quickly find needed information. Similarly, each chapter lists references, rather than offering a combined list of works cited at the end, which allows readers to find sources related to the specific topic of each chapter more easily. Happily, the book also includes an index for ease in locating specific topics. Although one might have hoped for greater engagement with work published on Hedayat in the past twenty years—even if only to refute it—this book presents scholarship on Hedayat in a thorough yet straightforward manner, and adds the author's own interpretations, which are informed by contemporary questions about Iran's modernity and place in the scheme of world literature. *World Literature and Hedayat's Poetics of Modernity* takes a distinguished place among a generation of scholarly work produced by researchers trained in the atmosphere of a dominant world literature paradigm.

doi:10.1017/irn.2023.4

The Persian Prison Poem: Sovereignty and the Political Imagination Rebecca Ruth Gould (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021). 312 pp. Hardcover, $95.33. ISBN 9781474484015

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(Received 21 March 2023; accepted 22 March 2023)

Spanning nine hundred years and examining an unprecedented depth and range of sources across the Persianate domain, Gould's groundbreaking exploration of the evolution of Persian prison poetry offers readers a fresh new perspective on the canon, justifying its establishment as a literary genre in its own right. With eloquent translations of key medieval Persian poets into English for the first time, the book is an important addition to the field of not just Middle Eastern literature, but medieval and comparative literature as a whole.

Perhaps Gould's most important contribution to the understanding of prison poetry is her bold subversion of the power hierarchies involved. Whereas existing analysis tends to place the prison-poet as a passive victim of the sovereign forces of the time, Gould shifts the focus onto the writers themselves, honoring their agency and activism in challenging and changing the power structures around them through their work.

Through this framework, prison poetry can be viewed as a transgressive force, ever-evolving and changing, refusing to stay fixed. Her rigorous interrogation of examples across different countries, eras, and regimes provides the most thorough genealogy of Persian prison poetry to date, demonstrating its transhistorical and transnational significance as the precedent for canonical works of medieval European literature such as Dante's *Inferno.*

Gould's starting point for reframing the genre is the German historian Ernst Kantorowicz's classic study of medieval kingship, *The King's Two Bodies* (1957)—particularly his distinction between the "body natural" (the mortal, physical body) and "body politic" (immortal, symbolic body). A ruler is both a living individual, and an archetypal role. This dichotomy has long underpinned our understanding of sovereign power, shaping theological, political, and literary thought. Kantorowicz's study shows the development of this in European hierarchies, as early Christian connotations of King-as-God shifted into a secular understanding of King-as-Head-of-State and, later, a realization of a monarch being a "normal" mortal and fallible human being.

Gould uses this premise in two ways: first, to frame prison poetry as writing "from, with, and about the body"; and second, to examine literature through the lens of political theology. She bestows prison-poets with the same embodied dualism as kings (referencing Dante's line, "Homer, sovereign poet"), offering a thesis in which sovereign and poet are mirrors, rendering the power dynamic between them far more nuanced and balanced than traditional analysis has allowed. The canon of embodied prison poetry is therefore defined by the expression of a variety of wounds: metaphysical (inflicted by the cosmos), personal (inflicted by the beloved), political (inflicted by the king), and physical (inflicted by imprisonment) (2).

By documenting how "the concept of the poet's two bodies was intimately linked to changing structures of power and in particular to the increasing authority accorded the poet's voice," Gould shows that "Persian poets claimed for themselves a unique authority to expose through their poetry the sultan's abuses of power" (2).

Gould's central mission is how poetics of the body and of incarceration came to be intertwined over time, from poet-prisoner Masʿud Saʿd Salmān in the twelfth century to the twentieth-century constitutionalist poet, Mohammad Taqi Bahār. The majority of her scholarship, however, is devoted to the twelfth century, when Saʿd Salmān's corpus of poetry was first categorized as "prison poetry" (*habsiyeh*) in its own right by the twelfth-century Persian literary historian Nezāmi ʿAruzi in his book *Chahār maqāleh*, and when its most significant proponent, the poet Khāqāni, was writing his work exposing the "politics of poetry and poetry of politics" (19). Her careful translation and analysis of Khāqāni, widely perceived to be a "difficult" poet to grasp, is a real highlight of the book.

As twelfth-century regimes in Iran collapsed and changed, the tension between a poet's creative expression and the hegemonic demands of the state became more widely recognized. The complex relationship between poetry, power, and patronage in Iran endures to this day and has been the subject of many important academic studies. Gould's book is a major stride forward in theorizing this relationship, placing the Persian situation in dialogue with parallel situations across place and time to show how "both medieval European and Persian engagements with Christian imagery provided crucial theological procedures for new materialist accounts of literary imagination and specifically its bridging of immanence and contingency" (21).

Both expansive and granular, Gould's research moves fluidly through history, space, and circumstance (often bundled together as a shared literary "cosmos"), echoing the flux of the canon itself and its "fluid relationship" with genres across the centuries (41). She takes us from the lyric odes and quatrains of Masʿud Saʿd Salmān and Nasrollāh Monshi in southeast Asia to the prison odes of Falaki and the theological-political odes of Khāqāni in the Caucasus and Iran.

The topical and spatial evolution of prison poetry is further articulated by insightful analysis of works by medieval historiographers and critics such as ʿOwfi, Nezāmi ʿAruzi, and Vātvāt to document the stylistic and epistemological transition of prison poetry across countries, providing literary unity where there was regional rivalry and rupture.

Through a rigorous examination of Khāqāni's Christological poetics and the sensitive sociopolitical contextualization of other poets in the canon, Gould proves that prison poetry moved beyond writing behind the actual bars of a jail cell to writing behind the bars of a felt imprisonment, as poets experienced oppression and persecution by reigning powers. More than a metaphor, prison poetry offers a "metonym—reflective of a broader political-theological situation—for the poet's condition" (106). It is within this new paradigm that Gould tackles tropes and themes of suffering, death, injustice, alienation, and the emergence of a prophetic self, bringing her thesis into the twentieth century with a case study of Mohammad Taqi Bahār's 1933 poem *Kārnāmeh-ye zendān*. As a renounced revolutionary poet-politician, imprisoned under the reign of Reza Shah, Bahār set the foundations of the modern school of *sabk-shenāsi* (prose stylistics) scholarship. His pioneering deployment of the *masnavi* form in his prison poem broke away from the qasida, lyric, and quatrain forms of

https://doi.org/10.1017/irn.2023.25 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the past to propose a new model for the aesthetics of imprisonment which operated in the medium of narrative (252).

Although Gould's argument on the poetics of incarceration in the modern period is not as well-substantiated as previous chapters, highlighting the continuity of the genre and its potential for new structural and topical transformation paves the way for further scholarly investigation. Postrevolutionary poets such as Mohammad Farrokhi Yazdi, Ahmad Shamlu, Esmail Khoi, Khosrow Golsorkhi, Saeed Soltanpour, Houshang Ebtehaj, Reza Baraheni, Mohammadreza Ali-Payam, and Baktash Abtin would all provide compelling case studies of Persian prison poetry for future scholarship.

"All great works of literature either establish a genre or dissolve one," said the writer Walter Benjamin, quoted by Gould on the book's very first page, which explores the Bakhtinian notion of genre-making, establishing the three criteria of form, theme, and discourse. In writing this book, Gould has, herself, shaken up the genre of literary scholarship, issuing a "call for in-depth engagement with [poetry's] historical, cultural and political milieus, beyond what would typically be encountered in a work of contemporary literary theory" (21). This book should inspire other scholars to interrogate literature through innovative theoretical frameworks that similarly place Persian literature, across time and place, on the world stage.

doi:10.1017/irn.2023.25

America and Iran: A History, 1720 to the Present. John Ghazvinian (London: Oneworld, 2020). Pp 667, including notes and index. £35.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9781786079473

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(Received 2 March 2023; accepted 2 March 2023)

Ghazvinian, a historian at the University of Pennsylvania, has written an engaging narrative of US–Iran relations from 1720 to the present. The author usefully contextualizes the American republic's growing interest in Iran by assessing the cultural fascination with all things "Persian" in the colonial period, moving on to look at the development of trade and ultimately political relations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. There is much in the later sections of the book that will be familiar to historians of Iran. The author seeks to reach a wider audience through accessible prose, and there is little in these sections that will be a revelation to historians. Indeed, as the text progresses the historian gives way to the policy prescription, with an epilogue which calls unequivocally for "comprehensive, unconditional, sustained, serious, good faith, high level talks" (540), a noble appeal, even if its practicality is contradicted by much of the preceding text. This is no doubt to give added relevancy to the text, but as events in 2022 have shown (including Iran's decision to side with Russia in the war against Ukraine and the protests that erupted in September of that year) it also risks dating the book. Ghazvinian is far from giving the Islamic Republic a free ride in his criticism of the state of relations between the two countries, but it is fair to say that the balance of his criticism leans toward the United States.

Any history of relations depends on how it is framed. Iranians tend to see relations framed by the coup of 1953, whereas Americans tend to start the narrative in 1979. The