperial and local interests and resulting in differing understandings of how the project should take shape, including most notably, what route the national railway line would follow (p. 75).

The construction of the Trans-Iranian Railway was a central facet of Iran's modernization and did indeed help create a more centralized state through connecting vast geographies, assimilating previously inaccessible provinces with the center of the Pahlavi state in Tehran, and creating a mobile modern citizenry. Koyagi argues that in practice, however, the railways primarily accelerated the movement of already highly mobile actors, including a host of international contractors and military personnel during both World Wars, and modern tourists. At the same time, there were also state-led initiatives to redirect, and sometimes prevent, the undesirable mobility of other actors, including tribal people, refugees and agents like disease and subversive ideas (p. 20). Koyagi's account is in fact most compelling in showing how the emerging railway system fostered limits to previous forms of movement, and led to various forms of displacement. In his fourth chapter, for example, Koyagi shows how many agricultural communities faced land confiscation and forced evictions as a result of the construction of the railways. This was a consequence of land registries and privatization efforts, another central component of the Pahlavi modernization project, justified as necessary to the building of the railways (p. 89). Agricultural peasants who lived and worked along the path of the

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Trans-Iranian Railway, in regions like the Caspian coast, were among those directly impacted and displaced by such state land reform initiatives. Many were forced to pursue new occupations, including as temporary unskilled wage laborers on railway construction sites. Koyagi also sheds light on the many tribal communities who were exiled from railway routes, faced unprecedented state scrutiny, were pushed into semisedentary lives, and often became precarious wage laborers (p. 94). After the completion of the Trans-Iranian Railway, many such constituents lost their temporary employment and were forced to beg for money and food, often in the same train stations they helped build through upending their traditional way of life.

Throughout the book, Koyagi offers a meticulously researched and empirically rich history of the construction of the railways and the reoriented movements subsequently enabled. His robust sources range from articles in a wide range of newspapers and periodicals, to political cartoons, petitions, debates within the *majles*, reports by British and American counselors, travelogues and memoirs. This rich array of literary, archival, and visual sources also offers the reader insight into a period of Iranian history that witnessed the proliferation of print culture, national press, and an expanding public sphere, particularly in the wake of the Constitutional Revolution (p. 64). Koyagi shows how these sites functioned as key spaces for the development of a national imaginary, as well as public debates and contestations, about the Trans-Iranian Railway.

Koyagi's manuscript makes a significant contribution to the field of modern Iranian and Middle Eastern history by offering a well-researched and convincing account of the ways in which the Trans-Iranian Railway, from inception to realization and usage, was produced by a host of local and transnational actors, and in turn helped produce divergent national subjects with differing mobilities. In doing so, he makes a number of successful interventions in the historiography of modern Iran. Firstly, Koyagi shows that the building of the Trans-Iranian Railway was always about much more than the creation of material infrastructure – it was also about producing new forms of modern national subjectivity, differing levels of mobility, and a reorganization of movements across the nation. Secondly, through focusing on a series of marginalized figures and de-centralized stories, the book clearly demonstrates that Reza Shah was one of many actors, several of whom came before and after his reign, who contributed to the realization of the project, benefited from its final form and/or suffered its consequences. Finally, in Koyagi's account, the Tran-Iranian Railway was a key factor in producing hierarchically differentiated modern citizen subjects through categories such as class, gender, and religion. *Iran in Motion* offers a comprehensive account of a large-scale, transnational infrastructure project through the lens of how it was simultaneously produced by and helped produce difference in a modernizing Iran.

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Persian Historiography Across Empires: The Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals, Sholeh Quinn, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. ISBN: 9781108842211 (hbk), 250 pp.

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Sholeh Quinn's *Persian Historiography Across Empires: The Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals* is a sweeping and erudite study exploring the enterprise of historical writing in Persian during