Ingenito will be of great interest to scholars beyond Persian studies. In *Beholding Beauty*, Saʿdī emerges as a refreshingly complex figure whose works constitute an open framework for experimentation, akin to what Gordon Teskey, borrowing from Adorno, calls open thinking—a style of improvisational, exploratory inquiry undertaken through imaginative literature, where the shape of thought is dynamic and open-ended.[1] Ingenito shows that Saʿdī's works are not vehicles for predigested ideas or precisely defined meanings; indeed, Saʿdī has been a timeless source of wisdom precisely *because* of his open style of thinking. Like Saʿdī, Ingenito does not settle for easy or stable definitions. One of the book's strengths is its insistence on embracing textual, conceptual, and aesthetic ambivalences; Ingenito describes his method as "navigat[ing] through a cluster of islands without the aid of maps—an experience of the literary territory that is rhizomatic rather than cartographical" (p. 52). Running to just over five hundred pages, Ingenito's exploration of Saʿdī's terrain is by no means a quick day trip; but the frequent recurrence of interlinked conceptual signposts and the organizational clarity of the book's three parts ensures that the voyage does not flag. Ingenito writes with an ardor that kindles, spreading from page to reader; in a characteristically arresting analogy, Ingenito compares Saʿdī's poems to Rothko paintings: both are "made of delicate simplicity, balanced contrasts of mood, and gradual variations across the spectrum of sensory experience" (p. 33). *Beholding Beauty* is an exciting model of scholarship that dares to open itself to ambiguities, multiple possibilities, and nonlinear explorations of "the anthropological complexity of the human theater" (p. 136). Ingenito's reconstruction of Saʿdī's sacred homoeroticism, his exploration of vital affinities between literature and philosophy and theorization of lyric performativity—these interventions break ample new ground within Saʿdī scholarship and Persian studies, and will be generative for Islamic studies scholars, medievalists, and literary scholars and comparatists far and wide.

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A Revolution in Rhyme: Poetic Co-Option under the Islamic Republic. Fatemeh Shams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021). ISBN 978-0-19-885882-9 (hbk), xvi + 371 pp.

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A curious turn of phrase adorns the subtitle of Fatemeh Shams's exciting new book, *A Revolution in Rhyme: Poetic Co-Option under the Islamic Republic*. At first glance, the term "poetic co-option" may appear oxymoronic. We generally think of poetry as far removed from something as sinister as co-option. Yet that contradiction rests at the heart of Shams's book, which advances a theory of poetic co-option to examine a cohort of contemporary poets who, rather than resist the Islamic Republic's power, operate within and benefit from its formal institutions. Across an introduction and seven body chapters, *A Revolution in Rhyme* accounts for a tradition of Persian poetry that has been highly visible within Iran—in government-run literary journals, anthologies, school textbooks, and at official poetry events—but almost entirely absent from scholarly and critical discourse. The book is a tremendous achievement in its scholarship, creativity, and prose.

Although Shams does not consolidate her theory of poetic co-option, she is acutely aware of the multiple meanings of co-option and delights in playing with its different connotations.

[1] Gordon Teskey, *Spenserian Moments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019).

For many readers, the word co-option will likely conjure something akin to appropriation. This definition is central to Shams's analysis as she uncovers the ways in which state-sanctioned poets in the Islamic Republic have picked up on and transformed existing conventions, including forms, themes, and images. In the spirit of appropriation, these poets have deployed Persian poetic conventions for new purposes, namely promoting the state's official ideology. Examples like Qaysar Aminpur's mastery of the classical *ghazal*, Morteza Amiri-Esfandaqeh's use of the panegyric *qasideh*, and Alireza Qazveh's application of modernist free verse show how the Islamic Republic's official poets are part of a longer tradition of Persian poetics—even as they engage with recent political and social issues.

This strand of inquiry reveals two of Shams's most significant claims. First, even though the works of state-sanctioned poets have been largely dismissed as derivative by literary critics both inside and outside Iran, their poetry demonstrates deep knowledge of and commitment to the history of Persian literature. Thus, *A Revolution in Rhyme* asks that we take contemporary official poetry seriously—not only for what it can tell us about state ideology but also for what it reveals about aesthetics. Second, by drawing on familiar themes, images, and styles, official poets have produced a tradition of "poetry . . . written for the many, not the few" (p. 19). Whereas the independent poets of the postrevolutionary period have been lauded by critics and scholars for their innovation, the state-sanctioned writers have sought wide appeal by conforming to old conventions rather than breaking them. For this reason, nostalgia, and especially the work of Svetlana Boym, is a major theoretical touchpoint for Shams's analysis.

Given her background in sociology, Shams also uses co-option as a sociological term that describes the process by which dissenting voices are folded into hegemonic structures. By bringing representatives of resistance groups into official organizations, co-option is a strategy used by powerful institutions to quell discontent rather than legitimize it. Here I am reminded of recent works by Rita Felski, who also is invested in exploring the intersections between literary studies and sociology.[1] Felski draws on sociological theory to advance literary criticism beyond the idea of "critique." Although Shams does not reference Felski, she similarly asks that scholars move past critiquing the Islamic Republic's official poets and instead focus on a wider field of structural and social forces that shape their literary output. By drawing on co-option as a sociological process, Shams arrives at her most compelling argument, which involves the relationship between poetry and politics. She shows that poetry is "inextricably linked to the process of power consolidation and to the establishment of the Islamic Republic" (p. 68).

Shams's analysis of the Center of Islamic Art and Thought (chapter 2) illustrates this meaning of poetic co-option. The center, often referred to as the *Howzeh*, began during the revolution as a "grassroots arts organization, existing outside the purview of state regulation" (p. 89). Although the *Howzeh*'s ideology and its commitment to Islamic rhetoric aligned with the new government, the organization resisted state funding for several years. Yet financial difficulties created an opportunity for the government's Organization of Islamic Propaganda to co-opt the *Howzeh* and transform it into a state-run institution. Shams provides a thorough account of the *Howzeh*'s financial strategy since it was co-opted by the state in the early 1980s—including its controversial foray into cigarette smuggling and investments in football teams. It would have been interesting to better understand how the organization's funding trickles down to individual poets. Nevertheless, Shams makes a compelling case for her argument that, despite its origins as an independent organization, the *Howzeh* has become "the lynchpin of officially sanctioned literature, art, and power in postrevolutionary Iran" (p. 120). Thus, poetic co-option isn't just a matter of appropriating poetic forms but also the commandeering of institutional forces to support official poetry.

By examining the relationship between politics and poetry, Shams attends to one of the most pressing questions about the literary context of postrevolutionary Iran: Why does

[1] Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

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poetry continue to matter, both culturally and politically? In addressing this question, *A Revolution in Rhyme* draws a parallel between state-supported poetry under the Islamic Republic and the courtly patronage practices that sustained medieval Persian poetry, including notable examples like Hafez and Saʿdi. Far from suggesting that these two systems of support are directly analogous, Shams draws forth the medieval example to demonstrate that Persian poetry has historically been entangled with institutions of power. In doing so, she tacitly argues (chapter 7) that the architects of the Islamic Republic have sought to recreate courtly patronage because they aspire to the ideals of medieval Islamic governance. Shams likens Ayatollah Khamenei's official poetry nights to the courtly poetry rituals of the medieval period. Ultimately, I admire that *A Revolution in Rhyme* is invested in moments of continuity throughout history, even as it details the unique circumstances of the postrevolutionary period.

Just as courtly patronage before it, poetic co-option under the Islamic Republic creates unexpected contradictions, many of which are revealed in the chapters of *A Revolution in Rhyme*, as Shams analyzes poems by official poets. Bundled around themes such as pastoral revivalism (chapter 3), the aesthetics of war poetry (chapters 4 and 5), and loss and nostalgia (chapter 6), these chapters demonstrate that—when treated rigorously—the body of official poetry is anything but homogenous. State-sanctioned poets are not uniform in their styles, images, or even viewpoints. In other words, through regulation and funding the *Howzeh* may demarcate the bounds of official poetry, but those bounds are not necessarily stable, and there is space for nuance within them.

The diverse perspectives offered by these poets is evident in Shams's discussion of official war poetry during the Iran–Iraq War. Many of the war poems that came out of the *Howzeh* enact what Shams calls "poetic violence," or the use of mystic motifs to romanticize the horrors of war, including works by Hasan Hoseini, Hamid Sabzevari, and Alireza Qazveh. In contrast, other state-sanctioned poets, such as Mohammad Reza Abdolmalekian, Qaysar Aminpur, and Tahereh Saffarzadeh, draw on a realist tradition to represent and even criticize the war. Whereas the turn to mysticism in the state's official cultural production of the Iran–Iraq War has been well documented in other domains, Shams's careful analysis of the realist trend shows how individual artists can maneuver within the structures of state-sanctioned culture, even if only subtly and on a limited basis.[2]

By examining such complexities in the Islamic Republic's official poetry, Shams makes a strong case for the urgency of her topic as she tackles a branch of poetry that has not yet been sufficiently studied. Certainly, *A Revolution in Rhyme* is essential reading for those interested in postrevolutionary Persian poetry. However, the book also is a must-read for anyone more generally curious about cultural production in the Islamic Republic. *A Revolution in Rhyme* meaningfully contributes to several trends in recent scholarship on cultural production since the revolution. The book joins studies like Narges Bajoghli's *Iran Reframed: Anxieties of Power in the Islamic Republic* in interrogating the nature of Islamic Republic's state power and its effect on mass media.[3] Like Bajoghli, Shams shows that state power is not absolute, even in the country's pro-regime corners. Both scholars have taken on the arduous tasks of studying cultural producers with whom they may not agree ideologically to advance our knowledge of power, regulation, culture, and sponsorship under the Islamic Republic.

Similarly, *A Revolution in Rhyme*, especially its chapter on the *Howzeh,* participates in a growing movement in Iranian studies to examine the formal and informal institutions that have historically facilitated cultural production in the country. This trend is most prominent in the scholarship on Iranian cinema, including recent and forthcoming works by

[2] See, for example, Nacim Pak-Shiraz, *Shiʿi Islam in Iranian Cinema: Religion and Spirituality in Film* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011); Pedram Partovi, "Martyrdom and the Good Life in the Iranian Cinema of the Sacred Defense," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 28, no. 3 (2008): 513–32; and Roxanne Varzi, *Warring Souls: Youth, Media, and Martyrdom in Post-Revolutionary Iran* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).

[3] Narges Bajoghli, *Iran Reframed: Anxieties of Power in the Islamic Republic* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019).

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Kaveh Askari, Anne Demy-Geroe, and Golbarg Rekabtalaei.[4] Happily, Shams's attention to the political economy of official poetry speaks to these works and proves the relevance of her scholarship beyond literary studies.

Of course, it is normal for any groundbreaking book to come with some limitations, and *A Revolution in Rhyme* is no exception. Shams's analysis of official poetry is exhaustive and thorough, but it tends to observe state-sanctioned poets in a vacuum, especially with respect to other movements in contemporary Persian poetry. Undoubtedly, word restrictions and other publishing concerns limited Shams's ability to put the official poets in more direct conversation with the so-called independent poets. Nevertheless, the tight focus on official poetry holds it peripheral to, or at least separate from, the broader landscape of contemporary Persian poetry. Establishing a rigid distinction between official poetry and other forms of poetry also does not account for those poets who operate in between these different modes, especially a figure like Saffarzadeh, who has earned acclaim among scholars and critics both inside and outside of Iran.

On a similar note, Shams's main mode of analysis is close reading of the poems of state-sanctioned authors. This approach yields insightful results, as we come to understand the major concerns and styles of official poets. However, such a topic also might be explored using a more diverse set of sources and methodologies. In some instances, Shams does include archival research and interviews to bolster her findings. More of these kinds of sources would expand the scope of her work and enrich our understanding of the book's topic. Ultimately I list these limitations not as criticisms but rather as opportunities for future generations of scholars to build off of Shams's remarkable scholarship—and they certainly will.

Although *A Revolution in Rhyme* is Shams's first monograph, it is a mature work. She has developed a fine-tuned vocabulary to discuss an important but also challenging tradition of poetry. I took great delight in reading this book; I am confident that scores of other scholars, students, translators, and poetry lovers will too.

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Iranian Music and Popular Entertainment: From Motrebi to Losanjelesi and Beyond

G. J. Breyley and Sasan Fatemi. London: Routledge, 2016. 202 pp., ISBN: 9780815358084 pbk, 9780415575126 hbk

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The very title of this book is refreshing: both *motrebi* and *losanjelesi* have pejorative connotations for the average Iranian music-lover, and so putting these terms in the title signals a most welcome reevaluation of conventional wisdom. Although classical Persian music has received, deservedly, much academic attention on the part of musicologists and cultural historians, popular music has been much less studied. Moreover, the studies we do have tend to concentrate on recent decades; Iranian hip-hop has proven to be far more attractive as an object of scholarly inquiry than the fondly remembered *bandari* songs of Nematollah Aghasi.

[4] Kaveh Askari, *Relaying Cinema in Midcentury Iran: Material Cultures in Transit* (Berkeley: University of California Press, forthcoming); Anne Demy-Geroe, *Iranian National Cinema: The Interaction of Policy, Genre, Funding and Reception* (London: Routledge, 2020); Golbarg Rekabtalaei, *Iranian Cosmopolitanism: A Cinematic History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2019).