

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

LĀHŪTĪ: PERSIAN POETRY IN THE MAKING OF THE
LITERARY INTERNATIONAL, 1906-1957

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Позабыл язык мой
все слова другие,
Лишь твое твержу я
ласковое имя.

زد رس محبت بخز نام جانان
پخنخی کنکر د زبان در ده نام

A Note on Transliteration

Az hamīn gūnah khaṭāhā-yi sangīn
Dar rūznāmahā man bisyār dīdam,
Dar kitābhā ham hamīn khel barīn
Ishtibāhāt-i bēshumār dīdam.

[...]

Rafiq ḥurūfchīn, qahrat nayāyad,
Aṣlā ranjīdan az ḥaq nabāyad.
Ba'd az īn sān khaṭāhā nakun,
Maṭbū'ātamān-rā rasvā nakun!

In the newspapers, I've seen so many
Serious errors of this sort
And in books, I've seen even more
Countless mistakes of the same kind.

[...]

Comrade typesetters, don't get mad,
One mustn't ever be offended by the truth.
So don't make any more errors like this,
And don't give our press a bad name!¹

In this 1932 poem addressed to his colleagues at the Tajik state publishing house, Lāhūtī complains about such egregious mistakes as “safēh” (ignorant) for “safēd” (white) and “khar” (donkey) for “hur[r]” (free). Bad as the mistakes are, the author of this dissertation can't help feeling a little sympathy for the bungling typesetters. They were required not only to decipher Lāhūtī's (usually fairly clear) Arabic-script handwriting, telling dots from blots and correctly assigning the latter to letters, but also to find and order the cast metal sorts representing the correct letters of a Tajik Latin script less than four years old (and indeed still open to a certain amount of orthographical improvisation).

Freed from lead type and long accustomed to Latin script, I hope I have avoided the obvious blunders of Comrade Typesetter. Nonetheless, in transliterating the texts of early 20th-century Persianate Eurasia, I have been compelled to reenact many of the difficult choices faced

¹ *Tojikistoni surx*, December 18, 1932, in *KI*, 63-64.

by that period's language and script reformers. Just as then, in many cases, no solution is entirely satisfying.

The Persian and Turkic texts consulted in this dissertation in some cases extend across as many as three script reforms: from Arabic (with additional Persian letters) to modified Arabic, Latin, then Cyrillic script. At the same time, as the experience of Lāhūtī's typesetters suggests, in this period such texts were almost always *written* in Arabic script, which obscured differences of pronunciation and even allowed a text in one language to transfer seamlessly into another. To preserve some sense of the Persianate literary commons from which such texts emerged into the nationally delimited world of print, I have rendered all poetry, prose, and glosses *as if* from Arabic script (LOC Persian, Ottoman, or Chaghatay² as appropriate), with one caveat. The poems range in diction and aural properties from classical literary language to official national language to vernacular speech: for his address to the typesetters, Lāhūtī adopts Tajik words ("khel") and particles ("namēranjī-kū"—"come on, don't be offended"). As a small compromise to the texts' life in oral performance, I have modified Persian vowels from the standard LOC transliteration to reflect prosody, as well as pronunciation in the few poems that are clearly intended to be read with a Tajik or Dari accent.³

References required a different approach, in order to make it as easy as possible for researchers to locate the works cited. In the footnotes and bibliography, I have followed LOC

² For Chaghatay I follow the modified LOC system from Eric Schluessel, "Transliteration," last modified June 12, 2011, <https://wiki.harvard.edu/confluence/display/turkic/Transliteration>.

³ In those instances, I have followed the rendering of vowels in standard Cyrillic-script Tajik, but I have assimilated them to LOC orthography where possible and always distinguished between long and short vowels, even where Cyrillic does not. So Cyrillic (а, е, и, ю, о, у, ў) becomes (a, e or ē, i or ī, ī, ā, u or ū, u or ū). One final exception is the Russian surname ending –ов/ев, which I always render as if from Cyrillic for aesthetic reasons (Bābāev, not Bābāyif; Rajabov, not Rajabūf).

transliteration rules for the Arabic or Cyrillic script of the edition cited,⁴ and I have not altered the orthography of Latin scripts.⁵ Finally, I have used unmodified LOC in both text and footnotes for Russian, except for writers' whose names have other conventional spellings given in WorldCat (Gorky, not Gor'kii).

All translations are mine, unless otherwise noted. For block quotes, I provide the original first, followed by the translation. Where the text under examination is a translation (Lāhūtī translating Pushkin, or someone else translating Lāhūtī), I begin with the original, provide my translation of the original to English, and then provide the (Russian or Persian) translation. I will only specifically provide an additional English translation of the Russian or Persian translation where this will make the difference between versions obvious. In all other cases, an explanation will be provided instead.

Abbreviations

Historical Entities:

ASSR, SSR	(Autonomous) Soviet Socialist Republic (<i>avtonomnaia sovetskaia sotsialisticheskaiia respublika</i>)—the SSR was a higher level of administrative unit than the ASSR, e.g., the Tajik ASSR was within the Uzbek SSR until 1929, when it became the Tajik SSR
FIAM	The Iranian Social Democratic Party (Militant) (<i>Firqah-i ijtimā‘iyūn-i ‘āmmiyūn (Mujāhid)</i>), 1905-1910
KUTV	The Communist University for Toilers of the East (named for Stalin in 1923) (<i>Kommunisticheskii universitet trudiashchikhsia Vostoka (imeni I.V. Stalina)</i>), 1921-1938

⁴ For Russian I exclude all diacritics. For Cyrillic Tajik I include only ī, ě, and ū, and for Cyrillic Uzbek ē and ũ.

⁵ I treat non-standard Soviet Latin letters as if LOC Cyrillic (e.g. qj > f > gh). Given the irregularity of Soviet Latin orthography, in the case of Latin-script works that I did not consult directly but encountered in Cyrillic-script scholarship, I transliterate on that basis.

MBPL	The International Liaison Bureau of Proletarian Literature (<i>Mezhdunarodnoe biuro sviazi proletarskoi literatury</i>), 1924-1929
MOPR	International Red Aid (<i>Mezhdunarodnaia organizatsiia pomoshchi bortsam revoliutsii</i>), 1922-1947
MORP	The International Association of Revolutionary Writers (<i>Mezhdunarodnoe ob'edinenie revoliutsionnykh pisatelei</i>), 1929-1935
NKVD	The People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (<i>Narodnyi komissariat vnutrennikh del SSSR</i>)—the institution that included the Soviet secret police from 1934-1946
OGPU	The Joint State Political Directorate under the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR (<i>Ob'edinennoe gosudarstvennoe politicheskoe upravlenie pri Sovete narodnykh komissarov SSSR</i>)—the primary Soviet secret police organ 1923-1934
RAPP	The Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (<i>Rosiiskaia assotsiatsiia proletarskikh pisatelei</i>), 1925-1932
RSDLP	The Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (<i>Rossiiskaia sotsial-demokraticheskaia rabochiaia partiia</i>), 1898-1912
SKSSAA	The Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee (<i>Sovetskii komitet solidarnosti stran Azii i Afriki</i>), 1956-1992
SSOD	The Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (<i>Soiuz sovetskikh obshchestv druzhby i kul'turnykh sviazei s zarubezhnymi stranami</i>), 1958-1992
VOAPP	The All-Union Federation of Associations of Proletarian Writers (<i>Vsesoiuznoe ob'edinenie Assotsiatsii proletarskikh pisatelei</i>), 1928-1932
VOKS	The All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (<i>Vsesoiuznoe obshchestvo kul'turnoi sviazi s zagranitsei</i>), 1925-1958

Archives:

IVANTaj	The Rudaki Institute of Oriental Studies and Written Heritage of the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan (<i>Instituti zabon, adabiët, sharqshinosī va merosi khattii ba nomi Rūdakī</i>)
RGALI	The Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (<i>Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literatury i iskusstva</i>)

RGANI	The Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (<i>Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv noveishei istorii</i>)
RGASPI	The Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (<i>Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii</i>)

Reference Works:

- EIr *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, edited by Ehsan Yarshater. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983-.
- EI² *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd edition.
- K1 Lohutī, Abulqosim. *Kulliēt*. Vol. 1, 1899-1925, edited by Mirzo Mulloahmadov. Dushanbe: Adib, 2010.
- K2 _____ *Kulliēt*. Vol. 2, 1926-1940, edited by A. Abdumannonov. Dushanbe: Adib, 2010.
- K3 _____ *Kulliēt*. Vol. 3, 1941-1956, *ruboiēt, dubaitiho, baitho*, edited by Kh. Otakhonova and Sakhidod Rahmatullozoda. Dushanbe: Donish, 2017.
- K4 _____ *Kulliēt*. Vol. 4, *Manzumaho, dostonho*, edited by Abdukholiq Nabavi and Mubashir Akbarzod. Dushanbe: Donish, 2017.
- K5 _____ *Kulliēt*. Vol. 5, *Tarjumaho*, edited by S. Rahmatullozoda. Dushanbe: Donish, 2017.
- KB5 _____ *Kulliēt*. Vol. 5, edited by M. Mirshakar, B. Rahimzoda, J. Azizqulov. Dushanbe: Nashriēti davlatii Tojikiston, 1962.
- KB6 _____ *Kulliēt*. Vol. 6, edited by M. Mirshakar, R. Hoshim, and M. Shukurov. Dushanbe: Nashriēti davlatii Tojikiston, 1963.
- ZTMM Nabavī, Abdukholiq, ed. *Zaboni tojikī dar mabnoi mubohisaho: majmūai maqolahoi solhoi 20-um*. Dushanbe: Irfon, 2007.

Biographical Timeline

Date	Events	Notable Literary Works
1847-48	Aḥmad, father of Lāhūtī, later known by the <i>takhallus</i> (pen-name) “Ilhāmī,” is born in Sirkān village, near Hamadan. ¹ The family soon moves to Kermanshah.	
c. 1878 CE	After a fever dream, Aḥmad begins composing devotional poetry. ² Through the Kurdish poet Ḥusayn Qulī-Khān “Sultānī,” he gains further education and obtains patronage from the Qajar prince Sultān-Murād Mīrzā Ḥusām al-Salṭanah.	
before 1883 CE	Sultānī dies and Ḥusām al-Salṭanah is recalled to Tehran. Ilhāmī makes a brief trip to Tehran, receives some patronage, but returns disappointed. ³ He begins doing piecework for his brothers, who make slippers (<i>gīvah</i>). ⁴	
Dec. 4, 1887	Abū al-Qāsim, later “Lāhūtī,” born in Kermanshah, the youngest of three brothers, two daughters, and four stillborn children. ⁵ Their mother is Kurdish.	
c. 1890s-1905	Lāhūtī’s father removes him from school after he is beaten unconscious, and begins teaching him at home. ⁶ He becomes recognized locally as a skilled poet. ⁷ The following are chronologically unordered: -- He is courted as a possible poetic spokesperson by the local Bahā’ī community, who promise to send him to America for education. He becomes disillusioned. ⁸ -- He participates in two Ni‘matullāhī Sufi lodges, under Mīr Muhammad Ṣāliḥ Dashtī ⁹ and Asadullah Khān. ¹⁰ -- He accidentally discovers his father’s copy of the contraband newspaper <i>Qānūn</i> , published in London by the exiled minister Mīrzā Malkum Khān, and begins reading it regularly. ¹¹	Numerous undated mystical poems.
c. spring 1905	Lāhūtī travels to Tehran to study for the clergy, with financial support from the local chapter of the pseudomasonic Temple of Humanity [<i>jāma‘-i ādamiyat</i> , c. 1895-1908], ¹² likely traveling together with the European-trained doctor to whom his elder brother was apprenticed. ¹³	Lāhūtī’s first published poem, a panegyric <i>qasīdah</i> to Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shah, in the newspaper <i>Tarbiyat</i> . ¹⁴

Mar. 1905-Aug. 5, 1906	Intensifying protests in Tehran. Lāhūtī leaves his madrasa, joins a revolutionary secret society, writes satires, distributes secret pamphlets (<i>shabnāmah</i>), participates in protests. ¹⁵	
Aug. 5, 1906-Jun. 3, 1908	First Constitutional Period. ¹⁶ Lāhūtī continues writing pro-Constitution verse. ¹⁷	
Jun. 3, 1908-Jul. 16, 1909	Suppression of Majlis and Constitutional movement. Lāhūtī travels to Rasht and joins the army of Sattār Khān. ¹⁸ He fights in a battle on the road between Rasht and Qazvin, and is awarded a medal by Sattār Khān. ¹⁹ He is likely associated with the Social Democratic Party (Militant) (FIAM). ²⁰	
summer 1909-1910	Lāhūtī enters Tehran with an army coming from Rasht. ²¹ As the result of a poem criticizing the Majlis, he is imprisoned and interrogated before being released (c. Dec. 1909). ²² He possibly joins the police force of Yēprem Khan. ²³	Six Constitutional poems published in <i>Irān-i naw</i> and <i>Chantah-i pābarahnah</i> .
c. Jul.-Dec. 1911	Treasury Gendarmerie founded, and Lāhūtī recommended for membership by Democrat Party. ²⁴	
Dec. 21, 1911	Treasury Gendarmerie abolished as Majlis accepts Second Russian Ultimatum, and Lāhūtī and associates enter State Gendarmerie. ²⁵ He is dispatched to Qom.	
Nov. 2, 1912	After defeating bandits in the region around Qom, Lāhūtī is awarded a medal and promoted to Colonel. ²⁶ Shortly thereafter, he marries Nuṣrat Āq-ūlī, sister of a gendarmerie captain who was translator for the Swedish gendarmerie head. ²⁷ A few days later, Qom notables send telegram to Tehran complaining about Lāhūtī meddling in city affairs. ²⁸	
early Mar. 1913	Lāhūtī sent to area of Arak and Borujerd to suppress Lor tribal activity. ²⁹	
Jul. 1913	Lāhūtī named head of Gendarmerie of Qom and Arak, promoted to major, continues battles with Lor tribes. ³⁰	
Jul. 1913-Apr. 1914	Conflicts in Qom between Lāhūtī's supporters and detractors. Investigator sent from Tehran finds no reason to reprimand him.	
Apr.-early Jun. 1914	Preparations for 3rd Majlis election. Lāhūtī accused of meddling on behalf of liberals (<i>āzādī-khwāhān</i>). Swedish Gendarme officer, Major Muller, is sent to investigate and is killed by bandits between Qom and	

	Arak. Lāhūtī is blamed by some, and flees to Kermanshah Province. ³¹	
summer-fall 1914	Lāhūtī crosses the Ottoman border and takes refuge in Sulaymaniyah. ³² Nuşrat Āq-ülī tries unsuccessfully to convince him to return. ³³	
winter 1914	As World War I reaches Kurdistan, Lāhūtī walks to Baghdad, ³⁴ then requests entry at border post near Kermanshah, is refused permission. ³⁵	
c. 1915	Lāhūtī witnesses genocide of Armenians in Sulaymaniyah region (Apr. 24). ³⁶ He reenters Kermanshah Province amid chaos of Russian-Ottoman fighting. For two years at some point in the war, he operates under the protection of the Kurdish Sanjābī clan on Iranian-Ottoman border. ³⁷	
c. 1916-1917	Majlis-in-exile of Democrat deputies in Kermanshah under Ottoman-German protection (called the <i>muhājirīn</i>). Lāhūtī, participating in support of Majlis, ³⁸ co-founds first Kermanshah newspaper, <i>Bīsutūn</i> , associated with the <i>muhājirīn</i> . ³⁹	
Mar. 1917	February Revolution in Russia. Lāhūtī meets Bolshevik infiltrators among the Russian military presence in Kermanshah, led by Ivan Kolomiitsev. ⁴⁰	
spring-fall 1918	Red Army retreats from Iran, and Lāhūtī flees to join émigré community of <i>muhājirīn</i> in Istanbul. ⁴¹	
c. 1918-early 1919	Lāhūtī arrives in Istanbul, becomes very sick, and is nursed back to health by street urchins. ⁴² He works for a while as a porter. ⁴³	
c. Jun. 1919-Jul. 1921	Lāhūtī teaches at the Istanbul Iranian émigré school ⁴⁴ and opens a bookstore with support from influential <i>muhājirīn</i> ⁴⁵ (either consecutively or concurrently). Co-edits a widely-read, influential Persian-French bilingual literary journal, <i>Pārs</i> , Apr.-Jul. 1921. ⁴⁶	In addition to <i>Pārs</i> , two poetry volumes: <i>La ’ālī-i Lāhūtī</i> (c. summer 1919), an anthology; <i>Irānnāmah</i> (1920), vol. 1 of a history of pre-Islamic Iran for students.
c. Jul.-Sept. 1921	<i>Pārs</i> closed by censors, Lāhūtī seeks permission from Ottomans to return to Iran, is denied, sets off on foot across deserts of Iraq. ⁴⁷	
Oct. 3, 1921	Lāhūtī at border near Kermanshah, receives permission to reenter Iran and is readmitted to Gendarmerie as private. He is immediately sent to front of Gendarme/Cossack battle against the Kurdish warlord Simko	

	Shikak. ⁴⁸	
Nov. 1921	Lāhūtī is returned to rank of adjutant, sent to Sharafkhānah where Gendarmes are entrenched against Simko with heavy losses, owed back pay. ⁴⁹	
Nov. 25, 1921	Tehran government of Rizā Khān announces plan to merge Gendarmes and Cossacks into new national military, putting Cossacks in charge of military for northwest. Soon after, mutiny starts. ⁵⁰	
late Jan. 1922	Lāhūtī elected representative of mutineers to Tabriz, and they set off. ⁵¹	
Feb. 1-8, 1922	Lāhūtī's forces in control of Tabriz, imprison representatives of Tehran, negotiate via telegraph, but are defeated. ⁵² During occupation, Soviet consul in city advises Lāhūtī to end revolt and go to the Soviet Union. ⁵³	
Feb. 8, 1922	Lāhūtī flees with 120 soldiers, crossing the Aras River at Julfa on Feb. 9-10 (12 drown in crossing). ⁵⁴ Upon entry, they are persuaded to disarm by Bolshevik guards, then beaten, plundered, and jailed. ⁵⁵	
Feb.-Apr. 1922	Lāhūtī moved with other mutineers to Nakhchivan, then Yerevan, then Tbilisi (by Mar.), then to Baku (Apr.). Many of the other mutineers are given amnesty to return to Iran by new governor of Iranian Azerbaijan, Muḥammad Muṣaddiq. ⁵⁶	
early Jul. 1922	Muṣaddiq alleges that Soviet Azerbaijan is using Lāhūtī to organize cross-border political infiltration. Lāhūtī is moved further from border at Iranian government's request. ⁵⁷	
early-mid-Nov. 1922	Lāhūtī arrives in Moscow, requests admission to KUTV. ⁵⁸	
c. 1923-c. May 1925	Lāhūtī studies at KUTV, while working at the Central Eastern Press. He becomes a Communist Party member (c. Jun. 1924). ⁵⁹	1st pub. Soviet verse: <i>Krimil</i> ("Kremlin," 1923) and <i>Rubā 'Iyāt</i> (1924). ⁶⁰
May-Jun. 1925	Lāhūtī recommended by Central Eastern Press to work for Central Asia Bureau to do "cultural-political work in Tajikistan," with emphasis on his literary value. ⁶¹ He travels first to Tashkent.	
Jun. 1925-early 1927	Lāhūtī based in Tashkent (1925) and then Dushanbe/Stalinabad (c. 1926), with trips to Samarkand and villages of Tajik ASSR. ⁶² He holds numerous posts: head of the national minorities section of the Central Asia Bureau, deputy commissar of education of Tajik ASSR, secretary of Samarkand city commissariat, and various agitprop positions. ⁶³ He	Anthology: <i>Adabīyāt-i surkh</i> ("Red Literature," 1926).

	edits the journal <i>Rahbar-i dānish</i> and, from 1926, the newspaper <i>Bīdārī-i Tājik</i> . In Aug. 1926, he requests to switch from Central Asia to Comintern Iran work, but is refused. ⁶⁴	
spring 1927-c. 1928	Lāhūtī studies at International Lenin School in Moscow, ⁶⁵ intervenes to ensure publication of Șadr al-Dīn ‘Aynī’s anthology of Tajik literature. ⁶⁶ At least one trip to Tashkent, but based in Moscow.	
1929	Lāhūtī does cultural work, frequently in Tashkent. He makes another attempt to switch to Comintern work, and the USSR sends him to Iran, but Iran refuses to admit him, and he is returned to Moscow. ⁶⁷ He is briefly in Dushanbe, then returns to Moscow around the new year.	
1930	Lāhūtī lives in Moscow throughout 1930s. He does some teaching at the International Agrarian Institute, ⁶⁸ writes for <i>Pravda</i> , and becomes the director of the Tajik section at the Central Publishing House for Peoples of the USSR, in which post he meets Tsetsiliia Banu, his future translator and wife. ⁶⁹ In Aug.-Sept. he travels to Stalinabad for the first Congress of Tajik Scholars. ⁷⁰	“Mā ẓafar khwāhīm kard” (“We Will Win”) is his first poem published in <i>Pravda</i> , after a direct intervention by Ordzhonikidze. ⁷¹
1931	A series of accusations against Lāhūtī by other Iranians in the Comintern; Lāhūtī begins a self-defense that continues in the following year. ⁷²	
1932	Existing literary organizations abolished, to be replaced by Soviet Writers’ Union (Apr. 23); Lāhūtī is cleared of his denouncers’ charges after investigation by Comintern (mid-May); ⁷³ upon the death of Stalin’s wife (Nov. 9), Lāhūtī writes a poem of condolence that meets with official approval. ⁷⁴	Poem introducing gardener metaphor for Stalin, “Bih rahbar. Bih rafīq. Bih Stālīn.” (“To a Leader. To a Comrade. To Stalin.”)
1933	Lāhūtī assigned to lead brigade of Russian and foreign writers to Tajikistan, but it is postponed due to lack of interest. ⁷⁵	Anthology, <i>Zūr-i SSSR</i> (“The Might of the USSR”).
1934	Lāhūtī leads brigade trip in Tajikistan (late Apr.); he speaks at First All-Union Writers’ Congress (Aug. 20); ⁷⁶ he is added to the Soviet Writers’ Union secretariat as its only “Eastern” member (c. early Sept.); ⁷⁷ he is excluded from public Soviet celebration of the Firdawsī Jubilee (Oct.). ⁷⁸	
1935	Peak of Lāhūtī’s visibility in Soviet public culture: he requests ⁷⁹ and gets a meeting with Stalin, at which he stresses that he does not want to work for the Comintern on Iran and complains of mistreatment on	<i>Masnavīs</i> on trip to Paris, “Safar-i Farangistān” (“Journey to France”); and

	<p>Writers' Union secretariat (Mar.);⁸⁰ he obtains an apartment in the prestigious House on the Embankment;⁸¹ he travels via Vienna to Paris to speak at the Congress for the Defense of Culture (Jun. 24);⁸² he participates in meeting of Central Committee with Tajik and Turkmen collective farmers inaugurating "Friendship of Peoples" (Dec. 4). Another Comintern investigation concludes with the decision to exclude Lāhūtī from Iranian Comintern leadership (Jan.-Nov.).⁸³</p>	<p>on collective farms, "Tāj va bayrāq" ("Crown and Flag"). Several anthologies of new verse, the most significant of which is <i>Hazār misra</i> ('One Thousand Lines').</p>
1936	Lāhūtī meets with Gide in Moscow, then participates in the denunciation of his travelogue. ⁸⁴ Beginning of the Great Terror.	<i>Masnavī</i> on Constitutional activities, "Du nishān" ("Two Medals"); ⁸⁵ two other significant collections, <i>Mubārizah va 'ishq</i> ("Struggle and Love") and <i>Sih qatrah</i> ("Three Drops").
1937	Lāhūtī intervenes on behalf of Osip Mandelstam (Oct.) and 'Aynī (Nov.) during Terror; ⁸⁶ he continues Writers' Union committee work.	
1938	Another Comintern investigation ends with no action against Lāhūtī (May); ⁸⁷ he sends a New Year poem to Stalin advocating for Solomon Mikhoels (Dec. 31). ⁸⁸	
1939	Stalin asks Aleksandr Fadeev to notify Writers' Union secretariat of his rejection of Lāhūtī's New Year poem (Jan. 3), and Lāhūtī's position in Union begins to diminish. ⁸⁹	
1940		Anthology, <i>Shi 'rhā-yi Tājikistānī</i> ("Poems of Tajikistan").
1941	Ten-day festival of Tajik arts in Moscow (Apr.): Lāhūtī's opera <i>Kāvah-i āhangar</i> ("Kāvah the Blacksmith") and his translation of Shakespeare's <i>Othello</i> performed; Lāhūtī and family evacuate to Tashkent (c. May); after the Soviet Union invades Iran (Aug.-Sept.), Lāhūtī's works are printed in edition for Iranian audiences; ⁹⁰ Lāhūtī moved to Stalinabad (Nov.).	
1942-c. 1944	Lāhūtī based in Stalinabad.	A dialogue, "Pīrūzī-i

		ghazal” (“Victory of the Ghazal,” 1942). Several collections of wartime patriotic songs, and poems addressed to Iran. Lāhūtī works with Banu on her translation of excerpts from the <i>Shāhnāmah</i> , <i>Almazy doblesti</i> (“Diamonds of Heroism,” 1943); a translation of Lope de Vega’s <i>Fuenteovejuna</i> (1942).
1945-1948	Lāhūtī and family based in Moscow region; they begin spending spring-autumn every year in village of Ivanovka outside of Moscow (1947). He makes visits to sanatoria for chronic tuberculosis-related illness. ⁹¹	A volume of Persian translations of Alexander Pushkin (1947) and a translation of Shakespeare’s <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> (1947), ⁹² a dialogue, <i>Pari-i bakht</i> (“The Good-Luck Fairy,” 1948).
1949	During Anti-Cosmopolitan Campaign, orientalists and Tajik writers participate in attacks on “pan-Iranism,” targeting Lāhūtī among others. ⁹³	
1950-1952		Numerous poems addressed to Iran and the international situation.
1953	Following the coup against Prime Minister Muṣaddiq in Iran (Aug. 15-19), CIA operative Donald Wilber publishes a false autobiography of Lāhūtī indicating that he defected and was killed (c. Nov.). ⁹⁴	
1954-1956	Lāhūtī meets with Central Committee (Jan.), and plans are approved for wider distribution of his works, together with radio broadcasts. Tajik 1st secretary Bābā-jān Ghafūrov is ordered to publish Lāhūtī’s works and permit him to speak on Tajik radio. ⁹⁵ Lāhūtī intervenes on behalf of	Anthologies, <i>Surūdhā-yi āzādī va şulh</i> (“Songs of Freedom and Peace,” 1954); and <i>Nidā-yi zindagī</i> (“The

	Iranian emigrants in Tajikistan. ⁹⁶	Call of Life," 1956); a translation of Alexander Griboedov's <i>Woe from Wit</i> (1956).
1957	Lāhūtī dies of tuberculosis-related heart ailment.	A translation of Shakespeare's <i>King Lear</i> ; the first volume of Banū's full verse translation of the <i>Shāhnāmah</i> , for which Lāhūtī was the scholarly editor. ⁹⁷

I have included on the timeline items of variable reliability, in order to provide the fullest possible biography. A star beside an endnote indicates an item found in his own memoirs and lacking other corroboration. The rightmost column focuses on poems with a verified date of composition.

¹ Mīrzā Ahmād Ilhāmī Kirmānshāhī, *Dīvān-i Ahmād-i Ilhāmī-i Kirmānshāhī*, ed. Umīd Islāmpanāh (Tehran: Mīrās-i maktūb, 1379 [2000]), 16. Dates that appear in other contemporary *tazkirahs* are 1250 and 1265 AH, but Islāmpanāh finds 1264 best supported, on the basis of a chronogram.

² Ibid.

³ Ahmād Bashīrī, introduction, in *Dīvān-i Abū al-Qāsim Lāhūtī (1264-1336)*, ed. Bashīrī (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1358 [1979-1980]), xi-xiii.

⁴ KB6, 76, 66.*

⁵ In a memoir uncompleted at his death, Lāhūtī devotes almost a tenth of his narrative to the problem of his birth-date, but his account still leaves problems. A chronogram gives his older brother's birth as 1301 AH (inscribed in a Qur'an by his father's fellow poet), and they were three years apart. His mother composed an oral couplet associating his birth with the hunger of Ramadan, and separately recalled snowy weather in that month. He concludes by proposing Dec. 4, 1887, but that date falls in the month of Rabī' al-awwal—in fact, 1303 and 1305 (the plausible range for approximately 3 years after his brother's birth), Ramadan fell only in May and June, rendering the evidence contradictory. An article in the newspaper *Tarbiyat*, Safar 7, 1323 AH (April 13, 1905) gives his age as 17, which does support a birth year of 1887 or 1888. Ibid., 65-68.

⁶ KB6, 88-90.*

⁷ K1, 343-344; KB6, 90.

⁸ KB6, 90-93.*

⁹ Muhammad ‘Alī Sultānī, *Ahzāb-i siyāsī va anjumanhā-yi sirrī dar Kirmānshāh: farāmūshkhānah tā khānah-i siyāh*, vol. 1 (Tehran: Suhā, 1378 [1999]), 32-34; KB6, 94-96.

¹⁰ Ibid., 96-99; see also dedication, Lāhūtī, *Īrānnāmah* (Istanbul: Shams, 1338 [1920]), 7.

¹¹ KB6, 99.*

¹² Ibid., 164-165.*

¹³ Ibid., 79. This may have been a separate, earlier trip, however.

¹⁴ *Tarbiyat*, 7 Safar, 1323 [April 13, 1905], pp. 1-3.

¹⁵ KB6, 165.

¹⁶ For the basic periodization of the Constitutional Revolution used here, see Janet Afary, *Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911: Grassroots Democracy, Social Democracy, & the Origins of Feminism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), xvii-xxii.

¹⁷ Ibid., 166.* Lāhūtī quotes one of his poems published in the Calcutta-based newspaper *Habl al-matīn*, although scholars have yet to locate it.

¹⁸ Ibid., 166-167, 109-111, 277.*

¹⁹ K4, 244-258.*

²⁰ This is on the basis of his numerous poems published in the FIAM newspaper, *Īrān-i naw*.

²¹ KB6, 167-168.* If he arrived with the force of Sattār Khān, the date was Apr. 3, 1910; however, his allegiance at this stage is uncertain, given the tensions that developed between that force and the police commanded by Yeprem Khan (see fn. 23).

²² See Ch. 1.

²³ “Muṣāḥibah bā Āqā-yi Sayyid Ziyā’ al-Dīn Ṭabāṭabā’ī,” *Āshuftah* 8, no. 13 (1333 [1954]): 8. For the periods 1910-1914 and Oct. 1921-Feb. 1922, although I consulted sources directly where possible, I follow on the detailed research of Kāvah Bayāt, *Kūdītā-yi Lāhūtī: Tabrīz, Bahman-i 1300* (Tehran: Shīrāzah, 1376 [1997]).

²⁴ Parvīz Afsar, *Tārīkh-i zhāndārmari-i Īrān*, 2nd ed. (Qom: Chāpkhānah-i Qum, 1334 [1955]), 31-35.

²⁵ Ibid., 43-45.

²⁶ *Āftāb*, 24 *Zū al-qā‘dah*, 1330 [Nov. 4, 1912], qtd. in Bayāt, *Kūdītā-yi Lāhūtī*, 17-18.

²⁷ Mīrzā Abū al-Qāsim Khān Kāhālzādah, *Dīdāhhā va shinādahhā: Khātirāt*, ed. Murtazā Kāmrān (Tehran: Tūs, 1363 [1984]) 428-429, n. 2. See also Bashīrī’s oral history of Nuṣrat Āq-ūlī, Bashīrī, intro., *Dīvān-i Lāhūtī*, xx-xxi.

²⁸ Bayāt, *Kūdītā-yi Lāhūtī*, 19-20.

²⁹ Ibid., 21.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 27-29. Bayāt judges this particular suspicion to be probably unjustified: ibid., 117-124. However, evidence of some conflict with the Swedish officers is the account of Hasan Muqaddam, a friend of Lāhūtī who would have had the story in his version, and

writes in a 1926 biographical profile, “He didn’t get along [*ne s’entend pas*] with the Scandinavians. In a quarrel, he threatened one of the Swedish officers. Several days later, the man was found murdered.” Ali-No-Rouze [pseud. Հասան Մոշադդամ], “Lahouti,” *Messages d’Orient* 1 (1926): 174.

³² KB6, 169.

³³ Bashīrī, intro., *Dīvān-i Lāhūtī*, xxi.

³⁴ KB6, 169.

³⁵ Bayāt, *Kūditā-yi Lāhūtī*, 29-30.

³⁶ Abduvali Davronov, *Ravobiti adabii khalqhoi tojiku arman* (Dushanbe: Adib, 2008), 164.

³⁷ The fullest account, although in parts clearly defamatory, is a set of letters from Հusayn-Khān Sālār Զafar Sanjābī to Avetis “Sultānzādah,” April 16, 1931, RGASPI f. 495, op. 217, d. 345, ll. 258-261. See also discussions in ‘Alī Akbar Khān Sanjābī, *Il-i Sanjābī va mujāhidāt-i millī-i Īrān: khāṭirāt-i ‘Alī Akbar Khān Sanjābī, sardār-i muqtadir*, ed. Karīm Sanjābī (Tehran: Shīrāzah, 1380 [2001-2002]).

³⁸ Muḥammad-Taqī Bahār, *Tārīkh-i mukhtaṣar-i aḥzāb-i siyāsī-i Īrān: inqirāz-i Qājāriyah* (Tehran: Shirkat-i sihāmī-i kitābhā-yi jībī, 1357 [1978-1979]), 169-170.

³⁹ Muḥammad Հusayn Shīriyān, *Tārīkh-i maṭbū ‘āt-i ustān-i Kirmānshāh* (Kermanshah: Idārah-i kull-i farhang va irshād-i islāmī-i ustān-i Kirmānshāh, 1392 [2013]), 73-74. This newspaper appears not to be extant, despite the thorough searching of Shīriyān: ibid., 69-73.

⁴⁰ KB6, 170-171. An undated letter from Lāhūtī to Kolomiitsev expressing sympathy for the Russian Revolution was printed in 1969, cited as an item from Lāhūtī’s personal archive, although I have been unable to locate the document in any of the likely current archives. T.A. Sobol’-Smolianinova, “Dokumental’nye ocherki: podvig posla,” *Voprosy istorii* 5 (1969): 132.

⁴¹ KB6, 171.* Given what we know from other sources about Lāhūtī’s participation in the *muhājirīn* movement surrounding the Majlis-in-exile, he may have left as early as February 1917, when the leading *muhājirīn* began evacuating for Istanbul.

⁴² Ibid., 172; Ts. Bonu, ed., *Ēdi ustod Lohutī* (Dushanbe: Adib, 1987), 56; K2, 316-317.*

⁴³ KB6, 171.*

⁴⁴ Bashīrī, intro., *Dīvān-i Lāhūtī*, xxxvii.

⁴⁵ Հusayn Bāyburdī, *Tarikh-i panahandagan-i Iran* (Tehran: Vahīd, 1349 [1970]), 225-226.

⁴⁶ See Ch. 2.

⁴⁷ KB6, 172.*

⁴⁸ Bayāt, *Kūditā-yi Lāhūtī*, 35-36.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 37-39.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 39-40.

⁵¹ Ibid., 40-42.

⁵² Ibid., 42-

⁵³ Giv Lakhuti, “‘Liubvi moei ostalos’ v mire delo’: Povest’ ob ottse,” *Literaturnoe obozrenie* 9/10 (1993): 84.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 76-77, 95; KB6, 173; R. Grigorian, “Neizvestnyi dokument o Lakhuti,” *Banber Hayastani arkhivneri* 3 (1970): 107-108; see also A.S. Balaian, statement about Lāhūtī, c. 1932, RGASPI f. 495, op. 217, d. 345, ll. 137-139; parts of this letter were obtained and publicly quoted in Ivan Isakov, *Morskie Istorii* (Moscow: Voennoe izd., 1970), 203-204.

⁵⁵ Giv Lakhuti, “Liubvi moei,” 85; Grigorian, “Neizvestnyi dokument,” 107-108.

⁵⁶ Bayāt, *Kūditā-yi Lāhūtī*, 96-103.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 103-105.

⁵⁸ Letter from Commissariat of Foreign Affairs to Broido, November 16, 1922, RGASPI f. 495, op. 217, d. 345, l. 328.

⁵⁹ Certificate of CP membership candidacy for Lāhūtī, June 27, 1924, RGASPI f. 495, op. 217, d. 345, l. 330.

⁶⁰ See Ch. 2.

⁶¹ Letter from Chicherin, Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, to the Sovnarkom chair for the Tajik ASSR, May 13, 1925, RGASPI f. 495, op. 217, d. 345, ll. 143-144.

⁶² Beginning from this time, specific sources are only noted where not provided in the dissertation chapters. Lāhūtī’s location is surmised from dating and location on letters and poems in *K1-K5* and Abulqosim Lohutī, *Nomaho*, eds. Abdurahmon Abdumannonov, Khurshed Otakhonova, and Gurez Safar (Dushanbe: Adib, 2004), with support from newspaper articles and archival documents where necessary.

⁶³ List of occupations, March 21, 1952, RGASPI f. 495, op. 217, d. 345, ll. 16-19.

⁶⁴ SredAzBiuro statement from Ostroverkhov indicating refusal of Lāhūtī’s request to switch to Comintern work, August 14, 1926, RGASPI f. 495, op. 217, d. 345, l. 282.

⁶⁵ Certificate confirming Lāhūtī’s enrollment with stipend at International Lenin School, January 16, 1927, RGASPI f. 495, op. 217, d. 345, l. 287.

⁶⁶ See Ch. 3.

⁶⁷ MOPR document requesting support for Lāhūtī, RGASPI f. 495, op. 217, d. 345, l. 279.

⁶⁸ International Agrarian Institute note of permission for missed teaching due to sickness, July 8, 1930, RGASPI f. 495, op. 217, d. 345, l. 121.

⁶⁹ Ts. Bonu, “‘Eddoshtoi mukhtasar,’ *Sharqi surkh* 12 (1957): 79.

⁷⁰ Flora Roberts, “Old Elites Under Communism: Soviet Rule in the Tajik SSR, 1917-1964” (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2015), 282-284, 292-299.

⁷¹ See Ch. 5.

⁷² Cf. accusation by Husayn-Khān Sālār Zafar Sanjābī (see n. 37 above); Lāhūtī letter of self-defense to Molotov against Sanjābī accusations, April 23, 1931, RGASPI f. 495, op. 217, d. 345, l. 249; Lāhūtī general letter of self-defense to the Comintern, January 7, 1932, RGASPI f. 495, op. 217, d. 345, ll. 141-142.

⁷³ Comintern report clearing Lāhūtī on all counts, May 15, 1932, RGASPI f. 495, op. 217, d. 345, l. 292.

⁷⁴ See Ch. 4.

⁷⁵ See Ch. 3.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Letter of September 3, 1934, qtd. in Leonid Maksimenkov, “Ocherki nomenklaturalnoi istorii sovetskoi literatury (1932-1946): Stalin, Bukharin, Zhdanov, Shcherbakov i drugie: okonchanie,” *Voprosy literatury* 5 (2003), <http://magazines.russ.ru/voplit/2003/4/maksim-pr.html>.

⁷⁸ See Ch. 3.

⁷⁹ Lāhūtī letter to Stalin requesting meeting, Feb. 19, 1935, RGASPI f. 558, op. 11, d. 760, l. 1.

⁸⁰ Stalin notes on meeting with Lāhūtī, on back of page dated March 3, 1935, RGASPI f. 558, op. 11, d. 760, l. 3.

⁸¹ See Ch. 4.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Summary of Comintern report on Lāhūtī by Abrahamian, January 31, 1935, RGASPI f. 495, op. 217, d. 345, l. 270; Abrahamian summary of Iranian Communists’ charges and final decision on exclusion from Comintern leadership, November 10, 1935, RGASPI f. 495, op. 217, d. 345, ll. 319-321.

⁸⁴ See Ch. 4.

⁸⁵ See Ch. 5.

⁸⁶ See Ch. 4.

⁸⁷ Writers’ Union summary of investigations of Lāhūtī, May 20, 1938, RGASPI f. 495, op. 217, d. 345, ll. 266-268.

⁸⁸ See Ch. 4.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ See Ch. 5.

⁹¹ G[iv].G. Lakhuti, “Dva berega u odnoi reki,” in *Vospominaniia o Mikhale Prishvine*, eds. Ia.Z. Grishina and L.A. Riazanova (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel’, 1991), 342.

⁹² See Ch. 5.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Masha Kirasirova, “My Enemy’s Enemy: Consequences of the CIA Operation against Abulqasim Lahuti, 1953-54,” *Iranian Studies* 50, no. 3 (2017): 439-465.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Letter from F. Khrustov and V. Ivanov to M. Suslov and Central Committee, March 10, 1954, RGANI f. 5, op. 17, d. 492, l. 53.

⁹⁷ See Ch. 5.

Introduction

When the first prime minister of independent India, Jawaharlal Nehru, made his first state visit to the Soviet Union in 1955, despite his general appreciation of Soviet arts and culture, he noted one significant gap. It was surprising, he remarked, that there was no full Russian translation of either the Indian national epic, the *Mahabharata*, or the Persian one, the *Shāhnāmeh*. In the ensuing scramble by Soviet cultural diplomats to prove their state's commitment to world culture, it became apparent that there was indeed a full *Shāhnāmeh* translation in verse whose first volume was awaiting print permission from the publishers of the *Literaturnye pamyatniki* [Literary Masterpieces] series.¹ It had been prepared by the Ukrainian Jewish orientalist Tsetsiliia Banu and her husband, the Iranian émigré revolutionary and poet Abū al-Qāsim, pen-name “Lāhūtī.” Like Nehru, the couple believed that the *Shāhnāmeh* belonged in the canon of world literature. When finally printed, the volume joined the couple’s contributions to that canon’s life in other languages: translations of Taras Shevchenko, Lope de Vega, and William Shakespeare into Tajik and Alexander Pushkin into Iranian Persian.

Written with the exhortation to young writers to “study the classics,” these translations were a natural extension of Lāhūtī’s literary-bureaucratic work with foreign Communists from Europe and Asia, sympathetic Iranian intellectuals, and above all, writers from the Soviet national republics. In 1934, Lāhūtī brought a brigade of Russian and foreign writers to Tajikistan to help to build cadres of young local writers. “Thanks to the intervention of the brigade,” a newspaper article reported, “the printing of the classics of Persian [*farsidskoi*] literature, the

¹ Ts.B. Banu, “Epopeia ob epopee,” *Irano-Slavika* 2 (2008): 52.

publication of a small library of Russian and foreign classics, and translations of the best contemporary Soviet writers have been added to the publishing house's plan.”²

Lāhūtī was well equipped to be the spokesman of such a project, comfortable as he was in Iranian and Tajik Persian, Kurdish, and Turkish, and with more modest facility in Russian, French, and various other Turkic languages. By the time he arrived in the Soviet Union in 1922, he was already 35, and had lived several literary careers, in a Sufi community of his native Kermanshah, in the ferment of the Iranian Constitutional press in Tehran and Rasht, and in the cosmopolitan milieu of émigré Istanbul. He had also made his mark in revolutionary politics, rising through the ranks of the Constitutional military force and even leading a mutiny that briefly seized control of Tabriz. It was the failure of this mutiny that forced his flight to the Soviet Union. Once he became established in Moscow and Soviet Central Asia, he became a powerhouse of the Soviet culture industry. In his wife's Russian translations, his speeches and verses lent the general line of Soviet cultural policy an authoritative “Eastern” voice, while simultaneously shaping that policy. He carried the Bolshevik gospel to Tajikistan, represented the Soviet Union in Paris and on the Iranian radio, and spoke on behalf of the Central Asian masses in Moscow. He thus became one of the most visible prototypes for a new fusion of functionary and author function: the literary representative.³ As functionaries (press editors, secretaries, committee members, education commissars, etc.), such representatives kept the

² “Nakanune s”ezda: mesiats v tadzhikistane,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, May 24, 1934, 3.

³ In using Michel Foucault's concept of the “author function” to describe the place of the name “Lāhūtī” in Soviet literary culture, I follow on an insight from Katharine Holt, “Performing as Soviet Central Asia’s Source Texts: Lahuti and Džambul in Moscow, 1935-1936,” *Littérature et société en Asie Centrale: nouvelles sources pour l’étude des relations entre culture et pouvoir du xv^e siècle jusqu’à nos jours*, eds. Gulnara Aitpaeva and Marc Toutant (Bishkek and Paris: Ifeac, 2015), 213-238. For Foucault's use of the term, see “What Is an Author?,” in Foucault, *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley et. al. (New York: New Press, 1998), 205-222.

bureaucratic institutions of world literature in operation. As author functions, their voices claimed the mandate to represent nations, and by means of this mandate they authorized the international institutions' operation.

Through the exemplary case of Lāhūtī, this dissertation examines the ways in which non-European literary traditions have been represented within the developing sphere of world literature. Specifically, it tells the story of the transition from one framework of representation to another, and the role of the figure of the literary representative in that transition. In the first framework, associated with the age of Romantic national politics within Europe and imperial expansion outside of it, the European framework of world literature treated the Eastern native as mute, and classical Eastern texts functioned as the East's authoritative representatives, through the mediation of orientalists. In the second framework, associated with the age of decolonization and statist modernization in former colonial or semicolonial regions, nation states laid claim to those classical Eastern texts, seizing control of their representative function for internal use in national culture building. Beyond the borders of the nation, before the reading public of world literature (no longer exclusively European), the authoritative interpreter of both national culture and nationalized classical canon was the literary representative.⁴ Between those two frameworks, colonial and postcolonial, I propose a transitional stage. The literary representative was born between the World Wars in the cultural orbit of the Soviet Union, as cultural planners worked

⁴ These two framework roughly correspond to Peter Kalliney's distinction between "Berlin modernism," referring to the Berlin Conference of 1884-5 at which the European powers divided Africa, and "Bandung modernism," referring to the Bandung Conference of 1955 that inaugurated the Non-Aligned Movement. Respectively, these refer to "the literature of high imperialism—of Western European expansion and rule—and the literature enabled by transnational solidarities generated through anticolonial movements." Kalliney, *Modernism in a Global Context* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 39.

towards a multilingual assemblage of old and new texts and writers that I will call the “literary international.”

The literary international, like the series of political internationals and their anthem, aspired to become “le genre humain,” and thus comprised both a vision of committed world literature and a set of real bureaucratic and informal institutions intended to embody and foster that vision.⁵ These institutions brought together writers and functionaries of many Soviet nationalities—the “multinational” [*mnogonatsional’nyi*] sphere—with writers from the European-American left and radicals from colonial and semicolonial regions. The number of participants in the latter category fluctuated through the interwar period, and then exploded as postwar decolonization gathered speed. The existence of an *international* assumed the nation or nationality as the unit of interaction, and so writers such as Lāhūtī and classics such as the *Shāhnāmah* became proxies for segments of the world. At the institutional hinge where writers from the Soviet multinational East met and collaborated with anticolonial writers from the Middle East and South Asia, writers such as Lāhūtī attempted to ground political solidarity in a Persianate discourse of shared literary heritage, which frequently resisted the cultural claims of the nation. As they transformed themselves and the Persian classics into representatives before a newly imagined world audience, these writers brought into the domain of “literature” certain of the customary functions that the verbal arts had performed in Persianate societies. In the process,

⁵ My specification of a distinctly *literary* international responds to Bruce Grant’s inviting plural in “Communist Internationals,” *Kritika* 18, no. 1 (2017): 89–93. Rossen Djagalov has fittingly described the constellation of Soviet and foreign leftist writers as a “people’s republic of letters” in “The People’s Republic of Letters: Towards a Media History of Twentieth-Century Socialist Internationalism” (Ph.D. diss., Yale, 2011). By forgoing that formulation for my own neologism, I hope to evoke a collectivity that contained not only living writers and twentieth-century texts, but also the canons of past texts that they included in (or press-ganged into) the same larger world literature and humanist project in which they participated.

they made the Persianate generic and rhetorical repertoire a resource for the mass politics of the 20th century.⁶

Writers such as Lāhūtī published, obtained books, and travelled under circumstances far more constraining than most of their comrades outside the Soviet bloc: this will not be a story of footloose cosmopolitanism and the free movement of ideas. The mass violence of the Terror and anticommunist campaigns, as well as the persistence of imperial dynamics in the Soviet Union, left their imprint on the lives and texts of the literary international, and ultimately stifled any hope of its realization long before the fall of the Soviet state. But in the poems, translations, and scholarship on which Lāhūtī and his contemporaries labored, we can catch glimpses, even under the direst of working conditions, of actually existing emancipatory world literature. This dissertation recounts parts of the institutional and social history of the literary international, particularly where necessary context for Lāhūtī's career coincides with gaps in the existing scholarship. But at its heart, this is a project of poetics and cultural history, following classical and modern texts between their lives in specific languages or cultures and their authors' and editors' aspiration to a universal and universally comparable library of cultures.

Lāhūtī's Life and Works

This is the first monograph-length study of Lāhūtī's literary works in either Iran or the West, although there have been numerous such studies in the Soviet Union and in post-Soviet

⁶ Michael M. J. Fischer has provided an especially *longue durée* account of “the uptake of Persian imagery [and poesis] into cosmopolitan circuits,” to which this study may be read as an addendum. Fischer, *Mute Dreams, Blind Owls, and Dispersed Knowledges: Persian Poesis in the Transnational Circuitry* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 3.

Tajikistan.⁷ His life in Iranian and Soviet politics has received more recent attention, although important biographical questions remain unanswered and will require further archival research.⁸ Some historians of Iranian politics have interpreted his failed Tabriz revolt of 1922, which necessitated his flight from Iran, as the signal moment of Rizā Khān’s establishment of control, a moment of flux and tantalizing counterfactuals. In such accounts, his Soviet career, constituting half his life, appears only as a curious or even bathetic coda.⁹ Conversely, in his own autobiographical writings and thereafter in Soviet scholarship, the trials and uncertainties of his

⁷ Recent Western surveys of Tajik literature that devote significant attention to Lāhūtī’s role are Lisa Yountchi, “Between Russia and Iran: Soviet Tajik Literature and Identity, 1920-1991” (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern, 2011), 48-58 et passim; Evelin Grassi, *Introduzione alla letteratura tagico-persiana (1870-1954)* (Naples: Università di Napoli “l’Orientale,” 2017), 149-159; Western studies of modern Iranian literature that discuss Lāhūtī’s work at length include Sorour Soroudi, “Poet and Revolution: The Impact of Iran’s Constitutional Revolution on the Social and Literary Outlook of the Poets of the Time: Part II,” *Iranian Studies* 12, no. 3/4 (1979): 245-250; Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, *Recasting Persian Poetry: Scenarios of Poetic Modernity in Iran* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1995), 188-202; Amr Taher Ahmed, *La “Révolution littéraire”: Étude de l’influence de la poésie française sur la modernisation des formes poétiques persanes au début du XXe siècle* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2012), 324-335; Kamyar ‘Abedi, “Lahuti, Abu’l-Qasem,” *EIr*, article published April 20, 2009, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/lahuti-abul-qasem>; for major Iranian, Tajik, and Russian works, see ns. below.

⁸ A summary is provided in a table in the dissertation’s front matter. Questions about Lāhūtī’s life that further research might elucidate include: 1) Non-autobiographical sources are limited for his activities from the Constitutional Revolution to his second flight from Iran, c. 1906-1918; 2) the extent and nature of contact between Iranian forces and radicals in the Russian Imperial army in Kermanshah province during the First World War; 3) the specifics of Lāhūtī’s local interventions outside of Dushanbe during his first few years in the Tajik ASSR, during the mid-1920s; 4) the extent of Lāhūtī’s participation in policy discussions during the Soviet occupation of Iran; 5) the periodization of Lāhūtī’s conflicts with members of the political and cultural leadership of the Tajik SSR, in particular Bābājān Ghafūrov. Other important questions have been well investigated by previous scholars, but seem unlikely to be explained definitively by extant sources: 1) The nature and extent of involvement in pseudomasonic circles by Lāhūtī and his father; 2) The causes of Lāhūtī’s conflict with the regional government of Qum while serving as major of the local Gendarmerie. On some of these questions, see also timeline.

⁹ Stephanie Cronin, “Iran’s Forgotten Revolutionary: Abulqasim Lahuti and the Tabriz Insurrection of 1922,” in *Reformers and Revolutionaries in Modern Iran: New Perspectives on the Iranian Left*, ed. Cronin (London, New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004), 141-142; Bayāt, *Kūdītā-yi Lāhūtī*, 105-106.

pre-Soviet life are subordinated to a subsequent Soviet apotheosis. Although this dissertation devotes more attention to his later career, it integrates his two lives, in Iranian revolutionary politics and Soviet culture building, into a comprehensible whole. As I will show, Lāhūtī’s career arc illustrates the real continuities between Persianate literary communities across Eurasia that histories have usually nationalized, and complicates the division between classical and modern Persian poetry. Furthermore, Lāhūtī himself played an important role in cross-pollinating Persianate communities and redeploying the resources of classical texts for new purposes.

Textology and Criticism of the Works of Lāhūtī

As with other Soviet classics, many of Lāhūtī’s poems underwent one or more revisions, often amounting to complete rewrites. They were also repeatedly and freely translated from Persian into the other languages of the USSR and the world, often (although not always) through Russian. These dynamics of textual instability are a major concern of the present study. A new seven-volume critical edition of his works, produced by the Tajik Academy of Sciences, is currently two volumes from completion. This edition places textology on a firm footing for his original works, with two caveats.¹⁰ First, efforts to gather all of his works printed before 1922 have been sporadic and limited; as the scholar Ia. Isoev wrote in 1957, “Some of them are scattered in the newspapers of Kermanshah, Tabriz, Tehran, and Istanbul, others are preserved

¹⁰ *K1-5* (see Abbreviations). Vol. 6 will contain his translations of Shakespeare, and vol. 7 his prose works. The only previous “collected works” to reach completion, published in Stalinabad/Dushanbe from 1960-1963, was missing many early works already known to Soviet scholarship of the time. Also missing from all posthumous collected works, but accessed for this study in the original editions, are some of Lāhūtī’s poems dedicated to Stalin. For the editors’ note on that exclusion, “Yak-du sukhan ba joi sarsukhan,” *K2*, 5.

only on the walls of Iran's prisons or in the memory of poor, oppressed people.”¹¹ Second, there has not yet been an adequate compilation and comparison of texts either for Lāhūtī's own translations into Persian, nor for the translations of Lāhūtī's works into other languages—an important consideration, since some of his works lived fuller lives in translation than in Persian. This dissertation makes original contributions to the chronology of Lāhūtī's translations in particular. The new critical edition has been a useful guide, and my references point to it or the previous (1960-63) collected works where possible for the ease of the reader. Nonetheless, my primary literary sources are the many published editions of his verse and speeches, consulted in their original books and periodicals, which have sometimes been supplemented by handwritten or typed drafts from the archives of RGASPI in Moscow and the Rudaki Institute of Tajik Language and Literature in Dushanbe. References are to these wherever a work is not included in the collected works in the variant quoted, or where I discuss typography, glosses, or other issues of presentation. The contemporaneous works and subsequent memoirs of his fellow Iranian, Ottoman, and Soviet writers are likewise taken from their original venues of publication wherever possible, with later editions serving as an occasional stopgap. Much of Lāhūtī's autobiographical writing and other documentary evidence has likewise been drawn from the archives in Moscow and Dushanbe.

Lāhūtī's abortive early political career meant that his work was unpublishable in Iran during the reign of Rizā Shāh and little-published during the reign of Muhammad-Rizā Shāh, whereas his vociferous atheism and anticlericalism rendered him an uncertain proposition in the

¹¹ Ia. Isaev, “Lakhuti—poet revoliutsionnogo dvizheniya v Irane,” *Uchenye zapiski* vol. 17, *Seriia filologicheskaya* (Stalinabad: Stalinabadskii gosudarstvennyi pedagogicheskii institut im. T.G. Shevchenko, 1957), 176. An assessment of the remaining gaps in research by from 25 years ago remains mostly accurate: Mirzo Mulloahmadov and Zafar Zarifov, “Surudahoi avvalini Lohutī,” in *Gulbongi navjavonī* (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1992), 3-4.

Islamic Republic. Most publication of his works in Iran since World War I occurred during two brief windows: the Soviet occupation of northern Iran from 1941-1946, when the scholar Sa‘īd Nafīsī wrote articles introducing Iranian readers to his works, and the few years between the Islamic Revolution and the complete suppression of the Communists (1978-1980), when two divan editions were published, one with an extensively researched preface by Aḥmad Bāshīrī.¹² The first histories of modern Persian literature to highlight his importance came from Soviet, Warsaw Pact, and Indian scholars.¹³ Before and since the Islamic Revolution, the major Iranian histories of modern literature granted him an important place in their narratives of formal and stylistic innovation in Persian verse, while dismissing many of his Soviet works as tasteless or formally unsuccessful.¹⁴ In the following pages, I engage with these scholars on the ways that

¹² *Kulliyāt-i Lāhūtī*, ed. Bihruz Mūshīrī (Tehran: Tūkā, 1357 [1979]); *Dīvān-i Lāhūtī*, ed. Bāshīrī; the latter was reprinted in facsimile in Piedmont, CA in 1985. An exception to this rule is the work of Muḥammad-‘Alī Sipānlū published since the Islamic Revolution: *Lāhūtī, shā‘ir-i du-havā’ī* (Tehran: Naqd-i āgāh, 1362 [1983]); and *Shahr-i shi‘r-i Lāhūtī: zindagī va bihtarīn ash‘ar-i Abū al-Qāsim Lāhūtī*, intro. Sipānlū (Tehran: Nashr-i ‘ilm, 1376 [1997]). I was only able to consult the latter of these, but it was composed without access to Bāshīrī’s introduction or the later Soviet editions that indicate variants, and as a result it replicates the partial narrative for Lāhūtī’s early life (and the versions of his early poems) that he shaped during and after the 1930s.

¹³ The first works in the Soviet Union that established his place in Persian literary historiography were Ṣadr al-Dīn ‘Aynī, *Namūnah-i adabīyāt-i tājīk* (Moscow: Nashrīyat-i markazī-i khalq-i Ittihād-i Jamāhīr-i Shūravī-ī Sūsiyālīstī, 1926), 586-594, 608-614; K.I. Chaikin, *Kratkii ocherk noveishei persidskoi literatury* (Moscow: KUTV, 1928), 110-112; and E.E. Bertel’s, *Ocherk istorii persidskoi literatury* (Leningrad: Izd. Leningradskogo vostochnogo instituta im. A.S. Enukidze, 1928), 171. Major works from Warsaw Pact states include Bozorg Alavi, *Geschichte und Entwicklung der modernen persischen Literatur* (Berlin: Akademie verlag, 1964), 105-112; Věra Kubíčková, “Persian Literature of the 20th Century,” in *History of Iranian Literature*, ed. Karl Jahn (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1968), 376; Jiří Bečka, “Tajik Literature from the 16th Century to the Present,” in *History of Iranian Literature*, 564-566. In the final category, M. Ishāq, *Sukhanvarān-i Irān dar ‘asr-i hāzir*, vol. 2 (Calcutta: Jāmi‘ah, 1937), 309-316; Munibur Rahman, *Post-Revolution Persian Verse* (Aligarh: Institute of Islamic Studies, 1955), 42-51.

¹⁴ Muḥammad Rizā Shafī‘ī Kadkanī, *Advār-i shi‘r-i fārsī az mashrūtiyat tā suqūt-i salṭanat* (Tehran: Intishārat-i Tūs, 1359 [1980]), 49-50, 57-58, 115; Yahyā Āryānpūr, *Az Šabā tā Nīmā 3: az Nīmā tā rūzgār-i mā: tārīkh-i adab-i fārsī-yi mu‘āṣir* (Tehran: Zavvār, 1374 [1995]), 498-499; Shams Langarūdī, *Tārīkh-i tahlīlī-yi shi‘r-i naw*, vol. 1 (Tehran: Nashr-i naw, 1370 [1991]), 76,

Lāhūtī’s verse departs from previous Persian formal, stylistic, and lexical models.¹⁵ My project is less concerned with evaluation of literary merit, except where the judgments of later Iranian scholars help to establish a horizon for reader response in Lāhūtī’s own literary communities. Without relinquishing their own terms of aesthetic and political evaluation, I believe that readers of this dissertation will come to understand what seems ill-judged in Lāhūtī’s poetic practice by following me through an investigation of the criteria of judgment implicit within the poetic texts themselves, and an attempt to account for the texts’ successes and failures in their original contexts of publication or performance.

Russophone and Tajik scholarship on Lāhūtī, while composed under obvious interpretative constraints, provides the biographical research and insightful textual criticism that this dissertation rests upon.¹⁶ My mode of close reading, emerging from the western tradition of literary scholarship and cultural history in which I am trained, at times leads me to very different interpretations of Lāhūtī’s works, although I aim for fidelity to the text and context above all. Lāhūtī’s most perceptive and creative reader was his wife Tsetsilia Banu, and her contributions to the phenomenon known as “Lāhūtī” in the literary international were so substantial that she

encapsulates this line of discussion with his observation that Lāhūtī receives little credit for his formal innovations because the content was so traditional or else unpoetic. Alavi also takes the same aesthetic line, despite his ideological sympathy, in *Geschichte und Entwicklung*, 111-112. One recurring claim is that Lāhūtī wrote the first “new poetry” (*shi‘r-i naw*) in Persian, cf. Langarudi, *Tārikh-i taḥlīlī*, vol. 1, 49; however, this has been ably disproven by Ahmed, “*Révolution littéraire*,” 324-333.

¹⁵ The strongest precedent for this kind of engagement, although it discusses only one moment in Lāhūtī’s early career, is Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, *Recasting Persian Poetry*, 108-202.

¹⁶ Milestones include Iakh’ e Isaev, “Tavrizskii divan Abul’kasima Lakhuti,” in *Uchenye zapiski* vol. 18, *Voprosy tadzhikskogo iazyka i literatury* (Stalinabad: Stalinabadskii gosudarstvennyi pedagogicheskii institut im. T.G. Shevchenko, 1959), 3-72; Mahmud Davlatov, *Ghazal va an’anai on dar ejodiēti ustod Abulqosim Lohutī* (Dushanbe: Donish, 1973); S. Davronov, *Vazni ash‘ori Abulqosim Lohutī* (Dushanbe: Donish, 1974); A. Abdumannonov, Kh. Otakhonova, and H. Shodikulov, *Abulqosim Lohutī: ocherkhoi mukhtasar* (Dushanbe: Adib, 1987); Abdulkholiq Nabavī, *Jangi vatanī va afkori adabii tojikī* (Dushanbe: Andaleb R, 2015).

must be considered this work’s second protagonist, and her translations of his poetry its second central corpus.

My analysis of textual and personal networks also follows on Iranian and Soviet methodological precedents: the Iranian tradition of *jarayān ’shināsī*, roughly translatable as “movement studies,” and the Soviet subfield of literary studies that documented the multinational and international “friendship of peoples” (*druzhba narodov*).¹⁷ Beginning in the 1930s, political and especially cultural relations between nationalities of the Soviet Union were represented in official culture as a “friendship,” and this paradigm was also applied to the history of cultural exchange among the peoples of Eurasia. The scholarly correlate of the “friendship” paradigm can be found in works with titles such as “Literary Relations between the Tajik and Armenian Peoples” or “On the friendship between a Tajik poet and a Czech doctor in Bukhara in 1918-1920” that were produced by scholars in every Union republic and satellite state.¹⁸ Like multinational literature itself, this was a comparatively low-prestige subfield within the Eastern Bloc. The tradition continues in the national academies of sciences of post-Soviet states, and in certain Moscow journals such as *Irano-slavika* and *Druzhba narodov*. The scholarly apparatus of the “friendship of peoples” is part of the discursive matrix under examination in this dissertation, but it should also be understood as a true predecessor of the contemporary field of transnational and translational poetics—for better or for worse.¹⁹ Like its successor field, it ranges from catalogues of mentions and contacts, sanguinely presented as evidence of reciprocity and

¹⁷ The debates that led to the consolidation of this narrative are recounted in Lowell Tillett, *The Great Friendship: Soviet Historians on the Non-Russian Nationalities* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969); however, I know of no study that surveys the broader subfield of scholarly production that followed.

¹⁸ Davronov, *Ravobiti adabii khalqhoi Tojiku Arman*; Jiří Bečka, “On the friendship...,” *Archiv Orientalni* 54, no. 3 (1986): 246-251.

¹⁹ These fields are addressed later in this introduction.

goodwill, to exquisite philological and prosopographical investigation of wandering texts and writers. In the corpus of literary texts and encounters constituting the “friendship,” I highlight evidence of political and cultural hegemony and failures of translation that Soviet and post-Soviet scholarship often passes over in silence.²⁰ But neither am I prepared to dismiss the ways that the “friendship of peoples” paradigm shaped Soviet citizens’ affective experience of real friendships or their imagination of the world beyond their borders.

Persianate Literary Practices: The Cultural Background

To succinctly suggest the practical coherence of the texts and conventions that provided the background for the literary practice of Lāhūtī and his contemporaries across much of Western, Central, and South Asia, I use the term “Persianate,” coined in the 1970s by the American historian Marshall Hodgson.²¹ Hodgson’s definition of the term extends across a

²⁰ Throughout this dissertation I prefer the general gramscian category “cultural hegemony” (the transmission of cultural forms under conditions of unequal power) to the more specific “cultural imperialism,” as the former phrase allows for a more flexible approach to culture and power. Ryan Dunch, “Beyond Cultural Imperialism: Cultural Theory, Christian Missions, and Global Modernity,” *History and Theory* 41 (2002): 301-325; Donald Sassoon provides a pragmatic description of cultural hegemony (although one that misrepresents the Soviet case) in “On Cultural Markets,” *New Left Review* 17 (2002): 113-126.

²¹ Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 293-294; and in its political aspect, Saïd Arjomand, “The Salience of Political Ethic in the Spread of Persianate Islam,” *Journal of Persianate Studies* 1, no. 1 (2008): 5-29. Particularly close to my meaning is Hamid Dabashi’s conception of the continued workings of “Persian *Adab*” in the modern world: Dabashi, *The World of Persian Literary Humanism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 263-300. I concur with Shahab Ahmad’s criticism of the terms “Perso-Turkic” and “Persianate,” which do “assumptively privilege linguistic and ‘ethnic’ elements,” as he argues. However, his preferred term, the “Balkans-to-Bengal complex,” is not only cumbersome, but suggests geographic bounds that did not change over time. Balkan Christian Slav intellectuals, for example, might have participated in this culture in the 17th century, but by Lāhūtī’s generation, their cultural identifications and social networks were quite different. Furthermore, in the intelligentsia communities examined here, it could not be claimed that the zone “is most meaningfully conceptualized not in terms of the Persianate, Turkic, or Perso-Turkic, but of *Islam*.” Ahmad, *What Is Islam?: The Importance of Being Islamic*

millennium and beyond the arts, describing a set of “cultural traditions,” a geographical “zone,” and perhaps a second (post-caliphal) phase of “Islamicate civilization,” although in the last instance he is wary of “oversimplification.”²² In practice, in his usage and since, it has usually referred to a literate, relatively elite subset of public culture, situated in the archipelago of royal courts and the more diffuse networks of sufis, learned people, and merchants, all of whom used Persian as a lingua franca and drew on Persian models for cultural production in other courtly or vernacular languages.²³ Although the term has no exact emic counterpart in Persian or any other language, the toponym *‘Ajam* and the adjective *‘ajamī* have been used in pre-20th-century discourse to refer to a non-Arabic-speaking Muslim cultural zone substantially overlapping with the Persianate.²⁴

The Persianate verbal arts were a cultural background for early 20th-century literature and literary politics in communities where writers of that period entered the literary sphere

(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 83-85. The chief shortcoming of the term “Persianate” for my purposes here is its assumption of a primacy for the Persian language. This may be appropriate to the post-Mongol centuries when Persian was a prestige language in many societies across Eurasia, although Hodgson’s suggestion that such societies “depended upon Persian wholly or in part for their prime literary inspiration” underplays the mutuality of inspiration (293). It is less apt for the 18th to the early 20th-century, when Persian texts were read across a similar-sized cosmopolis, but literary vernacularization had reduced Persophone literary production. Many of the Turcophone, Caucasian, and South Asian writers who appear in this dissertation saw the affinity between literatures and cultures within this cosmopolis as a horizontal one, and guarded against Persophone or Iranian chauvinism. “Persianate” is retained nonetheless for its compact evocation of a multilingual cultural commons.

²² Hodgson, 293-294.

²³ My conception of this cultural complex is indebted to James Robert Pickett, “The Persianate Sphere during the Age of Empires: Islamic Scholars and Networks of Exchange in Central Asia, 1747-1917 (Ph.D. diss., Princeton, 2015), 176-225.

²⁴ Sunil Sharma, “Redrawing the Boundaries of *‘Ajam* in Early Modern Persian Literary Histories,” in *Iran Facing Others: Identity Boundaries in a Historical Perspective*, eds. Abbas Amanat and Farzin Vejdani (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 51-64; Rebecca Gould, “The Geographies of *‘Ajam*: The Circulation of Persian Poetry from South Asia to the Caucasus,” *The Medieval History Journal* 18, no. 1 (2015): 87-119. However, note that the term *‘ajamī* was also used as a term of identity in non-Arab Muslim Africa.

possessing a formal education in Persianate model texts and customary performance settings, and also a body of tacit knowledge formed by those texts and settings.²⁵ On the scale of a single literary work, the background provided a range of rhetorical, lexical, and narrative possibilities on which individual writers could draw, and a corpus of intertexts to which they could respond and allude with the expectation that listeners or readers would be able to understand and situate the resulting work. Beyond the individual literary work, the Persianate background also provided models for literary personae, interactions with other writers, publics, and patrons, and thus structured the possible scenarios for an entire career. These models, moves, and scenarios were by no means invariant over time and across space, and specific communities flexibly emulated certain subsets of the literary background, and ignored or reworked others.²⁶ But by the late 15th century, this flexibility centered on a core set of older textual models and genres available to literary communities for situational redeployment alongside more local or recent texts and sociable literary practices.²⁷

Much recent Persian literary scholarship has been concerned with establishing how this central corpus of classical Persian works took shape, and the degree to which its inheritors

²⁵ This paragraph condenses the account given in J. T. P. De Bruijn, “Classical Persian Literature as a Tradition,” in *General Introduction to Persian Literature*, ed. De Bruijn (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 1-42. In my use of the terms “background” and “tacit knowledge,” I draw on theories of discursive practice, especially as presented in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (London: Routledge, 1982), esp. 44-78, and Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966).

²⁶ John R. Perry, “New Persian: Expansion, Standardization, and Inclusivity,” in *Literacy in the Persianate World: Writing and the Social Order*, eds. Brian Spooner and William L. Hanaway (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2012), 71-73.

²⁷ The periodization here and below follows Paul Losensky, *Welcoming Fīghānī: Imitation and Poetic Individuality in the Safavid-Mughal Ghazal* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 1998).

conceived of it as a unity, what we might call a “literary canon.”²⁸ As scholars of Western literature have noted, the importation of the term “canon” from religious usage already introduces problems, insofar as all the Persianate literary communities of pre-20th-century Eurasia, like their European contemporaries, also had religious textual canons for which the principles and practices of conservative transmission and the inclusion or exclusion of particular texts were more consciously articulated.²⁹ But the consolidation of the 15th century had a newly prominent mechanism of codification, as a few prominent instances of a previously existing genre, the *tazkirah*, a combination of biographical dictionary and literary anthology, assembled a set of poetic models that had remarkable staying power in the centuries that followed. This consolidation made possible an atmosphere in the 16th-17th centuries in which some communities of poets developed an unprecedented interest in stylistic, formal, and thematic innovation against the background of sustained engagement with classical literary models.³⁰ From the later 18th through the 19th century, an increasing proportion of Persianate literary production was in local vernacular literary languages. Several literary communities, across the Persianate zone, declaratively rejected the innovations of recent centuries and engaged with earlier literary models in a spirit of *ad fontes*. This shift may have marked the beginning of the

²⁸ William L. Hanaway, “Is There a Canon of Persian Poetry?” *Edebiyât* 4, no. 1 (1993): 3-12; Julia Rubanovich, “Literary Canon and Patterns of Evaluation in Persian Prose on the Eve of the Mongol Invasion,” *Studia Iranica* 32 (2003): 47-76.

²⁹ The Greek word *kanón* was adapted to the common classical Arabic and Persian word *qānūn*, which carries many of the same meanings: a law or law code, a general principle, even a corpus of fundamental knowledge in some instances, as in Ibn Sīnā’s 11th-century *Canon of Medicine* (*al-Qānūn fī al-tibb*). However, as in the medieval Christian context, the word was not used with reference to a body of literature, nor was there any near equivalent. On the uses of the word in Islamic societies, Y. Linant de Bellefonds, C. Cahen, and Halil İnalçik, “*Qānūn*,” *EI*², accessed September 20, 2016, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0439.

³⁰ Rajeev Kinra, “Fresh Words for a Fresh World: Tāza-Gū’ī and the Poetics of Newness in Early Modern Indo-Persian Poetry,” *Sikh Formations: Religion, Culture, Theory* 3, no. 2 (2007), 126.

reification of the Persian canon as a discursive object, but did not entail a decisive break from customary modes of engagement with previous literary models and practices.³¹

A qualitatively different relationship between writers and the Persianate background came with changing media contexts for the production and reception of Persianate poetry from the late 19th century, after the advent of print and, more specifically, the displacement of lithography by Arabic-script movable type.³² The rise of journalistic poetry, cheap printed poetry collections, literary journals, and new forms such as the novel culminated in a transformative cross-border Persianate media event: the revolutions in the Russian, Iranian, and Ottoman Empires between 1905 and 1908. A second shift, between the 1920s and the 1950s, was ultimately deeper in its effect on how poetry and the poetic canon was produced and received in Persian-speaking and Persianate societies: the advent of state systems of education and mass literacy, accompanied by language and sometimes script reforms.³³ Before discussing the significance of these transformations, it is necessary to establish their context in anticolonial and postcolonial Eurasia.

³¹ My account here relies on Kevin Lewis Schwartz, “Bâzgasht-i Adabî (Literary Return) and Persianate Literary Culture in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Iran, India, and Afghanistan” (Ph.D. diss., University of California Berkeley, 2014).

³² Farzin Vejdani, *Making History in Iran: Education, Nationalism, and Print Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015), 11; Adeeb Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan: Nation, Empire, and Revolution in the Early USSR* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015), 182.

³³ Across the Persophone and Persianate sphere, there is variation in the relative importance of the advent of print culture and the establishment of state education and textbooks to reception of the literary canon. In India and the Ottoman Empire, the print revolution had tremendous effects on literature and reading practices, whereas Adeeb Khalid has convincingly argued that in Transoxania, print had quite limited effects until the October Revolution, state publishing, and literacy campaigns. The cases of Iran and Transcaucasia fall between these extremes. Adeeb Khalid, “Printing, Publishing, and Reform in Tsarist Central Asia,” *IJMES* 26, no. 2 (1994): 195–197.

International and Multinational: The Institutional Background

This study follows Lāhūtī through three international systems of writers and texts: leftist anticolonial internationalism, Soviet multinational culture, and the community of modern Persianate writers. Each of these has been overlooked by most accounts of modern world literature,³⁴ but each has recently received good scholarly accounts in its own right.³⁵ The relationship between the international and multinational Soviet cultural spheres has also been the subject of recent studies, primarily focused on the history of networks, institutions, and media.³⁶ These studies have documented the intermediary roles frequently played by writers from Soviet Transcaucasia and Central Asia, that is, the heart of the Soviet domestic “East.” As Masha Kirasirova has observed, “More so than ‘Asia,’ ‘the colonized world,’ individual nations, or any other category inherited from prerevolutionary political geography, it was ‘the East’ that came to

³⁴ Aamir Mufti, discussing the erasure of phenomena such as the Afro-Asian Writers Association and the Lenin Peace Prize from contemporary world literature studies, notes that such studies “give an account of world literature as a concept, practice, or structure of the (Euro-American) bourgeois world, without any reference to these concrete historical alternatives and contestations throughout much of the twentieth century.” Mufti, *Forget English!: Orientalisms and World Literatures* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 93-94.

³⁵ Alexander Jabbari, “Late Persianate Literary Culture: Modernizing Conventions between Persian and Urdu” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Irvine, 2017). On the Soviet international sphere, recent works are more numerous for the West, including Katerina Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931-1941* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011); Anna Vadimovna Bogomolova, “Poniatiie ‘mirovoi literatury’ v sovetskoi kul’ture 30-ykh godov” (M.A. thesis, Natsional’nyi Issledovatel’skii Universitet “Vysshiaia Shkola Ekonomiki,” 2016); For the multinational sphere, the program is set by Kathryn Schild, “Between Moscow and Baku: National Literatures at the 1934 Congress of Soviet Writers (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2010). The international and multinational spheres are combined in Djagalov, “People’s Republic of Letters.”

³⁶ Masha Kirasirova, “The Eastern International: The ‘Domestic East’ and the ‘Foreign East’ in Soviet-Arab Relations, 1917-68” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia, 2014); Djagalov, “People’s Republic of Letters”; Artemy Kalinovsky, *Laboratory of Socialist Development: Cold War Politics and Decolonization in Soviet Tajikistan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018).

be embraced by the early Bolsheviks. A flexible and vague concept, it accommodated both the revolutionary domestic program on the national question and the world struggle for socialism.”³⁷

“The East” also gained currency as a unit of imagined solidarity in the Persianate lands over the course of the Eurasia-wide series of revolutions that followed the Russo-Japanese War of 1905. To this extent, such milestones as Lenin’s 1917 “Appeal to the Muslims of Russia and the East” or the 1920 Baku Congress of the Peoples of the East took their place in a preexisting pan-Asian discourse of awakening the slumbering East.³⁸ Underwriting this broad strategic essentialism were appeals to many more specific points of shared history and culture among subsets of Soviet and non-Soviet national intelligentsias. I argue in this dissertation that the institutions and poetics of Soviet internationalism between the domestic and foreign East were framed in terms of the Persianate cultural legacy, and cannot be understood without reference to it. On the basis of the geographical and linguistic extensification of world literature studies in recent scholarship to include Soviet and Persianate Eurasia, here I undertake a project of intensification, focusing on a single writer within those systems.³⁹ This permits a more textured investigation of these institutions’ poetics: the imaginative world of literary internationalism.

³⁷ Masha Kirasirova, “The ‘East’ as a Category of Bolshevik Ideology and Comintern Administration: The Arab Section of the Communist University of the Toilers of the East,” *Kritika* 18, no. 1 (2017): 8-9.

³⁸ Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

³⁹ Previous sets of literary case studies that build on the assumption of a Soviet anticolonial literary space, and establish the horizon for my own study, include Harsha Ram, “Towards a Crosscultural Poetics of the Contact Zone: Romantic, Modernist and Soviet Intertextualities in Boris Pasternak’s Translations of T’itsian T’abidze,” *Comparative Literature* 59, no. 1 (2007): 63-89; Naomi Caffee, “Russophonia: Towards a Transnational Conception of Russian-Lanugage Literature” (Ph.D. diss., UCLA, 2013); Margaret Litvin, *Hamlet’s Arab Journey: Shakespeare’s Prince and Nasser’s Ghost* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017); Leah Michele Feldman, “On the Threshold of Eurasia: Intersecting Discourses of Empire and Identity in the Russian Empire” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2013).

First, however, it is necessary to establish a general picture of each of these literary spheres, however cursory.

A schematic map of the literary international would include the following subsets, ranged in the Soviet administrative imagination from “West” to “East”:

- 1) leftist writers in Europe and its former settler colonies (the Americas, South Africa, and Oceania), both fellow travelers and Communist Party members
- 2) European and American émigrés and visitors in the Soviet Union or Warsaw Pact
- 3) writers in East European regions under short-lived Soviet occupation or in Soviet satellite states (particularly beginning in 1939)
- 4) East European participants in multinational literature
- 5) Soviet metropolitan literature: literary Moscow and Leningrad, including metropolitan literature in temporary exile (evacuation Tashkent during World War II), on missions of cultural diplomacy, on brigades, and in penal spaces⁴⁰
- 6) Provincial but non-national Soviet literature (including literature composed by non-metropolitan writers of Russian or otherwise unmarked nationality in national republics and in penal spaces)
- 7) Eastern national literatures: the Volga region, Siberia, the North and South Caucasus, Kazakhstan, and Central Asia⁴¹ all present different cases
- 8) Asian and African émigrés and visitors in the Soviet Union or Warsaw Pact
- 9) writers in Soviet-aligned countries in Asia and later Africa, and in non-European regions under short-lived Soviet occupation (Iran, Afghanistan)
- 10) writers in anticolonial and/or leftist movements of Asia and Africa, both fellow travelers and Communist Party members, as well as writers in postcolonial nonaligned countries engaged in cultural diplomacy with the Soviet Union

⁴⁰ This dissertation does not directly address the question of the relationship between publishable Soviet literature and the broad field that has often been referred to as “unofficial literature”: samizdat, tamizdat, religious devotional poetry, etc. It will become clear from the “official” literature that I examine that the line between publishable and unpublishable was at all times ambiguous and porous, and much Soviet literature clustered around it.

⁴¹ In Soviet geography Central Asia (*Sredniaia Aziia*) excludes Kazakhstan.

A writer can be located on this map according to four oppositions: the overarching oppositions Soviet/foreign and Eastern/Western, and, within the category of Soviet writers, metropolitan/provincial and national/unmarked. This last refers to the distinction between “national” (*natsmen*) writers, members of “national minorities” (*natsional’noe men’shinstvo*) who must always be literary representatives, and *unmarked* writers, a set that includes all Russians, many Ukrainians and Jews, and a few writers from Caucasus diasporas.⁴² All unmarked literature is Russophone, but not all Russophone literature is unmarked. Each of these positions might be at times tactically adopted by authors (Lāhūtī successfully escapes the fates of metropolitan foreign writers by becoming a metropolitan national writer), but each might also be forcibly imposed (previously unmarked metropolitan writers are unmasksed as Jews).

This conceptual map places Moscow-Leningrad at the center, but in the functioning of particular institutions or communities of the literary international, the place of Soviet literature varied from centrality to marginality, and sometimes to exclusion. Leftists from the decolonizing world and the West met and collaborated in the colonial and Western metropolitan cities from which Soviet writers were usually excluded by travel restrictions, through cultural institutions of empire (as Peter Kalliney has shown in the case of the British Commonwealth),⁴³ or through liberal internationalist institutions such as International PEN in which Soviet writers did not participate.⁴⁴ The ability of Soviet cultural bureaucrats to take or hold onto the leading role even

⁴² Marietta Shaginian typifies this category. My framing is informed by Erik R. *Familiar Strangers: The Georgian Diaspora and the Evolution of Soviet Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁴³ Peter J. Kalliney, *Commonwealth of Letters: British Literary Culture and the Emergence of Postcolonial Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁴⁴ Beginning with an attempt by Boris Pil’niak in 1923, representatives of PEN and the various Comintern-associated cultural bureaucracies made a series of tentative overtures until the early 1930s, but no agreement was ever reached on either a Soviet PEN branch or a MORP delegation to a PEN congress. Tara Talwar Windsor, “Dichter, Denker, Diplomaten: German Writers and

in the institutions and events that they themselves organized was only ever partial.⁴⁵ Even the most brutal expansions of Soviet control, the establishment of satellite states or regions under Soviet military occupation, brought new centrifugal forces into the literary international that changed its shape. Nonetheless, we may identify six types of institutions that tied together the writers belonging to the categories listed above, to the exclusion of writers belonging to none of them: writers' organizations, educational institutions where writers gathered to take courses, public occasions, presses, periodicals, and more dispersed activities such as petitions and defense funds. Only the history of writers' organizations will be surveyed here, as the other elements will receive more attention in the chapters that follow.

Even if Soviet literature was rarely as central to the literary international as its functionaries claimed, Soviet institutions acted as its strongest centripetal force, just as the Third International (Comintern) did on the political left until its disempowerment in the 1930s and dissolution in 1943. Furthermore, the replication of Soviet institutions such as the “writers’ union” elsewhere constituted an incipient organizational principle in a fractious literary space otherwise defined only by opposition to capitalism and imperialism. Early Soviet cultural diplomacy drew on the political hopes of a political constellation scattered around the world; at first such diplomacy loomed large in the awareness of Bolshevik leaders, insofar as they themselves and their revolution had emerged from this diffuse international space. In 1925, Soviet leaders sought to establish a coordinating organization with some apparent distance from state control, in order to encourage participation by influential public intellectuals abroad who were not completely committed to the Soviet project. The result was the All-Union Society for

Cultural Diplomacy after the First World War (1919-1933)” (Ph.D. diss., University of Birmingham, 2012), 302-304.

⁴⁵ Djagalov, “People’s Republic of Letters,” 20-28.

Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (VOKS), which included a literary section.⁴⁶ The formation of VOKS coincided with the first practical attempt to establish a specifically literary counterpart to the Comintern.⁴⁷ In 1924-25, when the Comintern took steps to establish an International Liaison Bureau of Proletarian Literature (MBPL), they entrusted it to the non-state-run but partisan Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP), but appointed the leading Old Bolshevik advocate of artistic pluralism, Anatolii Lunacharskii, to lead it.⁴⁸ He immediately began cultivating as wide as possible a community of “fellow travelers,” mostly in Western Europe, and in 1927 the first International Congress of Proletarian and Revolutionary Writers was held in Moscow under his chairmanship. After Lunacharskii was removed from his post in 1929, the organization was brought under closer control of RAPP under the new name of the International Association of Revolutionary Writers (MORP), and a second, more ideologically constrained congress was held in 1930 in Kharkiv.⁴⁹ This shift coincided with a similar consolidation of counterparts to RAPP in the national republics within an All-Union Federation of Associations of Proletarian Writers (VOAPP).

Together, VOAPP and MORP for the first time formalized a multi-level system in which national writers’ organizations selected representatives to occupy their national speaking slots at multinational and international meetings. Even a writer without a functioning national

⁴⁶ Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy & Western Visitors to the Soviet Union 1921-1941* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 40-46.

⁴⁷ One precedent was the limited attempt in 1920 to expand the Proletkult movement beyond Russia with an international branch, led by Anatolii Lunacharskii and housed within the Commissariat for Education (Narkompros), but this came shortly before its suppression. Lynn Mally, *Culture of the Future: The Proletkult Movement in Revolutionary Russia* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990), 200-201.

⁴⁸ N.A. Trifonov, “Lunacharskii i MORP,” *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, vol. 81, *Iz istorii Mezhdunarodnogo ob’edinenia revoliutsionnykh pisatelei (MORP)*, eds. A.N. Dubovikov and L.R. Lanskii (Moscow: Nauka, 1969), 32.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 35-37.

organization to represent might sign as “Lāhūtī (Persia),” as we find on a MORP resolution from 1931.⁵⁰ In 1932, VOAPP and all other associations were officially disbanded in favor of a single non-partisan Soviet Writers’ Union which, like VOAPP, was divided into republic and regional-level branches, and MORP was brought under the aegis of the Comintern.⁵¹ As this reorganization deemphasized the relationship between membership and specific ideological orientation (within limits), writers who occupied positions within republic-level Writers’ Unions ceased to represent a literary faction. Instead, they were simply the representatives of their entire (recognized) national literatures. The replacement of the logic of political commitment with the logic of national spokespersonship was further underlined in the ecumenical Popular Front period, when MORP was disbanded and replaced by the International Association of Writers for the Defense of Culture, based in Paris.⁵²

The rhetoric of literary internationalism became ever more hollow from the late 1930s until Stalin’s death, with the murder of most of the Soviet Union’s foreign Communists in the purges (including most Iranians),⁵³ the diplomatic u-turns of 1939-1941, the disbanding of the Comintern in 1943, and the anti-cosmopolitan campaign of 1948-1953. As decolonization gathered speed after the war, Soviet literary connections developed anew through the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee (SKSSAA, 1956-1992); with the Thaw, VOKS was also reorganized (1958) as the Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (SSOD). Relative to their prewar predecessors, these new institutions drew

⁵⁰ “Document: To All Writers of the World,” *Literature of the World Revolution* 1 (1931): 127.

⁵¹ O.V. Egorov, “Mezhdunarodnye organizatsii revoliutsionnykh pisatelei,” in Dubovikov and Lanskii, *Literaturnoe nasledstvo* vol. 81, 22-23.

⁵² Ibid., 23-24.

⁵³ Lana Ravandi-Fadai and T. Atabaki, *Zhertvy vremeni: zhizn’ i sud’ba iranskikh politicheskikh deiatelei i trudovykh migrantov v sovetskem soiuze v mezhdunarodnyi period* (Moscow: Akademiia nauk, 2016).

more extensively on the resources and leadership of the Soviet multinational East. The apparent unimportance of specifically literary organizations in Soviet Cold War cultural diplomacy belies the fact that organizations such as SKSSAA were overwhelmingly artistic in their orientation, helmed and populated by the *literary* representatives of the Soviet Union and postcolonial nations.

Beneath each section of the conceptual map sketched above, we must imagine a second layer: a subsoil of literary classics just as important to the collective imagination of the literary international as the activities of living writers. The writers of the literary international aspired to preserve and bring to the masses the best of every place and time, by contrast with capitalist cultural amnesia and fascist philistinism. A pantheon of dead writers and a library of old texts joined the living at their congresses and in journals, and they, too, were called on to speak for nations and nationalities. The system under examination, therefore, constitutes not only a transnational network of writers and works but a transhistorical canon. Just as the transnational network united distinct social communities of writers (and oral reciters) into a single community (sometimes actual and sometimes only imagined), the transhistorical canon integrated every genre of artistic expression in language from novels to folk songs under the banner of “literature.” Non-Western literature constituted a small proportion of the early Soviet classics both in print and in the school curriculum, just as writers from the decolonizing world were very few in the early literary international. But by the mid-1930s, Soviet prestige series such as *Literaturnye pamyatniki* were translating and publishing classics of Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit, Chinese, and Japanese literature together with European works and major oral epics from across Eurasia. Persian had a special position within this constellation, as the only language to feature simultaneously in the canons of Eastern classics, oral folklore, and, in its Tajik dialect, as a

Soviet national literature. Meanwhile, literary translation was becoming an established profession in every republic, although it frequently took place through intermediary texts. This, in particular, was an unprecedented development. During the early Cold War, the Soviet canon of world classics became more comprehensive than any other such publishing program, at the same time as Soviet presses accelerated their printing and translation of new literature from around the decolonized world.

This expansion of the field of “literature” to encompass a multiplicity of traditions (or judgment of those traditions as literature, according to aesthetic criteria largely derived from Russian and European reading practices) was by no means new or unique to the literary international. As Aamir Mufti has argued, the first articulations of an idea of world literature emerged from the entwinement of philology and European empire in the late 18th and early 19th century.⁵⁴ To date, intellectual and institutional histories have usually followed world literature from European empires through decolonization to the publishing world of global capitalism. Although many recent scholars have looked to the Non-Aligned Movement (1955-) as a site of non-Eurocentric literary community, the role of the Soviet Union and Soviet-aligned institutions has received little attention. And yet it was in the Soviet Union that world literature attained the institutional structure familiar to us today: congresses, prizes, publishing series and journals compiling works in translation, all of them full of writers *identified by nationality*.

Within interwar Europe, the institutionalization of representative bodies of writers was by no means exclusively a communist phenomenon. Beyond the activities of liberal internationalist writers’ organizations such as International PEN, even the fascist nations had their own jubilees

⁵⁴ Mufti, *Forget English!*, 56-98.

and literary congresses at which writers spoke for nations.⁵⁵ Benjamin G. Martin's suggestion that fascist international culture was an institutionalization of *völkisch* Romantic nationalism is also true of the Soviet literary international (regardless of fascist warnings and communist promises of the future dissolution of nations and nationalities).⁵⁶ Both liberal and fascist international cultural organizations began to attract members and establish branches outside of Europe and its settler colonies between the late 1920s and the mid-1930s, but it was the Communist literary international that built cadres of literary representatives there. In this way the literary international extrapolated the Romantic aesthetics of representation, combining it with a mode of international organization and credentialing of representatives derived from the experience of three successive socialist internationals.⁵⁷ Percy Bysshe Shelley's declaration in 1821 that poets were "the unacknowledged legislators of the world" was contemporaneous with the emergence of writers, especially poets, as the widely acknowledged spokespeople of Romantic nationalist movements.⁵⁸ But the convention by which writers speak on behalf of their nations before literary organizations modeled on the representative bodies of the political world entered the decolonizing world through Soviet multinational institutions. By the 1950s, an

⁵⁵ On liberal internationalism in the same period, see Patricia Clavin, "Introduction: Conceptualizing Internationalism Between the World Wars," in *Internationalism Reconfigured: Transnational Ideas and Movements Between the Wars*, ed. Daniel Laqua (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 1-14; on the early history of International PEN, Rachel Potter, "Modernist Rights: International PEN 1921-1936," *Critical Quarterly* 55, no. 2 (2013): 66-80.

⁵⁶ Benjamin G. Martin, *The Nazi-Fascist New Order for European Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

⁵⁷ Moira Donald, "Workers of the World Unite? Exploring the Enigma of the Second International," in *The Mechanics of Internationalism*, eds. Martin H. Geyer and Johannes Paulmann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 188-203, and on credentialing of representatives, 181-182.

⁵⁸ Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry," in *The Major Works*, eds. Zachary Leader and Michael O'Neill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 701; for a survey of this process see David Aberbach, ed., *National Poetry, Empires and War* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

increasing number of leading politicians in the Soviet East and the decolonizing world were writers who ascended to political power through cultural bureaucracies.

This shift took place within what Terry Martin has called the Soviet “affirmative action empire,” a state in which the symbolic importance of representation in cultural politics underwrote a policy of inclusion, at the same time as the Soviet order constrained the political representation of Eastern republics.⁵⁹ It was precisely the legacy of Russian imperial rule and the ongoing quasi-imperial situation that permitted the Soviet cultural bureaucracy to produce an aesthetics of representation, drawing on a large corps of trained orientalists, translators, and cultural intermediaries.

Although non-Russophone Soviet literature has been little studied, Soviet nationalities policy became a central topic in Western scholarship as the Soviet Union collapsed. Pushing against the Cold War image of the Soviet Union as a “prison of nations,” a series of books and articles analyzed the process by which Soviet policy had created or reified these categories and identities that outlived the Soviet Union.⁶⁰ Subsequent scholars have complicated this top-down model, showing how Soviet national boundaries and identities were shaped by local elites in pursuit of their own goals.⁶¹ It is clear that in the Stalin period, multinational culture played a compensatory symbolic role in the absence of political or economic sovereignty for the national

⁵⁹ Terry Dean Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

⁶⁰ Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Yuri Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994); Slezkine, “The USSR as Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,” *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (1994): 414-452; Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*.

⁶¹ Serhy Yekelchyk, *Stalin’s Empire of Memory: Russian-Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imagination* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge & the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005); Adrienne Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Roberts, “Old Elites”; Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*.

republics. In fact, this observation is in keeping with the official position. Stalin frequently described the “maximal development of national culture” as a sort of indulgent permissiveness, compatible with complete integration in all other spheres and concluding only when the national culture “exhausts itself completely,” making way for “an international socialist culture not only in content, but also in form.”⁶² But as historians working in local archives have often found, Moscow’s claims about its own power should be regarded with some suspicion, and this is nowhere more true than in the sphere of cultural policy. Literary bureaucrats in Moscow were consumed with anxiety about inadequate local sources of information and the dangers of ideological heresy transmitted by mistranslation, particularly before state education produced mass Russophonia in the national republics after World War II. State repressive measures, including the deportations and executions of the Terror, were usually indiscriminate and difficult for local writers to interpret.

Another kind of top-down intervention was more transformative in the long term. Official discourses surrounding “culture” and “literature” introduced fundamentally new terms of evaluation in the cultural sphere to communities with long, rich traditions in the verbal arts.⁶³ These were accompanied by a transformation of the rules of the game of cultural capital, permitting class mobility to some artists, but in many cultural zones introducing new stratifications and chauvinisms to the literary field. The writer was elevated to the status of

⁶² Trans. Marian Schwartz in Katerina Clark and Evgeny Dobrenko, eds., *Soviet Culture and Power: A History in Documents, 1917-1953* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 62; translation modified with ref. to original in Andrei Artizov and Oleg Naumov, eds., *Vlast’ i khudozhestvennaya intelligentsiya: dokumenty TsK RKP(b), VchK-OGPU-NKVD o kul’turnoi politike, 1917-1953 gg.* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyi fond “Demokratiia,” 1999), 102.

⁶³ Bruce Grant, *In the Soviet House of Culture: A Century of Perestroikas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Laura L. Adams, “What is Culture? Schemas and Spectacles in Uzbekistan,” *Anthropology of East Europe Review* 16, no. 2 (1998): 65-71; Ali Igmen, *Speaking Soviet with an Accent: Culture and Power in Kyrgyzstan* (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012).

official culture worker, who could measure success in new ways: prizes, publishing runs, or access to apartments and scarce goods.⁶⁴ This process, the redefinition of the cultural field and the elevation of new models, was most radically transformative when it was accompanied by a drastic shift in the media of verbal art, that is, in communities whose verbal culture was primarily or entirely oral. In these zones of maximum instability, Russians and cultural intermediaries often engaged in particularly drastic mistranslation and even forgery, a practice that Anglophone scholars have termed “fakelore.”⁶⁵ At times, in taking such concoctions as prototypical of the Stalinist national literatures generally, scholars have replicated the top-down view of Soviet culture. But as we will see, not only Lāhūtī but many of the most visible Soviet national writers were not Russian inventions-in-translation. Rather, they wrote for opinionated communities of readers in their own languages, while trying to control their works’ translation through institutional channels.⁶⁶

Throughout the Soviet period, there were stark differences between Soviet writers and their international leftist counterparts, although they shared a commitment to the project that Akira Iriye has called “cultural internationalism.”⁶⁷ From the perspective of the Soviet state apparatus, the literary cadres of the “two Easts” were to serve completely different goals, which Stalin delineated in a famous 1925 speech at KUTV: in the domestic East, the development of

⁶⁴ Kathryn Schild draws on Pierre Bourdieu’s work to model the functioning of different kinds of symbolic capital in “the cultural field of Soviet literature”: Schild, “Between Moscow and Baku,” 20-30.

⁶⁵ Margaret Ziolkowski, *Soviet Heroic Poetry in Context: Folklore or Fakelore* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013).

⁶⁶ This dynamic is shown clearly in Diana T. Kudaibergenova, *Rewriting the Nation in Modern Kazakh Literature: Elites and Narratives* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017).

⁶⁷ Akira Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

national cultures, in the foreign East, propagandizing revolution.⁶⁸ But this differentiation of function does not account for the gap in mentality between the two sets of writers, who often spoke past each other in their encounters. For committed writers of the colonial East, the Soviet project was less important as an actuality than as a political and imaginative counterweight. As a heterotopia, it allowed them to imagine and argue for other possible arrangements in their own regions, and as a state power, it might help to achieve them. Its internal polemics and aesthetic criteria were often incomprehensible to them. It is more difficult to speak of the political commitments of Soviet Eastern writers, given the narrow ideological field within which they operated. For them, the foreign East was the control group against which they measured their experiment's progress. As a heterotopia, it was a space whose dynamics of violent oppression and cultural hegemony were legible and speakable, by contrast with similar dynamics at home. Here, too, Lāhūtī occupies an ambiguous middle ground between the categories of multinational and international.

This blurriness is not atypical for an Eastern writer of the international. Much of the time, the making of the literary international entailed an attempted cooptation of already existing or independently developing institutions, networks, and imagined communities. In the Soviet domestic and foreign East, as in Europe and America, the networks forged in previous labor unions, political parties, periodicals, or publishing houses provided part of the scaffolding for official institutions. But a cultural bureaucrat might also fill a vacancy with a reform-minded former classmate from madrasa, or a poet who had participated in the same informal recitation

⁶⁸ Stalin does not specifically address literature in the speech, which is concerned with cadres of all kinds. The only soft-line cultural program provided for domestic Easterners involves “the development of a national culture,” whereas soft-line tasks in the foreign East are concerned with swaying public opinion against bourgeois nationalism, as well as other communicative goals. “Tov. Stalin o politicheskikh zadachakh universiteta narodov Vostoka: rech’ na sobranii studentov KUTV 18 maia 1925 goda,” *Pravda*, May 22, 1925, pp. 2-3.

gatherings. With these existing networks, the literary international also absorbed an existing conversation about literary reform. When such cultural workers met with colleagues from other Eastern republics or anticolonial movements, their attempts to develop an aesthetic-political program circled around one central question: if writers were to serve the goals of emancipation and modernization, how should they position their literary practice in relation to the Persianate literary tradition?

Scholars of Middle Eastern and South Asian literature have elucidated the emergence of “literature” [*adabīyāt* in several languages] as an analytic and operational category, accompanied by new approaches to canonicity, literary history, and language.⁶⁹ These studies have begun to coalesce into a comparative and transnational perspective on Persianate literary modernity, particularly in works that draw together Iran and India.⁷⁰ Comparison brings into focus the importance of language and script reform to Persianate literary modernity, especially with the

⁶⁹ Frances W. Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and its Critics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Karimi-Hakkak, *Recasting Persian Poetry*, 23-59; Wali Ahmadi, “The Institution of Persian Literature and the Genealogy of Bahar’s ‘Stylistics,’” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 31, no. 2 (2004): 141-152. On conceptions of canonicity, previous studies include Shaahin Pishbin, “Forough Farrokhzad and the Persian Literary Canon,” *Iran Namag* 1, no. 4 (2017): 24-51; Alexander Jabbari, “The Making of Modernity in Persianate Literary History,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 36, no. 3 (2016): 418-434. The Arab case of *adab/adabīyāt* shares many features: Michael Allan, *In the Shadow of World Literature: Sites of Reading in Colonial Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

⁷⁰ For studies drawing together Iran and India, Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism and Historiography* (Hounds mills, UK: Palgrave, 2001); Afshin Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran: Culture, Power, and the State, 1870-1940* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008); Jabbari, “Late Persianate Literary Culture.” On Perso-Arabic connections, Kamran Rastegar, *Literary Modernity between the Middle East and Europe: Textual Transactions in Nineteenth-Century Arabic, English, and Persian Literatures* (London: Routledge, 2007). On the relationship between Iranian and Afghan literary modernity, Aria Fani, “Institutionalizing Persian Literature: Sites of Power and Literary Production in Twentieth-century Iran and Afghanistan 1860-1960” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, expected 2019).

addition of the former Ottoman regions to the unit of analysis.⁷¹ For nationalist culture workers, the process of vernacularization, script reform, and nationalization of literary history was a parting of ways for literary traditions that had previously been inextricably intertwined; the literary international spelled an end to the Persianate cosmopolis.⁷²

The incorporation of Soviet Transcaucasia and Central Asia into comparative Persianate modernity confirms many of these insights. At the same time, Soviet Eastern internationalism complicates the narrative of post-Persianate divergence. When Soviet and non-Soviet writers from these regions gestured toward a common ground of cultural diplomacy between the 1930s and the 1960s, they did so with quotes and allusions drawn from Persian literature, drawing on older modes of Persianate sociability.⁷³ Simultaneously, these writers were building national education systems that dismantled the writing and recitation practices that had permitted the cultivation of such sociability.⁷⁴ They stood on the cusp between the world of their grandparents, who read and wrote in Persian and Arabic and likely spoke multiple languages within a regional sprachbund, and their grandchildren, many of whom were monolingual in a national language,

⁷¹ Nergis Ertürk, *Grammatology and Literary Modernity in Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); for a comparative view, John R. Perry, “Language Reform in Turkey and Iran,” *IJMES* 17, no. 3 (1985): 295-311; Perry, “Comparative Perspectives on Language Planning in Iran and Tajikistan,” in *Language and Society in the Middle East and North Africa: Studies in Variation and Identity*, ed. Yasir Suleiman (London: Curzon, 1999), 154-74. An in-depth study of the Turkish language reform is Geoffrey Lewis, *The Turkish Language Reform: A Catastrophic Success* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁷² Mana Kia and Afshin Marashi have summarized and complicated this narrative in their introduction to a recent article cluster: “After the Persianate,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 36, no. 3 (2016): 379-383; see also the articles that follow.

⁷³ Hamid Dabashi makes a similar argument, although the role of the Soviet subset of the Persianate world is not at the center of his account: “As the Orientalists were busy casting Persian literary humanism in ethnic nationalist terms, Iranian poets and literati were busy recasting themselves in a renewed cosmopolitanism, on the dominant map of the world.” Dabashi, *Persian Literary Humanism*, 264.

⁷⁴ A useful account of the retraining of Persianate writers is Ingeborg Baldauf, “Educating the Poets and Fostering Uzbek Poetry of the 1910s to Early 1930s,” *Cahiers d’Asie centrale* 24 (2015): 183-212.

with the possible addition of a European language. At the same time, Soviet rhetorical use of this cultural commons as a counterweight to national sentiment lent it a new conceptual weight. Over the course of the 1930s, as part of a Soviet turn toward a discourse of world civilizations, a conceptual category of shared Persianate heritage came into being, albeit without the coherence of a stable name.⁷⁵

For the nationalist elites of modernization-oriented states such as Kemalist Turkey, Pahlavi Iran, and later India and Pakistan, the Persianate legacy bore an uncertain relationship to the new national cultures that they were trying to build. But between the 1930s and the 1960s, they drew on Soviet models not only in the sphere of economic planning, but also in cultural policy. Meanwhile, Soviet culture presented an alternative to European imperialist modernity for writers and writers' organizations in these countries that had more ambivalent relationships to their national governments. These developments gave the literary international an outsized role in the making of national literatures throughout the Persianate cosmopolis. The international also became a home for canonic and contemporary texts and writers left "homeless," in Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi's formulation, by the establishment of nations and national literatures.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ This was not an isolated phenomenon of Soviet cultural politics, but a reflection of and a contribution to midcentury civilizations discourse that was developing simultaneously in the West. Hodgson's coinage of the term "Persianate" in the 1970s, while building a course on the history of the Muslim world for one of a series of civilizational course sequences at the University of Chicago, was the product of a genealogically related approach to the history of cultures. Johann P. Arnason, "Marshall Hodgson's Civilizational Analysis of Islam: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives," *Yearbook of the Sociology of Islam* 7 (2006): 23-47.

⁷⁶ Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran*, 9. Here, I draw on the argument of Sean Pue, *I Too Have Some Dreams: N.M. Rashed and Modernism in Urdu Poetry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

The Literary International in Comparative Perspective

As the Persianate perspective confirms, the Soviet-led literary international in many respects resembled any other colonial or decolonizing literary space. After all, critics of internationalism have suggested, the cosmopolitan “nostalgia for multinational co-existence and co-citizenship” may practically amount to nostalgia for empires.⁷⁷ In this case study of Lāhūtī, I will explore the ways that the Soviet system replicated, paralleled, or prefigured other versions of institutionalized world literature, and thus the persistence of various forms of hegemony in the second world. In doing so, I will draw on an extensive scholarly literature debating the usefulness of the imperial analogy for studies of the Soviet East.⁷⁸ The Soviet utopian aspiration to universal culture often resembled the chauvinistic universalism and missionary zeal of European empires, as in the case of the concept of “literature.” Post- or neo-imperial transnational structures such as the British Commonwealth suggest another useful model, insofar as the literary international was structurally underwritten by the consolidation of cultural institutions in a former imperial capital and the creation of a multinational intelligentsia united

⁷⁷ This position is summarized by Ronald Beiner, “1989: Nationalism, Internationalism, and the Nairn-Hobsbawm Debate,” *European Journal of Sociology* 40, no. 1 (1999): 178.

⁷⁸ Landmarks include A. Khalid, “Russian History and the Debate over Orientalism,” *Kritika* 1, no. 4 (2000): 691-699; Nathaniel Knight, “On Russian Orientalism: A Response to Adeeb Khalid,” *Kritika* 1, no. 4 (2000): 701-715; Maria Todorova, “Does Russian Orientalism Have a Russian Soul? A Contribution to the Debate between Nathaniel Knight and Adeeb Khalid,” *Kritika* 1, no. 4 (2000): 717-727; David Chioni Moore, “Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique,” *PMLA* 116, no. 1 (2001): 111-128; Stephen Collier, Alex Cooley, et. al., “Empire, Union, Center, Satellite: The Place of Post-Colonial Theory in Slavic/Central and Eastern European/(Post-)Soviet Studies: A Questionnaire,” *Urbandus Review* 7 (2003): 5-25 and the articles that follow; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Nancy Condee, et. al., “Are We Postcolonial? Post-Soviet Space,” *PMLA* 121, no. 3 (2006): 828-836. A recent synthesis that particularly informed my approach is Alfrid Bustanov, *Soviet Orientalism and the Creation of Central Asian Nations* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2015).

by a common tongue and discursive system.⁷⁹ The politics of Soviet multinational literature also confirm Adeeb Khalid's suggestion that in its internal dynamics, Soviet Central Asia is best compared to contemporaneous mass mobilization states such as Turkey and Iran.⁸⁰ As Artemy Kalinovsky has argued, a diachronic perspective reveals more colonial dynamics in the pre-Thaw Soviet East, and a Soviet effort at internal decolonization contemporaneous with independence movements in the Third World from the late 1950s through the late 1960s.⁸¹ But the nationalization of Soviet cultural institutions, whether before or after the Thaw, is idiosyncratic in comparative postcolonial perspective. The Soviet republics, as nations given every national institution but those that would permit national sovereignty, elevated the "modularity" of institutions, in Benedict Anderson's sense, to the level of a principle.⁸² That is, they were constructed as isomorphic entities with exchangeable parts—and often established by the same officials transferred from republic to republic. They were also fractal, containing minority nationality autonomous regions with institutions of their own. In literature, this intentional modularity reinforced the assumption of comparability, perhaps the most important prerequisite

⁷⁹ Raymond Williams, "Metropolitan Perceptions and the Emergence of Modernism," in *Unreal City: Urban Experience in Modern European Literature and Art*, eds. Edward Timms and David Kelley (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 13-24. In fact, Léopold Sédar Senghor took up a similar analogy with a positive valuation in his 1946 proposal that the French colonial empire should be replaced not by independent nations, but by "an equal Union of French Socialist Republics," in order to "create a new civilization whose center will be Paris, a new humanism at the scale of the universe and at the same time at the scale of man." *Liberté II: Nation et voie africaine du socialisme* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1971), 25. This proposal is discussed in Gary Wilder, *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 133-166.

⁸⁰ Adeeb Khalid, "Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization: Early Soviet Central Asia in Comparative Perspective," *Slavic Review* 65, no. 2 (2006): 231-251. At a different scale, Moscow's bid to lead the decolonizing world during the early Cold War was based on the claim that the Soviet Union as a whole was a successful developing nation, *primus inter pares*.

⁸¹ Artemy M. Kalinovsky, "Not Some British Colony in Africa: The Politics of Decolonization and Modernization in Soviet Central Asia, 1955-1964," *Ab Imperio* 2 (2013): 191-222.

⁸² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. and extended ed. (London, New York: Verso, 1991), 4.

for world literature.⁸³ Each of these analogies recurs in this study, but the inadequacy of any one of them alone reconfirms the uniqueness of the literary international.

A third analogy paradoxically underlines this uniqueness. In the 1930s, the Soviet multinational literary system prefigured in miniature the postcolonial marketplace of world literature that the literary international would subsequently create during decolonization. To adopt a model as bound to global capitalism as the marketplace may seem perverse. In major studies of world literature by scholars such as Pascale Casanova and Franco Moretti, much has been made of the logic of the marketplace in modeling dynamics between literary languages and writers: languages or national literatures accumulate cultural capital, their stock rises and falls, and so on. In such descriptions, the market is somewhere between mechanism and metaphor.⁸⁴ Emily Apter has deplored the role of property as both law and metaphor in the world literary marketplace, proposing instead that we understand world literature “as an experiment in national sublation that signs itself as collective, terrestrial property.”⁸⁵

This dissertation’s explorations in the command economy of the Soviet translation system find many of the same distortive and disfiguring pressures that critics have previously attributed to the market, alongside important differences, both hopeful and dispiriting. The legal framework of literature as property never entirely disappeared in the Soviet Union, and neither did attendant metaphors of ownership or inheritance. Conversely, collective property features in

⁸³ Zhang Longxi, *From Comparison to World Literature* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2015).

⁸⁴ Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M.B. DeBevoise (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 12-17; Franco Moretti, “The End of the Beginning: A Reply to Christopher Prendergast,” *New Left Review* 41 (2006): 75-77; Casanova’s model of the market of “literary capital” is an adaptation of Bourdieu’s “cultural capital.” For a practical view of market mechanisms in contemporary world literature, see Andrew F. Jones, “Chinese Literature in the ‘World’ Literary Economy,” *Modern Chinese Literature* 8, no. 1/2 (1994): 171-190.

⁸⁵ Emily Apter, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (London: Verso, 2013), 15.

Soviet and capitalist world literature alike, by way of the persistent discourse of literary heritage, national and terrestrial. A reading of a single writer's account books will give concrete instantiation to this economy of abstractions, in a series of poetic currency exchanges, inheritance contestations, and gifts.

The Transnational Poetics of Political Representation

Soviet texts about culture often seem to track the progress of non-European nationalities and nations by their mastery of the realist novel. That form was often identified as the appropriate literary instrument for national self-knowledge and the allegorical emplotment of historical development, so that a writer produced the nation's "first novel" as an intentional reenactment of a necessary stage. It is thus unsurprising that Fredric Jameson focused on prose and plots in the article that laid out his general theory of "third-world literature" as national allegory.⁸⁶ If third-world novels might be discovered to be a parade of allegories of nations, second-world novels were manifestly and intentionally so, on the basis of the more general principle of modularity. Just as socialist realist novels emplotted the development of the nation according to recognizable universal stages, the advance of the realist novel through the second and third world could be understood in terms of uneven development and diffusion. Socialist realist prose owed much to Russian writers' engagement with peripheral writers and

⁸⁶ Fredric Jameson, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," *Social Text* 15 (1986): 65-88. The response that has most informed my approach to the relationship between the politics of the nation and "the global culture of socialism" is Aijaz Ahmad, "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory,'" *Social Text* 17 (1987): 3-25.

landscapes,⁸⁷ but until the late Soviet period, the most important models for novelistic practice in multinational literature were nearly all Russian.

Socialist realist verse is at once more minor and far more ubiquitous, sprinkled through newspapers, films, and other visual media, excerpted on banners and in chants at demonstrations. In my decision to put poetry, especially short poetic forms, at the center of the literary international, I follow on the “transnational poetics” proposed by Jahan Ramazani, who has shown how poetic forms leap unpredictably through multilingual space.⁸⁸ Much of what is difficult to understand about Stalinist literature for today’s Russian intelligentsia reader—the successes of forms of official poetry that seem absurd and tasteless in Russian, for example—can only be understood as a multilingual and multi-tradition phenomenon. As “Soviet poetry” rapidly absorbed a variety of verbal arts with their conventions and traditions of reader- and listener-response, texts were drawn into unexpected and often incongruous uses, comparisons, and intertextualities that invite philological and generic investigation. In particular, the prominence of lyric poetry in the ceremonial culture of the Soviet Union and the literary international owes much to the Persianate literary tradition. As Laura Adams reminds us, “Soviet culture producers adopted international cultural forms as a means of symbolic communication with an often

⁸⁷ On peripheral dynamics of socialist realist prose, Schild, “Between Moscow and Baku”; Thomas Lahusen, *How Life Writes the Book: Real Socialism and Socialist Realism in Stalin’s Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); on similar dynamics in film, Emma Widdis, *Visions of a New Land: Soviet Film from the Revolution to the Second World War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003).

⁸⁸ Jahan Ramazani, *A Transnational Poetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015). Transnational poetics is concerned with the transnational imaginative geography of poetry and its relationship to transnational travel, networks, and economic and political dynamics. Another transnational poetics study that shaped my approach to performance of nationality is Matthew Hart, *Nations of Nothing But Poetry: Modernism, Transnationalism, and Synthetic Vernacular Writing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

imagined, and sometimes real, audience beyond their local communities.”⁸⁹ But Lāhūtī’s generation of Persianate poets attempted such symbolic communication both in European “international” cultural forms and in Persianate cultural forms with a longer history of cosmopolitan reach.

To say that a literary work was written for translation is rarely a compliment, especially in poetry; poetry is not expected to “travel well.” But as Steven S. Lee has shown, the celebration of multiethnic Babel was part of Soviet universalism from the beginning;⁹⁰ so was the hope that linguistic boundaries might eventually dissolve. In the literary international, some poets made an ethic of writing for translation, although readers then and now might judge that their works failed to travel across space or time.⁹¹ Lāhūtī anticipated his works’ translation and experimented with Tajik dialect poetry. He also wrote toward multiple publics, and his degree of sensitivity to the generic expectations of his target audiences varied. He wrote some poems that failed to impress either Persophone or Russophone readers. But in those poems that do not succeed on the terms that they set, we can observe the destabilizing effect on works or genres when the expected reading context is pulled out from under them.⁹² In more successful ones, we can see the outlines

⁸⁹ Laura Adams, “Globalization, Universalism, and Cultural Form,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50, no. 3 (2009): 615.

⁹⁰ Steven S. Lee, *The Ethnic Avant-Garde: Minority Cultures and World Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

⁹¹ This position is argued by the editors of *n+1*, who regret that “When it came to an audience, the reach of the international left considerably exceeded its grasp [...] Like international socialism, a truly internationalist literature has so far enjoyed hardly a moment of historical realization.” In their accounting, modernist poems obscure in their time “continue to live, while the works of such contemporary world-spanning giants as Malraux and Gide slowly fade to oblivion. Which goes to show that ‘world literature’ is like happiness: you might possibly achieve it, but not by aiming to.” “World Lite: What is Global Literature?,” *n+1* 17 (2013), accessed July 2, 2017, <https://nplusonemag.com/issue-17/the-intellectual-situation/world-lite>.

⁹² Comparable studies of the reframing of Persianate genres through the reframing of the verbal arts in the colonial and Soviet period are Ingeborg Baldauf, “A Late Piece of Nazira or a Symbol Making Its Way through Early Uzbek Poetry,” in *Cultural Change and Continuity in Central*

of a poetics that is not only transnational, but internationalist, explicitly reaching out for translation and transculturation.

Scholars of transnational modernism have often emphasized metropolitan and peripheral writers' shared aspiration to aesthetic autonomy from the immediate demands of nationalism and national politics.⁹³ Autonomy of one kind often meant constraints of another kind, and few today would describe Lāhūtī's working conditions as he did in a 1934 article printed in translation in *Literature of the Peoples of the USSR*. As a member of the working class, born to a shopless artisan, he writes, "I submit as freely and as naturally to [that class's] will as any limb of the body obeys the commands of the brain [...] This joyful sensation is the sensation of real personal freedom."⁹⁴ Jessica Berman's work has productively explored the relationship between formal innovation and committed engagement in the works of modernist writers, but many works from the literary international were written beyond the bounds of commitment as conceived by Western theorists.⁹⁵ I extend postcolonial critics' consideration of transnational literature of commitment into the poetics of the collective and the institution, as they developed in the works of Lāhūtī and his contemporaries between the writing desk, the meeting table, and the podium.

At the center of those poetics is the lyric "I" as the voice of political representation—what Jameson describes as a "very different ratio of the political to the personal," but might

⁹³ Asia, ed. Shirin Akiner (London: Kegan Paul International, 1991), 29-44; Harsha Ram, "The Sonnet and the Mukhambasi: Genre Wars on the Edges of the Russian Empire," *PMLA* 122:5 (2007): 1548-1570.

⁹⁴ Casanova, *World Republic of Letters*, 86; Kalliney, *Commonwealth of Letters*, 5-10; in the case of Persianate literary modernity, cf. Wali Ahmadi, *Modern Persian Literature in Afghanistan: Anomalous Visions of History and Form* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

⁹⁵ I quote the English edition: G[asem—sic]. Lakhuti, [untitled], *Literature of the Peoples of the USSR* 7-8 (1934): 109.

⁹⁵ Jessica Berman, *Modernist Commitments: Ethics, Politics, and Transnational Modernism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

better be understood as the intentional political instrumentalization of the literary persona.⁹⁶ This was not a Soviet innovation—the political relationship between the lyric voice and “the people” has played a role in Western poetics and literary criticism since the Romantic poets.⁹⁷ The conjoined development of Romantic nationalism and the poetics of representation in the 19th century established some of the central terms for the Soviet program of literary representation. Political representation was by no means an innovation of democratic or national politics—representatives of variously defined communities have played important roles in the legitimization and functioning of every kind of monarchy, for example—but it was Romantic thinkers such as Edmund Burke who linked national democratic politics to what F.R. Ankersmit refers to as “the aesthetic theory of representation.”⁹⁸ By this process, he argues, the earlier mimetic theory of representation, according to which a representative should resemble those represented and a representative body should be a microcosm of the population, gave way to a representative politics of replacement, in which the representative stands in for those who are represented.⁹⁹ Beginning with the Romantic episode, in Central and East European literature the lyric voice has often spoken on behalf of ethno-linguistic collectivities, and in the process helped to constitute those collectivities.¹⁰⁰ The institution of the national poet became a modular feature of official and rebel nationalisms quite early in the history of nationalism. In Soviet nationalities policy, it

⁹⁶ Jameson, “Third World Literature,” 69.

⁹⁷ Ashton Nichols, *The Revolutionary ‘I’: Wordsworth and the Politics of Self-Presentation* (Hounds Mills, UK: Macmillan, 1998), 29-55.

⁹⁸ F.R. Ankersmit, *Aesthetic Politics: Political Philosophy Beyond Fact and Value* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 28-29.

⁹⁹ The idea is elaborated in F.R. Ankersmit, *Political Representation* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 107-112. There, the mimetic and aesthetic theories of representation that he had previously contrasted are referred to as the resemblance and replacement theories of representation.

¹⁰⁰ David L. Cooper, *Creating the Nation: Identity and Aesthetics in Early Nineteenth-Century Russia and Bohemia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010).

was raised to the level of a principle that nations should be modularly constructed, with more or less analogous institutions, including literary institutions.¹⁰¹ Lāhūtī instantiated this principle as a national poet, although as a national poet who represented multiple nations, he should complicate our understanding of it.

The critique of politics of representation, and in particular of the intellectual's claim to speak on behalf of the people, runs deep in contemporary social theory.¹⁰² Thinkers such as Judith Butler and Gayatri Spivak have argued that even in emancipatory programs attempting to replace hegemonic representation of the other with self-representation, the very framework of representation may still entail acceptance of the terms set by the hegemonic public culture.¹⁰³ Anxieties about false representation pervaded the polemics of the literary international, often based on questions of the representative's authentic resemblance to the national masses. As Rossen Djagalov has pointed out, the postcolonial writer, like the Soviet writer, faced a new crisis of role that had been summed up in the 1920s by Boris Eikhenbaum: "The question of

¹⁰¹ Stalin's insistence in innumerable speeches from before the revolution until his death that models should not be "mechanically" replicated without regard for "local conditions" confirms that modularity was the default for institutions of the Soviet multinational state.

¹⁰² Cf. Michel Foucault's assertion, in a 1972 conversation with Gilles Deleuze, that "the intellectual discovered [in 1968] that the masses no longer need him to gain knowledge [...] and they are certainly capable of expressing themselves [...] The intellectual's role is no longer to place himself 'somewhat ahead and to the side' in order to express the stifled truth of the collectivity [...]" "Intellectuals and Power," in Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. D.F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 207-208. The problem is surveyed in Dick Pels, *The Intellectual as Stranger: Studies in Spokespersonship* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

¹⁰³ Cf. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 2-8; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," revised ed., in *Can the Subaltern Speak?: Reflections on the History of an Idea*, ed. Rosalind C. Morris (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 21-78.

‘how to write’ has been replaced or at least complicated by another question, ‘how to be a writer.’”¹⁰⁴

As Soviet Easterners attempted to seize from Moscow politicians and Russophone writers control of mimetic representation of the East in its socialist development, as well as the right to speak on its behalf, problems of aesthetic and political representation were particularly closely intermixed.¹⁰⁵ Soviet Eastern writers’ answer to the question of “how to be a writer,” their transformation of the resources of European orientalism and Romantic nationalism into a poetics of political self-representation, is a forgotten middle term between European and decolonized literatures. The transformation of an emancipatory program into another form of quasi-colonial hegemony in the Soviet East was a failure of strategy in the formulation of state nationalities policy, but Eastern writers’ efforts to give the Eastern masses symbolic representation within the Soviet project took place at the level of tactics, in language, as they worked out how to be literary representatives.

The resources for their performances came from specific generic conventions, and so this study pays close attention to the workings of Persian meter, rhyme, and other formal considerations, as well as the classical Persian intertexts of Soviet texts. Through Lāhūtī and his contemporaries, classical Persian genres and rhetorical devices entered the public culture of modern statism and internationalism, carrying with them elements from the *longue durée* culture

¹⁰⁴ Boris Eikhenbaum, “Literary Environment,” in *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views*, ed. Ladislaw Matejka and Krystyna Pomorska (Cambridge, MA: MIT University Press, 1971), 58; qtd. in Djagalov, “People’s Republic of Letters,” 100.

¹⁰⁵ Particularly appropriate here is Edward Said’s pun between the aesthetic and political meanings of representation in the epigraph to *Orientalism* from Marx’s “Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon”: Marx writes of the small-holding peasants that in French politics, “They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented.” In Said’s recontextualization, it becomes a verdict on Western depictions of the East. Said, *Orientalism*, 25th anniversary ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), xiii.

and discourse of the Eurasian state.¹⁰⁶ Few Soviet Eastern writers and few Iranian writers of Lāhūtī’s generation had such a keen sense for the tactical deployment of classical rhetoric in service of immediate goals: to defend a friend, or to intervene in a literary polemic. This was in accordance with his early, traditionally Persianate training in applied poetics. His all-consuming care for the tactical demands of the particular occasion had long-term costs. The end of the Stalinist cult of personality, the decimation of the Iranian left after the Islamic Revolution, and the collapse of the Soviet Union all diminished and tarnished his literary reputation even among those best equipped to appreciate his poetic accomplishments. But his gift for the tactical and the rhetorical also makes his life in letters an especially instructive case study in the poetics of representation in the world-literary field.

Organization

Before describing the specific research program of each chapter, I will briefly sketch the argumentative shape of the dissertation: Chapter 1 establishes a general conception of what a literary representative is and does. Chapter 2 recounts Persianate writers’ attempts to seize control of the meanings of the classical Persian texts that had previously functioned as their representatives to the West, while Chapter 3 describes those writers’ success in that venture, through the institutionalization of national literary canons. Chapter 4 shows how the writers deployed their mastery of classical genres to replace classical texts as the authorized representatives of the nation, and Chapter 5 traces what happened to these texts—both classical

¹⁰⁶ Ilya Kliger and Boris Maslov, “Introducing Historical Poetics: History, Experience, Form,” in *Persistent Forms: Explorations in Historical Poetics*, eds. Kliger, Maslov, and Eric Hayot (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 3-10.

and newly produced by literary representatives—when they entered the space of international representation by means of translation.

Chapter 1 introduces the dissertation’s central type, the literary representative, and provides a genealogy for the descent of this professional literary post from the more informal Romantic institution of the “national poet.” By following Lāhūtī’s development of a program of literary representation through his pre-Soviet and early Soviet career, the chapter suggests other components that contributed to the professionalization of literary representation. These include the Leninist “professional revolutionary,” but also vernacular models for literary and political representation. Thus, the chapter examines Lāhūtī’s early experiment in courtly panegyric and his participation in Iranian Constitutional debates about political representation, including the manifestos that he penned during his brief seizure of control of the city of Tabriz in 1921. It then considers the role of Romantic literature and politics in the transformation of his conception of the revolutionary vanguard during his time at KUTV, and his subsequent work as a surrogate representative for Central Asia in the later 1920s. The chapter closes with a consideration of what I refer to as “representation-work,” the process of constant public negotiation in which the literary representative’s autobiographical narrative and lyric voice are formed and contested.

The four subsequent chapters show how the functions of the literary representative developed, through canon formation (2-3), ceremonial acts of literary representation (4), and translation practices (5). Chapter 2 argues that canon-building projects in the Soviet East emerged from the tactics and concerns of Persianate modernizers in Constitution-era Iran and the late Ottoman Empire. It argues that the emergence of the Persian classics as a discursive object and the abatement of traditional modes of Persianate textual practice were mutually reinforcing processes. It considers two approaches to Persianate literary historiography: the practice of

affiliation to supposed classical Persianate antecedents of modern radicalism, and the practice of mourning the literary canon, analogized as an architectural ruin. It traces the transmission of these approaches from post-World War I Istanbul to early Soviet Moscow, among the diverse communities of Middle Eastern and Central Eurasian Turkic- and Persian-speaking writers and critics that Lāhūtī joined in both cities. Materials for this chapter come from *Pārs*, the bilingual Persian-French journal that Lāhūtī coedited in Istanbul in 1921, and the publications of the Central Press of the East, where he worked as a typesetter and writer after his arrival in Moscow from 1922-1924.

Chapter 3 examines Lāhūtī's participation in more institution-minded versions of the same polemics from the mid-1920s to the late 1930s, as writers and cultural bureaucrats determined what place classical Persianate texts would have in the national canons of the Soviet republics and in Soviet world literature. It shows how early critiques of the Persianate literary canon *as such*, and the concentration of cultural capital that it represented, gave way to concerns about equal representation of Persianate nationalities within a world literary canon. This chapter's textual corpus extends across Central Asian debates about language, script, and education reform in the newspapers and journals of the 1920s, speeches during the consolidation of the Tajik Writers' Union, the ephemera of jubilees and celebrations of Persian literature in the 1930s, and a multilingual array of early Soviet literature textbooks and anthologies. In sum, Chapters 2-3 show how Persianate texts came to be seen as representing national and international collectivities.

Chapter 4 investigates how Lāhūtī's poetics of representation developed in relation to specific multinational and international occasions of the 1930s. Social historians have long underscored the role of personal networks, favors, and gifts in Soviet everyday life at every level.

This chapter uses Lāhūtī’s speeches and epistolary and occasional verse to investigate the poetics that gave ritual form to these relationships and exchanges, and embedded personal friendships in the “friendship of peoples.” Lāhūtī often operated in classical Persianate genres that carried with them ways of formalizing the relationship between poet, audience, and power, and a repertoire of tactics for negotiating that relationship that sometimes proved useful, but sometimes betrayed him. By showing how the Stalinist gift economy and panegyric discourse took shape in these classical genres, the chapter reassesses the “neo-traditionalist” interpretation of Stalinist culture. It shows how in his public and private poetic transactions, Lāhūtī reworked classical poetic genres for the author function of the literary representative and the practice of authoritarian mass politics.

Chapter 5 foregrounds translation as the primary medium of representation. A growing scholarly literature has examined the practice of translation in the Soviet Union, which initiated the largest state translation project in history, drawing most of its own major writers into the practice of translation. Most scholarship has focused on the Russian side of the process, rather than the non-Russophone writers for whom translation was necessary to obtain cultural capital at the all-Union level. Using the public and archival record, the chapter documents how Lāhūtī the literary functionary attempted to shape the life in translation of Lāhūtī the author function, which from the 1930s was the single persona of two poets, the Iranian émigré Abū al-Qāsim and his wife Tsetsiliia Banu. Continuing the previous chapter’s exploration of international friendship as an interpersonal phenomenon, Chapter 4 shows how analogies of erotic love framed the relationship between translator and translated author in the literary international, and also gendered it. The reciprocities and asymmetries of the Soviet translation system, as seen in Lāhūtī

and Banu's translations of literary classics, allow for a reconsideration of the uses and limits of imperial and postcolonial analogies for the literary international.

An epilogue offers a view beyond Lāhūtī's death in 1957, into the more dispersed activities of the literary international and the more disparate functions of Persianate poetry in the cultural Cold War. It concludes with one final leap that Lāhūtī's poetry made, into the protest rock of Afghanistan on the eve of the Soviet invasion, and the continued portability and vitality of classical Persianate poetic forms.

Chapter 1

Representation-Work and the Invention of the Literary Representative

man farzand-i yak
dehqānē būdam
dar qishlāqhā-yi Tājikistān.

I was the son
Of a peasant
In the villages of Tajikistan.

-Lāhūtī, October 1924¹

In his study *Nations and Nationalism*, Ernest Gellner refers to the Marxist dismissal of nationalism as a “Wrong Address Theory,” according to which the “awakening message” of “the spirit of history or human consciousness,” addressed to classes, only went to nations “by some terrible postal error,” and it falls to “revolutionary activists” to rectify this error.² It is not the question of addressees that concerns us here, but the mailman. Beginning with Stalin’s tenure as Nationalities Commissar from 1917 to 1923, the Bolsheviks took the nation quite seriously as the address (however provisional) where proletarians and peasants could be reached, and moved to recognize new nations together with intermediaries who could deliver messages to and from them. This frequently entailed instances of mail-forwarding far more complicated than that which Gellner caricatured. It was for this reason that the Kurdish Iranian poet Lāhūtī became, for a time, the national poet of Tajikistan, writing the Tajik national anthem and speaking on behalf of the Tajiks at the First Writers’ Congress in 1934. It was in this way that even before he traveled to Central Asia, Lāhūtī wrote a song “in joy at the declaration of the Autonomous

¹ K1, 250.

² Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 129.

Socialist Republic of Tajikistan,” in which he ventriloquizes a peasant recalling his childhood and experience of the October Revolution in “the villages of Tajikistan”—a newborn toponym.³

The figure of the national poet long precedes Soviet nationalities policy, and, as the case of Lord Byron in Greece attests, so does surrogacy in poetic spokespersonship for the nation.⁴ But it was in the Soviet Union and the Soviet-aligned literary international that the representative functions of the national poet were professionalized into a role that I will refer to as the literary representative, distinct from the previous category of national poet. In the decolonizing world of the twentieth century, when literary representatives of new nations convened and signed petitions, they often did so not as “unacknowledged legislators of the world” but as deputized representatives of the nation understood as a historical subject—and sometimes also as parliamentary legislators. Lāhūtī and his Eastern colleagues in the Soviet Writers’ Union were among the first such literary representatives.

This chapter is a contribution to the history of the writer or intellectual as a spokesperson for “the people.” The development of the literary representative Lāhūtī, like the broader process of postcolonial literary role-definition, was informed by two European experiments in spokespersonship: the emergence of the national poet as the voice of Romantic anti-imperial nationalisms, and Lenin’s vanguardist solution to the Marxist problem of the relationship between proletariat and intelligentsia. But Lāhūtī’s program of representation also reflects other

³ Lohutī, “Baroi on ki dushmanoni proletoriët suiistifoda nakunand,” *Komsomoli Tojikiston* 6, January 30, 1932. The dating of the poem is uncertain: in the letter, he clearly identifies the poem’s composition year as 1924, but the divans published in 1938, 1939, and 1941 give the date as July 1925. The editors of all critical editions since the 1960s have opted for the 1925 dating: “It is known that Lāhūtī hadn’t yet come to Dushanbe in 1924. Accordingly, perhaps there is a mistake in the letter.” However, there is no reason to believe that writing the poem would have required first-hand experience of Tajik village life; given the evidence of Lāhūtī’s letter, I find the 1924 dating more convincing. *KI*, 363.

⁴ I use “spokesperson(ship)” here and below, as I use “representation,” in the sense of “acting as a representative.” The former term avoids ambiguity in some instances.

genealogies of the literary representative: Persianate revolutionaries' reworking of the Islamicate concept of legal representation (*vakālat*) for parliamentary government; or their transformation of courtly *adab* genres of political poetry to allow for new categories of claimants. When anticolonial writers in early 20th-century Eurasia claimed the role of "unacknowledged legislators" on behalf of imperial subjects or the people of new nation states, Romantic, Marxist-Leninist, and vernacular repertoires of political representation combined to shape the articulation of their claims. Given the oft-noted special role of European Romantic models in the transformation of Persian poetry in the early twentieth century, I will point to the resources that made the Romantic approach to representation (both aesthetic and political) useful for Persian poets in an age of revolutions.

The chapter opens with a survey of critical perspectives on the poet as spokesperson from the literature of Romantic nationalisms to mid-20th-century decolonization. Here, drawing on several theoretical approaches to the representative claims of politicians and intellectuals, I compare the functions of Romantic national poets and postcolonial literary representatives. The remainder of the chapter uses selected moments from Lāhūtī's career to narrate the development of his program of representation. First, I examine his first published poem, addressed to the last Qajar shah, as an instance of the changing dynamics of court poetry on the eve of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution. Briefly setting aside *literary* representation, I establish Lāhūtī's evolving ideas and practice of political representation over the course of his career as a revolutionary in Iran. Returning to literature, I argue that after his arrival in the Soviet Union, his encounter with Romantic poetics and Marxist politics gave him an aesthetic sense of revolutionary action. I show how he deployed this new role as a surrogate poetic representative for Soviet Central Asia, and describe the negotiation in autobiographical narration that was

required of every literary representative. A postscript describes the strange incident of the CIA-authored false Lāhūtī autobiography, in which his own program of representation was usurped.

The Poet as Spokesperson: From National Poet to Literary Representative

Given the relative conservatism of poetic genres, some important aspects of poetic spokespersonship must be understood as phenomena of the literary *longue durée*. Facing outwards, those who speak on behalf of one group to another within a single language community have sometimes done so in verse. So, for example, the Arabic *qaṣīdah* genre could serve intertribal warfare (or act as a verbal substitute for it).⁵ Facing inwards, the poet was often responsible for what Edward Whitley has called “bardic utterance: a direct address on a public occasion to a community of readers who seek from the poet (often in vain) a confirmation of the common cultural values that define them.”⁶ The biblical prophets perform just such a role of inward-facing poetic representation. But from the 18th to the 20th century, new conceptions of the people and political representation contributed to the development of new institutions of poetic spokespersonship.

Until recently, there was relatively little comparative work on the function of the writer as spokesperson of the nation, considering the ubiquity of this function in writing and reading practices of the 19th-20th centuries (and considering the ubiquity of representation as a concern in debates on textbooks and curricula). This may be a result of comparative literature’s long

⁵ Steven Charles Caton, “*Peaks of Yemen I Summon*”: *Poetry as Cultural Practice in a North Yemeni Tribe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

⁶ Edward Whitley, *American Bards: Walt Whitman and Other Unlikely Candidates for National Poet* (Durham, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 8. Benedict Anderson, more concerned with the novel as a national institution, identifies poetry and song with the “special kind of contemporaneous community which language alone suggests,” a preexisting resource for nationalism rather than a development distinctive to it: Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 145.

struggle against the framework of national literary historiography, which made critics more likely to draw figures out of the stereotyped role of national poet than to consider how they functioned within it. A recent series of connected article clusters, edited volumes, and conferences have set out a program for the systematic reconsideration of the national poet as a type of author-function in nineteenth-century Europe.⁷ Many of the conclusions of these studies could usefully be extended into the twentieth century and beyond the European periphery, as the function of authors as national representatives is at once ubiquitous and underexamined in studies of the world literature of 20th-century decolonization.⁸

⁷ A relatively coherent ongoing conversation includes Virgil Nemoianu, “National Poets” in the Romantic Age: Emergence and Importance,” in *Romantic Poetry*, ed. Angela Esterhammer (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2002), 249–255, and several other articles in the volume; John Neubauer, Introduction, in Neubauer and Marcel Cornis-Pope, eds., *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctions in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, vol. 4, *Types and Stereotypes* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2010), 11–18, and the eight articles that follow; David Aberbach, *National Poetry, Empires and War* (New York: Routledge, 2015); Marijan Dović and Jón Karl Helgason, eds., *National Poets, Cultural Saints: Canonization and Commemorative Cults of Writers in Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2017); Dović, “National Poets and Romantic (Be)Longing: An Introduction,” *Arcadia* 52, no. 1 (2017): 1–9, and the three articles of the cluster. Elements of this conversation that have deep relevance to the anticolonial 20th-century and especially the Soviet East, but which are omitted here, include ethno-national identity formation and the process of memorialization/hagiography of “cultural saints,” both of which have received significant attention in studies of the Soviet nationalities question. Above all, further literary investigation could fruitfully consider the role of Romantic national poets in setting the pattern for 20th-century post-colonial literary representatives’ containment of difference. Here, however, I focus on the act of literary representation as such.

⁸ In *The Republic of Letters*, Casanova is more interested in attempts to escape from national representation, and so the status of literary representative becomes the default for a peripheral writer, a correlate of mother-tongue and community of origin. The question of colonial writers’ resistance to their potential transformation into “de facto spokespersons for marginalized groups” is further explored by Peter Kalliney, *Commonwealth of Letters*, 21. The critics who have sought to recuperate committed literature have generally done so by rescuing it from the politics of the nation, arguing that anticolonial writers, even when declaredly national, were primarily solidarity-minded or reached beyond the nation: cf. Jahan Ramazani, “Louise Bennett: The National Poet as Transnational?,” *Journal of West Indian Literature* 17, no. 2 (2009): 49–64. This is often true and worth pointing out, but it leaves out the spokespersonship that was an important part of such writers’ position-taking in national and international literary fields. Jameson, in

In order to establish a clearer sense of the operation performed by a writer who claims to speak on behalf of a people, and the reconstructions of this representative role over the 19th and 20th centuries, it will be useful to draw on more developed theoretical literatures on representative speech. The extension of theories of political representation to the cultural sphere is a well-established tool—or slippage—in discussions of the claims of intellectuals to speak for the masses (whether proletarian or national).⁹ In this section, I will use Frank Ankersmit’s insistence on the relationship between Romantic nationalism and the aestheticization of political representation to clarify the function of the national poet. Pierre Bourdieu will be useful not primarily for his sociology of the literary field, but for his analysis of delegation, which provides resources for understanding the behavior of the professional literary representative as a special case of “literary position-taking.”¹⁰ Bourdieu brings into sharp focus the argument that representation is usurpation of the power of the represented by the representative. Fears of the usurpation of popular power by the representative recur in the texts under examination here, but it is not my purpose here to distinguish legitimate from illegitimate acts of representation. Rather, I seek to establish how Lāhūtī’s claims to represent were formulated and negotiated.

The national poet as a type originates no earlier than the Romantic moment of anti-imperial nationalisms (earlier examples, such as Petrarch and Shakespeare, became national poets in their Romantic reception).¹¹ Although the hegemonic nationalities of imperial states

“Third-World Literature,” is concerned with the ways that literary texts represent nations, but does not link this to writers’ formal or informal roles as representatives themselves.

⁹ Dick Pels has performed the most thorough investigation of the benefits and costs of treating the representative claims of intellectuals as a special case of political representation: Pels, *The Intellectual as Stranger: Studies in Spokespersonship* (London: Routledge, 2000).

¹⁰ My use of Bourdieu’s work here builds on the adaptation of his work by Kathryn Schild; on “position-taking” specifically, see Schild, “Between Moscow and Baku,” 22 et passim.

¹¹ This is a contested periodization of the national poet: David Aberbach, for instance, draws the category so broadly that it includes the Biblical prophets. John Neubauer limits the category

subsequently had writers self-declared and acclaimed as national poets, it remained by and large a counter-hegemonic phenomenon. Many aspects of the role draw on the performances of Romantic poets from imperial nations who became anti-imperialist surrogates, particularly Lord Byron. But notwithstanding some early instances on the edges of west European empire—Robert Burns, for example—the emergence of a recognizably modular author-function took place in the nationalist movements that developed in the space between the Austrian, Russian, and Ottoman Empires from the Congress of Vienna to the 1870s. In national movements and new nations during this period, literary representation already stood in for political representation.

The coevolution of the national poet with Romanticism is no surprise, given that literary movement's role in the emergence of nationalism generally. But the relationship between Romanticism and the idea of speech on behalf of a national collectivity bears further investigation. Ankersmit argues that political Romanticism “created the intellectual climate in which parliamentary democracy could thrive,” by aestheticizing the act of representation, artistic *and* political.¹² That is, Romantic thinkers such as Edmund Burke, operating at once in aesthetics and political theory, rejected the “resemblance theory of representation,” according to which the artistic representation should resemble its object and the political representative’s opinions

further than I would, including only poets committed to national causes *and* generally acknowledged as national poets, and thus explicitly excluding not only Shakespeare but Goethe and Pushkin: *National Poetry*. Although too narrow for me, this gets at the important distinction between poets who actively fashioned their lives and poetic practice to fulfil the “national poet” author-function, and those who were only used to fulfill that function by others. In the context of early modern vernacularization, there were advocates of local literary languages against hegemonic ones, who sometimes made their argument in ways that seem proto-nationalist. But the transformation of such figures as national poets was part of the Romantic nationalists’ search for a genealogy: as Virgil Nemoianu writes, “That is how the line of Dante-Cervantes-Shakespeare [...] was set up as a viable Romantic alternative to the classical and the neoclassical tradition.” Nemoianu, “‘National Poets’ in the Romantic Age,” 250.

¹² Frank Ankersmit, *Political Representation* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 99.

should resemble those of the represented. Instead, they argued for a “substitution theory of representation,” by which a representation or representative stood in for what was represented, in its absence.¹³ The political representative could not be expected to act always as the constituents would—this was as impossible as for a written description of an object to “resemble” the object—but would instead work for their interests, according to their own judgment.¹⁴ In this way, multifarious interests within society, irreconcilable on the scale of society, could be resolved in parliament by the representatives of those interests. According to Ankersmit, in the wake of the existential conflicts of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, it was Romanticism’s “respect for multiplicity, for all the paradoxes, oppositions, and contradictions inherent in sociopolitical reality,” which made possible respect for both the multiplicity of national cultures and the political diversity within the resulting nations.¹⁵

Although poets play no special role in Ankersmit’s narrative of this transition, that narrative can only be strengthened by an acknowledgment of the role of Romantic poetry in the making of *völkisch* claims against imperial sovereignty. Both resemblance and substitution theories of representation contributed to the definition of the role of national poet. In many cases, the sanctification of the poet was enhanced by a sense that he shared in the folk’s essential nature (as in Taras Shevchenko’s serf origin), but other major national poets were of the wrong national origin (Sándor Petőfi) or only tenuously connected to the folk (Alexander Pushkin), and it was precisely their choice to identify with and speak for the people that was celebrated. Ultimately, Ankersmit argues that it was representation-as-substitution that created the condition of possibility for a single lyric voice to become a metonym for the voice of the nation.

¹³ Ibid., 108-112.

¹⁴ Ibid., 111.

¹⁵ Ibid., 99.

Some national poets are not reducible to their poetic voice of representation, but also contributed to the development of proto-national institutions by printing works at minority-language presses and founding literary societies that would, after independence, provide the basis for national academies.¹⁶ But such interventions in civil society and collective memory only supplemented their primary task: to “program the reception” of their works as *the* literary representation of the nation.¹⁷ This was a spectacle aimed both out of the nation (a performance of difference for others) and back into the nation (the unifying experience of watching one’s nation gain reality in being represented before others).¹⁸ As such, the election of a Romantic national poet was a negotiation between nationalists and the West-European arbiters of cultural value. Nemoianu voices the implicit message from “the western ‘decisional centers’” thus: “we will make room for you, but not too much; what we need is a token representation, an ‘ambassador’ to our courts, a recognizable sample of your endowments and achievements. You can decide yourselves who that will be or else we are the ones who will make the choice for you.”¹⁹

New national movements after the advent of literary modernism were less likely to reproduce the institution of national poet. According to this periodization, those figures recognized as voices of their nations in the age of modernism (such as W.B. Yeats or Chayim Nachman Biyalik) have been too steeped in irony or anxiety to perform the role straight (or else the national literary communities would not have ratified their status on the basis of such a

¹⁶ Similar dynamics also operated in empires transitioning to *völkisch* nationhood in that period, such as Russia. David L. Cooper, *Creating the Nation: Identity and Aesthetics in Early Nineteenth-century Russia and Bohemia* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010).

¹⁷ George G. Grabowicz, “Taras Shevchenko: The Making of the National Poet,” *Revue des études slaves* 85, no. 3 (2014): 427.

¹⁸ Marko Juvan, “The Aesthetics and Politics of Belonging: National Poets between ‘Vernacularism’ and ‘Cosmopolitanism,’” *Arcadia* 52, no. 1 (2017): 10-28.

¹⁹ Nemoianu, “National Poets,” 254.

performance).²⁰ This observation may be true in nations where literature was well-established as a domain of high culture, whose participants were invested in the autonomy of literary prestige from state approval and popular success, in accordance with the model for the literary field proposed by Bourdieu.²¹ But it fails when extended to linguistic communities where preexisting verbal arts were restructured as a “literary” field at the same time as culture was nationalized, and by the same agents.

The pursuit of autonomy for the literary field is everywhere in early 20th-century anticolonial literature, and we can find denials of spokespersonship, especially of the national variety, from Muhammad Iqbāl and Rabindranath Tagore, Aimé Césaire and Léopold Senghor. But as anticolonial movements resulted in independent nations, the post of “writer” in the resulting national literary fields became, at least for some members of national intelligentsias, an officially-recognized post with a salary. Verbal performers in genres incompletely subsumed into the new literary field, such as ghazal-singers or devotional poets in the Persianate world, might continue their professional or social poetic activity unaffected by this shift. But particularly in the generation after independence, in many instances it would have been wrong to say, as Bourdieu does, that “the ‘profession’ of writer or artist is one of the least professionalized there is, despite all the efforts of ‘writers’ associations’, ‘Pen Clubs’, etc.”²² In the newly decolonized world, cadres of professional writers existed alongside unprofessionalized literati in Bourdieu’s sense (as well as traditional verbal artists with older forms of professional association). Although a poet’s status as voice of the people was still forged by an agonistic process among writers and

²⁰ Neubauer, Introduction, 12. Self-puncturing irony is by no means an invention of modernist nationalists, and much the same could be said of Pushkin or Mickiewicz.

²¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, ed. and intro. Randal Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 37-73.

²² Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*, 43.

critics inside and beyond the nation, successful achievement of such status could be tangibly measured in ambassadorships, poet-laureateships, and delegate seats in legislatures as well as national and international writers' organizations.²³ In this way, both bard and bardic utterance were professionalized in the person of the literary representative. In regions where salaried posts existed for state poets on the eve of the nationalization of culture, such as the Persianate zone, this preexisting institution might be adapted to the new type of literary spokesperson.

It was in part for this reason that the process of modularization that began with the national poets of Central and Eastern Europe reached completion on the other flank of the former Russian Empire, in the Soviet East. Another factor was the Bolshevik theory of political representation. Bourdieu's account of the literary field includes a polemic against the Marxist critics' "mythology of the writer as the unconscious spokesman of a group, which is simply an inversion of the Romantic myth of the poet *vates* [Latin: oracle]."²⁴ There is no reason, he argues, to suppose that an artist's patrons, addressees, or community of origin should speak through the artist: the determining role is played instead by "the whole structure and history of the field of production and, beyond this, [...] of the social field in question."²⁴ But in the Soviet national republics, the vatic role of the poet went from a mode of analysis to a professional responsibility. This was an extension of Lenin's proposed revolutionary vanguard, by analogy, to the nation, and like that ideological template, the idea of the literary representative "displayed a curious amalgam of rejection and acceptance" of the idea that the people could be represented by a

²³ This is the writers' equivalent of what Zygmunt Bauman refers to as "the intellectuals' neolithic revolution," a process by which "free intellectuals of yore turned into university teachers, government consultants, experts and functionaries of warfare and welfare bureaucracies." Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 90-94.

²⁴ Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*, 56.

surrogate.²⁵ Early leftist critics of Marxism regarded it as an intelligentsia usurpation of the people's power, but the Leninist tradition in particular rarely engaged with the question of whether "professional revolutionaries" might come to function as a new elite.²⁶

Thus, the early Bolsheviks considered their own relationship to the people to be something more subordinate than representation, and regarded the figure of the representative (whether a formal parliamentary delegate or an unofficial leader) with deep suspicion.²⁷ This is in accordance with Bourdieu's discussion of the "oracle effect," by which representatives and interpreters gain immense authority precisely by denying that they speak for themselves at all.²⁸ In a sense, this required a return of the resemblance theory of representation, as writers represented on the basis of their class origin and their continued closeness to the folk (*narod*) of their nationality.

But whether in the Soviet East or in the decolonizing world at large, for us to understand literary representatives' behavior, we must maintain an awareness that such representation was always substitution. The field where representatives interacted with each other, in this case the

²⁵ Pels, *Intellectual as Stranger*, 30. Pels refers to the Leninist attitude to intelligentsia representation of the proletariat.

²⁶ Debates on this question are surveyed in Lawrence Peter King and Iván Szelényi, *Theories of the New Class: Intellectuals and Power* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 19-44.

²⁷ Lenin's "Theses on the Fundamental Tasks of the Second Congress of the Communist International," published in July 1920, repeatedly stresses the suspicion and even hostility with which the Comintern should deal with the international Communist movement's "'leaders,' or 'responsible representatives,' who are very often hopelessly beset with petty-bourgeois and imperialist prejudices." V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th ed., vol. 31, trans. Julius Katzer (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1966), 192-193. Igal Halfin, among others, has argued for a mystical reading of the Bolshevik discourse of the intelligentsia's subordination to the proletarian project: Halfin, *From Darkness to Light: Class, Consciousness, and Salvation in Revolutionary Russia* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), 85-149.

²⁸ His argument here is grounded in a reading of Nietzsche's *The Antichrist*. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. and intro. John B. Thompson, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Oxford: Polity, 1991), 210-211.

literary international, usually set the terms for literary production to a greater extent than the national community on whose behalf they wrote and spoke. Bourdieu observes that the debates of political representatives “are affected by a sort of structural duplicity: while they are in appearance directly aimed at the voters, they are in reality aimed at competitors within the field.”²⁹ Likewise, the artistic choices of literary representatives were motivated and constrained by struggles with their peer writers in literary institutions. They had more interests and experiences in common with their fellow literary representatives than with non-nomenklatura members of the nationalities or nations that they represented.

What follows, then, is an account of how one poet became a literary representative.

1. Representations at Court

Among the resources from earlier regimes of representation that Lāhūtī carried with him into his practice as a Soviet literary representative, none was more visible than his *takhallus* (pen-name) itself, which means “belonging to the occult realm of Lāhūt.” The first known published poem by Lāhūtī, which also contains the earliest explanation of his pen-name, was published in 1905 in the Tehran newspaper *Tarbiyat*. For the first issue after the Iranian new year, the newspaper commissioned a seventeen-year-old poet visiting the capital to produce a panegyric *qasīdah* dedicated to the Qajar ruler, Mużaffar al-Dīn Shah. *Tarbiyat* was the most reform-minded newspaper published within Iran before the Constitutional Revolution. As the editor Muhammad-Husayn Zukā al-Mulk Furūghī³⁰ explained in the last issue of the newspaper in 1907, a panegyric “every six months to a year, at an appropriate time,” was a “means of

²⁹ Ibid., 247.

³⁰ Zukā al-Mulk was a royally-granted title, and Furūghī was first the *takhallus*, then (as in the case of Lāhūtī) the surname of both father and son.

protection” for the journal. “I hoped that in this way, I could carve out a benefactor and protector, whose support I could rely on [in order] to talk about the good of the country and nation.”³¹

Political theorists have often sought the roots of the modern practice of political representation in medieval European courtly settings, where estates, guilds, and towns sent representatives before the ruler, who in turn sent out representatives.³² In Persianate courts, we can find a similar range of deputized agents, falling under the broader legal category of *vakālat* (representation).³³ In Persianate, as in European courts, the verses that poets addressed to rulers were often acts of spokespersonship, and could symbolically bestow legitimacy on rulers; the Nawrūz celebration was a particular moment for the “reaffirmation of the social contract.”³⁴

³¹ *Tarbiyat* 434, March 14, 1907, 1-3, qtd. in Negin Nabavi, “Readership, the Press and the Public Sphere in the First Constitutional Era,” in *Iran’s Constitutional Revolution: Popular Politics, Cultural Transformations and Transnational Connections*, eds. H.E. Chehabi and Vanessa Martin (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 215.

³² Cf. Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr., “Modern and Medieval Representation,” in *Representation*, eds. J. Roland Pennock and John W. Chapman (New York: Atherton, 1968), 55-82; G. Griffiths, *Representative Government in Western Europe in the Sixteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968).

³³ Mawil Y. Izzi Dien, “Wakāla,” *EI*², article published online 2012, http://dx.doi.org.proxy.uchicago.edu/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_7830. On political instances relating to sovereignty and popular representation, cf. Willem Floor, “Kalāntar,” *EIr*, published online December 15, 2012, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kalantar-term>; John Perry, “Wakil-al-Ra‘āyā,” *EIr*, published online August 15, 2009, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/wakil-al-raaya>. In various periods and places, this dynamic of delegation extended up to Muslim rulers, who theoretically derived legitimacy from a caliph.

³⁴ Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy: Myth, Gender, and Ceremony in the Classical Arabic Ode* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), 229-230. The highest of official positions to which court poets could aspire, the *amīr* or *malik al-shu‘arā’* (ruler of the poets), was effectively the representative of the ruler to the other poets, acting as their gatekeeper and treasurer. Twentieth-century Iranian monarchs maintained poets in similar positions, although without the title after the Constitutional Revolution, while even the title continued at the court of the Barakzai Dynasty in Afghanistan. J.T.P. de Bruijn, “Malik al-Shu‘arā’,” *EI*², article published online 2012, http://dx.doi.org.proxy.uchicago.edu/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_4875.

This poem is atypical of Lāhūtī’s earliest verse, which consists almost entirely of playful lyric-mystical ghazals. But taken together with its context, the poem permits us to diagram the representative functions of court poetry in Iran on the eve of the Constitutional Revolution: who spoke to whom on whose behalf. The introduction to the poem, likely either by the editor or his son Muḥammad-‘Alī (who inherited both title and surname), establishes that worldly rulers and their mortal subjects are not the only nodes in this diagram:

As luck would have it, a youth, one of the poets [...] of Kermanshah, at this time and place [...] completed this task and did it so well that it merits a thousand portions of praise and deserves every kind of acclaim. Which is to say that the eloquent Mīrzā Ahmād, whose pen-name is Ilhāmī of Kermanshah, has a son who possesses sound taste and elevated imagination, seventeen years old, with a talent like spring water and poetry like licit magic. This young shoot with angelic [malakūtī] qualities has the pen-name Lāhūtī, and truly, it isn’t insignificant that help comes to him from the divine realm [*‘ālim-i lāhūtī*], linking the human realm [*nāsūtī*] to the angelic realm [*malakūtī*] and the realm of divine decree [*jabarūtī*]. In the first bloom of youth, he produces discourse with the self-possession of accomplished elders and adorns the beauty of things with the excellence of proven masters. I am of the opinion that even Master Rudākī, when he was seventeen, hadn’t composed poetry better than this, and at this age nobody has ever pierced the pearl of words and significations this truly and clearly.³⁵

In this hierarchy of divine realms, conventional in Islamicate esoteric thought, the *‘ālim-i lāhūtī* is an unseen liminal space through which God emanates toward the human world.³⁶ The licit magic [*sīhr-i halālī*] of poetry, at once worldly and divine, permitted Lāhūtī to speak to the human world on behalf of divine realms. Abū al-Qāsim likely had this semantic range in mind when he chose his *takhallus*, since at the time he was already involved with the Ni‘matullāhī Sufi lodge of Mīr Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Dashtī.³⁷

³⁵ *Tarbiyat*, 7 Safar, 1323 [April 13, 1905], 2.

³⁶ In its usual form the “five divine presences” emerges from the tradition of Ibn al-‘Arabī, as codified by his disciple Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī. William C. Chittick, “The Five Divine Presences: From al-Qūnawī to al-Qayṣarī,” *The Muslim World* 72, no. 2 (1982): 107-128.

³⁷ Muḥammad ‘Alī Sultānī, *Ahzāb-i siyāsī va anjumanhā-yi sirrī dar Kirmānshāh: farāmūshkhānah tā khānah-i siyāh*, vol. 1 (Tehran: Suhā, 1378 [1999]), 32-34.

With Lāhūtī’s *qaṣīdah*, our diagram of representations expands further. Following a conventional prefatory passage concerned with spring and wine, Lāhūtī praises the Shah, before concluding the poem with an expansion of the panegyric’s objects of praise:

kihīn ‘aṭāyash āzādī-yi jarā’id-i māst
kih zang-i jahl zi-dilhā-yi musta‘id bizudūd
bih vīzhah tarbiyat-i ān nāmah-i khirad-āmūz
kih jān-i tīrah-i mā-rā bih nūr-i ‘ilm āmūd
Zukā’-i Mulk Furūghī bitāft az pas-i abr
hamī furūgh bih dilhā-yi bīziyā bakhshūd [...]
shu‘ār-i khāmah-i ū būdī īzadī daftar
agar rasūlī ba‘d az Rasūl-i ummī būd
zi-yumn-i Tarbiyat-i ū būd kih Lāhūtī
nadīdah ranj-i mu‘allim madīḥ-i ū bisutūd
dalīl-i rāham shud Mīrzā Ḫusayn kih ṭab‘
dar īn chikāmah-i gharrā sanā-yi ū bisurūd
khudā-yi ‘ālam dar zill-i shāh Mużaffar al-Dīn
bad-ū bibakhshad ān-rā kih khwud irādah namūd

The slightest of his gifts is our freedom of the press
By which the rust of ignorance was cleaned from the hearts of the worthy
In particular the education [*tarbiyat*] of that wisdom-filled newspaper
Which filled our dark lives with the light of knowledge
Zukā’ al-Mulk Furūghī shone from behind the cloud
Continuously bestowing illumination on lightless hearts [...]
If there were any prophet after the Illiterate Prophet [i.e. Muhammad]
The slogan[s written by] his pen could make a divine book
It was by the grace of his *Tarbiyat* that Lāhūtī
Came to sing panegyric to him without any teacher’s effort
My travel was made possible by Mīrzā Ḫusayn, whose praises
My talent sings in this magniloquent poem
May the God of the world, through his shadow, Shah Mużaffar al-Dīn
Grant him whatever he himself desires.³⁸

On behalf of the newspaper that printed his poem, Lāhūtī thanks the Shah for his (limited) tolerance; he thanks the newspaper on his own behalf and on behalf of the people whom it educates. The newspaper, like Lāhūtī, is an intermediary for more transcendent emanation as well—a kind of emanation that becomes a literate counterpart to prophecy.

³⁸ *Tarbiyat*, 7 Safar, 1323 [April 13, 1905], 3.

The reader is reminded that the Shah himself is a representative of God on earth, according to a Islamicate convention for the legitimization of kingship. In fact, Lāhūtī’s mediating role on behalf of the angelic realm, whose qualities he possesses [*malakūtī-khiṣāl*], repeats the introduction’s description of the Shah [*malakūtī-ṣifāt*]. This is not a moment of audacious presumption, but a recognizable play on the double meaning of *malakūt*, connected to the distinct semantic and cosmological spaces of *malik*, the sovereign king, and *malak*, the angelic messenger.³⁹ The author-function “Lāhūtī” thus takes its place in a new, newspaper-mediated version of the royal Nawruz celebration that ritually confirms the king’s role as a mediating sign of God’s rule, and the poet’s analogous role as the ratifier of the king’s dominion. In keeping with this arrangement of mutual legitimations and representations, Lāhūtī requests a gift from God for his patron, to be delivered through the Shah.

This gift’s intended recipient is Hājī Mīrzā Husayn, identified in the poem’s introduction as “a silk-merchant of Kermanshah” who brought Lāhūtī’s poem to the *Tarbiyat* editorial office. According to Lāhūtī’s memoirs, he traveled to study at a madrasa in Tehran with funds provided by the Kermanshah chapter of an Iranian mason-inspired secret society, most likely the Temple of Humanity [*jāmi‘-i ādamiyat*, c. 1895-1908].⁴⁰ The Temple of Humanity drew inspiration and membership from a previous pseudomasonic organization established by the exiled Armenian Iranian politician Mīrzā Malkum Khān to distribute his constitutionalist newspaper *Qānūn*, printed in London from 1890 to c. 1898—a newspaper which, Lāhūtī tells us, his father secretly

³⁹ The words are both Arabic, but from etymologically unrelated Semitic roots, as the latter is an abbreviation of *mal’ak*.

⁴⁰ KB6, 164-165. Elsewhere, Lāhūtī mentions that the European-trained doctor to whom his elder brother was apprenticed took both of them along on a trip to Tehran, which may be the same trip: ibid., 79. Yaḥyā Āryānpūr writes that “one of the friends of the family” helped to pay for Lāhūtī’s education, although without specific citation. This is not incompatible with Lāhūtī’s own explanation, given his father’s connections to the Temple of Humanity. Yaḥyā Āryānpūr, *Az Sabā tā Nīmā*, vol. 2 (Tehran: Kitābhā-yi jībī, 1353 [1974]), 168.

read.⁴¹ There is reason to believe that Furūghī father and son were connected to the Temple of Humanity, like Malkum Khān’s faction at court and the silk merchant Mīrzā Ḥusayn, who made Lāhūtī’s introductions in the capital.⁴²

Lāhūtī’s first published poem thus marks a transition in the kinds of roles that poets could play within a transforming framework of political legitimacy as well as a new mass medium for political representations. Although the realms of *jabarūt* and *malakūt* would fade from his list of clients for representation, the pen-name “Lāhūtī” remained, linking the poet to the unseen realm of *lāhūt*. The surname laws enacted by new mass mobilization states across Eurasia turned many literary personae into legal persons as Lāhūtī’s generation of Persianate poets re-adopted their former *takhallus* (pen-name) into a bureaucratically recognized surname.⁴³ These *takhallus*-surnames were neither atavisms nor fossils, but markers of a set of skills that remained in high demand for new programs of political representation.

⁴¹ KB6, 99. Lāhūtī’s sponsorship for study in Tehran has usually been mistakenly connected with Malkum Khān’s similarly-named previous organization, *majma ‘-i ādamiyat* (1890-c. 1899), but, as Hamīd Rīzā Shāhābādī points out, it must have been *jāmi ‘-i ādamiyat* both for chronological reasons and because of the latter organization’s larger organizational footprint, particularly in Kermanshah. Shāhābādī, *Tārīkh-i āghāzīn-i farāmāsūnīrī dar Irān*, vol. 1 (Tehran: Hawzah-i hunarī, 1378 [1999]), 150; on the two organizations, ibid., 144-172. Shāhābādī’s account modifies the (more commonly cited) discussions of Lāhūtī’s pseudomasonic connection in Ismā‘īl Rā’īn, *Farāmūsh’khānah va frāmāsūnīrī dar Irān* (Tehran: Mu’assasah-i Taḥqīq-i Rā’īn, 1347 [1968]), 619-621; and Hamid Algar, *Mīrzā Malkum Khān: A Study in the History of Iranian Modernism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973), 234-235.

⁴² When the first truly Masonic-rite lodge was incorporated in Tehran in 1907, among its founding members were both Furūghīs. Rā’īn, *Farāmūsh’khānah va frāmāsūnīrī*, 46-49.

⁴³ On the surname laws, Meltem Türköz, *Naming and Nation-Building in Turkey: The 1934 Surname Law* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); V.A. Nikonorov, *Geografiia familii* (Moscow: Nauka, 1988); Houshang E. Chehabi, “The Introduction of Family Names under Reza Shah Pahlavi,” in *Languages and Memories: The Multi-Layered Human Experiences and the Variety of Interpretations*, eds. Y. Takashina et al. (Osaka: Research Institute for World Languages, 2010), 286-291.

2. For and Against Delegation: *Majlis, Anjuman, Soviet*

Suspicion of political representation, far from being a Soviet innovation, played a role in the debates that surrounded the Iranian Constitution of 1906. In a satirical newspaper column, the writer ‘Alī-Akbar Dihkhudā dramatizes the sudden terror of a simple pro-constitution man after learning that the new constitution will require the election of parliamentary deputies—referred to as *vakīls*, a word from the same root as *vakālat*, likewise used for any number of other representative roles in Islamic law. The man is uneasy, because his mother had told him how an unscrupulous mulla got power of attorney over her and, as her *vakīl*, got her married to his father against her will. He urges his betters not to elect delegates:

“Don’t do it, I beg you, don’t do it, don’t hand over power of attorney [lit. “carve off your own standing to bring suit”: “*barā-yi khwudatān mudda ‘ā natarāshīd*”] with your own hands!”

They said, “Come on, from Japan to Petersburg,⁴⁴ every country has *vakīls*. ”

I said, “By God, strike me dead, nothing good will come of having *vakīls*. How about just having a simple constitution?”

They said, “Mind your own business. You’re illiterate, don’t talk. How could you have a constitution without *vakīls*? ” I saw they were right.⁴⁵

Dihkhudā’s faux-naif narrator goes on to point out that his fears were subsequently proved well-founded, as the delegates elected under the Constitution turned out to be corrupt. In fact, the *vakīls’* legitimacy did not go uncontested: the political landscape of post-Constitution Iran, like those of the Ottoman Empire and Russia during their revolutions of 1905-1910, comprised a mix

⁴⁴ Lit. “pih tal purt,” probably intended as a malapropistic rendering of Pitirs-būrg, but defined in Dihkhudā’s own *Lughatnāmah* as “far and wide.” Thanks to John Perry for clarifying this point.

⁴⁵ Dakhaw, “Charand va parand: maktūb,” *Sūr-i Israfil* 22 (1325 [1908]): 7; trans. modified from Ali-Akbar Dehkhodā, *Charand-o Parand: Revolutionary Satire from Iran, 1907-1909*, trans. and notes Janet Afary and John R. Perry (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016), 218-219 (note in brackets is mine).

of institutions of representative parliamentary government and a variety of parties, secret societies, unions, militias, and other organizations that took direct action in the public sphere.⁴⁶

Lāhūti's political activities in this period, like those of many contemporaries, straddled these two types of political activity. After the Constitutional Revolution he fought as a member of factional armed bands, initially as a member of the Social Democratic Party (Militant) [*Firqah-i Ijtima‘iyūn-i Āmmiyūn (Mujāhid)*, FIAM], an affiliate of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP) that operated primarily through local political organizations called *anjumans*—a counterpart to workers' soviets during the Russian Revolution of 1905, sometimes secret, that circumvented the structures of the Majlis and its recognized parties.⁴⁷ But in the second Constitutional period he joined the Democrat Party, which made more attempt to achieve political respectability. Seemingly through leading Democrats' influence, he parlayed his militia activities into a brilliant career in state police and military service, where he rose to the rank of major before a dramatic fall from grace, probably because of his ongoing revolutionary activities (see timeline).

⁴⁶ M. Bayat, “Anjoman (Organization): i. Political,” *EIr*, last updated August 5 2011, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/anjoman-gathering-association-society-general-designation-of-many-private-and-public-associations>; Ismā‘il Rā’īn, *Anjumanhā-yi sirrī dar inqilab-i mashrūtiyat-i Irān* (Tehran: Jāvīdān, 2535 [1976-1977]).

⁴⁷ Armenians, Azerbaijanis, and Russian Transcaucasia's vast population of Iranian migrant laborers had brought FIAM to Iran in the early days of the Constitutional Revolution, with a program closely adapted from the RSDRP by a leading Russian Azerbaijani Bolshevik, Nariman Narimanov. Throughout the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, Democrats in Iranian Azerbaijan and the Caspian region conveyed supplies, funding, arms, and volunteer fighters to Iran from the RSDRP and other parties in Transcaucasia. Farīdūn Ādamiyat, *Fikr-i dimūkrāstī-i ijtimā‘ī dar nahzat-i mashrūtiyat-i Irān* (Tehran: Payām, 2535 [1976]); Cosroe Chaquèri, *The Russo-Caucasian Origins of the Iranian Left: Social Democracy in Modern Iran* (Richmond, UK: Curzon, 2001); Sohrab Yazdani, “The Question of the Iranian *Ijtima‘iyūn-i Amiyūn* Party,” in *Iranian-Russian Encounters: Empires and Revolutions Since 1800*, ed. Stephanie Cronin (Milton Park, UK: Routledge, 2013), 189-206; Janet Afary, “Ejtemā‘īūn, Ferqa-ye,” *EIr*, article published December 15, 1998, last modified December 9, 2011, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ejtemaiun>.

Between the start of the Constitutional Revolution in 1905 and his escape to the Soviet Union in 1923, in poems and manifestos, Lāhūtī adopted a range of stances on the appropriateness of political representation. These documents precede his career as a literary representative, and his sense of the stakes of literary spokesmanship derived from these earlier battles over the legitimacy or illegitimacy of representative positions or acts in revolutionary Iran. He later evoked and retrospectively reworked the texts of his revolutionary career in Soviet anthologies and autobiographical texts, and those later reworkings, together with the original documents, show how the role of literary representative was born out of critiques of the politics of representation as such.

Lāhūtī's most explicit consideration of the question of delegation in the Constitution period was a poem that first appeared in November 1909 in the satirical newspaper *Chantah-i pābarahnah* [“The Barefoot’s Satchel”], which addresses the “ill-fated laborer/ Poor, barefoot sower,” asking, “How much longer will you suffer and toil/ While the notables’ ease comes from your suffering?”⁴⁸ The poem concludes:

dānī, kih chirā hamīshah khwārī,
z-ān rū kih⁴⁹ hāmīrī nadārī.
har kas, kih mudāfi‘ī nadārad,
kay ḥaqq-i khwudash bih dast ārad.
har gallah, kih ū shubān nadārad,
az ḥamlah-i gurg amān nadārad.
ay kārgar-i shikam-gurusnah
v-ay barzgar-i badan-barahnah,
īn nuqtah bidān, kih bī‘adīl ast,
asbāb-i najāt-i tu vakīl ast.
gar ān kih vakīl az shumā būd,
dard-i tu, yaqīn bidān, davā shud.
gar ān kih vakīl shud az a‘yān,
tu fātiḥah bahr-i khwīsh bar-khwān!

⁴⁸ *KI*, 258.

⁴⁹ A word appears to be missing here on the basis of meter.

Do you know why you are always laid low?
Because you have no advocate.
Whoever has no defender
How can they get a hold of their rights?
Every flock that has no shepherd
Will know no safety from the attack of wolves.
You worker with an empty stomach
And you sower with a naked body,
Know this incomparable fact:
The means of your salvation is a representative [*vakīl*].
If the representative was one of you,
Your ills, know this for certain, would be cured.
But while the representative is one of the notables,
You'd better pray over yourselves!⁵⁰

The poem's apparent faith in the *vakīl*, its paternalistic or even conventionally Islamicate suggestion that peasants are a flock in need of a shepherd, belies its reflection of contemporaneous radical currents in rural northern Iran. After the Constitution, as observers at the time and since have noted, the Majlis paid little attention to the concerns of rural populations, which were formally underrepresented.⁵¹ Meanwhile, peasants began a series of tax and rent strikes, seizures of land from landlords, and occasionally violent actions, particularly in the Caspian region and Azerbaijan, where Lāhūtī had spent much of the previous year.⁵² Finally, in keeping with the resemblance theory of representation, Lāhūtī insists that the only effectual representative of the peasants will be a peasant, a position that pushes against the flock/shepherd dichotomy and, more practically, the overwhelming dominance of aristocratic families in the Majlis.

⁵⁰ *K1*, 346.

⁵¹ Afary, *Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, 146-176. In 1907, the Majlis passed a law granting legal recognition to certain categories of anjuman, particularly urban and province-level anjumans, in the hope of discouraging rural populations from setting up their own representative institutions: *ibid.*, 146.

⁵² For his accounts of experiences during that period, see *K4*, 244-258; *KB6*, 109-111, 277.

Before the poem's publication, he reentered Tehran with one of the victorious militias after the defeat of Russian and royalist troops and the return of the Constitutional order.⁵³

Approximately a month later, by his own account, he was jailed and interrogated after *Chantah-i pābarahnah* and other Tehran newspapers published a poem in which he dared to muse:

hamah dād-i vaṭankhwāhī zanand ammā namīdānam
vaṭankhwāhī bih guftār ast yā kirdār yā har du?
vaṭan-rā az khaṭar fikr-i vakīlān mīkunad amīn
va yā sarnayzah-i yak lashkar-i jarrār yā har du?
vaṭan-rā fitnah-i masnad-nishīnān dād bar dushman
va yā īn mardum-i bīdānīsh-i bāzār yā har du? [...]
vakīl az khidmat-i millat taghāful mīkunad ‘amdan
va yā bāshad vazīr az mamlakat bīzār yā har du.
bih majlis nisbat-i īrānfurūshī mīdihand ammā
namīdānam kunam iqrār yā inkār yā har du.
vakīlān-u vazīrānand khā’in fāsh mīgūyam
agar dar zīr-i tīgham yā bih rū-yi dār yā har du.

Everyone is shouting patriotically, but I don't know
Is patriotism in words, or in deeds, or both?
Are we kept safe from danger by the delegates' ideas
Or by the bayonets of a mighty army, or both?
Is it the intrigues of those in power that gave us into enemy hands
Or is it the ignorant people of the bazaar, or both? [...]
Does the delegate neglect service of the nation on purpose
Or is the minister sick of his country, or both?
The Majlis are being accused of selling out Iran
But I don't know whether to admit or deny it, or both
I'll say it openly: the traitors are the delegates and ministers
Whether I'm at the point of a sword or on the gallows, or both⁵⁴

In Lāhūtī's post-revolutionary disillusionment, he contrasts the useless or treacherous words and ideas of the delegate with the deeds and bayonets of fighters like himself, and the mob rule of the bazaar. By the time first poem addressed to the "ill-fated laborer" was reprinted in the Democrat Party newspaper *Īrān-i naw* ("New Iran") on February 13, 1911, the final section urging the poor

⁵³ KB6, 167-168.

⁵⁴ KI, 128, 347-348; KB6, 168.

to seek representation was removed.⁵⁵ We know little about his role in Constitutional Tehran, but after that jailing, he seems to have joined the city police force under the Armenian revolutionary Yeprem Khan, and then, perhaps at the recommendation of Democrat Party leaders, he was appointed to the Treasury Gendarmerie.⁵⁶ This, then, was his first experience as a representative of the Iranian state: not as a contemptible *vakīl*, but as an armed defender of the Constitution.

After the Majlis accepted the Second Russian Ultimatum in December 1911, he chose to remain in government service, moving from the abolished Treasury Gendarmerie to the State Gendarmerie.⁵⁷ Given the nature of his conflicts with local authorities as he rose through the ranks in the Central Province of Iran (see timeline), there is reason to believe his subsequent claim that he did so as part of “a secret revolutionary vanguard group” intending to “keep our original armed force readied under the clothes of the Gendarmerie,” but no contemporaneous text confirms this.⁵⁸ The only pre-Soviet documents that we have in which he articulates his experience of political responsibility come from February 1922, after his two exiles from Iran, during his eleven-day control of the city of Tabriz.

Lāhūtī entered Tabriz not as the leader of the mutinous force of gendarmes, but as their spokesman, elected following a suggestion from the first officers to join.⁵⁹ In Tabriz, he became

⁵⁵ *KI*, 259, 345-346. On *Irān-i naw*, see Afary, *Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, 273-282.

⁵⁶ “Muṣāḥibah bā Ṭabāṭabā’ī,” 8; Afsar, *Tārīkh-i zhāndārmārī*, 31-35.

⁵⁷ Morgan Shuster, the American advisor who initially proposed setting up the Treasury Gendarmerie in the summer of 1911, consulted the leading Democrats Muhammad-Rizā Musavvat, Sulaymān Mīrzā, Hasan Qulī-Khān Navvāb, and Mahdī Malikzādah, and they recommended Lāhūtī together with other Democrats. In accordance with this narrative, when Shuster was forced out by the Russian ultimatum and the Treasury Gendarmerie was replaced with the State Gendarmerie, Lāhūtī would have maintained his commission. *Ibid.*, 43-45.

⁵⁸ *KB6*, 169.

⁵⁹ Lāhūtī himself was no longer an officer, having been demoted upon his readmittance when he returned to Iran. See also the timeline. Bayāt, *Kūditā-yi Lāhūtī*, 37-44.

the spokesman for a revolutionary government under the ostensible leadership of a local political figure. While the local Democrat contingent conducted their own negotiations with the government of Rizā Khān in Tehran, Lāhūtī released a series of proclamations in his own name, some of which were also sent by telegraph to Tehran.⁶⁰ The proclamations are one of the last contestations of the legitimacy of Rizā Khān's government before he solidified his power. Of those that have survived, none offers a clear political program. Nonetheless, as acts of representation, they provide a useful counterpoint to his literary career. The longest was posted two hours before dawn on February 2, 1921, the day after the Gendarmerie entered Tabriz with Lāhūtī at their head. Addressing "Respected inhabitants of the city and dear other compatriots," Lāhūtī reminds readers of the sacrifices and efforts of the Gendarmerie that they have witnessed, and asserts that "our only concern and aspiration, as devotees of the homeland, is the independence of our dear country and the welfare of our compatriots." In return for this fidelity, he writes, they have been asked to replace their uniforms, "which are a historical dignity." Rejecting "the accursed clothes of the Cossack executioners, which are a reminder of tsarist times," the Gendarmes have revolted. He continues:

For this reason, considering these plans to be counter to our sincere feelings, we have entered the city and, with the Tabriz gendarmerie and the other patriotic armed forces, military and otherwise, in fact, showing a spirit and [*illegible*] of unity and alliance, we have sent our own legitimate [*haqqah*] proposals and declarations without deception or falsehood to be decided by the grand assembly [*shawrā*] and the great council of ministers, and request a decision favorable for the necessities of the country's strength and the nation's welfare. Compatriots, never fear or worry, but each carry on with your business and work, and consider this event as only for the general welfare.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 48-51, 49 n. 1..

He warns the soldiers and the populace that any offenses or oppression will be punished whether the offender is a soldier or not, and closes: “Long live Iran, and long may the freedom and independence of the homeland endure.”⁶¹

While the extant proclamations show no evidence of support for goals then under discussion among Iranian radicals, such as land reform, they do reflect a lively concern about political representation. The Gendarmerie, a smaller collectivity that has proven its willingness to sacrifice all on behalf of the large collectivity of the homeland [*vatan*] and populace, claim legitimacy in acting as the nation’s representatives in negotiations with the consultative organs of the state (here referred to as a *shawrā*, the term then already in use as a translation of Soviet). This concern is made on the basis of the historical mandate of the Gendarmerie as the professional guards of the Constitutional Revolution.⁶²

One consequence of this approach to legitimacy is a concern that the gendarmes should each consciously represent their smaller, corporate collective before the large, national collectivity. In two other surviving proclamations against looting, Lāhūtī attempts to instill just such a collective and individual awareness among the Gendarmerie. In one, he urges these “brave sons of the homeland” to “know well that you are self-sacrificers for the security and devotees of the welfare of the people, and dear compatriots,” while in the other, he informs them that “you want to prove to the world the nobility [*sharāfat*] of the love of liberty, the honor [*nāmūs*] of struggle, and your own manhood.”⁶³ In accordance, they must “strive so that more than before, our brothers and sisters in Tabriz will regard you in their hearts as the protectors of

⁶¹ Qtd. in Bayāt, *Kūditā-yi Lāhūtī*, 125-126.

⁶² Stephanie Cronin further explores the Gendarmes’ sense of their own communal purpose in “Iran’s Forgotten Revolutionary,” 125-131.

⁶³ Reproduced in Āryānpūr, *Az Šabā tā Nīmā*, vol. 2, opp. 219; Hidāyat, *Khāṭirāt va khaṭarāt*, 332.

the homeland's safety and the preservers of its honor," since "trespasses against the people" will "cause the honor [*sharāfat*] of the soldiery to be lost."⁶⁴ At the level of symbolism, Lāhūtī justifies the mutiny itself as the preservation of the Gendarmerie's status as a representative institution of the constitutionalist nation.

The consolidation of the Iranian military that provided the occasion for the mutiny is focalized through the issue of uniforms: the "historical dignity" of the gendarme uniform, associated with the constitution, contrasts with the Cossack uniform's historical baggage as an atavism, tied to an empire that no longer exists. Particularly as it manifests in the issue of uniforms, the Gendarmes' claim to be legitimate political representatives of the people rests on the basis of their status as state professionals.⁶⁵ Lāhūtī would have been especially keenly aware of this as a discharged officer who had been readmitted to Iran and the Gendarmerie only months before. In later recollections of Constitutional agitation and the Tabriz mutiny, he emphasized the radicalism of his aims, not his commitment to the legitimacy of the parliamentary processes and state institutions in which he participated. But precisely this sense of the dignity of a profession had everything to do with the kind of revolutionary spokesman and writer that he ultimately became.

In Lāhūtī's years as a Soviet poet, his first poem addressed to the "ill-fated laborer" became a touchstone for his retrospective evaluation of his Constitution-era politics, and

⁶⁴ Āryānpūr, *Az Šabā tā Nīmā*, vol. 2, opp. 219.

⁶⁵ It also relies on their standing as men capable, by virtue of their maleness and male *nāmūs*, of making representations in the civic sphere. On *nāmūs* and gender in the public sphere of the early Turkish Republic, A. Holly Shissler, "Womanhood Is Not for Sale: Sabiha Zekeriya Sertel Against Prostitution and For Women's Employment," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 4, no. 3 (2008): 12-30.

particularly his previous ideas about representation.⁶⁶ When it was used as the opening for a divan of his poetry published in Soviet-occupied Tabriz in 1941, he largely rewrote its conclusion, producing a somewhat different impression of his early politics for generations of Iranian readers.⁶⁷ The new version ends:

tu bā hamah arzishī kih dārī
dānī kih chirā hamīshah khwārī
zahmat zi tu, ni'mat az tu nabvad (1)
zīrā kih ḥukūmat az tu nabvad (2)
tu muntazir-i kumak zi ghayrī
hargiz narasad zafīr-i khayrī.
luṭf?-i digarān kushandah-i tu-st
dast-i tu rahā-kunandah-i tu-st.
v-īn dast, bih ar ziyād gardad
vā-bastah bih ittiḥād gardad.
har vaqt ḥukūmat az shumā shud
dard-i tu yaqīn bidān davā shud
tā ān-kih ḥukūmat ast zi a'yān
tu fātiḥah bahr-i khwīsh bar-khwān

Do you know why you are always miserable
Despite all that you are worth
The labor's yours, but the plenty isn't yours (1)
Because the government isn't yours (2)
While you await help from another
No philanthropic breeze will ever arrive.
The munificence?! [sic] of others is killing you
Your own hand is your liberator.
And that hand, it would be better if it became many hands
And these were clasped together to form a Union.
If ever the government became yours
Assuredly your ills would be cured by it
But as long as the government belongs to the notables
You'd better pray over yourselves.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ He quoted the poem's original form in a 1953 memoir, commenting that "at that time I only knew one path to redemption"—i.e. the Majlis. *KB6*, 166.

⁶⁷ Cf. Soroudi, "Poet and Revolution II," 246.

⁶⁸ Lāhūtī, *Lāhūtī, Dīvān ash-ār-i Lāhūtī*, vol. 1, ed. M. Muḥammad Avī 'Abbāsī (Tabriz: Hilāl-i Nāṣirī, 1320 [1941]), 1-3. The Tajik version printed in 1939 and 1941 differs in several respects from the Iranian 1941 version. *KI*, 123-126.

The poem includes footnotes, the first of which explains the extraction of surplus value in simple terms. The second reads, “This means that since the government is in the hands of the landlord and the capitalist [*sarmāyah’ dār*], you have been unfortunate, while the solution to make you fortunate is a government of the proletariat [*prūlitārīyāt*], that is, the class of laborers [*rānjbarān*.]” Lāhūtī identifies the expropriation of the peasants’ surplus with the Majlis and Shah’s usurpation of their political power, and urges suspicion of anyone claiming to act on the peasantry’s behalf. What replaces the institution of the delegate, that “other” whose gifts kill? An *ittihād*, a term used for labor unions and also for the Soviet Union (*Ittiḥād-i Shawravī*), here is presented as the possession and sum of the workers, including the Iranian peasantry. In this denial of the value of representation, we can see how the Soviet discourse of legitimacy replicates Rousseau’s “general will.”⁶⁹ Instead of putting one peasant forward as a *vakīl* who resembles the others, all the peasants should form a union capable of acting as a single historical subject. It was the critique, or concealment, of representation that would make Lāhūtī’s Soviet practice of representation possible.

3. Revolutionary Romanticism and the KUTV Vanguard

At the age of 35, Lāhūtī found himself in exile for the third time in his life, among a population of students most of whom were active Communists, and many of whom had more formal education than he. As Masha Kirasirova has shown, KUTV was “a model for the Comintern’s ‘Eastern International,’ and [...] a kind of Soviet ‘laboratory’ and ‘ecosystem’ for

⁶⁹ Ankersmit regards Rousseau’s rejection of all intermediation by representatives as a demolition of the resemblance theory of representation that made necessary the Romantic theorists’ substitution theory of representation. Ankersmit, *Aesthetic Politics: Political Philosophy Beyond Fact and Value* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 28-29. In Romantic nationalism, there is a vaguely-defined link between the sense that the folk have some single will and the bardic national poet.

the Bolshevization of Easterners.”⁷⁰ He socialized with younger students such as the Turkish avant-garde poet Nâzım Hikmet, who provided Lâhûtî with attractive models for self-reinvention, particularly in the absence of old acquaintances.⁷¹ Although by this time Lâhûtî had been participating in insurrections for fifteen years, it is here that the revolutionary, as a character type, begins to play an important role in his public self-presentation.

By referring to poses, characters, and roles, I am certainly not suggesting that the relationship between Lâhûtî’s inner life and his outer sociability and political participation became less authentic or sincere. Rather, I am suggesting that literary art and political action became connected for him in new ways. Since at least 1909, he had regarded literature as a tool of political persuasion, agitation, and perhaps commemoration. Like other Iranians in that period, he also came to see his individual actions as political representations and historical interventions. Frameworks drawn from literature would have informed his sense of his actions in certain limited ways, such as in the experience of combat or military adventure. But it was after his arrival in the Soviet Union that he came to imagine the revolutionary as a formally defined role like that of, for example, the gendarme. A consideration of Lâhûtî’s literary portraits of revolutionaries from his time at KUTV will show how Romantic poetics contributed to the literary imagination of Leninist vanguard representation.

KUTV was an institutional equivalent of Lenin’s theory of the revolutionary vanguard, and it produced self-consciously exemplary vanguardists. In doctrinal terms, the Bolsheviks

⁷⁰ Kirasirova, “Eastern International,” 114; see also Lana Ravandi-Fadai, “‘Red Mecca’—The Communist University for Laborers of the East (KUTV): Iranian Scholars and Students in Moscow in the 1920s and 1930s,” *Iranian Studies* 48, no. 5 (2015): 713-727; Irina Filatova, “Indoctrination or Scholarship? Education of Africans at the Communist University of the Toilers of the East in the Soviet Union, 1923-27,” *Pedagogica Historica: International Journal of the History of Education* 35, no. 1 (1999): 41-66.

⁷¹ See Chapter 2.

regarded their class of “professional revolutionaries” as substitutes for the proletariat in the service of effective coordinated action, unfortunately required in the short term. But the very framework of the revolutionary university could not help but produce graduates who were spokespeople twice over: for the international Communist movement (and perhaps workers and peasants) if and when they returned home, and for their national or local revolutionary movements before the Comintern in the meantime.

For KUTV students with literary aspirations, the consciousness of being a revolutionary spokesperson produced an interest in the revolutionary as a type, with a performative repertory particularly closely tied to the artistic legacy of European Romanticism.⁷² Lynn Hunt, discussing the French Revolution, observes that the legitimacy crisis of the revolutionary moment displaces legitimacy onto a charisma located in language, “in the ability to speak for the Nation.”⁷³ In Lāhūtī’s work, we encounter such a charismatic type for the first time in a poem from February

⁷² The appeal of Romantic literature to Chinese KUTV students was such that the struggle against it became a symbol of the broader struggle against revolutionary libertinism, as in a 1928 wall newspaper article, “No More Young Werthers!” Elizabeth McGuire, *Red at Heart: How Chinese Communists Fell in Love with the Russian Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 134-135. My analysis in this section follows insights from Ashton Nichols, *The Revolutionary ‘I’: Wordsworth and the Politics of Self-Presentation* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 29-55; and from Iurii Lotman’s analysis of the Decembrist revolutionary movement in early 19th-century Russia, in which he discusses their “theatricality” in terms of the “an increase in the role of *gesture* in everyday behavior,” informed by their sense of their exemplary place in history. Iurii Lotman, “The Decembrist in Everyday Life,” in Lotman, Lidiia Ia. Ginsburg, and Boris A. Uspenskii, *The Semiotics of Russian Cultural History: Essays*, trans. Alexander D. Nakhimovsky and Alice Nakhimovsky (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 81. Not all Romantic approaches to representative speech and action are revolutionary in their orientation, particularly in established nations such as Britain: Anne Frey shows a conservative celebration of the pastoral power of the settled state in Frey, *British State Romanticism: Authorship, Agency, and Bureaucratic Nationalism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).

⁷³ Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 26.

1924 that opens with the likely autobiographical portrait of a captive Iranian revolutionary, transported on foot by mounted Cossacks:

sar-u rīshī natarāshīda-vu rukhsārah zard,
zard-u bārīk chu nay.
sufrah’ī kardah hamā’il, patū’ī bar sar-i dūsh,
zhandah’ī dar tan-i vay.
kuhnah pīchīdah bih pā, chunkih nadārad pā-pūsh,
dar sar-i jādah-i Ray.

A head and beard unshaven and a sallow face,
Sallow and thin, reed-like.
With a cloth for a sash, a blanket on his back,
With rags on his body.
A cloth wrapped around his feet, for he has no shoes,
Along the road to Tehran.⁷⁴

In comparison with his earlier verse, the absence of images or conceits from classical poetry is stark. The “head-to-foot” (*sarā-pā*), used in classical verse to playfully describe the abject misery of the lover (or the beauty of the beloved), here is photographic rather than conventional. The Cossacks question him, more curious than hostile, “Are you in love with prison, beatings, and exile?” He bears witness as “a son of labor, raised up by toil,” explaining his critique of “state and faith,” and his testimony is not only an apostrophe to the poem’s readers beyond the frame of the poem, but a direct attempt to radicalize the Cossacks (“would that you understood!”). The poem concludes with a prescription for the workers of all the earth that became a long-lived slogan on the Iranian left: “unity and organization” [*vahdat va tashkilat*].⁷⁵

The KUTV poems’ approaches to costume, gesture, and sound are united by a theatricality that is completely new to his oeuvre. One of his earliest experiments in this line, which helps to draw out the significance of these revolutionary personae, is his 1923 translation

⁷⁴ *KI*, 226, 312.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 227.

from French of a section of Victor Hugo's *L'Année terrible* (*The Terrible Year*, 1872).⁷⁶ Scholars of Persian poetic modernity have often noted the special role played by translations and adaptations of Romantic literature, especially from French.⁷⁷ The education and travel circuits of the Qajar elite explain this preference in part. Lāhūtī did not come from a background that allowed for formal French education, and although his émigré cohort in Istanbul introduced him to the French language and literature, most of his reception of European Romantic poetry before he learned Russian was indirect, through the verse of Persian and Turkic poets who drew on French or Russian poetic models.⁷⁸ But the political affinities that made Romantic literature particularly appealing have been insufficiently explored.

The place of Romantic poetry in the European template for nation-building is one such basis for a Romantic filiation of modern Persian poetry, but Romanticism also provides a template for poets of the revolutionary moment claiming to speak for the people in revolt. As Ahmad Karimi Hakkak writes, "Traditional literary criticism assumes that [Constitution-era] poetry is more political [...] It also notes that this corpus encodes the attitude of the poet toward the sociopolitical events of the time in a way different from what a classical ghazal or *qasīdah* would, although it has not elucidated the nature of that difference."⁷⁹ Karimi Hakkak's work analyzes changes in the encoding process itself, but the nature of this new relationship between poetry and civic life requires further investigation. Muḥammad-Rizā Shafī‘ī Kadkanī, in his more

⁷⁶ This poem has been discussed by Amr Taher Ahmed, but with an emphasis on questions of form: Ahmed, *La "Révolution littéraire"*, 324-333.

⁷⁷ The relationship is explored throughout ibid.; see also Ahmad Karimi Hakkak, "From Translation to Appropriation: Poetic Cross-Breeding in Early Twentieth-Century Iran," *Comparative Literature* 47, no. 1 (1995): 71, n. 14.

⁷⁸ See Chapter 2.

⁷⁹ Karimi Hakkak, *Recasting Persian Poetry*, 61. As Karimi-Hakkak points out, in the period following the Constitutional Revolution, literary critics made frequent analogies between recent political transformations and the "literary revolution" [*inqilāb-i adabī*] that remained unfulfilled. Ibid., 101-102.

recent survey of Iranian literary modernization, *Bā chirāgh va āyīnah* [With a Lamp and a Mirror], explains the transformation of Persian poetics by mapping onto it M.H. Abrams' account of the shift from Neoclassical to Romantic theories of aesthetic representation in English literature. Iranian literature, too, went from “the mimetic imitation of reality” to “producing an image of the world in the artist’s mind”—that is, in Ankersmit’s terms, from a resemblance theory to a substitution theory of representation.⁸⁰ Shafī‘ī Kadkanī convincingly shows a shift in representational practices in the Constitutional and post-Constitution periods, and the new social functions of poetry made possible by that shift. His reluctance to make this new aesthetics a correlate of transformed subjective experience, as Abrams does, is understandable in light of the difference between English Romantic and Iranian Constitutional literary criticism. But I believe that the appeal of Romantic poetic models can tell us something about Persian poets’ changing sense of the relationship between individual subjectivity and historical transformations in the civic space.

L’Année terrible is one of the last major texts of Romanticism.⁸¹ As a poetic chronicle of the Paris Commune of 1871, one of the foundational events for Marxist political thought and praxis, it had a special place in the Soviet canon of world literature.⁸² It is possible that Lāhūtī was assigned the text as part of a French class at KUTV, and even his translation could have

⁸⁰ Muḥammad-Rizā Shafī‘ī Kadkanī, *Bā chirāgh va āyīnah: Dar justujū-yi rīshahhā-yi tahavvul-i shi‘r-i mu‘āṣir-i Irān* (Tehran: Sukhan, 1390 [2011]), 17-18 et passim. M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (London and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953).

⁸¹ John E. Coombes refers to it as “perhaps the last major poetic statement of European romanticism.” Coombes, “State, Self and History in Victor Hugo’s *L’Année Terrible*,” *Studies in Romanticism* 32, no. 3 (1993): 367.

⁸² On the popularity of “Sur une barricade” in the Soviet Union, Myriam Truel, “L’oeuvre de Victor Hugo en Russie et en URSS” (Ph.D. diss., Université Charles de Gaulle, 2017), 273-274 et passim.

been an assignment.⁸³ The section that Lāhūtī translated, particularly famous among revolutionaries, is frequently referred to by its first words, “Sur une barricade” (“On a Barricade”). In it, soldiers have captured a band of revolutionaries that include a twelve-year-old boy. After the soldiers have shot the boy’s adult comrades, he asks for permission to give his watch to his mother before his execution. The soldiers laugh at the obvious trick, but pity the boy and let him go. The boy returns to stand before the wall, declaring, “Here I am [*Me voilà*].” The soldiers pardon him, and Hugo concludes with a reflection addressed to the boy. Here, he expresses uncertainty about meaning “in the hurricane that goes by/ Confusing everything, good, bad, heroes, bandits,” but nonetheless celebrates the child’s bravery.⁸⁴

Lāhūtī’s translation, entitled “Sangar-i khūnīn” (“The Bloody Barricade”), excludes the coda in which the soldiers let the boy go (this is not an uncommon cut in Russian translations of the poem and may reflect the version that he received).⁸⁵ In the passage that remains, he removes the only historically specific reference (to the French Revolutionary boy hero Joseph Agricol Viala); in the first published version (*Adabīyāt-i surkh*, 1927), there is no mention of Hugo, although a subtitle reads: “One of the poems [*pārchahhā*] from the history of the Paris Commune.”⁸⁶ What remains is stylistically bare compared to Hugo’s poem. Compare the first lines of the original and Lāhūtī’s translation:

Sur une barricade, au milieu des pavés
Souillés d’un sang coupable et d’un sang pur lavés,

⁸³ Lāhūtī indicates a weak knowledge of French: KUTV form, c. 1925, RGASPI f. 495, op. 217, d. 345, l. 333.

⁸⁴ Victor Hugo, *Oeuvres poétiques*, vol. 3, ed. Pierre Albouy (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), 424-425.

⁸⁵ On pre-revolutionary Russian translations of the poem and the cuts made to them, Truel, “L’oeuvre de Victor Hugo,” 71-74.

⁸⁶ For this analysis, I focus on the version printed in Lāhūtī, *Adabīyāt-i surkh* (Samarqand, Dushanbe: Nashriyāt-i dawlatī-i Tājikistān, 1927), 36. Although subsequent editions sometimes divided or laddered the lines, this first version does not.

Un enfant de douze ans est pris avec des hommes.
— Es-tu de ceux-là, toi ? — L'enfant dit : Nous en sommes.

On a barricade, among the cobblestones
Soiled with guilty blood and with pure blood washed,
A twelve-year-old child is captured with some men.
“Are you one of them?” The child said, “We are.”

Razm-āvarān-i sangar-i khūnīn shudand asīr,
Bā kūdakī dilīr bih sinn-i davāzdah,
-ānjā budī tu ham? –balī bā īn dilāvarān

The fighters from the bloody barricade were captured
With a brave twelve-year-old boy
“Were you there too?” “Yes, with these bold men.”

Lāhūtī truncates the moralization of the second line to a single adjective. Here and throughout, he accentuates the dramaturgical elements of Hugo’s poem, cutting it down to a terse series of actions. To the same end, he expands the passage with which he closes:

Mais le rire cessa, car soudain l'enfant pâle,
Brusquement reparu, fier comme Viala,
Vint s'adosser au mur et leur dit : Me voilà.

But the [soldiers’] laughter stopped, since the pale child
Having suddenly returned, proud as Viala,
Came, leaned against the wall, and said, “Here I am.”

shūkhī shikast har kih bih ḥayrat naṣar-kunān:
maḥkūm-i khward-sāl miyāyad zi-pusht-i ṣinf.
āmad, miyān-i kūchah bih dīvār takyah dād,
khūn-sard-u bī-tazalzul-u maghrūr īstād,
ānjā kih paykar-i rufaqāyash bih khūn futād.
īn man!” [sic] –kashīd ‘arbadah –“khālī kunīd tīr!”

The joking stopped, as everyone looked on amazed:
The condemned youth is coming back from behind the file.
He came, leaned against the wall in the middle of the street
He stood with sangfroid, untrembling and proud,
There where his comrades’ bodies lay fallen in blood.
“Here I am!” he cried out, “Empty your barrels!”

Beginning with François Furet, a line of cultural historians of revolution have noted the theatricality of the revolutionary public sphere, and the importance of such theatricality in the struggle for representative legitimacy.⁸⁷ Twice in Hugo's poem, the boy steps into a revolutionary role, although offered the chance to avoid it. First, he refuses the first-person singular, drawing himself into a condemned collective ("es-tu?" "nous en sommes"). Lāhūtī's boy instead confirms his participation in the already-historical event, and secures its heroic significance ("ānjā budī?" "bā īn dilāvarān"). The second moment, suffused with nonchalant dark humor in Hugo's version, becomes performative to the point of melodrama in Lāhūtī's telling, as he invites the bullets that will not, as in Hugo's version, be held back by a pardon from the soldiers. In Lāhūtī's dramatizations of revolutionary action from this period, we can see Romantic poetics at work, combining with KUTV political education to allow Lāhūtī to integrate his personal experience into the civic space of history, and give his actions historical weight.⁸⁸ Beyond the scope of my argument here, I would suggest that in the occasional poems of Constitutionalists who were quicker to draw on French Romantic models, such as Dihkhudā, we would find a similar process of integration.

Angela Esterhammer has called the revolutionary's claim to represent the nation "a performative masquerading as a constative proposition"—that is, they seize representative legitimacy that they claim to possess already.⁸⁹ It is during Lāhūtī's KUTV studies that just such

⁸⁷ Paul Friedland, *Political actors: representative bodies and theatricality in the age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); the foundational text of this approach is François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, trans. Elborg Forster (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

⁸⁸ Here I am indebted to Irina Paperno's concept of "historicism self-consciousness" or "personalized historicism." : *Stories of the Soviet Experience: Memoirs, Diaries, Dreams* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 12.

⁸⁹ Angela Esterhammer, *The Romantic Performative: Language and Action in British and German Romanticism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 264-265.

a performative “we” enters into his poetry. Among his published Constitution-era poems, the few uses of “we” in political rhetoric demarcate the distinction between Iran and its enemies: “The trespasses onto our soil of strangers/ Have become a tale told around the world.”⁹⁰ The “we” that speaks in some later KUTV verse is qualitatively different, beginning with a poem from May 1924:

mā ranjbarzādagānīm
ābād az mā zamīn
mahṣūl-i sarpanjah-i māst
tāj-i shahān-u nigīn
[...]
bīdād-i sarmāyahdārān
mā-rā parākandah kard
‘ilm-i linīnī dubārah
şinf-i mā-rā zindah kard

ay ranjbarhā-yi dunyā
hangām-i ghayrat rasīd
bar ȝidd-i sarmāyahdārān
yakjān-u yakdil shavīd!

We are born of toilers
It’s we who cultivate the land
The seal and crown of kings
Is from the fruit of our toil
[...]
The injustice of the capitalists
Has divided us
Leninist knowledge will once again
Bring our class to life.

O toilers of the world
The time has come for devotion
Against the capitalists
Unite, heart and soul!⁹¹

⁹⁰ “Bih khāk-i mā tajāvuzhā-yi aghyār/ bar-i ahl-i jahān afsānah gardīd,” *KI*, 127; for a similar use, *ibid.*, 130. Uses that assume the people as a collectivity occur in poems dated in his collected works but unpublished until 1925 or later, but the dating of these poems must remain doubtful, at least in their extant versions, as these all contain labor discourse that appears to be a later imposition.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 232-233.

Lāhūtī speaks first with the collective voice of the toilers (inclusive of non-industrial workers), claiming on their behalf what is rightfully theirs. Still speaking for that collectivity, he reveals that it is as yet incipient. Those whom he includes in that “we” will only recognize themselves as part of it through Leninist *ilm*, the ideology through which their experience will become legible. Finally, he addresses the scattered laborers from outside, exhorting them to join the “we” for whom he has already spoken. His Soviet career rested on this mode of spokespersonship. Such a representative seeks to bring into being the unified proletarian or national subject whose existence is, at the same time, the precondition for his representations.⁹²

4. Surrogacy and Soviet National Poetry

At KUTV, Lāhūtī developed a new sense of his previous career’s meaning. But it was in Central Asia, acting and speaking on behalf of the Soviet state, that he developed a coherent program of representation-work. Setting up schools and printing agitational newspapers in the militarily unsecured space of the Tajik ASSR between 1925 and 1929, he operated in a zone of political flux where his revolutionary experience equipped him to excel. This time, however, his position was better defined: he was an empowered representative of the mighty Soviet collectivity that he had so recently joined and which he sought to create.

The significance of the Tajik borderlands for his new program of representation-work precedes his arrival there. In Moscow, he was already publishing materials bound for Persophone

⁹² This reading draws on Bourdieu’s account of the circularity of group-formation/representation, in which the “power to make a new group, through mobilization, or to make it exist by proxy, by speaking on its behalf as an authorized spokesperson, can be obtained only as the outcome of a long process of institutionalization, at the end of which a representative is instituted, who receives from the group the power to make the group.” Pierre Bourdieu, “Social Space and Symbolic Power,” *Sociological Theory* 7, no. 1 (1989): 23.

Central Asia, and he may even have been aware that Central Asian poets were writing emulations of some of his poems.⁹³ The most curious prelude to his Central Asian career is the song, composed in October 1924, quoted at the start of this chapter. The song is set to the tune of a popular song from the Soviet theater, “The Little Bricks” [“Kirpitchiki”], which recounts the First World War, October Revolution, and postwar reconstruction through the experience of a female brickmaker. Lāhūtī’s was only one of many reworkings of “The Little Bricks”: as one scholar writes, “In terms of the number of imitations, reworkings, and alterations, it has no equal in Soviet urban folklore.”⁹⁴ Lāhūtī adapted this template to the first-person recollections of a Tajik peasant before and after the October Revolution, rendered in simple international Persian with very few gestures to Central Asian dialectal specificity:

man farzand-i yak
dehqānē būdam
dar qishlāqhā-yi Tājikistān
yak zamīn dāshtēm
ān-rā mēkāshṭēm
nān mēkhwardēm az mahṣūl-i ān

I was the child
Of a peasant
In the villages of Tajikistan
We had some land
We sowed it
We ate our bread from its harvest⁹⁵

⁹³ Samuel Hodgkin, “Revolutionary Springtimes: Reading Soviet Persian-Tajik Poetry, from Ghazal to Lyric,” in *Iranian Languages and Literatures of Central Asia from the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, eds. Matteo de Chiara and Evelin Grassi (Paris: Association pour l’avancement des études iraniennes, 2015): 280-283.

⁹⁴ S.Iu. Nekliudov, “Vse kirpitchiki, da kirpitchiki...,” in *Shipovnik: Istoriko-filologicheskii sbornik k 60-letiu Romana Davidovicha Timenchika* (Moscow: Vodolei, 2005), 273. The article includes several early versions of the song.

⁹⁵ KI 250, var. 312-314. Here and below, I refer to the first printed version in *Āvāz-i tājīk*, January 19 1927. In later versions, short lines were combined to make the stanzas quatrains. Lisa Yountchi reads the poem as Lāhūtī’s attempt to recast himself as a Tajik: “Between Russia and Iran,” 54-57. However, I believe that Lāhūtī’s Tajik persona was always a transparently artificial model performance for imitation than as a claim to authentic identity.

The song describes the poor family's oppression at the hands of the village mullah, "one of the emir's officials," and their salvation after "there was a revolution in Tajikistan," and the Red Army arrived. "The enemy was annihilated/ The new age belonged to us/ The Soviet state was established."⁹⁶ Lāhūtī's projection into the past of both Tajikistan and class solidarity makes the Revolution a solution to a set of problems that preceded it.⁹⁷ He was particularly qualified to remember this invented past for Central Asians, precisely as a spokesman with no real past in the region.

The song was intended to be sung by Tajiks, "to the tune of 'The Little Bricks,'" as many printings specified.⁹⁸ As one of the most widely distributed autobiographical templates in early Stalinist Tajikistan, it helped Tajiks as they learned to produce their own "red autobiographies."⁹⁹ After Lāhūtī's return to Moscow, it also provided a template for Lāhūtī's second career of Soviet representation work, as a surrogate spokesman of Central Asia, representing (and occasionally ventriloquizing) Central Asian perspectives to a Russophone state and public.¹⁰⁰ The late 1920s and early 1930s was the peak of representative surrogacy for Central Asia. Russian audiences received "Central Asian" texts and performances by Russians

⁹⁶ "Dushman fanā shud/ davrān-i mā shud/ ḥukūmat-i shawrā bar-pā shud." Ibid., 251.

⁹⁷ On the production of class categories in Tajikistan, see Roberts, "Old Elites," 105-147.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 312-313.

⁹⁹ On the genre, see Igal Halfin, *Red Autobiographies: Initiating the Bolshevik Self* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011); and Kirasirova, "Eastern International," 123-132.

¹⁰⁰ In the historiography of Soviet Central Asia, the word "surrogate" has been closely associated with Gregory J. Massell's identification of women as a "surrogate proletariat" for the Soviet attempt to transform Muslim cultures: Massell, *The Surrogate Proletariat: Moslem Women and Revolutionary Strategies in Soviet Central Asia, 1919-1929* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974). Although the term "surrogate" is misleading in that context, it is suggestive insofar as it points to the role of outsiders acting on behalf of Central Asians in the early Soviet period. My use of surrogacy more closely resembles Jane Mansbridge's concept of "surrogate representation," although her discussion is focused on the place of surrogacy in the deliberative bodies of a representative democracy. Mansbridge, "Rethinking Representation," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 4 (2003): 522-525

such as the poet Nikolai Tikhonov, or by colonials born in Central Asia, such as the Samarkandi Armenian writer “El’-Registan” (pen-name of Gabriel’ Ureklian, 1899-1945) and the Fergana Armenian dancer Tamara “Khanum” (Petrosian, 1906-1991). To varying degrees, these artists also presented visible models of appropriate behavior in the local press: El’-Registan led the way in denunciations of “pan-Turkists,” and Tamara Khanum performed at numerous unveiling ceremonies.¹⁰¹ Their performances, like Lāhūtī’s, marked out a path for appropriate representation that Central Asians emulated. Lāhūtī’s various acts of surrogate representation will be discussed at length in Chapters 3-4.

5. Representation-Work

Thus far, I have focused on the representative claims that Lāhūtī made, with little mention of how these claims were received, either by those whom he purported to represent or by the addressees of his representations. At times he was phenomenally successful among the addressees that mattered in Moscow, and managed to negotiate desired outcomes for those whom he represented. Where his representations failed spectacularly, it was sometimes for reasons outside of the discursive realm (as in the failure of the Tabriz mutiny), and sometimes because the addressee did not wish to hear the message of those whom he represented (as we will see in the case of his letter to Stalin on behalf of the Jewish actor and director Solomon Mikhoels). At all times in his Soviet career, his representations were questioned by the organs responsible for overseeing the representation process, and contested by rival spokespeople and by members of represented communities who did not want such a spokesperson. His negotiation of such

¹⁰¹ Charles Shaw, “The Many Nationalities of Tamara Khanum: Friendship of the Peoples at Home and Abroad” (paper, Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies convention, San Antonio, TX, November 22, 2014); Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*, 372.

challenges took place in the subtle changes across endless repetitions of his life story and the stories of Iran and Central Asia in speeches and published works. Behind those public retellings lay an accumulated mass of bureaucratic documentation that the philosopher Rom Harré refers to as the “file-self.”¹⁰² Like every other Soviet citizen, Lāhūtī was called upon to answer questionnaires and autobiographical essays whenever he applied for a change of position, and the security organs exchanged notes with the Comintern and Lāhūtī’s professional organizations whenever his reliability was called into question.¹⁰³ From one challenge to another, Lāhūtī worked to make himself a more appropriate Soviet representative.

Soviet citizens’ projects of self-transformation have provided the subject for a cluster of works in cultural history on “Soviet subjectivity.”¹⁰⁴ Igal Halfin and Jochen Hellbeck, in particular, argue that citizens understood such projects as attempts to achieve unification with the social whole.¹⁰⁵ For the intelligentsia, the process offered the possibility of union with the masses through the medium of the Party, the proletariat’s representative organ.¹⁰⁶ It is precisely this relationship of political representation that has set the term for the investigation of Soviet

¹⁰² Rom Harré, *Personal Being: A Theory for Individual Psychology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 69–71. The “file-name” (my own coinage here) has a suggestion of digital information storage that is suggestive, if anachronistic.

¹⁰³ Masha Kirasirova, “Eastern International,” 116, 119–132. Kirasirova also specifically discussed the relationship between Lāhūtī’s various Soviet autobiographies in an unpublished conference paper that provided the initial impetus for the last section of this chapter: Kirasirova, “Biography on Trial.”

¹⁰⁴ Founding works include Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999); Igal Halfin, *From Darkness to Light: Class, Consciousness, and Salvation in Revolutionary Russia* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000); Anna Krylova, “Soviet Modernity in Life and Fiction: The Generation of the ‘New Soviet Person’ in the 1930s” (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins, 2000); Krylova, “The Tenacious Liberal Subject in Soviet Studies,” *Kritika* 1, no. 1 (2000): 119–146; Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on my Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

¹⁰⁵ Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*, 13 et passim.

¹⁰⁶ Halfin, *From Darkness to Light*, 105–141.

subjectivity as “class” subjectivity. Halfin critiques scholars of modern revolutions who “rehash issues predicated on the social theory of representation: inquiring as to the identity of the social group deserving representation, and whether the political practices implemented in the name of this group truly represented it.” Instead, he proposes, “we may ask how groups subject to representation were constituted in the first place.”¹⁰⁷ Soviet class, in these scholars’ analysis, is a category that emerges precisely through individuals’ rehearsal of class identities—an analysis that applies equally well to Soviet nationality or national identity throughout the decolonized world. I argue that these modern subjects try to establish not only that they authentically belong to class or national collectivities, but further, that they are legitimate representatives of those collectivities. I refer to the endless series of acts by which they build and maintain this claim as representation-work.¹⁰⁸

The case of a high-profile professional representative such as Lāhūtī might appear to be idiosyncratic, but it has implications for the interpretation of every attempt at self-reinvention within a new state-sponsored national or class identity. The rector of a provincial technical school or the trade union branch secretary for a factory, reading the questionnaires and autobiographies submitted by applicants with an acute awareness of possible judgments of their own vigilance, would have considered each application as the proof of concept for a program of representation. In this context, any fictions or elisions in those applications should not only be read as the individual’s attempts to deceive investigators or to push back against accusations—though they often served those purposes. In the context of mass mobilization, of meetings,

¹⁰⁷ Igal Halfin, *Language and Revolution: Making Modern Political Identities* (London, Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2002), 3.

¹⁰⁸ My instrumental approach to self-identification practices draws on the approach of Sheila Fitzpatrick, esp. *Tear Off the Masks: Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

parades, visits from dignitaries, and letter-writing campaigns, any citizen might come under scrutiny *as a representative*, and non-public “file autobiographies” were always already social, functioning as auditions for public representation-work.¹⁰⁹

The value of a public-facing approach to self-transformation becomes clear when we consider the case of Lāhūtī, as the Comintern, secret police, and Central Committee all did repeatedly between 1929 and 1953. From the first questionnaires (*ankety*) that Lāhūtī filled out in the Soviet Union until his public speeches in the mid-1930s, he built up a program of self-representation that was also a program of representation-work on behalf of Iranians, Tajiks, Soviet “Easterners” generally, and the Soviet Union as a whole, despite his non-resemblance to those he represented (he had never been a Communist in Iran, and did not join the Iranian Communist Party in the Soviet Union). Within the context of Soviet denunciation culture, he was an obvious target for Tajik and Iranian communists who felt that he misrepresented himself and, in doing so, claimed a status as political representative to which he was not entitled: he had some brief history of royal panegyric, and he had served the Iranian state in the post-Constitution period of reaction as a Gendarme and fought alongside Iranian “nationalists” in Kermanshah during the First World War. During a 1935 Comintern investigation on the basis of such denunciations, the investigator Ashot Abramian summarized the complaints of certain Iranian communists: “Among Iranians he has no authority, since everyone knows about his bad past and many of them resent it when they read in the Soviet press and in Lāhūtī’s works a completely inflated and made-up autobiography.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ I borrow the term “file autobiography” from Yury Zaretskiy, “Confessing to Leviathan: The Mass Practice of Writing Autobiographies in the USSR,” trans. Thomas Rollings, *Slavic Review* 76, no. 4 (2018): 1027-1046.

¹¹⁰ [Ashot Sedrakovich] Abramian, Comintern memorandum on Lāhūtī, October 23, 1935, RGASPI f. 495, op. 217, d. 345, l. 293.

Their charges were a combination of true statements, partial or probable misrepresentations, and outright slander, almost all of it hearsay presented as common knowledge (“everyone knows”).¹¹¹ Conversely, there are facts of his early life that might have been damning, but that do not appear in the extant denunciations. Each investigation concluded with the authorities declining to prosecute or censure Lāhūtī, although he was repeatedly refused a position on the Iranian staff at the Comintern because of the hostility of Iranian comrades. The Comintern’s final report from the 1932 investigation, which set the terms for the outcomes of the investigations that followed, declared:

1. The accusations made by individual Persian comrades against Comrade Lāhūtī related to his past before he joined the party are considered baseless.
2. No actions that would discredit Comrade Lāhūtī as a communist from the time of his membership in the Communist Party have been ascertained by the Comintern.
3. It is proposed that the Persian comrades stop spreading baseless rumors and gossip about Comrade Lāhūtī.
4. It is noted that the leadership of the Iranian Communist Party has not paid enough attention to the matter of Comrade Lāhūtī, and didn’t understand the proper measures for its comprehensive resolution.
5. It is considered to be quite possible to draw Lāhūtī into more active work for the Iranian CP.¹¹²

Two weeks later, the secretary of the Comintern’s Control Commission, Angarietis, appended to the decision a note that while “points 1, 2, 3, and 4 may be used in the press, point 5 is not for

¹¹¹ The charges as summarized by Abramian are paraphrased by Masha Kirasirova: “Lahuti was a nationalist who fought against Russian and British troops, was only allowed back into Iran because he wrote praise poetry about the shah, stole government money, and was a German spy. Other accusations suggested that Lahuti had abandoned his wife in Iran; that he supposedly executed soldiers to suppress a mutiny; and punitively ‘shut’ (*zamuroval*) peasants inside a wall.” Kirasirova, “My Enemy’s Enemy,” 460 n. 85; Kāvah Bayāt found the evidence for Lāhūtī’s supposed crimes in Qum to be inconclusive and for the most part the result of confused rumors in the following decades: *Kūditā-yi Lāhūtī*, 117-123.

¹¹² Sekretariat IKK, “Auszug aus dem Protokoll der Sitzung der IKK,” May 28, 1932, RGASPI f. 495, op. 217, d. 345, l. 246-247.

publication.”¹¹³ This last instruction, too, was a negotiation of Lāhūtī’s role, intended to avoid antagonizing the Iranian government unnecessarily by giving the impression that the Soviet state itself was putting this former rebel forward as its representative.

Iranian comrades professed to be shocked at the gap between Lāhūtī’s self-representations and their sense of him, particularly after several investigations failed to produce a public unmasking. By the second and third investigations, however, the inclusion of materials from previous investigations shows that investigators were well aware of the rumors, and they had even spoken with at least one witness who had known Lāhūtī in Iran and corroborated some of these charges.¹¹⁴ Halfin’s description of a lower-level purge as “a ritualized contestation of [...] class identity” applies here, insofar as Lāhūtī’s successful self-defense was proof not of his innocence but of his successful production of the right kind of self-presentation. But the Comintern also had a stake in the establishment and maintenance of Lāhūtī’s ongoing program of representation-work, as it was on their behalf as well as his own. For this reason, in retrospect Lāhūtī’s gamble appears to have been a success: he did not negotiate from a position of complete weakness. The relationship between investigator and investigated, like the relationship between

¹¹³ Z. Angaretis, “V biuro Iach. VKP/b/ pri Pravde,” June 16, 1932, RGASPI f. 495, op. 217, d. 345, l. 248.

¹¹⁴ In 1931, Husayn-Khān Sālār Zafar Sanjābī, a son of the leader of the Kurdish Sanjābī clan exiled from Iran, took refuge in Moscow, and recriminations followed between him and Lāhūtī concerned with their roles in the German and Ottoman-backed resistance in Kermanshah region during the First World War. The Armenian-Iranian revolutionary Avetis Mikaelian (nom de guerre: Sultānzādah), a leading member of the Iranian Communist Party and one of Lāhūtī’s principle antagonists, put forward Sanjābī’s attack on Lāhūtī to the Comintern: translated letters from Sanjābī to Sultānzādah, April 16, 1931, RGASPI f. 495, op. 217, d. 345, ll. 258-261; in his statement of self-defense soon afterwards, Lāhūtī complains about “the arrival in Moscow of the powerful Persian feudal lord Sanjābī”: Letter from Lāhūtī to Central Committee, August 11, 1931, RGASPI f. 495, op. 217, d. 345, l. 252.

censor and writer, contained both prosecution and coauthorship.¹¹⁵ What appeared to Iranian comrades to be a question of authenticity was not a problem for the Comintern if he was a capable spokesperson. This was a victory of the substitution theory over the resemblance theory of representation: he might not be an authentically typical Iranian Communist, but he did not need to be one to effectively represent.

Because of the Soviet Union's cycles of surveillance, denunciations, and purges, its literary representatives engaged in especially intensive representation-work. Lāhūtī is also distinctive among twentieth-century postcolonial literary representatives for the frequency with which he acted as a surrogate representative, in part as a result of the multinational nature of the Soviet project. Together, these features of Lāhūtī's career have left us an unparalleled corpus of documents of literary spokespersonship. The chapters that follow, then, constitute a study of Lāhūtī's poetic works, but they may also be read as a picaresque account of the earliest adventures of a newborn author-function, the literary representative.

Coda: Lāhūtī Misrepresented

One such incident from the last years of Lāhūtī's life, even more picaresque than most, reveals the perils of surrogate literary representation. The potency of the name, persona, and voice Lāhūtī as an instrument of spokespersonship made it a tempting target for a usurper.

On the heels of the coup against the Iranian prime minister, Muḥammad Muṣaddiq, the CIA field agent Donald Wilber became convinced that the Soviets were planning to invade and install Lāhūtī as the Iranian premier, and mounted a preemptive smear campaign to prevent such

¹¹⁵ Recent studies of the role of the censorship system in literary production have explored the combination of conflict, negotiation, and collaboration. See esp. Samantha Sherry, *Discourses of Regulation and Resistance: Censoring Translation in the Stalin and Khrushchev Soviet Era* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015).

an eventuality. At the campaign's center was a false autobiography of Lāhūtī that Wilber himself wrote and had distributed throughout Iran, entitled *An Account of My Life [Sharḥ-i Zindagānī-i man]*.¹¹⁶

In the fall of 1953, this book appeared in bookstores and bookstalls all over the city, in a facsimile of a handwritten text, "on newsprint, bound in fine chemise, assembled in 272 pages, written in handwriting, in a very neat fair copy without crossouts."¹¹⁷ At around the same time, the newspaper *Farmān*, closely associated with the Shah, printed the news that "Lāhūtī, the revolutionary poet and Russia's minister of culture, has fled the Soviet Union." Thereafter, they began printing *My Life* serially, although they did not reach the end of the book, and summaries and sections of the book were soon printed in other state-associated publications across the country.¹¹⁸ Lāhūtī was called before the Central Committee to explain himself, and in a Radio Moscow broadcast and Iranian newspaper articles, he was forced to deny the autobiography's claims that he had defected, fled, and subsequently died in Pakistan.¹¹⁹

For several reasons, this absurd forgery played an important role in the late development and afterlife of Lāhūtī's program of representation-work. First, because Wilber mined the Soviet anthologies of Lāhūtī's works for biographical information, his forgery for the first time created a first-person prose adaptation of the chronologically organized poem cycles that Lāhūtī had arranged in the late 1930s. Wilber interpolated anecdotes from memoirs, some more plausible than others, into his narrative.¹²⁰ Second, the forgery provided the impetus for Lāhūtī to write his

¹¹⁶ [Pseudo-]Abū al-Qāsim Lāhūtī [Donald Wilber], *Sharḥ-i Zindagānī-i man* ([no publisher or date given]). This incident is treated more fully in Kirasirova, "My Enemy's Enemy."

¹¹⁷ Bashīrī, intro., *Dīvān-i Lāhūtī*, c.

¹¹⁸ My account in this paragraph closely follows ibid., c; the first announcement was in *Farmān* 545, Ābān 17, 1332 [1953].

¹¹⁹ Kirasirova, "My Enemy's Enemy," 444-445.

¹²⁰ Bayāt, *Kūditā-yi Lāhūtī*, 2-6, 120-123.

fullest autobiographical works in order to save his reputation, correct the record, and reassure the Central Committee. Both his 1953 autobiographical article in *Soviet Literature* and his incomplete literary memoir drew on his earlier speeches and file autobiographies, but he was spurred to return to them after Wilber's slanders. Finally, because the forgery has continued to circulate to unsuspecting readers, its imputations have shaped and continue to shape Lāhūtī's reception in Iran.

My Life is a perverse, Borgesian labor on which Wilber must have expended many more billable CIA hours than would have been required for a simple smear campaign, and he remained very proud of the project when he later published his own memoirs, in spite of its many obvious blunders.¹²¹ Wilber's Lāhūtī is a penitent who has realized that "with my poems I have convinced innocent people to accept this new system, an example of the tyranny and injustice of the twentieth century," and who (a postscript tells us) has perished fleeing the Soviet Union to return to his beloved Iran.¹²²

When Lāhūtī declared over the radio that he was alive, a Communist, and in Moscow, the newspaper *Farmān* printed an article suggesting the voice was that of an impostor. The article was accompanied by a cartoon of a thug in a red army uniform, wearing a mask of Lāhūtī and shouting into a microphone, "Dear listeners, this is Moscow. Now Lāhūtī will speak for you!"

¹²¹ Donald N. Wilber, *Adventures in the Middle East: Excursions and Incursions* (Princeton, NJ: Darwin, 1986), 191. In particular there are frequent lapses into English syntax. Subsequent printed editions introduce still more errors of spelling and grammar. It is difficult to understand how so many Iranians have uncritically read and even cited this work. Presumably they interpreted the errors as a longtime émigré's loss of his native language. Those familiar with Lāhūtī, at any rate, were not fooled, according to Bashīrī, intro., *Dīvān-i Lāhūtī*, c-ci.

¹²² [Pseudo-]Lāhūtī, *Sharh-i Zindagānī-i man*, 168.



Fig. 1: Political cartoon of Lāhūtī as a façade. *Farmān* 572, 24 Āzar, 1332 [1953], reproduced in *Bashīrī*, intro., *Dīvān-i Lāhūtī*, cii. The lines beneath read: “You’ve seen how cotton became our line of work/ You’ve seen what a harvest our fields have produced/ You must say something, and boast/ In the form of [*dar qālib-i*] that lost friend of ours.”

The Soviet version of Bourdieu’s “oracle effect,” in which the representatives of the masses denied that they might have interests of their own, is travestied in the image of Lāhūtī as a death mask, mute but spoken through by the only real site of agency, violent and coercive.

The Soviet and Iranian leftist contestation of Lāhūtī’s legitimacy as a representative took place within a public culture of “unmasking” that had resulted in the delegitimation and purge of countless would-be spokespeople. (In fact, the slander was so effective because it coincided with a period when Iranian leftists were becoming more and more aware of how many of their

comrades in the Soviet Union had been killed.¹²³) As this case makes clear, in the Cold War, the logic of unmasking extended well beyond the Soviet semiosphere. Wilber attempts a positive unmasking of Lāhūtī as a humane penitent silenced by the Soviets. The cartoon takes up the logical corollary of this unmasking, suggesting that the name and persona Lāhūtī is, and implicitly always was, a mask through which Soviet coercive force spoke to Iran. By this point in the operation, questions of any actual person Lāhūtī's location, welfare, and ideology were irrelevant.

As can be seen from this chapter and those that follow, to regard the literary representatives of the Soviet project as mere mouthpieces of a state or an ideology that spoke through them is to underestimate the degree to which their position-taking determined the range of possible positions, despite obvious constraints and risks of arbitrary punishment. When we set aside the dissident tradition's assumption that writers such as Lāhūtī were puppets, and also those writers' own protestations that they were only the humble instruments of the masses, a complex and multilateral field of literary representations comes into view.

¹²³ For example, shortly before his death, Lāhūtī helped the Iranian writer and activist Najmī ‘Alavī, sister of Buzurg ‘Alavī, to determine the fate of their brother Murtazā, who had been executed in 1937 in Uzbekistan. Najmī ‘Alavī, *Mā ham dar īn khānah ḥaqqī dārīm*, ed. Ḥamīd Ahmadī (Tehran: Akhtarān, 1383 [2004]), 162-163.

Chapter 2

Canons I: Affiliation and Mourning in the International Persianate Press, 1918-1925

In a 1937 newspaper article, the Turkish writer Vâ-Nû (alias of Ahmet Vâlâ Nureddin) recounted for Istanbul readers a crucial moment in the modernization of Persian poetry. As he recalled, in 1923 he and the famous Turkish modernist poet Nâzım Hikmet were studying at the Communist University for Toilers of the East (KUTV) in Moscow, and there they met Lâhûtî, whom he calls, in the article's title, “[the] Persian [language]’s Most Modern Poet.”¹ He continues:

At that time Nâzım Hikmet was just trying out his well-known free verse. One day, the three of us were together, and he recited. We said, “Let’s see you try out that style [*tarz*] in Persian too!” Lâhûtî thought. We watched his eyes as he planned, saying, “Is it possible or not?”

As if suddenly rendering his verdict, he said, “Let’s see!” And the next day, he approached us in joy. During his political revolts, he’d experienced such joy when he captured a fortress: [now] it seemed he had been victorious in a literary revolt. I myself was first to hear the first Persian modern poem from the mouth of the poet himself!²

In a memoir that Vâ-Nû wrote in 1965 to commemorate Nâzım, he repeats the story, but with a different ending: “[Lâhûtî] wanted to write [Nâzım’s] sort of poems in Persian. After a few experiments, he said, ‘The classical is strong in Persian. The modern can’t get rid of it, I give up.’”³

Superimposing the two accounts allows us to see both Lâhûtî the lifelong formal experimenter, who introduced numerous Persian poetic innovations, and Lâhûtî the classicist craftsman, who revered the weight of the canon and believed that other Persian poets should, too.

¹ On KUTV, see Ch. 1.

² Vâ-Nû (Ahmet Vâlâ Nureddin), “Benim görüşüm: Farisî’nin ilk modern şairi,” *Haber Akşam Postası*, 15 February 1937.

³ “Farsça’nın klasiği kuvvetli. Modernlik kaldırıyor, vazgeçtim.” Vâ-Nû, *Bu dünyadan Nâzım geçti* (İstanbul: Cem yayinevi, 1980), 298.

It also reveals the ways that the push and pull of classical Persian literature shaped the shared literary modernity of the broader Persianate cosmopolis, and the terms of “textual transactions” between Persian-language poets such as Lāhūtī and their counterparts writing in Turkish, Uzbek, Georgian, or Urdu.⁴ For writers across the Persianate zone in the early 20th century, classical Persian poetry functioned as a threat and resource.⁵

The orientalists of the 18th and 19th centuries had made classical texts stand in for the living people of the East, whose lives and thoughts were reduced to postscripts. The representative power of those texts crowded out any possibility for Easterners to make their own political representations. In literary practice, meanwhile, the threat of the Persianate legacy was its association with the weight of the past, as orientalist discourse increasingly set the horizons for Eastern writers’ own reading of classical Persian works. Wherever national or nationalist cultural workers reified and elevated local languages, attempting to purify or vernacularize them (goals that were often at odds), they located cultural backwardness and decadence in Persian language and literature.⁶ Here, although writers’ concerns were similar in various Persianate literary languages, the timelines diverge. For example, in the first decade of Lāhūtī’s published career (1905-1916), use of classical Arabo-Persian ‘ariżī meters were in universal use in Persian poetry. Numerous Ottoman Turkish poets, meanwhile, had declared such meters unsuitable for

⁴ Rastegar, *Literary Modernity between the Middle East and Europe*.

⁵ I borrow this conceptual model from Annette Damayanti Lienau’s description of Arabic’s role in anticolonial West African literature, “Reframing Vernacular Culture on Arabic Fault Lines: Bamba, Senghor, and Sembene’s Translingual Legacies in French West Africa,” *PMLA* 130, no. 2 (2015): 419-429.

⁶ Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness*, 34; Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russia and Azerbaijan: A Borderland in Transition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 55; Erol Köroğlu, *Ottoman Propaganda and Turkish Identity: Literature in Turkey During World War I* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 41-42; Lewis, *The Turkish Language Reform*, 27-56; Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 208-214, 291-293; Shissler, *Between Two Empires*, 119-120.

their language and adopted syllabic meter, abandoning this major aspect of classical Turkic literary practice. By the October Revolution, Turkic poets in Transcaucasia and Transoxania were beginning to join them. Nâzım, for his part, confessed that he never learned how ‘*arıuzı*’ meters worked, as his mother preferred the French poet Alphonse de Lamartine.⁷

To understand Lâhûtî’s simultaneity with Nâzım, we must examine the new place that Persian language and literature achieved in the shared literary modernity of the wider Persianate zone. The narrative of post-Persianate divergence between newly national literatures inadequately explains the terms of the encounter between Lâhûtî and Nâzım in Moscow. By the end of the First World War, there is a less obvious counter-story. Persian literature had been a reference point for fin-de-siècle European and American writers’ challenges to cultural conservatism.⁸ Particularly Europe-savvy writers and critics within the Persianate zone made use of this fashion to enter European conversations as experts and reframe the Persian tradition for their new national audiences.⁹ In the process, they developed approaches to the “Eastern” literary heritage that were international and even counter-nationalist. Across the Persianate world, intellectuals made classical Persian poetry a third term between international European languages and local or national languages.

This chapter shows how classical Persian literature functioned as a resource for non-national projects of cultural modernization in the early twentieth century, using the examples of

⁷ Hikmet and Ekber Babayev, “Nâzım Hikmet kendi şiirini anlatıyor,” in *Konuşmalar*, ed. Güven Turan (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayıncılığı, 2002), 185–186.

⁸ Jos Biegstraaten, “Khayyam, Omar xi. Impact on Literature and Society in the West,” in *EIr*, article last modified December 15, 2008, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/khayyam-omar-impact-west>; Aleksis Rannit, “Iran in Russian Poetry,” *The Slavic and East European Journal* 17, no. 3 (1973): 266–269.

⁹ Cf. Peter Balakian, “Poet from Kars: Yeghishe Charents and Armenia’s Modern Age,” in *Vise and Shadow: Essays on the Lyric Imagination, Poetry, Art, and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 106–109; Pue, *I Too Have Some Dreams*.

two collective literary enterprises in which Lāhūtī participated in the early 1920s, both outside of Iran. In the literary activities of an ensemble of writers and critics who collaborated with Lāhūtī between 1921 and 1924, between Istanbul and Moscow, we can observe how Lāhūtī became a vector for strategies of Persian canonic renovation and redeployment in their transfer from imperial cultures to national ones. This first stage of canon reformation was unsystematic and had little effect on the cultural institutions of the broader societies in which these writers lived and published. Nonetheless, the state cultural institutions that followed bear the unmistakable imprint of the discussions of this period. As Farzin Vejdani writes, discussing the “Persian republic of letters” of E.G. Browne’s correspondents, “Many of the ideas forged in the 1910s and early 1920s in these literary circles and associations became central to the state’s official educational policy on literature by the late 1920s and 1930s.”¹⁰ The uniquely connected figure of Lāhūtī allows us to see how this Iranian discussion overlapped with similar discussions in the Ottoman and Russian empires. Through a literary prosopography and publishing history with Lāhūtī at its center, I trace how political radicals and advocates of modernization, operating in the space between three collapsing empires and a host of new national formations, laid claim to a select canon of pre-modern Persianate writers.¹¹

Furthermore, I explain why such writers placed classical Persian literature, their *bête noire*, at the center of that new internationalist canon. Orientalists had made classical Persian texts the authoritative voice of the East, but orientalists had also given those texts such civilizational prestige that the classical Persian canon could be measured against the civilizational achievements of Europe. If Eastern writers could seize control over the

¹⁰ Vejdani, *Making History in Iran*, 156.

¹¹ In using the term “radical” for writers who would not have self-identified thus, I follow Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860-1914* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010), 3.

representational power of those texts from Western orientalists and writers, it could provide the basis for a program of representation with legitimacy before the West. In the international Persianate literary space, I argue, writers reappropriated classical Persian poetry through acts of *affiliation* and *mourning*. By *affiliating* with certain classical poets as the basis of an “Eastern” genealogy of modern culture, some writers rewrote the narrative of the oriental golden age, while yet evading the national literary historiography of filiation. By representing classical Persian literature as a ruin, a previous shared habitation of Persianate peoples, some of the same writers established a Persianate philology of *mourning*, dethroning that literature’s authoritative status as their representative. This attitude of mourning paradoxically reified the Persian canon as a discursive object, ensuring its continuing importance for the idea of literature, while externalizing it and thus opening up wider possibilities for non-traditional poetic practice.

Both of the critical frameworks that I borrow in this chapter, affiliation from Edward Said’s late rereading of Goethe and mourning philology from Marc Nichanian’s account of early Armenian nationalism, are attempts to account for the relationships within a cluster of 19th-century developments that cast shadows over the twentieth century: orientalism, philology, literature, and nationalism.¹² When applied to the international Persianate space in the early 20th century, their approaches are complementary. Nichanian helps us to see how Easterners, by their adoption of Oriental philology as a mode of “autoscropy,” turned classical texts into the only way they could access their own authentic voice, which was always already in a past of ruins. Said draws our attention to the degree to which the archaeology of these ruins was an elective process,

¹² On the relationships within the same cluster, see also Mufti, *Forget English!*; Siraj Ahmed, *The Archaeology of Babel: The Colonial Foundation of the Humanities* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017). While I do not address these works’ arguments directly here, in my investigation of the ongoing significance of Persianate practices of reading and writing in the early 20th century, I follow on Mufti and Ahmed’s calls for a recovery of non-colonial critical and literary traditions.

permitting Easterners to choose their forerunners outside the temporality and geography of the nation.

Two enterprises bookend Lāhūtī’s move to the Soviet Union: the journal *Pārs*, which he co-edited in 1921 in Istanbul, and the Soviet Central Eastern Publishing House (*Tsentral'noe vostochnoe izdatel'stvo*), where he first worked in Moscow. After introducing the two institutions, I will examine two specific canon-building projects that Lāhūtī and his colleagues brought from Istanbul to Moscow, and show how the transfer affected the modern writers’ conception of the literary tradition in each case.

Pārs

When Lāhūtī founded the journal *Pārs* together with the Swiss-educated Iranian critic and playwright Hasan Muqaddam in the spring of 1921, he already had experience as an editor from his time in Kermanshah during the First World War. From the outset, Lāhūtī’s literary and publishing activities had an international dimension: he produced his Constitution-era satirical verses under the acknowledged influence of the Azerbaijani poet Şəbir, based in the Russian Transcaucasus, one of his earliest poems had been published in *Habl al-Matīn*, an Iranian émigré newspaper printed in Calcutta, and he published Kermanshah’s first newspaper, *Bīsutūn*, during the first Constitutional period (starting in 1907).¹³ But *Pārs* was his first periodical published outside of Iran, and its internationalism was reflected in its bilingual organization. It consisted of a Persian section managed by Lāhūtī and a French section managed by Muqaddam. The journal

¹³ A letter that Lāhūtī wrote to Şəbir’s Azerbaijani biographer on June 17 1954 is qtd. in Āryānpūr, *Az Şabā tā Nīmā*, vol. 2, 169-170, fn. 1; of *Bīsutūn* little trace remains, despite the extended research and inquiries recounted by the Kermanshah scholar Muhammad Husayn Shīriyān in *Tārīkh-i maṭbū ‘āt-i ustān-i Kirmānshāh*, 69-74.

ran approximately biweekly, in six issues, from April to July of 1921, when the censors closed it. Lāhūtī left for Tabriz shortly thereafter.¹⁴

Pārs was, for its brief run, much discussed in the Istanbul Iranian community. Produced with the support of Aḥmad Malik Sāsānī, a diplomat at the Iranian embassy, it had a constituency of the European-educated members of Muqaddam's "Young Iran" club and Lāhūtī's fellow radical writers, including Sa'īd Nafīṣī and Mīrzādah 'Ishqī.¹⁵ It also had a base of readers and even contributing writers among intellectual Turks, some of whom were fallen stars of Ottoman politics. These included Abdullah Cevdet, a founding secularist intellectual of the Ottoman Empire's ruling Committee of Union and Progress (CUP, in power 1908-1918), and Rızā Tevfik, a politician and professor who collaborated in studies of Persian poetry with the British orientalist E. G. Browne and the Iranian scholar Husayn Dānish.¹⁶ Soon after *Pārs* folded, Rızā Tevfik and Dānish were forced out of their professorships at Istanbul University. The

¹⁴ For Muqaddam's limited participation in Lāhūtī's coup, Isma'il Jamshīdī, *Hasan Muqaddam va "Ja far-Khān az farang āmadah"* (Oakland, CA: Jahān, 1984), 8-12.

¹⁵ [Aḥmad-]Khān Malik Sāsānī, *Yādbūd'hā-yi sisfārat-i Istānbul* (Tehran: Sahāmī, 1966), 143-144, 209-211; Jamshīdī, *Hasan Muqaddam*, 8; Sa'īd Nafīṣī, *Bih Rivāyat-i Sa'īd Nafīṣī: Khāṭirāt-i Siyāsī, Adabī, Javānī*, ed. 'Alī-Rızā I'tiṣām (Tehran: Nashr-i markaz, 2002), 286. Sāsānī, Muqaddam's cousin, also contributed to *Pārs* under the pen-name Mihr-Ispand.

¹⁶ Cevdet had left the CUP in 1908, and wrote for *Pārs* in the midst of a phase in which he was particular interested in Persian poetry, and shortly before one of his periodic blasphemy trials. Abdullah Djevdet, "Omar Khayyam et J.M. Guyau," *Pārs* 6 (1921): 81-83 (the journal's two languages are numbered separately). In this year see also Cevdet, *Dil'mestū-i Mevlânâ ve Ğazzâlî'de marifetüllâh: ruba'iyyât-i Ğazzâlî, Örfî'de şîir ve irfân* (İstanbul: Orhanîye matba'aası, 1921); on the trial, Necati Alkan, "'The Eternal Enemy of Islām': Abdullah Cevdet and the Baha'i Religion," *Bulletin of SOAS* 68, no. 1 (2005): 1-20. Cevdet, like Lāhūtī, came from a Kurdish family, likely a contributing factor both writers' cosmopolitan conceptions of Persianate culture. Rızā Tevfik, a member of the Bektâshī sufi order and longtime persophile, had been one of the signatories of the ignominious Treaty of Sevres by which the Ottoman Empire surrendered to the Entente after the First World War, and for that betrayal, he would be expelled from Turkey in 1922 following Kemalist victory in the Turkish War of Independence. Peter Chelkowski, "Edward G. Browne's Turkish Connexion," *Bulletin of SOAS* 49, no. 1 (1986): 25-34. Farzin Vejdani has shown that the "Persian republic of letters" of Browne and his Iranian and Indian collaborators developed an anti-imperialist critique of orientalist literary historiography: *Making History*, 147-156.

circumstances instantiate the nostalgia shared by many *Pārs* contributors for a Persianate commons that preceded nationalisms, as well as the opposition to such nostalgia. In a public discussion, Dānish had claimed that the 16th-century Oghuz poet Fużūlī was not a Turk, but an ‘acem (a term that suggested a capacious, shared Muslim culture of non-Arabs); Tevfik concurred, “[even] if he’s a Turk, so what [*ne çıkar*]?,” and the resulting student protests led to the ouster of both.¹⁷

Rızâ Tevfîk, unlike Cevdet, contributed to the Persian half of the journal, providing comment on the soul and race [‘*irq*] of Iran.¹⁸ The Persian half sometimes contained more political items, advocating Persian education for Iranian émigré youth or providing an internationalist view with articles like “Mexico is the Iran of America.”¹⁹ Initially, the editors intended an exchange, in which they would inform western and eastern readers about the pre-modern and contemporary poets of Iran, while also “bring[ing] into print for the Eastern world the literary works of the West.”²⁰ This latter goal fell by the wayside, and the journal only conveyed western scholarship and culture insofar as it reflected on Persian literature and art. At the same time, Lāhūtī devoted the Persian side to ever more essays on neglected contemporary poets, particularly from northwestern Iran. In his desire to protect such writers “from the

¹⁷ Kazım İsmail Gürkan, *Darıulfünun grevi* (Istanbul: Harman Yayıncılık, 1971).

¹⁸ The latter essay explores the Aryan origins of Iran, placing it within another tradition of Eastern status-seeking in the age of orientalism and empire: Faylsūf Rızâ Tawfiq-bik, “Irq-i īrānī,” trans. Lāhūtī [presumably from Turkish], *Pārs* 2 (1921): 20-26. For a comparable case in an Istanbul Armenian literary journal less than ten years earlier, see Nichanian, *Mourning Philology*, 196-214.

¹⁹ Lāhūtī, “Hikāyat,” *Pārs* 3 (1921): 41; Mihr-Ispand, “Mikzīk īrān-i Āmrīkā ast,” *Pārs* 1 (1921): 13-16.

²⁰ “Majallah-’i Pārs,” *Pārs* 1 (1921): 1-2. By comparison, the French mission statement promises to “work for the diffusion of occidental culture in the Orient”; la redaction, “Notre but,” *Pārs* 1 (1921): 1-2. That is, from the beginning, the goal of mutual exchange was presented only to readers of Persian, and the goal before the Western audience was non-reciprocal self-representation.

catastrophe of oblivion,” he urged “the enlightening youth of today to send in accounts of the writers and poets they know, with samples of their works.”²¹

On the French side, *Pārs* offered critiques of misleading travelogues and orientalist mistranslations or misinterpretations of Persian poets, alternating with free-verse translations of metered Persian ghazals and *rubā’īyāt* by Lāhūtī and other contemporary poets. Each issue closed with a collection of aphorisms by a Mirza Ḥasan, the only writer who played the role of the indolent Persian (although by way of rehashed Wildean dandyism). But it is the journal’s analyses of Persian literature, often framed by Muqaddam’s “Nouvelles lettres persanes,” that drew the most correspondence from French readers such as André Gide.

Beyond the broader preoccupation with exile as a modern condition in comparative literature and postcolonial studies, exilic Istanbul has recently received much attention in the historiography of comparative literature and “world literature.” As Kader Konuk and others have shown, for Jewish literary scholars such as Erich Auerbach who left Nazi Germany to take up positions at Turkish universities, the modernizing and universalizing project of Kemalist Turkey provided a dramatic case of the descent of *Weltliteratur* from diversity into homogeneity.²² Lāhūtī’s early career, however, partakes of a different kind of exilic modernity, for which Istanbul functioned as a key node, drawing together inter-imperial networks of Eurasian radical politics and culture. From 1914 to 1922, although Lāhūtī wrote numerous poems mourning his exile from Iran, he operated in a continuous space of overland revolutionary activity between the Ottoman Empire, Iran, and Russia. When he fled to first Soviet Azerbaijan and then Moscow

²¹ Lāhūtī, “Īrān va udabā-yi ān,” 53.

²² Kader Konuk, *East West Mimesis: Auerbach in Turkey* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

after his failed officers' coup in 1922, he, like other students at KUTV, initially viewed the Soviet Union as a fulcrum from which to move a broadly conceived "East."

The Central Eastern Publishing House

As it transpired, in the early 1920s it was Moscow where an Iranian writer could become indispensable as a representative of the Persian canon. More than thirty years before Auerbach's seminal article "Philology and *Weltliteratur*," the Russian writer Maxim Gorky attempted to revive Goethe's dream of *Weltliteratur* with a Soviet state-sponsored publishing series entitled World Literature (*Vsemirnaia literatura*), in accordance with Marx's anticipation of world literature as a progressive force.²³ From 1919 to 1924, Gorky oversaw the translation of approximately 120 works of literature.²⁴ In 1919, the press laid out an initial plan of exclusively European and American literature.²⁵ But by later that year, admitting the shortcoming, they commissioned the buddhologist Sergei Ol'denburg to "attempt to connect the classics of the East with world literature in the consciousness of Russian readers, uniting them with the classics of Western literatures."²⁶ This attempt began with two volumes of critical essays to introduce "the characteristics of the literature of the East, without which the [...] translations would be poorly

²³ Erich Auerbach, "Philology and *Weltliteratur*," trans. Maire and Edward Said, *Centennial Review* 13, no. 1 (1969), 1-17; on the World Literature Press, Jerome David, *Spectres de Goethe: les métamorphoses de la "littérature mondiale"* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2012).

²⁴ Marx's brief remark on world literature in the Communist Manifesto has drawn extensive commentary: cf. S.S. Prawer, *Karl Marx and World Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 138-165; Aijaz Ahmad, "The Communist Manifesto and 'World Literature,'" *Social Scientist* 28, nos. 7/8 (2000): 3-30.

²⁵ *Katalog izdatel'stva "Vsemirnaia literatura" pri Narodnom komissariate po prosveshcheniiu* (St. Petersburg: "Vsemirnaia literatura," 1919).

²⁶ Ol'denburg, S.F. et. al., *Literatura vostoka*, vol. 1 (Petersburg: Izd. Vsemirnaia literatura, 1919), 70.

understood by the reader.”²⁷ These essays, by many of the most renowned Russian orientalists, described Indian, Arabic, Turkic, and other literary canons defined in philological terms, but notably absent from the list, either among language groups of the Soviet Union or of “world literature,” was Persian.²⁸

This oversight stands in contrast to a less well-known effort to initiate a Soviet world-literary canon. In 1922, with the South Caucasus and most of Central Asia under Bolshevik control, a similar enterprise was initiated for the readerships of the Eastern nationalities themselves.²⁹ The state-sponsored Central Eastern Publishing House (hereafter, Eastern Publishing House) was established under the directorship of the Kazakh commissar Năzīr Töräqūlov. In addition to numerous translations of agronomy textbooks and political pamphlets aimed at farmers, herders, and oil workers, the press published a literary series managed by the Volga Tatar critic Zinnātulla Naushirvan.³⁰ It was here that Lāhūtī worked as a typesetter, establishing his Bolshevik credentials and finding opportunities for publication while studying at KUTV. Many of these literary editions were multilingual, pairing Persian poetry with an interlinear translation in another Eastern language, a reflection of the continued prevalence of Persianate multilingualism in the Soviet East in the first years after the revolution. In 1924 the

²⁷ Ibid., 5.

²⁸ The editorial statement, for its part, mentioned only Iranian antiquity. Ibid., 70-71.

²⁹ For a useful discussion of translated Persianate poetry and the Soviet project of world literature, see Rebecca Gould, “World Literature as a Communal Apartment: Semyon Lipkin’s Ethics of Translational Difference,” *Translation and Literature* 21 (2012), 402-421.

³⁰ Naushirvan had written for the CUP-oriented pan-Turkist journal *Turkish Hearth* (*Türk Ocağı*) during the First World War and fought in Anatolia with the leftist Green Army during the Turkish War of Independence: Erden Akbulut, ed., *Millî Azadlık Savaşı Anıları: Affan Hikmet, Ahmed Cevat Emre, Kazım Kip, Cemile Selim Nevşirvanova, Ziyasetullah Nevşirvanov* (İstanbul: Tüstav, 2006), 107-108. Almost all of the Tatars, Azerbaijanis, and Central Asians involved with the Eastern Publishing House had spent time in Istanbul and written for periodicals there. On the broader milieu, see Emin Özdemir and Mehmet Yusuf Çelik, “Osmanlı’dan Cumhuriyet’e Türkleri Konulu Haber ve Makaleler Bibliografyası (1908-1923),” *Turkish Studies* 8, no. 11 (2013), 247-277.

press was closed, merged into the new Central Publishing House of Peoples of the USSR (*Tsentral'noe izdatel'stvo narodov SSSR*). That later press maintained the distinction between Soviet national literatures and those beyond the border more carefully than the Eastern Publishing House, in keeping with a reduced focus on world revolution.³¹

In the short time of its operation, the literary and critical works printed by the Eastern Publishing House sketched out a revolutionary Persianate canon. In addition to journals and multi-author anthologies, it produced the following works by 1923: 1) Tatar and Azerbaijani anthologies of Khayyām's *rubā'īyāt*, each with critical essays and interlinear prose translations; 2) a Tatar volume on the philosophy and literary works of the 10th-11th-century Arab polymath Abū al-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī; 3) a collection of verse and prose by the late-Ottoman reformist poet Tevfik Fikret, with an introduction and glossary for Azerbaijani readers; 4) a dialogue in Uzbek by the Bukharan reformist poet 'Abd al-Ra'ūf Fiṭrat in which the characters discuss the poetry of the 17th-18th-century Indo-Persian poet Bēdil; and 5) a Turkish-Azerbaijani-Persian volume replying in verse and prose to a poem by the 12th-century Caucasian Persian poet Khāqānī, on which Lāhūtī, Naushirvan, and Nâzîm collaborated.³² This series' canonic synthesis echoed previous trans-imperial Muslim reformist canons, and, though some of its specifics would change before the emergence of the 1930s socialist realist canon of world literature, it set a precedent for that canon, and for the national literary canons of Soviet Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan,

³¹ The continuity between the two presses is evidenced by the presence of the Central Eastern Publishing House seal on the back of several publications from Central Press of the Peoples of the USSR from 1924: cf. Lāhūtī, *Rubā'īyāt* (Moscow: Tsentral'noe izdatel'stvo narodov SSSR, 1924).

³² In addition to works cited below, Tevfik Fikret, *Muntahab-i parçalar*, ed. 'Ali-Ejdar Sa'idzade (Moscow: Tsentral'noe vostochnoe izdatel'stvo, 1923), which also cites Rızâ Tevfik's writings. This Communist defense of a "bourgeois" poet returned to Turkey with Nâzîm's 1930 essay, "Tevfik Fikret," *Sanat, edebiyat, kültür, dil*, ed. Güven Turan (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayıncılığı, 2002), 47-49.

and Tajikistan. As such, all the press's publications, including books in whose production Lāhūtī probably played no role, help to elucidate the role of Persian literary canons in revolutionary Istanbul and Moscow.

A Canon of Affiliation: Khayyām among the Materialists

In his introduction to the 2003 edition of *Orientalism*, Said reconsidered the case of Goethe's *West-östlicher Divan*. Where previously he had emphasized Goethe's construction of an entire Orient that he had not even visited, here he applauded Goethe's intimate sympathy for the classical Persian poetry that he interpreted.³³ The elective bond that Goethe establishes with the "seven greats" of Persian poetry, and with Hāfiẓ in particular, became an instance of the shift from filiation to affiliation that Said had theorized in *The World, the Text, and the Critic*.³⁴ There, Said argues that rejection of the "natural" bond of filiation (family, homeland) in favor of affiliation to an elective community is a move typical of literary modernism.³⁵ Furthermore, it shades into "transpersonal forms—such as guild consciousness, consensus [...] and the hegemony of a dominant culture." In this category, he includes the institutionalization of the humanities and its Eurocentric literary canon.³⁶ For intellectual communities in which aspiration to literary modernity coincided with the advent of a sort of literary nationalism, affiliation sometimes presented itself in the guise of filiation—the reformed canon might be naturalized as a national family. But in the literary community of the Central Eastern Publishing House, this was

³³ Said, preface, *Orientalism*, xvi-xix; I follow the argument of Fritz Wefelmeyer, "'He Does Not Deny the Suspicion that He Himself Is a Muslim': Goethe, Said and the Other Orient," in *Postcolonialism and Islam: Theory, Literature, Culture, Society and Film*, eds. Geoffrey Nash, Kathleen Kerr-Koch et. al. (London: Routledge, 2014), 142-154.

³⁴ Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 19-20.

³⁵ Ibid., 16-19.

³⁶ Ibid., 20-23.

not the case. The set of chosen predecessors and contemporaries that they gathered was international and oppositional to the dominant culture, affiliation in the modernist sense described by Said.

Lâhûtî's first Soviet anthology, printed in 1924, rewrote the most blasphemous of Khayyâm's *rubā'iyât*, turning them into exhorting slogans and building a materialist cosmology in which "labor is religion, and the factory its [holy] book."³⁷ In producing it, he embraced the title that Nâzîm had given him in a poem the previous year: "Communist Khayyâm."³⁸ To present Khayyâm as a positive classical model for Persophone and Turcophone literary modernizers was not a Soviet innovation. A clear chain of transmission links early Soviet translations and critical works on Khayyâm to Istanbul precedents. In particular, both literary communities defended a select canon of Persian classics as useful and inspiring to young positivist radicals. In late Ottoman Istanbul and early Soviet Moscow, critics and poets sought after an indigenous "Eastern" genealogy of modernity, especially literary modernity, and found it in the verse of earlier models such as 'Umar Khayyâm and Bêdil. Furthermore, in counterdistinction to nationalist appropriation of figures such as Khayyâm by some contemporaneous writers and cultural officials, the radical project of affiliation to classical Persian models was internationalist from the outset. Writing at the end of the multinational empires of Persianate Eurasia, the writers of *Pârs* and the Eastern Publishing House claimed Khayyâm for an Eastern canon of radicals that was international in scope.

The portrait of radical Khayyâm owes much to the Ottoman thinker and politician Abdullah Cevdet, a key transmitter of 19th-century German popular materialism and fin-de-

³⁷ Lâhûtî, *Rubâ'iyât*, 21.

³⁸ Abû al-Qâsim Lâhûtî, Nâzîm Hikmet, and Ziynâtullâh Nawşîrvân, *Krimil* (Moscow: Tsentral'noe vostochnoe izdatel'stvo, 1923), 2.

siècle neopositivism to the CUP milieu and, as we have seen, a one-time contributor to *Pārs*.³⁹

Already in 1914, Cevdet had published an essay in the secularist journal *İctihat* and a volume of Khayyām translations with commentary.⁴⁰ In these works he provides a succinct summary of orientalist scholarship and western literary and popular interest in Khayyām. Describing the debate between those who consider Khayyām an atheist materialist and those who find Sufi mysticism in his works, he argues for the former, comparing the poet to Epicurus and Lucretius. In an Ottoman positivist discourse frequently hostile to poetry as useless or pernicious, and classical “divan” poetry doubly so, Cevdet stood out as a defender of poetry, which could instill positivist ethics and convey the full imaginative scope of materialist truth. Indeed, the essay that he contributed to *Pārs* (first published a month before in *İctihat*) belongs to his late phase, in which he updated his materialism with Henri Bergson’s vitalism, incongruously combined with the aestheticism of Jean-Marie Guyau.⁴¹ Here, he gives these philosophies an Eastern pedigree, interpreting a couplet from al-Ma‘arrī on the origin of man from matter as an anticipation of Darwin’s evolution and Bergson’s new monism. Cevdet further bolsters the revelatory role of poetry by setting Guyau’s oceanic vision of nature alongside a similar metaphor from Khayyām.⁴²

³⁹ M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, “Blueprints for a Future Society: Late Ottoman Materialists on Science, Religion, and Art,” in *Late Ottoman Society: The Intellectual Legacy*, ed. Elisabeth Özdalga, 37-64.

⁴⁰ Abdullah Cevdet, *Rubā‘iyât-i Hayyām ve türkçeye tercumeleri* (Istanbul: Kütüphane-yi İctihat, 1926); 1st ed. 1914; Cevdet, “Ömer Hayyām,” *İctihat* 91 (1914), 2031-2036.

⁴¹ Hanioğlu, 43-47.

⁴² Cevdet’s argument is punctured, however, by *Pārs* co-editor Hasan Muqaddam’s scholarly footnote denying that the *rubā‘i* in question was actually Khayyām’s. See also Nazım İrem, “Bergson and Politics: Ottoman-Turkish Encounters with Innovation,” *The European Legacy* 16, no. 7 (2011), 873-882. It is Cevdet’s mention of al-Ma‘arrī, based on orientalists’ comparisons between him and Khayyām, that accounts for the anomalous inclusion of one Arabic poet in the otherwise Turco-Persian Eastern Publishing House series, although it also speaks to a broader imagined community of Islamic free-thinkers.

Muqaddam likewise highlights Khayyām’s atheism in *Pārs*, applauding a new translation’s textual rigor: “Nothing comes to cloud my joy, none of that disturbing mysticism and reconciliation with good God that some excessively zealous believers have [...] added to the poet’s works, so frankly pagan.”⁴³ For Muqaddam, more attuned to the European Khayyām, the poet’s atheism is that of a pessimist aesthete, an interpretation that the more famous Iranian writer Şādiq Hidāyat would also make in his works on Khayyām, beginning in 1924.⁴⁴ The Istanbul scholars Rızâ Tevfik and Ȣusayn Dānish, in their own scholarly selection and translation of Khayyām’s *rubā’īyāt* that they published in 1922, muddled materialism with pessimism and extended the range of philosophical and literary points of comparison, adding Shakespeare to Lucretius and al-Ma‘arrī, and Schopenhauer to Bergson.⁴⁵

The 1922-1924 Moscow editions drew on Rızâ Tevfik and Ȣusayn Dānish’s scholarly apparatus.⁴⁶ The Azerbaijani edition borrowed their translations of many *rubā’īyāt*, as well as photographs and illustrations.⁴⁷ However, it was Cevdet’s first, more straightforwardly polemical and materialist use of Khayyām and al-Ma‘arrī that set the hectoring tone. Khayyām becomes “the East’s merciless critic of the life of human society of his time and a mocker of all its vain dogmas,” compared favorably as a “great revolutionary” to his (supposed) schoolmate Ȣasan

⁴³ Ali No-Rouze (pen-name of Muqaddam), “Nouvelles lettres persanes: À propos d’une traduction d’Omar Khayyam,” *Pārs* 2 (1921): 19.

⁴⁴ Iraj Parsinejad, *A History of Literary Criticism in Iran, 1866-1951: Literary Criticism in the Works of Enlightened Thinkers of Iran: Akhundzade, Kermani, Malkom, Talebof, Maraghe’i, Kasravi and Hedayat* (Bethesda, MD: IBEX, 2003), 201-210.

⁴⁵ Hüseyin Daniş, *Rubâ’iyât-i Ömer Hayyâm* (Istanbul: İ lkbal, 1927) [1st ed. 1922, Evkaf]. Rızâ Tevfik was a co-author and editor, but is not credited on the 1927 edition’s title page.

⁴⁶ “[Abbâs] ‘Aliyûf, ‘Ömar Xayyâm ve rubâ’îyâti, intro. “Z. N.” (Moscow: Tsentralnoe vostochnoe izdatel’stvo, 1924). For the Tatar edition, written exclusively by Naushirvan, I relied on descriptions in the Azerbaijani edition.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 83. ‘Aliyûf acknowledges the source, but points out that Dānish and Tevfik had themselves taken them from an English edition of Fitzgerald’s version.

Sabbāḥ.⁴⁸ Naushirvan undertakes the instrumentalization of Khayyām’s legacy quite consciously, writing, “to make use of their works to spread our own revolutionary atheist thought among the masses of young people [...] is our duty and our right.”⁴⁹ He sums up the cross-temporal and international canon that he has assembled: “Lucretius, ‘Umar Khayyām, Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Ma’arrī and Tevfik Fikret, these are each society’s [...] precious craftsmen and militant thinkers.”⁵⁰

The ease with which Ottoman positivism could be integrated into a Soviet context should not be surprising. CUP and the Bolshevik cadres emerged from similar processes of the peripheral reception of German positivist thought, often in popularized form, and shared similar aspirations as vanguard parties hoping to hurry their publics from backwardness to modernity. For several years after the revolution, Muslim reformists across the former Russian Empire who had looked to Istanbul for inspiration considered the Soviet project to be the continuation of their project of modernization, and enthusiastically embraced the new means put at their disposal for the project.⁵¹ ‘Abbās ‘Alīev, a Bukharan activist whose essays accompany the Azerbaijani

⁴⁸ Hasan Şabbāḥ was the 11th-12th-century leader of an Isma‘ili Muslim group that has subsequently been referred to as the Assassins. The myth that Khayyām and Ḥasan were classmates, attested quite early but revived by Fitzgerald’s introduction, had already been debunked when the Soviet volume was published: E. G. Browne, “Yet More Light on ‘Umar-i Khayyām,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (1899): 409-416.

⁴⁹ The Eastern Publishing House’s efforts to bring Khayyām to the masses may be contrasted with Muqaddam’s account of the canon in an article that he published in 1927 in Alexandria. Sa‘dī, Firdawsī, and Ḥāfiẓ belong to every Iranian but, Muqaddam writes, “the true Khayyām has only survived in the heart and spirit of an independent elite and in the admiration of profligates.” No-Rouze (see n. 43), “Omar Khayyam,” *Messages d’orient* 1 (1926): 149. Nâzım similarly found Khayyām’s addressees to be a limited elite in his *rubā’īyāt* of the 1940s, though for him this was a fault. In one *rubā’ī*, he imagines a shoeless man replying to Khayyām: “I don’t have enough money to buy bread, let alone wine...” Nâzım Hikmet, *Kuvâyi millîye*, ed. Güven Turan (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2002), 219; translation from Nazim Hikmet, *Rubaiyat*, trans. Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk (Providence, RI: Copper Beech Press, 1985), 27.

⁵⁰ ‘Aliyūf, ‘Ömar Xayyām, 3-4.

⁵¹ Cf. Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*.

Khayyām edition, draws together class warfare with anticolonial and cultural struggle, connecting ignorance of Khayyām’s verses in “the Caucasus, Afghanistan, India, or even Iran itself” to the machinations of imperialists, capitalists, and clergy (*rūhānīlār*).⁵²

Khayyām entered this new canon from Europe, as Turkic and Persian-speakers attempted to ensure that an “Eastern” poet who garnered respect at the new literary metropolises would be, in Pascale Casanova’s formulation, “credited to [their] account in the international literary market.”⁵³ However, this is not a case of a hegemonic, European modern canon emanating to a periphery. In fact, Khayyām’s *rubā’iyāt* are a perfect illustration of what the historian Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi has called “the significance of heterotopic experiences”—in particular the ways that Europe and the Persianate world each projected possible reconfigurations of society onto the other—“in the formation of the ethos of modernity.”⁵⁴ For Europeans, the reconfigured *Ruba’iyat* of Fitzgerald gave decadent skepticism a pedigree in an imagined Iranian past.⁵⁵ The heterotopic significance of Khayyām’s *rubā’iyāt* precedes this adoption, however. Modern textual research, beginning at the end of the 19th century, has shown that most (if not all) of the poetic corpus of “Khayyām” is a series of later, anonymous accretions in a genre whose skeptical blasphemies were authorized by its putative author, a master of the “foreign” sciences.

⁵² ‘Aliyūf, ‘*Ömar Xayyām*, 7.

⁵³ Casanova is referring specifically to Hidāyat’s scholarship on Khayyām: Casanova, *World Republic of Letters*, 239.

⁵⁴ Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran*, 3.

⁵⁵ Afshin Marashi has observed a similar use of Khayyām in Iran in the 1930s, as part of an attempt “to uncover, select, and emphasize the elements of tradition that were deemed most compatible with the culture of modernity. The presence of European orientalists at the tomb of Omar Khayyam [...] was a tacit, public sanctioning of the suitability of Iran’s culture—or some part of that culture—for membership in the new universalism.” Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran*, 114.

That is, the medieval Persian authorial persona Khayyām, like Fitzgerald's Khayyām, was the mythical founder of a collectively authored heterotopia.⁵⁶

The Eastern Publishing House's literary series, unlike *Pārs*, did not gather and package the Persian literary legacy for an international (western) public, but rather, like the Jadid press, it facilitated literary exchange and consolidation within a press community whose readers were presumed to be somewhat competent in both Turkic and Persian. The Bukharan reformist and former Istanbul student Fitrat bridged a canonic divide in that cosmopolis with *Bēdil at One Gathering* (*Bēdil bir majlis-dā*), his Uzbek-language contribution to the Eastern Publishing House series.⁵⁷ Bēdil (1644-1721), a Persophone poet of late Mughal India, composed famously difficult and ambiguous ghazals and *masnavīs* just as Persianate reading communities were beginning to diverge. By the time of the Eastern Publishing House, Azerbaijanis and Iranians were heirs to a Persian poetic canon shaped by the *bāzgasht* movement, which cast out post-Timurid Persian literature, and particularly Indo-Persian verse, as tastelessly overwrought, incomprehensible, and un-Persian, none more so than Bēdil.⁵⁸ For Central Asians, on the contrary, his name and verse had not lost its prestige. Just as Bēdil's exclusion from some late Persianate canons illustrates the fracturing of the Persianate cosmopolis, Fitrat's inclusion of his

⁵⁶ C. De Fouchécour and B.A. Rosenfeld, “Umar Khayyam,” *EI²*, published 1978, http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/umar-khayyam-COM_1284.

⁵⁷ Fitrat, *Bēdil bir majlis-dā* (Moscow: Tsentralnoe vostochnoe izdatel'stvo, 1924), facsimile in Edward Allworth, *Evading Reality: The Devices of 'Abdalrauf Fitrat, Modern Central Asian Reformist* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 282-329. My interpretation of this work largely coincides with Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*, 247-249. On Fitrat's intellectual and press milieu in Istanbul, quite different from Lāhūtī's, see Zaynabidin Abdirashidov, “Known and Unknown Fitrat: Early Convictions and Activities,” *Acta Slavica Iaponica* 39 (2016): 103-118.

⁵⁸ Rajeev Kinra, “Make it Fresh: Time, Tradition, and Indo-Persian Literary Modernity,” in *Time, History and the Religious Imaginary in South Asia*, ed. Anne Murphy (New York: Routledge, 2011), 12-39; Kevin Schwartz, “The Local Lives of a Transregional Poet: ‘Abd al-Qâder Bidel and the Writing of Persianate Literary History,” *Journal of Persianate Studies* 9, no. 1 (2016): 83-106.

works illustrates the renewal of an Eastern literary commons to which the Eastern Publishing House aspired.

The dialogue depicts a gathering of Bukharan educated men, including “a mullah famous among the mullahs of Bukhara for writing pretty poems in Persian [*fārsīchā*],” an old master of classical *shash-maqām* music, and an enlightened young Bukharan westernizer just returned from Moscow, the dialogue’s main speaker.⁵⁹ The locals are surprised to learn that the westernizer loves “the music of the East,” and likewise knows and loves Bēdil’s verse and prose, which he quotes in the original Persian.⁶⁰ He then paraphrases and analyzes these quotations in an Uzbek peppered with Ottoman verbs and idioms, claiming them as expressions of the poet’s radical, antireligious ideas.⁶¹ In Transoxiana, as Adeeb Khalid writes, the post-Revolution “explosion of Turkism [...] meant a disavowal of Persian and the heritage it represented,” and specifically its displacement by Uzbek as a more suitable language for modernization.⁶² Fitrat had been one of the most committed Turkists before his exile from Uzbekistan to Moscow in 1923, but as his dialogue shows, Persian literary prestige remained a resource for vernacular modernity.⁶³

Fitrat performs much the same rereading of Bēdil, “one of the greatest Eastern philosopher-poets,” as Cevdet had for Khayyām.⁶⁴ A *ruba‘ī* on the transformation of ape into man proves that Bēdil discovered Darwinian evolution, and Bēdil’s description of human

⁵⁹ Fitrat, *Bēdil*, 8.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 9.

⁶¹ Allworth, *Evading Reality*, 109.

⁶² Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*, 295.

⁶³ On Fitrat’s enthusiastic turkification of Persian-speakers during his tenure as education minister, see *ibid.*, 299. That he produced the bilingual *Bēdil* within a year of his departure, celebrating the Persian elements of Turkophone culture instead of repressing them, indicates some kind of shift.

⁶⁴ Fitrat, *Bēdil*, 48.

societies becomes a narration of the Marxist modes of production, ending in revolution.⁶⁵ These ideas are all presented first in Bēdil's authoritative Persophone source texts, and then in Turkic explication, suggesting a genealogy that is not national, but Persianate. Like Cevdet and his successors, Fîrat treats atheism, materialism, monism, and pantheism as interchangeable world-views.⁶⁶ Fîrat, however, needed a non-colonial genealogy for specifically Bolshevik modernity. Although debates in Central Asia and Moscow about Bēdil's suitability continued until the 1950s (it is difficult to interpret his abstruse poetry as a vector for any clear message except Persian literary prestige), Bēdil's place in the Soviet canon survived the execution of Fîrat in the Stalinist purges in 1938.

The modern heterotopia of classical materialist poetics merits attention because it shaped not only radical literary historiography, but also poetic practice. Some of the most famous *rubā‘iyāt* associated with Khayyām describe a potter's workshop where pots irreverently question the existence and omnipotence of their maker. The scenario's power of suggestion draws on other Khayyām *rubā‘iyāt* in which the reader is reminded that the dust or clay of wine pots and mausoleum bricks comes from human bodies. Comparison collapses into equation: the pots are not only figures for humans, but *are* humans. At least in this respect, the original quatrains are genuinely shocking in their materialism. Lāhūtī closely pastiches one of these Khayyām *rubā‘iyāt* in his 1924 collection:

dar kārgah-i tavāngarī būdam dūsh:
dīdam dū hazār dīg dar jūsh-u khurūsh.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 34-49.

⁶⁶ In fact, Fîrat's Bēdil differs little from that presented by the South Asian Islamic revivalist writer Muhammad ‘Iqbal, in an unpublished essay probably written in 1915-1917: ‘Allama Muhammad ‘Iqbal, *Bedil in the Light of Bergson*, ed. Tehsin Feraqi (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 1988). Elsewhere, ‘Iqbal claims Tevfik Fikret had used Bēdil for anti-religious propaganda sent to South or Central Asia: Mohammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, intro. Javed Majeed (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 6.

dar har dīgī, bi-chashm-i ‘ibrat dīdam:
khūn-i du hazār kārgar būd bi-jūsh!

Last night, I was in a capitalist's workshop
I saw two thousand cauldrons boiling and bubbling
In each pot, with attentive eyes, I saw
Two thousand workers' blood was at a boil!⁶⁷

It could not be said that Lāhūtī extends Khayyām's materialism: his *ruba‘ī* deals with human matter less literally than the classical model. Instead, he brings Khayyām's image of the human body into relation with established figures of speech: the capitalist vampire familiar from revolutionary rhetoric, whose factory runs on the workers' blood, and the "boiling blood" of rage about to explode into violence. Taken as a commentary on the Khayyām *ruba‘ī*, the image's amplitude increases. What appears to be a realistic image, a factory full of boiling vats, comes into focus as a nightmare vision of production. If the vessels are humans, here filled with blood instead of wine, the workers are the factory's product, brought to a boil by the industrial process.

When Said makes his hopeful amendment to the suspicion of knowledge that pervades *Orientalism*, the case that he makes for philology as a possible alternative to the orientalism that essentializes others is based on the principle of "generosity and, if I may use the word, hospitality. Thus the interpreter's mind actively makes a place in it for a foreign Other."⁶⁸ If Goethe's reception of Hāfiẓ may be understood in this way, what of acts of cross-temporal reception within a continuous cultural tradition? When Lāhūtī and his contemporaries welcomed classical poets into their invented radical tradition, the limits of their hospitality to those poets' strangeness were set not by reification of their difference, but by that difference's suppression.

⁶⁷ Lāhūtī, *Ruba‘īyāt*, 35. The *ruba‘ī* is metrically irregular: the first two and fourth hemistiches are in akhrab meter, while the third is in akhrām.

⁶⁸ Said, *Orientalism*, xxv.

All the same, these source texts carried more than superficial Easternness with them into Persianate literary modernity.

The Persianate Philology of Mourning

We have seen how the moderns deployed the most suitable canonical figures, such as Khayyām and Bēdil, to indigenize projects of modernization. But setting aside such exceptions, how did they regard the broader corpus of classical Persian poetry? Some Persianate literary reformers, before and after Lāhūtī’s generation, have regarded the majority of classical Persian poetry as a hindrance to modernization.⁶⁹ This was one position expressed within Eastern Publishing House circles, but it was not Lāhūtī’s position on the Persian canon, and ultimately, it would not be the orthodox Soviet position. The development of the idea of the Persian literary tradition may be followed through international Persianate critical writing in the form of an architectural metaphor, one that accreted around a single famous classical poem by Khāqānī in layers of nationalist and Bolshevik internationalist reinterpretation.

Among the poetic hagiographies printed by the Eastern Publishing House, one work stands out for its critical distance from the classical Persian poet it invokes. This trilingual volume presents Lāhūtī’s Persian-language *qaṣīdah* “Kremlin” (“Krimil”), which is a formal poetic response (*istiqbāl* or *nazīrah*) to Khāqānī’s “Madā’ in *qaṣīdah*,” together with an introduction and interlinear translation in Azerbaijani by Naushirvan and a prefatory Turkish free-verse ode to Lāhūtī by Nâzîm.⁷⁰ In Khāqānī’s poem, a visit to the ruins of the pre-Islamic

⁶⁹ Cf. Mohammad Ali Jazayery, “Ahmad Kasravi and the Controversy over Persian Poetry. 1. Kasravi’s Analysis of Persian Poetry,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 4, no. 2 (1973): 190-203.

⁷⁰ Lāhūtī et. al., *Krimil*.

Sassanian palace at Madā'in in Iraq inspires a pious *memento mori*.⁷¹ Lāhūtī's reply uses the original's meter, rhyme, and themes to alternately challenge and appropriate the Persian heritage, a strategy that Naushirvan and Nâzîm carry further in their contributions. The resulting volume provides an interpretive key to the role of the classical Persian canon in Persianate literary modernity. The classical canon comes to function, in this work's rhetoric, as a ruin. At the same time, all three writers' polemics with nationalist cliché and their declarative turn towards new themes are complicated by the poetic practice on display, and specifically the formal divergence between Nâzîm's free verse poem and Lâhūtī's *qaṣīdah*. In the remainder of the chapter, I will situate the Persianate corpus of Madā'in texts in relation to the broader modern practice of representing Eastern literary traditions as ruins, a practice at the intersection of orientalism and nationalism, and thus clarify the relationship between nationalist nostalgic philology and its Soviet Eastern counterpart.

In 1935, Lâhūtī described how he came to compose his response poem, after visiting the Kremlin when he first arrived in Moscow in 1923:

Not knowing a word of Russian yet, I was looking at its halls one by one, and the ruins of the palace of Anushirvan, of which Khāqānī had sung, came to mind. I was struck by this great historical contrast. Two royal palaces. Both built on the blood of the workers. But the first collapsed, burying under itself the power of the nation, while the second revived and became a fortress of internationalism and communism. With one stroke of the pen I wrote the poem "Kremlin."⁷²

Lâhūtī's account, written at a time when his prominence allowed the poem to stand alone, masks the poem's intertextuality with more immediate predecessors. However, the poem's rhetorical

⁷¹ Jerome Clinton, "The Madaen Qasida of Xaqani Sharvani I," *Edebiyat* 1 (1976): 153-170.

⁷² KB6, 237 (Tajik translation). Original Russian of this passage qtd. in Z.G. Osmanova and M. Sh. Shukurov, eds., *Ocherk istorii tadzhikskoi sovetskoi literatury* (Moskva: Izd. Akademii nauk SSSR, 1964), 291.

force at the time of its first publication derived from its attack on the Iranian nationalist rhetoric surrounding the palace at Madā'in.

In the 1923 Eastern Publishing House edition, Naushirvan's introduction describes Lāhūtī's poem as a successful rebuttal of an earlier poem by Ḥusayn Dānish, the Iranian scholar whom we last encountered as a translator of Khayyām to Turkish. Dānish's poem was a strophic *musaddas* built around Khāqānī's poem, published in 1912 with an introduction and interlinear Turkish prose translation by Dānish's frequent collaborator, Rızâ Tevfik.⁷³ Dānish transformed many of Khāqānī's images in ways that Lāhūtī would reuse, and established the Iranian nationalist reading of the original poem by his choice of couplets from the original and his own lines that recontextualized and explained them. He opens the poem recalling a state of contemplation in which "I was pondering the ways of this era,/ I inquired of Zoroaster's philosophy, and of [the philosophy of] the Greeks." The pre-Islamic angel Surūsh appears and, in a nationalist reworking of Qur'anic revelation, commands that he recite Khāqānī's opening lines, awakening the listener to take heed of the lesson of Madā'in.⁷⁴ In the following stanzas, Dānish repurposes and extends Khāqānī's apparatus of ruin-interpretation. Where Khāqānī demands that readers listen to the voice of the portal and battlements, and imagine the court in its moment of flourishing, Dānish urges them on to more intensive excavations: "pull a brick from the portal and hold it before your damp [weeping] eyes [...] look inside its doors and walls with eyes attentive to their lesson."⁷⁵ When couplets from Khāqānī are preceded by such injunctions and followed by precise reconstructions in Turkish prose, Dānish's poem, like the ruined palace, becomes a site for the reader's archaeology of the nation.

⁷³ Hüseyin Daniş, *Medâyin harabeleri*, intro. Rızâ Tevfik (İstanbul: Cemî kitaphanesi, 1912).

⁷⁴ Ibid., 17.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 27, 30.

In the decade that followed Dānish’s poem, Madā’in and other pre-Islamic ruins inspired diverse visions of Iranian national renewal. The Istanbul Iranian émigré poet ‘Ishqī’s 1915-16 opera, “The Resurrection of Persian Kings in the Ruins of Madā’in” was not an explicit touchstone for “Kremlin,” but established its redemption motif. In the opera, popular among other Iranian exiles as well as the Indian Parsi community, the ghosts of pre-Islamic kings and queens mournfully declaim, “This ruined graveyard isn’t our Iran/ This wasteland isn’t Iran. Where’s Iran?” The play closes with Zoroaster rising to inform the assemblage that “In this very cradle sleeps the seed of those to come/ A seed to replace these dead whom you see alive.”⁷⁶ In 1918, a polemic between two Iranian poets, Muḥammad-Taqī Bahār and Taqī Rafīat, centered on a shared comparison between Iran’s linguistic and literary resources and a ruined monument. Bahār warned poets not to wield “the pickax against the historical structures built by the poets and literary figures who are our fathers and forebears,” advocating instead its repair and the construction of a new house beside it. When Rafīat ridiculed the impracticality of such a plan in another journal, based in revolutionary Baku, Bahār compared the classical literary edifice to Madā’in, asking “from which kiln or quarry you will provide bricks and rocks so solid, so unique and so ready-made, that we too may find and use them.”⁷⁷ Lāhūtī himself drew on the architectural imagination of Iranian nationalism in his pre-1923 poetry. When he produced a nationalist history textbook for the Istanbul Iranian émigré school in 1920, it included poetic descriptions and engravings of the ruins at Persepolis similar to those that had illustrated Dānish’s poem.⁷⁸ For Lāhūtī, as for many of his contemporaries in Iran and in exile, pre-Islamic ruins had become a focal point for what Svetlana Boym has called “restorative nostalgia,” which

⁷⁶ Rizā Mīrzādah ‘Ishqī, *Kulliyāt-i muṣavvar*, ed. ‘Alī Akbar Mušīr Salīmī (Tehran: Zībā, 1965), 231-241.

⁷⁷ Qtd. and trans. in Karimi-Hakkak, *Recasting Persian Poetry*, 111-114.

⁷⁸ Lāhūtī, *Irānnāmah*.

“proposes to rebuild the lost home,” if possible, through “total reconstructions of monuments of the past.”⁷⁹

By undertaking this project, Iranians joined other Eastern intelligentsias who had made ruins the altar of nationalism. In European orientalism, the early modern *topos* of the Greco-Roman ruin as a sublime *memento mori* had been repurposed, permitting imperialists to displace their anxiety about civilizational decline onto another, more decadent society.⁸⁰ As Stathis Gourgouris has shown, Greek nationalism emerged as young elite Greeks came to regard “their” ruins and peasantry with an orientalist gaze, and aspired, like certain European Philhellenists, to “a contemporary resurrection of ancient traces.”⁸¹ Marc Nichanian fruitfully revises Gourgouris’s framework for understanding the relationship between nationalism and orientalism in *Le deuil de la philologie* [Mourning Philology], claiming that “the process of becoming a nation is, in reality, an ‘aesthetic’ process.”⁸² His analysis is particularly useful for Iranian nationalism and Persianate internationalism because his central case study is Armenian nationalism. From the mid-19th century, Armenian nationalists established a path that Iranian nationalists would follow in trying to establish full membership in the community of civilized nations: a pre-monotheistic Indo-Iranian religious background, Indo-European philology, and Aryan racial theory. Meanwhile, Armenian living traditions of literature and orature, with which the nationalists maintained an uneasy relationship, shared much with the living verbal arts

⁷⁹ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 41.

⁸⁰ Cf. Linda Nochlin, “The Imaginary Orient,” in Nochlin, *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 38-39.

⁸¹ Stathis Gourgouris, *Dream Nation: Enlightenment, Colonization, and the Institution of Modern Greece* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 81.

⁸² Marc Nichanian, *Mourning Philology: Art and Religion at the Margins of the Ottoman Empire*, trans. G. M. Goshgarian and Jeff Fort (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014 [1st ed. 2007]), 8. The category of “seeing and knowing” comes from Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, trans. A.M. Sheridan (New York: Routledge, 2003), 107-123.

encountered by every other Persianate nationalism and internationalism, both in those arts' generic features and in that they circulated within and between Eurasian multinational empires.

A central figure in Nichanian's argument is "the native," that is, not only the oriental object of "the philologist's and the orientalist traveler's seeing and knowing [*voir-savoir*]," but the subject who "springs into existence when he ardently solicits the philologist's gaze," who indeed "is invented at the very instant that this solicitation of the gaze occurs."⁸³ So, for example, the French half of *Pārs* called out for readers such as André Gide, who wrote a brief testimonial in its pages, declaring that though he regretted his reliance on translations of classical Persian poets, "enough light still gets through from these stars to let us judge their greatness."⁸⁴

This native is a grandparent, and in some instances even an earlier life-stage, of the figure whom I have called the literary representative. Both come to exist in the moment of soliciting Western *voir-savoir* and in claiming to be an authentic instance of a category whose primary existence is in Western institutions, but with a crucial difference. Nichanian, following a line of postcolonial thought extending from Said to Spivak, defines natives by their "mutism," the inability to represent or know themselves independent of oriental philology. Even when Armenians played both the roles of native and "philologist-traveler," traveling "toward themselves,"⁸⁵ self-knowledge had to be mediated:

The task was to put the native's own utterances back in his mouth and his ears [...] enabling the 'people' to hear its own voice at its epic or mythological source [...] But this is a strange demand, after all. The native cannot hear his own narratives and does not live according to his own customs: why, then, is there a need for a reduplication, a supplementary organ, one more mouth or ear, so that people can finally hear themselves? Why does it devolve upon writing to play this role? [...] Without this supplementary organ of writing, the native will continue to be cut off from himself. The project consists in confronting him with himself by

⁸³ Nichanian, *Mourning Philology*, 82.

⁸⁴ "Nos collaborateurs," *Pārs* 3 (1921): 34.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

way of a mediation (a corpus of knowledge, a common language, a written culture, an informed memory) so that he may once again hear his own voice resonating from its mythological source.⁸⁶

Here, Nichanian is primarily concerned with folklore collection, in which the native himself appears “as ruin and monument,” requiring decipherment by himself or others. In the case of the classical Persian literary heritage, however, the argument stands in its most general form: the native is best able to speak through the mediation of ancient texts that require philological investigation, because “the encounter with the present could only involve the ruins and monuments of the past.”⁸⁷ Philology is always already “an institution of mourning.”⁸⁸

Between the Constitutional Revolution and the emergence of the Pahlavi state, actual pre-Islamic archaeological ruins were only of secondary importance as a source for Iranian self-knowledge and restorative nostalgia. In the first instance, ruins stood in as a governing metaphor for the body of classical Persian verse that was far more familiar than pre-Islamic antiquity for educated Iranians—and for many others throughout the Persianate world. Like oral folklore, classical Persian poetry was alive and active in traditional schooling and the urban culture of Sufi lodges, guilds, and clerisies, and it was an absurdity to speak of resurrection or return. As the Khayyām of the radicals illustrates, it was not only Iranian nationalists but also other Easterners who made classical Persian texts function as their authentic voices, with the mediation of philological knowledge. In the process, classical poetry became a closed canon, receding into proud but mournful recollection for the same intellectuals who wished for its revival.

Nichanian’s argument hinges on his identification of “mourning philology” with the recovery of a pre-Christian religion that can only be recovered by its reinvention as myth. This argument

⁸⁶ Ibid., 46.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 85.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 5.

applies to the strand of Iranian nationalism for which pre-Islamic religion takes on special importance—a strand that became ever more important over the reign of the two Pahlavi shahs, but is less central for the writers examined here. Rather, these writers made a secular institution of classical Persian poetry, which had been inseparably (although not exclusively) part of lived Islam and Muslim communal life, and through this institution, they constructed a secular past for the East.

Whether the identification of classical Persian poetry as a ruin served a narrative of civilizational decline or one of continuity and the possibility of resurrection, it owed something to orientalist discourse, as well as Persianate intellectuals' increasing interest in the Western discipline of archaeology.⁸⁹ At the same time, as Khāqānī's poem reminds us, ruin-gazing and laments of civilizational decline were not entirely an orientalist imposition, but could draw on classical Arabo-Persian genre conventions.⁹⁰ In fact, Khāqānī's 12th-century *qaṣīdah*, to which Dānish and Lāhūtī responded, was itself a reply to the Arabic poet al-Buhturī's 9th-century *qaṣīdah* on Madā'in. In the earlier poem, al-Buhturī adapted the *qaṣīdah*'s elegiac convention of weeping over the traces of abandoned campsites, expanding it to include the ruins of a royal

⁸⁹ For example, over the reign of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh (1846-1896), Iranian elites became increasingly interested in European excavations of pre-Islamic sites, and began engaging in antiquarian explorations of their own, an interest only formalized in 1922 with the founding of the Society for National Heritage (*Anjuman-i āsār-i millī*); on ruins and texts see also Ch. 5. Kamyar Abdi, "Nationalism, Politics, and the Development of Archaeology in Iran," *American Journal of Archaeology* 105, no. 1 (2001): 53-62. For another case study, see Daniel J. Sheffield, "Iran, the Mark of Paradise or the Land of Ruin? Approaches to Reading Two Pārsi Zoroastrian Travelogues," in Sunil Sharma and Roberta Micallef, eds., *On Wonders of Land and Sea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 31-37. The broader idea of Iran as "ruined" [*vayrān*], without the specificity of archaeological metaphor, appears earlier, certainly no later than the 18th century. For a discussion of its appearance in a *tazkirah* by the Isfahani poet Āzar Baygdilī, the *Ātashkadah* (1760), see Mana Kia, "Contours of Persianate Community, 1722-1835" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard, 2011), 105.

⁹⁰ The same is true of decline narratives more generally: cf. Douglas A. Howard, "Ottoman Historiography and the Literature of 'Decline' of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Journal of Asian History* 22, no. 1 (1988): 52-77.

palace and celebrate the Persianate court culture of the Abbasids.⁹¹ Just as al-Buhturī's poem attempts to resolve the tension between the author's courtly milieu and the genre's origins in the oral *qaṣīdah* of the pre-Islamic Bedouin nomads, Khāqānī (though by no means a premature nationalist) finds his ambivalent nostalgia on the site of the defeat of the Persians and the establishment of Islam, and thus addresses the ambivalence of the *qaṣīdah* as a Persian genre. Because of the sediments of meaning preserved in the *qaṣīdah* and the topos of Madā'in, it is possible for us to see the aesthetic production of *Pārs* and Eastern Publishing House within a cultural *longue durée*. Classical Persian poetry was not a cypher from which nationalists and internationalists made whatever meaning they liked. Instead, it made available to them a variety of nonsynchronous and unexpected meanings, images, and verbal strategies out of the past.⁹²

Lāhūtī made his own excavation of the classical, orientalist, and nationalist Madā'in text in his Kremlin *qaṣīdah*. At its opening, the poem reads as a manifesto addressed to nationalists, redirecting them away from Madā'in and mourning philology: "How long will you weep over Anushirvan's throne?/ In the fortress of Kremlin, o heart, read the hidden secrets!"⁹³ While the most direct rebuke is to Iranian nationalists preoccupied with the Sassanian legacy, the poem's Turco-Persian bilingual presentation marks this as a lesson that the Central Press editors thought other Easterners should hear.⁹⁴ Lāhūtī links the East and the Soviet Union by comparison—"For

⁹¹ Jerome Clinton, "The Madaen Qasida of Xaqani Sharvani, II: Xaqani and al-Buhturi," *Edebiyat* 2 (1977), 191-206; Samer M. Ali, "Reinterpreting al-Buhturī's 'Īwān Kisrā Ode': Tears of Affection for the Cycles of History," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 37, no. 1 (2006): 46-67.

⁹² Here I follow Kliger and Maslov's reading of Veslovsky, "Introducing Historical Poetics," 3-10.

⁹³ "Tā chand kunī giryah bar masnad-i Nūshirvān/ dar qaṣr-i 'Krimil' ay dil, asrār-i nihān bar khwān." Lāhūtī et. al., *Krimil*, 18.

⁹⁴ Within the next year, the Kremlin *qaṣīdah* would also be printed in Armenian and Georgian, and as late as 1931 there was an Armenian-Persian bilingual edition, suggesting the ongoing existence of a cosmopolitan Persianate reading public. Samad Vali, "Qadri 'Kreml'-i ustod

this place and Madā'in, laborers were trampled/ This became the Romanov fortress, that the throne of the Sassanians," and by contrast—the Kremlin, unlike the Madā'in palace, has been redeemed by its "rightful master," the worker who built it.⁹⁵ But he also reminds the reader that the history of imperialism links the Kremlin to Persianate ruin-gazing: "Because of [this fortress], Turan [i.e. Central Asia] was put into confusion, and because of it, Iran was laid ruin."⁹⁶

Although he rejects the national ruin as a site for contemplation, he prefaces to verbally excavate the Kremlin as if it were a ruin. His excavation uncovers not lost glories, but corpses:

dar dākhil-i har dīvār bā dīdah-i sar bingar
paykār bih sar-i paykār, sutkhwān bih sar-i sutkhwān
az khūn-i dil-i khalq ast har naqsh, darīn gunbad,
khāk-i tan-i muzdūr ast, har khisht darīn ayvān.
az āh-i shahīdān ast har dūd dar ān barpā
az ashk-i yatīmān ast har dar, kih dar ān ghaltān.
īn khānah-i bīdād ast, bā dīdah-i sar bingar
zīr-i pay-i har pāyah khūn-i du hazār insān.

Look within each wall with an eye for the secret—
Body on body, bone on bone.
Every painting in this dome is made in the people's blood,
Every brick in this portal is the dust of a laborer's body.
All the cooking-smoke in this establishment is made of martyrs' sighs,
Every pearl that shines there is from the orphans' tears.
This is a house of injustice. See with heedful eyes
Under the foot of every stair, the blood of two thousand people.⁹⁷

As in his reworking of Khayyām, so again Lāhūtī mixes classical Persian conventions with the poetics of popular materialism. He transforms the raw material of brickmaking from human bodies—Khayyām or Khāqānī's dust of mortality—to workers' bodies—the dust of exploitation,

Lohuti dar Ozarboijon," *Izvestiia akademii nauk Tadzhikskoi SSR, seria: vostokovedenie, istoriia, filologija* 2:6 (1987): 20.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 29.

⁹⁶ "Sar-gashtah az ān Tūrān, vayrānah az ān Īrān." Ibid., 22.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 18-19.

thus repurposing the classical Persian commonplace of bodies in bricks as an etiology of social relations. When Khāqānī's or Dānish's bricks speak, they give voice to the fallen kings who are the reader's point of identification, but Lāhūtī's bricks describe the injustices they witnessed, and establish a different solidarity: "Just like you, some time ago, we were workers."⁹⁸

The contrast between old and new visions of the oriental ruin may be seen from the Eastern Publishing House edition's two illustrations. The back cover (fig. 2) displays an exotic jungle ruin adapted (via Dānish and Tevfik's edition of Khayyām) from a plate of an Edmund Dulac watercolor in the famous 1909 edition of Fitzgerald's Khayyām. The ruin's implicit site, at least before the image moved from London to Istanbul to Moscow, was colonial India, where colonizers could contemplate the fall of generically Eastern empires. On the same volume's front cover (fig. 3), however, the Kremlin itself is shown to be composed of bones and skulls, and a writhing mass of bodies pushes out from beneath it. If the back cover is a tasteful imitation of orientalist fantasy, the front shifts from architectural illustration into a violent modernist nightmare.

⁹⁸ "Mā ham, chu tu, chandī pīsh az kārgarān būdīm," ibid., 24.

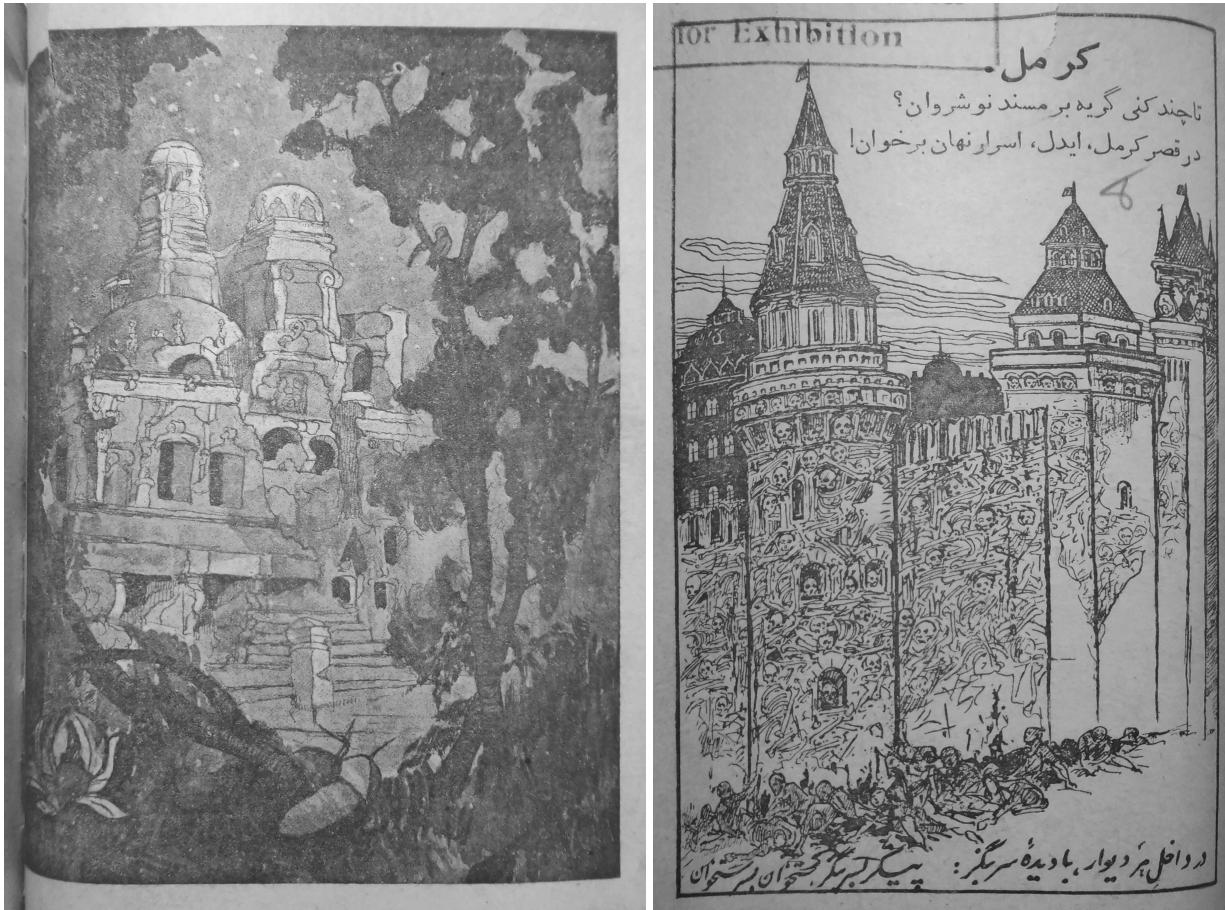


Fig. 2 (left): [Artist unknown], back cover illustration, Abū al-Qāsim Lāhūtī, *Krimil*, trans. Nâzîm Hikmet (Moscow: Markazî şarq naşriyâtı, 1923). “How long will you weep over Anushirvan’s throne?/ In the fortress of Kremlin, o heart, read the hidden secrets! [...] Look within each wall with an eye for the secret—/ Body on body, bone on bone.”

Fig. 3 (right): [Artist unknown], cover illustration, *Krimil*.

The visual transformation of solid walls and turrets into human refuse highlights the poem’s implication that however solid the Kremlin may appear, it is just as much a ruin of a bygone political order as the palace at Madā’in. What is more, it does not highlight cultural difference by importing foreign words: the Kremlin’s portal is an *ayvān* like that of the Sassanian palace, and tsar is a *shāh*. The description of the life of tsar and court leans so hard into parody of classical Persian lyric convention that it approaches an orientalist image of decadence: “So the shah could play with the tresses of idols, sometimes/ Around the neck of a hundred poor, the

chain of want was wound.”⁹⁹ With the Kremlin thus orientalized, when Lâhûtî rededicates it to the discarded laborers who built it, he replies to the eternal mourning of Eastern nationalists with a proposal for the reconsecration of their monument, their national burial ground.

The Soviet Persianist E. E. Bertel's later identified “Kremlin” as a turning point for the literary language: “In this poem, for the first time we see the possibility of a revolutionary artistic style in Persian poetry.”¹⁰⁰ But Lâhûtî’s experiment seems quite modest beside Nâzîm’s poem, with which he introduces “Kremlin”:

Sa‘dî
şoñ sözünü söyledi.
diñlemek istemiyoruz artık onuñ
Şirvan şallarınıñ âhu nağışlarıyla qıvrılan ahengini!.
bir şâ‘ir lazıim ki bize
çizsin gözümüze şınıfımızıñ
ķan!.
ve alın teri koğan
rengini!.

ey “Krimil’i” yazan adam
ey komünist “Hayyam”
iştir sen farisi’niñ
ilk
bolşevik
şâ‘irişin!
behey Lâhuti yoldaş!
tek kalma
çoqlaş!..

Sa‘dî
has spoken his last.
We don’t want to hear any more of his
tune entwined with images of gazelles on Shervan shawls!
We need a poet who will
scratch across our class’s eyes
blood!

⁹⁹ “Tâ shâh kunad bâzî bâ zulf-i butân, mîshud/ bar gardan-i şad miskîn zanjîr-i ‘adam pîchân.’ Ibid., 28.

¹⁰⁰ E. E. Bertel's, introduction, in Lohutî, *Devon* (Moscow: Nashriëti davlatîi adabiëti badeî, 1939), 21-22.

And their scent, stinking of
forehead-sweat!

O “Kremlin”-writing man!

O communist Khayyām!

Now you are Persian’s
first

Bolshevik

poet!

Hey, comrade Lāhūtī!

Don’t be alone

multiply!...¹⁰¹

Lāhūtī’s *qasīdah* lacks the sensual immediacy that Nâzîm demands here. The shock of the poem “Kremlin” results mostly from the incongruences of its diction. Much of the poem seems artificially neoclassical or archaic in relation to the neologisms it introduces into the poetic system. In a 1937 newspaper article, the Russian literary theorist Viktor Shklovskii explains the relationship between classicism and the future in Lāhūtī’s works: “In Tajikistan, everyone knows Lāhūtī’s poems, and they’ve become proverbs. Proverbs, like the poems of Hāfiẓ, usually speak about the future. Lāhūtī’s poems are [...] for today and tomorrow.”¹⁰² The goal was to project an existing message into the future by giving it the ring of the timeless. At his best Lāhūtī is a master of *al-sahl al-mumtani‘*, inimitable simplicity. In transforming a new idea into natural common sense, genres and structures internalized by the listener—the couplet, the *rubā‘ī*—are useful, as the Persian wisdom literature tradition confirms.

The risk that Lāhūtī runs with this style is cliché. “Kremlin,” however, confronts a body of pietistic and nationalist cliché, and gives the familiar tune new words. This is no longer parody of classical genres, like some of Lāhūtī’s earlier works, but an impudent *détournement*. Poets of other languages could symbolically cast out the conservative element from their poetic

¹⁰¹ Lāhūtī et al., *Krimil*, 2. The ellipsis and idiosyncratic punctuation is Nâzîm’s.

¹⁰² V. Shklovskii, “Gasem Lakhuti,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, October 15, 1937, 5.

traditions with the scapegoat of Persian genres and vocabulary, but this was not an option for Persian poets of Lāhūtī's generation. Instead, Lāhūtī enters the sanctum of courtly Persian poetics (as Situationists entered globalized mass culture) and repurposes it.¹⁰³ His reworking of classical aphoristic style, which did indeed "multiply" among the Central Asian poets who imitated him, made him a "communist Khayyām."

In its relationship with the Persian canon, "Kremlin" is a transitional work. In his introduction, Naushirvan explains that because of Khāqānī's "spiritual conservatism," his poem, "however rich and elevated [...] in terms of the linguistic arts," fails where Lāhūtī's poem succeeds: "In order for a work to be great from a literary standpoint, it must be elevated in terms of content [*ma 'naviyat*], inner meaning [*'irfān*], and morality [*adab*]."¹⁰⁴ Naushirvan's moral and "content"-based criteria for canonicity are not new, but echo the judgments of Fath-‘Alī Ākhūndzādah and his late-19th-century heirs. More than in the works of Ākhūndzādah, for Soviet Persianate writers the classics become adversaries worthy of respect and fear—an "anxiety of influence" qualitatively different from previous Persian attitudes to the literary tradition.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ In the 1935 speech to Tashkent writers, Lāhūtī explains: "Sometimes it has happened that I directly use the old literary heritage in my own creation. I do it in such a way that I overcome the outdated works completely, and insert my own contemporary truth into it." Lohutī, "Dar borai tajribai ejodī khud," 236.

¹⁰⁴ Lāhūtī et. al., *Krimil*, 17.

¹⁰⁵ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford UP, 1973); classical Persian poetry's games of conservative competition are described in Franklin Lewis, "The Rise and Fall of a Persian Refrain: The *Radīf ‘Ātash u Āb’*," in *Reorientations/Arabic and Persian Poetry*, ed. Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 199-200, 210-214. On Soviet writers' attempts in the 1920s to learn from the classics without being unduly influenced by them, Vladimir Akimov, *V sporakh o khudozhestvennom metode (Iz istorii bor'by za sotsialisticheskii realizm)* (Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1979), 241; Evgeny Dobrenko, *Aesthetics of Alienation: Reassessment of Early Soviet Cultural Theories* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2005), 45-46. Lāhūtī continued to express his relationship with the canon in these terms through the mid-1930s.

Lāhūtī began experimenting with a more accommodating stance toward classical literature after he traveled to Tajikistan in 1925 as a representative of the Soviet cultural bureaucracy (see Chapter 1 and below). In Lāhūtī’s first Central Asian poem, “The Palace of Civilization” [“Sarāy-i tamaddun”], he wanders through another ruined building. The edifice’s fragments are “strewn on the ground,” a disorder reflected in the line divisions that break up the poem’s classical meter.

dar sar-sutūn-u sar-dar-u ayvān-u shaqf-i ān,
bā khaṭṭ-i zar nivishtah hazārān katībah’hā,
ammā siyāh gashtah-u yaksar shudah nihān,
dar zīr-i dūd. ān hamah āṣār-i pur-bahā!...

**

hā?! yak kitāb-i pārah!...
bikhvānīm: az īn kitāb,
shāyat shavad padīd kih īn khānah mulk-i kī-st!
pūshīdah!...
āh!
balkih buvad chashm-i man bi-khvāb...
īn khaṭṭ...bidūn-i shubhah, balā, khaṭṭ-i fārsī-st!...

On capital and lintel, on portico and ceiling,
Thousands of inscriptions are written in golden script.
But they’ve darkened, they’re completely hidden
Under soot, all these estimable works!...

**

What?! A scrap of a book!...
Let’s read: from this book,
Perhaps it will become clear whose home this was!
Hidden!...
Ah!
Perhaps my eyes are still asleep...
This script...without a doubt, yes, it’s Persian script!...¹⁰⁶

He concludes, “this structure was Tajik civilization/ The house that cast a light out on creation,” and resolves that it must be renewed. To some degree, this is a return to the restorative nostalgia of Bahār or ‘Ishqī. The poem’s concern with illegibility, though, makes for a more alienated

¹⁰⁶ Lāhūtī, *Adabīyāt-i surkh*, 22. All ellipses are from the original.

experience of the edifice to be rebuilt. The ambiguous word “āsār” means traces left behind, and its semantic range includes ruins as well as literary works, such as a writer’s “collected works.” Following the violent rejection of classical aesthetics among Lāhūtī’s cohort, reclamation of classical Persian literature has different ramifications for ongoing poetic practice, as the form of “Palace of Civilization” illustrates: the classical text returns as a ruin that must be puzzled through, across a canonic rupture.

Nichanian’s understanding of national philology responds to the pessimistic vision of the original edition of *Orientalism*, but it benefits from an infusion of the more hopeful late Said, for whom a better philology of affiliation seemed possible. The self-created natives of *Pārs* and the Eastern Publishing House journeyed toward not an inevitable, authentic source, but toward classical precedents that they themselves chose. The terms of engagement, and even of reconstruction, were negotiable, as the *Madā’in* variations show.

After such agency and variability, ending the journey in Tajikistan may seem to be a reversal. Lāhūtī presents it as a national homeland, a space of ruins and authentic natives in precisely Nichanian’s sense. Furthermore, like the Armenian SSR, the Tajik SSR was a colonized space, to which “natives” were transplanted from cosmopolitan cities beyond its borders. Nichanian describes Soviet nationalities policy as a final extrapolation of orientalist philological nationalism.¹⁰⁷ But on the road from Istanbul to Tajikistan with Lāhūtī, we may encounter another possibility. Could the transition from a melancholic recollection of multiethnic Persianate empire to a more vigorous restorative nostalgia have been made possible not by a nation, but by a new Persianate multinational empire, the Soviet one?

¹⁰⁷ Nichanian, *Mourning Philology*, 60.

Chapter 3

Canons II: Persian Classics into Soviet Institutions, 1924-1934

In an editorial of 1921, Lāhūtī expressed frustration at the inferiority of the East to the West in “the management of education and the provision of necessities for the advancement of literature.” In order to awaken the East, it seemed, literature needed the support of state and civil society institutions as Western nations did:

In the West, there are all sorts of encouragement for the printing of literary works and the thoughts of poets, and so development takes place. There are few cities that don’t have some large boulevards named after famous poets of that district [...] statues of their famous writers are sites of public pilgrimage [...] Numerous bookstores and societies are at work for the printing of the greats, important men make efforts to do service to literature, and in all of these steps, the local government gives material and moral support.¹

Read against this mission statement, Lāhūtī’s career as a public poet would seem an unqualified success. As an advocate for the Persian canon, he found a receptive audience in the Soviet Union by the mid-1930s. By his death in 1957, the Persianate East was full of monuments, statues, mausoleums, streets, and publishing series dedicated to its great classical writers. From the late 1950s to the 1970s, state representatives of Iran, Turkey, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Soviet Transoxania and Transcaucasia gathered with European orientalists and UNESCO representatives every few years to recognize the importance of a great Persianate poet: Rūdakī (1958), Fużūlī (1958), Sayat Nova (1963), Nesimī and Rūmī (both 1973), and Amīr Khusraw (1975).² Modern writers, too, were increasingly subject to state memorialization. In his lifetime,

¹ Lāhūtī, “Īrān va udabā-’i ān,” *Pars* 4 (1921): 49.

² Stéphane A. Dudoignon, “Some Side Effects of a Progressive Orientalism: Academic Visions of Islam in the Soviet South after Stalin,” in *After Orientalism: Critical Perspectives on Western Agency and Eastern Re-appropriations*, eds. François Pouillon and Jean-Claude Vatin (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 125-126 (Rūdakī); Jamil Hasanli, *Khrushchev’s Thaw and National Identity in*

Lāhūtī became the namesake of streets, factories, and collective farms from Tajikistan to Ukraine.

For Persianate societies, this was a new pattern for the reception of the literary past, revealing a family resemblance between the modernization projects of Eurasian states with divergent, even conflicting ideologies, including the Soviet Union. Of course, many of the aspirations that Lāhūtī describes were more general features of nation-building and modernization. Other national experiences of literary modernity offer many near analogies for the process by which Turco-Persian “*adabīyāt*” became conceptually interchangeable with European “literature,” and the literary “ancients” (*qudama*) were institutionalized as “classical” (Per: *kilāsīkī*, Tur: *klasik*) literature.³ From the 18th to the 20th century, peripheral intelligentsias formed societies and requested the help of states to achieve the coordinated “advancement” of national consciousness, education, and literature, imagined as a triad. Canons, and the anthologies, publishing series, and school curricula that formalize them, constitute a national “code.”⁴ But when this same process took place in Eastern nations or nationalities, it was not the first institutionalization of Eastern literary canons. European orientalists had reframed Eastern classics as “literatures,” sorted along philological lines, and made those classics stand in for the

Soviet Azerbaijan, 1954-1959 (London: Lexington Books, 2015), 323-326 (Fużūlî); James Steffen, *The Cinema of Sergei Parajanov* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), 121-123 (Sayat Nova); Mehmet Önder, ed., *Mevlâna'nın 700. ölüm yıldönümü dolayısıyle Uluslararası Mevlâna Semineri, 15-17 Aralık, 1973 : bildiriler* (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1973) (Rûmî); *Amir Khusrau: Critical Studies* (Islamabad: National Committee for 700th Anniversary of Amir Khusrau, 1975).

³ A particularly clear delineation of such a process is Haruo Shirane and Tomi Suzuki, eds., *Inventing the Classics: Modernity, National Identity, and Japanese Literature* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).

⁴ In my approach to institutions of the *national* canon specifically, I found useful Robert Lecker, *Keepers of the Code: English-Canadian Literary Anthologies and the Representation of Nation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013); and Anne MacCarthy, *Reimagining Irishness in the ‘Library of Ireland’ Anthologies* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2012).

contemporaneous peoples that they conquered, whose voices were reduced to faint echoes of their ancestors' voices. The transformation of these orientalist institutions into national ones was a reclaiming of representational authority, however constrained and distorted by the frameworks of literature and the nation.

This chapter will place the making of the Soviet Tajik classical canon in its contemporaneous Persianate context, and show how Lāhūtī came to play a leading role in “the advancement of literature,” especially classical poetry, in Tajikistan. In this period, the nature of the classical Persian and Persianate canon was a matter of state policy as factions debated plans for the reform of national languages, scripts, education systems, and new literatures. In the early ‘20s, Lāhūtī had been an exile among exiles, but in Central Asia later in the decade, he was an outsider intervening in the debates of locals negotiating the terms of their new identities. Here, in discussions of classical Persianate literature, the rhetoric shifted from renewal of continuous Persian literature to the deployment of the Persian canon as a resource for post-rupture modern national literatures. I will parse and periodize how that rupture was declared, resisted, and explained in its early years. Subsections will examine three watersheds in this process: discussions of Tajik and Uzbek national language and literary history following the national delimitation in October 1924 and their epitome, ‘Aynī’s *Sample of Tajik Literature* (1926); the radical turn from philology toward ethnography during the script reform and cultural revolution from 1928 to 1932; and Lāhūtī’s successful reversal of this negation in Tajikistan, the revival of reverence for “the classics” during preparations for the 1934 All-Union Writers’ Congress. The chapter concludes with two celebrations of 1934 that confirmed Lāhūtī’s classicist and internationalist approach to the Persianate literary heritage: the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers and the Firdawsī Jubilee.

Themes of Persianate Canon Debates: Bookshelves and Battleships

In general, critiques of literary canons may be divided between those that focus on the sociology of consensus about literary value and the organic process of that consensus's transformation, and those that focus on the canon as an ideological object subject to intentional transformation by top-down policy changes.⁵ While in Chapter 2, Lāhūtī and his comrades were participants in a civil society debate from below, in this chapter, they appear to assume that the literary canon is a matter of state policy. This is the transformation of acts of affiliation into an "orthodox canon of literary monuments handed down through the generations" that Said imagines—a symbolic restoral of the filial order.⁶ When Lāhūtī wrote the textbook *Irānnāmah* for the Istanbul Iranian expatriate school in 1920, his sense of national mission was not unusual for his cohort, but given the scarcity of Persian-language reformist teaching materials, he could afford to be quite idiosyncratic in his execution of the task. By the early 1930s, literature curricula were produced by committee, and textbooks and their authors were critiqued harshly in polemics between camps of writers who hoped to redirect the policy of state cultural and educational bureaucracies. The same writers often also held positions within those bureaucracies, and canonic debates sometimes related to territorial disputes between organizations or the parallel organizations. Critical essays in the press were no longer private opinions, but position papers in advance of meetings at which decisions would be made, or particular interpretations of ambiguous signals from higher authorities.

As Persianate intellectuals such as Lāhūtī attempted to adapt the canon idea into a practicable program for state action, their conversations amongst themselves, and between them

⁵ John Guillory argues for the former interpretative framework and critiques the assumptions of those attempting to intentionally "open up" the canon in *Cultural Capital*.

⁶ Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, 22.

and their European counterparts, underwent changes that this chapter will explore. First, the canon was increasingly discussed as a physical object, a measureable number of reams of paper and inches on a bookshelf. Second, as egalitarian poets and intellectuals applied themselves to the writing of educational curriculum, they became increasingly concerned about classical literature's role in perpetuating elites. Third, as "their" literary classics entered canons and curricula that also included the literature of other nations or nationalities, they became increasingly preoccupied with the representation of their heritage within a larger world literary canon. All of these transformations had precedents in 19th-century canon discourse. Here I will briefly highlight two such earlier moments, which also mark stages in the history of Persian's decline as an international prestige language.

The British historian and politician T.B. Macaulay, during an 1835 debate on the terms of British East India Company support for Indian education and printing of literature, opined on the value of Oriental literature in his now-infamous memorandum on Indian education. Recommending that the East India Company should support English-language schools over schools teaching "Arabic [by which he meant Persian] and Sanscrit [sic]," he declared himself "quite ready to take the oriental learning at the valuation of the orientalists themselves. I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia." Indeed, he judged that "the literature now extant in [English] is of greater value than all the literature which three hundred years ago was extant in all the languages of the world together."⁷ The resulting English Education Act contributed to the eclipse of Persian literacy and Persophone literary production in India.

⁷ "Minute recorded in the General Department by Thomas Babington Macaulay, law member of the governor-general's council, dated 2 February 1835," in *The Great Indian Education Debate*:

In 1869, an Iranian Armenian reformist official, Mīrzā Malkum Khān (last encountered as the founder of Lāhūtī's pseudomasonic organization) wrote a Persian dialogue that was one of the first texts to advocate for a modified Arabic script.⁸ In it, a reformist vizier reassures a sheikh that Iranians will not “have to abandon all of our books”:

- Vizier- Why would we have to abandon our books? What relevance does a script change have to books? Whether [the Ilkhanid chronicle of] *Vaṣṣāf* and the *Shāhnāmah* are written in *naskh* script or *nasta’līq* [two Arabic calligraphic styles], what difference does it make to the meaning? [...]
- Sheikh- Yes, but those people who learn the new script won't be able to read our old books anymore.
- Vizier- First, the way to learning the old scripts won't be in any way barred. Just like today, anyone who wants will be able to master them. And second, there won't be any need to master the old scripts anymore. Because in a short time, all of our books can be published in the new script.
- Sheikh- We have so many books, how can we replace them all with the new script?
- Vizier- We had so many tens of millions of flintlock muskets. How did we manage to exchange them all? How many sailing ships did we have, and how did we replace them all with steamships? [...] And besides, do we have that many books? If you give me a tenth of the cost of one of these steamships that they are building now, in two years time I can convert all the books to be found in Islam to the new script.”⁹

Although Iran never adopted a different script, the dialogue circulated widely among more successful advocates of new scripts elsewhere in the Persianate zone. At the International Turkological Congress in 1926 in Baku, a member of the New Alphabet Committee of Soviet Azerbaijan approvingly misquoted Malkum Khān: “One of the eminent Latinizers [sic: *latinistov*] of previous times, Mirza Malkum Khan, calculated that in order to reprint all the

Documents Relating to the Orientalist-Anglicist Controversy, 1781-1843, eds. Lynn Zastoupil and Martin Moir (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 161-173.

⁸ On his participation in the earliest script reform discussions, see Hamid Algar, “Malkum Khān, Ākhūndzāda and the Proposed Reform of the Arabic Alphabet,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 5, no. 2 (1969): 116-130.

⁹ Mīrzā Malkum Khān, “Shaykh va vazīr,” in *Risālahhā-yi Mīrzā Malkum Khān Nāzim al-Dawlah*, ed. Hujjat-allah Asīl (Tehran: Nashr-i nay, 1381 [2002/3]), 395-396.

existing literature in the Near East—the literature of Persia, Afghanistan, and so on—would demand only the sum required for the construction of one battleship.”¹⁰ By that time, Turkey and the Turco-Persian regions of the Soviet Union were preparing immediate Latinization campaigns, and all the books of Islam had been replaced in discourse by the “literature of the Near East.” The proliferation in the interwar period of modified Arabic, Latin, and then Cyrillic scripts decisively concluded the thousand-year period when the difference between spoken Turkic or Persian dialects and languages was less perceptible or altogether absent in unvoiced, formal-language written texts. The large lexical overlap between the languages of the Persianate world was no longer easily detectable in many of its languages, and what began as a single conversation about the reformulated category of ادبیات —pronounced different ways but legible to all—fragmented into conversations about *edebiyat* (Turkish), *ədəbiyyat* (Azerbaijani), *adaõuäm* (Tajik), and so on.

Between the two earlier reckonings of Eastern literary shelf space, we may find many of the practical considerations that 20th-century state cultural planners would face in the Persianate world. They would allocate printing resources and shelf space for literary canons of multiple languages, evaluate those canons’ comparative educational use according to supposedly universal criteria, submit their own canons to the evaluation of Europeans, and allocate funds for the cost of multiple reprints of the same classics in new scripts, out of the same state budgets that paid for defense and heavy industry.

The resemblance between Soviet multinational literature and the literatures of other Persianate successor states is a matter of shared intellectual and cultural genealogy. Scholars

¹⁰ *Pervyii Vsesoiuznyi tiurkologicheskii s'ezd: 26 fevralia-5 marta 1926 g.: stenograficheskii otchet* (Baku: Tähsil, [2006?]), 287.

have plotted the Russian genealogy of the Soviet idea of the classics,¹¹ but it is an idea with other lineages, carried by inter-imperial networks of non-Russian intellectuals. Even in periods of relative Soviet isolation, canon-making was an international process as Soviet cultural bureaucrats, like their Iranian and Turkish counterparts, aspired to confirm their classics as world classics. Thus the project of Sovietizing Central Asian and Transcaucasian literature in the 1920s and 1930s was ultimately a typical case of Persianate literary modernity, despite Russian cultural hegemony and frequent violent interference from Moscow.

The Soviet institutional consolidation of Persian literary canonicity with which this chapter concludes was preceded by several crises of canonic values. Culture planners wondered whether Persian classics had any use for the training of Soviet citizens, or whether they were only good for propagating old elites. At the advent of mass literacy campaigns in new scripts, there was a turn toward oral folk forms, as if the entire adult population of Tajikistan needed the ontogeny of the new national literature to recapitulate the phylogeny of the Persian canon from the beginning. Finally, the introduction of national literatures into a universal Soviet canon of world literature produced a completely different set of anxieties about representation, and the search for texts to represent Tajikistan before the world led cultural planners back to the prestige of the Persian classics, now reframed as a pantheon of individual geniuses. It was in this way that Lāhūtī's canon of statues and honorarily named streets came to pass.

¹¹ Cf. Boris Dubin, *Klassika, posle i riadom: sotsiologisticheskie ocherki o literature i kul'ture* (Moscow: NLO, 2010).

1. Central Asian Canon Politics: The Background

In order to make the stakes of Lāhūtī's contribution to Soviet Eastern canon debates clear, it will be necessary to provide a broader picture of the polemics between Central Asian writers and cultural planners about the Soviet Tajik canon before and during his first residence there, from 1925-1929. Because Lāhūtī entered these debates when their terms had been developing for more than twenty years, his contributions cannot be understood except in the context of two prior debates: on language and script reform, and on the relative value of Persophone and Turcophone culture for Soviet Transoxania. When Lāhūtī arrived in Tashkent to take up a portfolio of educational and agitprop duties in 1925, the latter debate was entering a period of stalemate, while the former was becoming increasingly central to literary politics. Lāhūtī's involvement in these debates was quite modest, and he spent much of the late 1920s on the losing side of those debates in which he did intervene. His departure for a Moscow-based position at the end of the decade may be interpreted as a retreat from a Central Asian cultural sphere that had become hostile, perhaps even dangerous. However, when the ideological tide turned in 1932, this fact left him well-positioned to definitively advocate and shape the Soviet conception of the Persian and Persianate classics.

1a: Canon as Chrestomathy and Textbook: Classics for Education and Language Reform

In early Soviet Central Asia, discussions of the literary classics almost always took place in the context of two other topics, education and language. Because of the importance of universal literacy to the national awakening desired by local modernizers and the mass mobilization desired by Russian Bolsheviks, in this period language, education, and literature are often a single topic, and the question of the canon is a question of reading textbooks and

language chrestomathies. A survey of the changing uses of classical literature in Persianate education systems will provide context for the discussion of Soviet polemics that follows.

In 1952, the leading Tajik writer Șadr al-Dīn ‘Aynī wrote, “Despite the fact that the Tajik language has a thousand-year history and consistent grammar, before the Great October Socialist Revolution, not a single serious work had been written on this topic, because in our schools and madrassas, the native language wasn’t taught as a subject.”¹² ‘Aynī, as we will see, habitually included all Persian written and spoken in Central Asia under the term Tajik, including second-language Persian. With this in mind, while the first part of the statement is partly true—formal grammatical analysis was reserved for Arabic, but lexicographies were composed for Persian—the implication that Persian was not taught at maktabs and madrasas is imprecise. The language *itself* was not a subject, and maktab students only developed limited situational literacy, but the curriculum included numerous Persian and Turkic Persianate literary texts from Central Asia and beyond. First in manuscript and then in printed editions, a standard textbook circulated that included “Hāfiẓ, [the 17th-18th-century Bukharan poet] Șūfī Allāh-yār, Fužūlī, Bēdil, Navā’ī, and ‘Attār.”¹³ Wherever maktabs and madrasas were the main educational institution in the Persianate world, a similar mix of works in Persian and the local Persianate literary language supplemented their Arabic curriculum, whether formally in the classroom or informally in student reading circles.¹⁴ In the classroom and in informal settings, discussion led by those with expertise provided oral framing that was an essential part of learning a text.

¹² *Sharqi surkh* 6 (1952), 3, qtd. in R. Khodzhimukhamedova, *Razvitie tadzhikskoi obshcheobrazovatel’noi shkoly* (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1972), 55.

¹³ Khalid, *Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, 23-24.

¹⁴ On use of Persian literature in Iranian education, Monica Ringer, *Education, Religion, and the Discourse of Cultural Reform in Qajar Iran* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 2001), 211 n. 14, Ali Mohammed Kardan, *L’Organization scolaire en Iran* (Geneva: Imprimerie Reggiam et Jacond, 1957), 26; Reza Arasteh, *Education and Social Awakening in Iran* (Leiden: Brill, 1962), 6.

In movements of modernization and education reform, the role of literature shifted. On the one hand, literature was newly instrumentalized as a means to full literacy. On the other hand, as the central role of religious instruction receded to make way for national awakening, both vernacular and classical texts became objects for the student's contemplation in their own right, rather than means of inculcating religious doctrine and the ethics of *adab*.¹⁵ This phenomenon recapitulated the process by which Europeans had begun to teach vernacular literature in state schools by the mid-19th-century, but European national literary canons were also forged in schemes of colonial education reform in the Persianate world. As Gauri Viswanathan has shown in the case of British India, "English literature appeared as a subject in the curriculum of the colonies long before it was institutionalized in the home country."¹⁶ Thus it is in Tolstoy's series of literature primers, used in Transoxania's Russian schools for natives, that Russian and Eastern literature was first placed within an imperial world literary canon for Central Asian readers.¹⁷ Tolstoy's collection brought together Aesop with Indian fables from the Panchatantra (adapted in Pahlavi, Arabic, and Rūdakī's Persian as the famous collection *Kalīlah va Dimnah*), ethnography of Eskimos, the story of the conquest of the Khanate of Sibir by Ermak, and Tolstoy's own hunting tales.¹⁸ Following the establishment of the Uzbek SSR and Tajik ASSR, textbooks were printed that combined excerpts from classical Chaghatai or Persian literature, folk proverbs, riddles, and anecdotes about characters such as Luqmān Ḥakīm, proverbs and riddles, and translated Russian classics: excerpts from Tolstoy's textbook and the

¹⁵ This also tended to exclude some kinds of classical text, ghazal poetics in particular. Khalid, *Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, 168, 170-171; Ringer, *Education, Religion, and the Discourse of Cultural Reform*, 211, 218.

¹⁶ Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 3.

¹⁷ Khodzhimukhamedova, *Razvitie*, 25.

¹⁸ Lev Tolstoy, *Pervaya russkaia kniga dlia chteniia* (Moscow: Tip. Volchaninova, 1889); Tolstoy, *Vtoraia russkaia kniga dlia chteniia* (Moscow: Tip. Volchaninova, 1890).

18th-19th-century writer Ivan Krylov's fables.¹⁹ Many of the textbooks' selections follow on previous Jadid textbooks and included religious materials, including use of the dedicatory first surah of the Qur‘ān, the *fātiḥah*.²⁰

The early phases of the Soviet campaign to “liquidate illiteracy” in Transoxania were too chaotic to entail anything so efficacious as a centrally organized literature curriculum. The number of state schools and textbooks remained inadequate to a program of universal education until at least after the Second World War, and two successive script reforms squandered what literacy gains had been made.²¹ Nonetheless, the idea that classical literary works had a role to play in Soviet Transoxanian education remained part of debates on education policy, albeit an increasingly contested part.

1b. The Birth of Tajik Literature: Central Asia’s Persianate Legacy Externalized

The defense of classical Persian literature in Soviet Central Asia can only be understood in relation to a previous classicist effort, one that Adeeb Khalid calls “Chaghatayism.” This term was only used by militant “proletarian” critics for those whom they regarded as bourgeois nationalists, but it alludes to a short-lived cultural organization that Fitrat founded in Tashkent in 1918, the *Chighatāy Gurungi* (“Chaghatay Conversation Group”). Under the slogan “Make use of the historical and literary heritage,” they gathered to discuss their historical and literary research and ethnographic, ethnomusicological, linguistic, and archaeological fieldwork, and

¹⁹ These books included Muhammad Ṣamadzadah Ṣābitah’s *Muftah al-ta‘līm* [beginning of education] and Sa‘īd Rizā ‘Alīzādah’s *Sāl-i nakhustīn* [first year]. Khodzhimukhamedova, *Razvitiye*, 56-57.

²⁰ Ibid., 57.

²¹ Shoshana Keller, “Going to School in Uzbekistan,” in *Everyday Life in Central Asia: Past and Present*, eds. Jeff Sahadeo and Russell Zanca (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 253-256.

debated possibilities for language and script reform until the Bolshevik takeover of Bukhara in 1920 forced their closure.²² In principle, the group cast a wide net in defining this “heritage,” laying claim to all the great Turkic and Mongol empires of Central Asia. But their nationalist consciousness-raising was aimed at the settled peoples of Central Asia, both Turkophone and Persophone (and many bilingual). Much of their work fit under the intellectual rubric of *kraevedenie*, a Russian concept with no exact Western equivalent, but translatable as “regional studies.”²³ In keeping with this interest in local and regional cultural and linguistic phenomena, they rejected Persianate ‘arūzī meter in favor of Turkic folk syllabic meter (*barmāq*). At the same time, their national arcadia was the Timurid period, when Chaghatay Turkish had joined Persian as a second classical Persianate literary language for the region, a language in which poets composed Turkic verse in ‘arūzī meter, heavy with Persian vocabulary, idiom, and grammatical constructions.

Many of the activities of the Chaghatayists closely resembled the contemporaneous classical-minded research and literary production by the contributors to *Pārs* and the Eastern Publishing House, discussed in the previous chapter. In fact, several writers moved between these milieux, including, as we have seen, Fitrat himself. But the Chaghatayists’ degree of openness or hostility to the Persian elements in Central Asian literature and culture fluctuated. The period from 1918-1924 was the peak of anti-Persian sentiment, including among many Transoxanian intellectuals whose home language was Persian. In these years, intellectuals such as Fitrat argued that Persian-speaking children should be educated in the Uzbek language. They

²² Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*, 261-266; Allworth, *Uzbek Literary Politics* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1964), 109-116.

²³ Emily D. Johnson, *How St. Petersburg Learned to Study Itself: The Russian Idea of Kraevedenie* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006); in the Transoxanian case, see Ingeborg Baldauf, ‘Kraevedenie’ and Uzbek National Consciousness (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1992).

also published collections of traditional music that excised Persian lyrics. This vision preceded and outlived the Chighatāy Gurungi, and the Uzbek SSR, Khalid argues, “was the fulfillment of the Chaghatayst project.”²⁴ Accordingly, Tajik functioned as a “residual category.” The Tajik ASSR’s borders excluded the cosmopolitan urban Persian speakers but included the rural populations of the eastern reaches of the Bukharan Khanate, mostly Persophone, and the Pamirs, mostly speakers of non-Persian Iranian languages or Kyrgyz. Those who lost political battles in Uzbekistan were assigned to the Tajik party leadership.²⁵

In the later 1920s, as Khalid notes, many of the most prominent Chaghataysts became leading Tajik cultural bureaucrats, including Fitrat and the Samarkandis Törahqul Zehnī and Narż-allāh Bektāsh.²⁶ Even ‘Aynī, a bilingual writer who never had strong Turkist sympathies, received commissions in 1925 to edit two volumes: *Samples of Turkic literature* (by the Scientific Committee of the Uzbek SSR) and *Sample of Tajik Literature* (by the Tajik ASSR).²⁷ In the new Tajik press, ‘Abbās ‘Alīzādah, a Bukharan of Iranian descent who had written the introduction of the Azerbaijani edition of Khayyām’s works at the Central Press of the East, discussed Tajik language and education with the Uyghur nationalist writer Mannan Uyghur. Between 1926 and 1929, intellectuals who had forced Persophone children into Uzbek-language schools just a few years earlier now advocated for Bukhara’s Tajik status, collected Tajik folklore, and wrote about the thousand-year continuous tradition of Tajik Persian literature. For the most part, they did this while continuing to live in Samarkand, Bukhara, and Tashkent, where some of the Tajik journals and newspapers were printed. At first, many administrative functions for Tajik culture-building were located there, too: for Lāhūtī’s first year as the Tajik ASSR’s

²⁴ Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*, 277.

²⁵ Ibid., 301-304.

²⁶ Ibid., *Making Uzbekistan*, 306-307.

²⁷ Baldauf, ‘Kraevedenie’, 9-10.

deputy education commissar and head of agitprop,²⁸ he was based in Tashkent, and the big migration of writers did not take place until 1930. Tajik-Persian culture, like Uzbek-Chaghatay, was for a long time a cultural commitment rather than an exclusive identity. Fitrat, fulfilling a commission originally given to ‘Aynī, published the two most important Chaghatayist chrestomathies, *Examples of the Oldest Turkic Literature: Materials for the History of Our Literature* (*Eng eski turk adabīyāti uchun materiallar*, 1926) and *Examples of Uzbek Literature* (*Özbek adabīyāti namunalari*, 1927) in the same years that he was one of two scholars put in charge of the Latinization of Tajik (1927), taught Tajik language and literature to teachers in Samarkand (1927), and was declared by ‘Aynī the founder of modern Tajik prose (1926).²⁹ Beginning in late 1925, a young generation of Bolshevik critics joined leaders of the Uzbek Communist Party in a series of attacks on Chaghatayism in speeches and the press. From early 1926, the OGPU also began arrests for nationalism and pan-Turkism. In this context, Fitrat’s pivot to Tajik has often been characterized as a self-protective measure, but I will propose a different relationship between Chaghatayism and Soviet Persian classicism.

While in political terms, Tajik identity was a “residual category” from the national delimitation, in cultural terms, Tajik identity became a vessel for aspects of the Chaghatay project that no longer had a place in Uzbek public culture in the late 1920s. Writers such as Fitrat who intended for literary Uzbek to be a simplified, de-Persified Chaghatay soon found themselves outflanked by advocates of a spoken dialect including vowel harmony.³⁰ Transoxanian writers with excessive interest in feudal literature or even local traditions were urged to write about the present and adopt Marxist sociological categories. Between 1926 and

²⁸ List of occupations, March 21, 1952, RGASPI f. 495, op. 217, d. 345, ll.16-19.

²⁹ Ibid., 282; Bergne, *Birth of Tajikistan*, 81; ‘Aynī, *Namūnah-i adabīyāt-i tājīk*, 531.

³⁰ Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*, 261-262, 283-286.

1929, Uzbek-language Soviet press culture was more developed, more attuned to signals from the Soviet center, and thus more dangerous. Turkic nationalism was a particularly dangerous accusation because of its lingering association with the “pan-Turkist” threat (although this was a rhetorical figment). Consequently, those bilingual Chaghatayists from Samarkand, Bukhara, or the Fergana Valley who were attracted to classical literature or folklore found that by removing the Turkist emphasis from those interests, they could continue to study and preserve the same phenomena in their Persian-language instances. Like Abdullah Cevdet and Rızâ Tevfik in the early 1920s, Transoxanian intellectuals determined that the heritage that they wanted to triage from utter destruction was not specifically Turkic but ‘*ajamī*.

Tajik national culture, like the Tajik ASSR, was a residual category, the externalization of the shared Persianate heritage of Central Asia at a time when many Turkist intellectuals saw it as a liability for their modernization project. It soon became a refuge for many of those same intellectuals, and over the course of the 1930s, some of them developed a vernacular aesthetic for Soviet Central Asia that fared better than Chaghatayism. In a remarkable reversal, this externalized Persianate aesthetic returned to become the defining form of Soviet Eastern culture as a whole by the late 1930s.

1c. The Border Delimitation of Tajik Language and Literature

These, then, were the terms of the Tajik language reform discussion when Lāhūtī first arrived in Central Asia in 1925.³¹ All participants agreed that maximum comprehensibility was

³¹ The essential work on the Tajik language debate, from which my basic periodization and narrative derives, is Lutz Rzehak, *Vom Persischen zum Tadschikischen* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2001). The language debate of the 1920s replicated some of the dynamics of a debate among Jadids in 1912 about how closely the newspaper *Bukhārā-yi sharīf* should imitate the language of the Iranian press: Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*, 293.

the goal, but they differed on the scale of the community in which comprehensibility could be maintained. Positions were staked based on opposing literary models. A vernacularist camp advocated a new literary language based on Tajik dialects that would build mass literacy as quickly as possible, and a literature based on folklore. Lāhūtī advocated the opposing internationalist camp, which saw classical Persian literature as a possible common ground for Eastern revolutionaries. Their argument was best put by the former Chaghatayist Törahqul Zehnī in a series of articles from May and June of 1926. He opens with a lyric passage singing the praises of “the Tajik (Persian [*fārsī*]) language and literature [...] that mighty literature and that treasure-house of poetry and art [...] so incredibly mysterious and magical that one who has caught the scent of it goes wild like a madman, captive to its magic and spell-weavings, and won’t let go of it until they reach the end.” Pointing out that “even the Brahmins of India love this language and literature,” he declares that “today our language and literature is considered one of the sweet, radiant languages and literatures of the civilized world.”³² In the following article, he states the internationalist case, drawing on contemporaneous developments in Turkic language reform:

The Tajik language of literature, which we call Persian [*fārsī*], is the international language of the Persian-speakers [*fārsīzabānān*]. Today, whether in Afghanistan or Iran and India, that same Persian language is used. Everywhere it is the same. We must not wish, instead of people coming together, to become split and scattered from each other. That idea, of course, is far from the communist and socialist point of view. Today, Turcologists feel the necessity to create one common international scientific Turkic language for all the Turk and Tatar peoples. What necessity is there that we Persian-speakers of the East create separate styles, which do not yet exist in the fields of print and literature, disperse from each other and become fragmented.³³

³² Zehnī, “Mubāhiṣah dar bārah-i zabān va adabīyāt,” *Āvāz-i tājīk*, May 25, 1926, in ZTMM, 81.

³³ Zehnī, “Dar bārah-i zabān,” *Āvāz-i tājīk*, June 6, 1926, in ZTMM, 83.

In the next article, Zehnī rebuts the idea that literary Persian was reliant on Iranian borrowings, declaring that “this language was given by our fathers as an inheritance” and pointing to a series of classical milestones: the first Persian verses by Abū al-Hafṣ Sughdī Samarqandī; the first divan and the maṣnavī *Kalīlah va Dimnah* by Rūdakī; Daqīqī’s contribution to the *Shāhnāmah*; and the first *tazkirah* by Dawlatshāh. These firsts are evoked not to claim Persian literature as a particularly Tajik inheritance, but to show “the shared nature of Persian language and literature.”³⁴ This he further demonstrates with a series of excerpts from those and other Transoxanian Persian poets followed by others: ‘Aṭṭār, Ḥāfiẓ, Khayyām, Anvarī, Sa‘dī, and Bēdil.³⁵ He marks this latter group’s non-Central Asian origin, but declares that “especially in terms of usage [ṣarf], there is no difference.”³⁶ His final illustration of the point is a pair of excerpts from ‘Aynī and Lāhūtī.³⁷ With a final warning, he evokes a Persianate space either divided or sublimely whole:

Thus, to call Persian literature the literature of Iran, the literature of Afghanistan, the literature of Transoxiana is to associate the literature with a land and country; at the same time it becomes necessary to establish a definite border. Then the circle of Persian literature becomes small and bounded, but when we pass the name “Persian literature” over our tongue, a very wide space appears before our eyes; one side of this literary space is Iran, another side of it is Afghanistan and India, and another part of it is called Transoxiana.

‘Aynī’s position on the language reform question was steady but nuanced. In 1924, at the outset of the language debate, he distinguished between the “Tajiks” in the mountains to the east of Bukhara, whose pure language should provide the basis for the Tajik language reform, and the

³⁴ Ibid., 83-84.

³⁵ Ibid., 84-86.

³⁶ Ibid., 84.

³⁷ Ibid., 86.

“Persians” [*fārsiyān*] of the cities, whose language had too much Arabic and Turkic baggage.³⁸

He held to this position down to 1928, when he explained in an article, “If we say ‘let’s be international,’ we will take the Tajik literary language out of the Tajik community, and the Tajik ordinary people will be deprived of the nourishment of learning.” He approvingly quotes a folk saying: “First oneself, then the dervish [*avval khvēsh duvvum darvēsh*].” Revolutionary materials, he argued, could be pitched to foreign Persian-speaking workers nonetheless with illustrations and appeal to popular taste. After all, he argues, “However much we heed Tajik particularities in our writing, our printed language will still be closer to Persian-speakers than the language of, for example, the press of Iran, which is 80-90 percent Arabic.”³⁹

At the outset of discussions about Tajik language reform, ‘Aynī was given the task of assembling a literary corpus for the committee’s consideration.⁴⁰ When Lāhūtī first visited him in Samarkand in August 1925, he recalled, “The master was in his room, drowned among hundreds of books, and had in hand a manuscript that he was writing. It was this very one (*A Sample of Tajik Literature [Namūnah-i adabīyāt-i Tājīk]*).”⁴¹ The collection was finished that year, but was rejected by Uzbek and Tajik publishing houses as dangerously feudal and nationalist. ‘Aynī was accused of cryptomonarchism for his inclusion of Rūdakī’s celebration of the shah’s return to Bukhara. On one of his periodic trips to Moscow, Lāhūtī joined the orientalist E. E. Bertel’s to ensure the book’s publication at the Central Press of Peoples of the USSR.⁴² To the collection, Lāhūtī appended a defensive preface, his first entry into the Central Asian language polemics. In

³⁸ Bergne, *Birth of Tajikistan*, 77. This position had its exact counterpart in Fitrat’s 1925 grammar manual, where he writes, “Our urban language is spoiled. We can see the pure form of our language [only] with our tribal folk in the countryside.” Baldauf, ‘Kraevedenie’, 11-12.

³⁹ S. ‘Aynī, “Zabān-i tājīkī,” *Rahbar-i dānish* 11/12 (1928), in ZTMM, 319.

⁴⁰ ‘Aynī, *Namūnah*, 7.

⁴¹ Lāhūtī, “Şadr al-Dīn ‘Aynī” [dated May 1926, Moscow], in ‘Aynī, *Namūnah*, vii.

⁴² Jiří Bečka, *Sadriddin Ayni: Father of Modern Tajik Culture* (Naples: Istituto Universario Orientale, 1980), 39.

it, he foregrounds ‘Aynī’s sacrifice for the Revolution as a former victim of torture in the emir’s prison and the brother of a revolutionary martyr, and suggests that at the time of the book’s composition, this suffering had left him prematurely old and exhausted.⁴³ He then makes clear what the book is not: “for many reasons, this book has been was written without any kind of criticism or analysis. But for the criticism and analysis of future Tajik writers, it [provides] the richest and most comprehensive sources of Tajik literature.” He describes Central Asia as “the oldest source and wellspring of Persian literature,” and suggests that today, as in the time of Rūdakī, it is the Central Asian “Persian writers” such as Fīrat, Zehnī, and ‘Aynī who can resurrect “a dead literature.” This is both a task of new writing and proper anthological recontextualization of the classics. “The contemporary literature of the Tajiks,” he explains, “is like a rose garden that for many years has had no gardener and hasn’t been watered, and needs a lot of arrangement and trimming. I am certain that the honored master has established literary masses [sic] among the new, earnest Tajik youths, and they will make very firm steps toward the unity of a literary movement in the Persian language.”⁴⁴

In its emphasis on Persian literary unity, Lāhūtī’s introduction was at odds with ‘Aynī’s preference for a nationalized, specifically Tajik language. However, the *Sample of Tajik Literature* bears only an indirect relationship to the language reform project, and it certainly does not set out a primordially separate Tajik literary heritage. The volume covering pre-19th-century literature drew the most comment from contemporaneous critics and subsequent historians of Tajikistan, who have often seen it as a distinct Tajik canon going back to Rūdakī. Although the *Sample* was directed against the Turkist denial that Tajiks had any history in Central Asia, under

⁴³ Lāhūtī, “Şadr al-Dīn ‘Aynī,” vii. Photographs of ‘Aynī’s tortured figure after his rescue from the Bukharan prison are printed on the first two pages of the book.

⁴⁴ Ibid., viii.

close examination, the *Sample* confounds a nationalist interpretation. The collection was, as Lāhūtī indicated, a scholarly source collection. Only 185 of the collection's 626 pages comprise the volume of pre-19th-century literature, and of that, only 100 pages are works from the Timurid period or earlier. As 'Aynī explains in the introduction, in existing printed collections "the works of earlier [poets] are included in detail. But although samples from recent times have been collected in commonplace books [*bayāz 'hā*] and *tazkirahs*, they aren't widely known among the general public because they haven't been printed."⁴⁵ Indeed, well over half the material from the Timurid period or earlier was from printed sources, whereas two thirds of the material from the 16th-18th centuries was from Central Asian manuscripts. It is the post-Timurid material where 'Aynī made his most important contribution as a literary scholar and a *kraeved*. The present study, however, will reexamine the earlier section, because it is here that 'Aynī most directly adapted modern canonic revisions from elsewhere in the Persianate world, and it is this period that took up the most public attention in the return to the classics of following decade.

'Aynī's printed sources provide a map of the early 20th-century Persianate publishing world. For the pre-Timurid period, his most frequent printed source is a Lucknow edition of the *Ātashkada* (1760), the most important *tazkirah* of the 18th-century *bāzgasht* movement and a favorite of both Iranian nationalists and Parsi revivalists.⁴⁶ The second most commonly cited work, and a particularly important model for the chrestomathies of both 'Aynī and Fitrat, is the little-known *Sample of the Literature of Iran* (*Namūnah-i adabīyāt-i Īrān*), published in Soviet

⁴⁵ 'Aynī, *Namūnah*, 7.

⁴⁶ Hājī Luṭf-‘Alī Bīk Āzar, *Ātashkada* (Lucknow: Faṭḥ al-Karīm, 1881-2). On this work, see Mana Kia, "Imagining Iran before Nationalism: Geocultural Meanings of Land in Azar's *Atashkadeh*," *Rethinking Iranian Nationalism and Modernity*, eds. Kamran Aghaie and Afshin Marashi (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014), 89-112; Sharma, "Redrawing the Boundaries of 'Ājam,"' 54-56.

Baku in 1922 by the Iranian linguist and language pedagogue Mīrzā Muhsin Ibrāhīmī.⁴⁷ Other poems were drawn from a collection by the Russian orientalist Bartol'd and from the first Turkic-language encyclopedia, the *Kamūs-ül Â'lâm* of the Ottoman Albanian intellectual Şemseddin Sami.⁴⁸ He made extensive use of the three most important Timurid-era *tazkirahs*, in which, perhaps more than anywhere else, the Persian and Chaghatay canons were codified: Dawlatshāh's *Tazkirat al-shu 'arā'* (1487) and Jāmī's *Bahāristān* (1487) in Persian, and Navā'ī's *Majālis al-nafā'is* (1491) in Chaghatay. Of these, he consulted the *Bahāristān* in one of the numerous printed Indian editions but the *Tazkirat al-shu 'arā'* in a manuscript.⁴⁹ On the latter work, he writes, “It is too bad that this work hasn't yet been published; although it was printed in London in 1900, it hasn't circulated to our country [...] (I hope that the government of Uzbekistan, keeping in mind the historical and literary importance of this book, will have it printed, with properly careful editing.)”⁵⁰ Although he draws on Central Asian post-Timurid

⁴⁷ Mīrzā Muhsin Ibrāhīmī, *Namūnah-i adabīyāt-i Īrān* (Baku: Birinci hukumat maṭbu‘ası, 1922). Little is known about Ibrāhīmī. He had published two Persian language textbooks in Baku before the revolution: one elementary, *Dastūr-i pārsī: barā-yi kilās-i avval* (Baku: 1909); and another for non-native Persian speakers, *Dastūr-i pārsī va rahbar-i sukhan: āmūzish-i mukālimah bih ghayr-i fārsī'zabānān* (Baku: Maṭbu‘ah-i barādarān-i Ūrūjāf, 1909). He continued to publish in the Soviet period, producing a historical grammar of Persian: *Girāmir-i tārīkhī-'i zabān-i fārsī* (Baku, 1928). Compared to ‘Aynī’s *Namūnah*, that of Ibrāhīmī is far less like a *tazkirah* and more like a chrestomathy, with very little framing material, particularly for poetry. Ibrāhīmī, unlike ‘Aynī, includes sections on Avestan and Pahlavi inscriptions. He cites far more European and Russian orientalist editions and scholarly works, and his most frequent source is more scholarly chrestomathy of Persian prose and verse taken from manuscripts by an early “native” graduate of the Lazarov Institute in Moscow, the Azerbaijani scholar Mīrzā ‘Abd-allah Ghaffārov: Mirza Abdulla Gaffarov, ed., *Obrazchiki persidskoi pismennosti s X wieka do nashego vremeni*, vol. 1, *proza* (Moscow: Típo-lit. Russkago t-va, 1906); and vol. 2, *poezия* (1916).

⁴⁸ I have been unable to identify which of Bartol'd's works ‘Aynī used, although it appears to be a published work based on his description. He calls it “majmū‘ah-i Türkistān,” but gives no publication information. ‘Aynī, *Namūnah*, 41. Şemseddin Sāmī, *Kamūs-ül Â'lâm*, 6 vols. (Istanbul: Mihran maṭbaası, 1889-1898).

⁴⁹ ‘Aynī, *Namūnah*, 15. He does not indicate in what form he accessed the *Majālis*.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 104-105.

collections, published and unpublished, he makes no reference to the major Safavid, Mughal, or post-Timurid Afghan *tazkirahs* or lexicons. Because he does use post-Safavid Iranian texts such as the *Ātashkadaḥ*, we cannot posit a simple post-Timurid division of the Persianate canon into regional canons. Rather, the canon-revision process of the Iranian *bāzgasht*, or rather the 19th-century Indo-Persian and Iranian reception of that movement, contributes to ‘Aynī’s choices.

It is where he is closest to those sources that he comes closest to a national narrative. He declares in the introduction that the existence in Central Asia of “a large people called Tajik, of the Aryan race,” was proved by the continuity of Persian literature down the ages, both during the rule of Persian-speaking dynasties such as the Sāmānids and during periods of Turkic and Mongol rule.⁵¹ ‘Aynī’s principles of selection make a nationalist reading of the work as a whole tenuous, however. He writes that his collection includes “the works of famous literateurs who ended up in Transoxania and Turkestan or had a relationship with that region.”⁵² Thus, not only Central Asians in Iran but Iranians in Central Asia are included. Important poets neither native to nor resident of Transoxiana, such as Ḥāfiẓ, Ṣā’ib, and Bēdil, make their appearances when ‘Aynī cites poets’ emulations of their famous poems, or strophic poems built around their couplets. ‘Aynī also includes numerous poets whom he acknowledges to be Turks who composed primarily in Chaghatay, such as Navā’ī and Nādira (1792-1842), the poet queen of Kokand, whose poetry concludes the first volume.⁵³ He writes that although her biography and Chaghatay

⁵¹ Ibid., 3. Like previous orientalists and Iranian nationalist scholars, ‘Aynī suggests that Daqīqī was Zoroastrian.

⁵² Ibid., 6.

⁵³ The volume is also not completist. Although Navā’ī is included, his primarily Persophone friend and rival Jāmī is not (perhaps because of excessive association with religion). The most notable other exclusion is the 11th-century Isma‘ili poet Nāṣir Khusraw, whom he likely considered off-limits given the state’s increasingly conflictual relations with the Isma‘ili community leadership in Badakhshan. Neither would be excluded from the 1930s canon, however.

verses were printed in a 1923 issue of the Turkestan Commissariat of Enlightenment periodical, “her Persian verses weren’t mentioned,” and presents an extract by way of supplement.⁵⁴ As in the earlier Eastern Publishing House literature series, the organizing principle is the reassertion of bilingualism for the Persianate cultural commons, and the role of a Tajik language and *ethnos* in those commons. What the *Sample* shares with Iranian national historiography is also the result of their shared legacy from the orientalist scholarship that informed both. ‘Aynī frames his materials with the rhetoric of things “*uncovered, brought to light, rescued*” that Edward Said identifies with the orientalist chrestomathy.⁵⁵ In his preface, Lāhūtī refers to “the obliteration of this language’s literature by the Arab invasion and the burning of Persian works and books.”⁵⁶ ‘Aynī therefore takes up a task that Christopher Baker, discussing late Soviet Kazakh literature, has called “ethnic bricolage”: the assembly of an encyclopedic collection of fragments.⁵⁷

‘Aynī’s *Sample*, like contemporaneous classical anthologies from other Persianate regions, follows the chronologically-ordered format of the classical *tazkirah*, proceeding from a brief account of each poet’s life to a few verse extracts.⁵⁸ Farzin Vejdani has shown how early Pahlavi-era Iranian anthologies and textbooks are modified *tazkirahs* that cite scholarly works and introduce a periodization from Western literary historiography. In the Iranian, case, the primary model was E.G. Browne. ‘Aynī’s periodization of the past owes more to Jadid and Soviet narratives about Central Asia, divided between the unbroken pre-conquest past, the proto-modern 19th century, and “new Tajik literature,” divided between the reformism of 1905-1917

⁵⁴ Ibid., 185. The article to which he refers is in *Bilim öchāghi* 2/3 (1923).

⁵⁵ Said, *Orientalism*, 127.

⁵⁶ Lāhūtī, “Şadr al-Dīn ‘Aynī,” viii.

⁵⁷ Christopher Baker, “The power and significance of the ethnic past,” in *History Making in Central and Northern Eurasia: Contemporary Actors and Practices*, ed. Svetlana Jacquesson (Rechte: Reichert Verlag, 2016), 21-40.

⁵⁸ Khalid notes this generic characteristic in *Making Uzbekistan*, 310.

and the first literature since the revolution.⁵⁹ ‘Aynī explains that the materials were gathered so that “the names of the departed would live and the young would be inspired by literature. The pages of this book show the masters of Tajik literature: ‘Today, the literary market is hotter than hot. If you have the goods, bring them, and if you have the inclination, get to work! Here is the polo ball, and here the field!’”⁶⁰ ‘Aynī’s collection shares with contemporary nationalist anthologies the goals of preserving collective memory and inspiration of the youth. But where those anthologies instill reverence for some national essence, such an attitude is nowhere to be found in the *Sample*; instead, the classics present a challenge: “The government of Tajikistan has declared its task. Now let us see what brave man’s pen flows with what quality, and what subtle-minded hero’s grip will adorn the page.”⁶¹ He produced the *Sample* in order to correct Tajik writers’ unawareness of the Soviet state’s appreciation for “the language and literature of the nations” and the “value and prestige that they gave to literature generally.” This ignorance, he suggests was the result of the Uzbek government’s neglect.⁶¹ As Uzbek cultural authorities and critics became more hostile to “the classics,” Tajikistan could fulfill the mandate of Soviet nationalities policy on behalf of Transoxanian “literature generally.”

This reading of the *Sample* is in line with ‘Aynī’s statements on classical literature during the ensuing language reform debates. Unlike many of his colleagues, he does not suggest that a specifically Central Asian version of the Persian language can be found in pre-16th-century

⁵⁹ The pre-Russian conquest past is an unbroken continuum in the first volume, demarcated only by Islamic hijrī centuries and sometimes dynasties (in keeping with the late *tazkirah* tradition), and includes a special section for female poets, another typical feature of *tazkirahs* including the *Ātashkada*. The second volume includes poets from the 19th century down to the Revolution of 1905 (although its cover gives a longer time-span, 1785-1924).

⁶⁰ Ibid., 6.

⁶¹ Ibid., 4.

literature.⁶² “A Tajik or an Iranian,” he wrote in 1928, “understands and likes the works of Sa‘dī, Hāfiẓ, Nizāmī, and so on to the same degree as the works of Rūdakī, Kamāl Khujandī [...] and so on. Whatever difficulties a Tajik encounters in understanding some words taken from Old Persian [i.e., Pahlavi] by Firdawsī, an Iranian will have too.”⁶³ Mana Kia, in her study on *Ātashkadaḥ*, shows that its geographical imagination was not Iranian nationalist, as has often been claimed, but instead “distinguished and centered Iran within the larger Persianate world,” based on “a history and standard of evaluation that was shared with other Persians in Turan [Central Asia] and Hendustan [India].”⁶⁴ 165 years later, excluding the introduction’s reference to the Tajik nation, ‘Aynī’s geography of Persian literature is no more national. In 1928, he cited the Hungarian orientalist Ármin Vámbéry on the linguistic conservatism of Central Asian Persian speech relative to Iranian dialects, but his claim never went further than this.⁶⁵ The new Iranian national canon, which incorporated much of the same material, did so by making “Iran” synonymous with the entirety of the pre-Timurid heritage, and nationalizing only what followed. At this early stage of Soviet nationalities policy, ‘Aynī found room for a less nationalized narrative of pre-modern Persophone literature.

⁶² That argument was made in a puzzling form by the poet and journalist Baḥr al-Dīn ‘Azīzī (1895-1944), who explained that medieval Persian can be divided already between the “city language,” heir to the “Pahlavi language,” and the “mountain language,” heir to the “Dari language”—the former implied to be Iranian Farsi, and the second Tajik. He evinces as evidence couplets from Rūmī’s *Masnavī-i ma ‘navī* and one of Hāfiẓ’s ghazals that refer to Pahlavi and Dari, and takes the two poets as models of two literary languages, nearly mutually incomprehensible (a difficult conclusion to imagine): “if you put these two divans by ancient poets before you and become acquainted with them, you will understand well what kind of difficulty to understanding the poet Rūmī presents, having composed his speech in city language, and how easily comprehensible to the masses Hāfiẓ is, having composed his discourse in mountain language.” ‘Azīzī, “Bah zabān-i darī durr-i suktan mīkhvāham,” *Tajikistān-i surkh*, December 28, 1928, in ZTMM, 360. See also Zehnī, “Maşlaḥat-i man dar bārah-i zabān,” *Rahbar-i dānish* 5/6 (1929), in ZTMM, 436-437.

⁶³ ‘Aynī, “Dar atrāf-i zabān-i fārsī va tājīkī,” *Rahbar-i dānish* 4/5 (1928), in ZTMM, 162.

⁶⁴ Kia, “Imagining Iran before Nationalism,” 92.

⁶⁵ ‘Aynī, “Dar atrāf-i zabān-i fārsī va tājīkī,” 165-166.

In this combination of careful historicism, advocacy for the interests of a Tajik nationality, and celebration of borderless Persian legacy, ‘Aynī’s *Sample* resembles the works of the Russian orientalists who supported the Tajik cause at an early stage. Francine Hirsch, Paul Bergne, Sergei Abashin, and Matthias Battis have shown how Russian orientalists advocated the Tajik minority’s case to Russian Soviet administrators during the national delimitation (when most Persian-speaking intellectuals were still caught up in the Turkist fervor), and then provided the basis for Tajiks’ request for full SSR status later in the decade.⁶⁶ These orientalists were convinced of the role of Persian-speakers and Persian culture in Central Asian history, but their philological training led them to see Tajikistan in a broader context. When they formed an association in 1925, they called it the Society for the Study of Tajikistan and the Iranian Peoples Beyond its Borders.⁶⁷ Some of these same figures, including Aleksandr Seménov, Ol’ga Sukhareva, and Aleksei D’iakov, also participated in the language debate, writing for Russian-language Central Asian newspapers such as *Pravda vostoka* alongside younger Central Asian cadres whose Russian was fluent, and sometimes contributing articles to the Tajik press.⁶⁸ In fact, given the power dynamics, those Transoxanian participants in the debate who did not read Russian regarded the Russian-language debate with some combination of deference and

⁶⁶ Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 181-186; Bergne, *Birth of Tajikistan*, 127; Sergei Abashin, *Natsionalizmy v Srednei Azii: V Poiskakh Identichnosti* (St. Petersburg: Aleteiia, 2007), 189-195; Matthias Battis, “Soviet Orientalism and Nationalism in Central Asia: Aleksandr Semenov’s Vision of Tajik National Identity,” *Iranian Studies* 48, no. 5 (2015): 729-745.

⁶⁷ Battis, “Soviet Orientalism and Nationalism,” 734.

⁶⁸ As Battis has pointed out, the local/Russian distinction must be complicated somewhat, in light of “local” figures such as Bābājān Ghāfūrov (or Lāhūtī) who intervened in debates from Moscow, and Russians such as Sukhareva (born and raised in Samarkand) or Semenov (who lived most of his life in Central Asia). *Ibid.*, 732.

trepidation.⁶⁹ To protect participants against trespasses beyond acceptable discourse, Tajik journals occasionally provided summaries of recent discussions in Russian.⁷⁰

Some awareness of a broader scholarly conversation also played a role in these debates, as we have seen from ‘Aynī’s use of Vámbéry. Writers drew on comparative studies of Pashto, Urdu, Kurdish, and Gilaki, and discussed similar efforts of language reform around the Persianate world.⁷¹ Certain participants also followed debates about language and literature in Iran. In a 1929 article, ‘Abd al-Qādir Muḥī al-Dīnov (Muhiddinov), a leading member of the Tajik government, drew on the philological works of the Iranian scholars Aḥmad Kasravī and Sa‘īd Nafīṣī, the latter one of Lāhūtī’s former comrades from Istanbul.⁷² Using their work, he defended the principle of “unity of language” and the role of classical literature in that unity:

One could get the idea that “bookish language, the ancient Persian [*pārsī*] literary language, is a useless thing, and has no necessary place in our new literature.” If we think this way, we make a big mistake. “We have to separate ancient from ancient.” The “literary language,” the “bookish language” against which we speak, is the ruined literary language, the Arabic-filled literary language of today. Of course we don’t take this language as a foundation. But in ancient Persian [*pārsī*] literature, there also exist valuable works worthy of use. Ancient Persian literature also has a period of purity.⁷³

⁶⁹ At one stage of the debate, ‘Aynī wrote, “everything that I write about this in this essay is only in order to make known my own position, and until I understand their positions, I will hold back what my views are on the thoughts of comrades who wrote and write in the Russian press.” “Zabān-i tājīkī,” *Rahbar-i dānish* 11/12 (1928), in ZTMM, 318.

⁷⁰ Cf. Rahīm Mīm, “Dar gird-i zabān-i adabī-i tājīk chih mīnavīsand?: Yak nazar bah rafīqān Mużaffar, Diyākūf, Dunbāl, prūfissūr Shīl dar rūznāmah-i ‘Prāvdā vustūkā,’ *Rahbar-i dānish* 11/12 (1928), in ZTMM, 327-334. As it transpired, the only clear signal from above was in favor of the alphabet shift, and that proceeded according to the recommendations agreed on by the relevant committees, which contained both locals and Russian orientalists.

⁷¹ Zihnī, “Zabān-i guft-u gū’ī-’i hāzir,” *Āvāz-i tājīk*, June 17, 1926, in ZTMM, 89; Sirus Diyārūf, “Falsafah-i ‘naw’ dar bārah-i zabān-i adabī-yi tājīk va yā millatparastān-i mahallī dar libās-i ‘Sukharevā,’” *Rahbar-i dānish* 4/5 (1930), in ZTMM, 627.

⁷² A. Muḥī al-Dīnūf, “Fikrhā-yi mā dar bārah-i zabān-i adabī-’i tājīkī,” *Tājīkistān-i surkh*, January 9, 1929, in ZTMM, 388-392. He cites an article by Kasravī in the newspaper *Tūfān-i haftagī*, on the corrupted state of Iranian Persian, and Nafīṣī’s positive review of *Namūnah-i adabīyāt-i tājīk* in the newspaper *Shafaq-i surkh*.

⁷³ Ibid., 385.

Citing Rūdakī, Firdawsī, Daqīqī, Farrukhī, Manuchihrī, and others as possible resources for the new literature, he includes that in addition to writers and scholars, the Tajik State Press has a role to play, “by printing works that are relevant in these terms, to provide ways for the masses to become acquainted with ancient literature worthy of use.” Affection for Samanid and Ghaznavid poets, placed in the context of Tajik reception of Iranian scholarship and polemics, becomes legible. Using models derived from Iranian literary historiography, Tājīk writers claimed a special closeness with the “*Khurasāni*” period of Persian literature, the golden age of Persian literature for Iranians from the *bāzgasht* to Bahār.

Although Lāhūtī helped to ensure the publication of ‘Aynī’s anthology, as the terms of literary criticism in the Tajik press caught up to norms set by Uzbekistan, the *Sample of Tajik Literature* faced ever sharper attacks for the same nationalist sins as Fiṭrat’s *Samples of Uzbek Literature*. ‘Aynī, although an advocate of vernacularization of Tajik, found support from the linguistic internationalists whom he had defeated in the language reform debate, and from Russian orientalists. Andrei Znamenskii, the chairman of the Society for the Study of Tajikistan and the Iranian Peoples Beyond its Borders, declared the work’s usefulness in “the future struggle for cultural-political influence in the East among the Persian-speaking countries. This means: in Iran, Afghanistan, and to a certain (significant) extent in India. In all these places, one can assume, the Tajik anthology will find its readers.”⁷⁴ This had already begun to take place: in December 1927, during one of Lāhūtī’s periodic official trips to Moscow, he wrote a report back to ‘Aynī:

Representatives of Iran, editors of newspapers, and members of the Majlis who are visiting were measurelessly pleased with the usefulness of the *Sample of Tajik Literature*, and frequently discussed this book and your labors for the

⁷⁴ Battis, “Soviet Orientalism and Nationalism,” 736.

advancement of Tajik literature. They said that everyone in Iran desires to see this book.⁷⁵

He sent along reviews of the book from the Iranian press, one of which was likely the article by Sa‘īd Nafīṣī that entered the debates about Tajik literary language. Despite the international reputation of ‘Aynī’s book, however, by 1930 it was removed from circulation and copies were collected for destruction.⁷⁶

2. Ethnography and Philology, Anti-Canon and Canon

The pulping of ‘Aynī’s anthology marks the end of the first phase of Central Asian literary textbook production. At this stage, it may be useful to ask, as intellectuals had been asking throughout the Persianate world since the late 19th century, what classical Persian literature was good for, and why it needed to be taught in state schools. Its teaching in madrasas before the Soviet reconquest of Central Asia may be easily explained, in accordance with Pierre Bourdieu’s model of cultural capital, as one part of the mechanism by which elites reproduced themselves.⁷⁷ The ability to appropriately quote famous verses, understand the allusions of others, and compose fitting occasional verse was not a trade skill for a merchant or jurist (although it might be a skill for a bureaucrat), but such facility with classical poetry allowed one to signal the elite status that made one an appropriate appointee or business partner.⁷⁸ Those

⁷⁵ Lohutī, *Nomaho*, eds. Abdurahmon Abdumannonov, Khurshed Otakhonova, and Gurez Safar (Dushanbe: Adib, 2004), 7.

⁷⁶ Sadriddin Aini, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 6 (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1971), 118.

⁷⁷ Pierre Bourdieu and Jean Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, 2nd ed., trans. Richard Nice (London: SAGE, 2000).

⁷⁸ For some conversions of Persianate cultural and social capital into political capital in Russian Imperial Central Asia, see Pickett, “Persianate Sphere,” 323–330; a close study of one such instance is Galit Hasan-Rokem, “Classical Poetry as Cultural Capital in the Proverbs of Jews from Iran,” in *Orality and Textuality in the Iranian World*, ed. Julia Rubanovich (Leiden: Brill,

without the family resources for post-maktab schooling could and did gain access to such an education (as is the case with both Lāhūtī and ‘Aynī, childhood verse prodigies who found elite patrons).⁷⁹ But on the whole, despite widespread engagement with classical poetry at all levels of society, formal literary education preserved the elite status of the children of elites.

The attitude to classical Persian poetry of pre-1917 Central Asian education reformers was ambivalent, as we have seen, for eminently practical reasons: if the schools were to teach different kinds of reading and writing skills, the old set texts might not serve the purpose. But the kinds of criticism that ‘Aynī faced for the *Sample of Tajik Literature* were more strenuous, based in the sociological approach to literature that was proliferating in the Soviet literary scholarship and criticism of the late 1920s.⁸⁰ Although some Marxist sociological critics did subtle work, the version that made its way into school textbooks and peripheral book reviews was usually crude in its analytic terms, particularly where critics were reading only the few contemporary theoretical texts that had been translated, as was the case for many Tajik and Uzbek critics. But in focusing on the ways that Persian literature might function in educational settings as a way of perpetuating elite status, young anti-classicist critics approached a vernacular critique of literary canons as cultural capital. For a brief period, these critics hoped to abolish the canon, and with it

2015), 307-315. Discussing the functions of literary canons in the contemporary American university, John Guillory delineates subcategories of cultural capital that have informed my description above: “First, it is *linguistic* capital, the means by which one attains to a socially credentialled and therefore valued speech, otherwise known as ‘Standard English’ [or literary Persian]. And second, it is *symbolic* capital, a kind of knowledge-capital whose possession can be displayed upon request and which thereby entitles its possessor to the cultural and material rewards of the well-educated person.” Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, ix.

⁷⁹ See Ch. 1.

⁸⁰ For a sympathetic account, see Caryl Emerson, “Literary Theory in the 1920s: Four Options and a Practicum,” in *A History of Russian Literary Theory and Criticism: The Soviet Age and Beyond*, edited by E.A. Dobrenko and Galin Tihanov (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011), 76-79, 85-87.

the elite's means of self-reproduction. In its place, they proposed an anti-canonical production by ethnographic collection of the folklore of ordinary Tajiks.

A different program of canon critique resulted in the restoral of a hierarchy in which Persian literature, now framed by the values of oriental philology that we saw at work in Chapter 2, once more took precedence over folklore. The shift resulted from the inclusion of national literary canons within a larger multinational Soviet canon of world literature. Henceforth, the increasingly dominant question of literary representation was displaced from the interior of the nation (What texts provide a representative past for the new national collectivity?) to the multinational space of comparison between national literatures (How can the national collectivity ensure that it is *well*-represented before others?). At this stage, concerns about making the literature represent the nation brought the logic of literary prestige to the fore and eclipsed concerns about the functioning of cultural capital.⁸¹

2a. Script Reform and the Ethnographic Anti-Canon

The destruction of ‘Aynī’s chrestomathy must be understood in the context of a counter-discourse about the classical Persian canon that was on the ascendant in 1930, concurrent and complementary with the Tajik script reform. The present section describes this episode of cultural revolution, the triumph of ethnography over philology and of an idiosyncratic Tajik alphabet over Lāhūtī’s proposal of international coordination, in order to make clear the magnitude of the reversal that Lāhūtī and his allies orchestrated between 1932 and 1934. The term “cultural revolution” (*kul’turnaia revoliutsiia*) has been used, both in contemporaneous Soviet polemics and in subsequent historiography, for two distinct but related phenomena. When

⁸¹ My narrative draws on John Guillory’s discussion of the “canon wars” in the American academy here and in the section that follows. *Cultural Capital*, 3-82.

‘Aynī wrote in 1928 that “our first task is to enlighten the thought of the Tajik people, to spread Soviet knowledge and learning among the Tajik people and make the cultural revolution [*inqilāb-i madani*] universal,” he described a long-term process of transformation.⁸² But at that time, a more specific phase of Soviet politics was beginning, “an aggressive movement of the young, proletarian and communist against the cultural establishment,” incited by Stalin and other members of the party leadership to eliminate resistance to the speed-up of the First Five-Year Plan.⁸³ Beginning with Sheila Fitzpatrick, many English-language historians have picked up on the term to suggest that the displacement of the old intelligentsia by young cadres between 1928 and 1932 should be compared with China’s Cultural Revolution.⁸⁴

In Central Asia, too, there was a sudden increase in intergenerational strife within public institutions, although without the same class dimension as in Russia.⁸⁵ The near-absence of industry meant that few of the young scholars, specialists, and writers who challenged their elders were proletarians. In fact, as Flora Roberts has shown, many of them were from elite urban families whose status did not fit into any of the class or identity categories marked for exclusion, and whose elders had ensured that they got the ideological education and Russian

⁸² ‘Aynī, “Zabān-i tajīkī,” 319. It is in this sense that Adeeb Khalid uses the term: *Making Uzbekistan*, 20; likewise A’zamdzhon Kholmatovich Azimov, “Tadzhikskaia zhurnalistika v period kul’turnoi revoliutsii (1929-1940 gg.)” (Ph.D. diss., Tajik National University, 2009). However, both Khalid and Azimov do include within their larger analytic category the phenomena associated with the more temporally bounded cultural revolution of Fitzpatrick’s works.

⁸³ Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Cultural Revolution in Russia 1928-32,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 9, no. 1 (1974): 34. Back in Moscow in December 1930, Lāhūtī wrote a poem celebrating one of the landmark show trials of the cultural revolution, the Industrial Party Trial. Lohutī, “‘Devoni’ inqilob,” in *K2*, 41, 313-314 notes.

⁸⁴ Fitzpatrick, “Cultural Revolution,” 33-52.

⁸⁵ On the changing of the guard among the intelligentsia more generally, see Donald S. Carlisle, “The Uzbek Power Elite: Politburo and Secretariat (1938-83),” *Central Asian Survey* 5:3-4 (1986): 100-102. He describes this younger generation as the “class of ’38,” alluding to the role of the purges in their rise to power.

knowledge to navigate the new order.⁸⁶ In literature and scholarship, young writers established affiliation with Communist writers' organizations: from 1927 to 1930 the Uzbek group Qizil Qalam (Red Pen), then local affiliates of the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP) or the all-union umbrella organization (VOAPP, from 1928).⁸⁷ In Uzbek literature, by mid-1930 denunciations were leading to arrests and, by 1931, executions. The first victims were, with a few exceptions, from among the younger generation of energetic "leftists" opposed to traditional literature, albeit some of them former Chaghatajists.⁸⁸ But the imaginary nationalist conspiracies that were the basis of the resulting convictions and executions implicated some of the most prominent crossover Uzbek-Tajik writers and scholars, including Fitrat. In the Tajik press and literary circles of Dushanbe, Samarkand, and Bukhara, the atmosphere seems to have remained comparatively congenial, perhaps because writers worked within a few close patronage networks.⁸⁹ Accusations and threats are usually directed vaguely at unnamed advocates of a particular opinion. In this period, consensuses in the press form quickly and shift as quickly, while disagreements between particular parties must often be read between the lines. The tide did turn against the opinions and works of many former Jadids, as the fate of 'Aynī's anthology shows, but for the most part relations tended to be at least civil, and those accused attempted to stake out a position within the new window of discourse.

⁸⁶ Roberts, "Old Elites," 105-169.

⁸⁷ These included local city affiliates such as TAPP in Tashkent and, from 1930, the Central Asian general organization (SAAPP), of which the strongest member organization was the Uzbek affiliate (UzAPP, or Özbekistān Proletar Yāzuchilari Uyushmasi); the Tajik affiliate seems to have been limited in its organizational role. On these organizations, see Allworth, *Uzbek Literary Politics*, 117-131.

⁸⁸ Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*, 371-378.

⁸⁹ The slights and polemics recorded in the writer Jalāl Ikrāmī's memoir between 1928 and 1932, distressing though they were to those involved, seem quite civil compared to the polemics that had consumed the Russian literary world throughout 1920s, or even the mutual recriminations of the Uzbek literary world. Jalol Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht* (Dushanbe: Sharqi ozod, 2009), 155-209; also discussed in Roberts, "Old Elites," 292-319.

The most remarkably sudden consensus of the late 1920s formed around the adoption of the Latin alphabet for the Tajik language. Both in the Jadid press and in earlier stages of the language reform debates, the possibility of a new writing system had been suggested, but in the first half of 1927, this possibility coalesced into a debate about a few specifics of phonetic representation and orthographic conventions.⁹⁰ In this unanimity it is difficult to distinguish participants' prudent acquiescence, facing a seemingly inevitable outcome, from their enthusiasm for a leap into linguistic and literary modernity, but the latter phenomenon was real and widespread. The previous year, the Congress of Turkologists in Baku, attended by delegates from Turkey and numerous Soviet Turkic nationalities, had proposed a universal Turkic Latin alphabet called *Jangalif*. This phonetic system was adopted for all the Soviet Turkic languages between 1927 and 1928, although Turkey adopted a slightly different Latin alphabet in 1929.

As intellectuals discussed the Tajik script change, they discussed similar efforts underway, not only in Turkey, but around the world: a Russian orientalist reported on script reform from Java to Albania, and correspondents wrote from Iran.⁹¹ In this atmosphere, Lāhūtī

⁹⁰ Many of the major Tajik-language articles of the debate, together with several essays providing context, are reprinted in ZTMM; Russian-language articles were most often published in *Pravda vostoka* and *Pravda tadzhikistana*. Following the idea's confirmation in 1928, the new alphabet appeared in the journals on the masthead, then in article titles, and then by 1929 in a section in the back of each issue.

⁹¹ A. Dal', "Alifbā-yi lātīnī dar mamlakathā-yi sharq," *Rahbar-i dānish* 7 (1928), in ZTMM, 184-188. 'Aynī, responding to a report from the Iranian consul Mīrzā Karīm-khān about Iranian reformers' unsuccessful attempts to import the Latin alphabet, wrote, "But if Iran can't solve this problem, it's not their fault. Because now Iran is under the influence of the mullas." To this, he contrasts the Tajik's propitious circumstances. "Dunyā-yi naw va alifbā-yi naw," in ZTMM, 123. Lāhūtī was not the only participant in the debate who had seen the workings of the press in other Turco-Persian states. As we have seen, Fīrat and some other Bukharans had studied in Istanbul before the Revolution. In 1921-1922, Payraw Sulaymānī was a representative at the Bukharan revolutionary consulate in Kabul, and between 1924 and 1926 he traveled to Afghanistan and Iran as a journalist. Jiří Bečka, "Tajik-Afghan Relations and the Writings of Sadreddin Aīnī," *Archiv Orientální* 46 (1978): 101; Keith Hitchins, "A Bukharan Poet between Tradition and Revolution: Pařav Sulaimonī," in *Iranian Languages and Literatures of Central Asia: From the*

wrote an article giving his enthusiastic support for the Latinization for which the Tajik poor and laboring masses “have made known their definite wishes and desires.”⁹² He mildly proposed a few alterations to the phonetic system advocated by Fiṭrat, chiefly the removal of distinctions between Arabic letters pronounced the same in Tajik.⁹³ His most important proposal was for the Tajik Commissariat of Education to “quickly convene a conference on the latinization of the Tajik alphabet in Samarkand. And at this conference, scholarly representatives of Iran, Afghanistan, and the Persian-speakers of India should also be invited,” on the model of the Baku Turkological Congress. In this way, “the Tajik-speakers [*tājīkzabānān*] of the other countries” would be able to “participate in this collective task with us,” and other representatives would witness the positive example of Tajikistan. He concluded by declaring his “longtime desire” for Tajikistan to “be the teacher and leader of the Persian-speaking peoples of the East.”⁹⁴ Although the conference did take place, and the new alphabet was approved there, I have found no evidence that foreign delegates ultimately attended. Lāhūtī did not play a leading role in discussions at the Samarkand Congress, though Fiṭrat reported his suggestion that “o” be used in place of “u,” in order, Fiṭrat explained, to take “into account the spoken language of the contemporary people of Iran.”⁹⁵ This smaller attempt at internationalization, too, was rejected. Also rejected were Fiṭrat and Bektāsh’s proposals to bring the Tajik alphabet as close as possible to the Uzbek one.⁹⁶ The resulting alphabet was neither a regional nor an international common

Eighteenth Century to the Present, eds. Matteo de Chiara and Evelin Grassi (Paris: Association pour l’avancement des études iraniennes, 2015), 266.

⁹² Lāhūtī, “Dar gird-i lāyihah-i alifbā-yi naw-i tājīkī,” *Rahbar-i dānish* 1/2 (1928), in ZTMM, 146.

⁹³ He compares redundant Arabic letters to Central Asian religious, cultural, and economic elites, writing, “let’s send Dāmullā Ḥ packing before Ēshān Š and Š-bāy.” *Ibid.*, 147.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁹⁵ Fiṭrat, “Dar gird-i alifbā-yi naw,” *Rahbar-i dānish* 10 (1928), in ZTMM, 222.

⁹⁶ Bergne, *Birth of Tajikistan*, 81.

system, but an idiosyncratic one that separated Tajik literacy from both Uzbek and international Persian.

Another dislocation in the literary culture of this period, both demographic and symbolic, was the attempt to make the territory of the new Tajik SSR the home of Tajik culture, and its capital Dushanbe, renamed Stalinabad in 1929, the center of Tajik culture. Tens of thousands were resettled from the Samarkand, Bukhara, and their hinterlands to settle in the city or to work at new collective farms in the surrounding countryside. In 1930, a brigade of writers traveled from Uzbekistan to Stalinabad for the first Congress of Tajik Scholars, and a number of them stayed on as residents, including Bektāsh, Payraw Sulaymānī, and Zehnī.⁹⁷ Lāhūtī was one of the Congress's presiding elders, but as he greeted the new settlers, he had already taken up a position at *Pravda* and moved back to Moscow earlier that year.⁹⁸ Although he left behind many warm friends and successful projects, not only had he failed to prevent the linguistic separation of the Tajiks from the wider Persophone world, but the types of classical and new literature that he had promoted had been routed by the cultural revolutionaries.

In January 1930, Bektāsh, the former Chaghataiyist who was the most daring intellectual of this cultural revolution, dramatically described the atmosphere of the moment: “At official and unofficial gatherings, some comrades whisper of the nonexistence of a Tajik literary language. The bookish language that has taken to its bosom ranks of divans from Rūdakī to ‘Ajzī, Fitrat, and Payraw Sulaymānī, the problem of that language of Persian-speakers, they are bringing to an end.”⁹⁹ But what did it mean to deny the existence of a Tajik literary language?

⁹⁷ Roberts, “Old Elites, 282-284, 292-299.

⁹⁸ Between 1925 and 1935, both before and after his move from Dushanbe to Moscow, in most years, he spent some time in both Moscow and Central Asia, but the move does seem to mark a change of general orientation.

⁹⁹ Bektāsh, “Dar atrāf-i zabān-i tājīkī,” manuscript dated January 19, 1930, in ZTMM, 536.

It is true [...] that after the advent of Islam, for the entire Muslim East, a court language, the feudal Persian style, became recognized as universal [...] even the language of the Turks' dynasties and their courts couldn't be rid of it. The Turks remained under the influence of Persian literature not only in terms of technique and form, even in terms of ideology and content they accepted Persian literature as their model. There is no room for doubt that the Tajiks of Central Asia [...] couldn't stay outside of that circle [...] The language and style of [lower-]class literature was our courtly language, starting from Rudaki and until today, was of the same kind, having the feudal language and style of Iran.¹⁰⁰

Literary Persian no more belonged to the Central Asian Persians who wrote in it than Persian or Chaghatay belonged to the Turks who used those languages for their literature. This was especially true of the non-courtly poets who wrote critically about royal despots and hypocritical mullahs. These were the forebears of proletarian literature, according to the increasingly sociological literary criticism of the day. Unfortunately, these poets could not provide a basis for a Tajik literary language, because they had been obliged by cultural hegemony to write in classical Persian, a language foreign to their class and nation. As Bektāsh had written in 1928:

Other than a few divans, dictionaries, and *tazkirahs*, we have nothing that will be useful in the future for our society. Do all the people who can read with the old alphabet understand those same valuable divans of [lower-]class literature of ours? Of course not! Our class literature, it can be said, has all been built on the foundation of Sufism. Because of this, it is all convoluted with special metaphors and idioms within idioms, so that not every literate person can immediately understand. To understand our old literature, of course, you need expertise.¹⁰¹

He quotes two couplets from Bēdil as an exemplary poet who has every qualification to belong to the progressive tradition, but is incomprehensible. He concludes: "It is clear that even if these divans are in the Arabic alphabet, in truth they are foreign to our youth today."¹⁰² This is the heart of the matter: Bektāsh delivers this message in a pamphlet in defense of the introduction of the Latin script, entitled *From Old to New*. In one section, he mocks those who worry that "the

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 536-537.

¹⁰¹ Bektāsh, *Az kūhnah bah naw*, [pamphlet from 1928], in ZTMM, 243.

¹⁰² Ibid., 244.

entire future generation that learns to read only with the new alphabet won't be able to make use of the precious works of our past poets and writers (such as Hāfiẓ, Bēdil, Sa‘dī, Khāqānī and so on...) [...] we will have to ask ourselves, what do we have of the past?"¹⁰³ It is to this that he answers, almost nothing.

Not every advocate of the Tajik script reform understood it in this way, as we have seen. But in the short term, Bektāsh's radical interpretation of the script reform's consequences hit nearer the mark than Muḥī al-Dīnov's hope for a classical/modern synthesis. The entire corpus of prior indigenous literature receded into the distance. The Russian Indologist A.M. D'iakov compared the relationship between spoken Tajik and literary Persian to Russian and its archaic liturgical language, Old Church Slavonic.¹⁰⁴ The Tajik cultural revolutionary Rahīm Mīm took up the analogy, and declared that teaching Persian texts in schools would be as inappropriate as "forcing the dependencies of the Russians to learn Slavonic [*Slavyani*]."¹⁰⁵ For new readers, the new script introduced between 1928 and 1932 came with an initial printed corpus consisting entirely of new Tajik works and Russian translations—including Russian pre-Soviet "classics," but no Persian or Tajik equivalent.¹⁰⁶ The absence of clear long and short vowels in the script turned 'arūzī meter into an opaque system requiring arcane knowledge.¹⁰⁷ Simplicity and easy

¹⁰³ Ibid., 243.

¹⁰⁴ A. D'iakov, "V poriadke obsuzhdennia: O tadzhikskom literaturnom iazyke," *Pravda vostoka*, October 21, 1928, 3. D'iakov's contribution to the debate is unusually ill-informed (for example referring to Rūdakī as "the Bukharan Rudegi") and the OCS-New Persian comparison, too, is a distortion, given the relative similarity between literary New Persian and spoken dialects compared to the distance between Russian and OCS.

¹⁰⁵ Rahim Mim, "Dar gird-i zabān-i adabī-i tājīk chih mīnavīsand?," *Rahbar-i dānish*, 11/12 (1928), in ZTMM, 330.

¹⁰⁶ Textbooks included works by Lāhūtī, 'Aynī, Gorky, and Tolstoy, and early printed books followed a similar profile. Khodzhimukhamedova, *Razvitiye*, 91.

¹⁰⁷ John Perry, "Tajik Literature: Seventy Years is Longer than the Millennium." *World Literatures Today* 70:3 (1996): 573. In Latin script, the letters i and e can either represent long vowels (to be represented in Arabic script with ڦ), or short vowels (unwritten or represented

comprehensibility had been desiderata for reformers of Persian prose since the 18th century and reformers of verse since the early 20th century, but this tendency was exaggerated following the script reform. In a literary corpus intended to generate literacy, at first, all literature was children's literature.¹⁰⁸

Having mastered reading skills with new elementary texts, the reader was not expected to move on to literary Persian texts, but to a new kind of anthology of national literature. At this “year zero,” in the (declared) absence of literary history, Bektāsh’s circle, like the anti-Chaghatayists in Uzbek literature, proffered an anti-canonical grounded in folklore.¹⁰⁹ In 1930, Bektāsh founded a Tajik scholarship committee to document folk culture, analogous to the Uzbek Bureau of *Kraevedenie* and sharing some contributors.¹¹⁰ In the same journals where the language and alphabet reform were debated, a series of articles by many of the same scholars argued for the primacy of oral literature as a basis for the new Tajik literature. The Tajik scholar Abdulkholiq Nabavi remarks on the remarkable shift in the views of writers who had recently praised ‘Aynī’s *Sample*.¹¹¹ Zehnī, who had praised in 1926 the indivisible Persian “treasure-house of poetry and art,” in 1928 contrasted classical literature’s reliance “on fixed, set works” with the “living, animate language” of folk literature that “takes a path toward discovery and

with a kasrah in Arabic script). In Cyrillic, и and е fulfill the same purposes. In both instances, long ى is marked (ି or ି) only in the final position.

¹⁰⁸ In practice, some of the young literary cadres who were eventually most successful were from Persianate intelligentsia families and so did not learn primarily from Latin-script literature. In this respect, Benjamin Fortna gives a useful caution about the danger of writing history in terms of “‘cadres’ of like-minded graduates who emerged with a similar worldview.” *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 6.

¹⁰⁹ My account of this body of literature relies on Abdulkholiq Nabavī, “Ibtidoi pazhūhishi bonizomi folklori tojik,” *Nomai pazhuhishgoh* 2 (2002), 161-182.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. On the activities of the Uzbek bureau, founded in 1924, see Baldauf, *Kraevedenie*.

¹¹¹ Nabavī, “Ibtidoi pazhūhishi bonizomi folklori tojik,” 175.

evolution [*takāmul*].”¹¹² He quoted a series of folk poems in syllabic meter as a preferable alternative to the difficult, Arab-import ‘arūzī metrical system.¹¹³ After all, he pointed out, “literary language is established on the sole foundation of living language, that is, the language in which ordinary people speak.”¹¹⁴ These essays found their apotheosis in Bektāsh’s *Chrestomathy of Literature* [*Xrestomatijai adabijot*], published in 1932 on the basis of years of collecting oral proverbs, poetry, folktales, and epics.¹¹⁵

As in the earlier Chaghatayist movement, not all of those who participated in the Tajik project of *kraevedenie* saw it as incompatible with appreciation and preservation of classical Persian literature, but many polemicists were explicitly hostile to such literature.¹¹⁶ One critic, dismissing the argument for an international Latin script for Persian, wrote, “If enlightened Persians, the enlightened people of India, Afghanistan, and Iran, really have the inclination and wish to know revolutionary matters, for them, learning the Latin letters and our simple language will be easier than for Tajik peasants to learn to read from the *Gulistān*.¹¹⁷ Bektāsh described the proper place of classical Persian literature in a future Soviet Tajik society:

In the future, as soon as sociologists and literary scholars arrive at special schools and establishments, of course they will work on these valuable works. But in the future, these divans, too, will become possible to print again in the new alphabet. With the raising of our cultural level, the sociological and philosophical thoughts of theorists from our past will be analyzed and printed in the form of books with the new alphabet, so that we won't remain completely ignorant of their secrets...¹¹⁸

¹¹² Zehnī, “Adabīyāt-i khalq,” *Rahbar-i dānish* 4/5 (1928): 25.

¹¹³ Ibid., 26-27.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 25.

¹¹⁵ Bektosh, *Xrestomatijai adabijot* (Stalinabad and Samarkand: Nashrijoti davlatī Tojikiston, 1932).

¹¹⁶ Baldauf, *Kraevedenie*, 12 et passim.

¹¹⁷ Rahīm Mīm, “Dar gird-i zabān-i adabī-i tājīk chih mīnavīsand?,” 334.

¹¹⁸ Bektāsh, “Az kuhnah bah naw,” 244.

European orientalists, he pointed out, weren't put off from studying "all the texts that were written 4-5 thousand years ago with hieroglyphics, cuneiform, and so on," and similarly they "know very well our history, literary accomplishment, and social thought."¹¹⁹ Classical Persian literature recedes into a speciality to be mined for sociological insights by Tajik scholars who bear the same relationship to it as do European orientalists.

This aspiration is entirely in keeping with the dominant approach to teaching literature in Russia during the late 1920s, according to which literary works, mostly contemporary, were taught as a complement to topics in the social sciences.¹²⁰ In Russian critical polemics, however, engagement with the canon had never receded to the same degree. In fact, the system of training for proletarian writers had, since the early 1920s, emphasized the importance of classic Russian literature (and sometimes also European literature). Slogans such as "study the classics" (RAPP) and "forward to the classics" (Pereval) urged young writers to learn technique from the best. Ultimately, such technical proficiency was to be assimilated in order to more effectively struggle against the classics' pernicious aspects, and eventually establish a Soviet literature that could replace them.¹²¹

From 1932, a more reverent, less agonistic approach to the classics transformed literary historiography, pedagogy, and practice in Russia. Because of the dynamic that had turned so many of the lovers of Chaghatay literature into Persophiles in the mid-1920s, when celebration of classical literature returned to Transoxanian public culture, it returned in Persianate garb. It

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Evgeny Dobrenko, *The Making of the State Reader: Social and Aesthetic Contexts of the Reception of Soviet Literature*, trans. Jesse M. Savage (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 154-155.

¹²¹ Akimov, *V sporakh o khudozhestvennom metode*, 241-244; Dobrenko, *Aesthetics of Alienation*, 36-46. On Pereval's specific approach to the classics, Natalia Kornienko, "Literary Criticism and Cultural Policy during the New Economic Policy, 1921-1927," in *History of Russian Literary Theory and Criticism*, 27-30.

was Lāhūtī, living back in Moscow since 1930, who seized on the signal and returned to Tajikistan to undo the anti-classical consensus. Lāhūtī had failed to reestablish an international Persian language or script, but by the mid-1930s, the idea of a border-crossing classical Persianate canon was an integral part of Soviet world literature.

Seen in retrospect, the Tajik anti-canonical movement had little effect on the positive content of the canon that has been celebrated and taught since. Since the 1940s, folklore and oral epics have played some limited role in Tajik public culture, but national literary pride has rested exclusively on the prestige of classical Persian poetry. At the same time, the ethnographic canon of the cultural revolutionaries did have one enduring effect on the Tajik literary canon. Guillory notes the emergence of noncanonical literature in the period fo the Canon Wars as “a newly constituted category of text production and reception, permitting certain authors and texts to be *taught* as noncanonical, to have the status of noncanonical works in the classroom”—noncanonical, and thus capable of “truly represent[ing] socially subordinated groups.” It is in this way, he asserts, that “the critique of the canon has proceeded in recent years to reinstate at the level of institutional practice, of curriculum, the same opposition—between the canonical and the noncanonical—that its early agenda of ‘opening the canon’ called into question.”¹²² In Central Asia, it is not clear that the distinction between classical texts and folk oral compositions had *any* strong determining power in ordinary Central Asians’ experience of poetry before the advent of state schooling, at least outside court settings.¹²³ To this extent, the cultural revolutionaries did not so much reinforce an opposition between canonical and noncanonical as create it.

¹²² Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 9.

¹²³ This is by contrast to post-18th-century European literatures in which the categories of “popular” and “serious” literary works developed in tandem, “defin[ing] each other in a system of literary production.” *Ibid.*, 24.

2b. Lāhūtī's Classicist Coup

In April 1932, a resolution by the Politburo banned independent writers' organizations and declared the establishment of a Writers' Union to oversee all literary production. Across the Soviet Union, for writers who had come under attack from RAPP and its affiliates over the previous decade, the measure came as a relief. Signals indicated that the new Writers' Union, unlike the proletarian associations, would be a big-tent organization, welcoming to fellow-travelers. The two years between the April Resolution and the First Congress of the Writers' Union in August 1934 were a period of relative safety for non-Party writers. Particular efforts were made to provide new resources to writers in the national republics and bring them into the fold, as the new Writers' Union was to be a multinational, inclusive enterprise.

In republics that had not yet undergone a disciplinary writers' purge, this increased attention likely precipitated the catching-up process that followed. For Tajik-language writers, 1933 was a purge year.¹²⁴ In 1929, the OGPU had “unmasked” an imaginary conspiracy in Uzbekistan with ties to nationalist bandits across the border in Afghanistan; now, they discovered a similar Persian-speaking organization called *Ittihād-i Sharq* (Union of the East) with spies in every Soviet enterprise. Ex-Jadids and young writers who had expressed RAPPist sentiments were equally vulnerable to attack: Muhib al-Dinov, the official who had cited Iranian critics to defend classical Persian literature as late as 1929, was arrested, as was Bektash.¹²⁵ Alone among the national conspiracy investigations of the late ‘20s and early ‘30s, the *Ittihad-i Sharq* prosecutions failed to secure any convictions, and most of those arrested were released the

¹²⁴ Roberts, “Old Elites,” 224-261, 319-323.

¹²⁵ The two are identified in OGPU documents as allies who discussed Chaghatayism together: *ibid.*, 245-246; . Whether this is true or not, the intermingling of accusations of Tajik nationalism and Chaghatayism illustrates how much supposed national chauvinism of the period was in fact affection for Transoxanian cultural heritage with neither a particularly Turkist nor Persianist orientation.

following year.¹²⁶ Nonetheless, the arrests initiated an atmosphere of more acute paranoia and mutual recrimination in the leading cities of Tajik literature, and particularly in Dushanbe. Lāhūtī may well have escaped suspicion only because he was based in Moscow, a jurisdiction where the OGPU had no interest in a Tajik cross-border conspiracy.

From Moscow, Lāhūtī was preparing for the Congress as a member of the all-Union organizing committee.¹²⁷ As the organizers in Moscow surveyed the task of preparing for an all-union presentation of a unified Soviet literature, they admitted the inadequacy of coordination with literature outside the center, and especially non-Russian literatures. In August 1933, in order to increase ties between center and periphery, plans were made to send brigades of (mostly Russian) writers to the autonomous regions and republics. These were tasked with building friendships, evaluating their ethnic comrades' degree of preparedness, and initiating programs of translation and publication across the language barrier.¹²⁸ Certain assignments were more desirable than others, both because of the cultural preoccupations of the Russian intelligentsia and for reasons of creature comforts, and many writers abandoned unattractive brigade assignments for Georgia or Armenia. Lāhūtī was given leadership of the brigade to Tajikistan, but at the time of its intended departure in late 1933, he could not get any of the intended

¹²⁶ A possible exception is Muhiddinov, who may have been shot in 1934, though he more likely perished in 1937-8 together with most of the other figures previously accused in the *Ittiḥād-i Sharq* affair and many other Tajik intellectuals. Bergne, *Birth of Tajikistan*, 70; Bergne gives the date of the original imprisonment as 1934, but Roberts has shown that it, too, took place in the summer of 1933: "Old Elites," 240-241, 319-320.

¹²⁷ Lāhūtī was a member at large, while 'Aynī technically represented Tajikistan, but as would often be the case, it was Lāhūtī who was present to advocate for Tajikistan (and Central Asia generally) during meetings. Kathryn Schild, "Between Moscow and Baku: National Literatures at the 1934 Congress of Soviet Writers (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2010), 40.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 68-70.

members to come.¹²⁹ In his first, solo months of brigade work, he achieved some organizational successes, convincing the Tajik Central Committee to appropriate substantially more funds to the Tajik Writers' Union and pushing forward a program of Russian translations of contemporary Tajik literature.¹³⁰ By mid-March of 1934, he was back in Moscow, begging the Organizing Committee for "a special brigade" to be sent, and reminding them of Tajik literature's "great importance, since tens of millions of people who live in the foreign East speak the Tajik language."¹³¹

By late April, the brigade finally showed up, including the Polish ex-futurist Bruno Jasienski, the French committed writer Paul Nizan, the literary critic Viktor Shklovskii, the travel writers Boris Lapin and Zakhar Khatsrevin, the former Acmeist Mikhail Zenkevich, and the proletarian poet Pavel Vasil'ev.¹³² Together, the brigade visited collective farms in the region surrounding Stalinabad and traveled to the site of the massive irrigation works on the Vakhsh River.¹³³ Nizan, Zenkevich, and Shklovskii stayed on with Lāhūtī to attend the Tajik Writers' Congress immediately afterwards.¹³⁴ Folklore remained a topic for the brigade. Many of the evening gatherings arranged for the visitors included recitations, and Lapin and Khatsrevin

¹²⁹ He wrote in a letter of March 11, 1934, "Telegrams arrived every day, saying that the moment was serious—come. I had to replace the brigade myself and go in place of the brigade." Ibid., 70-71.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 73-74. "Poet Lakhuti v Tadzhikistane," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, December 5, 1933.

¹³¹ "Plenum Orgkomiteta SSP zakonchil svoiu rabotu: Vechernee zasedanie 11 marta," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, March 14, 1934, 1.

¹³² Based on the brigade, Jasienski wrote a bestselling novel, *Chelovek meniaet kozhu* (*Man Changes His Skin*, published soon after in English translation); Nizan wrote an article, "Sindobod Toçikiston (Fragments)," *Europe* 38, no. 149 (1935): 73-99; Lapin and Khatsrevin, trained orientalists who had already produced a collection based on previous travels there, added several articles, as did Shklovskii (both cited below).

¹³³ On that construction project (Vakhshstroi), see Maya Karin Peterson, "Technologies of Rule: Empire, Water, and the Modernization of Central Asia, 1867-1941" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2011), 429-501.

¹³⁴ "Nakanune s"ezda: mesiats v tadzhikistane," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, May 24, 1934, 3.

continued their previous collection of oral poems by collective farmers, some of which were published in translation in *Literaturnaia Gazeta*.¹³⁵

But the brigade's main task was pedagogical, aiming "to raise the skills of young writers." A newspaper article explained, "Seminar-style discussions were held with young authors, papers about poetry, about study of the classics, about dramaturgy, consultative work, etc."¹³⁶ They helped to establish a new literary journal modeled on *Literaturnaia gazeta*, and critiqued the existing one, *Baroi adabijoti sotsijolistī*. As the article summarized the brigade's critique:

The journal's main shortcoming [...] is shared by the Tajik state publishing house, which operates without a clear publishing plan and publishes almost no classical literature. Thanks to the intervention of the brigade, the printing of the classics of Persian [*farsidskoi*] literature, the publication of a small library of Russian and foreign classics, and translations of the best contemporary Soviet writers have been added to the publishing house's plan.¹³⁷

Shklovskii, writing in 1937, remembered one of these education sessions for young writers:

At that time, Tajikistan had its own RAPP [sic]. In the hot climate, young people sat in waterproof rubberized coats, and these people knew neither old Persian literature nor European literature. Lahuti was angrily explaining to them that they shouldn't leave behind a thousand-year culture that the people understood, that it was necessary to Tajikistan, to Iran, and to the whole world.¹³⁸

The brigade, then, gave Lāhūtī the opportunity to repeat an old message in a new context. Now, in the wake of a top-down restructuring of literary power and an inscrutable round of persecutions, he spoke as an intermediary, determining the meaning of these signals. Furthermore, standing with groups of Russian and European writers, he also spoke implicitly on

¹³⁵ Nizan, "Sindobod Toçikiston," 80-81; B. Lapin and Z. Khatsrevin, "Daulet-Sho Pamirets," *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, May 14, 1934, 4. Lapin and Khatsrevin's previous fieldwork and journalism in Tajikistan had been collected in *Stalinabadskii arkhiv: rasskazy i dokumenty o sovetskem tadzhikistane* (Moscow: Federatsiia, 1932).

¹³⁶ "Nakanune s'ezda," 3.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Shklovskii, "Gasem Lakhuti," 5.

their behalf. At a time when cultural actors in Moscow were still debating the purpose of the Writers' Union and the meaning of its watchword "socialist realism," an intermediary could choose aspects of that conversation to convey, in order to win existing local debates.

2c. The Return of Prestige Philology and the Making of the Soviet Persian Classics

By the time that Lāhūtī reported on the state of Tajik literature before the All-Union Congress in 1934, he could report (or reassert) a changed consensus in Soviet Tajik literature. He opens the speech with the tale of his first encounter with the ethnonym Tajik, "in the verse of Sa‘dī." In the couplet, Sa‘dī imagines the beloved's "cruel Turk eyes" shedding the poet/lover's "Tajik blood." Lāhūtī continues, "Becoming interested in the meaning of this word, new to me, I looked in dictionaries, and in one of them I found the following definition: "Tajik- the name of a once-existing people." The "Tajik," then, is the literary alter-ego of the Iranian Persian poet (either Sa‘dī or Lāhūtī himself), existing as a counterpart to the Turk. It emerges from classical literature into ethnic minority politics when he meets its Communist Party representatives in Moscow: "And thus, a people that had existed in the past, a politically dead people-- it was said that in the USSR, not only did it exist, but as a politically organized, independent people, possessing all the necessities for a powerful economic and cultural efflorescence." Not only had the revolution brought the Tajik ethnonym from the potential of literature into the actuality of politics, but it "was developing and being revived hand in hand with an older brother republic, Uzbekistan—with those same 'cruel' Turks about whom Sa‘dī had written."¹³⁹ Lāhūtī does not speak as the primary representative of the Tajiks ('Aynī played that role at the Congress), but

¹³⁹ Lakhuti, "Doklad G.A. Lakhuti o literature Tadzhikskoi SSR," in *Pervyi vsesoiuznyi s"ezd sovetskikh pisatelei 1934: stenograficheskii otchët* (Moscow: "Khudozhestvennaia literatura," 1934), 141.

rather explains how *the idea of the Tajik* provides the resolution to the contradictions, ruptures, and rifts of anxious Persianate modernity.

Throughout the speech, Lāhūtī stakes out new orthodoxy on all the debates of the late 1920s: the inextricable bond between Turkic and Persian culture; the mutual comprehensibility of spoken Tajik, spoken Iranian Persian, and literary Persian (and indeed their unity); the usefulness of the classical literary heritage for contemporary writers and readers; the value of the new alphabet. He quotes newly-collected Tajik oral poetry, but also verses by Khayyām and Ibn Sīnā.¹⁴⁰ He mocks a free verse poem and explains how “insufficiently deep familiarity with the Persian classics leads to the mechanical transfer of the images to [contemporary writers’] own work.”¹⁴¹ It is particularly important that Tajik writers develop familiarity with the classics and undergo literary training, he declares, because “the Tajik language is spoken by tens of millions of workers in India, Persia, and Afghanistan, and Soviet Tajik literature is their only source of familiarity with life in the Soviet Union, the homeland of the workers of the entire world.”¹⁴² Most definitively, he clarifies the ideological status of the Persian classics and their place in the state publishing program:

[T]o usher in a new, Soviet, Bolshevik literature [...] at a high ideological level, imbued with a Marxist-Leninist worldview, in the first place it was necessary to study Russian Soviet literature. On the other hand, the Tajiks have such a rich artistic heritage: classical Persian poetry. The poets of the 9th, 10th, and 11th centuries, Daqīqī, Rūdakī, Bū-‘Alī Sīnā (Avicenna), Firdawsī, Sa‘dī, Ḥāfiẓ [sic], ‘Umar Khayyām, and tens of other brilliant masters of words, enjoying worldwide renown, wrote in the native language of the Tajiks, in a language that down to the present day is clear and close to the broad masses of Tajikistan. Following Lenin’s call, Tajik writers must critically assimilate and use these treasures of the past. But study of the classics has long been in the paddock. There were people

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 142-143. He speaks in favor of young writers’ “collection and study of folk poetry, which can greatly enrich their work.”

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 143-144. On Lāhūtī’s discussion of “training” in the speech, see also Schild, “Between Moscow and Baku,” 94-95.

¹⁴² Lakhuti, “Doklad G.A. Lakhuti,” 144.

who claimed that these writers are utter class enemies, and that Soviet writers shouldn't even glance at old books. The Party came out against such tendencies. Recently, a number of selected classical works have been scheduled for publication by the Tajik State Press.¹⁴³

Classical literature is of great value, in this vision, but Persian literature or literature of the East does not comprise a cross-temporal unity, requiring revival from a ruined state. Rather, the new literature, assumed to be separated from the classics by a rupture, should view them as a resource to be exploited or "critically assimilated," that is, as a distinct object. In the early 1920s, such a position could be seen in some of the writings published by the Central Press of the East, but it had developed as a fully articulated position in Transoxanian defenses of the classics later in the decade.

"The Party" that Lāhūtī claimed had taken a position favoring the use of courtly literature was, in fact, Lāhūtī himself. His use of "the Tajik language" interchangeably with Persian is particularly out of step with contemporaneous Tajik cultural policy. But presenting this as the "Party" position in a speech at the Congress was a representation with consequences. Kathryn Schild has pointed out the subtle ways that Russian speeches at the Congress assumed a Russian collectivity, whereas national speakers' "collectivity was fragmented." Taking into consideration the subsequent newspaper printing of their speeches, they had to communicate simultaneously with "a somewhat indifferent Russian audience, a multinational Soviet audience sympathetic to their goals but unfamiliar with their national specificity, and a national audience eager to see themselves represented on the all-Union stage."¹⁴⁴ This fragmentation had certain benefits. Russian speakers at the Congress were assumed to be taking polemical positions and, unless their political position was unassailable, statements that they made about the ideological position of

¹⁴³ Ibid., 142. Parentheses are in the original, brackets are mine.

¹⁴⁴ Schild, "Between Moscow and Baku," 92.

the Writers' Union, Party, or state were open to contestation. A national speech, by contrast, could authoritatively declare a nonexistent consensus, provided that it was within the window of acceptable discourse. Top Politburo members with limited knowledge or interest would assume that the local Party had indeed taken a particular position. Meanwhile, nomenklatura on the Republic level, reading in *Pravda vostoka* that such a statement of the Party position had gone unchallenged at a gathering attended by Stalin himself, would likely tack accordingly.

Lāhūtī had correctly judged the moment, and his speech took its place in what Yuri Slezkine has aptly called “a curiously solemn parade of old-fashioned romantic nationalisms.”¹⁴⁵ Crucially, however, some of the new Romantic nationalisms were based not on folklore studies, but oriental studies, merging the recently-imported function of literature as the (folkloric) representative of the creativity of the masses with the previously-imported function of literature as the (orientalist) representation of former civilizational greatness. The 1934 Writers’ Congress marks an early stage in the transformation of Stalinist literary historiography from sociology and ethnography to secular mythology.¹⁴⁶ Within Central Asian republics, this meant new publication series of national classics. But Lāhūtī’s speech also signaled the emergence of classical Persian literature onto a Soviet multinational and international stage. Academia Press (1922-1937), a high-end publishing house for Russian and European classics, published Russian translations of Nāṣir Khusraw’s *Safarnāmah* (1933); the *Shāhnāmah* (1934, excerpts); and Khayyām’s *rubā’iyāt*, Sa‘dī’s *Būstān*, Nizāmī’s *Khusraw va Shīrīn* (excerpts), the divan of Ḥāfiẓ, and Jāmī’s *Bahāristān* (all 1935).¹⁴⁷ Oriental philology marked the Persian canon as a prestige canon, and its

¹⁴⁵ Yuri Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment,” 446.

¹⁴⁶ Dobrenko, *Making of the State Reader*, 159-162.

¹⁴⁷ The press also printed an anthology of Iranian literature from the 10th-15th centuries (1935), and many of the volumes listed above were published together with a companion volume containing papers from an international scholarly congress on the writer. Before the press was

classical authors became literary representatives of the Soviet East to the world, shepherded into the role by Lāhūtī, the representative *par excellence*.

Some scholars have viewed the 1924 closure of Gorky's "World Literature" press as the end of the dream of world literature in the Soviet Union, but the work of Katerina Clarke and Anna Bogomolova has shown the important role that the world literature concept played in Stalinist attempts to work out a Soviet relationship with European cultural heritage.¹⁴⁸ The replacement of the Press of the East with the Press of Nationalities of the USSR in the same year (1924) was a sharper retreat from the international to the multinational East. However, beginning in 1934, in public discourse the units of the multinational USSR became proxies for Soviet claims on canons of world literature. The idea of a "a thousand-year culture" as an inheritance for Tajikistan, Iran, and "the whole world" was in keeping with the intensive discussions of world literature and world culture throughout 1934.¹⁴⁹ As Chapter 4 will show, during the Popular Front period in the mid-'30s, the Soviet state and intelligentsia claimed to be the bastion of these principles against the fascist threat.

By 1936, the call in Pravda was for schools to better "instill love of the classics."¹⁵⁰ For Russian writers and pedagogues in the later 1930s, "world literature" and "the classics" continued to refer primarily to Russian and European literature, as a compensatory discourse for

shut down during the purges, it only published three non-Persian "Eastern" volumes: collections of Armenian and Azerbaijani folktales (1933 and 1935), the Urdu tales collected and retold by Haider Bakhsh Haideri (d. 1828), Ibn Ḥazm's *Tawq al-Hamāmah* (1933), the *Thousand and One Nights* (8 vols. 1929-1939, final vol. Goslitizdat), and a one-volume anthology of Chinese and Japanese literature (1935). "Academia" 1922-1937: *vystavka izdanii i knizhnoi grafiki* (Moscow: Kniga, 1980), 30-31; other catalogs consulted as supplements.

¹⁴⁸ Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome*; Bogomolova, "Poniatie 'mirovoi literatury.'"

¹⁴⁹ Bogomolova has charted the spike in mentions of "world literature" in the press at that time: "Poniatie 'mirovoi literatury,'" 40-45.

¹⁵⁰ "Privit' shkol'nikam liubov' k klassicheskoi literature," *Pravda*, August 8, 1936.

perceived Russian backwardness.¹⁵¹ In Russian-language schools, literature from other languages, foreign or Soviet, entered the curriculum slowly, and was almost exclusively Western.¹⁵² In the national republics, by contrast, translation was a central function of the cultural apparatus and any politically conscious perspective was a comparative one. Whenever the multinational dimension of the Soviet project came to the fore in all-Union (i.e. Russian) culture, with it came a different version of the world literary canon.

This was particularly true of Soviet participation in the global craze of literary jubilees. The institution existed before the 1930s (as in the 1921 international Dante centenary), but celebration of a world literature pantheon took on a dimension of fascist/anti-fascist polemic during the Italian fascist Virgil bimillennial in 1930 and the Nazi Schiller commemoration in 1934.¹⁵³ The jubilee was established as a Soviet institution by the 1937 Pushkin and Rustaveli jubilees, from which the Shevchenko (Ukraine, 1939), Mayakovsky (1940), Navā’ī (Uzbekistan,

¹⁵¹ On a Soviet “inferiority complex” and the West, David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment*, 1-27. Thus an article on “the publication of translations of classics” in Tajik listed new and upcoming works by Hugo, Shakespeare, Pushkin, Lermontov, Tolstoy, Gorky, and Flaubert. “Klassiki na tadzhikskom iazyke,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, April 4, 1936, 4.

¹⁵² The usual exception was Rustaveli’s “Man in the Panther Skin.” Even this was excluded in the anti-cosmopolitanism of the late Stalin years. Evgenii Ponomarev, “Chemu uchit uchebnik,” *Neva* 1 (2010), accessed online September 3, 2016, <http://magazines.russ.ru/neva/2010/1/po22.html>.

¹⁵³ Luciano Canfora, “Fascismo e bimillenario della nascita di Virgilio,” in *Enciclopedia virgiliana*, vol. 2 (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1985), 469-472; Ehrhard Bahr, “The Goethe Society in Weimar as Showcase of *Germanistik* during the Weimar Republic and the Nazi Regime,” in *Nazi Germany and the Humanities: How German Academics Embraced Nazism*, eds. Anson Rabinbach and Wolfgang Bialas (London: Oneworld, 2007), 59. Between 1927 and 1933, there had been a series of polemics between Nazis and their opponents in Germany surrounding public commemorations of Beethoven, Goethe, Heine, and other German contributions to “world culture.” David B. Dennis, *Inhumanities: Nazi Interpretations of Western Culture* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 307-329. See also the 1935 Horace bimillenary celebration: Mariella Cagnetta, ed., *L’edera di Orazio: Aspetti politici del bimillenario orazioni* (Venice: Osanna Venosa, 1990).

1941, celebrated more fully 1948), and Niżāmī (Azerbaijan, 1947) jubilees took their pattern.¹⁵⁴

In 1934, Soviet scholars and writers participated in a foreign jubilee celebration that likely contributed to the ritual's Soviet manifestation.

In October of that year, the Pahlavi state held celebrations to commemorate the (supposed) millennial anniversary of Firdawsī's birth, as the poet's new, neoclassical mausoleum was dedicated in the Iranian city of Tūs.¹⁵⁵ In Europe and America, societies of orientalists held events in the same year, and many of the most prominent western Iranologists attended the festivities in Tehran and Tūs. For the Soviet Union, the Firdawsī Jubilee was not only a celebration for orientalists, although the Soviets sent the largest delegation of foreign scholars by far to the Iranian ceremonies. The Soviet celebration was a year-long multinational mass phenomenon with coverage in the major newspapers. From May to August, in the Transcaucasian and Transoxanian republics, museums and libraries held lectures and exhibits of *Shāhnāmah* manuscripts and related artworks while state presses printed volumes on Firdawsī's

¹⁵⁴ The Pushkin Jubilee has been the subject of intensive scholarly analysis: cf. Stephanie Sandler, "The 1937 Pushkin Jubilee as Epic Trauma," in *Epic Revisionism: Russian History and Literature as Stalinist Propaganda*, eds. Kevin M. F. Platt and David Brandenberger (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 193-213; Karen Petrone, "*Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades*": *Politics and Culture in Soviet Celebrations, 1934-39* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 113-148; Jonathan Brooks Platt, *Greetings, Pushkin! Stalinist Cultural Politics and the Russian National Bard* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016). [figuring out who to cite on Rustaveli Jubilee]; Allworth, *Uzbek Literary Politics*, 81-88 (Navā'ī); Isabelle Ruth Kaplan, "The Art of Nation-Building: National Culture and Soviet Politics in Stalin-Era Azerbaijan and Other Minority Republics" (Ph.D. diss., Georgetown, 2017) (Niżāmī). The Iranian writer Buzurg 'Alavī described his experience of the Navā'ī Jubilee: 'Alavī, Ūzbakhā: ravandī dar farhang va jāmi‘ah shināstī-’i mardum-i Ittihād-i Jamāhīr-i Shawravī-’i Sūsiyālīstī ([s.l.: s.n., 197-]), 20-54.

¹⁵⁵ On the celebration, Shahpur A. Shahbazi, "Ferdowsi, Abu'l-Qāsem iv. Millenary Celebration," in *EIr*, article last modified January 26, 2012, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ferdowsi-iv>; Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran*, 124-132. On the mausoleum (which has striking similarities to the Stalinist Central Asian monuments of the later '30s and '40s), see Ch. 5.

legacy in Soviet national literatures.¹⁵⁶ The Armenian writer Mkrtich Janan's play based on various segments of the epic was performed in Moscow during the summer, an animation was prepared entitled "The Birth of Rustam," and several writers celebrated Firdawsī at the Writers' Congress.¹⁵⁷ The Georgian old Bolshevik Avel Enukidze oversaw the celebrations and delegation, and the Armenian Hovsep Orbeli was the Soviet jubilee's presiding orientalist (as the director of the Hermitage Museum in Leningrad), so Transcaucasia was well-represented throughout the ceremonies. Lāhūtī's old friend Sa‘īd Nafīsī led the Iranian scholarly delegation to join the Soviet celebration. They stopped in Tbilisi and held several receptions there with local poets before going on to Moscow for a series of events at museums and the Bolshoi Theater.¹⁵⁸ During the Iranian delegation's visit, Lāhūtī seems to have remained behind the scenes, likely due to the diplomatic sensitivities involved. Once the Iranian and Soviet delegations departed for the Iranian celebration at the end of the month, however, he oversaw an event to coincide with the festivities in Iran at the Writers' House in Moscow.¹⁵⁹

The Firdawsī Jubilee established important parts of the discourse of pre-modern literary "friendship of nations," especially because most of the Soviet jubilees that followed were

¹⁵⁶ I. Iras', "Iubilei Firdousi v Uzbekistane," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, May 6, 1934, 1; Iras', "Drevnie spiski "Shakh-name," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, June 2, 1934, 4; "Poslednie izvestiia," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, June 26, 1934, 1 (Georgia); "Prazdnovanie 1000-letiia Firdousi v Armenii," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, July 6, 1934; "Vystavka persidskoi literatury i iskusstva," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, July 9, 1934 (Azerbaijan).

¹⁵⁷ G. Tatulov, "Dramaticheskaiia skazka: "'Shakh-name' M. Dzhanana," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, June 24, 1934, 3; "10 let sovetskoi mul'tiplikatsii," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, November 20, 1934, 4. In Writer's Congress speeches, as well as Lāhūtī, the Georgian Malakia Toroshelidze (1880-1936) and the Russian Anna Karavaeva (1893-1979) referred to the *Shāhnāmah*. Toroshelidze, "Gruzinskaia khudozhestvennaia literatura," *Pravda*, August 23, 1934, 3; Karavaeva, "Literatura velikoi rodiny," *Sovetskoe iskusstvo*, September 5, 1934, 2.

¹⁵⁸ *Literaturnaia gazeta*, September 16-18 and 24-30, 1934; "Tysiacheletnyi iubilei Ferdousi: torzhestvennoe zasedanie v Bol'shom teatre," *Izvestiia*, September 21, 1934, 1.

¹⁵⁹ "Izveshchenie," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, October 12, 1934, 4.

concerned with classical Persianate poetry.¹⁶⁰ Lāhūtī drew on its lessons as the head of the Soviet Writers' Union organizing committee for the Rustaveli Jubilee in 1937, the first year of Soviet home-grown jubilees.¹⁶¹ Historians of Soviet Uzbekistan have noted the irony that the Chaghatayist cultural vision, in its most classicist form, was tacitly confirmed by the state immediately following the purge and execution of its architects in 1937-38, including Fitrat.¹⁶² By the time of the second script reform, vernacularism had receded. The new Uzbek Cyrillic alphabet (1940) lacked vowel harmony and had far fewer points of divergence from the Tajik alphabet (1939). This reversion is best understood in the single system of Soviet Turkic-Persian literature. The classicists who had retreated from Uzbek literary politics, together with Lāhūtī, successfully made Persianate classicism the basis of Tajik cultural heritage, establishing a model that then returned to Uzbek. Notwithstanding discussions of Navā'ī as an Uzbek or Rūdakī as a Tajik, in the late 1930s, the heroic figures of national literatures were primarily presented as common property of the Soviet nation and world literature, and only secondarily subject to national delimitation.

1930s jubilee culture, whether in Iran or the Soviet Union, established a canon that was primarily a pantheon. Stalinist culture had turned from mass heroism to the figure of the individual hero, and so sociologism gave way to a parade of national geniuses. In the Persianate world of Lāhūtī's and 'Aynī's childhood, the *Shāhnāmah* had primacy as an exemplary text, but in both the Pahlavi Iranian and Soviet canons, Firdawsī took priority as an exemplary figure. This was a Romantic vision, already visible in Goethe's description of the "seven greats" of

¹⁶⁰ On literature and the "friendship of nations" metaphor, see Chapter 4.

¹⁶¹ Del'man, "Na sekretariate SSP SSSR," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, April 26, 1937, 4.

¹⁶² Allworth, *Uzbek Literary Politics*, 81-89; Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*, 388-389. In Allworth's Cold War interpretive framework, this is no accident: the reversal was possible because "the nationalists who had idolized Navaiy were now out of the way." *Ibid.*, 83.

Persian literature.¹⁶³ When Lāhūtī and his peers in Iran, Istanbul, and Moscow engaged with European orientalist scholarship in the first quarter of the 20th century, they adopted the figure of the heroic writer, adding only a Shelleyan pose of revolt.

Such writer-heroes could join a world-literary cast of analogous characters. Thus the first announcement of the Firdawsī Jubilee Year in *Literaturnaia gazeta* orients Russian readers, hurrying to inform them that his name “stands beside Homer, Dante, and Shakespeare in world literature.”¹⁶⁴ Such comparison was the first resort for Persianate writers pleading their canon’s case before the European court of world literature: the Azerbaijani critic Mīrzā Fath-‘Alī Ākhūndzādah had made the same analogy already in the mid-19th century.¹⁶⁵ In the Soviet Union, the homogenized conceptual landscape of nationalities policy made for an interchangeability between national writers that was apparently absolute.

In Soviet poetic practice, however, the Persianate classics could not recede into symbolic abstraction. If classics in the Soviet schools served “the legitimization and historicization of Soviet literature,” then the reverse could also apply.¹⁶⁶ Uzbek and Tajik realist prose found its genealogy in the Russian and European classics, but such a primary lineage could not be claimed in poetry, for several reasons. The *Shāhnāmah* and the rubā‘iyāt of Khayyām, once accepted as classics, demanded a modern Soviet literature that they could legitimize and historicize, a demand that Lāhūtī attempted to meet. “Love for the classics,” meanwhile, did not exclude the continuation of anxiety and agonistics. In the 1920s, even the advocates of the classics had

¹⁶³ These were Firdawsī, Anvarī, Nizāmī, ‘Aṭṭār, Rūmī, Hāfiẓ, and Jāmī. In fact, the topic of the list is discussed in the Soviet 1935 edition of Hāfiẓ: Shems-ed-Din Mokhammed Khafez, *Lirika*, trans. and intro. E. Dunaevskii (Moscow: Academia, 1935), 25.

¹⁶⁴ “Dnevnik literaturnoi gazety,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, February 8, 1934, 1.

¹⁶⁵ He had mentioned Homer and Shakespeare, but not Dante. Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran*, 99.

¹⁶⁶ Dobrenko, *Making of the State Reader*, 161.

warned against its imitation. The editor of the leading Tajik pedagogical journal, Sābit Manāfzādah, declared in 1927, “The Tajik nation possesses a thousand-year literature, and still has the right to be proud of this and study its own literary history with pride. But this pride mustn’t encourage contemporary writers to imitate and follow the works of past eras.”¹⁶⁷ This continued to be a strand of discussions throughout the Stalin years. As Lāhūtī himself declared at a Writers’ Union organizing meeting, classical Persian literature could have “quite a strong toxic effect on young writers” because of the combination of “its high artistry” and its “completely alien [...] ideological orientation and content.”¹⁶⁸ Classical texts and genres, then, continued to generate friction in the Soviet system of world literature. The chapters that follow find Persianate canonic resistances in Lāhūtī’s compositions for Stalinist world literature: in his deployment of old tactics of political poetry for modern political scenarios (Chapter 4) and in his attempts to write for translation (Chapter 5).

The final consensus on the Tajik national literary canon may be surveyed in a 1940 volume for the education of schoolteachers entitled *Examples of Tajik Literature* [*Namūnah’hā-yi adabīyāt-i tājīk*].¹⁶⁹ The volume was edited by a committee including ‘Aynī and a variety of former classicists and cultural revolutionaries, and Lāhūtī was credited as a consultant. Before its section of Soviet literature, the volume includes a selection of the writers from ‘Aynī’s 1926 *Sample of Tajik Literature*, both the famous Central Asian Persophone poets and some of the more obscure post-Timurid poets whom ‘Aynī had discovered in local *tazkirahs*. It also includes a selection of “pre-Revolutionary” folklore, much of it collected by cultural revolutionaries such

¹⁶⁷ S[ābit] M[anāfzādah], “Inqilāb-i adabī,” *Rahbar-i dānish*, 2 (1927): 19. On Manāfzādah, see Murād Murādī, “Sābit Manāfzādah, muntaqid va tarbiyatgar,” *Rūdakī* 9, no. 20 (1387 [2008]): 203-214.

¹⁶⁸ “Plenum Orgkomiteta SSP zakonchil svoiu rabotu,” 1.

¹⁶⁹ S. Ajni, S. Ulugh-zoda, A.P. Dehoti, M. Tursun-zoda, M. Rahimi, I. Braginskij, et. al., eds., *Namunahoji adabijoti toçik* (Stalinabad: Gosizdat Tadzhikskoi SSR, 1940).

as Bektāsh. It also includes seven prestigious poets that ‘Aynī’s *Sample* had not claimed, because they never set foot in Central Asia: Khāqānī, Niẓāmī Ganjavī, Sa‘dī, ‘Ubayd-i Zākānī, Ḥāfiẓ, Zēb al-Nisā’, and Bēdil. Together, these additions marked the prestige culture that the Jubilees had reinforced, as well as special interests of the editors that extended back as far as the Central Eastern Publishing House.

Chapter 4

Lāhūtī's Publics, 1928-1941: Toward a Poetics of the Stalinist Occasion

In popular and polemical works on Stalinism, it has long been a commonplace to refer to Stalin's court, and, as a corollary, his court poets.¹ The latter term is frequently given as if self-explanatory, but the comparison may be found in a more articulate form in the dissident writer Andrei Siniavskii's famous 1959 essay *On Socialist Realism*.² The analogy seems to have circulated as early as the consolidation of socialist realism. In 1936, as recorded by the NKVD in a dossier of Soviet writers' reported conversations, the translator A. Gatov complained about Lāhūtī's receipt of the Order of Lenin: "Lāhūtī got a medal because he's a court poet [*pridvornym poetom*], but he's got a lot less talent than the court poets of old."³

¹ Eg. Simon Sebag Montefiore, *In the Court of the Red Tsar* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003). The identification of Stalinist culture as court culture is given in scholarly form by a group of historians and social scientists referred to as the "neo-traditionalists." For such scholars, such as Ken Jowitt and J. Arch Getty, Stalinist society was characterized by "archaizing" phenomena. These include (in Sheila Fitzpatrick's summary of the line of argument): "petitioning, patron-client networks, the ubiquity of other kinds of personalistic ties like *blat*, ascribed status categories, 'court' politics in the Kremlin, the mystification of power and its projection through display." Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Introduction," in *Stalinism: New Directions*, ed. Fitzpatrick (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 11. Kenneth Jowitt, "Soviet Neo-Traditionalism: The Political Corruption of a Leninist Regime," *Soviet Studies* 35:3 (1983): 275-297; J. Arch Getty, *Practicing Stalinism: Bolsheviks, Boyars, and the Persistence of Tradition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013); Anatolii G. Vishnevskii provides a different model of Stalinism as a "socialist Middle Ages" in *Serp i rubl': konservativnaia modernizatsiia v SSSR* (Moscow: OGI, 1998), 204-210. The debate is surveyed in Michael David-Fox, "Multiple Modernities vs. Neo-Traditionalism: On Recent Debates in Russian and Soviet History," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 55:4 (2006): 535-555.

² Siniavskii compares Soviet literature to the 18th-century courtly odes of Derzhavin. Abram Tertz [pseud. Andrei Siniavskii], *On Socialist Realism*, intro. Czeslaw Milosz (New York: Pantheon Books, 1960), 71, 82-87.

³ Qtd. in Artizov and Naumov, *Vlast' i khudozhestvennaya intelligentsiia*, 292; trans. in Clark and Dobrenko, *Soviet Culture and Power*, 234.

In Russian narratives of literature in the Stalin years, Lāhūtī is often singled out for this term of abuse. Implicitly meant, and sometimes explicitly mentioned, is that he was exceptionally willing to write poems of immoderate praise for the Soviet state and Stalin, and able to produce verse to suit the requirements of any public occasion. Stalin, who affected modest intolerance for excessive praise, occasionally made Lāhūtī a scapegoat for sycophancy. Two years after Gatov's comment, Lāhūtī's years on the Writers' Union organizing committee ended when Stalin arranged for its deputy chairman, Aleksandr Fadeev, to read out a comment from him rebuking Lāhūtī for sycophancy. To some extent, Lāhūtī was singled out for such criticism as an “Eastern” poet.⁴ The identification of courtly panegyric as an Eastern phenomenon is an old trope in orientalist discourse.⁵ In Russia, there was a particular tradition of the panegyric occasion as a moment for orientalist play-acting at court, as in the eighteenth-century poet Derzhavin’s “Felitsa” poems for Catherine the Great, where he addresses a

⁴ This narrative continued to be replicated in subsequent Russian dissident and Western sovietological writings on official literature. Cf. Robert C. Tucker, “Stalin was now being sung, especially by poets from the Orient, where versified flattery of rulers is a centuries-old art,” a statement which he illustrates with an excerpt from Lāhūtī’s “The Experienced Gardener.” Tucker, “The Rise of Stalin’s Personality Cult,” *The American Historical Review* 84:2 (1979): 365. A frequent feature of anti-Stalin rhetoric was the idea of an “Asiatic restoration,” with Stalin as an oriental despot. The phrase derives from a polemic between Lenin and the Old Bolshevik Georgii Plekhanov, in which the latter warned that bureaucratic dictatorship could replicate aspects of the tsarist state: Marian Sawer, *Marxism and the Question of the Asiatic Mode of Production* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977), 156-178. By the 1930s, the political concept of an “asiatic restoration” had entered intelligentsia culture at large through its entanglement with elements of Russian Silver Age cultural mythology. Laura Mieka Erley, “Reclaiming Native Soil: Cultural Mythologies of Soil in Russia and Its Eastern Borderlands from the 1840s to the 1930s” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2012), 59-82.

⁵ Franklin Lewis, “Sincerely Flattering Panegyrics: The Shrinking Ghaznavid Qasida” in *The Necklace of the Pleiades: Studies in Persian Literature Presented to Heshmat Moayyad on his 80th Birthday*, eds. Lewis and Sunil Sharma (Amsterdam: Rozenberg and Purdue University Press, 2007), 209-212.

“Kyrgyz” empress in the persona of a “Murza.”⁶ For West-oriented intelligentsia, who knew and cared nothing about Lāhūtī’s radical career or the popular poetic traditions and Iranian Constitutional innovations on which his poetry drew, the oriental court poet was a convenient role in which to cast him.

Truly, Lāhūtī’s poetic repertoire in the Stalin period did owe something to his limited experience as a royal panegyrist—and his more extensive experience in the mystical and civic registers of early 20th-century Persian poetry. Altogether, this amounted to a formidable tool kit for subtly expressing praise and blame, producing emotional effects, and appropriately making requests on the behalf of oneself or others, *provided* that the poet and audience shared enough familiarity with the conventions to recognize a departure from them. The history of Soviet world literature, like other notions and systems of world literature, can be told as the biography of that peculiar fictional character, the universal reader. As in every such case, some Soviet readers came to identify more strongly with this character than others, imagining themselves and others like them to be the ideal addressees of all texts, capable of reading them through transparent screens of translation and transculturation. The writers who participated in this globalized system, meanwhile, addressed this universal reader the best that they could, trying to keep track of which tactics worked as planned or misfired in unexpected ways in this new Babel of canons and genres. This chapter gives an account of the failures and successes of a system of poetic tactics. But it also seeks to clarify why a poet adopted such tactics, and what the stakes were for those who participated in such a system.

Though panegyric verse will be one of this chapter’s main objects of analysis, that particularly noticeable manifestation of socialist realist poetic practice must be understood as

⁶ Harsha Ram, *The Imperial Sublime: A Russian Poetics of Empire* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 106–115.

part of a larger phenomenon: the Stalin-era ascendancy of the poetic occasion. The scholar of English poetry John Dolan writes:

occasional poetry is poetry which relies on a verifiable event as its genesis. Occasional poems are not in any simple sense meant to be taken as works of the imagination. They are instead what Aristotle called ‘epideictic’ rhetoric, ostensibly produced by community-approved speakers who celebrate community values at a time when these values require commemoration, as after the death of a prominent person or a critical battle.⁷

Lāhūtī was an exemplary occasional poet. Unlike his Russian contemporaries, he had begun his career in a poetic milieu in which extemporaneous occasional composition and epideitic elaboration in verse were valued. Consequently, from his first years in the Soviet Union, he was perfectly comfortable producing verse “with one stroke of the pen,” and in the 1930s, he could compose a couplet or two during a public meeting for immediate recitation.⁸ Many of his occasional poems were only comprehensible their immediate context, whether that was the moment of their composition or the surrounding articles in the newspapers where they appeared.⁹ Operating within a Russian literary culture in which poetic composition was associated with the Romantic narrative of fickle inspiration, his easy fluency in poetic production was not necessarily admirable.

⁷ John Dolan, *Poetic Occasion from Milton to Wordsworth* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 3.

⁸ Abulqosim Lohuti, trans. KB6, 237, altered with ref. to orig., qtd. in Osmanova and Shukurov, *Ocherk istorii*, 291; *Contra* some doubt expressed by scholars, there is no reason to believe that poems presented as extemporaneously composed, or at least short ones, were produced in advance. A convincing document of the process is the scrawled dubaytī from the December 4, 1935 meeting of Tajik and Turkmen collective farmers (discussed below, 68-70), given not only a date but an hour (coinciding with the version provided by the meeting minutes). RGASPI f. 558, op. 11, d. 1078, doc. 15. See also Giv Lakhuti, ““Liubvi moei,”” 87.

⁹ In conversation with young writers, he said: “Every work has its own history. When I read them all of our struggles, revolutionary events, defeats and victories pass before my eyes one by one. If I could arrange to write a detailed addendum for each poem, they would be interesting for all readers.” KB6, 245.

As Chapters 2-3 show, the Persianate canon that Lāhūtī and his generation reframed for a modern world literature was fundamentally distinct from the set of customary Persianate poetic practices that preceded it. This chapter will explore the most apparently archaizing and neoclassical side of Lāhūtī’s Soviet poetic practice: his occasional verse in the 1930s. The verse that Lāhūtī produced for these occasions is his least enduring. But it is an ideal test case for the ways that Stalinist official culture did and did not reproduce pre-modern forms. Scholarship on Arabic and Persianate literature has long since developed an appreciation for not only the technical accomplishments of classical panegyric but also its vital engagement with ethical and political realities, albeit within conventions difficult and alienating for the modern reader.¹⁰ However, when Mahmūd of Ghazna or Nādir Shāh is exchanged for Stalin, and the polemical context is not medieval studies but the post-Soviet moral reckoning of the Russian intelligentsia, a special plea may be necessary to hold the reader’s moral judgment in abeyance while we clarify the functions and generic expectations of socialist realist poetry, as scholars of Ghaznavid or Mughal panegyric have done.

When compared to the poetics, sociability, and performative aspects of classical Persian occasional courtly verse, Lāhūtī’s poems reveal aspects of Stalinist occasional verse that are radically different from any courtly model. Most crucially, in these poems, the constitutive rhetorical role of the masses makes for a distinctively modern poetics of power. The Soviet

¹⁰ Samer Mahdy Ali writes that studies on the “social functions” of panegyric have been “critical to understanding the panegyric as more than an expression of feelings,” and ultimately “making the polemic over sincerity seem naïve and superficial at best”: “Praise for Murder? Two Odes by al-Buhturī Surrounding an Abbasid Patricide,” in Beatrice Gruendler and Louis Marlow, eds., *Writers and Rulers: Perspectives on Their Relationship from Abbasid to Safavid Times* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2004), 2. The bibliography of recent panegyric reevaluation is extensive, surveyed by Ali, “Praise for Murder?,” 2; and Lewis “Sincerely Flattering Panegyrics,” 217-222; a recent contribution is Rebecca Gould, “The Much-Maligned Panegyric: Toward a Political Poetics of Premodern Literary Form,” *Comparative Literature Studies* 52:2 (2015): 254-288.

masses, whether Tajik, Uzbek, Russian, or Ukrainian, are frequently apostrophized or ventriloquized in the poems under examination here, and that public did read such poems in newspapers or heard them at meetings or on the radio. Though Lāhūtī interacted with his broader readership often, and thought and wrote about problems of reader response, the present chapter focuses on intra-elite discourses in which the masses functioned as a mostly abstract source of authority.¹¹ Civic language used to describe the role of the masses in politics was increasingly drawn from the vocabulary of personal relationships. As Terry Martin writes, “Instead of hatred for internal class enemies, the new emphasis was on the nationalities’ ‘feeling of love’ for one another and, of course, for Comrade Stalin. The emotions being highlighted were now intimate and personal.”¹² The entanglement of poetics of power and intimacy had courtly precedents too, but Lāhūtī’s poems confirmed the sentimental bonds of an imagined multinational community in new ways. Having introduced the figure of the literary representative in Chapter 1, and sketched out the kinds of surrogacy that Lāhūtī was called on to perform, it is now time to see how this fusion of functionary and author function worked in practice.

The first section of this chapter addresses Lāhūtī’s poetic sociability in the 1930s, examining those poetic occasions that emerged from his “personalized” interactions in the context of the Stalinist poet’s social role. The second section focuses on poems that more specifically mediate relations between the party and the masses for public occasions. Both sections conclude with a single case study contextualized and examined in more detail, both from the year of 1935: in the first instance, the transactions of writerly friendship that emerged from Lāhūtī’s participation in the Paris Congress for the Defense of Culture in June, and in the

¹¹ Petrone “Life Has Become More Joyous”, 173; Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin: Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 51-53, 116-117.

¹² Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 441.

second, his contributions to Stalin's meeting with Central Asian collective farmers at which the "Friendship of Peoples" was unveiled as a slogan in December. These occasions have both been discussed in other studies of Stalinism and socialist realism as watershed moments. If we adopt the apparently idiosyncratic perspective of an Iranian émigré, and attend to his strangely ceremonious verses, the Stalinist occasion's personalization of mass politics can be read, gesture by gesture, as a ritual of representation.¹³

In the mimetic sense, writers and functionaries, as representatives of national collectivities, modeled appropriate multinational and international relations in a microcosm, whether horizontal relations of affection and mutual obligation or vertical relations of gratitude and beneficence. In the political sense, these were ceremonies of legitimation in which the same writers and functionaries recognized each others' power to speak on behalf of the masses, and thus delegated the authority to legitimate the power of individuals by expressing the masses' love and gratitude to them personally. The most visible such literary-political events were informed

¹³ The closest previous analogue is Erik R. Scott's brief analysis of Stalin's deployment of the genre of the Georgian toast: Scott, *Familiar Strangers*, 87-88, 95-100. My approach to such poetic "dedications," whether panegyric or only in confirmation of friendly relations, follows the anthropological approach to socialist realism whose seminal works are Clark, *Soviet Novel*; and, more specifically concerned with the ritual aspect of gift-giving, Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin*. However, both of those works drew primarily on earlier structuralist anthropology, and so were concerned with archetypical features of the public culture: a Stalinism of archetypes, master narratives, myths, and rites, and "primitive sacred dramas" (*ibid.*, 74). This chapter departs not only from ritual, but from anthropological approaches to art and literature, concerned with "social relations between persons and things, and persons to persons *via* things,"—sometimes substituting "poems" for "things": Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 12. For generalizable schema, the chapter will substitute thick description of specific transactions. A close model in this respect is Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov and Olga Sosnina, "The Faculty of Useless Things: Gifts to Soviet Leaders," in *Personality Cults in Stalinism—Personenkulte im Stalinismus*, eds. Klaus Heller and Jan Plamper (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2004), 153-300. Likewise, on the functions of panegyric in political and social relations and the economy of the gift, this chapter's approach closely follows Caton, "*Peaks of Yemen I Summon*"; on social and ritual functions of Arabic and Persianate *courtly* panegyric specifically, see also Ch. 1 and below.

by an idiom of representation built up over a multitude of small interpersonal transactions between literary representatives and functionaries, many of them not for public consumption. In Lāhūtī's case, it is possible to trace how the multitude of small literary friendships and small acts of representation established the terms for even the most public performances before the Central Committee.

1. Socialist Friendships in Verse

Both advocates and critics of the “neo-traditionalist” model in Soviet historiography have noted the central role that personalized ties played in the effective exercise of Soviet power, and in the broader social dynamics of a world in which public associations operated under intense formal strictures and surveillance.¹⁴ Lāhūtī, whose Soviet career frequently crossed between “soft line” cultural work and “hard line” affairs of state and ideological enforcement, is a good illustration of this point, however atypical. Even before the organization of the Soviet Writers’ Union between 1932 and 1934, he had become a member of the ruling stratum that Western observers, following the Soviet dissident Mikhail Voslenskii, have sometimes called the “nomenklatura.”¹⁵

Although I will provide a brief sketch of Lāhūtī’s network of personalized connections from the perspective of social history, this sketch is in service of a fuller examination of participants’ understanding and articulation of these ties’ nature, and how successive

¹⁴ The discussion is surveyed in Barbara Walker, “(Still) Searching for a Soviet Society: Personalized Political and Economic Ties in Recent Soviet Historiography. A Review Article,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43:3 (2001): 631-642.

¹⁵ Michael Voslensky, *Nomenklatura: The Soviet Ruling Class* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), a work originally circulated in *samizdat* from 1970. The terms in which Voslensky described this group drew on another dissident work: Milovan Djilas, *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1957).

articulations contributed to the Stalinist political discourse of legitimate representation that will be the topic of the following section. As Barbara Walker has observed, “There is far more to be discovered about personal ties in Soviet history [...] above all their qualitative nature and cultural resonance: how they worked and what they meant to members of a society so permeated by them.”¹⁶ Personalized occasional verses are an exceptional source for such qualitative analysis.

Scholars have often presented the search for personalized ties and the *blat* system of exchanged favors as a process of reading against the grain of a Soviet rhetoric of egalitarianism. The most famous figure for public rejection of the personalized tie is the boy hero Pavlik Morozov, who (at least in Stalinist legend) denounced his father to the authorities as a thirteen-year-old, and was then murdered by his family.¹⁷ A broader view of Stalinist public representations of family and sentimental friendship gives us a different picture, however. Such one-to-one affective ties could be not anti-Soviet encumbrances, but constitutive of the bonds of Soviet society. Lāhūtī, who as a Soviet celebrity lived much of his family and social life in public in the ‘30s, and particularly before the Central Asian periodical-reading public, modeled the proper affective bonds of a Soviet citizen in his occasional social verse. As I discussed in Chapter 1, Soviet autobiographical genres always had a social dimension as programs for an individual’s representation-work. The semi-public epistolary analyzed here brings together individual programs of representation-work in a discursive space where new, socialist affective bonds are fashioned, what might be called “soviet subjectivity squared.” To complete the picture,

¹⁶ Walker, “(Still) Searching,” 635.

¹⁷ The historical person and the myth are explored in Catriona Kelly, *Comrade Pavlik: The Rise and Fall of a Soviet Boy Hero* (London: Granta, 2005).

such poetic representations of interpersonal bonds frequently include the masses as a third term, even in cases where the poem is not for public presentation.

1a. Lāhūtī in the Social Context of the Stalinist Cultural Elite

Before examining particular poems, I will survey Lāhūtī's world in the 1930s, drawing together his activities within official and unofficial networks of Iranians, Soviet Easterners, Russians, and other members of the literary international. Lāhūtī's relationship with former comrades from his pre-Soviet revolutionary career in Iran was almost exclusively a liability to his advancement in the 1930s. As early Soviet enthusiasm about cross-border possibilities for spreading revolution changed to Stalinist paranoia about cross-border infiltration, the Iranian émigré community faced increasing suspicion.¹⁸ Chapter 1 has already described the circumstances of the Comintern investigations of Lāhūtī in 1932 and 1935. In a meeting with Stalin in March 1935, he emphasized that he had no desire to continue to work on Iran through the Comintern.¹⁹ Ultimately, he was one of very few Iranian revolutionaries in the Soviet Union to survive the 1937-1938 purges, and in the mutual denunciations that accompanied the liquidation of the former inter-imperial underground, his past contacts continued to threaten his life.²⁰

¹⁸ On the reversal in Soviet official attitudes to cross-border populations, Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 311-343.

¹⁹ Stalin's notes from meeting with Lāhūtī are on the back of a letter: RGASPI f. 558, op. 11, d. 760, doc. 2.

²⁰ Touraj Atabaki, "Incommodious Hosts, Invidious Guests: The life and Time of Iranian Revolutionaries in the Soviet Union 1921-1939," in Stephanie Cronin, ed., *Reformers and Revolutionaries in Modern Iran: New Perspectives on the Iranian Left* (London: Routledge-Curzon, 2004), 147-164.

He was likely saved by the role that he had built up in two other communities of leading Soviet culture-makers: in Central Asia and in Moscow. His work in Central Asia from 1925 to 1930 as the head of Tajik agitprop was, more than anything, an assignment in cadre-building for a reliable Persian-speaking member of the Communist Party. For Șadr al-Dīn ‘Aynī in Samarqand, he was a powerful contact in Stalinabad in the late 1920s and then a vital ally of Tajik and Uzbek literature in Moscow in the 1930s.²¹ When he returned to Moscow, he left behind numerous young Tajik and Uzbek writers and politicians whose careers he had advanced or even started. Even to writers outside of Stalinabad who had not met him, he was a legend; when the young writer Jalāl Ikrāmī first met him at the 1930 Conference of Tajik Scholars, he was astonished that the heroic master was not taller.²²

By 1932, when plans were first formulated for a single Soviet Writers' Union, Lāhūtī quickly became the Union Congress organizing committee's point-person for Central Asia, and after the establishment of the Union's five-member secretariat in 1934, he was its only non-European member for the rest of the 1930s.²³ One history of the Writers' Union calls his addition "a gesture to the Central Asian Republics," and many top literary bureaucrats seem to have viewed him as a token member, a beneficiary of what Terry Martin has called the "affirmative action empire."²⁴ In a 1934 letter, Andrei Zhdanov informed Stalin that they had "filled out

²¹ The published correspondence of ‘Aynī and Lāhūtī provides especially clear documentation of the functions of informal personalized contact for information-sharing, coordination, and mutual aid in the multinational system of Soviet literature. Rahim Hoshim, ed., *Mukotibai Sadriddin Aini va Abulqosim Lohuti*, intro. Kh. Otakhonova (Dushanbe: Donish, 1978).

²² Roberts, "Old Elites," 296-297.

²³ On the organizational process, see Schild, "Between Moscow and Baku," 38-46; see also Chapter 3. Here, I am including Russians, Jews, Ukrainians, and Belorussians as "Europeans"; Transcaucasia was not represented in the secretariat and Lāhūtī sometimes spoke as an authoritative representative of that region as well, especially on behalf of Azerbaijan.

²⁴ John and Carol Garrard, *Inside the Soviet Writers' Union* (New York: Free Press, 1990), 47; Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*.

[*popolnili*]” the secretariat by the addition of Lāhūtī and Ivan Kulik (1897-1937, the secretariat’s only Ukrainian and Jew) to the initial three members.²⁵ Lāhūtī complained in 1935 that although a secretary, “he isn’t given the run of things, they treat him like a juvenile.”²⁶ That he was in some sense a “token” should not be understood as a diminution of his importance. After all, the Writers’ Union was a project entirely concerned with representation, both as the body responsible for “depicting reality in its socialist development” and as a body of writers “representing” the (non-enemy) classes and nationalities of the Soviet Union. Lāhūtī performed admirably as the bearer of “representational authority for Central Asia,” adopting a Central Asian perspective in his verses, leading Russian writers on visits to Central Asia, and presiding over festivals celebrating the arts of Central Asian and Caucasian republics throughout the late 1930s.²⁷

He was not only an icon but a cadre-builder and patron, and over the course of the decade he built up a network of friends and dependents that included Europeans as well as Asians. From mid-1935, following a personal intervention by Stalin, he obtained an apartment in the infamous House on the Embankment, where many prominent writers, artists, generals, and national heroes lived, together with Politburo members and their children.²⁸ As a tuberculosis sufferer from his

²⁵ Letter of September 3, 1934, qtd. in Maksimenkov, “Ocherki nomenklaturaloi istorii.” However, when Gorky advocated the Secretariat’s reorganization as “a regularly functioning institution” in a letter to the politburo member Andrei Andreev of December 8, 1935, Lāhūtī was third on the list of recommended participants (although Gorky added, “we need two more: one who is a good manager; and another as a lecture organizer and, so to speak, ‘Head of Improving Writers’ Qualifications,’”) so we may infer that Lāhūtī was seen as suitable for neither of these tasks. RGASPI, f. 73, op. 2, d. 44, ll. 17-20; qtd. in Artizov and Naumov, *Vlast’ i khudozhestvennaia intelligentsiia*, 278; Clark and Dobrenko, *Soviet Culture and Power*, 196.

²⁶ RGASPI f. 558, op. 11, d. 760, doc. 2.

²⁷ Holt, “Central Asia’s Source Texts,” 221.

²⁸ Maksimenkov, “Ocherki nomenklaturaloi istorii,” 273; also discussed in Yuri Slezkine, *The House of Government: A Saga of the Russian Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), 483-484. Lāhūtī’s family occupied apartment no. 176 of the House on the

revolutionary years, he made visits to elite sanatoria at Barvikha near Moscow and in the south at Kislovodsk, Essentuki, and in the Crimea.²⁹ At the same time, he maintained his ties in Central Asia with official visits. Increasingly, he also made visits to Ukraine and established ties with Ukrainian and Jewish writers. This connection may have begun with a trip to a Crimea sanatorium in 1933, but also owed something to the friendships and sympathies of his wife, a Jew from Odessa.

Numerous anecdotes in memoirs record Lāhūtī's activities as a patron. The most famous concerns his two interventions for Osip Mandelstam (1891-1938) during the period of ostracism before the latter poet's arrest. In the summer of 1937, Lāhūtī commissioned Mandelstam to visit the Moscow-Volga Canal penal forced labor project and write an occasional poem, and later that year, he attempted without success to arrange a public reading for him.³⁰ Lāhūtī had more success as a patron when 'Aynī fell under suspicion in Samarkand in 1936-1937. Receiving 'Aynī's letter of appeal, Lāhūtī contacted the writer and literary bureaucrat Aleksandr Fadeev (1901-1956) and arranged a meeting with Molotov, who in turn set up a meeting with Stalin where 'Aynī's name was cleared.³¹ Likewise, his Ukrainian translator, the poet Volodymyr

Embankment (ul. Serafimovicha, 2). On its history, see also T.I. Shmidt, *Dom na naberezhnoi: liudi i sud'by* (Moscow: Vozvrashchenie, 2009). Barbara Walker, discussing such elite apartment buildings, writes: "the power of the personalized political and economic ties that were formed in these buildings was formidable, and may have done much to consolidate elite status identity and power." Walker, 637.

²⁹ My accounting of Lāhūtī's travels within the Soviet Union draw on the corpus of places of composition appended to poems in *KI-3*.

³⁰ "I know nothing at all of Lakhuti, except that he was friendly and kind to us. In the brutal atmosphere of those days, his friendliness seemed like a miracle." Nadezhda Mandelstam, *Hope against Hope*, trans. Max Hayward (New York: Atheneum, 1970), 300, 302; for partial archival confirmation of this narrative, Pavel' Nerler, *Slovo i "delo" Osipa Mandel'shtama: kniga donosov, doprosov i obvinitel'nykh zakliuchenii*, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Litres, 2014), accessed February 2, 2018, <http://testlib.meta.ua/book/162501/read>.

³¹ 'Aynī had previously written to Stalin directly, but enlisting Lāhūtī as an intermediary proved more effective. Other cultural actors whom Lāhūtī brought into the meetings on behalf of 'Aynī

Sosiura (1898-1965), recalled that when he was anathematized as a nationalist, after his reemergence from a period of punitive committal to a psychiatric hospital, “in front of everyone, [Lāhūtī] went with me into the Writer’s Union building, treated me to lunch at the writers’ club, and gave me money.”³² During the Second World War, he played a vital role as a patron for writers evacuated to Tashkent and Dushanbe.³³

Sometimes, cadre-building involved pedagogical tasks, such as correcting a wayward writer. One writer recounts how the Writer’s Union received an appeal from its Rostov branch about a gifted young proletarian poet who was ruining his talent with drink. It fell to Lāhūtī, then the second secretary of the Union, to go out to the provinces and talk sense into the young man.³⁴ In 1937, a case is recorded in which he was called on to take testimony from the wife of a writer who had evidently been abusive and unfaithful, as a result of which the writer fell from grace.³⁵ Sometimes interventions could be more off-the-record: in early 1937, the playwright Vsevolod Vishnevskii (1900-1951) describes in his diary going along with Lāhūtī to have a talk with Boris Pasternak about “the situation, the process, feedback from [other] writers, their internal duty...

were the orientalists E. E. Bertel’s (1890-1957) and Igor’ D’iakonov (1915-1999) as well as the literary bureaucrat Vladimir Stavskii (1900-1943). Isfandiyār Ādīnah, “Chigūnah Ṣadr al-Dīn ‘Aynī az tirūr-i Istālīnī jān-i sālim bidar burd?,” *BBC Persian*, April 16, 2016, accessed April 16, 2016, http://www.bbc.com/persian/world/2016/04/160416_u04_how_eini_escaped. The recent archival discoveries chronicled in that article largely confirm the account of Giv, who also points to Lāhūtī’s rescue of young Uzbek writers: Giv Lakhuti, “Liubvi moei,” 91.

³² Buzina Oles’, *Soiuz pluga i trezuba: Kak dumali Ukrainu* (Kiev: Arii, 2013), 453. Lāhūtī’s function within the particular economy of translation is discussed further in the following chapter.

³³ Cf. Valentina Mikhailovna Khodasevich, *Portrety Slovami* (Moscow: Galart, 1995), 318.

³⁴ Boris Arдов, “Table-talks na Ordynke,” in Mikhail and Boris Arдов et al., *Legendarnaia Ordynka: sbornik vospominanii* (St. Petersburg: INAPRESS, 1995), 241-242.

³⁵ The case concerns the Russian writer of the Kazakh SSR Ivan Shukhov (1906-1977), and the meeting was May 23, 1937: RGALI f. 631 op. 15 d. 236 l. 50-81, discussed in Valentina Antipina, *Povsednevnaiia zhizn’ sovetskikh pisatelei: 1930-1950-e gody* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 2005), 170-176. Antipina notes, however, possible ideological reasons for the action against Shukhov.

The people, the masses of readers, expect from writers their *word*, and its meaning...”³⁶ To be a leading Soviet cultural bureaucrat, then, required a combination of hyperbolic gestures and subtle implications, agitation and friendship.³⁷ Lāhūtī the awkward outsider, still heavily accented and never entirely comfortable in Russian,³⁸ sought an instrument of such hyperbole and subtlety in his epistolary verse.

1b. Epistolary from Small Friendships to Great

According to the standard intelligentsia narrative of Lāhūtī’s career, his period of full official favor, from 1932 to 1938, began and ended with verse epistles to Stalin.³⁹ In 1932,

³⁶ RGALI f. 1038, op. 1, ed. Khr. 1098, l. 1-2, qtd. in A.L. Oborina and E.V. Pasternak, eds., *Pasternakovskii sbornik: stat'i i publikatsii*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi gumanitarnyi universitet, 2011), 456-7. Vishnevskii presents these as his contributions to the conversation, and doesn’t mention what Lāhūtī added (besides observing in a supervisory capacity), but in any case he was one of the message’s bearers. The ellipses and italics are Vishnevskii’s.

³⁷ There was, at any rate, some basis for the intervention in previous sociability; the Lāhūtīs had visited Pasternak’s dacha for a weekend in November 1935, at which they discussed problems of poetry translation and poetic representation of the Leader. As Pasternak extemporized during the visit, “You’re a fighter, the leader of a movement;/ Where as I’m a slave of imagination” [Ty—borets, vozhak dvizhen’ia;/ Ia zhe—rab voobrazhen’ia]: Giv Lakhuti, “Liubvi moei,” 88.

³⁸ In an introductory note to Vishnevskii’s meeting notes, I.G. Veniavkina writes, “Some absurdity was added to this situation by the fact that Lāhūtī didn’t speak Russian very well and on his own, without Vishnevskii, could not have coped with the task at hand.” Ibid., 455. He cites minutes of a Writers’ Union secretariat discussion of a problem with accounts: “Lāhūtī: I’ve said several times to Com. Liashkevich that you mustn’t come to me with prepared papers for a signature. I know Russian badly, and you should first speak with me about such important measures.” RGALI f. 631, op. 15, ed. khr. 151, in ibid., 460 n. 25. This was perhaps overstating the case in self-defense; for a different perspective, Giv Lakhuti, “Liubvi moei,” 87.

³⁹ This version occurs in memoirs and, uncited, in Russian scholarly works: cf. Esther Markich, *Le long retour*, tr. Léon Krug (Paris: Éditions Robert Laffont, 1974), 110-111; Maksimenkov, “Ocherki nomenklaturalnoi istorii,” 254, n. 34. Both poems are documented, and in the latter case Stalin’s negative response was a matter of public record (see below), but whether these were the significant turning points is difficult to establish. Lāhūtī himself seems to date his fall from grace earlier, writing in a letter to Stalin on April 13 1950 that he has suffered for “more than thirteen years already [...] not knowing my transgression”: RGASPI f. 558, op. 11, d. 760, doc. 9. A particularly subtle scholarly discussion on panegyric of Stalin has taken place in the study of

following the suicide of Stalin's wife Nadezhda Allilueva, the poet sent a poem of condolence that described a captain piloting a ship through storms to the far shore, when a hurricane strikes:

nākhudā kham nashud, valī larzīd.
larzishash kard ḥall-i har mushkil.

tā kunūn har kih māndah būd bah shak
kih tan-i nākhudā zi pūlād ast,
tan-i pūlādī ast, bī pay-u rag,
dil nadārad, zi ‘ishq āzād ast,—

burd az īn larzish-i muvaqqat pay
bih haqīqat, kih kār īn sān nīst
[...]
nākhudāyī kih īnchunīn dārad
‘ishq chun gul, irādah chun pūlād,
tā bih sāhil bidūn-i shubhah barad
kashū-vu khalq-rā kunad āzād.

The captain wasn't bowed, but he trembled
And his trembling solved every enigma.

All those who had suspected
That the captain's body was of steel,
An iron body without nerves or veins,
Without a heart, free of love,

Was convinced by this momentary tremor
Of the truth, that it was not so

[...]
A captain who has such
Love like a rose, and a will like steel
Without a doubt will bring to shore
The ship, and liberate the people.⁴⁰

Mandelstam's poetic engagements with the figure of Stalin. Works that have informed my approach include Clarence Brown, "Into the Heart of Darkness: Mandelstam's Ode to Stalin," *Slavic Review* 26:4 (1967): 584-604; M.L. Gasparov, *O. Mandel'shtam: Grazhdanskaia lirika 1937 goda* (Moscow: RGGU, 1996); D[elir] G[asemovich] Lakhuti, *Obraz Stalina v stikhakh I proze Mandel'shtama: Popytka vnimatel'nogo chteniia (s kartinkami)* (Moscow: RGU, 2008).

⁴⁰ Lohuti, "Nokhudo: Dar margi Allilujeva," in *Devoni Lohutī* (Stalinabad: Naşrijoti davlati toçikiston, 1938), 271-272. I have been unable to find the first publication of the poem (Lāhūtī's poems addressed to Stalin are not included in the critical *Kulliēt*—see my Introduction.). Banu's Russian version is laddered verse, and the effect that Stalin would have received in that version

Evidently, this balancing-act of humane sentiment and heroic epic brought him to Stalin's particular attention, and opened the way for his ascent. Six years later, as the purges of 1937-1938 drew to a close, he sent a poem of New Years' greeting entitled "The Poem of the Flower" ["Dāstān-i gul," "Poema o tsvetke"], which Stalin rejected outright.⁴¹ He scrawled at the top of the page, "A sycophantic thing. I.G.," and sent it to Fadeev, who publicly announced Lāhūtī's disgrace at a meeting of the Writers' Union secretariat.⁴² The story spread as an instance of Stalin's modest good taste, and recurs in later Staliniana without a source.⁴³

is so different that I include and translate the same passage here: "Ne pal kapitan,/ no vzdognul,/ i vot/ Dlia vsekh raskryta/ vozhdia zagadka/ Kto dumal,/ gliadia na oblik surovyi,/ Chto vylit splosh'/ kapitan iz stali,/ Stal'naia figura/ bez serdtsa i krovi/ Chuzhda chelovech'ei liubvi i pechali,/ Uvidia drozh'/ etikh plech moguchikh,/ Teper' lish' ponial,/ chto pravda ne v etom, [...] Takoi kapitan,/ nesushchii berezhno/ Liubov', kak tsvetok,/ voliu, kak stal',/ Korabl' dovedet,/ dovedet do berega,/ Gde krai svobody,/ gde schast'ia stan!" ("The captain doesn't fall/ but shudders.../ and there/ The enigma of the leader/ is revealed to all. / Those who thought,/ looking at the severe figure,/ That the captain was poured out/ completely from steel,/ A steel figure/ without heart or blood,/ To whom human love and sorrow/ were foreign,/ Seeing the shudder/ of these mighty shoulders/ Only now realizes/ that this isn't the truth [...] / Such a captain/ carefully bearing/ Love like a flower/ And a will like steel/ Will bring the ship/ Bring it to shore/ Of the land of freedom/ The camp of happiness!") Gasem Lakhuti, "Stalinu—brigadiru udarnoi brigady mirovogo proletariata (na smert' N.S. Alliluevoi)," trans. Ts. Banu, in Lakhuti, *Sila SSSR* (Moscow and Tashkent: Ob'edinenie gosudarstvennykh izdatel'stv sredneaziatskoe otdelenie, 1934), 58-59. Lāhūtī was not the only writer to offer condolences; a group of Russian-language writers published a collective note of condolence in *Literaturnaia gazeta* 221, November 17, 1932, which was followed by an idiosyncratic personal note from Pasternak. However, I have not found evidence of another *poem* of condolence. At any rate, Lāhūtī's address of the delicate topic found enough favor with Stalin to be repeatedly published without omitting the reference to Allilueva.

⁴¹ RGASPI f. 558, op. 11, d. 760, doc. 7. The archival item includes the poem in Persian (written with a calligraphic care unusual for Lāhūtī), Ts. Banu's typed translation signed by Lāhūtī (it is on l. 25, the front page of this translation, that Stalin's judgment is written), and the note from Stalin's administrator Aleksandr Poskrebshev (1891-1965) forwarding the poem on to Fadeev. Quotes are my translation from the Persian, except where translation from Banu's Russian is specified—although, as will be evident, the roles of these two "originals" pose a problem.

⁴² Giv Lakhuti, "'Liubvi moei,'" 90.

⁴³ Cf. Lev Balaian, *Stalin: otets naroda* (Moscow: EKSMO, 2011), 170. As Jan Plamper has pointed out, "the archival documents readily available [such as "Poem of the Flower"] were part of a deliberate effort by Stalin to place at the easy-to-reach upper layers of his archive—the

The more formulaic a text is, and the more repetitive its genre, the more pressingly important it is that readers understand how a genre’s “rules of the game” are renegotiated in particular texts.⁴⁴ In highly conventionalized texts, only once we “separate what is *de rigueur* in terms of structure, content and style—what is ‘stylized’—from what is spontaneous” can we access what response the author could reasonably have expected from a contemporary audience.⁴⁵ In Stalinist panegyric, we are presented with a challenge: any genres that we or 1930s critics might identify are on the one hand quite formulaic and repetitive, and on the other hand quite new and quickly changing from year to year. So much of the intra-poem repetition is stratified in one-year or one-month bands that poets could hardly be expected to master which hyperboles were *de rigueur* and which might be understood (and not only by Stalin) as sycophancy.⁴⁶ Of course, the “rules of the game” were not rewritten from scratch each time. So, for example, when the collectively-authored factory history went out of favor by 1934, for the community of writers and readers who had participated in it, a renegotiated set of expectations carried over to collective farm poetry or production novels. Necessarily, there was also a certain amount of bleed-through from genres no longer practiced, both intentional (from “studying the classics”) and unintentional. Different writers and languages brought different ground-rules to the making of these genres.

semipublic ‘relicuary section,’ if you will—documents confirming his image of modesty.” Plamper, *The Stalin Cult: A Study in the Alchemy of Power* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), 124.

⁴⁴ Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetics of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 88; and as defended in Ralph Cohen, “History and Genre,” *New Literary History* 17:2 (1986): 203-218.

⁴⁵ Marilyn Waldman, *Toward a Theory of Historical Narrative: A Case Study in Perso-Islamicate Historiography* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1980), 14; qtd. and argued further in Lewis, “Sincerely Flattering Panegyrics,” 234.

⁴⁶ On the negotiation of bounds between conventional hyperbole and excess in classical Persian panegyric, as discussed in rhetorical manuals, *ibid.*, 231-233.

As Jan Plamper has pointed out, the Stalin cult had a kind of shadow existence in 1930s culture: there was no basis for it in Marxist-Leninist theory, and the possible emergence of a “cult of personality” was an explicit concern for those who participated in the cult, including Stalin.⁴⁷ For this reason, there was less discussion in the Soviet critical press about appropriate artistic method in praising Stalin than, for example, about adequately representing rural labor. Writers’ various literary traditions had precedents that filled the gap. In dealing with Lāhūtī’s occasional verse, it is the classical Persian panegyric *qaṣīdah* that functioned as an implicit horizon of expectations. Classical Arabic and Persianate panegyric was more normative than descriptive, and relied on a relatively stable ideology of rule and the ideal ruler. The poet could then celebrate and symbolically bestow legitimacy on the ruler as the avatar of a role, while also highlighting the particular ruler’s departures from that standard in an ethical challenge.⁴⁸ Panegyrics to a sovereign whose rule was legitimated according to a different political ideology, such as a Mongol or a British queen, could educate the ruler and mark his or her incorporation into the courtly ideology.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Plamper, *Stalin Cult*, xviii.

⁴⁸ On the ruler as ideal type, Julie Scott Meisami, “Ghaznavid Panegyrics: Some Political Implications,” *Iran* 28 (1990), 42. Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych’s many works exploring the ritual aspects of the *qaṣīdah*, and particularly the economy of the gift, have shaped my approach in many ways, not least her attention to the specificity of particular transactions between poet, ruler, and larger audience: see her essays in Stetkevych, *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy: Myth, Gender, and Ceremony in the Classical Arabic Ode* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001). On ritual and panegyric, see also S.M. Sperl, “Islamic Kingship and Arabic Panegyric Poetry in the Early 9th Century,” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 8 (1979): 25-31.

⁴⁹ On Sa‘dī’s poems for a Mongol governor of Shiraz, George Lane, *Early Mongol Rule in Thirteenth-Century Iran: A Persian Renaissance* (New York and London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 124-125, 133-135. For a less successful *qaṣīdah* addressed by the Indian poet Ghālib (1797-1869) to Queen Victoria, see G.C. Narang, “Ghalib and the Rebellion of 1857,” *Indian Literature* 15:1 (1972): 5-20. The latter example is a good comparison for Lāhūtī’s addresses to Stalin, in that Persianate culture’s non-hegemonic status allowed the ruler to refuse the panegyrist’s terms of engagement.

In the absence of Persianate cultural hegemony, however, problems of global literary modernity come to the fore. As the following chapter will show, socialist realism's assumption of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural legibility papered over the absence of a real shared horizon of reader response expectations. Although socialist realism seemed to restore to Persianate poets a ritual role in conferring legitimacy on power, they took on that role in a newborn literary system. They operated without the benefit of a readership educated in conventions of reading by a millennium of poets, who had negotiated rhetorical precedents and representational ethics with a millennium of patrons and audiences. The eclecticism of multinational panegyric genres and idioms combined with the absence of a stable rhetoric or even ideology of legitimacy to sabotage the project of Stalinist panegyric well before the purges. Once the works of Lāhūtī and Central Asian Soviet poets were translated to Russian, they overstepped the target literary tradition's different bounds. When their works were accepted as models, they also sometimes renegotiated the bounds of propriety for other literary traditions, introducing new "norms" for conventional praise or exaggeration that seemed absurd and mendacious to writers with different models of propriety. Entry into this globalized economy of competitive praise was a shock for all participants.

The traditional Russian intelligentsia interpretation of Soviet Eastern panegyrics, then, has been to regard them as atavisms of an earlier stage of literary development (Russian poetry having already moved beyond the ode). In his recent work on the Stalinist national literatures, Evgeny Dobrenko draws on this framework to argue that Soviet multinational literature was invented, in Russian translations that were often fudged or forged, in order to fill a generic gap that Russian literature could not: "the function of this 'Eastern poetry' is that it revives a genre that had died in European literature [...] Stalinist literature needed the ode. It was only 'Eastern

poetry' that could revive it.”⁵⁰ According to Dobrenko, the literature of the East (or at least the Russian projection of it—in the essay there is some equivocation on this point) was capable of fulfilling this need because “in the Eastern tradition [...] not only was it not shameful to receive ‘a signet ring in reward,’ it was honorable, insofar as poetry was not a means of self-expression—alien to the anti-individualistic spirit of the Muslim East—but of making a living [*zarabotka*]: it was an art in the original sense, a trade [*remeslo*].”⁵¹ There is no question that in the 1930s there was a wide gap between Russian intelligentsia readers’ expectations about the performance of authenticity and concealment of conventionality on the one hand, and Persianate writers’ expectation that readers would be impressed by virtuosic play with familiar roles and conventions on the other. But what mattered even more was those “universal” Russian readers’ confidence that they could distinguish, in translation, between the conventional and the original in genres whose rules were unfamiliar to them. In the Babel of Soviet multinational genre confusion, it was difficult to distinguish between a bad form and a bad meaning.

No case illustrates this point better than Lāhūtī’s “Poem of the Flower.” Though supposedly rejected for excessive sycophancy, this work, like the 1932 condolence poem, takes on a rhetorical task of some delicacy. The poem tells the story of a skillful gardener who builds up a garden from a ruin, and then surveys his work with satisfaction. In this respect, it draws on the *topos* of the “garden state” and its gardener, which was commonplace in socialist realism after 1935, and which Lāhūtī seems to have initiated in a poem composed in November 1932, the

⁵⁰ Evgenii Dobrenko, “Dzhambul. Ideologicheskie arabeski,” in *Dzhambul Dzhabaev: Prikliucheniia kazakhskogo akyna v sovetskoi strane: Stat'i i materialy*, eds. Konstantin Bogdanov, Rikkardo Nikolozi, and Iurii Murashov (Moscow: NLO, 2013), 51. The narrative of Soviet Eastern literature’s invention in translation, which Dobrenko extrapolates from infamous “fakelore” cases such as the Kazakh bard Jambyl Jabaev (1846-1945), will be addressed in the next chapter’s discussion of the Soviet multinational translation system.

⁵¹ Ibid. Here Dobrenko alludes to a satire of sycophants by the Russian poet Ivan Dmitriev (1760-1837).

same month as the poem in memory of Allilueva.⁵² In the flourishing garden, a nightingale comes to the gardener and insistently leads him to a far corner, where he finds a forgotten, beautiful flower deserving of elevation. Lāhūtī then provides the key: “O shelter, patron, sought after by us,/ O comrade, kind and beloved by us,/ You are the nurturer of roses in Lenin’s rose garden [...]”⁵³ After reassuring Stalin that he is “loyal and faithful to your rose garden,” he turns his attention to the beautiful, forgotten rose:

Rahbar-ā, man madḥ mīgūyam bih ān
Tā kunam taḥsīn bih tu bā īn zabān [...]
Īn gul-i khwush-jilvah-rā bālā bibar!
Tā bibīnad har kas, az nazdīk-u dūr
K-andar īn gulzār-i āzādī-yu nūr,
Gul, bih har shaklī-yu har rangī kih hast,
Bahrah-var, yiksān, az ilṭāf-i tu ast.
Bīn kih juz dar bāgh-i rangārang-i mā,
Bāgh-i rangārang-u yik-āhang-i mā,
Dar jahān kūshand, k-az īnsān gulān
Nah bi-mānad nām bāqī nay nishān.
Kī-st, dānī, īn gul-i pur-zīb-u farr?
Mikhoels ast ū Sulaymān-i hunar.



Dil bih man, man bā tu guftam īn kalām.
Bar tu az Lāhūtī-yat bī-had salām!

⁵² On the garden metaphor and Stalin, see Robert Bird, “Vozhd’ v sadu,” *Zbornik Matice srpske za slavistiku* 92 (2017): 219-238; Plamper, *Stalin Cult*, 91-95; Clark, *Soviet Novel*, 93-113. Lāhūtī’s earliest use of the metaphor, which seems to be its first appearance in Soviet literature, is in a 1932 poem “Ba rahbar. Bah rafiq. Bah Stalin.” *Devon* (1938), 264-268. The 1938 garden poem (discussed above) alludes to the 1932 poem from its opening dedication, a quote of that poem’s title: “To the leader. To a comrade. To Stalin.” RGASPI f. 558, op. 11, d. 760, doc. 7, l. 25 Russ., l. 30 Pers. As Natalia Chalisova and Leyla Lahuti have observed, Lāhūtī’s narratives of Stalin as a gardener, weeding out bad plants, allude to a story from Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī’s *Masnavī-i ma’navī* in which King Solomon finds a carob tree growing outside his Jerusalem mosque, and uproots it to prevent it from destroying the mosque. That this poem’s secondary *mamdūh* (panegyric object) is a Solomon only adds to the ambiguity of the gesture. Chalisova and Lahuti, “Poet and Ruler: The Case of Dāstān-e gol, Lāhūtī’s Poem for Stalin,” in *The Layered Heart: Essays on Persian Poetry, a Celebration in Honor of Dick Davis*, ed. Ali-Asghar Seyed-Gohrab (Washington, DC: Mage Publishers, forthcoming 2018).

⁵³ “Ay panāh-u ḥāmī-yu maṭlūb-i mā,/ Ay rafiq-i mushfiq-u maḥbūb-i mā,/ Tu ba-gulzār-i Lenīn gulparvar-ī.” Ibid., 36-37.

O leader, I compose a panegyric [*madḥ*] to it,
In order to give praise to you with this tongue [...]
Raise up this lustrous rose!
So that everyone sees, near and far,
That in this garden of freedom and light
Roses, of whatever kind and whatever color,
Are equal beneficiaries of your beneficences.
See that other than our multicolored garden,
Our multicolored and single-voiced garden,
In the world, others are striving so that from this kind of rose
Neither a lasting name will remain, nor a trace.
Do you know who this rose is, beautiful and splendid?
It's Mikhoels, the Solomon of art.



My heart spoke these words to me, and I to you.
A boundless greeting to you from your Lāhūtī!⁵⁴

No search for Aesopian language is required to understand that Stalin's reaction was not primarily to the poem's sycophancy.⁵⁵ Lāhūtī does use the classical Persian word for panegyric,

⁵⁴ Ibid., 38-39. The double-underline is original (though not repeated in the Russian, l. 29), as is the star (hand-drawn). In Russian, the passage reads: "Ia slavliu ego pred toboiu, vozhdem prozorlivym,/ Chtob gromko tebia zhe pozdravit' s tvoren'em schastlivym [...] O vozhd' i otets i uchitel! Rukoi blagorodnoi/ Vysoko ego podymi, voznesi vsenarodno./ Ved' tam, za ogradoi, nogami predatelei zlobnykh/ Nemalo rastoptano v mire sozdani podobnykh./ Pust' vidiat povsiudu, volizi i v kraiu otdalennom,/ Chto v nashem svobodnom sadu, v tsvetnike obnovlennom/ Tsvetam vsekh okrasok i form schast'e darish' odno ty,/ Vse greiutsia ravno v luchakh tvoei mudroi zaboty./ Da slavitsia v mire nash sad, gde beschisleny kraski,/ Beschisleny kraski, no vse uzhivautsia bratski,/ Gde tysiachi roz raznotsvetnykh vzrastaiut v narode,/ Gde сотni pevtsov raznozvuchnykh poiut o svobode.../ A kto zhe tsvetok, chto volnuet i razum i chustva?/ Zovetsia Mikhoelsom on, Solonom iskusstva./ xxx/ Chto serdtse skazalo mne, molvil tebe ia segodnia./ Ves' tvoi Lakhuti/ shlet tebe svoi privet novogodnyi."

⁵⁵ The poem is unusually susceptible of Aesopian reading among Lāhūtī's works, though that is not the focus of the present study. It opens with the garden under bad management before proceeding to the people's uprising and the emergence of the wise gardener. The garden is ruled by a "guard" [Pers: *pāsbān*; Rus: the less obvious *storozh*]. The guard is "an enemy without learning, without honor,/ Against beauty, grace, color and scent [...] If nature raised up so much as one rose,/ Or to a rose, a single nightingale recited,/ The guard would be maddened by this incident [...] He hatched intrigues [...] so that the rose might be effaced from the world/ And the throng of rose-worshippers disappear./ If the nightingale fell into his snare/ He'd cut off its wings and feathers, and throw them to the wind [...] For this reason, that rose garden became wilted/ Its orchard became dry and blighted." This figure has little to do with the tropes of pre-Revolutionary tyranny, but suggests the antagonistic figure of the anti-*ghazal* critic in Lāhūtī's

madh, a word that is exclusively negatively encoded as a synecdoche for feudal courtly flattery in his Soviet verse, as it is in most Iranian constitutional verse.⁵⁶ But although the passage quoted here follows an extensive *madh* of Stalin, the term is instead used in the poet's recommendation of another artist for advancement in the official patronage system. Solomon Mikhoels (1890-1948) was an internationally recognized cultural icon, the artistic director of the Moscow State Jewish Theater. Esther Markish, wife of the Soviet Yiddish poet Perets Markish, describes Lāhūtī's fall from grace in a memoir written in emigration: "Such a suggestion troubled the anti-Semite of the Kremlin to the very bottom of his soul and he ordered Lāhūtī not to write him letters any more."⁵⁷

Though it is not improbable that Stalin's anti-Semitism played some role in his reaction, Markish writes from the other side of the anti-Semitic campaigns of Stalin's last years, in which both Mikhoels and Perets Markish were executed.⁵⁸ Mikhoels had certainly spent some of 1937-1938 under suspicion, like any artist, but within months of "The Poem of the Flower," during commemorations of the Moscow Jewish Theater's twentieth anniversary in March-April 1939, he became a People's Artist of the USSR and received the Order of Lenin.⁵⁹ It is possible that the poem, however distasteful to Stalin, contributed to the positive recognition that Mikhoels received. Still, it marked the signal for Lāhūtī's disgrace. What, then, made it worthy of censure?

dialogue "Victory of the *Ghazal*" four years later, given a more actively violent role. It is not implausible that Lāhūtī intends a critique of the situation of the Soviet arts during the purges.

⁵⁶ He gives a parable on the foolishness of *madh* in his 1930 poem "Khar hamān khar ast," K4, 6-7. On the broader Persianate critique of classical court poetry, see also Ch. 3.

⁵⁷ Markich, *Long Retour*, 111.

⁵⁸ Joshua Rubenstein, *Stalin's Secret Pogrom: The Postwar Inquisition of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005).

⁵⁹ "20 let Moskovskogo Evreiskogo teatra," *Pravda* 90, April 1, 1939, 6. In the same year, he became a member of the artistic council of the committee for artistic affairs of the Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom) of the USSR.

It is unlikely that Lāhūtī submitted the poem in hopes that it would be approved for publication, given the directness of its request that Stalin take a specific action. The poem was unsuitable for publication because of the same features that make it one of Lāhūtī’s most classically epideictic poems of the Stalin period. The rhetorical unity of ritual sanctification of rule (praise) and normative modeling of ideal rule (persuasion) is at the heart of the classical Islamicate practice of the *qaṣīdah*, whereas even benign encouragements to the Leader are foreign to socialist realist praise poetry’s rhetoric of spontaneous sentimental affection. Where the court poet explicitly deals in conventional roles corresponding to roles and ranks (the poet speaks to the ruler before a generic court), in Stalinist praise all these relations are personalized, and bound together by the radically different abstraction of authoritarian democracy. Contrarily, the fact that the poem asked Stalin for something specific and was therefore unpublishable—had an implicit audience of one—also violated the principles of Soviet literary production. The personalized relationship represented in verse was to be for mass consumption. We will return to courtly and Stalinist rhetoric of power, but first, it is necessary to investigate the poetics of the “personal” in the Soviet public sphere.

At every stage of Lāhūtī’s poetic career, we can find epistolary verse and personal dedications. His 1920 *Īrānnāmah*, an adaptation of the *Shāhnāmah* intended as a textbook for students at the Iranian émigré school in Istanbul, includes a dedication to his Ni‘mat-allāhī Sufi master (*pīr*) from Kermanshah, Asad-allāh Khān, in which he implores:

alā ay rahnamā andar rah-i dil
khidīv-i mulk-i jān shāhanshah-i dil.
chu z-avval dastgīr-i man tu būdī
bi-rāh-i ‘ishq pīr-i man tu būdī
zi-pā uftādah-am yārī-m binmā
zi-nafs-i dūn nigahdārī-m binmā [...]
zi-bakhshish-i karam kun hangāmah-i man
madad kun tā sar āyad nāmah-i man

tavān-i kashf-i har rāz-am bibakhshā
zabān-i nuktah-pardāz-am bibakhshā
tu khwud dānī nabāshad ān zabānam
kih bitvānam bih ū haq rā bikhwānam
tu-rā hast ān zabān-i pāk yārā
bikhwānam az zabān-i tu khudā-rā

O you who are truly the pathfinder on my heart's path
The lord [*khidīv*] of my soul and the king of kings of my heart
Since you have been my patron [*dastgīr*] from the beginning
And you have been my master [*pīr*] on the path of love
I have fallen from my feet, help me
Protect me from my lower self [...]
Be gracious to me in my trouble
Help me, so I can finish my poem [*nāmah*]
Grant me the power to discover every secret
Grant me a sagacious tongue
You yourself know that I don't have language
To be able to do justice to him in speech
You have that pure tongue, o friend
I am calling with your tongue to God.⁶⁰

Here, as in much of Sufi order sociability and organizational structure, interpersonal intimacy and love point toward a sphere beyond. Here, more than in court panegyric, is a suitable analogue for the poetics of the Stalinist occasion.

Lāhūtī's *Irānnāmah* dedication, like his verse for Allilueva's death but unlike the "Poem of the Flower," was a gesture for public consumption. The inadequacy of the public/private distinction for modeling everyday life in the Stalinist Soviet Union has drawn extensive scholarly debate and theoretical work.⁶¹ Jeffrey Brooks, in his influential account of the Stalinist official absorption of the private sphere, summarizes the transformation thus:

In the performative culture of the 1930s the press resolved the tension between self-interest and revolutionary selflessness, between private and public life, so evident in the 1920s. Private rewards and enjoyment were public goods that came from Stalin. Actors on the public stage no longer abjured family and home but

⁶⁰ Lāhūtī, *Irānnāmah*, 7. He also refers to the dedicatee as 'Abd-'Alī Shāh. On Lāhūtī's Sufi career, see Ch. 1.

⁶¹ On soviet subjectivity, see Ch. 1.

were thankful for these boons [...] when the press reintroduced private life into the morality play, it did so not to encourage genuine privacy but to open a hitherto little recognized domestic domain to occupation by the cult.⁶²

As Brooks argues, private life and private relations did emerge as public goods in a paternalistic gift economy, and the press did play a signal role in this transformation. In the press, poems in which public citizens sentimentally addressed family members and friends (some of whom were also public citizens) comprised a personalized, lyric register of this new discourse. As an examination of such verses will show, the emergence of private sentiment as a public good was not focused through the cult of Stalin to the degree that Brooks suggests. These two phenomena were intimately related, but in a relation of mutual amplification, not the dependence of one on the other.⁶³

Lāhūtī's epistolary verses of the Stalin period reflect a wide range of relationships, from familial to purely official, and he wrote them expecting varying degrees of public circulation. In May 1937, both *Komsomoli Tojikiston* and *Pioneri Tojikiston*, the newspapers of the Party organizations for Tajik youth and children respectively, published a poem from Lāhūtī to his three-year-old son Dalīr.⁶⁴ The poem was printed with a note explaining that the poet had been at a sanatarium in Kislovodsk and his son asked about the weather: "Now, to this question the

⁶² Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin!*, 93.

⁶³ Ssorin-Chaikov and Sosnina (2004) have criticized Brooks' conflation of the gift economy, a feature of "societies [...] in which power relations could be theorized in terms of reciprocity," with forms of gift-giving to leaders that are more comparable to tribute or sacrifices (and are only rhetorically treated as counter-gifts to "gifts" from the state) (279-280). The distinction is an important one, and in this chapter we will see some gifts and dedicated poems within a horizontal economy of reciprocity, and others given as tribute. Occasional poetry challenges this distinction, however. Panegyric poetry articulates a reciprocal gift-based model of patronage (see Ch. 1 and above in this chapter), and in the Soviet case, it was precisely the poetics of friendship that conflated lateral and hierarchical relations. For a longer view of the symbolic politics of Russian and Soviet multinational gift-giving, Bruce Grant, *The Captive and the Gift: Cultural Histories of Sovereignty in Russia and the Caucasus* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016).

⁶⁴ IVANTaj, f. 18 nomn. 1 voh. hifz 83; K2, 153, 282, 330.

master wrote the above poem, and sent it. I print it for the children of Tajikistan as a very good example of precious and simple poetry.” The poem is proceeded by a dedication “To my comrade, to my friend, to Dalīr.” What follows begins as a simple and sweet account of the sun coming out from behind a cloud, but moves predictably toward images of unveiling and a shining red flag. It is a public modeling of familial affection in which civic and private virtues are merged, and young Tajik citizens are encouraged to imagine having a revolutionary hero for a father, one who expressed his politically-conscious love in letters from Kislovodsk.

But as is often the case with Soviet subjectivity, what may appear to exist purely for public consumption is also rehearsed in private. Later that year, a pair of *rubā’iyāt* to Șadr al-Dīn ‘Aynī’s daughter after a success at school appears only as a manuscript penned at midnight and sent privately:

shād-am, kih sabaq khwāndah, zi khwud shād shavī,
dar fazl-u hunar chun padar ustād shavī.
dar zindagī-at tamāman āzād-ī tu,
dar maktab ham tamām āzād shavī.

ūktabr kushād hamchu gul rūy-i tu-rā,
āzād namud qadd-i diljūy-i tu-rā,
bigzār, barad nasīm-i zahmat bah jahān
az gulshan-i ‘ilm būy-i nēkū-yi tu-rā.

I am glad that you studied—be pleased with yourself,
In excellence and craft, you will be a master like your father.
In your life, you are completely free,
At school, too, become completely free.

October opened your face like a rose,
Your lovely stature came to be free.
May the breeze of effort carry to the world
From the rose garden of knowledge your sweet scent.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ IVANTAJ, f. 18 nomn. 2 voh. hifz 85; K2, 163, 331.

Though there is no evidence that he intended to publish the poem, its message is public-minded and reminds the addressee of her opportunities as a new woman of Soviet Central Asia in terms that would not be out of place in the press. In an odd intermediate zone between the last two works is a poem sent by telegram (with translation) to Gorky after the death of his son in 1934:

garchih sakht ast pārah gashtan-i dil,
mashaw, ay shīr-i purshujā‘at, sust.
dar chunīn dam, kih gham hujūm kunad,
‘ishq-i sarshār-i mā muhāfiż-i tu-st.

Even though it's hard when the heart is in pieces,
Don't be weak, o brave lion.
At such a moment, when cares attack,
Our overflowing love is your preservation.⁶⁶

Like the poem of consolation to Stalin, this *rubā‘ī* urges the mourner to be resolute. The appeal to “our” affection might seem to point back to the 1920s spirit of collective-over-family. But the poet empathizes with the grief of the father, and points to “our” love—ambiguously the love of the collective or of a more intimate cohort of friends—as supplement, not replacement. There is no reason to believe that the two writers were close friends in Gorky’s last years, but Gorky, as the Soviet public personality *par excellence*, elicited intimate sentiment from other public figures.⁶⁷

The public display of bonds of sentimental friendship between writers was often multinational, as between Lāhūtī and Gorky. In this, such epistolary display of multinational

⁶⁶ IVANTAJ, f. 18, voh. hifz 41; K2, 100, 322.

⁶⁷ On the textual relationship between the writers, Soner İşimtekin, “Ebu’l-Kâsim-i Lâhûtî’nin gözüyle Maksim Gorki,” *NÜSHA* 16:42 (2016): 37-54. Such emotional availability, for both Gorky and Lâhûtî as for contemporary celebrities, also invited epistolary intimacy from the masses, who drew on such models in their letters to famous writers and officials, full of sentimental displays and confidences. On letters to Soviet public figures, Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York and Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999), 175-178.

friendship precedes the 1935 introduction of the “Friendship of Peoples,” and even the first showcase of multinational Soviet culture at the 1934 Writers’ Congress. As we will see, it established much of the multinational rhetoric that would later be institutionalized. For Lāhūtī, as for many of the more cosmopolitan Soviet writers, the late 1920s was a period in which actual border-crossing sociability was exchanged for a mostly abstract internationalism, projected onto intra-Soviet social networks of writers.⁶⁸ As late as 1926, when he wrote a *rubā’ī* mourning the martyrdom of the revolutionary poet Muḥammad-Yahyá Kayvān “Vā‘iz” of Qazvin (1885-1925), he entitled it “In Our Country” [“Dar kishvar-i mā”] and meant Iran.⁶⁹ As we have seen in Chapter 1, at times in the 1930s, he not only addressed Tajikistan as his country, but wrote verse in a Tajik or neutrally Soviet persona.

In this, as in many respects, the First Five-Year Plan is the hinge. An early rehearsal of multinational epistolary friendship can be found in a 1931 exchange of verses between Lāhūtī and the Bukharan poet “Payraw” Sulaymānī (1899-1933).⁷⁰ In the previous year, Payraw had been among a handful of Transoxanian writers who moved to the new Tajik capital of Stalinabad to build a national literary culture and press, and Lāhūtī, at the end of his stay there, was among

⁶⁸ In the Stalin period, there were a few exceptional occasions at which Soviet writers could cultivate relationships with writers outside of the USSR. On such relationships in the 1930s, see David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment*, 142-311. See also below on the Congress for the Defense of Culture.

⁶⁹ K2, 13, 310. See also a longer poem written in Tashkent in April 1929, mourning the death under torture of the head of the central council of trade unions of Iran, Murtazá Ḥijāzī: IVANTAJ, f. 18 nomn. 1 voh. hifz. 24; in K2, 22, 225-226, 311. That poem makes (workmanlike) formal reference to the Iranian Constitutional writer ‘Alī-Akbar Dihkhudā’s famous 1909 *qaṣīdah* “Remember...” [“Yād ār...”]. The reference is telling: Dihkhudā was commemorating an executed constitutionalist, and wrote and published the poem in exile in Yverdon, Switzerland, likewise participating in an international revolutionary Persophone republic of letters. On Dihkhudā’s *qaṣīdah*, see Karimi-Hakkak, *Recasting Persian Poetry*, 68-88.

⁷⁰ On Payraw, see Hitchins, “Bukharan Poet,” 259-272.

the most prominent figures there to welcome him.⁷¹ Just after the New Year, Payraw sent the following poem in rhyming couplets to him:

ey shā‘ir-i surkh-i mulk-i Īrān!
ustād-u adīb-i nawjavānān! [...]
dar markaz-i Ittiḥād-i Shūrā,
dar masnad-i jahd-u shūr-u ghawghā,
gulzār-i bahār-u ranj-u miḥnat,
jānsūz-i khazān-i ahl-i ṣarvat,
ey bā “chap”-u rāst dar sar-i kīn!
ey rahbar-i shāhrāh-i Lēnīn!
ey ān, kih bah nūg-i khāmah-i khwēsh
kardī dil-i khaṣm-i khwēsh-rā rēsh!
nēsh-i qalam-i tu tēztar bād!
khaṣm-i tu az īn ẓalīltar bād!
az nām-i tamām-i nawjavānān,
dārēm salām-i garm-u jūshān!
dar hamīn-i nigār-i ṭab‘-i purjūsh,
mārā nakunī, dil-ā, farāmūsh!

O red poet of the people of Iran!
Master and learned one for the young! [...]
In the center of the Soviet Union,
At the seat of effort, of commotion and tumult,
The rose garden of springtime, of labor and toil,
The heart-render of the capitalists’ autumn,
O you who are at odds with “left”⁷² and right!
O leader on the royal road of Lenin!
O one who, with the tip of your pen
Have wounded the heart of your enemy!
May the sting of your pen grow sharper!
May your enemy become weaker from this!
In the name of all the youths,
We send a warm and flowing greeting!
Looking with that talent, likewise flowing,
Heart, don’t forget us!⁷³

Soon afterwards, Lāhūtī replied with a poem in the same meter and rhyme scheme, and it was printed together with the original in *Komsomoli Tojikiston*:

⁷¹ Roberts, “Old Elites,” 296.

⁷² It is unclear what the scare-quotes indicate. Likely, the implication is that any opposition’s leftism is feigned.

⁷³ K2, 315.

bah shā‘ir-i hunarmand-i tājīk Payraw Sulaymānī

1

ey shā‘ir-i nāmdār-i tājīk!
dānandah-i nuqtahhā-yi bārīk!
bisyār shudam zih nāmah-at shād,
ey khānah-i nēkī-yi tu ābād!
az Tājīkistān bah shahr-i Maskaw
sehr-i qalam-at fikandah partav.
guftū, kih dar īn muhīt-i āzād
az tājīk-i kāmsumul kunam yād.
ān quvvah, kih dil bah vay bidādam,
albattah namēravad zih yādam.

2

īn dawrah, kih punbahhā-yi tājīk
birhānad-amān zih sharr-i Amrīk,
bāyist, kih kāmsumul dar ān jā
bāzī bikunad ruli muhim-rā.
tu nīz, kih yak javān-i pāk-ī,
qā’il bah uşūl-i ishtirākī,
bāyad bah hunar namūnah bāshī,
sarbāz-i şaf-i kamūnah bāshī.

3

az markaz-i tām-i inqilābī
şad shū‘lah salām-i inqilābī
z-īn pīr ghulām-i nawjavānān
bar kāmsumulān-i Tājīkistān!

To the Skillful Tajik Poet Payraw Sulaymānī

1

O famed Tajik poet!
Knower of subtle points!
I was much pleased by your letter,
May the house of your goodness flourish!
From Tajikistan to the city of Moscow
The secret of your pen cast a ray.
You said that in this free atmosphere
I should give a thought to the Tajik Komsomol.
The strength to which I gave life,
Of course would not pass from my mind.

2

In this age, whose Tajik cotton
Has freed us from America’s evil,
It is fitting that a communist there

Should play an important role.
You, too, who are a pure youth,
Holding to the communist method,
Must be an example for art,
A fighter in the commune ranks.

3

From the absolute center of the revolution
A hundred sparks of revolutionary greetings
From this old servant of the youths
To the Komsomol of Tajikistan!⁷⁴

The exchange radiates the militant, factional spirit of literary polemics before April 1932. For Payraw, Lāhūtī is to be praised for attracting the hatred of enemies, and Moscow is a “seat of effort” from which to attack the capitalists. (Note, however, that it has already become a rose garden too.) Lāhūtī’s response is similarly agitational, concerned with production mobilization and the commune as a fighting unit. In this atmosphere of struggle, though, a young fighter and a grizzled veteran exchange “a warm and flowing greeting.” What is more, they convey these greetings on behalf of masses. Payraw speaks for the Tajik Komsomol (who are assumed to identify with his voice when they read the poem in their own newspaper), while Lāhūtī speaks on behalf of the “people of Iran” and, in a more sustained way, for Moscow. The poems are a call and response between periphery and center: Payraw, the fire in the provinces, sends a ray to the capital, which sends back poetic sparks to kindle fires in more youths. Young Tajik writers urge their teacher not to forget them now that he has ascended in power beyond their circle, and Lāhūtī in turn declares his parental feelings. The tone is a mix of intimacy (“this old servant”) and formal distance (“you who are a pure youth”).

The ascendancy of the “Friendship of Peoples” confirmed national writers’ status as envoys speaking on behalf of their nations. Paradoxically, this allowed writers to play out their

⁷⁴ Lohuti, “Ba shoiri hunarmandi tojik Pairav Sulaimoni,” *Komsomoli Tojikiston*, February 23, 1931; in K2, 43, 234, 314-315.

public epistolary friendships as private ones, since the reader could be expected to understand these intimate feelings' implied macrocosm. Lāhūtī played with sentimental friendship and national representation in a 1938 poem in European syllabic meter that he wrote to the Ukrainian poet Pavlo Tichina (1891-1967). The poem, like many of Lāhūtī's poems about Ukraine, makes use of the figure of Taras Shevchenko (1814-1861), a Ukrainian romantic nationalist poet and a major figure in the Soviet multinational literary canon.⁷⁵ It was published in Tajik and Ukrainian newspapers with the annotation, "On the occasion of his election as a deputy to the High Soviet of Ukraine."

bih Pavlo Tichina

ay nuṭq-i zindah, jān-i ṣukhan-gū,
vāris-i ṭab'-i Taras-i a'ẓam!
agar sākin-i Kanev būdam man,
ra'y-i khud-am-rā bah tu mīdādām.

ham purma'rifat, ham purjasārat,
ham purnazākat, ham matīn-ī tu,
khulāṣah, rūḥ-i Ukrain-ī tu,
nāzanīn-ī tu.

tu chun bulbul-i Irpen sarmast-ī,
ākhir tu īn-rā guftah-ī yā nah:
“naẓar mayafkan īn sān jānānah
gulisībānah”.

tu chun shamshīr-i shawrā burrā-ī,
rang-i dushman az barq-at mīparad,
vaqtī mīgū'ī: “firqah mībarad,
firqah mībarad”.

bāyad yak āvāz 'ilāvah kunand
bah ra'y-i mardum dar bārah-i tu,
āvāz-i qādir az mardī nakū—
ra'y-i Shevchenko.

Taras ham dar Kanev khānah dārad,

⁷⁵ Yekelchyk, *Stalin's Empire of Memory*, 19 et passim.

ān jā, kih tu-rā intikhāb kunand,
bāyad ra'y-i ū-rā hisāb kunand,
dar kitāb kunand.

ākhir, īn īd-i istiqlāl-i ū-st,
fatḥ-i fakhr-i ū, fatḥ-i kār-i ū,
fatḥ-i mulk-i puriqtidār-i ū,
iftikhār-i ū.

ārī, agar ū aknūn zindah būd,
ra'y-i khud mīdād bah ṭawr-i yaqīn,
bah payravān-i maslak-i Lenīn,
rāh-i Stalīn.

To Pavlo Tichina

O living utterance, o speaking soul,
Heir to the talent of great Taras!
If I were an inhabitant of Kanev,
I would have given you my own vote.

Full of both wisdom and audacity,
Delicate and firm are you,
In short, you're the soul of Ukraine
You're dear.

You're intoxicated as the Irpen⁷⁶ nightingale,
After all, didn't you say this:
“Don't throw glances so, my dear
Like an apple blossom.”

You're as sharp as the Soviet sword,
The enemy's color flees from your lightning,
When you say: “The party will win,
The party will win.”

They must add one voice
To the people's vote for you
The strong voice of a good man—
Shevchenko's vote.

Taras has a house in Kanev too,
Where they elected you.
They have to count his vote,

⁷⁶ A city near Kiev.

Enter it in the book.

For this is the celebration of his independence,
The victory of his pride, of his work
The victory of his mighty people,
His glory.

Yes, if he were alive now
Most surely, he'd have given his vote
To the followers of Lenin's ideology,
Stalin's path.

[First stanza repeated.]⁷⁷

Whereas in the poem to Payraw, affection was subordinate to militancy, in this poem's second and third stanzas, lyric and agitation are complementary.⁷⁸ The poem's tone is affectionate, whatever the degree of Lāhūtī's intimacy with Tichina, but an intimacy whose fullest consummation would be the act of voting. In the second stanza, the represented nation is made the answer to the riddle of Tichina's personal characteristics. Thus, he is "the soul of Ukraine" (a representative even before his election!), and finally the two are merged in Lāhūtī's affections. One more figure for representation is added in the poem's second half: Ukraine's bard, whose "heir" Tichina is. The fact that Tichina's election would have been uncontested, like all elections to the Soviets in 1938, sours Lāhūtī's joke that Shevchenko's vote should be added to the count alongside his own hypothetical vote as an honorary Ukrainian (his second honorary Soviet nationality). The poem's conflation of eros with electoral legitimacy reflects the spirit of the Stalin Constitution of 1936, and this is a combination that will be important to this chapter's argument at a later stage.

At the level of personalized affect, though, Lāhūtī's verses to poets of other nationalities represent an inter-elite phenomenon that is far less replicable than his modeling of familial

⁷⁷ Lohuti, "Ba Pavlo Tichina," *Toçikistoni surkh* 89, April 18, 1939; in K2, 182-183, 293, 335.

⁷⁸ This is a repeated message in Lāhūtī's poems of the late 1930s and early 1940s.

relations.⁷⁹ For the many Tajiks who would never meet a Ukrainian, or for that matter an Iranian, this experience had no real analogue. In this sense, the “Friendship of Peoples” was an especially clear instance of Dobrenko’s model in *Political Economy of Socialist Realism*, according to which “*Socialist Realism was the means for producing socialism.*”⁸⁰ To the microcosm of Lāhūtī’s warm friendship with Tichina, Gorky, and Payraw, the appropriate macrocosm was a multinational friendship, not a metaphor but a real collective feeling. The feeling was not real because Tajiks experienced it in the day to day (though some did and still do), but because socialism was, in Dobrenko’s terms, “a *representational* project,” and the representation of this feeling was its reality.⁸¹ But when the representational project created a purely abstract feeling of friendship between people, or peoples, who have never met and could not communicate if they did, it should be clear that the political economy in question was that of Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*.⁸²

The book opens with the puzzle of Marxist revolutionary states’ reliable transformation into national ones, a conclusion that Anderson and other scholars amended after the breakup of the Soviet Union to suggest that the Soviet Union had constructed multiple national communities.⁸³ In examining the affective bonds represented into existence by socialist realism, the whole for which Soviet citizens died during the Second World War may be best understood in terms of an imagined solidarity between nations that is, like the bond between co-nationals,

⁷⁹ In my discussion of personalized friendship, and epistolary in particular, as a means of producing scaleable intimacy between peoples, my approach is indebted to the argument advanced in “International, Intimate, Intense,” in *Vision and Communism: Viktor Koretsky and Dissident Public Visual Culture*, eds. Robert Bird, Christopher Heuer et. al. (New York: New Press, 2011), 39-74.

⁸⁰ Dobrenko, *Political Economy*, 5. Here and below, the italics are Dobrenko’s.

⁸¹ Ibid., xi.

⁸² 1-3, xi.

abstracted and personalized.⁸³ Consider Lāhūtī’s poem “A Gift to the Valiant People of Spain” [“Hadiyah bah khalq-i mubāriz-i Ispāniya”], published in the autumn of 1936 as the first Soviet tanks departed for the Republican government.⁸⁴ The poem’s occasion is a round of donations from the Soviet public to a fund for Spanish aid, and the poem’s Russian publication in *Izvestiia* is accompanied by a note: “P.S. We are making a donation to the fund for the aid of the women and children of Spain.” Donations of money or labor had been a way for citizens to show their personal stake in the Soviet project since the revolution; here, such gifts personalized relations between allied states. Lāhūtī describes the fund thus:

luṭf-i barādarāna-vu ihsās-i khwāharī
bā zawq-i kūdakānah dar īn hadyah mudgham ast.
az ‘ā’idāt-i fa’lah-vu mahṣūl-i kālkhuз ast,
tanhā nah ni’mat ast, kih ‘ishq-i mujassam ast.

Brotherly beneficence and sisterly feelings
Are mingled in this gift with childlike zeal.
It’s from laborers’ income and collective farms’ produce,
It’s not only bounty, it’s love embodied.

As Terry Martin has observed, in a Soviet context the phrase “brotherhood of peoples” [*bratstvo narodov*] was actually less intimate than friendship [*druzhba*], since in Marxist contexts the former “was strongly associated with class militancy, which did not connote domestic affection, but rather public solidarity.”⁸⁵ By 1936, within the Soviet Union the “Friendship of Peoples” was

⁸³ In drawing the concept of solidarity into Anderson’s orbit, I follow Sheila Fitzpatrick’s treatment of classes as imagined communities: *Tear Off the Masks*.

⁸⁴ *Toçikistoni surkh* 246, 24 Oct 1936; first published in Russian: G. Lakhuti, “Primite dar, Ispanii syny!,” *Izvestiia* 6092, October 9, 1936; in *K2*, 275-276, 328. The following month, Lāhūtī presided over a reception for visiting Spanish writers, described in the diary of the old Bolshevik writer Aleksandr Arosev (1890-1938), qtd. in Ol’ga Aroseva, *Prozhivshaia dvazhdy* (Moscow: Astrel’, 2012), 296-297.

⁸⁵ Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 441. However, in relation to Ukraine and Belarus, “brotherhood” also had a Russian nationalist connotation.

the dominant metaphor, and even in the solidarity-oriented international sphere, sibling relations were governed by affection.⁸⁶

1c. The Paris Congress for the Defense of Culture, 1935

From 1934 to 1935, reacting to the rise of Hitler, the Comintern pivoted toward a policy of alliance with foreign socialist, labor, and even liberal parties against fascism, referring to it as a “Popular Front.”⁸⁷ In May 1935, the Soviet Union signed a defensive alliance with France’s recently-formed Popular Front coalition government. The following month, at the First International Congress of Writers for the Defense of Culture from June 21-25, an international gathering of leftist writers met in Paris to affirm this new unity against fascism.⁸⁸ Lāhūtī was among the writers sent as representatives of the Soviet Union, a group mostly united by their political reliability (with the exception of Isaak Babel’ and Pasternak, added at a late stage of planning).

As Katerina Clark observes, “*the* mantra at the Congress [...] was ‘world literature.’” As was often the case in 1930s world literature discourse, this “largely meant European literature,”

⁸⁶ On broader uses of the “Friendship of Peoples” metaphor, especially in Stalinist historiography, see Tillett, *Great Friendship*; for another reading of the metaphor in the Tajik case, focusing on the 1940s-1950s, Yountchi, “Between Russia and Iran,” 81-107; and on Lāhūtī and Sa‘īd Nafīsī in that period, Yountchi, “An Ode to Great Friendship: Russia, Iran, and the Soviet Tajik Writer,” *Clio* 41:2 (2012): 173-196.

⁸⁷ For a broader view of the Popular Front, see Helen Graham and Paul Preston, eds., *The Popular Front in Europe* (London: Macmillan, 1987); on the Popular Front in Soviet literary culture, Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome*, 169-209.

⁸⁸ The Congress transcripts, together with an excellent introduction, are in Sandra Teroni and Wolfgang Klein, eds., *Pour la défense de la culture: Les textes du Congrès international des écrivains, Paris, juin 1935* (Dijon: Éditions Universitaires de Dijon, 2005); for the Russian text of the speeches, see I. Luppold, ed., *Mezhdunarodnyi kongress pisatelei v zashchitu kul’tury*, trans. E. Triole (Moscow: GosIzdat “khudozhestvennaia literatura,” 1936). All translations from Lāhūtī’s speech are mine from the Russian.

and the culture whose defense the participants undertook was likewise a European one.⁸⁹ This reflected the Congress's makeup. The congress's star-studded central bureau included 84 writers, among them Shaw, Woolf, Dos Passos, Brecht, the brothers Mann, Gide, Rolland, and Gorky,⁹⁰ but only two were neither European nor American: Lāhūtī and the Chinese writer Xiao San (1896-1983). The Soviet Union's entire delegation included only two other Easterners, Galaktion Tabidze (Georgian, 1892-1959) and Vahram Alazan (Armenian, 1903-1966). Lāhūtī, speaking at a plenum on "The Nation and Culture," took the opportunity to establish the place of the classical Persian canon and Central Asian and Iranian contemporary writers in the canon of world literature. He alluded to the Iranian socialist poet Muḥammad Farrukhī Yazdī (1889-1939),⁹¹ and presented the Soviet Union as a bastion for the preservation of classical and modern literature, European and non-European:

While the treasures of millennium-old Chinese literature perished under the ruins of Zhabei [in Shanghai], destroyed by Japanese guns, 880 libraries grew up from the ground in Soviet Azerbaijan, in Uzbekistan 1790, in Turkmenistan 478, and in Tajikistan 204. While the ashes of the greatest cultural values are borne away by the wind, burnt in the flames of fascist Germany's bonfires, in the USSR, on the basis of centuries-old world heritage, the flame of the workers' energy is creating the renewed, splendid culture of socialism.⁹²

Like many Congress participants, he wove the Jewish question into his speech. Comparing the condition of pre-revolutionary Jews in the Pale of Settlement to that of Bukharan Jews, he identified both as results of a political culture that passed oppression from the imperial capital

⁸⁹ Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome*, 178. The italics are Clark's. On the idea of world literature, see Chs. 2-3.

⁹⁰ Gorky did not attend the conference due to illness, but sent a telegram that was read out to participants.

⁹¹ Luppold, *Mezhdunarodnyi kongress*, 302. Farrukhī Yazdī visited the Soviet Union twice in the late 1920s. Lāhūtī had mentioned him at the 1934 Writers' Congress as well. On his career, Sayyid-Aḥmad Ḥusaynī Kāzirūnī, introduction, in *Dīvān-i Farrukhī Yazdī* (Tehran: Armaghān, 1378 [1999]), 5-53; Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, "Farrokī Yazdī," *EIr*, article last updated December 15, 1999, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/farroki-yazdi>.

⁹² Luppold, 299-300.

down a chain of hatreds.⁹³ He concluded with the image of the “rope of malediction” [*nakh-i la ‘nat*], a special belt that Jews were required to wear by pre-Revolution Bukharan sumptuary laws. The Bolsheviks, he declared, had severed the *nakh-i la ‘nat* “and gave into the hands of the peoples in its stead the ‘nakh-i vahdat,’ the link of union and culture.”⁹⁴

Following the Congress, the Soviet Jewish writer Il’ia Erenburg (1891-1967), who had initially conceived of the Congress, wrote a letter to Bukharin (duly passed on to Stalin by Bukharin) in which he complained of a missed opportunity to increase “our cultural prestige”: the national literatures, he said, had been “‘in the paddock.’ At the [1934] Moscow [Writers’] Congress a report on Georgian literature was one of the most brilliant: it showed that Georgian literature was of first-class value. Here representatives of national literatures spoke only of the liberation of nationalities. The French have the impression that they are ‘little brothers.’” He particularly called for better deployment of Lāhūtī in counteracting the propaganda of the French Trotskyists, as a writer “who, thanks to his background and his position, could play a winning role for us.”⁹⁵

If Lāhūtī’s speech and participation at the Congress was flatly focused on the “national question,” this was a direct consequence of the incentives and disincentives internal to the Soviet system of cultural production. Lāhūtī’s background did in fact give him a special basis for engagement with Western European public intellectuals, beginning with those like Gide who had

⁹³ Ibid., 294-295.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 302. Lāhūtī’s own account of another speech that he gave at a public meeting, from a letter to Banu, survives in part, and seems to focus on the history of Persian poetic language in relation to culture. Lohutī, *Nomaho*, 46-47.

⁹⁵ Boris Frezinskii, *Pisateli i sovetskie vozhdii: izbrannye siuzhetы 1919-1960 godov* (Moscow: Ellis Lak, 2008), 383. Shcherbakov, on the other hand, described Lāhūtī’s speech as a “counterattack” in his notes: RGASPI f. 88, op. 1, ed. khr. 467, l. 6, qtd. in ibid., 345.

subscribed to his journal *Pārs* in 1921.⁹⁶ Following the Congress, Lāhūtī took up the idea of an international network of solidarity again, albeit one that largely pointed west, not south. On his return to Moscow, in he described the pockets of revolutionary fellow-feeling that he had encountered in his travels.⁹⁷ In Vienna, he met up with “a communist acquaintance” who showed him buildings damaged in the previous year’s February Uprising. Their local driver turned out to be another sympathizer, and told them that when other Soviet writers had come through on their way to the conference, road workers had hastily cleared an obstruction, crying, “Welcome, safe travels!” In the French countryside, an old peasant woman gave him milk and asked after Gorky’s health. In Paris, he and other delegates were looking for an open restaurant late at night, when an initially unfriendly restaurateur heard them speaking Russian and opened up. Lāhūtī recalls, “We told them we were Russians and we were going to the Congress [and] a French cafe was transformed into a red teahouse [*chaikhana*].”⁹⁸ He discussed connections that needed to be maintained: a young woman associated with the Communist newspaper *l’Humanité*, for example, had asked after the girls of Central Asia, and he needed to extract a promised collective response from them.

With French writers, likewise, the Congress established ties that blossomed into sentimental epistolary friendships in the press in the months that followed. At the same time, such public manifestations were truncated by the real dangers of being seen to associate with foreigners, especially after Gide’s perceived betrayal. In Lāhūtī’s case, only one poem resulted

⁹⁶ See Ch. 2.

⁹⁷ Lakhuti, “Rech’ tovarishcha Lakhuti,” *Literaturnaia gazeta* 532, July 25, 1935, 2.

⁹⁸ The “red teahouse” was a Central Asian vernacular variation of the “culture club” (Rus: *dom kultury*) that played a role in the political education of Soviet citizens (and had analogues in many other interwar nations). On the institution in Kyrgyzstan, İğmen, *Speaking Soviet with an Accent*.

from this exchange, to Romain Rolland (1866-1944).⁹⁹ But this poem, together with the prose letters and Lāhūtī’s interactions with Gide and Henri Barbusse (1873-1935), completes our picture of this developing Stalinist poetics of friendship in its ritual aspect, as a series of personalized transactions on behalf of the represented masses.¹⁰⁰

Lāhūtī’s correspondence with Rolland began with a formal, conventional note, appropriate to the purely formal relationship between the two writers.¹⁰¹ In January 1936, he wrote to congratulate Rolland on his seventieth birthday. The message deploys the epideictic epistolary of a classical scribe, using an extended conceit to say the conventional in an especially apposite manner. The letter opens with an anecdote about how the Iranian poet Shaykh al-Ra’īs Afsar (1880-1940), hearing someone walking down the street singing his verses, declared that he no longer feared death, because “One who hears his songs from the mouth of the people will never die.” Consequently, referring to the repetition of Rolland’s name and words from the “factories and workshops of Moscow to the distant villages of the Soviet Pamirs,” he congratulates the writer on both his birthday and his “eternal life in the heart of laborers.” The first message, then, is not personalized or emotive, but it establishes a recurring theme of such

⁹⁹ On Rolland’s broader relations with the Soviet Union, Michael David-Fox, “The ‘Heroic Life’ of a Friend of Stalinism: Romain Rolland and Soviet Culture,” *Slavonica* 11:1 (2005): 3-29.

¹⁰⁰ The longest-term French “friend of the Tajiks” in this period was Louis Aragon (1897-1982), who met Lāhūtī at the Congress, and later participated in the 1957 Tajik arts festival in Moscow, but his relationship with Lāhūtī seems to have been entirely generic: Louis Aragon, *Littératures soviétiques* (Paris: Éditions denoël, 1955), 100-101. The idea that citizens who never left the Soviet Union should experience international friendship intimately was revived in the Thaw years: Eleonory Gilburd, “Books and Borders: Sergei Obraztsov and Soviet Travels to London in the 1950s,” in *Turizm: The Russian and East European Tourist Under Capitalism and Socialism*, eds. Anne E. Gorsuch, Diane P. Koenker (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 227-247.

¹⁰¹ For the full correspondence, with Lāhūtī’s messages in Tajik and Rolland’s in French, KB6, 229-230, 233. The second and third letters and poem appeared, slightly cleaned up (and in two cases translated to Russian), in the Soviet press: Gasem Lakhuti and Romen Rollan, “Romen Rollan,” *Literaturnaya gazeta* 617, September 26, 1936, 2.

exchanges: the poet's voice becomes the people's (or peoples') voice. Rolland replied in May with a note that playfully pastiched "Persian" rhetoric:

Dear Comrade Lāhūtī,
The song of the nightingale of Iran beautified my seventieth birthday celebration, and my heart is glad of it. I thank you fondly for it, and I send, by your voice, my warm greeting to your glorious Iranian people, to whom the Soviet Revolution has brought a new life.

Fraternally yours,
Romain Rolland

Here, the masses are not Rolland's ventriloquized speakers, as before, but his addressees, through Lāhūtī, who now speaks on Rolland's behalf. Rolland's apparent confusion about the state of Iran (or the Stalinist line on Rizā Shāh) interferes with the chain of transmission, but the most significant shift is one of tone. Rolland's heart has been "gladdened," albeit by a depersonalized "nightingale of Iran," and he returns fond thanks and a "warm greeting."

In his reply, Lāhūtī adopts the affectionate tone of Rolland's message (while adeptly defusing its political error). It is with this letter that the discourse of "fraternity" is replaced by personalized friendship, without the loss of the exchange's collective dimension:

My honored friend Romain Rolland,
I was in a sanatorium¹⁰² when I received your letter. I read it as a prescription for the most curative remedy. Fourteen years ago I escaped the clutches of the shah, but to this day my people suffer violence and misery in those clutches.

Nonetheless, here there are people through whom I can convey these sincere, warm and passionate greetings of yours to them. In the Soviet Union, I found a people who speak the same language as I do—that is, the Tajik people—and furthermore, I found many other peoples whom the Soviet revolution has truly brought to life.

I hope to remain alive until the day when I can convey your salutations to the people of Iran, who will be free and happy like the peoples of the Soviet Union.
Lāhūtī

The letter was accompanied by the following qit'ah:

¹⁰² At the time, he was at Essentuki in the North Caucasus.

bih nāmah-at vaṭanam-rā navishtah-ī: “āzād”.
 bih rukh zi dīdah-am az shādī āb mī'āyad.
 man ān mubāriz-i īrānī-am kih az vaṭanam
 faqāt bih yādam, tīr u ṭānāb mī'āyad.
 kunam chu fikr az ān khalq u ān sitam k-ānjāst,
 bih dil gham u bih tanam iżtirāb mī'āyad.
 dar āshyānah-i sīmurgh lānah dāram u bāz
 bih khāṭiram hamah parr-i ghurāb mī'āyad.
 Javāb-I nāmah-i man muzhdah-i sa‘ādat būd,
 nasīm-i fatḥ u ẓafar z-īn javāb mī'āyad.
 nidā-i şādiq-i tu ān şadā-yi shaypūrī-st
 kih dar payash sipah-i inqilāb mī'āyad.
 zi-nāmah-at shudam ān gūnah shād k-īn ash‘ār
 bih rū-yi safhah ravān hamchu āb mī'āyad.
 sahār bih shawq digar chahchah mīzanad bulbul
 khabar dihad chu shafaq k-āftāb mī'āyad.

In your letter, you wrote of my homeland, “free.”
 Tears poured down my cheeks from joy.
 I am the Iranian warrior who, thinking of his homeland
 Can only recall arrows and bowstrings.
 When I think of the people and the oppression that is there,
 Sorrow comes to my heart, and shuddering to my body.
 I have a spot in the simurgh’s nest, but still
 The raven’s wing keeps coming to mind.
 Your reply to my letter was a messenger of joy,
 The breeze of victory and triumph waft from this reply.
 Your just voice is the sound of the trumpet
 That heralds the army of the revolution.
 I’m so gladdened by your letter that this feeling
 Flows over this line like water.
 At dawn the nightingale begins to sing again for joy
 Like the red dawn, giving the news that the sun is coming.¹⁰³

Rolland’s premature “prescription,” with its trumpet call for the (Soviet) army of the revolution,
 gives Lāhūtī the rare poetic occasion to explicitly point toward an imminent revolution in Iran,

¹⁰³ This is a particularly large divergence between Persian and Russian. The opening three couplets in *Literaturnaia gazeta* read: “Sovetskim ty nazval Iran moi. Plachu ia/ Nevol’no plachu ia, o drug moi blagorodnyi!/ Da, ia Irana syn, no tol’ko vspominat’/ Mogu o rodine i o rodnom narode./ Ia zdes’ u rodnika, i mnitsia mne, Iran—/ Mirazh krovavyi na pustynnom nebosvode.” (“You called my Iran “Soviet.” I cry/ I cry unbidden, o my honorable friend!/ Yes, I am a son of Iran, but I can only/ Recall my homeland and native people./ Here, I’m at the spring, and Iran seems to me/ A bloody mirage in the desert sky.”) The Russian vision of an Iranian “bloody mirage” suggests a more definitive parting from Iran than the Persian “red dawn.”

and even mention the friends through which the message will pass to the Iranian people (but also, diverted, to the Tajiks and other peoples of the Soviet Union).¹⁰⁴ By speaking from the nest of the mythical Simurgh bird, Lāhūtī identifies himself with the hero Zāl from the *Shāhnāmah*, who is Iranian, but abandoned and raised by the Simurgh before returning to his father's kingdom. The poem revives tropes of Constitutional and early Soviet poetry that receded in Lāhūtī's verse of this period—the trumpet, the nightingale “at dawn,” and the “red dawn” itself, since the poetics of high Stalinism operated under a noon sun. But the emotional display of both letter and ghazal, the confidences and personal detail, point to the future of socialist realist occasional verse.

Evidence of Lāhūtī's epistolary friendship ends there, and it may be inferred that as a private friendship for public consumption, it was no longer suitable. The end of Lāhūtī's international friendships, and his return to the multinational sphere, was closely linked to Gide's visit to the Soviet Union in the summer of that year (1936). In a newspaper article immediately after the visit, Lāhūtī recalled their encounter at the Paris Congress:

I, on behalf of the collective farmers of the seventh republic, Tajikistan, present[ed] to the representatives at the congress Andre Gide and Barbusse superb robes of honor [*khalat*], sewn by the hands of Tajik women. André Gide and the [now] deceased Barbusse put them on, to the stormy applause of the whole hall. Located in different corners of the hall, they came together, shook hands, and said, "We consider it the greatest honor to become citizens of the Republic of Tajikistan." The whole hall agreed with stormy applause and cries of "Hurrah."¹⁰⁵

The Tajik women's gift of labor, conveyed through their representative Lāhūtī and accepted in the form of a new costume, conferred Soviet citizenship and national minority status on the

¹⁰⁴ These are unusual points of reference for his poetry at a moment when the Soviet Union had just signed a new treaty with the Pahlavi state (1935) and networks of Iranian revolutionaries, including Lāhūtī's, were under suspicion.

¹⁰⁵ G. Lakhuti, “Andre Zhid,” *Literaturnaia gazeta* 603, July 15, 1936, 3.

French writers.¹⁰⁶ Remembering that Lāhūtī, too, was the recipient of conferred Tajik citizenship (or nationality?), and perhaps honorary Ukrainian citizenship through Tichina, we should not hesitate to conclude that in the 1930s, all Soviet citizenship was honorary, received through bonds of friendship but conditional on loyalty. On his visit, Gide, too, exchanged greetings with the workers and collective farmers of Tajikistan through Lāhūtī in Moscow, and “promise[d] to return, in order to personally express brotherly feeling and my deep sympathy to the comrades and friends there.”¹⁰⁷

Unfortunately, before such a direct communion could take place, Gide’s honorary citizenship was revoked. The mildly critical book that he published that November, *Return from the USSR (Retour de l’URSS)*, was received as an attack on the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁸ It was Lāhūtī who was called upon to write the long response essay for *Literaturnaia gazeta*, in the voice of a betrayed friend. In Paris, he pointed out, the Soviet writers, in a venue surrounded by enemy police, had pulled no punches in their critique. He continues:

And how did the "brave" Andre Gide conduct himself in the friendly and hospitable Soviet Union? He flattered, he flirted, he was moved while he was here. He denounces, he slanders, and he curses, having returned to his homeland. So the philistine, when he's gone visiting, crumbles before his host into syrupy compliments, but returning home, angrily and enviously gossips about those whose hospitality he just availed himself of.¹⁰⁹

“Double-talk” was a usual Soviet accusation in the later ‘30s,¹¹⁰ but when Lāhūtī combines the accusation of flattery with the ethics of hospitality, the topos is distinctively oriental, with Gide

¹⁰⁶ In his memoirs, Erenburg recalls this dress-up as a moment of levity: “Lāhūtī gave André Gide a Tajik robe and hat, and, seeing the author of *Corydon* in an unaccustomed garb, we suddenly understood that he should sit in a teahouse [*chaikhana*] and try on eternity, rather than talking at meetings.” Il’ia Erenburg, *Liudi, gody, zhizn’ vol. 2* (Moscow: Sov. Pisatel’, 1990), 60.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ André Gide, *Retour de l’U.R.S.S.* (Paris: Gallimard, 1936).

¹⁰⁹ G. Lakhuti, “Neumnyi boiaka,” *Literaturnaia gazeta* 635, December 26, 1936, 5.

¹¹⁰ Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome*, 210-242.

cast as the perfidious panegyrist. Having accepted the gift of hospitality and donned the robe of friendship, he failed to unburden his heart directly to his friends, the Soviet people. At the moment of international friendship's revocation, the rituals and objects on which it depends come into focus: honorary citizenship and its national costume, the sincere confession of fellow-feeling, and the two imagined collectives brought together by a personalized relationship.

2. Love and the Masses: Democratic Court Poetry

What becomes of this poetics of political love when the poet's address is not horizontal, within or between collectivities, but vertical in the hierarchy of Stalinism? It is here that the question of panegyric arises directly, and more particularly, the question of continuities from the Persianate practice of courtly panegyric to Stalinist verse. As Chapter 1 showed, his first published poem was a 1905 panegyric *qaṣīdah* to the Qajar shah for the Nawrūz holiday, one that celebrated the connection between kingship and the public-minded reformism of the newspaper *Tarbīyat*. He developed the same themes further in one section of his 1920 Istanbul émigré school textbook, *Irānnāmah*, in which he describes the reign of the mythical ancient king Jamshīd:

bar-i barkhī zi-mardān-i dil-āgāh
Sulaymān-i payambar būd ān shah
khiradmand-u buzurg-u dādgār būd
dalīr-u nāmdār-u pur-hunar būd
az ān shāhanshah Īrān zindah gardīd
bih nīkī nām-i ū pāyandah gardīd
dar az har pīshraftī ū gushādah
hunarhā bas bi-mardum yād dādah

For the wise-hearted portion of men
This king was a prophet Solomon
He was wise, great, and just
He was brave, famed, and skilled
Because of that king, Iran came to life

He had long renown for his goodness
He opened the door for every kind of progress
He taught so many crafts to the people¹¹¹

The passage is a summary of Firdawsī's *Shāhnāmah*, and it duly describes the various elements of civilization invented by Jamshīd, including house-building, the division of humanity into four castes (!), and finally, the Persian springtime festival of the new year, Nawrūz:

nukhustīn rūz-i māh-i Farvardīn shud
zi-zībā'ī zamīn bāgh-i barīn shud
shahanshah mardumān-rā pīsh-i khwud khwānd
bar ānān sīm-u zar bisyār afshānd
chu ānsān jashn-i shāyān-rā bi-pā dāsh
bishud bar takht-u chatr-i zar bar-afrāsh [...]
zamīn būsīd har kas dar bargāh
khwush-ā mīguft har kas bar shahanshāh
bifarmān-i khidīv-i Ahriman-sūz
hamah ān rūz-rā guftand Nawrūz

The first day of Farvardin [March 21] came
In beauty, the earth became a sublime garden
The king of kings called the people before him
He showered much silver and gold on them
When in this way he had established a worthy festival
He went up on the throne and raised up a parasol above it [...]
Everyone in the court kissed the ground
Everyone was blessing the king of kings
By the order of the Ahriman-burning lord
Everyone called that day Nawruz¹¹²

In its similarities to “Poem of the Flower,” the passage reveals where Stalinist panegyric reproduces the ideals of court and kingship. Here, too, we find the ruler holding an audience as the garden of the earth comes to life at the New Year. As in poems from the 1930s that will appear below, the ruler bestows material wealth on the people in exchange for their assent to be

¹¹¹ Lāhūtī, *Irānnāmah*, 30-31.

¹¹² Ibid., 32-33.

ruled by him.¹¹³ But compared to Lāhūtī’s Stalin-era poems, the ceremonial nature of the exchange is undisguised by any suggestion of a personal or emotional relationship between the appropriate [*shāyān*] king and the dutiful people. The *Īrānnāmah*’s departures from Firdawsī point to Constitution-era revisions of the ideal of kingship as a source of “progress” [*pīshraft*]. Lāhūtī’s description of the Nawrūz audience also diverges from Firdawsī. In the general Constitution-generation fascination with pre-Islamic Iran, he identifies the gathering with the images carved on the palace at Persepolis, popularly known as “Jamshīd’s Throne” [*takht-i Jamshīd*], and includes one such frieze as an illustration (fig. 4).¹¹⁴ In the *Shāhnāmah*, at the New Year, “the world gathered around his throne [...] they scattered jewels upon Jamshīd,” and then follows a feast for the nobles [*buzurgān*] attended by musicians.¹¹⁵ In the *Īrānnāmah*, the public ritual is no longer separate from the courtly one, and the people [*mardumān*] come into focus as participants in the ritual.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ The ritual renewal of kingship through panegyric is closely associated with the Nawruz festival. On spring and the garden in Persian court poetry, William Hanaway, Jr., “Paradise on Earth: The Terrestrial Garden in Persian Literature,” in *The Islamic Garden*, eds. Elisabeth B. MacDougall and Richard Ettinghausen (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1976), 43-67. Interestingly, the spring motif survives, however unseasonably, in Lāhūtī’s Soviet New Year and October Revolution anniversary poems.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 33-34. Over the king in the frieze is the symbol of the *khvarənah*, or in New Persian, *farr*, an icon of royal legitimacy that plays a central role in pre-Islamic Iranian ideology of kingship and continues to function in Islamic Persianate discourse about rulers and power. Gherardo Gnoli, “Farr(ah),” in *EIr*, article last updated December 15, 1999, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/farrah>. The concept plays a key role in the Jamshīd narrative, including in the *Shāhnāmah* and Lāhūtī’s *Īrānnāmah*: after Jamshīd boasts of his self-sufficiency and forgets God, the *farr* departs from him and he loses his kingship. Although the word *farr* occurs throughout Lāhūtī’s 1930s verse, glorifying Stalin, the people, and the Soviet Union itself, it is never highlighted and its use is inconsistent. Consequently, despite its relevance to the development of a Stalinist discourse of power in Persian/Tajik, it has been excluded from the discussion.

¹¹⁵ Abū al-Qāsim Firdawsī, *Shāhnāmah* vol. 1, ed. Jalāl Khāliqī Muṭlaq (New York: Bibliotheca Persica, 1988), 44.

¹¹⁶ Lāhūtī, *Īrānnāmah*, 3



Fig. 4: Achaemenid door jamb at Persepolis depicting king with *khvarənah* (symbol of royal authority) above, attendants below. Image from Lāhūtī, *Irānnāmah* (1920), 33.

Lāhūtī and Central Asian poets during the Stalin period specifically drew on those topoi of Persianate courtly panegyric that had survived or been revived in early 20th-century Persianate civic poetry, because they emphasized the part of the tradition that aestheticized rule by popular assent. But as the cacophonous public debates about sovereignty from 1905-1922 gave way to interwar authoritarian modernization, the constitutive role of the masses became a primarily aesthetic phenomenon, changing not only the rhetoric of Persianate panegyric, but also the content of panegyric's ritual transaction. The nature of the transaction varies: in the Soviet case, the poet might praise Stalin or the Party in the voice of the masses, or praise the masses in an address to Stalin, or praise Stalin in an address to the masses. This is partly because the normative and rhetorical base of Soviet power was unstable, and partly because the poet might be uncertain of the poem's primary real audience and patron. Before directly dealing with products of the Stalin cult, then, it will be instructive to see how Lāhūtī panegyrized a patron of whom he *was* expected to make requests in verse: the masses.

2a. Stalinist Representative and Representational Politics

In November 1934, as the cotton harvest progressed, the Central Asian republics fell behind the production quotas set by the Second Five-Year Plan. Following a series of admonitory articles in *Pravda*,¹¹⁷ Lāhūtī wrote an agitational poem, “Alarm” [Taj: “Signāl”; Rus: “Signal”] that was printed first in *Pravda* in Banu’s translation, then in *Tojikistoni surkh*.¹¹⁸ In the Tajik version, the poem opens:

tūdah-i turkman-u uzbek-u khalq-i tājīk!
‘īd-i dahsālah-i āzādī-atān shud nazdīk.
man kunam az dil-u jān ‘īd-i shumā-rā tabrīk
lēkin ‘īdī zih shumā khwāham-u ‘īdī-yi kalān:
bēshtar az şad ijrā shudan-i jumlah plān.

dar chunīn dam, kih jahān muntazir-i ‘īd-i shumā-st,
mulk dar mas’alah-i pakhtah bah ummēd-i shumā-st,
pur hamah safḥah-i ta’rīkh zih tamjīd-i shumā-st,
sharm-am īyad kih chunīn kār-i shumā dar ‘aqab ast,
hayf-am īyad kih “Haqīqat” zih shumā dar ghazab ast.

gar “Prvdah” bah shumā khashm kunad, ḥaq dārad,
ū bah ḥaq dāshtan az jāmi‘ah bayraq dārad,
khāṣah dar kār-i shumāhā ḥaq-i muṭlaq dārad:
dar chunīn dam, kih jahān dar khaṭar-i fāshizm ast,

¹¹⁷ Eg. M. Sheverdin, “Nuzhna ne boltovnia, a bol’shevistskaia organizatsiia uborki i zagotovok khlopka,” and anonymous, “Sovkhozy Tadzhikistana plokho ubiraiut khlopok,” *Pravda*, November 3, 1934, 2; Sheverdin and Kureiko, “Boltovnia vmesto konkretnogo rukovodstva zagotovkami khlopka,” and Naugol’nov, “Primer dlia vsekh khlopkovykh raionov,” *Pravda*, November 4, 1934, 3; and the final straw before Lāhūtī’s November 6 composition, a series of sketches exposing poor practices: Rovinskii, “Zagotovki khlopka: pochemu ostaet ikramovskii raion,” *Pravda*, November 5, 1934, 2. These articles also appeared in the Central Asian *Pravda vostoka* and had counterparts in the Tajik-language press (although Lāhūtī, as a Moscow resident, experienced the failure as it was mediated by the metropolitan Russian press specifically).

¹¹⁸ IVANTAJ, f. 18 nomn. 1, voh. hifz 54; Lakhuti, “Signal,” trans. Banu, *Pravda*, November 15, 1934, 3; Lohuti, “Signol,” *Tojikistoni surx*, November 18, 1934; in K2, 101-102, 262-263, 322. The poem is dated November 6. Its newspaper publications were surrounded by articles describing farms successful in meeting quotas on the one hand, and the unmasking of wreckers on the other. In the Russian version, it is given in laddered lines. See also Chapter 5 on differences between Persian/Tajik and Russian versions.

pēsh-i mā pakhtah mehīn khādim-i sus(i)yālizm ast.

bah umēdē, kih tu ijrā-yi plān khwāhī kard,
khwēshtan-rā bah hunar fakhr-i jahān khwāhī kard,
quvvah-i kishvar-i khwud-rā du chunān khwāhī kard,
sarzamīn-rā hamah az nām-i tu pur kardam man.
pur jahān-rā zi sukhanhā-yi chu dur kardam man.

guftam, īn bēshah-i jahd ast-u tu shēr-ī dar ān,
guftam, īn şahnah-i kār-u tu dalēr-ī dar ān,
guftam, īn kishvar-i ranj-u tu amīr-ī dar ān.
pas dalērānah bah īn pand-i man andēshah bikun:
jahd-u kūshish pay-i ārāyish-i īn bēshah bikun!

Turkmen and Uzbek masses, Tajik nation
The tenth anniversary of your freedom draws near.¹¹⁹
Heart and soul, I congratulate you.
But I ask of you, as a festive gift, a great oath:
That the plan [*plān*] be fulfilled more than one hundred percent.

At such a moment, as the world awaits your celebration,
On the cotton question, the country's hope is in you.
Every page of history is full of your praises.
I'm ashamed that you are lagging behind in such a task
I'm regretful that *Pravda* [*Haqīqat*] is angry with you.

If *Pravda* [*Pravda*] is angry at you, they are right,
They bear society's banner of correctness,
Especially in your matter they are absolutely right:
At this moment, when the world is in danger from fascism,
For us, cotton is socialism's greatest servant.

In hope that you will fulfill the plan,
That in labor, you will make yourself the pride of the world,
That you will double the might of your own country,
I have filled the entire land with your name.
I've filled the world with discourses like pearls.

I said, this is a thicket of struggle, and you're a lion in it,
I said, this is a worksite,¹²⁰ and you're bold on it,
I said, this is the country of labor, and you are a commander in it.

¹¹⁹ The event whose anniversary is meant is the national delimitation, concluded on October 27, 1924, by which the Uzbek SSR and the Tajik (then) ASSR were formed out of the Turkestan ASSR and the People's Republics of Bukhara and Khorezm.

¹²⁰ In later publications of the same year, a "battlefield."

Then boldly listen to this advice of mine:
Struggle and try to bring this thicket into order!

The stanzas that follow encourage farmers to “complete the plan by the day of the celebration,” urging:

ākhir, ey shēr, ba-pā khēz-u khurūshīdan gīr,
ākhir, ey bahṛ, talāṭum kun-u jūshīdan gīr,
ākhir, ey mard, ba-maydān raw-u kūshīdan gīr,
tā kih dushman biharāsad zi khurūshīdan-i tu,
shavad in mamlakat ābād zi kūshidan-i tu.

binamā bar hamah ‘ālam, kih tu kāmil shudah-ī,
kāmilan mustaqil-u bāligh-u ‘āqil shudah-ī,
dawrah-i kūdakī-at ṭay shud-u fāzil shudah-ī,
zindagānī-yi tu rū kardah bah davrān-i dīgar,
gashtah-ī lāyiq-i har kār chu akhvān-i dīgar.

Come on, lion, rise to your feet and roar,
Come on, ocean, rage and come to a boil,
Come on, man, take to the field and struggle,
So that the enemy takes fright at your roaring,
And this country flourishes by your struggle.

Show the whole world that you have reached perfection,
That you’ve become independent, full-grown, and sagacious,
That the time of your childhood is over, and you are learned,
Your life has passed on to another stage,
You’ve become worthy of any task, like the other brothers.

On one level, “Signal” is a typical poem of the Stalinist gift economy described by Brooks, “in which citizens received ordinary goods and services as gifts from a generous and solicitous leadership [...] and the tremendously beholden citizens were obligated to provide their labor in return.”¹²¹ Even meeting production quotas, the least surplus transaction possible in an economy dominated by rhetoric of “overfulfillment,” becomes a holiday present (‘īdī, on the analogy of gift-giving at Islamic religious holidays). This labor is the repayment of a debt, because of a gift

¹²¹ Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin*, xv. Ssorin-Chaikov and Sosnina, “Faculty of Useless Things,” suggest that such collective gifts may be better understood not only in relation to earlier tributary practices, but also in relation to the “feat” (280).

that the collective farmers have already received: Lāhūtī’s panegyric “discourses [Rus: songs] like pearls.”¹²²

It is this sense of mutual obligation that has led scholars such as Brooks to compare Stalinist and feudal culture.¹²³ But when the special paternalism of the Stalin cult is removed from the scene, what remains is a less hierarchical rhetoric of mutual obligation, and one in which economic interests are even more definitively concealed. In Lāhūtī’s “Gift to the Valiant People of Spain,” from 1936, ordinary Soviet citizens are on the other side of the equation, passing on their wages to the Republican cause in a spirit of fraternal affection and *noblesse oblige*. “Signal,” written at an earlier stage of Stalinist occasional poetry, is more agitational than sentimental, but it contains hints of the future. The poem begins as a clear address to a group, marked by the second-person plural (Taj: *shumā*, Rus: *vy*), but already in the fourth stanza, the “you” who is praised in the hope of labor heroism is singular (Taj: *tu*, Rus: *ty*), and the appeal is personalized for the rest of the poem, except for one stanza of plural imperatives. Just as the private sentimental friendship connotes an imagined mass sentiment, even an address to the masses takes on a private emotional valence—in this instance, betrayal. In classical Persian court poetry, as Julie Scott Meisami writes, “the analogy between poet and lover, patron and beloved was so clearly understood that overt articulation (as well as being unsubtle and uncourtly) was [...] unnecessary.”¹²⁴ Such an analogy structured the panegyric *qasīdah*, which often opened with a thematically separate lyric section, the *naṣīb*, in which the poet deployed topoi connected with love, wine, or spring, before entering upon praise of the poet. The ghazal, a form which may

¹²² On the panegyric as a gift demanding counter-gift, S. Stetkevych, *Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy*, 73-79, 277.

¹²³ Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin*, xvi, xviii, *et passim*; Vishnevskii, *Serp i rubl'*, 32.

¹²⁴ Julie Scott Meisami, *Classical Persian Court Poetry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 67.

have originated from the *naṣīb*, and which at any rate resembled it closely, could also be used as a panegyric form. In such poems, the lover's praise of the beloved could be read doubly, his complaint to a cruel beloved could reinforce courtly ethics, and his suit could be (and was) read as a request for material support.¹²⁵ Lāhūtī, like many Iranian reform-minded poets of his generation, stopped writing panegyric *qaṣīdahs* with *naṣībs*, and though he did write *ghazals* in the 1930s, “Signal” bears no formal and little generic resemblance to either. But the classical Persian habit of using scenarios of love to address ethics of power proved fruitful in the Stalinist context, where economics and coercive power were effaced from public discourse, replaced by an economy of sentiment.

“Signal” is also a metadiscursive acknowledgement of panegyric anxiety, unusually frank for its time. The system’s tautology is declared: the anger of *Pravda* (meaning “truth,” in Tajik *haqīqat*) must be right (“*haq dārad*,” “has *truth*,” a cognate), because they carry the banner of having the truth (“*haq dāshtan*”). But here, an evident gap has opened up between socialism (fulfillment of the Plan) and reality (actual production figures), and this leaves Lāhūtī in a false position. He acknowledges that he has written praise of the Central Asian masses *preemptively*, “in hope that you will fulfill the plan.” If “every page of history” is full of the Central Asian people’s praises, that too is a matter of “hope” projected backward. The fifth stanza, in which he lists the hyperbolic clichés that he has used in praising his addressees, parodies his own socialist realist verse. However, he does not parody here in order to suggest that the poetics is inadequate, as he did in his parodic classical Persian love lyrics of the early 1920s.¹²⁶ Here, again,

¹²⁵ On the panegyric *ghazal* and the relationship between love *ghazal* and panegyric, Meisami, *Court Poetry*, 271-285; on the genre in an early period, Franklin Lewis, “Reading, Writing and Recitation: Sanā‘ī and the Origins of the Persian Ghazal” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1995), 448-449.

¹²⁶ Karimi-Hakkak, *Recasting Persian Poetry*, 108-202.

Dobrenko's description of reality under Stalinism is helpful. What might appear to us a mimetic failure (the artist has not represented reality) is instead presented as a moral failure (the collective farmers have not represented reality truthfully, i.e. in its socialist development).

“Signal” provides one possible arrangement of voice and addressee, in which the poet addresses the masses, in a personalized relationship with them, as an outside interlocutor. A certain distance is implied by the assumed context of the poet reading *Pravda* in Moscow and writing this epistle to his Central Asian friends. As his epistles on behalf of the Tajiks or Soviets to the Ukrainians or Spanish show, another arrangement was also possible, in which the audience understood that he ventriloquized the masses, either as their deputized representative or as the voice of the whole. The literary conceit in which the poet claims that “the 150,000,000 speak through my mouth” is associated with avant-garde verse of the period after the revolution.¹²⁷ By 1932, such total rhetorical submergence of the self in the collective uncommon in poetry, but might occur in discussions of party discipline. In an essay of 1934 about “artistic freedom,” Lāhūtī compares himself to a “limb” of the proletariat, then declares that he is “as inseparable from my class as a drop is inseparable from the ocean. This joyful sensation is the sensation of real personal freedom.”¹²⁸ A corporeal metaphor reminiscent of early Soviet avant-garde fantasies is followed by an image of the drop in the ocean derived from Sufi discourse of annihilation of the self.

¹²⁷ Vladimir Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* vol. 2, ed. N.V. Reformatskia (Moscow: Gosizdat. khudozhestvennoi literature, 1956), 115. In addition to Maiakovskii's famous poem 150,000,000, “the liturgical power of the mass voice raised in song” was a common conceit in the poetry of the Proletkult movement and its offshoot the Smithy (*Kuznitsa*). Rolf Hellebust, *Flesh to Metal: Soviet Literature & the Alchemy of Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 50.

¹²⁸ KB6, 221.

The passage's eclecticism reflects the uncertainties of the moment. By the time of the 1934 Writers' Congress, a different discourse of poetic anonymity was developing in the Eastern national literatures. As the genre of Soviet "folklore" developed, national poets were often presented as anonymous bards speaking collectively-authored ideologically committed poetry in mode of 19th-century Romantic *volkisch* nationalism. Celebrities such as the Lezgin bard Suleyman Hasanbekov "Stal'skii" (1869-1937) and the Kazakh *akyn* Jambyl recited "oral compositions" in praise of Stalin or collective labor, many of which had actually been written on their behalf by a pool of younger national or Russian poets.¹²⁹ As this mythical phenomenon gained momentum, national poets with no pretensions to illiteracy alluded to the fiction of collective folk composition in their individually-authored work. The Persian belletristic tradition was less susceptible to this kind of mythmaking than the more oral traditions of northern Central Asia, but Lāhūtī did experiment with this kind of depersonalized poetic persona.

The representation of the mass voice posed a problem for poets because it was also a matter of some ambiguity in Leninist-Stalinist thought. Although Lenin's theory of the revolutionary vanguard cleared away any Rousseauian notion that the Soviet state need directly express the masses' will, rhetorically the Party continued to derive its legitimacy from the people. Stalin famously ended his *Short Course* with a reminder that the Bolsheviks "are strong [...] when they retain their link with their mother, with the masses, who gave birth to them, fed them, and educated them."¹³⁰ Another model of political legitimacy came to the fore in 1935 with a new Soviet vanguard class, as Stalin declared that "the cadres decide everything" and

¹²⁹ Bogdanov, Nikoloz, and Murashov, *Dzhambul Dzhabaev*; see also Ch. 5.

¹³⁰ Trans. in Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin*, 79.

celebrated the Stakhanovites, exemplary workers.¹³¹ Party-oriented poets such as Lāhūtī constituted a cadre in their own right, but might ritually confirm the Soviet political order by directing panegyrics to leaders, particular other cadres, particular laboring groups or nationalities, or the Soviet people as a whole.

The instability of panegyric multiplied with the audiences toward whom such poetry was directed. As we have seen, poetry might be privately delivered to leading figures, either for private consumption or for approval before printing. Even if printed in *Pravda* without prior approval from higher up, the writer would have in mind that the poem's career consequences, positive or negative, might be decided not by the cadres but by the more select audience of Politburo members. Poems recited or presented at closed meetings or at limited-attendance congresses and then printed in the newspapers might simultaneously address three or more audiences. When speakers at the 1934 Writers' Congress, for example, spoke before a combination of all the special groups listed above, "they reified a restrictive body politic," but even in this limited world of cadres and leaders, the addressees could be multiple.¹³² As Kathryn Schild points out, "The ritual aspect of the Congress projected a self-contained and authoritative audience, while the communicative aspect was aimed at a broad external audience." When translation was expected, writers from the non-Russian nationalities had to speak in terms transmissible to even more publics.¹³³

The relationship between Stalinism and democracy has received nuanced attention in recent scholarship. Building on decades of "revisionist" critiques of the totalitarian model of

¹³¹ Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR, 1935-1941* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Mary E. A. Buckley, *Mobilizing Soviet Peasants: Heroines and Heroes of Stalin's Fields* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).

¹³² Jeffrey Brooks, "Socialist Realism in Pravda: Read All about It!," *Slavic Review* 53:4 (1994): 988.

¹³³ Schild (2010), 92; this aspect is discussed further in Chapter 5.

Stalinism, Wendy Goldman has shown how labor union democratic mobilization and secret-ballot voting contributed to the Terror.¹³⁴ The most significant symbolic renegotiation of the contract between the Party and the population took place with the new Soviet constitution.¹³⁵ Frequently referred to as the “Stalin Constitution,” the idea was proposed in early 1935, drafted by June 1936, discussed nationwide for the five months that followed, and approved on December 5 of the same year with 48 “corrections” based on suggestions that had emerged during the discussion. By the new constitution, among other new rights, numerous previously-disenfranchised groups such as mullas and formerly rich landowners were given the right to vote, a shift whose potential risks likely contributed to the purges of 1937-38. On December 12, 1937, amid massive publicity to maximize voter turnout, the first new Supreme Soviet was elected from exclusively uncontested ballots.¹³⁶ To this extent, it was a celebration of mass acquiescence rather than a democratic decision, but in this respect it was a typical political mobilization for the 1930s, a decade of referenda and one-party rule even in many more democratic states. The spirit of civic mobilization was real. Party leaders demanded as broad a public discussion as possible, and criticized the leadership of regions or workplaces from which feedback was not forthcoming.¹³⁷ On a symbolic level, they insisted that the language of the Constitution, and Stalin’s legalistic speech at the time of its ratification, were utterly accessible and “spoke

¹³⁴ Wendy Z. Goldman, *Terror and Democracy in the Age of Stalin: The Social Dynamics of Repression* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

¹³⁵ In discussion of the Constitution and its rollout, I rely on J. Arch Getty, “State and Society Under Stalin: Constitutions and Elections in the 1930s,” *Slavic Review* 50:1 (1991): 18-35; Ellen Wimberg, “Socialism, Democratism and Criticism: The Soviet Press and the National Discussion of the 1936 Draft Constitution,” *Soviet Studies* 44:2 (1992): 313-332; Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, 175-202.

¹³⁶ Getty argues that Stalin did originally intend to hold contested elections, but was dissuaded by the tone of the Union-wide discussions as reported by activists. Getty, “State and Society,” 31-33.

¹³⁷ Wimberg, “Socialism,” 318-322.

simultaneously to every Soviet citizen at his or her level,” whether an old Kazakh man or a child.¹³⁸

If Stalin’s speeches, newspaper editorials, explanations from local Party activists, and the text of the Constitution itself gave confusing and often mutually contradictory explanations of the legal ramifications of the shift, a clear idea of the Constitution’s *meaning* could reliably be found in occasional verse. The unveiling of the Constitution coincided and reinforced another public occasion, celebrated in Lāhūtī’s 1937 poem, “The Twentieth Anniversary of the Revolution” [“Uktubri bīstsālah”]. The poem’s first section explains (anticipating, perhaps, the need to provide cultural context to Russian readers) that according to a custom in “this ancient East,” at the age of twenty a youth would become a man, his father would give him weapons, and the town would gather to celebrate his wedding.¹³⁹ The people would sing ghazals and dastans, and as the bride and groom embraced, “the people would throw roses onto their heads/ The father would throw gold and silver onto the people.” The section concludes with the blessing shouted by the assembled crowd: “O Lord [*Allāhī*], may I see your children,/ May I not die before I see their weddings!”¹⁴⁰ The following section proceeds by analogy. “From the line of great revolutions” is born a child named October; “Lenin raised him to manhood/ Stalin cared for him, as for himself.”¹⁴¹ Now October is twenty:

¹³⁸ This stance undermined the Party workers who were attempting to clear up the general public’s many dangerous “misinterpretations” of their new rights. Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous*, 182-184.

¹³⁹ Abū al-Qāsim Lāhūtī, “Uktubri bīstsālah,” in *Kullīyāt*, ed. Mušīrī, 177-178. I have located this poem in Persian only in Mušīrī’s collection (although in several Russian anthologies), making the reliability of the text less certain than for other poems discussed in this dissertation.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 177.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 177-178. Lāhūtī had previously used this conceit in a 1935 poem for the fifteenth anniversary of the Republic of Azerbaijan. In that poem, he recalls that when he fled after his uprising failed, he was met at the border by a newborn child who “showed us the way with his light” and “like an old teacher/ Gave me lessons under the battle banner.” Now, the child is an

jahān ḥayrān bah rūy-i bēmisāl-ash.
 vaṭan imrūz bazm-i shādī-yi ū-st,
 bah har jā ṣuhbat az dāmādī-yi ū-st.
 bah ū dādah Stālīn tīr-i khwud-rā,
 kitāb-u khāmah-u shamshīr-i khwud-rā.
 sarāpā kardah-ast ū-rā zirah-pūsh,
 kashīdah hamchu farzand-ash dar āghūsh.
 kunūn ū-rā, bah qānūn-i lenīnīsm,
 ‘arūsī mēkunad bā sūsiyālīsm.
 şad-u haftād milyūn khalq-i shūrā
 kunad shirkat dar īn bazm-i dil-ārā.
 kunad shirkat dar ān dihqān-u muzdūr,
 asīrān-i sitam dar ‘ālim-i dūr [...]
 kunad shirkat dar ān har kas bih ‘ālim
 buvad shāyān-i nām-i pāk-i ādam [...]
 buvad Maydān-i surkh aknūn gulistān,
 zi-har khalqē buvand ānjā ghazal-khwān.
 bih dāmād-u ‘arūs az mihrabānī
 kunad īn khalq-i a‘zam gulfishānī
 stālīn bar sar-i marqad sitādah,
 chu makhzan nāmah-i khwud-rā gushādah,
 az ān farkhundah qānūn-i asāsī,
 huquq-i ijtimā‘ī-yu siyāsī,
 bah har fardē huquq-i kār kardan,
 zi-khwān-i istirāhat bahrah burdan,
 bah insānhā-yi az kār ūftādah
 zi-ni‘mathā huquq istifādah,
 huquq-i kasb-i ‘ilm-u shādmānī,
 sukhan kūtah: huquq-i zindagānī
 chu sīm-u zar bah mardum mēkunad pakhsh
 va-z ān ni‘mat barad har ādamē bakhsh.
 man andar bayn-i khalq az īn zar-u durr
 namūdah kīsah-u dāmān-i khwud pur,
 bah dāmād-i javān—oktober-i a‘zam,
 ‘arūs-ash—sūsiyālīsm-i mukarram
 gul-afshānī kunam az ṭab‘-i sar-shār
 bah şidq-i dil kunam īn naghmah iżhār:
 allāhī, bachchahhā-tān-rā bubīnam,
 namīram, dar ‘arūsī-shān nishīnam!

The world is astonished at his incomparable face.
 Today, the homeland is a celebration of his joy,
 Everywhere, the talk is of his marriage.

adolescent, “world-famous in might and learning,” with “many [...] incomparable brothers./
 He’s proud, audacious, and young./ Should I say who he is?/ He’s Azerbaijan.” K2, 124-125.

Stalin has given him his own arrow,
 His own book, pen, and sword.
 He has dressed him in gold from head to foot,
 And embraced him like his own son.
 Now, by the law of Leninism,
 He will be wed to Socialism.
 The 170 million Soviet people
 Will participate in this heartwarming celebration.
 The peasant and wage laborer will participate,
 And the prisoners of oppression in the wide world [...]
 Everyone in the world will participate
 Who deserves to be called by the pure name of Humanity¹⁴² [...]
 Red Square will now be a rose garden
 There will be ghazal-reciters from every folk.
 On the bride and groom, in affection,
 This great people scatter roses.
 Stalin, standing on the mausoleum,
 Opening his book like a treasury,
 From it, the auspicious constitution [*qānūn-i asāsi*],
 Social and political rights,
 The right to work for all individuals,
 To take their portion from the table of leisure,
 For people who have fallen out of work
 To make use of their right to benefits [*ni‘mat’hā*],
 The right to a calling of learning and joy,
 In short, the right to a life,
 He scatters on the people like silver and gold,
 And every person receives their portion of that benefit.
 Among the people, with this gold and pearls, I
 Have filled my pockets and skirts,
 On the young groom, great October,
 And his bride, honorable Socialism,
 I scatter roses from my overflowing temperament [*tab‘*],
 And from the sincerity of my heart, I open forth with this song:
 O Lord, may I see your children,
 May I not die before I see their weddings!¹⁴³

Of the materials examined here, “October” comes closest to confirming Brooks’s model of a centralized, paternalistic gift economy. Stalin gives his adoptive son¹⁴⁴ a book (presumably the

¹⁴² This is a reference to a famous line from the Persian poet Sa‘dī’s *Rose Garden* [*Gulistān*], which is now written above the entrance of the UN building. Musharraf al-Dīn Muṣliḥ bin ‘Abd-allah Sa‘dī Shīrāzī, *Kulliyāt-i Sa‘dī*, ed. Kāzim ‘Ābidīnī Muṭlaq (Tehran: Farhang-i jāmi‘, farhang va qalam, 1389 [2010/11]), 28.

¹⁴³ Lāhūtī, *Kulliyāt*, ed. Mūshīrī, 178.

Short Course) and distributes rights “like silver and gold” to the people. In an unequal exchange sure to leave the masses “tremendously beholden,” they return exclusively aesthetic objects: ghazals and good wishes. The arrangement of figures and the position of the masses bear little resemblance to “Signal.” The poem’s protagonist and addressee (at least in the final verse) is a pair of personifications: the October Revolution and Socialism. Stalin oversees the ritual and overhears the praises addressed to the couple by the poem’s speaker, a chorale of the masses in which Lāhūtī participates. The poet distinguishes himself by his “overflowing *tab*,” an Arabic word connected with the impress of a stamp or casting mold, but in a person suggesting talent, disposition, or nature. It simultaneously suggests the talent that sets him apart, but naturalizes that talent as a matter of his essence. After all, he is only one of the crowd who reach down for the rights that have been thrown here and there, and try to gather as many as they can. As in his 1920 rendition of Jamshīd’s first Persian New Year, relations of ruler to ruled are defined by universal patronage and unanimous panegyric. A vote is a sentimental gesture (as for Tichina) or an aesthetic object: a song or a rose petal. It is the nature of the patronage that has changed. The masses offer their festive mobilization, and thus (symbolic) democratic legitimacy, in exchange for a regime of (often symbolic) rights.

¹⁴⁴ On the symbolic appeal of specifically *adoptive* parenthood in Stalinist culture, Oushakine, “The Flexible and the Pliant,” 410-416; on the actual practice of adoption in Stalin’s inner circle, Sheila Fitzpatrick, *On Stalin’s Team: The Years of Living Dangerously in Soviet Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 70-71.

2b. The Friendship of Peoples, 1935

The Stalin Constitution and the Friendship of Peoples were contemporaneous campaigns, united in a single system of political symbolism.¹⁴⁵ As we have seen with the song-votes of Lāhūtī's twentieth anniversary poem, or Pavlo Tichina's hypothetical voters, the election confirmed a coalition not of parties, but of nationalities.¹⁴⁶ Before the introduction of the draft Constitution, on December 4, 1935, Stalin, the leading Politburo members, and Lāhūtī held a reception at the Kremlin for 43 Tajik and 33 Turkmen farmers representing respectively 41 and 12 collective farms.¹⁴⁷ The meeting has received attention in scholarship, most notably from Terry Martin, as the signal for a new governing metaphor for the Soviet multinational system: the friendship of peoples or nations [Rus: *druzhba narodov*].¹⁴⁸ It built on 1935's celebrations of the cadres, and particularly the exceptional, record-breaking workers and peasants called Stakhanovites. Some participants had come to Moscow three weeks before for the First All-Union Conference of Stakhanovites from November 14-17.¹⁴⁹ In the four months that followed, the meeting's formula was followed at equivalent meetings for collective farmers from the other Eastern republics and ASSRs.¹⁵⁰ At the meeting, Molotov acted as master of ceremonies,

¹⁴⁵ Karen L. Kettering, "Sverdlov Square Metro Station: 'The Friendship of the Peoples' and the Stalin Constitution," *Studies in the Decorative Arts* 7:2 (2000): 39-42.

¹⁴⁶ In the fall of 1936, before the final decision to limit ballots to one candidate, newspapers signaled the move towards unanimity by referring to "blocs" of Party and non-Party candidates. Getty, "State and Society," 31-32.

¹⁴⁷ RGASPI f. 558, op. 1, d. 3192 (December 4, 1935, stenographer's transcript of meeting and meeting agenda with Stalin's modifications and doodles); for press coverage of the event, with less reliable transcripts but more thick description: *Pravda*, December 5, 1935, 1-2, and December 6, 1-3; and, with a slightly different presentation, *Izvestia*, December 5, 1-2, and December 6, 1-3.

¹⁴⁸ Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 437-441.

¹⁴⁹ As part of the visit, the Tajik pioneer girl Mamlakat Nahangova had toured Leningrad and visited the Pioneer camp Artek on the Black Sea. Buckley, *Mobilizing Soviet Peasants*, 238.

¹⁵⁰ Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 439-440.

introducing each speaker, but the event's presiding cultural bureaucrat was Lāhūtī.¹⁵¹ The delegations each had an interpreter, and so speeches were made in Tajik and Turkmen as well as Russian. Only Lāhūtī translated his own speech to Russian (Stalin insisted that he speak Tajik first).¹⁵² When the time came for Turkmen translation, members of the assembly interjected, "He can do it himself," to Molotov's astonishment.¹⁵³

The collective farmers invited to participate in the meeting were truly exceptional. The leading members of the Tajik delegation, the brothers Pulād and Jūrah Bābākalānov (1899-1959, [?]), had risen through the ranks to become managers of a "millionaire collective farm" outside Leninabad, and several of the other participants in the meeting worked on such farms.¹⁵⁴ Such model farms were set up by the state for extraordinary success, so that they could model the future life of the countryside.¹⁵⁵ As Flora Roberts has shown, for the Bābākalānov brothers, this meant the opportunity to patronize "a particularly ambitious cultural program," including the classical Turco-Persian musical and poetic form known as shashmaqām (the six modes). Collective farms shielded traditional epic dāstān reciters and shashmaqām singers and musicians from the vicissitudes of Soviet policies on national forms with courtly associations.¹⁵⁶ Lāhūtī and his Tajik colleagues visited this collective farm and similar ones to research their literary renditions of the new pastoral, and it is certain that the Central Asian Stalinist literary idyll of

¹⁵¹ Lāhūtī continued to preside over many of the Eastern nationality arts festivals in Moscow that followed: Holt, "Central Asia's Source Texts," 219, fn. 15.

¹⁵² RGASPI f. 558, op. 1, d. 3192, l. 32. See also Chapter 5.

¹⁵³ The transcript reads, "Molotov: He can do it himself? Go ahead, Comrade Lāhūtī." RGASPI f. 558, op. 1, d. 3192, l. 35. Lāhūtī's fluency in Anatolian and Azerbaijani Turkish would have provided a sufficient base in the Oghuz branch of the Turkic language family to make himself understood in Turkmen, another Oghuz language.

¹⁵⁴ Roberts, "Old Elites," 179-182 (on Pulād), 158, 205, 207 (on Jūrah). In the transcript the former is referred to as "Pulatbai," but the -bāy ending does not occur elsewhere with his name, so I have omitted it here.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 191-195.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 195-204.

ghazal-singing folk owes some inspiration to them.¹⁵⁷ Epistolary friendships in the press, then, were not the only microcosms that contributed to the sentimental patronage economy of Stalinist friendship. A trope could develop under special circumstances at a provincial “experimental station” of Stalinist culture, and then be accepted as a model in Moscow.

Historians have sometimes presented the meeting, and the Friendship of Peoples generally, as a high-water mark of Stalinist paternalism and the Stalin cult.¹⁵⁸ Certainly this is an obvious feature of the meeting’s transactions. Stalin took up the role of bestower of bounty, giving each collective farm represented at the meeting a truck, and each participant a watch, a gramophone, and records. The meeting also provided the Stalin cult with the first example of what became a genre: a photograph and description of Stalin embracing a non-Russian child as if his own (fig. 5).¹⁵⁹

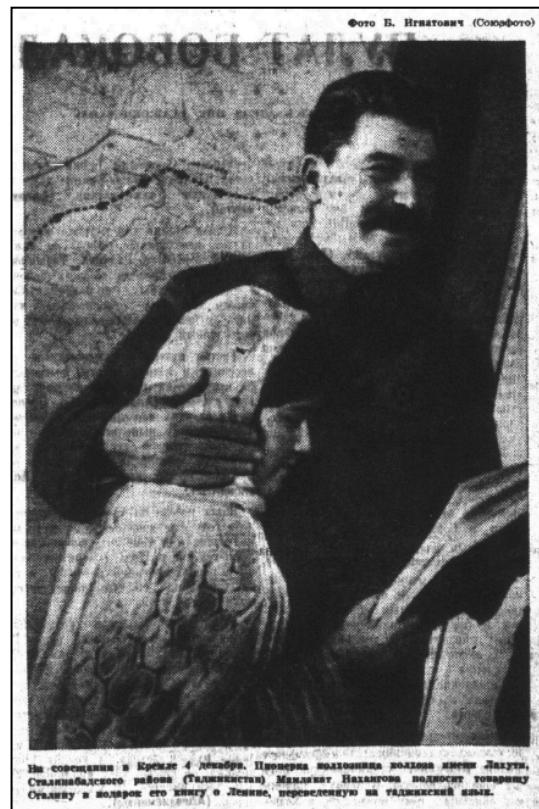


Fig. 5: Photo B. Ignatovich (Soiuzfoto). The caption reads: "At a meeting at the Kremlin on December 4. Mamlakat Nahangova, a girl pioneer collective farmer of the Lāhūtī Collective Farm in Stalinabad Province, brings Comrade Stalin as a gift his book on Lenin, translated into Tajik. *Izvestiia* 262, December 5, 1935, 2.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Lohuti, “Dar borai tajribai ejodii khud” (1963), 239.

¹⁵⁸ Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 437-438; Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin*, 93-97; Plamper, *Stalin Cult*, 46-47. For a useful discussion of popular conceptions of paternalism in post-Soviet Central Asia, Morgan Liu, “Post-Soviet Paternalism and Personhood,” in *Prospects for Democracy in Central Asia*, ed. Birgit N. Schlyter (Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute, 2005), 225-238. For a demonstration that such a relationship need not exclude negotiation of the terms of power, Eva-Marie Dubuisson, “Dialogic Authority: Kazakh *Aitys* Poets and their Patrons,” in *Ethnographies of the State in Central Asia*, eds. Madeleine Reeves, Johan Rasanayagam, and Judith Beyer (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014), 55-77.

¹⁵⁹ “Velikaia druzhba,” *Pravda*, December 5, 1935, 1. See also Plamper, *Stalin Cult*, 45: a famous photograph of Stalin holding the Buriat Mongol girl Gelia Markizova, 30 January, 1936.

This scenario made political ties a matter of intimate emotions, as writerly friendships did, but also gave the relationship a hierarchy.¹⁶⁰ The implied analogy to Moscow or Russia's paternalistic or "elder brother" relationship with the other nationalities could not be missed.

But as in the other Stalinist rituals examined in this chapter, a closer examination of specific gestures in a performance allows us to move beyond the acknowledgment of hierarchical relations. When collective farm representatives had concluded their vetted speeches, which boasted of successes and expressed confidence in and gratitude to Stalin and the Party, they often concluded with special requests for materials or assistance. Such requests, and Stalin's promises of help, were included in newspaper articles on the meeting for public consumption, but the unedited stenographic transcript shows that such requests were not necessarily so rehearsed. Here, the Turkmen translator, Sahatov, conveys a request from the collective farm leader Yusup 'Ali Agha that is received less elegantly:

Sahatov: We have, says comrade Yusup 'Ali, electric light, radios, and schools. We have money, but, Comrade Stalin, we live—

Stalin: You don't have gramophones.

Sahatov: ...But we live as before in tents.

Stalin: There isn't enough wood.

Sahatov: So I request help with wood materials.

Molotov: Right.

Sahatov: They have money, they have everything, but there is no lumber in Turkmenia. I really ask for help in this regard.¹⁶¹

Stalin, for whom the meeting is a symbolic, soft-line event, expects a request appropriate to the cultural sphere. This is unsurprising, as the request comes after a description of the farm's achievement of symbolic (electricity) and cultural (radio) benefits, according to the developing formula. The disjuncture between formulaic praise and indelicately material needs recurs in the meeting's exchanges.

¹⁶⁰ "Velikaia druzhba" (1935), 1.

¹⁶¹ RGASPI f. 558, op. 1, d. 3192, pp. 18-19.

Another complex moment came, as in Paris, with the handing out of Tajik robes.

Concluding his speech in Tajik, Pulād Bābākalānov declared that “by order of a session of the TSIK [Central Committee] of Tajikistan,” the leaders were to receive membership cards of the Tajik government and Tajik national costumes.¹⁶² Once the Politburo and government had put on their skullcaps and robes of honor (fig. 6), Molotov joked, “Comrades, maybe now you don’t

Fig. 6: Caption: "At the Kremlin on December 4, 1935, the leaders of the Party and government among the foremost collective farmers of Tajikistan." Lāhūtī in second row, three to the right of Stalin. Photo: Kislov, Soiuzfoto. *Izvestiia* 283, December 6, 1935, 1.



even need to translate the speech of a Tajik to Russian, since we have all been made Tajiks.”¹⁶³

To the ambiguous performance of honorary citizenship already noted in the case of Gide, we must add another layer of complexity here. The gift moves up the hierarchy, but not as tribute. In Persianate courtly culture, such a robe of honor (Taj/Pers: *khil’at*) would have been a ceremonial gift from a patron to a dependent, including from a patron to a court poet.¹⁶⁴ Thus, this gift at once flattens the hierarchy of nationalities (the center plays at being just like the periphery) and

¹⁶² Ibid., 6.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 10, 32.

¹⁶⁴ Willem Floor, “*Kel’at*,” *EIr*, article last updated July 15, 2009, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kelat-gifts>. As a Russian dressing gown (Rus: *khalat*), it has an entirely different set of associations, many of them orientalist. In the Russian literary context, it is associated with Viazemskii’s dilettantism, Oblomov’s indolence or, in Belyi’s *Petersburg*, the more sinister oriental perversity of the *khalat*-wearing terrorist Nikolai Ivanovich Ableukhov. The garment’s symbolism is discussed in Katherine Bowers, “Unpacking Viazemskii’s *Khalat*: The Technologies of Dilettantism in Early Nineteenth-Century Russian Literary Culture,” *Slavic Review* 74:3 (2015): 529–552.

reverses the patronage hierarchy. In a bit of very mild carnivalesque, the patrons accept a position offered by their dependents, and accept a robe indicating their subservience to the (national) people.

In Lāhūtī’s speech, he explicitly draws out the comparison between Stalinist public culture and court culture, but with a different inflection than the comparisons of Stalin to Ivan the Terrible or Peter the Great that historical novels and films made particularly in the later 1930s and 1940s.¹⁶⁵ Where Russian works found echoes or parallels while assuming historical distance, Lāhūtī’s comparison begins from the assumption that a contrast must be drawn out. Observing the Party and state leadership’s receptions for Stakhanovites, he declared, he had been reminded of how “great rulers” such as Chinggis Khan and Alexander of Macedon “received backwards peoples [*narodnosti*].” Such rulers, he explains, held audiences “on the one condition that these backwards peoples must be definitively defeated [...] but the condition for a reception with our leader [...] is that the backwards peoples, the working people, must without fail be victorious [...] over nature.”¹⁶⁶ Lāhūtī’s elaboration of this point bears quoting at length as a veritable Platonovism: the fumbling ways that its slogans and images get out of hand add up to a revealing *reductio ad absurdum* of Stalinist discourse.

Comrades, the emperors, of course, didn’t always receive defeated peoples in the same way. They sometimes received parts of their body. For example, they brought in the heads of a defeated people [*naroda*], they made the defeated and their wives and daughters their property. But Comrade Stalin, his Politburo, the party of Lenin, also receive the produce of the backward nations, but produce that they got as the result of victories over nature, they created many times more than nature allowed. And as a sign of these peoples’ victories, Com. Stalin received their daughters. But he kissed this little daughter on the eyes, he gave her a watch.

¹⁶⁵ Kevin M.F. Platt, “Rehabilitation and Afterimage: Aleksei Tolstoi’s Many Returns to Peter the Great,” in Platt and Brandenburger, *Epic Revisionism*, 47-68; Brandenburger and Platt, “Terribly Pragmatic: Rewriting the History of Ivan IV’s Reign, 1937-1956,” in Platt and Brandenburger, *Epic Revisionism*, 157-178.

¹⁶⁶ RGASPI f. 558, op. 1, d. 3192, l. 33.

And already this thirteen-year-old little girl became a world-famous person [*mirovym chelovekom*].

They say that God made Adam out of clay. But the party of Lenin and Stalin caused a dead people to be resurrected, a people [*narod*] that was not only in the ground, but underground, it was below the ground. And these peoples [*narodnosti*] in their turn defeated the earth and came to report that the dead peoples had become living, conscious victors and workers. In Persia, in the city of Kermanshah, there is a great mountain, entirely stone, and there is a portrait of a great shah, and behind him stand eleven kings bound to him. They stand because in that place, these eleven kings surrendered in defeat to the shah, who received them all at the same time. This portrait has stood for four thousand years. The victory of Bolshevism is the victory of those who had been defeated before. I think that Comrade Stalin's reception of these victors would have been artistically better to carve on the mountains of the Caucasus and Central Asia, and then on the whole world. Let these portraits, which live in the USSR among the victorious laborers, remain in the whole world. You see, is this not the fire of Bolshevism, can other peoples kiss and hug their leader in this way?¹⁶⁷

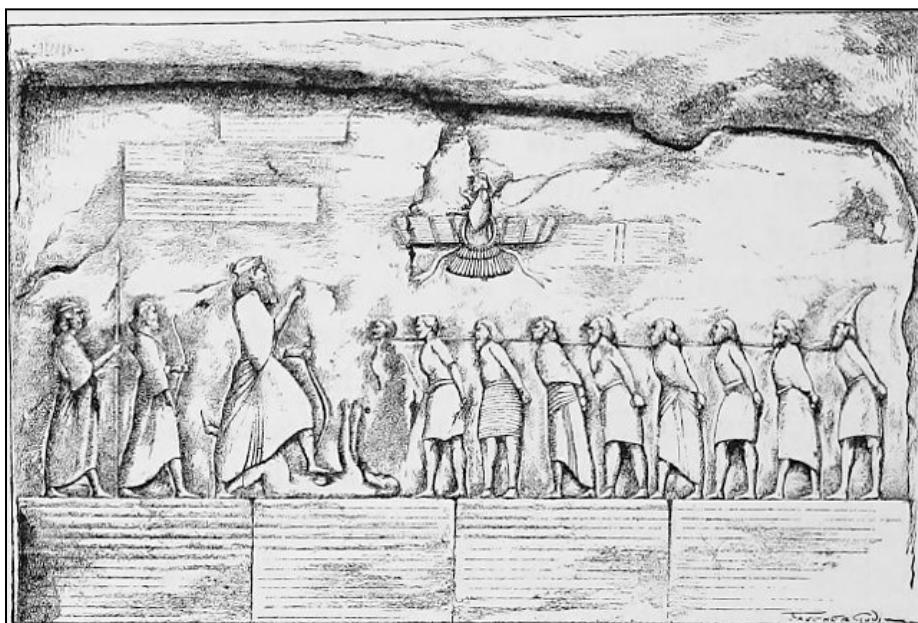


Fig. 7: Illustration of Behistun Inscription and frieze, Kermanshah Province, Iran. Written for the Persian Achaemenid King Darius I between 522 and 486 BC. G. Maspero, *History of Egypt, Chaldea, Syria, Babylonia, and Assyria*, vol. 9, trans. M.L. McClure, ed. A.H. Sayce (London: The Grolier Society, 1903), 174.

Lāhūtī sets an ekphrasis of another pre-Islamic monument, the Behistun inscription produced for Darius I (fig. 7), alongside the present ceremony. Two knots of grotesque images emphasize the

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 33-34.

likeness between the ceremony of collective farmers and the frieze at Kermanshah, in spite of the poet's declared desire to contrast them.

The first jarring pair results from his attempt to point to personalized affection as a feature of Stalinist democracy. At earlier conquerors' triumphal audiences, they took possession of the defeated people's wives and daughters; Stalin, too, "received their daughters," but with a fatherly kiss that heralds her transfer from the national into the multinational realm of the "world-famous person." In the transcript, some time *after* Stalin puts the watch on her wrist, she explains through the translator that she is giving Stalin a Tajik-language copy of *Stalin on Lenin*, "a book which is now the textbook according to which we will learn how to live and work henceforth [*budem uchit'sia dal'she zhit' i rabotat'*]."¹⁶⁸ In *Pravda*, a slight rearrangement of elements produces a vow of dedication sealed with not a ring, but a watch:

With a clear voice, Mamlakat pronounces her greeting to Stalin.
"For us," says Mamlakat, "your book is the textbook according to which we will live and work henceforth.
Stalin is touched [*rastrogan*]... With quick steps he approaches the pioneer girl Mamlakat, and puts a gold watch on the lucky girl's wrist, then paternally [*po-otecheski*] hugs her tightly and kisses her."¹⁶⁹

The second unintentionally powerful image relates to the relationship between the human body and iconography of power. The backward peoples such as the Tajiks and Turkmen, resurrected from "underground," are connected with the sculpting of Adam from clay. Lāhūtī intends comparison with the eleven bound kings, "entirely stone." The instability of meaning enters with his implicit contrast between emergence from clay or earth into life and the transformation of living beings into stone at the moment of ritual submission. If the "reception of the victors" would make a better monument on the sides of Asiatic mountains, the defeat/victory

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 29.

¹⁶⁹ "Velikaia druzhba," *Pravda*, December 5, 1935, 1.

contrast is not enough to overcome the previous identification of the ritual “reception” as a paralysis. To quote Grigory Tulchinsky on Stalin’s cultural effect, “living organisms become statues, exchanging real for purely symbolic value.”¹⁷⁰ Lāhūtī attempts to shift to a triumphant tone, but the horrors that he has raised up render the final effect unsettling.

Press coverage also included the two poems that Lāhūtī presented to Stalin during the meeting. The two works show the range of possibilities for Stalinist occasional verse. One, “The Crown and the Banner” [*Tāj va bayrāq*], was a long-form *dāstān* (Rus: *poema*) about the record-breaking socialist competition between cotton collective farms, the result of long preparation and field research.¹⁷¹ It was handed over in the form of a bound book, already prepared for



Fig. 8: Caption: "At the meeting of the foremost collective farmers of Tajikistan and Turkmenistan with the leaders of the Party and government, the poet Lāhūtī gives Comrade Stalin his poem." Photo: M. Kalashnikov. *Pravda*, December 5, 1935, 1.

¹⁷⁰ Grigory Tulchinsky, “Culture and Mythocracy,” in *Re-entering the Sign: Articulating New Russian Culture*, eds. Ellen E. Berry and Anesa Miller-Pogacar (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 73.

¹⁷¹ K4, 215-243. For further discussion, see Yountchi, “Between Russia and Iran,” 74-79.

publication in Tajik and Russian (fig. 8).¹⁷² The other was a *dubaytī* (quatrain)¹⁷³ that he wrote on the spot based on something that he saw during the first half of the meeting. During the intermission, he telephoned his wife and she translated it to Russian quickly so that he could deliver it in both languages during his speech, as well as handing over an autographed manuscript.¹⁷⁴ “The Crown and the Banner,” as he explained to an audience of Uzbek aspiring writers from collective farms, is based on a contrast between two battles fought on the banks of the Syr Darya. The poem opens with a brief passage quoted from the *Shāhnāmah*, describing the Iranians’ attempts to take their prince’s crown back from their Central Asian Turanian foes in what Lāhūtī described as a glorification of “national honor and national pride.”¹⁷⁵ To this chauvinistic past, he contrasts the effort by Pulād Bābākalānov and his collective farm to beat a production record using “not weapons of war, but production implements.” In this way, he hopes to show “the new meaning of honor,” and help citizens to look at the “heroes among whom the majority live and work [...] with a new gaze.”¹⁷⁶ However deceptive the world of Bābākalānov’s “millionaire collective farm” may have been, the poem attempts a panegyric of the many, somehow personalized.

Contrast this with his impromptu quatrain, more hierarchical in its panegyric. During the meeting, the Turkmen collective farmer Ene Geldieva had given Stalin a carpet with Lenin’s face

¹⁷² A short excerpt of the text was also published in Russian in *Izvestiia*: Lakhuti, “Korona i znamia: otryvok iz poemy,” *Izvestiia*, December 5, 1935, 2.

¹⁷³ A *dubaytī*, like a *rubā’ī*, consists of two couplets, but the rhyme scheme is ABAB rather than AABA.

¹⁷⁴ Transcript of presentation and story of composition: RGASPI f. 558, op. 1, d. 3192, l. 32; manuscript forms: f. 558, op. 11, d. 1078, doc. 15, pp. 141-142. Included in “Velikaia druzhba,” *Pravda*, December 5, 1935, 1; Lakhuti, “Nezabyvaemiy den’,” *Izvestiia* 262, December 5, 1935, 2; and again in printings of his speech in both newspapers the following day.

¹⁷⁵ KB6, 238.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 239.

on it (fig. 9), woven by two members of her collective farm.¹⁷⁷ Lāhūtī explained that at that moment, Stalin's "face shone so much that it was as if Lenin were alive, as if he were talking with us now." In Persian, the poem reads:

mēdīd chu dar libās-i tājīk
bar hāsil-i kār-i khwud Stālīn,
dar şan'at-i turkman bar āyad
taşvīr-i Lenin barā-yi tahsīn.

While Stalin, in Tajik garb,
Looked upon the harvest of his labor,
In the Turkmen craftsmanship,
Lenin's image emerged to give praise.¹⁷⁸

His retrospective explanation, with its talk of "shining," owed something to his wife's rendition of the poem:

Kogda gliadel, v tadzhikskom iarkom odeian'i,
Na plod svoikh usilii Stalin – bol'shevik,
Na krasok raduzhnykh turkmenskogo sozdan'ia,
Siiiaia schast'em, obraz Lenina voznik.

When in bright Tajik robes, Stalin the Bolshevik
Looked upon the fruits of his efforts,
From the rainbow hues of the Turkmen creation
Beaming with happiness, Lenin's image
emerged.¹⁷⁹

In both renditions, the poem gives an entirely static impression. Lenin, already an icon, emerges to sanctify Stalin. Stalin's "harvest" consists of the equally immobile collective farmers—as Lāhūtī wrote in his article on the meeting, "He reminded me of a gardener attentively cultivating a tree who has just seen the first fruits on it, the same gardener about whom he himself spoke in his speech



Ковер с портретом Ленина работы туркменских ковровщиц Бишим Нур-Али и Аман Султан Нур-Али, переданный 4 декабря товарищу Сталину.

Fig. 9: Caption: "A rug with a portrait of Lenin made by the Turkmen carpet-weavers Biashim Nur-Ali and Aman Sultan Nur-Ali," Pravda, December 6, 2.

¹⁷⁷ On such carpets, see Adrienne Edgar, "Portrait of Lenin: Carpets and National Culture in Soviet Turkmenistan," in *Picturing Russia: Explorations in Visual Culture*, eds. Valerie Kivelson and Joan Neuberger (New Haven, CT: Yale, 2008), 182-184.

¹⁷⁸ f. 558, op. 11, d. 1078, doc. 15, l. 141.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 142.

about the cadres.”¹⁸⁰ But Stalin is also looking at the carpet, the product of his successful transformation of Lenin into a panegyric object. In the quatrain, the leader comes to resemble the icon on the carpet, reduced to pure symbolic gaze. We can find the same gaze in Stalin’s gift to Lāhūtī at the meeting, a photograph of himself on which he, too, inscribed a dedication: “To my friend and comrade, the talented poet Lāhūtī, from I. Stalin. 4/12/1935.”¹⁸¹ Despite Stalin’s own use of the discourse of friendship, Lāhūtī’s encounter with Stalin, like that of many Soviet citizens, “fuses the intimate and the historical.”¹⁸² The extemporaneous quatrain is not a panegyric of sentimental friendship, but the ekphrasis of a ritual frieze. Rebecca Gould, discussing the medieval Persian *qaṣīdah*, refers to “the panegyric’s autotelic mode of reference,” its celebration of its own ability to “confer [...] immortality on both patron and poet.”¹⁸³ We can find that perspective’s uncanny parody in the autotelic closed circuit of socialist realism/socialism. Lāhūtī, writing in and for a community of poets, readers, and rulers with no depth of panegyric tradition, produced odes whose immortality curdled.

When Russian intelligentsia identified the literature of the Stalin cult as an import to Russian literature from Eastern literatures, they were partly right: the collapse of numerous literary traditions into a space of supposed mutual legibility put Russian writers into a shared

¹⁸⁰ Lakhuti, “Nezabyvaemyi den’,” *Izvestiia* 262, December 5, 1935, 2. The reference is to Stalin’s “Talk with Metal Producers,” December 26, 1934: “We must protect every capable and understanding worker, we must protect and cultivate him. We must cultivate people as carefully and attentively as a gardener cultivates a beloved fruit tree.” I.V. Stalin, “Vystuplenie na prieme metallurgov,” in *Sochineniia* vol. 1 (14), ed. Robert H. McNeal (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution, 1967), 48-50.

¹⁸¹ Lakhuti, “Nezabyvaemyi den’,” *Izvestiia* 262, December 5, 1935, 2. Esther Markish calls the photograph and dedication “Lāhūtī’s letter of safe conduct.” Markich, *Long Retour*, 110.

¹⁸² Irina Paperno, “Intimacy with Power: Soviet Memoirists Remember Stalin,” in Heller and Plamper, *Personality Cults in Stalinism—Personenkulte im Stalinismus* (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2004), 339. Paperno uses the phrase in describing Svetlana Allilueva’s memoirs of her father, and by extension memoirs of encounters with Stalin generally.

¹⁸³ Gould, “Much-Maligned Panegyric,” 274, 276.

literary space with writers whose strategies of transcultural negotiation with power came across as grotesque, and the reception of those apparent grotesqueries made a new range of rhetorical strategies available to those writers willing to imitate them. As Dobrenko correctly points out, Russian writers also built part of the literature of the Stalin cult on ventriloquy of the sycophantic “Eastern literature” of the orientalist imagination. But in the contributions of real non-Russian writers, the Persianate tradition of panegyric that entered Soviet literature was by no means outside of history. Particular poets entered with the specific renegotiations of political authority to which they had given voice in their various revolutions, and the versions of epideictic poetry that had emerged from that renegotiation. They also brought with them, in their familiarity with classical verses, a rich and various set of resources out of the past for negotiation with political power.

Sergei Abashin, arguing that local conditions generated a variety of different Stalinisms, describes Central Asian collectivization as “a complex process of mutual influence, in which local social institutions, including those that were formed during the tsarist period, were incorporated into the new Soviet institutions and fundamentally transformed them.”¹⁸⁴ The same could be said for the institution of Soviet literature. But this transformation is not only a question of multiple local Stalinisms: after 1932, multinational public occasions provided opportunities for the representatives of central, national, and local Stalinisms to meet in ceremonies of mutual recognition and legitimization. In this way, far from being local phenomena, the Stalinisms

¹⁸⁴ Sergei Abashin, “Stalin’s Rais: Governance Practices in a Central Asian Kolkhoz,” *Central Asian Survey* 36, no. 1 (2017): 133; see also Deniz Kandiyoti, “Modernization without the Market? The Case of the ‘Soviet East,’” in *Anthropology, Development, and Modernities: Exploring Discourses, Counter-Tendencies and Violence*, eds. A. Arce and N. Long (London: Routledge, 2000), 52-63; Tommaso Trevisani, *Land and Power in Khorezm: Farmers, Communities, and the State in Uzbekistan’s Decollectivization* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2010); Roberts, “Old Elites.”

negotiated in various non-Russian cultural contexts reached into the heart of the central Stalinism, over which Stalin himself presided.

Chapter 5

Reciprocity and Asymmetry in the Stalinist Translation System: Lāhūtī, Translator and Translated, 1941-1957

Dlia chego ia luchshie gody
Prodal za chuzhie slova?
Akh, vostochnye perevody,
Kak bolit ot vas golova.

Why did I sell my best years
In exchange for foreign words?
Oh, you Eastern translations,
What a headache you've given me.

-Arsenii Tarkovskii, “The Translator” (1960)¹

Shumā-rā, ser, man bah şaf-i şad savār-i khudam qabūl mēkunam. Faqat dukht-i libāsatān bah man ma’qūl nēst. Balki shumā gūyēd, īn libās-i ērānī-st? Bah har hāl ān-rā ‘ivaz kardan lāzim.

You, sir, I entertain for one of my hundred; only I do not like the fashion of your garments: you will say they are Persian attire: but let them be changed.

-Abū al-Qāsim Lāhūtī and Tsetsiliia Banu, “Shāh Līr” (1957); William Shakespeare, “King Lear” (c. 1606)²

On March 16, 1957, Lāhūtī died of complications from the tuberculosis that he had contracted in his years as a revolutionary. On the same day, the Soviet Academy of Sciences began printing the first volume of a complete Russian verse translation of Firdawṣī’s *Shāhnāma* that he and his wife Tsetsiliia Banu had worked on for almost fifteen years.³ On March 20, his ashes were buried at Novodevich’e Cemetery in Moscow, while across the street, a poster was

¹ Arsenii Tarkovskii, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1991), 92-93.

² KB5, 419; William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Lear*, ed. Jay L. Halio (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 197.

³ Ts. B. Banu, “Korotko ob istorii sozdaniia pervogo polnogo russkogo perevoda ‘Shakhname,’” in Firdousi, *Shakhname*, vol. 6, trans. Banu and V. G. Berznev (Moscow: Izd. Nauka, 1989), 578.

put up for the upcoming premiere of his Tajik translation of *King Lear*, part of the ten-day festival of Tajik literature and culture held in Moscow from April 9-20.⁴ Lāhūtī’s final years, corresponding to the uncertain interlude between Stalin’s death on March 5, 1953 and Khrushchev’s “secret speech” on February 25, 1957, were a period of intense productivity for him, mostly in the realm of translation. Lāhūtī had translated and engaged with questions of translation since his years in Istanbul, but during the Second World War, he began intensively translating Russian literature for export to Iran, as part of cultural diplomacy during and after the Soviet occupation.⁵ By the early 1950s, almost all of his work was translation of some kind. Almost all of this was undertaken together with Tsetsilia Banu. Even more than in the 1930s, late-career “Lāhūtī” was the single public persona of two poets operating in two languages. It is this dual author with whom the present chapter is concerned.

Lāhūtī’s shift from original writing to translation may be understood as the long-term result of his fall from official favor in 1938.⁶ In 1945 he was moved from editorship of the Tajik section of the Central Publishing House of Peoples of the USSR to the Persian section of the Foreign Languages Publishing House, and soon afterward, his publication in Tajik slowed down, though Russian publication continued.⁷ In the late 1940s, leading Tajik writers and officials denounced “pan-Iranism” as a form of rootless cosmopolitanism, and there followed a definitive victory for the advocates of Tajik literary tradition’s primordial distinctness from Iranian Persian literature. Lāhūtī’s subsequent erasure from Tajik anthologies of contemporary literature

⁴ Ts. Bonu, “Eddoshthoi mukhtasar,” *Sharqi surkh* 12 (1957): 83; TASS, “Marosimi dafni A. Lohutī,” *Tojikistoni sovetī*, March 22, 1957, 4.

⁵ On this cultural diplomacy generally, James Pickett, “Soviet Civilization through a Persian Lens: Iranian Intellectuals, Cultural Diplomacy and Socialist Modernity 1941–55,” *Iranian Studies* 48, no. 5 (2015): 805–826.

⁶ My account of Lāhūtī’s postwar political situation is indebted to Kirasirova, “My Enemy’s Enemy,” 446–449.

⁷ Employment history questionnaire, RGASPI f. 495, op. 217, d. 345, 18.

amounted to a symbolic act of indigenization (*korenizatsiia*), only partially reversed following Stalin's death and a successful appeal to the Central Committee.⁸ In the mid-1950s, while the first volume of Banu's *Shāhnāmah* project approached publication, Tajik and Moscow presses published two other partial translations of the *Shāhnāmah* "from the Tajik" by a group of non-Persian-speaking translator-poets.⁹ At the same time, as we will see, Lāhūtī continued to be a marginal figure among the Iranian literary left. But as he noted, translation was a fruitful way to intervene: "for me, the pursuit of forms for these translations combined well with the search for new paths for Persian verse in general."¹⁰

This career arc, in which creative translation displaces original work that cannot be published, conforms to the pattern of that stock figure of Russian literary martyrology, the poet-translator. Arsenii Tarkovskii's ruefully self-deflating epigraph on the headaches of Eastern translations captures in brief the way that oral history represents the careers of several generations of young aesthetes and avant-gardists whose West-facing artistic ambitions, to quote the editors of a recent English-language anthology, "had to be sacrificed for the propagandistic popularization of multinational Soviet literature"—inevitably Eastern literature.¹¹ The Russian literary translators of Eastern literatures had varying degrees of familiarity with the languages and literatures that they translated, social proximity to the writers whom they translated, and

⁸ Kirasirova, "My Enemy's Enemy," 449-453.

⁹ I. Braginskii, introduction, *Shakh-name: perevod s tadzhikskogo (farsi)*, by Firdousi, trans. S. Lipkin et. al., eds. Braginskii and S. Shervinskii (Moscow: Gosizdat. khud. lit., 1957), 24-25.

¹⁰ A.Z. Rozenfel'd, "Novye perevody Pushkina na persidskii iazyk: 50-70-e gody," in *Vremennik Pushkinskoi komissii, 1981*, eds. D.S. Likhachev, V.E. Vatsuro, et. al. (Leningrad: Nauka, 1985), 127.

¹¹ Brian James Baer and Natalia Olshanskaia, eds., *Russian Writers on Translation: An Anthology* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 143-144.

investment in or resentment of their task.¹² At least some were aware that the translation system was predicated on mutual obligation, and “sacrifice” of several kinds. Few would have recognized the layered ironies of a King Lear, translated by an Iranian, who demands in a Tajik-dialect pastiche of European courtly speech that Edgar change his Iranian (not “Persian,” but “ērānī”) costume.¹³ For a poet such as Lāhūtī, change of linguistic costume did sometimes happen under duress, although as with Edgar, it could also result in the poet’s elevation into a different stratum of Soviet literary activity, conducted in a different language.

As Susanna Witt has pointed out, the Soviet translation system, “viewed as a more or less coherent project [...] may in fact represent the largest translation enterprise the world has seen to date,” particularly given the scale of its reciprocity.¹⁴ Although large-scale multinational literary translation began with the establishment of the Writers’ Union in 1932-34, rhetoric ran well ahead of institutional capacity. In the mid-1930s, translation played a major symbolic role, but one that was often murky in practical terms. Recent work in Central Asian cultural history suggests that the Second World War was a watershed: much of the population of the Soviet Union spent the war translating and being translated, whether dealing with the Russian language as a non-Russian in the Red Army, with another state’s language of rule under occupation, or with a local language in evacuation or deportation.¹⁵ In the late Stalin years, the social dynamics

¹² A work on the West-facing part of the Soviet translation system that has shaped my approach to the negotiations of translators generally, and whose cast of translators substantially overlaps with those discussed here, is Sherry, *Discourses of Regulation and Resistance*.

¹³ This alteration enters not with the Russian translation used by Lāhūtī (see below), but with Lāhūtī’s Persian; compare with “persidskoe odeian’e” in Vil’iam Shekspir, “Korol’ Lir,” trans. Tat’iana Shchepkina-Kupernik, in *Korol’ Lir; Mnogo shumu iz nichego; Son v letniuiu noch’* (Moscow: Profizdat, 2005 [1st ed. 1937]), 107.

¹⁴ Susanna Witt, “The Shorthand of Empire: *Podstrochnik* Practices and the Making of Soviet Literature,” *Ab Imperio* 3 (2013): 155-156.

¹⁵ Scholarship has better captured this dynamic in the Uzbek than in the Tajik case: Charles Shaw, “Soldiers’ Letters to Inobatxon and O’g’ulxon: Gender and Nationality in the Birth of a

transformed by the war combined with pre-war multinational symbolism to make a Union-wide culture of translation. In fact, considering the widespread Russophonia of later generations of Soviet national writers such as Chingiz Aitmatov and Timur Pulatov, the late Stalin period and early Thaw may be regarded as the apogee of Soviet multinational literary translation as an institution.

This translation boom coincided with a series of connected postwar campaigns that signaled an end to the relative cultural openness and intelligentsia agency that the war had made possible. The terms of abuse “formalist” and “cosmopolitan” [*kosmopolit*] circulated through several campaigns from 1946 to Stalin’s death in 1953: an antiformalist attack on certain Russian writers beginning in 1946, an attack on un-Russified national orchestral music in 1948, and an anticosmopolitan campaign declared in January 1949. The stated goals of this last campaign were to encourage Soviet patriotism and root out those with other allegiances (such as, it was implied, the Jews), to encourage proper appreciation of national (especially Russian) culture, and to discourage excessive idolization of international (usually Western) culture. Unofficially, it also served to contain intelligentsia power and agency, to protect Soviet culture from outside influences, and to allow the state to appeal to the antisemitism that was widespread among segments of the Soviet population.¹⁶ In the Soviet Eastern republics, local culture builders initially adopted the rhetoric of anticosmopolitanism to promote art grounded in national specificity (such as *shash-maqām* music in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan) over international and even Russian styles, but from mid-1949 to 1951, Moscow bureaucrats strove to correct this

Soviet Romantic Culture,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 17, no. 3 (2016): 517-552; Boram Shin, “Red Army Propaganda for Uzbek Soldiers and Localised Soviet Internationalism during World War II,” *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* 42 (2015): 39-63.

¹⁶ Frank Grüner, “‘Russia’s battle against the foreign’: the anti-cosmopolitanism paradigm in Russian and Soviet ideology,” *European Review of History: Revue européenne d’histoire* 17, no. 3 (2010): 453-454, 457-458.

deviation and promote Russian cultural forms.¹⁷ Nonetheless, as Kiril Tomoff summarizes the historiography of the Anti-Cosmopolitan Campaign, “anti-Semitism, Russocentrism, and attempts to reconcile (and sometimes disavow) both with the promotion of other national cultures were not mutually exclusive endeavors at the end of the Stalin period.”¹⁸ Tajik public denunciations of “pan-Iranism,” discussed above, formed part of this broader discourse.

The Soviet cultural bureaucracy’s enforcement of parochialism paradoxically contributed to a translation boom. Republic-level school curricula adopted Russian classics and taught them in the republican language rather than in Russian language classes.¹⁹ Meanwhile, the naturalization of national texts into a Russocentric canon of classics contributed to the rise of a style of translation, and literary scholarship generally, that deemphasized linguistic and cultural specificity. A new wave of Eastern translations owed something to the official repression or rebuke of many capable literary translators and orientalists (especially, though not exclusively, Jews) and their replacement by younger, more politically reliable cadres.

In the Soviet period and since, the translation system has received scholarly attention primarily as a phenomenon of Russian literature. Lāhūtī and Banu’s late career, then, provides a useful vantage point from which to focus on the reciprocities and asymmetries of the Soviet translation system. Their translation work makes possible an investigation of what intermediary agency could achieve when the sophistication of non-Russian literary traditions and Russian orientalist philology were brought into sympathetic engagement by the Soviet ethos of translation. Where their case is unusual, it brings into focus features that exist more diffusely

¹⁷ Kiril Tomoff, “Uzbek Music’s Separate Path: Enforcing ‘Anticosmopolitanism’ in Stalinist Central Asia, 1949-52,” *Russian Review* 63, no. 2 (2004): 212-240.

¹⁸ Ibid., 212, n. 2.

¹⁹ Dmitrii Ivanov and Mariia Tamm, “Russkie klassiki v sovetskoi Estonii: sluchai Griboedova,” *NLO* 2 (2014), <http://magazines.russ.ru/nlo/2014/126/19i.html>.

everywhere. For example, the decades-long romance between them allows us to see with fresh eyes how the practice of translation was shaped by the Soviet intelligentsia mythology of sentimental friendships between national poets and Russophone translators.

The question of translation brings into particularly clear focus the question of a comparative framework for the Soviet multinational literary system. The introduction proposed three primary comparative models: the modernizing nation, the empire, and the postcolonial global marketplace of “World Literature.” Though these models overlap, the project of translating literature into, out of, and between the Soviet languages appears in a different light, depending on which of these we adopt as our primary point of comparison. Here, it may be helpful to briefly make the case for each model:

- 1) The modernizing nation: For Soviet republics, translation from Russian and Western literatures was conceived as a means for the importation and assimilation of cultural resources from advanced or hegemonic nations, in order to “catch up.” At the same time, such translations were intended “to form national identities by soliciting their readers’ identification with a particular national discourse that was articulated in relation to the hegemonic foreign nations,” alternately “exclusionary or receptive.”²⁰ Soviet Russian translation of Western texts served these same functions. Republics translated for display on the multinational stage literature of “their own” that produced discourses of distinct national culture.
- 2) The empire: In the Soviet translation system, translations into peripheral languages furthered the hegemony of Russian culture and Soviet ideology, while translations from

²⁰ Lawrence Venuti, “Local Contingencies: Translation and National Identities,” in *Nation, Language, and the Ethics of Translation*, eds. Sandra Bernmann and Michael Wood (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 187.

peripheral languages served the center's ethnographic regime of control and functioned as a resource for reified categories of the ruled.²¹

- 3) The marketplace of world literature: Soviet national writers whose republics' presses had less political, cultural, and economic capital competed for access to the multinational literary marketplace. Dependent on translation for their texts to acquire "exchange-value" in that marketplace, they sought to write "export-friendly" texts. Thus, national republics imported (translated) Russian and Western texts as already "finished goods," but Russian translators and publishers treated national texts as "raw materials."²²

Three subsets of Lāhūtī's participation in the translation system bring each of these comparative models to the fore as a basis for understanding the motivations and tactical repertoires of Lāhūtī and his colleagues. Section 1 shows how Lāhūtī's translations of Russian literature for Iranian readers were imagined as a national-linguistic modernization effort; section 2 shows the unequal dynamics governing translation in Banu and Lāhūtī's Tajik "King Lear" and Russian *Shāhnāmah*; and section 3 considers the limitations and possibilities that writing for Russian translation offered to Lāhūtī. Between these sections, interludes provide broader context for Lāhūtī's translation career in the Soviet Union by examining both the structures and the mythology of Soviet translation.

The Soviet Translation System

At this stage, it may be useful to briefly review the distinctive features of Soviet literary translation [or, more literally, "artistic translation": *khudozhestvennyi perevod*]. Translation of all

²¹ An account of translation's function in colonial contexts is Douglas Robinson, *Translation and Empire: Postcolonial Theories Explained* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2014).

²² My account here follows Jones, "Chinese Literature," 171-190.

kinds played a practical and symbolic role in Soviet multinationalism and internationalism.²³ It was the site where the contradiction between “national in form and socialist in content,” between the fetishization of national difference and the universality of analytic categories, was to be resolved, and it was consequently a powerful site for Soviet mythmaking. Lāhūtī described the power of the translation process in his article in *Izvestiia* on Stalin’s 1935 meeting with Central Asian collective farmers: “I understand Turkmen and Tajik well, and I heard how slogans were pronounced at this excellent meeting. When they pronounced a particular slogan, everyone would immediately swoop it up into different languages, and all of this merged into a single slogan, powerful like an oath.”²⁴

In this state-ordered movement toward mutual comprehension, literature was regarded as a crucial institution. As Chapter 3 discussed, the Soviet claim to be the bastion of world culture was predicated on the assimilation of numerous contemporary national literatures and all the classics of world literature into a conceptual whole through publishing series, anthologies, meetings, and festivals. The intelligentsia who performed this task of assimilation by translating into Russian considered these two translation categories, world classics and modern multinational literature, utterly dissimilar.²⁵ This was in part the result of hierarchies of cultural prestige, but it also resulted from concerns about authenticity.²⁶ Translation of Soviet Eastern

²³ On the birth of simultaneous translation in the Comintern and Party Congresses, Lynn Vission, “Simultaneous Interpretation: Language and Cultural Difference,” in *Nation, Language, and the Ethics of Translation*, eds. Sandra Bermann and Michael Wood (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 51.

²⁴ Gasem Lakhuti, “Nezabyvaemyi den’,” *Izvestiia*, December 5, 1935, 2.

²⁵ Lauren G. Leighton, *Two Worlds, One Art: Literary Translation in Russia and America* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1991), 6.

²⁶ On the intelligentsia conception of translation of classics as a way to avoid official culture and participate in a counterculture of timeless, often Western values, see Brian James Baer, “Literary Translation and the Construction of a Soviet Intelligentsia,” *The Massachusetts Review* 47, no. 3

literatures usually involved multiple agents and intermediary texts. A 1947 review of Russian translations of Nizāmī provides an outline of the difference between interlinear and literary translation:

Translating language is different from translating art. In poetry, one without the other cannot exist. The first translation is done by a linguist, professionally unfamiliar with the art of the original, but the second translation can only be done by a poet, and often he is not at all familiar with the original language. The linguist works with ideas in the language in which everyone thinks. The poet operates with artistic forms in which only artists think. This is the difference between interlinear translation and literary translation.²⁷

Interlinear translations (*podstrochniki*), usually in Russian, gave the literal meaning of the text, sometimes together with explanatory and contextual notes, and were produced by orientalist philologists or by cultural workers from the national intelligentsia, who were sometimes the original authors.²⁸ These were then given to writers who used them to produce literary compositions in Russian or a national language. The *podstrochnik* was often regarded as a regrettable temporary measure until sufficient literary translators could be trained in all the Soviet national languages, but as in so many aspects of Soviet culture, the provisional slid into institutional permanence.²⁹

Soviet translations of Eastern poetry constitute a corpus of extraordinary complexity and sensitivity, including versions by many of the greatest Russian poets of the twentieth century. Post-Soviet Russian literature scholars in Russia and the West have devoted significant attention

(2006): 550-551; E.G. Etkind, *Mastera poетicheskogo perevoda XX vek* (St. Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 1997), 39.

²⁷ M. Malishevskii, “O stile perevodov poem Nizami,” in *Druzhba narodov* 15 (1947), 204.

²⁸ A maximalist *podstrochnik*, proposed by the translator Mark Tarlovskii, was imagined as a portfolio containing notes on the source language and its literary forms, translation dictionaries, the original work, notes on rhyme, stresses/meter, other formal features, and words used, information on the author, an exact *podstrochnik* and a more comprehensible one. Tarlovskii, “Khudozhestvennyi perevod i ego portfel’,” *Druzhba narodov* 4 (1940), 282. See also Susanna Witt, “Shorthand of Empire,” 155-190.

²⁹ Ibid., 161-166.

to the translation work of major poets. In the process, the characteristic concerns of Soviet official and unofficial discussions of translation (fidelity vs. literariness in published scholarship, cooptation vs. resistance in dissident culture) have receded. Studies by Zemskova, Khotimsky, and others have explored the productive role of the “escape into translation” in Soviet Russian literary careers.³⁰

The role of Russian poets in making national literatures has been the subject of several studies of Stalinist collection and translation of folklore. This enterprise, particularly in the period between the establishment of the Writers’ Union and the purge of 1937-8, involved a metastasis of translatorial agency, as verse was altered or invented whole-cloth by folklore collectors, oral poets’ literary secretaries, and, in the case of non-Russian works, *podstrochnik*-writers and literary translators.³¹ This phenomenon was particularly egregious in the case of the two most famous Soviet “bards,” the Lezgin *ashug* Suleiman Stal’skii and the Kazakh *aqyn* Jambyl Jabaev. For Evgenyi Dobrenko, the case of Jambyl, “found in translation,” stands in for the making of Soviet multinational literature as a whole.³² Thus, multinational socialist realism is described as the entry of the East into Russian literature, which “*brought with it* a special mode of political culture” (as discussed in Chapter 4), but this is actively undertaken by, and within,

³⁰ Cf. Elena Zemskova, “Translators in the Soviet Writers’ Union: Pasternak’s Translations from Georgian Poets and the Literary Process of the Mid-1930s,” in *The Art of Accommodation: Literary Translation in Russia*, ed. Leon Burnett and Emily Lygo (Oxford and Bern: Peter Lang, 2014), 185-211; Maria Yevgenievna Khotimsky, “A Remedy for Solitude: Russian Poet-Translators in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Eras” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard, 2011), esp. 48-181; see also Susanna Witt and Harsha Ram below.

³¹ Ziolkowski, *Soviet Heroic Poetry*.

³² Evgenyi Dobrenko, “Naideno v perevode: rozhdenie sovetskoi mnogonatsional’noi literatury iz smerti avtora,” *Neprikosnovennyi zapas* 78, no. 4 (2011), <http://magazines.russ.ru/nz/2011/4/do24.html>; this perspective also predominates in the contributions to Bogdanov, Rikkardo et. al., *Dzhambul Dzhabaev*.

Russian literature itself, of which Jambyl's East is "a pure stylization."³³ In this reading, it is translation culture that is understood to enable the reversal of the Enlightenment and its replacement with a culture of jubilant violence and anonymous, interchangeable authorship. Holt, drawing on Dobrenko's approach, has argued that Eastern poets, whether Jambyl or Lāhūtī, functioned alongside their translated verse as authentic untranslated or untranslatable "source texts."³⁴

According to this line of scholarly argument, Russian writers who participated in the translation system were "deauthorized," and so were Eastern writers (to the extent that they had ever been "authors" in a Romantic sense). This vision of "culture planning" owes much to the totalitarian or top-down interpretation of Soviet history, but, as Susanna Witt points out, if we regard even the most spurious Soviet national literary texts as speaking with the single voice of the state, we neglect the many intermediaries who brought them to the Soviet public. "The manipulations of the 'space in between [writer and translator]' made possible by the extensive use of interlinear trots in Soviet translation practices is a field of research as yet undeveloped."³⁵ Brian James Baer has suggested that for Russian writers, Stalin-era translation work should instead be understood as a process of "reauthorization," which inducted writers into an "ethos of *imitatio*."³⁶ According to Baer, translation, "the most Soviet of the arts," modeled socialist realist literature as a whole insofar as it was hierarchical, linguistically conservative, and unconcerned

³³ Dobrenko, "Naideno v perevode."

³⁴ Holt, "Central Asia's Source Texts," 213-238; see also Chapter 4.

³⁵ Susanna Witt, "Between the Lines: Totalitarianism and Translation in the USSR," in *Contexts, Subtexts and Pretexts: Literary Translation in Eastern Europe and Russia*, ed. Brian James Baer (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2011), 164. The phrase in brackets is my clarification.

³⁶ Brian James Baer, *Translation and the Making of Modern Russian Literature* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), 115-116, 119-123.

with individual authorship. At the same time, its emphasis on craft and respect for classic literary models made it comprehensible and even appealing to Russian writers.³⁷

Compared to extensive scholarship on Soviet translation of poetry into Russian, outside the former Soviet Union there has been little attention to the equal quantity of verse that moved from Russian into national or international Eastern languages under the auspices of Soviet publishing, never mind the lesser but not insignificant material translated directly between Eastern literatures.³⁸ While some of the phenomena described by scholars of Russian literature apply bilaterally, others are peculiar to the hegemonic language or require modification. Furthermore, as Harsha Ram's work on Georgian-Russian translation shows, careful attention must be paid to intertextualities beyond Russian literature.³⁹

Relevant here are not only particular intertexts, but also modes of intertextuality. A reconsideration of Baer's "ethos of *imitatio*" exemplifies the value of placing the Soviet translation project in a longer history of Eurasian—and specifically Persianate—state translation projects. Viewed as a phenomenon in Russian literature, Stalinism's tighter network of response texts and rereadings may seem like an Asiatic restoration or return to orality. But recognizing the Stalinist state's appeal to Persianate prestige as a basis for cultural hegemony, its strategy becomes familiar. Cross-linguistic *nażīrah* is an important feature of Eurasian state-sponsored literary practice from the pre-Mongol period down to the October Revolution.⁴⁰ In Persianate

³⁷ Ibid., 115-132.

³⁸ The translation analysis in this chapter draws on the approach proposed by Leah Feldman, "On the Threshold of Eurasia," 146-148.

³⁹ Ram, "Poetics of the Contact Zone," 63-89.

⁴⁰ On interlingual *nażīrah*, Ferenc Csirkés, "Aspects of Poetic Imitation in 15th-17th-century Turkish Romances: The Case of the *Gul u Navrūz*," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hung.* 60:2 (2007): 195-221; Stefanno Pellò, "Persian as a Passe-Partout: The Case of Mīrzā 'Abd al-Qādir Bīdil and his Hindu Disciples," in *Culture and Circulation: Literature in Motion in Early Modern India*, eds. Thomas de Brujin and Allison Busch (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 21-46;

literatures, poetic response was continuous, with various transformations, from the pre-colonial into the Soviet period, and provided many Soviet “national” poets with models for canonic apprenticeship across linguistic divides (see Ch. 1). The other Persianate mode of interlingual poetic reception, namely, the metaphrastic prose renderings referred to as *sharḥ* (explanation), find their continuation in the *podstrochniki* produced by national writers and cultural workers.⁴¹

While the categories of *imitatio* and *sharḥ* clarify what is not new in the Soviet system, a consideration of literature as property captures the Soviet aspiration to a fundamentally new kind of humanism. Emily Apter has suggested that the “authorized plagiarism” of translation allows literature to move beyond the “Western law and international statute” according to which “authors *have* texts, publishers *have* a universal right to translate (as long as they pay), and nations *own* literary patrimony as cultural inheritance [...] A translational author,” she writes, “is the natural complement, in my view, to World Literature understood as an experiment in national sublation that signs itself as collective, terrestrial property.”⁴² If, as Apter suggests, a comparative literature capable of real critique would need to consider the functions of property as a metaphor and a reality in world literature, it may be helpful to examine closely the functioning of a previous, actually-existing system that operated under the banner of collective, universal literary heritage (Russian *nasledstvo*, Persian/Tajik *mīrās*).

Marc Toutant, “La réponse du poète chaghatay Nawā’ī au poète persan Nizāmī: le sultan timouride, ‘refuge de la charia’,” *Cahiers d’Asie centrale* 24 (2015): 81-103; on its relationship with cultural projects of empire, cf. Audrey Truschke, *Culture of Encounters: Sanskrit at the Mughal Court* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 101-141, 203-227.

⁴¹ On the Arabic background, Cl. Gilliot, “Sharḥ II. Poetry, *adab* and stylistics,” in *EI*², article published online 2012, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1039. This continuity-oriented approach might be usefully applied to the *podstrochnik* production of Russian orientalists as well, given the role of Mughal lexicons and *sharḥ* in the early development of European oriental philology: Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran*, 18-34.

⁴² Apter, *Against World Literature*, 15.

Discourse of collectivity notwithstanding, Soviet discourses and laws concerning property are complex, and the question of national literary patrimony was not obviated but heightened in Soviet multinational literature.⁴³ In an unanswered 1950 letter to Stalin, Lāhūtī complained about Tajik anti-cosmopolitans:

On the one hand they declare that Rūdakī, Firdawsī, Khayyām, and other poets who lived in Bukhara or even in Khurasan, belong definitively to Tajik literature, and speak out against the term ‘Tajik-Persian literature’ as leading to pan-Iranism, but on the other hand they write about Sa‘dī and Hāfiẓ as poets ‘who were born in Shiraz but are included in Tajik literature.’ It’s reminiscent of the words of the ancient poet: ‘What’s mine is mine, what’s yours is yours, thus says the ordinary person./ What’s yours is yours, what’s mine is yours, thus says the generous person.’ But what do you call a person who says, ‘what’s mine is mine, what’s yours is mine’?”⁴⁴

Lāhūtī is referring to a 1949 article in which the Tajik poet Mīrzā Tūrsūnzādah claims that the Iranian bourgeois press “not only doesn’t appreciate the classics, but even openly rejects or falsifies them [...] We, by contrast, lovingly and carefully preserve the best in the works of Sa‘dī and Hāfiẓ.” After the Iranian revolution, “the Tajik people will return to the Persians [*persam*] the legacy of their poets in its original glory and brilliance.”⁴⁵ In this instance, discourse of national property and inheritance is nearly entirely preserved. Tūrsūnzādah identifies the Tajik nation as a relation who acts as executor for Iran’s national property while the owner is indisposed, in an echo of orientalist appeals to the necessity of taking care of a decadent civilization’s affects until it recovers vigor. In this sense, it more closely resembles the rhetoric of the mandate system in the Middle East than that of Soviet nationalities policy.

⁴³ On the history of the subset of property law most directly relevant here, S. L. Levitsky, *Introduction to Soviet Copyright Law* (Leiden: A.W. Sythoff, 1964).

⁴⁴ RGASPI f. 558, op. 11, d. 878, doc. 4, 19.

⁴⁵ Mirzo Tursun-zade, “Protiv kosmopolitizma i paniranizma,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, February 19 1949, 3.

Another example affords a more practical view of Soviet translation as literary property.

In 1949, the State Literature Publishing House (*Gosudarstvennoe literaturnoe izdatel'stvo*) was preparing an anthology of Lāhūtī's verse for publication, and this required the editors to gather permissions from interested parties other than Lāhūtī himself. For example, as was customary, the propaganda department wrote to Stalin's personal secretary on the editor's behalf to obtain permission to print a Russian translation of Lāhūtī's "The Gardener," in which "Comrade Stalin is depicted in the symbolic image of the gardener, although his name is not mentioned in the poem."⁴⁶ The permissions process proved more difficult in the case of Georgii Shengeli, a Russophone poet who produced some of the most important early Soviet manuals on poetic composition, and who was also one of Lāhūtī's main translators. Shengeli's working relationship with Lāhūtī went back to 1932, when they had both done work for the Central Asian department of the Association of State Publishing Houses, and Shengeli produced translations for one of Lāhūtī's first Russian anthologies, *We Will Win! (My pobedim!)*.⁴⁷ It was likely in this period that Mandelstam had written an epigram referring to Shengeli as "the fully authorized representative [*polnomochnyi predstavitel'*] of the Persian satrap Lāhūtī."⁴⁸ But even if Mandelstam's depiction of the power dynamic was accurate for the early 1930s, by 1949, questions of authorization and representation between Lāhūtī and Shengeli had become murkier.

On October 8, the wall newspaper of the State Literature Publishing House contained a denunciation of Shengeli. "Soviet authors," the anonymous author began, "always put societal

⁴⁶ RGASPI f. 558, op. 11, d. 1527, doc. 4, l. 30; confirmation of permission is doc. 5, l. 31. Earlier publications of the poem had explicitly mentioned Stalin in the title or subtitle (see Ch. 2). I have been unable to find equivalent requests for permission in instances of Stalin's depiction in Persian or Tajik verse.

⁴⁷ Vasilii Molodiakov, *Georgii Shengeli: biografiia 1894-1956* (Moscow: Volodei, 2016), 324.

⁴⁸ Osip Mandel'shtam, *Polnoe sobranie sochinений i pisem*, vol. 1, eds. A.G. Mets and N.G. Zakharenko (Moscow: Progress-Pleiada, 2009), 327.

interests at the forefront. But as it is said, no family is without a freak [*uroda*.]” The freakish act alluded to was Shengeli’s withdrawal of his translations from the Lāhūtī anthology at the last minute because, according to the denunciation, the honorarium “is inadequate in the opinion of the translator [...] Who gave the translator the right (not authorial, but civic [*grazhdanskoe*]) to dismantle printed books?” Shengeli wrote a furious letter full of capitalized words to the publishing house’s director and party bureau, in which he explained that early in the year, the press had asked him for material for a new Lāhūtī anthology. Some time later, Tsetsilia Banu telephoned to say that one of his translations needed a few small corrections. “Knowing Banu to be a talented translator and a very thoughtful editor, I asked her to put in those corrections herself, so that I could approve (or change) them in the proofs.” Returning from a trip a month later, he found that the book was already formatted, with outrageous editorial choices: “the poem ‘Two Orders’ *reduced* by half, reduced ineptly and unskillfully”; of another “only two extracts were taken, at that, digressions, which didn’t even give a feel for the poem [...] *In this way, the output of my many years of work on Lāhūtī’s verses is given to the reader in a scabrous and unattractive form* [italics Shengeli’s].” The editors replied that “the outrageous castration of the poem ‘Two Orders’ was carried out by the author ‘who, of course, has the right to do with his work what he likes.’” (Shengeli noted that Lāhūtī later “indignantly denied his part in the work’s mutilation.”) He concludes: “The question is, who gave [the editors] the right (both formal and moral) to talk and act this way with a writer?”⁴⁹

Authorial *or* civic rights, formal *and* moral rights: as in the occasions discussed in the previous chapter, the partial replacement of property relations with an economy of the gift produces a differently fraught system of mutual obligations. As Soviet literary translators such as

⁴⁹ RGALI f. 2861, op. 1, ed. khr. 129, l. 60-67, qtd. in Molodiakov, *Georgii Shengeli*, 453-459.

Lāhūtī managed joint ventures in the multinational or international commons, authorial and formal rights continued to operate, both legally (as in Shengeli's control of his translations) and formally (as in inheritance squabbles over the division of the Persianate legacy). But the binding laws of the Soviet translation zone were always framed in civic and moral terms, and particularly when they were renegotiated, questions of civic duty and morality came to the fore.

1. Teaching Iran to Speak Bolshevik: Pushkin and National Modernization

The idea of control of translation as a civic concern is a function of the symbolic link between guardianship of literary traditions and state sovereignty, or in most non-Soviet cases, national sovereignty. Pahlavi Iran, like many other new nation states of the interwar period, laid claim to sovereignty by taking up the mantel of a guardian of a national heritage that was literary even when it had no reflection in the political realm. The nationalist narrative of Firdawṣī's decision to resist Arab hegemony by writing in pure Persian found its counterpart in the Jubilee of 1934, where the Iranian state took up management of Firdawṣī's reputation before the world, hosting *Shāhnāmah* translators and scholars from around the world.⁵⁰ But such guardianship entailed control not only of exports, but also imports. Under circumstances of constrained state sovereignty, management of translation became particularly symbolically important, both as a threat and as a possible resource for the reaccumulation of power.

Such were the circumstances during and immediately after the Soviet occupation of Iran. If the Soviet Union may be regarded as an empire at all, Iran in the period surrounding the wartime occupation presents an especially defensible instance of a colony: an extraterritorial space of legal exception, governed according to an acknowledged program of resource extraction.

⁵⁰ See Ch. 3.

But the importation of Soviet culture was largely undertaken by declared Iranian nationalists. Lāhūtī, the most anomalous case among the writers who translated Russian literature for Iranian readers, framed his program in terms drawn from anticolonial national literary modernization movements, while contributing to the Soviet cultural project in Iran.⁵¹ Iranian writers and political figures interpreted his translations as acts of either national strengthening or hostile invasion. Both of these interpretations were grounded in readings of his approach to translation, deeply idiosyncratic in relation to previous Persian translation practices. After surveying Lāhūtī's place in Iranian literature during and after the Soviet occupation, I will examine his program for translation of Russian literature as literary and language reform.

At least in political terms, the circumstances were propitious for the deployment of Lāhūtī's poetry as propaganda. During and immediately after the Second World War and the Soviet occupation of northern Iran, sympathy for the Soviet model was ubiquitous among the Iranian intelligentsia, and writers in particular. From June 25 to July 2, 1946, nearly all the major Iranian writers with modernizing sensibilities gathered for the First Iranian Writers' Congress at the Soviet Cultural Institute in Tehran. There, in an event closely modeled on the Soviet Writers' Congress of 1934, a broad political spectrum of writers and cultural bureaucrats accepted the encouragement of Soviet writers and other cultural diplomats, and made reciprocal overtures.⁵² As Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak notes, "Even the most traditionalist participants in the congress spoke of 'the evolution of literature' and the 'advances' made in 'the Soviet culture'."⁵³ Only months earlier, the USSR-supported Azerbaijani and Kurdish secession movements had failed and the

⁵¹ For a comparable discourse, see Özlem Berk, "Intralingual Translation as 'Modernization' of the Language: The Turkish Case," *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology* 21:2 (2013): 257-271.

⁵² *Nukhustīn kungirah-i nivīsandagān-i Īrān* (Tehran: Rangīn, 1326 [1947]).

⁵³ Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, "Nima Yushij: A Life," in *Essays on Nima Yushij*, eds. Karimi-Hakkak and Kamran Talatoff (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 60.

Red Army had withdrawn from Iran under American pressure, but a Soviet-backed coalition government was in power, including the communist Tūdah party.⁵⁴ Even many committed participants had concerns about Soviet designs on Iranian territory and oil, but leftist commitment was in the ascendency. Malik al-Shu‘arā Bahār, a literary hero of the Constitutional movement, ceremonially presided over the gathering in his capacity as the new education minister. Although he had expressed no Soviet sympathies before the war, in 1945 he had traveled to Baku to participate in Soviet Azerbaijan’s 25th anniversary celebration. Since the start of the war, numerous Iranian writers had made such trips to Transcaucasia, Central Asia, or Moscow.⁵⁵

Although Lāhūtī had corresponding hopes of revisiting Iran, permission for such a trip was never granted.⁵⁶ Not only was he not sent to the 1946 Congress, but he went almost unmentioned in the speeches. Among the generations of leftist Iranian writers who had begun their careers after the Constitutional Revolution, he was not a touchstone, though his works had been published in Arabic script for Iranian audiences several times since the early 1930s, including in Iran itself. As we have seen, in the 1930s, even though he spoke as an Iranian representative in Soviet settings, he is almost entirely absent from the record of Soviet-Iranian

⁵⁴ This episode is surveyed in Touraj Atabaki, *Azerbaijan: Ethnicity and the Struggle for Power in Iran* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2000), 63-178.

⁵⁵ Pickett, “Soviet Civilization through a Persian Lens,” 805-826.

⁵⁶ Sa‘īd Nafīsī recalled: “All of Lāhūtī’s conversations with me were about Iran. Being distant from Iran lit a fire in his heart, and alas that he was burnt up in that fire. He would often tell me that he hoped to pass away in Iran, and to sleep beneath the dust of Iran.” Nafīsī, “Safarhā-yi man bih mā varā’-i Khazar,” *Sālnāmah-i dunyā* (1340 [1961]), 53. During the period of the Soviet-backed Azerbaijan People’s Government in 1945-1946, his son Daler recalls, “When the possibility arose that he might be able to decide to go there, how happy he was [...] He would sing all the time, ‘We’ll go, go go, we’ll go to Kermanshah [Mīrvām mīrvām mīrvām mā, mīrvām mīrvām bih Kirmānshāh]!’ [...] Unfortunately just then the counterrevolutionary coup routed the Soviet Union, and all that didn’t happen.” *Ustod*, pt. 2, directed by Davlat Khudonazarov (Dushanbe: Tojikfil’m, 1988), accessed as mp4 file.

joint events such as the Firdawsī Jubilee and the Leningrad Exhibition of Iranian Art—perhaps due to the sensitivity of public contact with a former rival of Rizā Shāh for Iranian cultural bureaucrats. Among Iranians who came to the Soviet Union, those who established friendships with him were frequently Tūdah activists.

Sa’īd Nafīsī, a major scholar of classical and modern Persian literature, was one of his few advocates among the Iranian literati.⁵⁷ His article reintroducing Lāhūtī to the Iranian public was printed in 1946 in the journal of the Society for Iranian-Soviet Cultural Relations, *Payām-i naw*. Nafīsī begins with reminiscences of his own first years as a writer during and after the First World War, and describes the sense he had then of Lāhūtī as a poet against whom he did not even dare to measure himself.⁵⁸ But the article soon takes a protective tone. Recounting a series of conversations the two had on Nafīsī’s visits to Moscow in the 1930s, he writes, “I suspect that none of Lāhūtī’s compatriots has come to know his greatness of spirit or the pure feelings for Iran that are concealed within him.”⁵⁹ The article is full of refutations of anticipated critiques of Lāhūtī’s sincerity (“I have become acquainted with this capable poet from close-up [...] and I know that his poetry is a clear mirror of his thoughts”) and his Iranian authenticity (“Lāhūtī’s way of thinking and speaking is also completely Iranian”).⁶⁰

⁵⁷ On the symbolic international dimension of Lāhūtī and Nafīsī’s friendship, Yountchi, “An Ode to Great Friendship.”

⁵⁸ Sa’īd Nafīsī, “Lāhūtī: bi-munāsibat-i intishār-i āsār-i muntakhab-i ū,” *Payām-i naw* 2:12 (1325 [1946]): 46.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 47.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 48-49. In Nafīsī’s copy of the 1946 Moscow Persian-language edition of Lāhūtī’s *Kullīyāt* (held by Princeton University), the author inscribes an apology that a preface written by Nafīsī was not used for the edition. Muhammad Rizā Shaffī’ī Kadkanī has surmised that the unused preface was Nafīsī’s article in *Payām-i naw*, and that it was rejected for its presentation of Lāhūtī as an Iranian patriot. The former is probable; the latter, though quite possible, is not confirmed by any materials that I have yet been able to locate. Shaffī’ī Kadkanī, *Bā chirāgh va āyinah*, 421-422.

Despite special pleading, Lāhūtī remained an infrequent presence even in the pages of *Payām-i naw*. Lāhūtī's isolation may be imagined from his questions during a 1955 conversation with Nafīsī, broadcast on Radio Moscow internationally. "Dear Professor," he asked, "I shall be glad if you will say a few words about young Persian authors and poets. What path are they following? Do the broad creative masses appear in their work, or not?" Near the end of the conversation, Lāhūtī made an appeal to Iranian listeners, taking Nafīsī as their representative: "Can I ask all Persian authors, through yourself, to inform me of all the shortcomings in my works, so that I may put them right?"⁶¹

Opinions on Lāhūtī's verse varied even among the Communist faithful. In 1950, the union organizer and Tūdah central committee member Rizā Rūstā wrote to the Soviet Communist Party central committee to complain that too many of Lāhūtī's recent poems were available in Russian but not in Persian. "His way of writing in the original is simple and melodious, and [his poems] easily reach the heart of the reader," Rūstā explained. He asked that the Party "reconsider the question of publishing [new poems] in a separate book in Persian through the Foreign Languages Publishing House."⁶² An opposite assessment may be found in a 1953 memo from the Soviet Communist Party foreign affairs department. It records an official meeting with two members of the Tūdah Party central committee, who wished to express concerns about the export of Lāhūtī's verse to Iran. Some of their objections were political: Lāhūtī's verse, due to his inadequate command of Marxist theory, evidently contained "false and

⁶¹ "Poets Meet," *The Manchester Guardian*, February 22, 1955, 6.

⁶² RGASPI f. 495, op. 217, d. 345, l. 31 (Letter from Rizā Rūstā to TsK VKPb, November 19, 1950). By that time, the Tūdah party had been banned, following a 1949 assassination attempt on the Shah, and the ability of the underground party to distribute literature was diminished. The following year, the Iranian party secretary Rizā Rādmanish advised the Soviet party against expending resources on such a publication: RGASPI f. 495, op. 217, d. 345, l. 29 (letter from A. Bashkirov and G. Shumeiko to Ia.M. Lomakin, February 1951).

pessimistic ideas.” But they also complained that “the majority of comrade Lāhūtī’s poems are written illiterately from the point of view of the Persian language, while his translations from Russian to Persian consist of a whole array of words not helpful for the Iranian reader, and don’t convey a sense of the Russian works,” citing his translations of the verse of Aleksandr Pushkin in particular.⁶³ By rejecting the representative assigned to Iran by Moscow, leaders of a local Soviet-aligned party could assert control over their own program of intermediation. In this context, translation criticism became a way of staking the local party’s claim to be better able to locally represent the Soviet civilizational project than Moscow itself.

Diction and idiom were topics of special concern for Lāhūtī’s Iranian critics. Nafīsī reassured readers:

Even though for years Lāhūtī has been far from his country, Iran, and his mother tongue, Persian, his explanations and adornments are entirely in accordance with the spirit of the Persian language, and except for special cases, countable on one’s fingers, when for the comprehension of the people of Tajikistan, he used some idioms particular to the language of the Tajiks [*zabān-i tājīk*], in all other cases, he has kept to the Persian language. This is one of the important aspects of his poems, because we know that in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, his discourses circulate fully among the Tajiks, and are a very good example so that Tajikistan doesn’t become distant from the absolutely correct method of writing the language of their ancestors.⁶⁴

Subsequent Iranian literary scholars have been more inclined to keep a tally of the “special cases” in which he introduces non-Iranian linguistic elements, which are, *contra* Nafīsī, numerous.⁶⁵ Lāhūtī’s poetic diction oscillates between the goals of vernacularization, Iranian or Tajik, and maintaining an international poetic register in both. The international register, which corresponds

⁶³ RGASPI f. 495, op. 217, d. 345, l. 18 (Letter from V. Savel’eva to Ia. M. Lomakin, February 5, 1953).

⁶⁴ Nafīsī, “Lāhūtī,” 49.

⁶⁵ Cf. Āryānpūr, *Az Šabā tā Nīmā*, vol. 3, 498-499. Shafī‘ī Kadkanī identifies this as one of the most important features of his work: “In Lāhūtī’s poetry, areas of language—new and old language, the language of the center and of other regions of greater Iran, particularly the Tajik language—play a very important role.” *Bā chirāgh va āyīnah*, 426.

to Nafīṣī’s “good example” tethering the errant Tajik dialect, was classicizing, and sometimes even archaizing. As I argued in Chapter 3, the idiom of classical Persianate poetics, so portable between languages, became an important common denominator in multinational socialist realist poetics.⁶⁶ But Lāhūtī’s attempts to transform literary language leave a different kind of trace, in the glosses and glossaries that accompany almost every Persian and Tajik publication of his works after 1922. These collectively raise the same question as Iranian and Tajik critics: do Lāhūtī’s works require translation to be understood by ordinary readers of *any* language or dialect?

His first collection printed for Tajiks, *Adabīyāt-i surkh* (1926), already includes footnoted glosses that translate between dialects or registers of Persian. ‘Aynī notes in his review that the collection “is in the literary language,” but both Lāhūtī’s variable poetic diction and the glosses suggest the author and publisher’s hope to draw in new readers of diverse backgrounds.⁶⁷ The volume includes dialect-neutral glosses for Iranian dialect words (*vil kun* explained as *bugzār*, and *halā!* as *āgāh bāshīd!*) and Tajik dialect words (*shift* explained as *saqf*, and *qabas* as *jaraqqah-i ātash*), and simple glosses for bookish or antiquated words (*bād-afrāh*, *īvār*, *tamavvul*).⁶⁸ This last category of glosses expanded substantially in later Soviet collections of Lāhūtī’s works, providing an index of the reading public’s increasing distance from classical Persian.

In the large collection of Lāhūtī’s verses published in Tabriz immediately after the 1941 Soviet invasion, by contrast, there are few glosses for Tajik dialect, and none for unusual literary

⁶⁶ On the lexical overlap between Soviet Persianate literary languages in the process of reform, see H. Tursunova, *Tadqiqi muqoisavii frazeologizmhoi paralleli zabonhoi tojikī va ūzbekī (dar asosi asari S. Aini “Ghulomon”-“Qullar”)* (Dushanbe: Donish, 1979).

⁶⁷ Ṣadr al-Dīn ‘Aynī, “Adabīyāt-i surkh,” *Āvāz-i tājīk*, July 14, 1926, in *ZTMM*, 75.

⁶⁸ Lāhūtī, *Adabīyāt-i surkh*, 109, 114, 22, 140, 49, 78, 114.

words, although most of the poems from *Adabīyāt-i surkh* are included. This suggests an anticipated audience of intelligentsia rather than new readers, but also simple lack of planning. The collection is full of glosses, but almost all of these explain Russian acronyms (SSSR and SKPB, though OGPU goes unglossed), Communist terminology both Soviet-specific (*kulak*, *komsomol/ka*, *PromFinPlan*, *chekist*) and general-use (*fāshīzm*, *kāllīktīv*), or Russian words used in the original poems in place of perfectly serviceable Persian equivalents (*otriad* for squad, *sud* for court).⁶⁹

At the most general level, this radical lexical departure from both spoken and written Persian (as well as pre-revolution Tajik Persian) may be considered the most extreme case of the semiotic transformation of early 20th-century Persian poetics, as described by Karimi-Hakkak. Drawing on Lotman, he has shown how Constitution-era poets brought new signs into Persian poetry’s “expressive system.”⁷⁰ But the scale on which Lāhūtī imported and even replaced lexical elements almost amounted to the occlusion of one expressive system by another. Specifically, the foreign and translational elements in anthologies of Lāhūtī’s verse provided first Tajiks and then Iranians with a primer in “speaking Bolshevik,” according to Stephen Kotkin’s formulation.⁷¹ In places, Lāhūtī anthologies include full definitions or ideological clarification of

⁶⁹ Lāhūtī, *Dīvān ash ‘ār*, vol. 1 (Tabriz: 1941), 148, 120, 73, 134, 121, 105; vol. 2, 34. Unsurprisingly, the most intensive translation apparatus was required for poems of the 1930s whose likely primary addressees would have read it in translation, a subset of Lāhūtī’s works discussed below.

⁷⁰ Karimi-Hakkak, *Recasting Persian Poetry*, 86-88.

⁷¹ Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 198-237. Kotkin, who describes “Bolshevik” as “the obligatory language for self-identification and as such, the barometer of one’s political allegiance to the cause” (220), analyzes the speech of Soviet workers in a way that laid the groundwork for the study of “Soviet subjectivity,” but only minimally theorizes the role of language itself, a task undertaken by Michael S. Gorham, *Speaking in Soviet Tongues: Language Culture and the Politics of Voice in Revolutionary Russia* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003). On the diffusion of this new way of speaking, Michael G. Smith, *Language and Power in the Creation of the USSR*,

imported or calqued terminology.⁷² But the verse itself would have provided Iranian intellectuals with a familiar context for vocabulary-building. From the earliest new Persian dictionaries (c. 900 CE) down to the early 20th century, lexicographers structured entries around exemplary usages of words in verse, referred to as “witnesses” (*shāhid*, pl. *shavāhid*).⁷³ No less naturally than editorials in factory wall-newspapers, Lāhūtī’s verses would have inducted readers and listeners into the mysteries of a new language, with support from the familiar guide-rails of conventional literary Persian.

Compared to the late Ottoman Arabic calques that dominated Iranian Constitutionalist and Central Asian Jadid political and technical vocabulary,⁷⁴ the language taught by Lāhūtī was heavy with direct Russian imports. But this was to be expected: for all that the writers and critics of the Soviet multinational literary system insisted on translatability, the political international depended on a bristling array of German, French, and Russian untranslatables to contain the centrifugal pull of local political conditions and cultures. The role of such untranslatables in ensuring univocality across languages finds a neat symbol in the very word “internationale.”

1917-1953 (Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1998), 143-173; and Lenore Grenoble, *Language Policy in the Soviet Union* (New York: Kluwer, 2003), 193-197. Studies of Soviet vocabulary importation/substitution in specific languages include William Fierman, *Language Planning and National Development: The Uzbek Experience* (Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1991), 149-163; John Perry, “From Persian to Tajik to Persian: Culture, politics and law reshape a Central Asian language,” *NSL 8: Linguistic Studies in the Non-Slavic Languages of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic Republics*, ed. Howard I. Aronson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 279-305.

⁷² In the 1941 anthology, for example, Leninism is defined in a footnote as ““Marxism in the time of imperialism and the revolutionary proletariat”; Lāhūtī, *Dīvān-i ash ‘ar*, vol. 1 (Tabriz: 1941), 170 n. 2. In the instance of *mubādalah*, the Persian word adopted to mean exchange in a Marxist sense, the writer of the footnote in *Adabīyāt-i surkh* threw up their hands, instructing the reader: “Read about the topic of **mubādalah** in articles on political economy [bold in original].” Lāhūtī, *Adabīyāt-i surkh*, 80.

⁷³ John R. Perry, “Lexicography,” *EIr*, article last updated August 29, 2011, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/lexicography>.

⁷⁴ Perry, “Language Reform in Turkey and Iran,” 296.

Lāhūtī's Persian translation of the anthem of that name went by a translated title ("Bayn al-milal-i ishtirākī": "The Collective International") in an early (1926) version, but through all his reworkings in subsequent years, it retained one constant: the last line of the chorus begins with one of the song's few loan-words: the Russified "intirnātsyūnāl" (a word which no longer required revoweling once Latin and then Cyrillic scripts were used for printing).⁷⁵ This was the standard practice across all Communist parties, with the result that, in Nâzım Hikmet's account of a KUTV event, "We all stood and sang the 'Internationale,' everyone in their own language, except everyone sang the word *international* together at the same time, [even] the Chinese in Chinese."⁷⁶

The exigencies of producing new lyrics for an existing tune meant that Lāhūtī's translation of "L'Internationale" was one of his first compositions to depart entirely from Arabo-Persian 'arūzī quantitative feet in favor of syllabic meter.⁷⁷ At least in its final form, his rendering is judged to be fluent and easy to sing by the Iranian leftists whom I have asked, and although Ahmād Shāmlū has composed a lyrical free-verse interpretation of the song, Lāhūtī's version is still the only one practical for singing purposes.⁷⁸ To that extent, it differs from the rest of his numerous experiments in non-'arūzī meter, which Iranian critics have generally regarded

⁷⁵ Lāhūtī, *Adabīyāt-i surkh*, 15; Lohutī, K5, 17-18, 345-346 (n.b. the critical edition misstates the date of the translation as 1928—given its appearance in *Adabīyāt-i surkh* it must date to 1927 at the latest, and an earlier date is likely). Contrast with another key word, Soviet (Rus: *sovet*), successfully rendered in Turkic and Iranian languages as *shawrā/shūrā*; as Leah Feldman writes, "In the zone of translation it acquired ideological power in its heteroglossia, or participation in multiple social registers of meaning." Feldman, "On the Threshold of Eurasia," 131.

⁷⁶ Nazim Hikmet, *Life's Good, Brother*, trans. Mutlu Konuk Blasing (New York: Persea Books, 2013), 39.

⁷⁷ Previous attempts to identify the earliest non-'arūzī poems in Persian have often excluded song lyrics from the discussion, despite the nearly complete overlap between lyricists and poets in early 20th-century Iran.

⁷⁸ Ahmād Shāmlū, "Antirnāsyūnāl," *Kitāb-i jum 'ah* 1, no. 33 (1359 [1980]): 2-3.

as original but unsuccessful.⁷⁹ Most of Lāhūtī’s syllabic verse, though by no means all, was composed in translation of Russian and other European poets. His insistence on attempting to reproduce the formal features of the verse that he translated departed from all previous Persian practices of translation. The question of “importation” of Western meters is particularly vexed. In investigating Lāhūtī’s syllabic and accentual meters, this study follows Yopie Prins’s caution, in her study of English hexameters, that a meter should be regarded not “as a fixed form that can be transported from source language to target language,” but a historical object transformed by translation. As with the English hexameter, the importation of Western meters was for Lāhūtī “an instrument of defamiliarization, and anything but transparent.”⁸⁰ His defensive statements on the subject of verse form, particularly in the preface to his volume of Pushkin translations, suggest that he had already encountered opposition:

There may be people who would ask, why did the translator use forms for these two works that are unfamiliar to the Iranian ear? Wouldn’t it be better to translate them in accordance with the previous rules of Persian verse? [...] But the translator, in the modern meaning of this word, is obligated to preserve with complete attention the sound and all the peculiarities of the original form, and this requirement is completely right. After all, the form of an exquisite work and its content are bound together as tightly as body and soul. If they are separated from each other by force, the living being is replaced with a coffin [sic]. If a Persian poet wants to translate these poems of Pushkin, still more to be eloquent with their meaning, it is indispensable for him to create forms corresponding to the original in his own language [...] Someone familiar with the original of this work will not waste their time looking for metrical [*‘arūzī*] mistakes in its translation. They will grasp that it would have been the greatest mistake if the translator had translated this tale in agreement with the rules of *‘arūz*.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Cf. Shafī‘ī Kadkanī, *Bā chirāgh va āyīnah*, 425.

⁸⁰ Yopie Prins, “Metrical Translation: Nineteenth-Century Homers and the Hexameter Mania,” in Berman and Wood, *Nation, Language, and the Ethics of Translation*, 229, 233. In taking this approach to Persian metrical transformations, this chapter follows closely on Ahmed, *La “Révolution littéraire”*.

⁸¹ Pūshkīn, *Chand asar*, trans. Abū al-Qāsim Lāhūtī (Moscow: Idārah-i nashrīyāt bih zabānhā-yi khārijī, 1947), 6-7. In my discussion of Lāhūtī’s Pushkin translations below, I build on discussion of these translations in Lisa Yountchi, “Beyond Mere Translation: Abulqasim Lāhūtī,

In a speech at the oriental department of Leningrad State University in 1947, Lāhūtī attributed this approach to “the Soviet school of translation,” which required the translator, in Lāhūtī’s words, “to convey the content and form of the original in their inseparable unity.”⁸² He describes this obligation as a matter of intercultural reciprocity, insofar as Russian literary translation had already made the first gift:

Contemporary Russian literature has gathered a lot of experience in translating the literary works of various languages, including the works of the nations of the East [*khāvarzamīn*]. When a Persian poet reads a Russian translation of the ghazals of Hāfiẓ or Rūdakī, and sees how, with synonymous content, such attention has been paid to the preservation of the arrangement of hemistiches, internal rhymes, refrains, and peculiarities (for all that such forms are not familiar for the Russian reader), how could his conscience accept that in his translation of Pushkin’s poems to his own language he would not pay the same attention and would instead take an easier path!⁸³

Lāhūtī’s statements about the Soviet Russian approach to translation need not be taken at face value—this chapter will show how such reciprocity worked in practice—but beginning in the 1930s, he adopted a new approach to translation in keeping with the idea of an international standard.

This was not a complete departure; even his earliest translation, a section from Victor Hugo’s *L’Année terrible* (trans. 1923), was both an act of *istiqbāl* (a *nazīrah* that welcomes in a new model text) and modest formal innovation.⁸⁴ Furthermore, much interpretative space remains for the translator hoping “to convey unity” or “preserve an arrangement.” For his translation of Gorky’s “Song of the Storm Petrel” (“Pesnia o burevestnike,” 1901), Lāhūtī departs completely from the meter and even the typographical presentation of the original.

Soviet Tajik Translators, and the History of Russian-Iranian Cultural Relations” (paper, Middle East Studies Society annual meeting, New Orleans, LA, October 12, 2013).

⁸² Rozenfel’d, “Novye perevody Pushkina,” 127.

⁸³ Pūshkīn, *Chand asar*, 9-10.

⁸⁴ See Ch. 1.

Gorky's work, though metrically composed of trochaic tetrameter, is arranged in unusually long lines, each containing five sets of four trochées (with occasional pyrrhics).⁸⁵ In combination with the lack of rhyme, this presentation produces the effect of an incantatory prose-poem. Lāhūtī's translation, “Surūd dar vASF-i murgh-i tūfān” (“Song in Description of the Storm Petrel”), follows a syllabic meter, in which each of Gorky's long lines is broken into four or five ten-syllable lines.⁸⁶ Here, the typographic presentation is poetic, but the complete absence of rhythm, unlike Gorky's original and even more unusual in Persian, combines with the lack of rhyme to produce a text awkwardly caught between prose and verse. The opening “line” from Gorky and Lāhūtī's corresponding stanza will illustrate the effect of each:

Nad sedoi ravninoi moria veter tuchi sobiraet. Mezhdu tuchami i morem gordo
reet Burevestnik, chernoi molnii podobnyi.

Over the gray flatness of the sea, the wind gathers up the clouds. Between the clouds and sea, the Storm Petrel proudly soars, like black lightning.

Rū-yi hāmūn-i bahr-i sar-safid
Abrahā-yi tīrah gird miārad bād.
Mā bayn-i abrhā-vu daryā, maghrūr,
bālhā gushādah parvāz mīkunad
murgh-i tūfān, barq-i siyāh-mānand.

Lāhūtī was encouraged by his son to translate Mayakovsky, but demurred for a long time. Even after publishing a translation of Mayakovsky's “A Conversation with Comrade Lenin” (“Razgovor s tovarishchem Leninyem,” 1929), “he would sometimes say that a lot of searching was still required before an appropriate form for translating the works of Mayakovsky to Tajik could be found.” Although he continued to explore the possibilities, at the time of his death this “Conversation” remained his only complete Mayakovsky translation.⁸⁷ It preserves

⁸⁵ M. Gor'kii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 6 (Moscow: Nauka, 1970), 7-8.

⁸⁶ Lohutī, K5, 7-8, 344.

⁸⁷ Bonu, “Ēddoshtoi mukhtasar,” 79.

Mayakovsky's distinctive "stepladder" (*lesenka*) typographical arrangement, in which lines of verse, often metrically consistent, are broken up in accordance with a logic of oral performance.⁸⁸ The original poem's accentual meter of four stresses per line provided an uncertain starting point: stress is as understated in Persian as it is dominant in Russian. Insofar as Persian stressed syllables can be counted, Lāhūtī's version does not maintain a consistent number per line. Neither does he always displace the counting of stresses onto counting of long syllables in 'arūzī terms, or even long vowels. Nonetheless, most half-lines (some of them further divided typographically) contain two audible stresses according to one of those three principles, and to this end, long vowels are occasionally shortened. Finally, Lāhūtī's typographical division within the lines follows the logic of Persian speech, not the specific division of the original. The resulting translation more closely approximates the rhythm of Nâzım Hikmet's "stepladders" than those of Mayakovsky. Again, the opening will provide an example:

Grudoi del,
sumatokhui iavlenii
den' otoshel,
postepenno stemev.
Dvoe v komnate.
Ia
i Lenin—
fotografiei
na beloi stene.

With a heap of tasks
a flurry of events
the day had departed
darkening by degrees.
Two of us in the room.
Me
and Lenin,
A photograph
on a white wall.

⁸⁸ Michael Wachtel, *The Development of Russian Verse: Meter and Its Meanings* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 206-208.

az khirmanhā kār,
 awzā‘-i nuvīn,
 rūz
 kam-kam tārīk shudah
 āramīd.
 du tan dar utāq:
 manam
 va Linīn, —
 ‘aks-i ū
 rū-yi dīvār-i safid. ⁸⁹

In justifying his approach to translation of Pushkin, Lāhūtī pointed out that if the forms that Pushkin used in his works “did not exist until now in Persian literature,” neither did some of those forms exist in Russian literature until Pushkin “brought new forms into existence that were his own invention, and also made innovative use of the folklore of his homeland.”⁹⁰ To translate Pushkin’s “new forms,” as in Gorky and Mayakovsky’s poems, Lāhūtī departed from classical Persian formal constraints. In the case of works “whose originals have both a fixed classical meter and rhyme,” however, “the translation of these works are likewise in fixed ‘arūz meter and have ordinary Persian-language rhymes.” That is, if the effect of “innovative” forms in Russian could be reproduced by syllabic and accentual meters in Persian, then in keeping with the late-Stalinist conception of a universal classical canon and style, “classical” European forms were analogous to traditional Persian meter and rhyme.

Incorrectly, Lāhūtī suggests that Pushkin’s “tales” (*skazki*) were also “outside the rules of classical meter.”⁹¹ His translations of them are consequently neither consistently ‘arūzī nor closely modeled on Iranian folk meter. This is in keeping with the loose notion of what might make new literature of the Soviet East “of the folk” (*narodnyi*), a category which was contrasted

⁸⁹ Lohutī, K5, 14-16; V. V. Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v dvenadtsati tomakh*, vol. 10, eds. N. N. Aseeva, L. V. Maiakovskii, et. al. (Moscow: Gos. izdat. khud. lit., 1941), 25-27.

⁹⁰ Pūshkīn, *Chand asar*, 6, 11.

⁹¹ Ibid., 7.

with the “classical” (and thus misleadingly excluded ‘arūzī verse), but often drew on Western models more than even vernacular non-‘arūzī verse.⁹² The diction of the *skazki* translations did point toward Iranian folkloric models, and they open with the traditional Persian equivalent of “once upon a time”: “yakī būd, yakī nabūd.”⁹³ In Stalinist culture, and particularly after his 1937 Jubilee, Pushkin was a solitary colossus, simultaneously a progressive transformer of Russian literature and culture and a writer attuned to folk culture who spoke on behalf of the people.⁹⁴ In the Soviet national literatures, translation and other poetic production connected with the Pushkin legacy was a central feature of the Great Friendship.⁹⁵

The representation of each nation or nationality’s canonical literary genius was connected by explicit analogy to the figure of Pushkin, and Firdawsī was no exception. For the first year of *Payām-i naw* (1944-45), Soviet-Iranian friendship was represented by paired busts of Firdawsī and Pushkin on the cover of each issue. In the first issue, following the inaugural statements of editors and cultural officials, the first piece was a translation of Pushkin’s famous monument poem by the scholar and poet Parvīz Nātil Khānlarī.⁹⁶ As Pushkin’s classicizing poem *par excellence*, it was an ideal choice to celebrate the Soviet Union’s status as the defender of the

⁹² Lāhūtī’s first experiment in this direction, *narodnyi* and utterly unlike any traditional verse form, was “Man farzand-i yak dehqānē būdam” (“I was the child of a peasant”), a syllabic poem from 1925: see Chapter 1.

⁹³ A. Z. Rozenfel’d, “A. S. Pushkin v persidskikh perevodakh,” *Vestnik Leningradskogo Universiteta* 6 (1949): 96-97; Lisa Yountchi has suggested that this opening is a specific reference to Muḥammad-‘Alī Jamālzādah’s pathbreaking 1921 short story collection, *Yakī būd, yakī nabūd*: Yountchi, “Beyond Mere Translation.”

⁹⁴ Platt, *Greetings, Pushkin!*.

⁹⁵ Yountchi, “Between Russia and Iran,” 89-97; Boram Shin, “Pushkin bizniki! The 1937 Pushkin Centennial in Uzbekistan” (paper, Modern Language Association annual convention, Austin, TX, January 10, 2016).

⁹⁶ Russian scholarship has traditionally referred to the poem by its first line, but in non-scholarly Soviet and Iranian contexts it was often referred to as “The Monument” or the monument poem.

monumental high culture of every nation. Furthermore, the poem connects its own predicted monumental status to its translation in the context of Russian empire.

As such, it should be unsurprising that Khānlarī's Persian translation of this poem was neither the first nor the last in the Stalin period. In 1937, as part of the Pahlavi government's participation in the Soviet Pushkin Jubilee, the Iranian culture minister had commissioned Bahār to translate the poem for an anthology.⁹⁷ A third translation came hard on the heels of the second: *Payām-i naw*, whether because of editorial dissatisfaction with Khānlarī's translation or for some other reason, printed another translation of the poem five months later, composed by Lāhūtī. It was his first Pushkin translation to be published in Iran, though he had translated Pushkin for the Tajik press in preparation for the Jubilee. A comparison of the three translations will allow us to see what distinguishes Lāhūtī's approach to poetic translation and the poetics of translation.⁹⁸

The monument poem, which Pushkin wrote in 1836, less than a year before his death, is among his most densely referential works. It was his contribution to a chain of response-poems, drawing its epigraph, "Exegi monumentum," from the opening of Horace's Ode 3, 30.⁹⁹ Pushkin responds to that ode's structure and argument, as well as the responses that had been a feature of

⁹⁷ Malik al-Shu‘arā Bahār, "Banā-yi yādgār," in *Dīvān-i Ash ‘ar* (Tehran: Nigāh, 1387 [2008/9]), 504; originally printed in a shorter form and anonymously in Pūshkīn, *Namūnah ‘ī az āsār-i Pūshkīn: ba-yādgār-i ṣadumīn sāl-i vafāt-i shā‘ir* (Tehran: Barūkhīm, 1315 [1937]), 102-103. Rozenfel'd, "A. S. Pushkin v persidskikh perevodakh," 92-93. In the Pushkin birthday jubilee year (1949), Bahār also produced a *qīt ‘ah* mourning Pushkin's death: "Durūd bih Pūshkīn," in *Dīvān-i ash ‘ar*, 596. This poem likely alluded to the literary critic Mīrzā Fath-‘Alī Ākhūndzādah's famous commemorative poem of a century earlier. On Ākhūndzādah's poem, Feldman, "On the Threshold of Eurasia," 28-41; Naomi Caffee, "Russophonia," 66-80.

⁹⁸ Rozenfel'd briefly compares the first stanzas of the three translations, in order to demonstrate that only Lāhūtī "managed to convey the entire deep, committed [*ideinyi*] idea of the poem," in "A. S. Pushkin v persidskikh perevodakh," 93-94.

⁹⁹ Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, ed. and trans. Niall Rudd (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 216-217. As with Khāqānī's *Madā'in qasīdah*, the chain of response has many links: Horace may have written the poem as a response to Egyptian poetic models: Ludwig Koenen, "Egyptian Influence in Tibullus," *Illinois Classical Studies* 1 (1976): 127-129 and n. 3.

late-18th-century Russian poetry, in particular Derzhavin's "The Monument" ("Pamiatnik").¹⁰⁰

In five stanzas, Pushkin declares his verse a monument that will last as long as "even one bard/poet [*piit*] lives," because his advocacy of liberty and mercy in a "cruel age" earned the love of the people. Significantly for our purposes, although the first and fourth stanzas place the poet's works in relation to a single people (*narod*), the third conceives the monumentalization of the poet and poem as a process of translation:

Slukh obo mne pridet po vsei Rusi velikoi,
I nazovet menia vsiak sushchii v nei iazyk,
I gordyi vnuk slavian, i finn, i nyne dikoi
Tunguz, i drug stepei kalmyk.

Tidings of me will pass across all of great Rus
And each language/people in it will name me,
The proud descendant of the Slavs, the Finn, the still savage
Tungus, and the Kalmyk, friend of the steppes.¹⁰¹

This section corresponds roughly to Horace's boast of having been the first to bring "Aeolian verse to Italian meters," as a measure of Italy's advancement from "rustic" origins to the glory of Rome.¹⁰² Where Derzhavin introduced the Russian imperial sublime, imagining his fame spreading along the Volga, Don, Neva, and Ural rivers into the White and Black seas, Pushkin makes the languages in which his name will be spoken synecdochically stand in for the peoples of empire, corresponding to the cardinal points (northern Finns, southern Kalmyks, eastern Tungus, western Slavs—perhaps specifically Poles).¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ G. R. Derzhavin, *Stikhotvorenia* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1957), 233; Stephanie Sandler, *Commemorating Pushkin: Russia's Myth of a National Poet* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 21-25.

¹⁰¹ A. S. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v desiati tomakh*, 2nd ed., vol. 3 (Moscow: Akademii nauk SSSR, 1957), 373.

¹⁰² Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, 217.

¹⁰³ Katya Hokanson, "Politics and Poetry: The 'Anti-Polish' Poems and 'I Built Myself a Monument Not Made by Human Hands,'" in *Taboo Pushkin: Topics, Texts, Interpretations*, ed. Alyssa Dinega Gillespie (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012), 283-317.

Bahār's poem, almost certainly produced from an intermediary European translation, reorders and reworks Pushkin's themes in a much longer series of du-baytī stanzas: thirteen to Pushkin's five. Bahār's choice of the alternating-rhyme du-baytī (ABAB) places this in the tradition of Constitutionalist reception of European poetry, somewhere between a response poem and a translation. The interpretation is formally innovative, although only within the bounds of 'arūzī meter and lexical conservatism. His poem's civic discourse is also in the Constitutional tradition: Pushkin's *narod* is almost everywhere rendered by *būm* and *vaṭan*, words corresponding to a patriotic homeland rather than a *volk*.¹⁰⁴ It is only in the section connected with Pushkin's third stanza that Bahār uses the most usual Persian *narod* equivalent, *khalq*. The three corresponding (non-contiguous) stanzas are given here in full. Lines specifically connected with other stanzas of Pushkin's poem are italicized, while those referring to the third stanza are bold:

dar ‘arşah-i pahn-i dasht-i saqlāb
 z-āvāzah-am uftad inqilābī
v-az jilvah bih jilvah-gāh-i mahtāb
mashhūr shavam chu āftābī
 [...]
har ham-vaṭan-i surūd-khwānī
gūyā-st bih yād-i man zabānash
uftad sukhunam bih har zabānī
āzādī-yu ‘ishq tarjumānash

bā barbat-i khwud bih junbish āram
har shash jihat-u chahār sū-rā
v-andar dil-i khalq zindah dāram
*akhlāq-u ‘avātif-i nikū-rā*¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ On modern Iranian father/mother/homeland terminology, Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2005), 97-131; Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions: Shaping the Iranian Nation, 1804-1946* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 49-52 *et pass.*

¹⁰⁵ Bahār, “Banā-yi yādgār,” 504.

In the wide plain of the Slavic steppe
Revolution will come from my voice
And for my splendor, up to the lunar display
I will be renowned like the sun
[...]
Every compatriot who sings songs
Their language will be as if in my memory
My discourse will go into every language
Freedom and love will be its translation

With my lute, I set in motion
All six directions and four sides
And in the heart of the folk, I keep alive
Good morals and sympathies

Compared to Horace, Derzhavin, or Pushkin, Bahār's poem strips away toponyms and ethnonyms and abstracts the cardinal points of imperial space, although the classicism of *dasht-i saqlāb* makes a medieval Islamic Hyperborea of Pushkin's *Rus'*.

In other respects, Bahār reproduces Soviet representations of Pushkin as a bearer of revolution to a surprising degree.¹⁰⁶ Elsewhere in the poem, in keeping with his generation of Iranian writers' emphasis on education, he specifies that the poet's speech leavens "a revolution of thought." Where Pushkin's self-projection into other languages stops at the boundaries of Russian imperial power, Bahār claims a place for Pushkin, and perhaps for himself, in world literature. Consequently, the role of translation is substantially expanded, as languages beyond Russian sovereignty absorb not only the poet's name, but his discourse (*sukhun*), that is, the translatable content of the poet's verse. The assimilation of this content is liberating for the new bearers, but induces affection in its new speakers, presumably affection for Pushkin and Russia.

¹⁰⁶ In the context of Bahār's uneasy truce with the government of Rizā Shāh in the later 1930s, it is not difficult to find in the poem the same Aesopian quality that many have identified in commemorative texts produced for the Soviet Pushkin Jubilee. Stephanie Sandler, "The 1937 Pushkin Jubilee as Epic Trauma," in *Epic Revisionism: Russian History and Literature as Stalinist Propaganda*, eds. Kevin M. F. Platt and David Brandenberger (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 193-213.

Khānlarī's poem, unlike Bahār's, is for the most part a stanza-by-stanza translation of Pushkin, although additional lines pad out each stanza's length. In formal terms, the verse is more traditional than either of the other translations, consisting of rhymed couplets in the *mutaqārib* meter of the *Shāhnāmah*. As we have seen in Lāhūtī's verse, this meter is closely associated with heroic representations of the project of modernization, and Khānlarī's poem is heavy with mid-century neoclassicism. In Pushkin, the monument (*pamiatnik*) is more a notional memorial (from *pamiat'*, memory) than a literalized edifice, and Bahār's "yādgār" (*yād* is likewise memory) matches Pushkin closely, with relatively abstract verbs (*vozdvignut'*, to erect; *bunyād kardan*, to found/build) befitting a structure not built by human hands. In Khānlarī's rendering, the memorial becomes a *kākh*, a palace. "*Kākh-i yādgār*," his title for the poem, is not a phrase used to describe any kind of building, but another term used in the poem points to the specificity of the architectural vision: *buq'ah*, a place of pilgrimage or, in modern usage, a mausoleum.

We have already seen in Chapter 2 how the classical Persian literary canon came to be represented as a monumental edifice, ruined, abandoned, still standing. Between 1928 and 1934, this image was literalized in a mausoleum constructed on the proposed site of Firdawsī's burial. The marble structure, which was advocated and planned by an alliance of Pahlavi cultural officials, orientalists, and patriotic Iranian scholars and civic groups, quotes architectural elements from Achaemenid ruins.¹⁰⁷ In the section of the poem most closely associated with the construction of the mausoleum, used in promotional materials and inscribed prominently on the building, Firdawsī makes his own boast of poetic immortality through the *Shāhnāmah*, by which

¹⁰⁷ Talinn Grigor, *Building Iran: Modernism, Architecture, and National Heritage under the Pahlavi Monarchs* (New York: Periscope, 2009), 46-81.

he has scattered the seeds of speech (*sukhun*).¹⁰⁸ Khānlarī adapts these lines to fit Pushkin's claim to immortality in the second stanza: "As long as some place in the world nurtures speech (*sukhun*)/ My name will be scattered to all countries." The third stanza draws this map with greater specificity (the bold is Khānlarī's):

bih rūsiyah, īn kishvar-i bīkarān
ma-rā nām gardad bi-har jā ravān
shināsad ma-rā har kih z-īn kishvar-ast
agar chih zi qawm-u zabān dīgar-ast
agar hast az nasl-i **islāv**-i rād
v-agar khwud zi **Finlānd** dārad nizhād
zi **tungūs**, k-ash khū-yi dad dar sar-ast
zi **kalmūk**, k-ū yār-i dasht-u dar-ast

In Russia, this boundless country
My name travels fluently everywhere
Everyone who is from this country knows me
Even if they are of another tribe and language
Whether they are of the glad **Slav** lineage
Or whether they are of the race of **Finland**
Of the **Tungus**, whose minds still have a wild disposition
Or of the **Kalmyk**, lovers of steppe and plain

Where Bahār removes ethnic and geographic specificity, Khānlarī clarifies and updates it with the names of 20th-century nations, even in the case of "Kalmyk," for which a Persian rendering less antiquated than *saqlāb* exists: *qālmūq*. His description of Russia as without bounds or borders (*karān*) is clichéd, but would have had an edge in 1946, so soon after the Soviet withdrawal from Iran. He preserves the original poem's narrow sense of translation, in which at issue is not the movement of Pushkin's verse, but his name. Significantly, Khānlarī pauses to laboriously explain the multinational Russian/Soviet state, in which the inhabitants of a country

¹⁰⁸ The passage in the *Shāhnāmah* comparing his verbal immortality to a monument was featured on the lottery tickets that paid for the Firdawsī mausoleum's construction: *ibid.*, 61. The connection between Pushkin's monument poem and these lines from Firdawsī is pursued below in my discussion of Firdawsī translations. For Tūrsūnzādah's use of the same comparison, see Yountchi, "Between Russia and Iran," 91.

might be “of another tribe and lineage.” This is another ambiguous detail, at a moment when Iran’s own ethnic diversity, suppressed by Constitutionalist and Pahlavī rhetoric, had just reemerged in the Soviet-backed Azerbaijani and Kurdish secession movements.

The decision to print two translations of the same poem so close together in *Payām-i naw* is unexpected, so early in the journal’s project of presenting the Russian classics to Iranian readers. Lāhūtī expresses his disdain for previous translations of Pushkin in the introduction to his 1947 collection:

Of course, it is much easier to change four lines of Pushkin into fourteen, in one’s own style, and to surround them with decoration [*āb-u rang*], but in that case, the main requirement of a translation—that it be like a glass of limpid water [*zulāl*], in which nothing can be seen but the view through its far side—is not fulfilled. In that case, Pushkin’s simplicity, solidity, and concision have been changed to phrasemaking [*‘ibārat-pardāzī*] and loquaciousness—diseases against which Pushkin and the innovators sympathetic to him fought hard.

Accordingly, compared to Bahār or even Khānlarī, Lāhūtī’s translation seems austere. In keeping with his equation of Western syllabic-accentual meter with Persian ‘arūzī, he uses regular *hazaj* feet to form stanzas that do not reproduce Pushkin’s masculine/feminine rhyme alternation, but do end with a shortened line. He echoes Pushkin’s archaic flourishes with rhetorical elements such as “*valaw yak shā‘ir zindah*” (“*If yet one poet lives*”), but in keeping with Shaffī Kadkanī’s observation about Lāhūtī’s mixing of registers and dialects, he also introduces new words. Most importantly, like his translations of Gorky and Mayakovsky, this poem does not have the independent literary status of a *naṣīrah*, but clearly points toward the priority and authority of its original.

zi man āgah shavad sar tā sar-i rūsiyah-i a’zam
barad nām-i ma-rā bā mihrabānī har zabān dar ū-st,
nizhād-i rād-i islāv, fīn, kunūn bī-‘ilm tungūs ham
va kalmūk-i biyābān-dūst.

Great Russia will become aware of me from end to end
Every language in it will carry my name with affection.
The glad Slav race, the Finns, the Tungus, now unlearned, too
And the wasteland-loving Kalmuks.

Lāhūtī, who knew Russian well by the 1940s and consulted with Banu while translating, has a fine ear for the specificities of Pushkin's verse. As a Soviet writer familiar with the overlapping but distinct discourses of "the people" and "peoples," Lāhūtī translates the *narod* in stanzas 1 and 4 with *mardum* and *khalq*, in each case preserving Pushkin's rhetoric. In the third stanza, *nizhād* neatly conveys Pushkin's *vnuč*, and the preeminence of language as the marker of ethnicities is preserved.

Though he does not directly introduce the topic of literary translation, as Bahār does, Lāhūtī nonetheless connects the arrival of Pushkin's name in a new language with expansions in consciousness and feeling among the speakers. This is reinforced by his description of the Tungus as "*kunūn bī-'ilm*" (italics mine), "without knowledge (*for*) now," which captures the anticipated future enlightenment in Pushkin [*nyne dikoi*]. The translation departs most from its source in its literal-mindedness. Where Pushkin refers to his "dust" [*moi prakh*], a scriptural gesture toward decay of the body that is commonplace in Russian, English, and Persian, Lāhūtī spells this out: "even though my body will become dust." For the same reason, he removes all of the rhetoric of the poet as a singer; where Pushkin awakens good feelings "with the lyre" [*liroi*], Lāhūtī does so "with discourse" [*sukhun*]. These changes suggest the translator's desire not only to convey, but also to explain the poem to new readers.

Lāhūtī's translation work brings out his most radical advocacy of literary modernization, and his deepest deference to notions of classical heritage. For him, there is no contradiction when he urges young Persian writers "to perform the service for the literature of their own language that Pushkin did for Russian literature, to bring it forward at full speed, and, by keeping and

using its world-conquering thousand-year treasury, they will add to it new riches and glories.”¹⁰⁹

For Iranian readers of the 1940s, Lāhūtī appeared entirely as a herald of literary modernity, importing the texts and techniques of more advanced national literatures. Nafīsī seems to draw more on Lāhūtī’s 1920s rhetoric when he describes him in *Payām-i naw*: “Today, composers and writers are fast-moving guides, scouts of the freshest thoughts of world civilization [*tamaddun*], and inevitably the poet and writer must be in the front rank in combat, leading the other soldiers. This is the most important feature of Lāhūtī’s poetry.” Nafīsī is not discussing class struggle here: who or what is the enemy? The rhetoric of battle takes a strange turn here:

Of course, there’s no denying that the great poets of Iran conquered [*giriftand*] the world with those special charms, techniques, rhyme-making, meters, and tone that they have in their discourse, but since they conquered the world, they didn’t leave behind a finger’s breadth of unconquered space for the poets of their country [...] Then inevitably, it is necessary to take another way forward: to speak of the theme that hasn’t been spoken, to find new meters, change rhyme schemes, and enter a more open field.¹¹⁰

A conquest, then, can also be a retreat. It is precisely the unassailable authority of the classics that requires the poetic soldier to “storm” an open field instead of the edifice of the Persian canon. But there is no sense, either here or in any of the monument poem translations, that another language’s classics are similarly unassailable fortresses. That is, one nation’s literary-linguistic territory is not imagined to be contiguous to the next, but existing on non-intersecting planes, perhaps even arranged vertically in the stratigraphy of historical stages. It is for this reason that Pushkin’s monument, built again in a new language, might be reconceived not as the capital of Russian poetry but as an outpost of Persian poetry. In this way, Nafīsī answers any suggestion that Lāhūtī’s translations might constitute an imposition or threat to Persian by denying that national languages and literatures can take territory from each other at all.

¹⁰⁹ Lāhūtī, *Chand asar*, 12.

¹¹⁰ Nafīsī, “Lāhūtī,” 48.

2. Lāhūtī and Banu Translate the World: Global Forms and Soviet Classics

In 1947, the year when Lāhūtī’s translated volume of Pushkin was published in Iran, a Cyrillic-script edition was also published in Stalinabad.¹¹¹ The words were the same, and the dynamics between translation and existing literary language comparable. How might we think of the different significance of a Pushkin translation, not in the “near abroad,” but in a union republic? Whereas Iranian writers under Soviet occupation wrote in a literary market flooded with Soviet products (that is, under conditions of literary trade deficit), in Tajikistan not only writers but the public experienced the reciprocity of the literary international, since all-Union celebrations of Firdawsī and Rūdakī provided a counterpart to their own education on Pushkin (and Rustaveli, and Shevchenko...). Richard Jacquemond has suggested imbalance of translation as a measure of cultural hegemony.¹¹² In Iran, the Soviet Union made little attempt to avoid such an imbalance, but in Central Asia, there were attempts to avoid such an impression, even if paper allocation did not always match rhetoric.

Jacquemonde highlights the disparity between the “servile” status of peripheral translators of hegemonic texts and the “authoritative” position of the hegemonic translator of peripheral texts, both of which serve to bring all literary traditions into line with the forms of the hegemonic culture.¹¹³ Laura Adams, by contrast, uses the case of Soviet Central Asian theater to complicate the postcolonial interpretation of the homogenization of world cultural forms as a straightforward result of differentials of economic or political power, proposing that the broader

¹¹¹ A. S. Pushkin, *Chand asar*, trans. Lohutī (Stalinabad: 1947).

¹¹² Richard Jacquemond, “Translation and Cultural Hegemony: The Case of French-Arabic Translation,” in *Rethinking Translation: Discourse, Subjectivity, Ideology*, ed. Lawrence Venuti (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 139-140.

¹¹³ Ibid., 155.

context is “modernity's drive for universalization.”¹¹⁴ She explains this drive as the result of an increasing sense, among both the cultural bureaucrats and artists of the peripheries, of “an international audience and [...] a global cultural field.” Universalization takes place not only as the center seeks to propagate its cultural forms, but as “peripheries draw on global models to enhance their status relative to other peripheries,” and even “to propagate local content.”¹¹⁵ In the multinational sphere, these dynamics governed not only the propagation of the genres and classic works of world literature, but also the propagation of Russian as a global literary language. By producing commissioned translations of world theater to be performed by the Tajik state theater, Lāhūtī and Banu helped to enhance the status of Tajikistan's cultural industry. With their translation of the *Shāhnāmah*, they enhanced the prestige and visibility of Persianate culture itself, while contributing to the emergence of Soviet multinational Russophonia. The section that follows will consider the negotiation between global/Russian and Persianate cosmopolitan/Tajik literary form, and language as cultural form, in two of the couple's collaborative translation projects, Banu's *Shāhnāmah* and Lāhūtī's *King Lear*.

As we have seen in Lāhūtī's introduction to his Pushkin translations, in order to justify his willingness to break the rules of Persian poetry for the sake of translation fidelity, he pointed to the care with which Russian translators preserved the meter, rhyme, and style of Persian poetry in their translations as a debt of hospitality that had to be repaid. If any work could substantiate this hopeful characterization, it is the Russian *Shāhnāmah* produced by Banu. The story of its production is in itself an epic of Soviet Persianate internationalism, beginning with a small 1943 volume of selected passages and ending with the final volume of the complete translation, published in 1989. In between, a Soviet colonel brought back a copy of the Tehran

¹¹⁴ Adams, “Globalization, Universalism, and Cultural Form,” 615.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 636.

Firdawsī Jubilee edition from occupied Iran; the typeset volume was held back from the printers, then reapproved after Jawaharlal Nehru unwittingly intervened (see my introduction); Lāhūtī passed away; the project lost funding after the 4th volume and only resumed after almost fifteen years, with the support of the Tajik Academy of Sciences.¹¹⁶ As the first volume of the translation came out, its editor, E. E. Bertel's, was also orchestrating the first proper critical edition of the *Shāhnāmah*, although he, too, passed away in 1957, before even the first volume of that enterprise was published in 1960. In a postscript to the final volume, Banu described the project in the epic mode, proceeding “through sicknesses, through traumas, and through many relocations. Moscow and the Moscow suburbs, Tashkent and Ashgabat, Samarkand and Bukhara, Dushanbe and the banks of the Vakhsh, where wasn’t the *Shāhnāmah* translated, all the way to Iran and the French Alps,” where family and friends helped with technical tasks such as proofreading.¹¹⁷

She emphasizes the collaborative spirit of the enterprise, recalling a Samarqandi girl named Sa‘ādat, who helped by pasting blank pages into her copy of Firdawsī to be used for interlinear notes. One day, while she was busy with that task, her mother called her for lunch:

“I’m here!,” yelled the daughter, “hang on, I’m busy, we’re translating the *Shāhnāmah* here!” In essence, Saodat was right. We were all translating the *Shāhnāmah*: the city, everyday life, everyone acquainted with the pages of the epic, the people who speak the language of Firdawsi, and the architectural monuments of his age...¹¹⁸

The poetry of the translation was Banu’s alone, but emerged from a decades-long conversation about the work between her and Lāhūtī, culminating with the annotations that he wrote on the

¹¹⁶ Kirasirova, “My Enemy’s Enemy,” 454; Banu, “Epopeia ob epopee,” 52.

¹¹⁷ Banu, “Korotko ob istorii sozdaniia,” 579-580; clarified in correspondence with Leyla Lahuty.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 580.

inserted pages in the copy that Banu used for her translation work.¹¹⁹ Banu's orientalist training was sufficient preparation for the task, as her independent work after the second volume would show. Lāhūtī did have deep, lifelong familiarity with the text, and contributed to the textual criticism that was particularly important to the project while it dealt with sections not yet published in the new critical edition.

Translation of excerpts from the *Shāhnāmah* had previously drawn some of the most famous Russian literary translators of poetry, from Vasilii Zhukovskii (1783-1852) to Mikhail Lozinskii (1886-1955), but the editions of the 1940s and 1950s consisted entirely of new (partial) translations.¹²⁰ A few of the translators, notably Konstantin Lipskerov and Semen Lipkin, combined some Persian-language knowledge with the sensitivity of original Russian poets. In her first volume, Banu writes that “[t]he Soviet reader awaits a full poetic translation of the *Shāhnāmah* to Russian, especially unmediated and from the original.” Banu and Lāhūtī’s direct philological work served “first [...] to carefully, without distortions, reproduce the thoughts and images of a literary masterpiece a thousand years old; second, to give the reader a suggestion, however distant, of the musicality of Firdawsi’s verse.”¹²¹ For the latter goal, Banu made notes on oral performances from the epic by Tajiks and Iranians, and determined that *motaqārib* meter was best replicated by masculine-rhymed amphibrachs. For the former, she writes, “We tried to preserve the original images in translation, even if they sound unusual to a Russian reader (for

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 578.

¹²⁰ I. Braginskii, introduction, *Shakh-name*, 23-25. My analysis draws on N. Iu. Chalisova, “Abu-l-Kasim Firdousi v russkikh perevodakh: strategii retseptsii,” in *Rossiya-Iran: dialog kul’tur*, ed. A. S. Zapesotskii (St. Petersburg: SPBGUP, 2017), 109-116.

¹²¹ Ts. Banu, “Ot perevodchika,” in Firdousi, *Shakhname*, vol. 1 (1957), 594.

example, comparing troops to a well-dressed bride or a spring garden). Our task was not to adapt the original to our own taste, but to convey it as it is.”¹²²

The distinctive features of Banu’s translation emerge if we compare it to the best *podstrochnik*-based *Shāhnāmah* translations of that decade, by Semen Lipkin. Although he would build up a close familiarity with classical Persian over the course of a long and distinguished career, his translations of passages from the *Shāhnāmah* were his first large-scale work in that language. Following translations from ‘Alī-shēr Navā’ī’s Chaghatay *masnavī* “Laylī va Majnūn” during the war, he translated a few Tajik poems by Tūrsūnzādah. Then, he recalled, “they proposed that I should translate Firdawsi’s poem, and I studied Persian literature, and in a year and a half I could speak Tajik decently. In the following year, I conversed a little bit with Tajik workers in [the writers’ colony of] Perekelkino,” as he began his translation based on a *podstrochnik* prepared by Magomed-Nuri Osmanov, an orientalist of Dargin origin.¹²³

Despite such a gap in experience and expertise, Lipkin and Banu both translated Firdawṣī with Russian verse ringing in their ears, and their texts are full of intentional or unintentional intertextual connections. Firdawṣī’s third-person description of how he came to write the work concludes: “As the commander listened to their discourse/ He laid the foundation of a renowned book [*nāmah*]// That has become a memorial [*yādgār*] in the world/ He is applauded by great and small.”¹²⁴ Neither Lipkin nor Banu could resist an echo of the opening line of Pushkin’s

¹²² Ibid. 595.

¹²³ Semen Lipkin and Elena Kalashnikova, “Tem, kogo ia perevodil, ia chasto sovetoval, chto ubrat’, gde rasshirit’ . . .,” in “Ugl’, pylaiushchii ognem—“: vspominaniia o Mandel’shtame: stikhi, stat’i, perepiska, ed. P. Nerler (Moscow: Izdatel’skii tsentr Rossiiskii gos. universiteta, 2008), 273; Chalisova, “Abu-l-Kasim Firdousi v russkikh perevodakh,” 114.

¹²⁴ Firdawṣī, *Shāhnāmah*, vol. 1 (Tehran: Barūkhīm, 1934), 8, l. 142-143. All citations of the original *Shāhnāmah* are taken from the edition used by Banu and Lipkin, which Sa‘īd Nafīsī, ‘Allāmah Iqbāl, and Partaw Minuvī produced for the Jubilee, completing a previous edition begun by Johann Vullers in the nineteenth century. All English translations are mine.

monument poem, “Ia pamiatnik sebe vozdvig nerukotvornyj,” (“I have erected a monument to myself not built by human hands”)—a neat reversal of Khānlārī’s translation of Pushkin. In Banu’s rendering, the echo approaches paraphrase:

I na zemle on pamiatnik vozdvig,—
Ves' mir vosslavil etu knigu knig.
(Lipkin)¹²⁵

Tak pamiatnik vechnyi sebe on vozdvig.
Chtut vitiazia mudrogo mal i velik.
(Banu)¹²⁶

In her first volume, Banu underlines the importance of translation from the original with a discussion of one particular aphorism from Firdawsī, provided here together with a word-by-word rendering:

Ba-guftār-i dānandagān rāh jūy
ba-gītī bipūy-u ba-har kas bigūy
zi-har dānishi chun sukhun bishnavī
az āmūkhtan yak zamān naghnavī
chu dīdār yābī ba-shākh-i sukhun
bidānī kih dāniš nayāyad bih bun¹²⁷

Seek a path to the speech of those who know
Search/run [throughout] the world and tell it to everyone
When you hear any speech about knowledge
Don’t rest for a moment from learning [it]
When you manage to see the branches of discourse
Know that *knowledge does not reach the root.*

I have translated the italicized phrase literally, as does Lipkin:

K slovam razumnykh ty ishchi puti,
Ves' mir proidi, chtob znaniia obresti.
O tom, chto ty uslyshal, vsem povedai,
S uporstvom kornii issledui:

¹²⁵ “And on the earth, he erected a monument/ All the world praised this book of books.” Firdousi, *Shakh-name* (1957), 37.

¹²⁶ “Thus, he erected an eternal monument to himself/ Great and small deemed him a wise hero.” Firdousi, *Shakhname*, vol. 1 (1957), 16.

¹²⁷ Firdawsī, *Shāhnāmah*, vol. 1 (1934), 3, l. 33-35

Lish' vetvi izuchiv na dreve slov,
Doiti ty ne sumeesh' do osnov.¹²⁸

Firdawsi's second couplet, admittedly repetitive, disappears as Lipkin takes three lines each to convey his reading of the first and third couplets. His reading of the final branch/root metaphor is in accordance with previous Russian and English translations: "Tenaciously explore the roots of knowledge:/ Having only studied the branches of the tree of speech,/ You will not manage to reach the very [bottom of the] roots." The translation makes sense on its own terms, but neglects a second, idiomatic meaning of "reaching the root."

In her notes on the passage, Banu does not single out the errors of any previous translation. But she explains her own process:

Attentive analysis of the text made it possible to establish the original idea of these lines. The purely internal, linguistic wordplay—branch and root—was adopted by the poet only to emphasize the contrast between the two parts of that *bayt* (couplet). For this reason, in translating it made sense to distinguish the important part, and line up a counterpart in Russian that would connect to the important part just as logically as in the original. The basic idea in that *bayt* is that there is no limit to knowledge. The word *bun*, which has two meanings, root and limit/end, is clearly used here in the second meaning, since the phrase *nayāyad bih bun* signifies 'has no limit/end.' But the word 'end' [*konets*] is most naturally opposed to 'beginning' [*nachalo*], in this case the 'beginning of knowledge,' 'the first precepts.'¹²⁹

The resulting translation reads:

Ty istinu v mudrykh rechen'iakh naidi,
O nei povestvuia, ves' mir oboidi.
Nauku vse glubzhe postignut' stremis',
Poznaniia vechnoiu zhazhdoi tomis'.
Lish' pervykh poznanii blesnet tebe svet,
Uznaesh': predela dlia znaniia net.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Firdousi, *Shakh-name* (1957), 30.

¹²⁹ Ts. Banu, "Ot perevodchika," 594.

¹³⁰ Firdousi, *Shakhname*, vol. 1 (1957), 9.

The final couplet does uproot Firdawṣī’s wordplay: “No sooner has the light of the first precepts shone on you/ Than you know that there is no limit to knowledge.” But the image of the searching root is not altogether removed, only displaced onto the previous couplet, where the “eternally thirsty” search for knowledge goes “ever deeper.”¹³¹

The auspicious conjunction involved in this translation was by no means typical of literary translations of world classics in the 1950s, although it does point to the possibilities and aspirations contained by the translation system. The sheer range of possible outcomes within this system may be understood by examination of another translation jointly undertaken by Lāhūtī and Banu at the same time as the first volume of the Russian *Shāhnāmah* was approaching completion. *King Lear* was the third of Shakespeare’s plays that Lāhūtī and Banu translated, in each case to help the Tajik state academic theater to expand its repertory of world classics. In line with nearly identical projects for the other Eastern republics, the couple’s first Shakespeare translation, *Othello*, was prepared ahead of the first Tajik ten-day festival in 1941, together with Lāhūtī’s ‘arūzī opera adapted from the *Shāhnāmah*, *Kāvah-i āhangar* (“Kāvah the Blacksmith”). They translated *Othello* in stark, simple prose, but made a first experiment with a ten-syllable counterpart to blank verse in Lope de Vega’s *Fuenteovejuna* (1942), although the original had not been blank verse.¹³² Over the following decade, they produced a series of dramatic translations in syllabic meters intended to mimic the syllabic and accentual features of the

¹³¹ Although critical notice of the early volumes was limited, Banu’s translation is held in high regard today by both Iranian and Russian scholars. Cf. Nargis Muhammadi-badr, “Naqsh-i tarjumah dar ta‘āmilāt-i farhangī-i Irān va Rūsiyah,” *Pizhūhish-i zabānhā-yi khārijī* 43 (1387): 128; Chalisova, “Abu-l-Kasim Firdousi v russkikh perevodakh,” 114-116.

¹³² The choice of meter may reflect the Russian relay translation from which Lāhūtī and Banu produced their version. The main source of *Fuenteovejuna*’s fame on the Soviet stage was the ballet adaptation, *Laurencia* (1939) composed by Aleksandr Krein and choreographed by Vakhtang Chabukiani.

originals:¹³³ Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and Pushkin's *Mozart and Salieri* (1947), Griboedov's *Woe from Wit* ("Gore ot uma," 1956), and finally *King Lear* (1957).¹³⁴ There had been a burst of Soviet interest in *King Lear* following a 1934 Russian translation by Mikhail Kuzmin and an internationally celebrated 1935 Yiddish production with Solomon Mikhoels in the leading role.¹³⁵ Given Lāhūtī and Banu's friendship with Mikhoels, who was assassinated on Stalin's orders in 1948, the choice of the play may have had particular significance in the context of de-Stalinization.

Their previous theatrical translations, with the exception of Pushkin and Griboedov, were primarily based neither on the original texts nor *podstrochniki*. Instead, authoritative originality was vested in each case in a Russian poetic translation. In Western Europe, use of such "relay translations" had long been more typical of the diffusion of oriental literature than Western classics. But in the Russian Empire, Russian literary translations were often used as relay texts in the transfer of Western texts to literary languages of the Caucasus.¹³⁶ Relay translation became a common practice in Central Asia in the first years of Soviet rule both for authoritative Marxist texts and literature. 'Aynī, for example, prepared to write his own first full-length novel in 1928

¹³³ These later Shakespeare translations, as well as *Mozart and Salieri*, follow alternations between verse and prose, using ten-syllable lines as a counterpart to blank verse. The Griboedov translation follows the original's flexible-length lines of iambs with lines containing a variable but even number of syllables.

¹³⁴ Chronology and basic production history is taken from *K5* and *KB5*.

¹³⁵ Elena A. Pervushina, "'Korol' Lir' Shekspira v Rossii: osnovnye perevodicheskie strategii XIX-XX vekov," *International Communication Studies* 13, no. 1 (2014): 84-85; I. L. Motronenko, "Korol' Lir: natsional'nyi kontekst i kontrapunkty Solomona Mikhoelsa," in *Natsional'nyi teatr v kontekste mnogonatsional'noi kul'tury: doklady, soobshcheniya* (Moscow: Tri kvadrata, 2010), 36-50; see also Jeffrey Veidlinger, *The Moscow State Yiddish Theater: Jewish Culture on the Soviet Stage* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 139-146.

¹³⁶ N.K. Orlovskaia, "Shekspir v Gruzii," in *Vil'iam Shekspir. K chetyrekhsoletiu so dnia rozhdeniya. 1564-1964. Issledovaniia i materialy* (Moscow: Akademiiia nauk SSSR, 1964), <http://www.w-shakespeare.ru/library/vilyam-shekspir-issledovaniya-i-materialy11.html>.

by translating a French colonial novel to Tajik through intermediaries.¹³⁷ He described the process in this way:

After its translation from French to Russian, from Russian to Uzbek—it has been turned from Uzbek into Tajik. Some parts where the Uzbek wasn't really comprehensible were corrected by using the Russian text. Nonetheless (insofar as it has reached me through two intermediaries), it is possible that the original content [*mazmun*], names, and descriptions have changed a lot. On top of this, taking into account the taste of Tajik readers, who prefer verse, some descriptions have been adorned with passages of poetry and poetic rhymed prose [*fiqrah 'hā-yi she'rmānand*].¹³⁸

Such early Soviet concessions to local literary form largely ceased in Soviet Eastern translations of works in Western forms by the end of the anti-cosmopolitan campaign. Instead, relay translations came to act as a filter that removed stylistic complexity and ambiguity from the text. In the case of *Lear*, Lāhūtī and Banu selected Tatiana Shchepkina-Kupernik's 1937 translation, likely on the basis of its clarity relative to Kuzmin's.¹³⁹ Where Kuzmin's desire to preserve the number of lines produced a play whose short sentences alternate between lapidary clarity and gnomic ambiguity (Chukovskii called his translations “idiotization of the text”), Shchepkina-Kupernik felt that “to convey Shakespeare's idea is more important than [to preserve] the mechanical form of the phrase, even if it is said with too many syllables, words, or even lines.”¹⁴⁰ The Lāhūtīs' translation style follows that principle still further. It had emerged from their close work with the Tajik academic theater company at the early stages of their translation of *Romeo and Juliet*, during the wartime evacuation. In a letter in 1944, they urged

¹³⁷ Ferdinand Duchêne, *Kamir; roman d'une femme arabe* (Paris: Impr. de l'illustration, 1926); Ferdinand Diushen, *Molodoi mesiats: roman*, trans. A.K. Vinogradov (Moscow: izd. “Sovremennye problemy,” 1926); Ferdinand Diuşen, *Qamar: rumon*, trans. Zarif Başır (Samarkand-Tashkent: Özbekiston davlat naşr., 1928); Ferdinand Diuşen, *Qamar: rumon*, trans. S. Ajnī (Samarkand: Naşrijoti davlatii Toçikiston, 1928).

¹³⁸ Sadriddin Ainī, *Kulliēt*, vol. 13 (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1977), 305.

¹³⁹ It should be assumed that Pasternak's version (1949) was not considered as a basis.

¹⁴⁰ Pervushina, “Korol' Lir' Shekspira v Rossii,” 87-88; Tat'iana L'vovna Shchepkina-Kupernik, *Dni moei zhizni* (Moscow: Zakharov, 2005), 490.

the company to take pains that the audience understand what they are saying. “For our part, we have done everything we can so that as much as humanly possible, the language of the translation is maximally simple and intelligible. To do more would have meant to vulgarize and distort Shakespeare, with which, of course, one can’t agree.”¹⁴¹

The balance was particularly difficult as the translators worked with a text that had already been “maximally simplified” in Russian. In many instances, rhetorical confusions in the Tajik text result from Shchepkina-Kupernik’s extended explication or removal of wordplay in the Russian translation.¹⁴² In the case of *Lear*, the method of simplification poses special problems, since lapses into real and feigned madness constitute a central section of the play. As Lear and Edgar’s most obscure rhymes turn to prosy sense, we reach the limits of Lāhūtī’s poetics of persuasion. At the level of diction, the translation cleaves remarkably closely to colloquial Tajik, drawing on vernacular vocabulary and even grammatical constructions (e.g. *-a īstādan*). Shchepkina-Kupernik’s tendency to render Shakespeare in the language of Russian romantic poetry has no equivalent here. The outcome was a Shakespeare that Tajik critics could claim as their own, with the assumption of translation transparency:

High emotions, surprising lyricism, powerful satire, poetic elegance, the variety of characters depicted—these are special characteristics of classical Tajik literature, from which the aesthetic sense of the Tajik people has been formed. These particularities of Tajik verse did not fail to influence the collective creation of the Tajik academic dramatic theater. These kinds of characteristics, which also had a

¹⁴¹ G. A. Shukurova, *Shekspir v Srednei Azii* (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1969), 136-137.

¹⁴² “Then poor Cordelia!/ And yet not so; since, I am sure, my love’s/ More richer than my tongue” becomes “O bednaia Kordelia!/ No net, ia ne bedna: moia liubov’/ Sil’nee slov moikh” (love is not *richer than my tongue* but *stronger than my words*). It remains for Lāhūtī to drop the conceit of material poverty altogether for a word, *bēchārah*, that only means “helpless and pitiable,” not “impoverished,” and the reason for Cordelia’s playful self-contradiction disappears altogether: “Bēchārah Kordelia! Nē, īn ṭawr nēst./ Bāvarē dāram, muhabbat-i man/ Az ān chih bāyad bar zabān rānam/ zūrtar ast.” Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 103; Shekspir, “Korol’ Lir,” 8; Lohutī, *KB5*, 323.

place in the dramaturgic mind of Shakespeare, are the reason for the Tajik artists' [...] successful performance of his works.¹⁴³

Only in the first scene does the specificity of Persian courtly language come to the fore, as the play focuses on the ethics of conventional speech. There is an echo of the erotic/political rhetoric of the ghazal in Goneril's declaration that she loves her father "Bēsh az binā'ī, havā, āzādī/ Bēsh az har chī garān, kamyāb, 'ālī-st" ("Dearer than eye-sight, space, and liberty; Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare," I.i).¹⁴⁴ With her father's reply, though, the ceremonial register comes into focus.

Of all these bounds even from this line, to this,
With shadowy forests and with champains riched
With plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads,
We make thee lady.¹⁴⁵

Ba īn qismat, az īn tā bah ān ḥad,
Bā sabz jangalhā, ḥāṣil-khēz dasht'hā,
Sērab daryāhā, pahn charāgāhhā
Tu-rā ṣāḥib kardēm.¹⁴⁶

The vocabulary of bountiful landscape, once simplified, reveals that the characters are negotiating in the Soviet Tajik neoclassical rhetoric of the gift that Lāhūtī, more than any other writer, developed. The subtlest achievement of the Tajik *King Lear* is its anxious reconsideration of the linguistic performances on which multinational love was founded.¹⁴⁷ A Russian critic, reviewing a performance of *King Lear* at the Tajik ten-day festival in Moscow, judged the speech of the lead character to be unconvincing, specifically in the first scene, for its "rhetoricality" [*ritorizm*]: "a somewhat literary, abstract king/despot, for whom the distribution

¹⁴³ B. Kim'ëgarov, "Zinati sahnai tojik," *Tojikistoni Soveti*, May 23, 1957, 3.

¹⁴⁴ Lohutī, *KB5*, 322.

¹⁴⁵ Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 102.

¹⁴⁶ Lohutī, *KB5*, 322.

¹⁴⁷ My approach here draws on, but substantially modifies, Lev Loseff's conception of Soviet "aesopian translation": Loseff, *On the Beneficence of Censorship: Aesopian Language in Modern Russian Literature*, trans. Jane Bobko (München: O. Sagner in Kommission, 1984), 77.

of lands is just a celebration [*prazdnik*] of power, a caprice of cold intellect, and not a dangerous but splendid celebration of life and love.”¹⁴⁸ The critic’s objection is likely based solely on the performance, not the text. But I do not believe that it is explained entirely by the Tajik actors’ inexperience. Rather, the Tajik performance failed to reproduce the Russian Romantic conception of Shakespeare, finding instead a different formal linguistic and gestural repertoire of power, bearing an uncomfortable relationship to other “celebrations of power.”

The asymmetry of the two translations runs opposite to Jacquemonde’s model of the servile colonial translator and the high-handed metropolitan orientalist. Banu worked in a spirit of translatorial receptivity as she sought to plant the root of Firdawsī’s discourse in Russian soil, while Lāhūtī made Shakespeare serve the exigencies of the Tajik stage. Nonetheless, together, the two translations illustrate a process of the propagation of universal literary languages and forms that conforms to Adams’ model. Banu wrote a close translation of the *Shāhnāmah* that made the case for the text before a universalized public by means of a hegemonic language, however limited her concessions to global or Russian literary form. Lāhūtī, assembling a Western classic from a partially preassembled kit, wrote a less close adaptation of *Lear* whose primary content was the idea of “Shakespearean theater,” with the primary purpose of educating Tajik theater workers and audiences in new forms of performance and receptivity. Both translations also suggest how such globalized products could also preserve or even propagate the formal possibilities contained in a non-Western literary tradition. Banu’s forceful insistence on the Shahnamah’s transmissibility bore fruit as her translation went on to become a relay text for Bulgarian and Israeli translators.¹⁴⁹ Even in the Shakespearian theater, one of the most modular of Soviet artistic institutions, a translation’s register of Persian courtly speech could bring out out

¹⁴⁸ O. Pyzhova, “Puti natsional’nogo teatra,” *Teatr* 7 (1957): 81.

¹⁴⁹ E-mail correspondence with Leyla Lahuty, July 24, 2018.

different resonances in *Lear*'s scenario of tyranny and panegyric. The colonial residue in the Soviet translation system, then, is best sought not among multinational writers and intermediaries, but rather in Russian literature.

Soviet Translation Discourse

Thus far, we have seen several descriptions of the translator's task by Lāhūtī and Banu. Their desire "not to adapt the original to our own taste, but to convey it as it is," using "forms corresponding to the original," or "maximally simple and intelligible": all of these phrases echo positions in contemporaneous Soviet polemics about the role of the translator and the nature of translation. Most of these debates, conducted in the literary journals, translator professional publications, and eventually in programmatic books, concerned the translation of Western classics. Where the debates directly touched on translation of national literatures to Russian, the examples given were often from Ukrainian literature. Where Eastern translations were evaluated in such articles, the translation was usually set alongside not the original, but a *podstrochnik*. In short, these polemics belong almost exclusively to the more familiar strain of Western-oriented Soviet literary internationalism, which can be traced from Gorky's World Literature Press in the early 1920s through the journal *Literaturnoe nasledstvo* (Literary Heritage) in the 1930s to the rediscovery of West European culture during the Thaw. This dissertation has traced another lineage of Soviet literary internationalism extending from the Central Press of the East in the early 1920s through the multinational Writers' Union, ten-day festivals, jubilees, and translation journals of the Stalin period.

Many Russophone writer-functionaries participated in both spheres, especially from the establishment of the Writers' Union and Translators' Union in the early 1930s, and polemics in

the two spheres frequently shared terminology (“humanism,” “heritage,” “formalism,” etc.). However, these points of intersection should not deceive us into an excessively synoptic periodization of Soviet literary internationalism. The Russophone literary manifestations of Eastern literary multinationalism and internationalism were the tip of an iceberg, whose vast bulk consisted of literary production and debates conducted in other languages and sometimes other countries, as well as the scholarship of generations of Soviet orientalists. The well-established scholarship on West-facing Soviet translation debates will be referred to here insofar as it helps to clarify debates on Eastern literary translation. But as the remainder of this chapter will show, advocates of one position in the translation of Western literature often behaved differently as Eastern translators. Likewise, borrowed terminology often obscured substantially different polemical stakes in the multinational East. This section surveys some Soviet discussions on translation of the 1940s and 1950s, and their reflection in the writings of Eastern literary translators specifically.

The idiosyncrasy of individual approaches to translation in the late Stalin period was acknowledged by translators themselves at their second all-Union congress in 1951, where they declared “the necessity of working out a single Soviet theory of translation, closely connected with the method of socialist realism.”¹⁵⁰ Such a method was proclaimed and elaborated over the course of the 1950s by a set of translators who referred to their method as “realist translation,” led by Ivan Kashkin, a translator of English and American prose.¹⁵¹ The earliest statements of the “realist” program came in the form of a series of attacks on the translation theories and practices of two translators whom the “realists” accused of “literalism.” These supposed “literalists” were

¹⁵⁰ Qtd. in Andrei Azov, *Poverzhennye bukvalisty: iz istorii khudozhestvennogo perevoda v SSSR v 1920-1960-e gody* (Moscow: Izdatel’skii dom Vysshei schkoly ekonomiki, 2013), 97.

¹⁵¹ My account of this debate relies primarily on Andrei Azov, *Poverzhennye bukvalisty*.

Evgenii Lann, a translator of mostly English prose, and Georgii Shengeli, a poet and translator of first European and then Eastern poetry. By the early 1960s, the principle of “realist translation” had gained general recognition, and “literalism” remained a term of abuse in Russian translation through the end of the Soviet period.¹⁵²

Andrei Azov points to “exactitude” [*tochnost’*] as a key concept in the writings of Lann and Shengeli, and a marker of their disagreement with the realists. Lann favored an approach that reproduced as much as possible the style of the original in his prose translations, directly translating grammatical structures and idioms even at the expense of fluent Russian prose.¹⁵³ Shengeli, too, cleaved relatively closely to the language of the Western poems that he translated. However, when subsequent critics such as Chukovskii claimed that Shengeli’s translation of Byron’s *Don Juan* “attempted to reproduce each stanza word for word, line for line, without concern for communicating its sparkling style,” they exaggerated.¹⁵⁴ For example, he allowed for the “principle of functional similarity” (*printsip funktsional’nogo podobia*), according to which the meter of a poetic original could be replaced by a meter judged to be equivalent in the target language.¹⁵⁵ But on the whole Shengeli shared with Lann a preference for translations that reminded the reader that the original work came from another language and culture.

The realists favored smoother, more comprehensible translation, and justified this preference in the language of Zhdanov-period literary theory. If, according to theorists of socialist realism, literary development has as its end-point a truthful, mimetic relationship with

¹⁵² Ibid., 9-11 et pas.; one notable exception, which provoked a reaction sufficient to prove the rule, was M. L. Gasparov, “Briusov i bukvalizm,” *Masterstvo perevoda* 8 (1971): 88-128.

¹⁵³ Azov, *Poverzhennye bukvalisty*, 67-74.

¹⁵⁴ Kornei Chukovskii, *Vysokoe iskusstvo*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 3, eds. E. Chukovskaia and P. Kriuchkov (Moscow: Agenstvo FTM, 2012), 218-219.

¹⁵⁵ Susanne Witt, “Translation and Intertextuality in the Soviet-Russian Context: The Case of Georgy Shengeli’s *Don Juan*,” *Slavic and East European Journal* 60, no. 1 (2016): 28.

the world, Kashkin suggested that the translator should operate according to the same process. In order to produce a similar mimetically truthful translation, the translator had to inwardly reproduce the original author's encounter with their material and historical circumstances, and then reenact the process of creation in a new language.¹⁵⁶ When critics described desiderata for realist translation, as with socialist realist literature, they had prose in mind, and only by tortuous extension could the tenets be fitted to lyric verse. In a general sense, Kashkin's writings emphasized responsibility to the ordinary reader, while freeing the translator from any specific obligation to the source text. Thus, he dismissed the productions of the Academia publishing house (discussed in chapter 3): "The translations produced by these 'scholars' [*erudity*] at best made it their goal to demonstrate the particular beauty and difficulty of the original and the virtuosity of the translation's technique. In essence, these translations were addressed not to the general reader, but to the connoisseur [*znatoku*]."¹⁵⁷ If this critique did identify a real feature of earlier Soviet translations of Dickens and Verhaeren, it was even more true of translations of the Confucian classics or Jāmī. Most of Academia's Eastern translations had been undertaken by translators with specialized philological knowledge, and most often orientalists with academic appointments. By the mid-1940s, as we have seen, orientalist scholars such as Osmanov were producing *podstrochniki* that they handed off to poets with limited or no area expertise. But despite the rout of "precise" translation in the postwar polemics over the Western classics, in the case of Eastern classics this Soviet tradition was not extinguished utterly. In those literary translations of Eastern classics that were published in scholarly and quasi-scholarly editions, such as Banu's *Shāhnāmah*, continued to inform artistic translation practices through the Soviet

¹⁵⁶ Azov, *Poverzhennye bukvalisty*, 96-104.

¹⁵⁷ Azov, *Poverzhennye bukvalisty*, 103

period, and, in works such as Osmanov's delicate 1992 Russian translation of the Qur'an, down to the present day.¹⁵⁸

Shengeli made a tempting target for Kashkin in part because of his institutional position. From 1938 until 1943, he led the Translator's Section of the Writers' Union—a role in which Kashkin managed to succeed him after the war. Until 1943, it was Shengeli who handed out many of the assignments for translation of contemporary works by Eastern writers in that period, and he played a leading role in building training materials for literary translators working from *podstrochniki*.¹⁵⁹ Throughout the 1930s, Shengeli and Lāhūtī worked together in the bureaucracy of national literature translation and publication, and Shengeli translated Lāhūtī as well as other contemporary and classical Eastern poets. His attitude to the multinational literary project may be gleaned from a letter from his wife to a friend in 1932, in which she equates Eastern translation to the dull but necessary and remunerative maintenance of urban infrastructure: "He worked on 'communal utility management' [*kommunal'nom khoziaistve*], worked in the Uzbek publishing house—that was for the pocket—while for the "soul," he was finishing his [own poem] 'Avalanche.'"¹⁶⁰

In important respects, his work on Eastern literatures lay beyond the bounds of the project of "exactitude." In an unpublished explanation of his theory of translation, he presents as a thought experiment the case of "two languages differing only in phonetics, but completely coinciding in morphology, syntax, the number of syllables and the positions of stresses [...], and a rhyme in one language would rhyme in the other—then a translation could not and should not be anything but a transliteration." He proceeds to a phrase in Ukrainian capable of just such a

¹⁵⁸ M.-N. Osmanov, trans. and ed., *Koran* (Moscow: RAN, 1992).

¹⁵⁹ Witt, "Translation and Intertextuality," 27-28; see also Witt, "Shorthand of Empire," 175.

¹⁶⁰ Molodiakov, *Georgii Shengeli*, 324. *Kommunal'noe khoziaistvo* is used to describe state-managed utilities such as plumbing, electricity, gas, roads, and public transportation.

direct transfer to Russian.¹⁶¹ Clearly, such a thought experiment has few consequences for translations from Persian to Russian, but this was not an atypical starting point for discussions about translation principles.

Under less ideal conditions, Shengeli suggested that the translator establish a sense of the hierarchy of values specific to a text, and make sacrifices to exactitude accordingly. In practice, this led him to justify every kind of possible sacrifice. He cites a phrase in which the 18th-century Turkmen poet Magtymguly calls the beloved a camel harness on the lover: “but to repeat this image in Russian would be to make the reader laugh; you should say a ‘noose’ or ‘lasso’.”¹⁶² Reviewing Shengeli’s volume of translations from Magtymguly, his fellow poet-translator Il’ia Sel’vinskii, also a user of *podstrochniki* for Eastern verse, commended the collection’s “high conscientiousness and genuine poetry [...] If some translations look like the fifth copy out from the original, if others try to make a translation of things over and above the original and are addicted to ad-libbing, Shengeli strives to translate so that the reader forgets about the very idea of translation.”¹⁶³ The review’s use of “conscientious,” as a judgment that a reader could make without access to the original, is typical.

André Lefevere has called translation by intercultural analogy “the leap we often call ‘of the imagination’ but which could be much more aptly called ‘of imperialism’.”¹⁶⁴ In a later essay, Chukovskii describes Samuil Marshak’s translations as just such a leap:

No matter how Blake tried to slip away, Marshak would rope him into Russian poetry sooner or later, and make him sing his songs in Russian. In fact, Marshak’s translations of Burns are the same act of conquest [*zavoevatel’nyi akt*] [...] It

¹⁶¹ Georgii Shengeli, “O moei rabote,” in *Inokhodets*, ed. Vadim Perel’muter (Moscow: Sovpadenie, 1997), 358.

¹⁶² Ibid., 364.

¹⁶³ I. Sel’vinskii, “Novye perevody Makhtum-Kuli,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, January 5, 1946, 3.

¹⁶⁴ André Lefevere, “Composing the Other,” in *Post-colonial Translation: Theory and Practice*, eds. Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 78.

seems somehow strange to call Marshak a translator at all. He is more like a conquistador, a conqueror of foreign poets who, by the force of his talent, converts them to Russian citizenship.¹⁶⁵

While this kind of image is by no means new in Soviet criticism,¹⁶⁶ it illustrates the degree to which unreconstructed imperial feeling pervaded the Soviet assimilation of world classics.

In the Soviet case, the aggressions become more complex. In the poem, “I Translate from Mongolian and Polish” (1961), the poet-translator Boris Slutskii writes: “It is only for one reason/ That I work on translations with such zest:/ Only because I see translation as infantry/ That blows up the walls [valy] between peoples.”¹⁶⁷ “Chinese walls” of cultural isolation are destroyed here not by cheap capitalist commodities, as in the *Communist Manifesto*, but by siege on behalf of the besieged.¹⁶⁸ Unlike in Nafisi’s description, for Slutskii, the topographies of national classics are contiguous, though it is unclear who is willfully blocking that contiguity.

As in Slutskii’s fraternal siege, Chukovskii’s description of Marshak moves from violence to comradeship. Discussing Marshak’s poem in which he calls Shakespeare “a comrade in arms,” Chukovskii explains that Marshak chose poets for translation “because with all his heart, he sympathized with their indignation and hatred and, having fallen in love with them

¹⁶⁵ Chukovskii, *Vysokoe iskusstvo*, 193.

¹⁶⁶ It is St. Jerome who wrote, “The translator considers thought content a prisoner (*quasi captivos sensus*) which he transplants into his own language with the prerogative of a conqueror (*iure victoris*).” The philologist Hugo Friedrich comments: “This is one of the most rigorous manifestations of Latin cultural and linguistic imperialism, which despises the foreign word as something alien but appropriates the foreign meaning in order to dominate it through the translator’s own language.” Hugo Friedrich, “On the Art of Translation,” trans. Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet, in *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida*, eds. Schulte and Biguenet (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 12-13.

¹⁶⁷ Boris Slutskii, *Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh*, vol. 1, ed. Iu. Boldyreva (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1991), 335; trans. Maria Khotimsky, in *Russian Writers on Translation*, 146.

¹⁶⁸ Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, ed. Frederic L. Bender (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1988), 59.

when he was young, could not help wanting us to fall in love with them too.”¹⁶⁹ In this spirit of love, Chukovskii cites Marshak’s advice on choosing works to translate: “If you pick out our best translations of poetry, you will discover that they are all children of love, not of a marriage of convenience.”¹⁷⁰

For readers of this chapter, it should come as no surprise that love between the translator and translated writer was a great theme of Soviet writings on multinational literature. Romances and romantic friendships between individual writers and translators formed a real and important part of the experience of multinational translation, and left behind an extraordinary literary corpus. But we should not ignore the frequency with which Russian translation discourse reproduces the violently coercive features of Soviet nationalities policy. The love marriage described above emerges not from actual partnership, but from fantasies of shared violence, rupture of the walls separating national houses, and hostage-taking. In this emphatically non-arranged love marriage, has the bride been kidnapped? In short, the Soviet Russophone imagination of multinational literary translation follows the logics neatly captured by Bruce Grant in his study of sovereignty in the Russian imperial and Soviet Caucasus, *The Captive and the Gift*.¹⁷¹ Sovereignty is justified by the debts created through preemptive gift-giving, including the “gift of empire.” In the real and imagined scenarios that Grant describes, that sovereignty is subsequently maintained through the giving and taking of hostages, sometimes for the purpose of exogamous marriage. In the case of Soviet translation, the imagined collateral ensuring the bond between peoples was not only human, but humanistic.

¹⁶⁹ Chukovskii, *Vysokoe iskusstvo*, 193.

¹⁷⁰ S. Marshak, *Sochinenia v chetyrekh tomakh*, vol. 4 (Moscow: khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1958), 342, qtd. Chukovskii, *Vysokoe iskusstvo*, 193-194.

¹⁷¹ Grant, *The Captive and the Gift*.

As in the cases described by Grant, structures of domination emerge from a web of obligations that constrains all the participants. It does not require a colonial view of the Soviet project to recognize that national writers were utterly at their translators' mercy in a system where life-altering judgments were often made based on a work's translation, or lack of a translation. And yet everywhere in Russophone intelligentsia mythology, from the Stalin period to the present day, we see Russophone poets held captive by the national, Eastern writers whose works they translate. As in Caucasus captivity narratives, the writer's sojourn in translation work is forced, but produces self-sacrificing love between captors and captive. The *topos* of the Soviet Russian poet in love with the national republic to which they have been sent, usually Georgia or Armenia, is entirely continuous with the southern exiles of the Romantic poets. Whatever specific friendships and translational tasks result, the most important outcome is a Russian poetic *Bildung*.

The classic narration of this perspective is an article in *Druzhba narodov* entitled “Translation as an Education” (“*Perevod kak shkola*,” 1947), by Mark Tarlovskii, a poet and Eastern translator who had been one of the main ventriloquists for Jambyl Jabaev in the 1930s.¹⁷² At the outset, he declares that his article will not be about the theory or practice of translation, but “the role that work on translations plays in the creative life of the writer.”¹⁷³ He narrates the positive transformations that such an apprenticeship has for the journeyman writer. The process

¹⁷² On Tarlovskii and Jambyl, Witt, “Between the Lines,” 160-163; Mark Tarlovskii, “*Perevod kak shkola*,” *Druzhba narodov* 14 (1947): 169-176. Tarlovskii was also a contributor to an important debate of the Zhdanov period on the literary category of epic, and its relation to the Soviet national literatures. The focus of these debates was oral Turkic epic, particularly the Kyrgyz epic *Manas*. The *Shāhnāmah* (and for that matter Lāhūtī and ‘Aynī’s efforts at Soviet epic) remained anomalous, more often discussed together with Persian and Chaghatai verse romances. For this reason, although the polemic on epic was one of the most important in late Stalinist literary and translation criticism, it has been excluded from the present chapter.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 169.

subsumes the writer's sense of self to questions of craft and language, and matures the writer's style. The object of translation serves as the mystery that resists and then yields:

Working on a translation, the writer quickly takes possession of [ovladevaet] the most intimate secrets of the language in which the original is written. Even in translation from a *podstrochnik*, as long as the technician [*laborant*] doesn't think of it as ready-made dumplings pouring down his gullet, but attentively compares it with the original, the language of the original will fairly quickly make itself understood for him.¹⁷⁴

Translation work also enriches the writer's language, as in the case of "the so-called *radif* rhyme [i.e. refrain], brought in abundance by our Soviet Columbuses, by means of translation, onto the soil of Russian poetry from the resplendant alluvial deposits [*rossypei*] of the poetry of Central Asia."¹⁷⁵ In short, translation is a sort of frontier, where a young Russian can make a writer of himself, while bringing back literary raw materials to be turned into finished goods.

The visibility of the translator in postwar Soviet literature is worth remarking on in itself. As we have seen, the polemics of the late Stalin period resulted in the victory of naturalized translations, that is, translations that obscure the fact of the text's translation. Considering this ostensible goal, it is remarkable how many celebrations of the translator's art and lengthy declarations of purpose by translators contextualize, and sometimes almost crowd out, the translated poems of journals such as *Druzhba narodov* ("Friendship of Peoples"). In this sense, Slavist scholars who have argued that Soviet multinational literature was the creation of Russian translators are knocking at an open door. Certainly, many of the frustrated writers who produced these translations saw this achievement as primarily theirs.¹⁷⁶ To this day, the intelligentsia

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 173.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 174.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. an NKVD report from 1934, "Writers' attitudes towards the recent writers' congress and the new administration of the Soviet Writers' Union": "The general tone was as follows: national writers are bad. It's we who actually make them into writers, sacrificing our own creativity." Qtd. in Clark and Dobrenko, *Soviet Culture and Power*, 177.

hagiographic tradition continues to repeat a narrative in which crushed Russophone poets invented Soviet multinational literature in the beleaguered, absurd, loving, and somehow meaningful act of literary translation. This narrative was, in fact, the Russian literary intelligentsia's particular version of the "gift of empire" myth.

Lipkin was the most sensitive of *Druzhba narodov*'s essayists on the subject of multinational translation. In the years after his first Persianate translations, his ear for philological specificity became ever keener.¹⁷⁷ In his reflections on translation work from the 1940s and 1950s, he expressed concern for "the living soul of the original work," and for the poets, living and dead, whom he translated.¹⁷⁸ He addressed to his multinational colleagues a "Letter to My Closest Friends" that illustrates, more than any other single document, both the pitfalls and the real possibilities of the Soviet translation system. In it, the Soviet avant-garde dream of collective authorship recurs as a multinational phenomenon. He opens his letter in the Sentimentalist style:

My friends, the poets whom I translate, with whom I share joy and failure: to whom, if not to you, should I write about everything dear to us in the matter of translation. The literary life of more than one poet-translator has passed—passes—in close communion, and sometimes in spiritual fusion [*sliianie*] with you. Let's talk about our shared literary life, about our shared literary existence. It seems, even, that the main distinguishing feature of the Soviet school of translation is this communion.¹⁷⁹

In identifying interlingual communion as a distinctively Soviet literary phenomenon, he has in mind the ways that Soviet translations affect not only the target language, but the source language, and other languages as well. Zhukovskii's important translations from German, he

¹⁷⁷ Here and after, in taking Lipkin as a heroic model for Soviet multinational translation with "a vision of a true plurality of literary cultures," I follow Gould, "World Literature as a Communal Apartment," 421. However, where Gould emphasizes Lipkin's pluralism, I focus on his conception of communion between literary cultures in a single work of translation.

¹⁷⁸ Semen Lipkin, "Zhivaia dusha podlinnika," *Druzhba narodov* 6 (1957): 200-202.

¹⁷⁹ S. Lipkin, "Pismo samym blizkim druz'iam," *Druzhba narodov* 8 (1955): 158

points out, had no effect on subsequent German poetry. But Soviet “translations of the classical poetry of the East to Russian have rendered your literature a great service,” by allowing modern national writers to “view even their own heritage, their native classics, with new eyes.”¹⁸⁰

For national writers, the positive double consciousness of seeing their “own” literature through Russian eyes has a transformative effect on that classical literature. Where previously that literature was the horizon of convention, in translation “you see brightly reproduced and sharply underlined the features of realism, an understanding of the human soul, simplicity—that is, everything that you want in your own creative work, in the name of which you are struggling against imitators of conventional poetry.”¹⁸¹ Here, Lipkin explicitly acknowledges the role of the translator as an ideological filter. When the German orientalist Friedrich Rückert’s *Shāhnāmah* translation sought defenses of “enlightened absolutism,” or Zhukovskii sought “paintings illuminated by the sad, captivating light of romanticism,” they found them—“these ideas do indeed live in Firdowsi’s book.” Lipkin’s project, as he acknowledges, proceeds along similar lines:

Is it not natural for the Soviet poet-translator to seek and to find (because this is the wealth of Firdowsi!) in the gigantic creation of the Tajik classics, so near and dear to us, the breath of [that] era, the anger of those days, the depth of the human personalities, the real depictions of everyday life, the beauty of goodness, of love for the people, of the optimism that is so characteristic of truly popular [*narodnoi*], truly human poetry? And is not this task, in this case that of the poet-translator, a part of your larger task, to firmly and conclusively take the path of realism?¹⁸²

This celebration of his own service to national writers is only a prelude to a request for commensurate help in return. Lipkin complains that he does not get the feedback that would allow him to improve from critics, orientalists, and especially “you, my dear friends, who are so

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 158-159.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 159.

¹⁸² Ibid.

well aware of their classical heritage, so deeply interested in it [...] how valuable to us is your every word, the word of experts, the word of the active builders and creators of literature.”¹⁸³ He gratefully cites a Tajik writer who listened to his draft translation of a section of the *Shāhnāmah*, the murder of Īrāj by his brothers, Salm and Tūr. The writer responded:

"Close, but it doesn't hold me captive [*v plen ne berët*]. Once, my grandmother read this poem to us children, and our hearts were pounding, we could not fall asleep, we were worried: what will happen next, will the murderers really go unpunished?" And my friend showed me how Firdawsi, with scattered words sprinkled throughout the text, gradually prepares the reader for this event, creates an atmosphere of excitement, extreme mental tension [...] In Russia it is customary to call a bad work watery [*vodianistym*], that is, thin [*rastianutoe*], but in Central Asia, where water is of great value, they say of a good, successful work that it is "saturated with water" [*ābdār*]. Your criticism, dear friends, is as necessary to us as water for cotton fields.¹⁸⁴

Lipkin's simile suggests a translation economy that is the inverse of Tarlovskii's gold-panning conquistadors. It is the translator who grows the laborious cash crop, and the national writers who undertake the refining process of criticism.

Such criticism was reciprocal. As he later recalled, “I often advised the poets whom I translated on what to take out and what to expand. Authors would listen to my advice.”¹⁸⁵ In his “Letter,” he recounts how he came to modify the Avar poet Gamzat Tsadasa’s “Tale of the Shepherd.” He gives a stanza about a shepherd’s journey by truck, whose four Avar lines he had reduced to three in Russian, adding a line of his own: the shepherd travels “Under a tarpaulin, so it doesn’t blow.” As he explains, in order to translate Tsadasa, he travelled to a mountain village in Daghestan to speak to the people and make his own observations. It was there that he heard a shepherd speak the phrase about the tarpaulin.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 159-160.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 160.

¹⁸⁵ Lipkin and Kalashnikova, “Tem, kogo ia perevodil,” 275.

[T]he study of heroes and landscapes will give me the possibility, in those cases when it is necessary to deviate from the original (and we have already said that there are retreats not only necessary but also useful), to make these digressions so that their reader does not notice, so that the translation is born of the same life that gave birth to the original, so that it is close in spirit to the author. Most importantly: without such observations, I do not feel I have the domestic [vnutrennego] right to advise the author.¹⁸⁶

Translation, then, becomes another kind of brigade-writing. Just as on the writers' brigades of the early 1930s, Lipkin accepts hospitality, and with it, he receives the right to speak in the voice of his host.

Where Tarlovskii's description of translation focuses on the transformative effect of translation on the translator, Lipkin tries to capture a dialogic process of mutual transformation. He recalls a poet asking him, on seeing the finished translation of his poem: "And what will happen to our poem?" He explains: "'Our,' because it was thought up together, experienced together [*v mestе prochuvstvovana*], because in it were merged the civic [*obshchestvennye*] and artistic intentions of the poet and the poet-translator."¹⁸⁷ Lipkin provides the most hopeful interpretation of the way that agency and feeling is conjugated in the bilingual Soviet poem. But ultimately, his essay rhetorically calls out for an impossible response. For the national poet, such a public and civic show of self-discovery in translation can only be written in Russian.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ Lipkin, "Pismo samym blizkim druz'iam," 163-164.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 164.

¹⁸⁸ On writers who made the choice to write in Russian, Naomi Caffee, "Russophonia."

3. Lāhūtī Writes for Translation: The Multinational Marketplace of a Literary Command Economy

In 1946, a Russian collection was published of Lāhūtī's *Collected Works in New Translations*.¹⁸⁹ Some of the “greatest hits” were given in familiar translations: Banu's rendering of “The Power of the USSR” (“Sila SSSR”) and Lāhūtī's poem to Gorky (“Svobodnyi lev”), Shengeli's “To the Miners of Donbas” (“Shakhteram Donbasa”). The collection contained an unusual proportion of lyric ghazals, most of which were given lovely monorhymed translations by Banu and—in his first work on Lāhūtī's verse—Lipkin. Among the retranslated poems, some introduced new translators, but there was also a certain amount of musical chairs. The functions of retranslation will be illustrated by a brief consideration of two poems, one, “We Will Win!” (“Mā ȝafar khwāhīm kard!”), translated first by Shengeli and then Banu; the other, “Two Medals” (“Du nishān”), translated by Banu and then Shengeli.¹⁹⁰

Lāhūtī had an unsurprising preference for Banu's translations of his work. He complained that others produced translations with more lines: “That is, they diluted my thoughts with water.” Banu, by contrast, “knows Persian with its literary nuances, and is herself a capable poetess. Persian verses don't always lend themselves to exact translation, but all the same Banu conveys my ideas well and preserves the distinctiveness [svoeobrazie] of the original.”¹⁹¹ But translators had their own sensitivities. In Shengeli's 1949 letter of complaint about misuse of his translations of Lāhūtī, he wrote, “In no way expecting that the whole massive entirety would be printed (some poems have aged, others aren't so interesting), I did still suppose that a significant

¹⁸⁹ Lakhuti, *Izbrannoe v novykh perevodakh*, ed. K. Lipskerov (Moscow: OGIZ, 1946).

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 50-51, 198-206; the previous translations appeared together in Abul'gasem Lakhuti, *Izbrannye poemy*, ed. E. Mozol'kov (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1936), 26-33, 161-175.

¹⁹¹ Gasem Lakhuti, *Moi tvorcheskii opyt—rabochemu avtoru* (Tashkent: Profizdat, 1935), 37-38.

proportion of my translations would be included in the book.” In the proofs, though, he found only four of his short poems, “and only the least interesting,” and that two poems that he had translated “were given in the translations of other comrades—in translations that were incomparably less exact.”¹⁹²

The translation by Shengeli that was replaced in the 1946 collection, “We Will Win!,” had special significance as his first translation of Lāhūtī’s verse, commissioned in 1930, according to him, by Molotov, who personally sent it to *Pravda* “with a testimonial [*kharakteristikoi raboty*] exceptionally flattering of the author and of me.”¹⁹³ Banu’s translation was first published in the late 1930s, and three stanzas were attached to a “folk melody” arrangement by the young Armenian composer Aram Khachaturian in 1938.¹⁹⁴ The poem, a celebration of the Soviet Union’s readiness to fight, is written in the form of a tarkīb-band, a classical strophic form in which many Constitution-era political songs were written.¹⁹⁵ The meter of Lāhūtī’s poem, typical for such songs (*ramal musamman mahzuf*), suggests that the poem may have been intended as a song from the beginning. Shengeli captures the pace with a popular brisk Russian meter, iambic hexameter, a few syllables shorter than many of the Persian lines (although the number of syllables varies in quantitative ‘*arūzī*’). The first publication of Shengeli’s translation in *Pravda* included 33 stanzas, addressing every major campaign of the First Five-Year Plan, but substantially rearranged the material of Lāhūtī’s stanzas. The stanzas proved modular, and subsequent Persian and Russian publications added and subtracted stanzas.

¹⁹² Molodiakov, *Georgii Shengeli*, 456-457.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 456; Lakhuti, “My pobedim!,” trans. Georgii Shengeli, *Pravda*, December 13, 1930, 3. The poem also provided the title and centerpiece for the first Soviet volume of Lāhūtī’s works specifically published for export to Iran.

¹⁹⁴ *Pesni G. Lakhuti v tvorchestve sovetskikh kompozitorov* (Moscow, Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1939), 11-14.

¹⁹⁵ Gabrielle van den Berg, “Stanzaic Poetry,” *EIr*, article updated December 6, 2012, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/stanzaic-poetry>.

The rhyme scheme (AAAABB, CCCCDD...) permitted final couplets to move from one stanza to another. In this way, the song version assembled three particularly suitable stanzas from parts. Banu's translation, likely produced for the song, reproduced the rhythm of the *ramal* meter (- ^ - / - ^ - - / - ^ -) with a trochaic octameter with a pause in the middle, and, unlike Shengeli's version, only masculine rhymes.¹⁹⁶ The effect was a bilingual song, and sometimes even a close translation:

- ^ - - / - ^ - - / - ^ - - / - ^ -
‘umr-i ū bā lashkar-i mā shīsha-vu sang-astə īn

Zhìzni ikh i vòisko nàshe—èto stèkla i granit

Their life and our army are glass and stone

In this instance, the two translations served distinct functions, as a *Pravda* slogan-assemblage and a folk march.

“Two Medals” (“Du nishān,” translated by both Banu and Shengeli as “Dva ordena”) presents a different case. This *masnavī* is memoir as historical epic, divided into two tableaux, 1907-1908 and 1935-1936, which recount the circumstances of his receipt of two medals, one a military medal from the Constitutional hero Sattār Khān, the other the Order of Lenin for his verse. The second section consists for the most part of conventional, familiar material, though it ends with the joy of watching his young son recognize the figure on the medal. The first section, however, gives a personal, politically novel framing to civic events that would have been familiar to every Iranian of Lāhūtī’s generation or older. The beginning, though narrated with the immediacy of first-person perspective, places him in the position of an observer of great events,

¹⁹⁶ Shengeli’s insistence on the translator’s right to alter meters extended to his Eastern work. In the early 1950s, he clashed with the editor of the flagship journal of multinational literature in Russian translation, *Druzhba narodov*, over the latter’s insistence that translators should preserve the original meters of Armenian and Georgian verse. Azov, *Poverzhennye bukvalisty*, 46.

opening: “From the revolutionary forces, to Rasht/ Came the news of victory and success// The Manjīl Bridge was cleared of soldiers/ And the road to Qazvin open before us.”¹⁹⁷ The subsequent crumbling of the Constitutional coalition is attributed to nationalist dissension between Persians, Turks, and Armenians, sown by agents of the shah and tsar.

In the Persian, a description of the sunrise brings on the reversal, an etiology (*husn-i ta'līl*) in the style of classical *masnavī*:

sahar chun dīv-i shab dar chāh uftād
zi pusht-i asb-i gardūn māh uftād
shafaq chun gurg-i khūn-ālūdah’ī tākht
judā’ī bayn-i akhtarhā biyandākht
bar āmad khwur bih tīgh bar sharārah
gulū-gāh-i shafaq-rā kard pārah¹⁹⁸

At morning, when the demon of night fell into the pit,
The moon fell from the back of the horse of the heavens
Dawn sprang out like a blood-smeared wolf
And cast the stars apart from each other
The sun came out with a sword on fire
And tore open the throat of dawn

The translation provided is as direct as possible, without the interstices of conventional context that would allow a reader of Persian to understand how ambiguous prepositions link demon-night to moon and heaven-horse. Banu produces an explicit narrative link, based on night’s traditional slinking cowardice in such scenarios, but by no means implied by the original text: “The *div* of night was driven into the abyss,/ Stealing the moon from off the blue horse” [“Poktilsia v bezdnu nochí div,/ S sinego konia dunu stashchiv”].¹⁹⁹ Her clearest departure comes in the third couplet, where the sun “pierced the breast of the clouds.” The naturalistic image,

¹⁹⁷ Lāhūtī, *Dīvān-i ash’ār* (1941), vol. 2, 2.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Lakhuti, *Izbrannye poemy* (1936), 162.

while still violent, loses the carnage of the original scene, but avoids the unexpected “throat of dawn.”

Shengeli, who would have likely translated the poem from a *podstrochnik* produced by Banu, preserves the slashed throat and the glossed word *div* (instead of naturalizing it as *demon*). But the overall narrative flow is transformed to a greater degree. In Lāhūtī’s rendering, the only continuous character is dawn, and each couplet is a separate act: night’s departure, dawn, day. Shengeli traces a single chain reaction: “No sooner [*lish’*] had the *div* of night fallen into a dark well,/ And knocked down the rope of the immense horse of the heavens,/ Driving the stars, burning furiously,/ The bloody wolf of dawn bolted,/ As [*a*] the sun stretched out its shining sword/ And cut the throat of cruel dawn.”²⁰⁰ Markers of sequentiality or simultaneity (*lish’, a*) and words suggestive of psychological motive (bolted, cruel) tie each action to the previous one. At least in this instance, the distance of the *podstrochnik* from the text revealed to Shengeli the narrative logic that a translator needed to provide.

In his lifetime, Lāhūtī’s Russian-language oeuvre carried an authority that frequently overshadowed the Persian. As the previous chapter discussed, Lāhūtī wrote a number of poems for an immediate, one-time reception that would take place in Russian, such as his 1938 poem to Stalin in support of Mikhoels. In the papers submitted to Stalin’s secretary, it is unlikely that the Persian manuscript received the same attention as Banu’s translation. Instead, its carefully composed lines served only to confirm that it was indeed Lāhūtī who had written the poem whose translation was now submitted for judgment. On many more occasions, the situation was more like that of the extemporaneous *rubā’ī* that he produced at the 1935 meeting of Tajik and Turkmen collective farmers with Stalin and the Politburo. The poem itself would have drawn

²⁰⁰ Lakhuti, *Izbrannoe v novykh perevodakh* (1946), 198.

smiles of appreciation from the Tajik (and perhaps some of the Turkmen) peasants, but final judgment came from a second audience that heard the quatrain hastily composed and telegrammed to the Kremlin by Banu. Some poems for the newspapers followed this pattern, albeit less dramatically, addressing an all-Union or international audience that would read the poem's first publication in Russian. In more cases still, Russian translations of poems addressed to national audiences served a supervisory function, indicating to vigilant literary bureaucrats and patrons whether the poet was on the right track. These performances of national address before a Russian audience might still be more consequential than the original. As a consequence, in the late 1940s mistranslation turned from a literary problem to a Russian anxiety about the possibility of being misinformed by double-dealing native informants and rootless cosmopolitans. Zhdanov-period criticism on translation *from* Russian in *Druzhba narodov* frequently takes the form of a faithful native informant revealing treacherous mistranslations in their own republic.²⁰¹

The authority of a text's Russian translation was not only a question of political supervision. The advent of the all-Union literary space in the 1930s made Russian a space where aesthetic judgments of translated literature were made as well. At the outset, some demurral was expected. One recurring motif in the 1930s is the complaint that adequate translations of Lāhūtī's verse do not yet exist. At the 1934 Writers' Congress, Bukharin referred to "the blossoming of poetic creativity by the Persian emigrant poet, Lāhūtī," but demurred that such works "should be brought to light [*osveshchena*] separately by comrades who know the respective languages."²⁰² Dem'ian Bednyi lent the weakest of praise: "I rejoice when I'm told that the poet Lāhūtī is a first-class poet. It's just too bad that not knowing his language, I can't fully enjoy his work and

²⁰¹ Cf. K. Nurmakhanov, "Plokhoi perevod," *Druzhba narodov* 3 (1952): 302-304.

²⁰² N.I. Bukharin, "O poezii, poetike i zadachakh poeticheskogo tvorchestva v SSSR," in *Pervyi vsesoiuznyi s'ezd sovetskikh pisatelei*, 497.

value it.”²⁰³ Two years later, Chukovskii agreed that Lāhūtī, like other prominent national writers, ought to be part of children’s education, but warned that “if you give them wretched translations of some random passages to cram, it will [...] hardly inspire them with great sympathy for the literary creativity of fraternal peoples.”²⁰⁴ While it remained the normal practice for a Russian critic to emphasize the failure of the translator, some such articles venture to draw conclusions on the original verse. Iurii Olesha, discussing Banu’s translations of Lāhūtī’s verse that contained elements that he deemed “comical,” “impoverished,” and “far too sloppy even for conversational language,” sets aside the usual caveat: “True, we draw our conclusion only on the basis of translations, which might be careless or messy, but still, the fire that breaks forth from the soul of a poet can’t be put out even in the cold of translation.”²⁰⁵

If the Russian translation operated as a text’s authoritative, primary version within the multinational system, public poets could only compose in other languages while attempting to guess how it might read in Russian. This, too, is part of double consciousness, seeing one’s own literature “with new eyes.”²⁰⁶ From the late 1940s, the phrase “authorized translation” began to appear in print, as national writers learned how to negotiate the translation bureaucracy and manage their lives in translation. Lāhūtī, of course, had become intensely involved in his own translation, both bureaucratically and personally, almost two decades earlier.

When critics today suggest that a poet “writes for translation,” they have in mind a critique most famously made by Stephen Owen in his 1990 jeremiad on the impoverishment of

²⁰³ Ibid., 557.

²⁰⁴ Irina Luk’ianova, *Kornei Chukovskii* (Moscow: Moldaia gvardiia, 2007), 618.

²⁰⁵ Iurii Olesha, “Vera v pobedu,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, December 1, 1945, 2. The review discusses a 1945 omnibus of Tajik wartime verse.

²⁰⁶ See W. E. B. Du Bois’s much-cited description of “this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.” Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Dover, 1903), 2-3.

modern Chinese poetry, “The Anxiety of Global Influence: What Is World Poetry?” Owen describes a subset of Chinese poets, writing in a style “formed by reading Western poetry in translations, sometimes in very poor translations,” and unrelated to the Chinese poetic tradition.²⁰⁷ “The international audience admires the poetry, imagining what might be if the poetry had not been lost in translation. And the audience at home admires the poetry, knowing how much it is appreciated internationally, in translation.”²⁰⁸ We may be reminded of Lāhūtī’s bewildered but deferent reception in Iran as a Soviet favorite, and his early reception in Russia as a good Iranian poet who may not translate well. Tajikistan was a more promising space of reception for his works, but it is difficult to gauge the degree to which this was the case outside of official settings.

However, there is no evidence that Lāhūtī regarded his poetry as tragically caught in-between or lost in translation. He gives a practical description of translation, in keeping with his practical view of his own verse, in a 1932 letter to Banu:

You know that I use my poems like a Bolshevik weapon in the battle for the building of socialism. You make the field of influence of that Bolshevik weapon much, much wider than the circle of its Persian [*fārsī*] application—with your exquisite, martial translations you make it accessible for the use of the great masses of Russian workers and laborers, and it may be that by means of the language of October, the octoberist contents of these poems may also more quickly be of service to the proletarians of other nations.²⁰⁹

In his autobiographies and verse, he insists over and over that his verse is purely a practical enterprise, serving the revolution in ways that his fighting no longer can. This was not only a rhetorical conceit. His Soviet verse was often violent, and it kicked up (at British imperialism)

²⁰⁷ Stephen Owen, “The Anxiety of Global Influence: What Is World Poetry?,” *The New Republic*, November 19, 1990, 29.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 32. For the debate that followed the publication of Owen’s article, Emily Apter, *The Translation Zone* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 101.

²⁰⁹ KB6, 144.

and down (at “kulaks” and “wreckers”) alike. He instrumentalized his verse like a weapon, but like a soldier, he allowed his use of it to be instrumentalized by others. The violence that his verse advocated was real and colossal, even if he never inflicted it himself.

Soldier—poet: in this equation, or transmutation, for Lāhūtī, the middle term is precisely translation. No poem makes this more explicit than “Two Medals.” We rejoin our hero as history arrives on horseback in the person of Sattār Khān, bringing victory together with all the right signifiers: “Two of the leaders with a red flag/ One from the Persians, and the other from the Turks.”²¹⁰ It is at this point that Lāhūtī receives his “medal of the Revolution.” He describes the medal’s insignia closely, as if to allay doubts that he really received it. It is hand-made of metal so cheap that “if you pushed on it a little, it would break,” but predictably, it is “better than a mountain of gold.” He describes all of this, alas, from memory: “In the time of reaction, that medal/ as valuable as my life// I wrapped in political papers/ And buried under a tree.”²¹¹ Both Banu and Shengeli add Romantic emotion (“unable to hold back sobbing” –Shengeli) and scene dressing (“under an old oak” –Banu), and both describe the papers in which the medal is buried as a shroud [*savan*].²¹²

The medal’s return from the grave, bearing the face of Lenin, takes place following the awardees’ meeting with Stalin, as he finds himself between two scholars, an Armenian and a Turk. Holding his new medal, he recalls that old, “non-durable” [*bī-davām*] medal, and expresses his hope to live until “our revolution, like the phoenix [‘anqā]/ Takes the egg-like world under its plumes,” and he returns to the tree in Iran.²¹³ The distant hope of digging up the original

²¹⁰ Lāhūtī, *Dīvān-i ash ‘ār* (1941), vol. 2, 4.

²¹¹ Ibid., 5.

²¹² Lakhuti, *Izbrannye poemy* (1936), 166; Lakhuti, *Izbrannoe v novykh perevodakh*, 202.

²¹³ Lāhūtī, *Dīvān-i ash ‘ār* (1941), vol. 2, 8.

medal notwithstanding, the story describes the transmutation of one medal into another, by either an alchemical miracle or a sleight-of-hand substitution.

To refer to translation as a writer's "second life" is commonplace. The notion of translation as a personal testament was an element of the Soviet multinational literary system that appealed even to a poet as justifiably fearful of the Soviet project as Mandelstam. As he wrote in November 1933, the same month when he composed the "Stalin Epigram" that probably led to his death:

Tatars, uzbeki i nentsy,
I ves' ukrainskii narod,
I dazhe privolzhskie nemtsy
K sebe perevodchikov zhdu.

I, mozhet byt', v etu minutu
Menia na turetskii iazyk
Iaponets kakoi perevodi
I priamo mne v dushu pronik.

Tatars, Uzbeks, and Nenets,
And the entire Ukrainian folk,
And even Volga Germans
Await their translators.

And perhaps at this moment
Some Japanese man is translating me
Into the Turkish language,
And he's reached right into my soul.²¹⁴

In Walter Benjamin's essay "The Task of the Translator," the rebirth is expanded to compass the lives of languages, and by extension literatures. As Benjamin imagines translation, "of all literary forms it is the one charged with the special mission of watching over the maturing process of the

²¹⁴ Mandel'shtam, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 1, 305.

original language and the birth pangs of its own.”²¹⁵ For Lāhūtī and Nafīsī, an equally important marker was the deaths of literary languages—the potential death of classical Persian—and so translation becomes not only personal testament, but the real location of heritage (*nasledstvo, mīrās*).

In the case of Lāhūtī’s own poetry, the question goes beyond translation. He wrote to Banu that he considered himself “very fortunate that I have been able to be the reason for the manifestation of your literary talent,” but that description of a causal relationship is inadequate, especially for his late verse.²¹⁶ Working so closely with his translator, his verse becomes the product of collective authorship in a different sense than that of Jambyl. Abū al-Qāsim and Tsetsiliia Bentsianovna’s bilingual literary performance as “Lāhūtī” suggests the most hopeful vision of the Soviet multinational fusion described by Lipkin.²¹⁷

If we place equal emphasis on Lāhūtī’s Persian and Russian textual presences, what becomes of authorial responsibility? Apter, seeking to move translation studies away from “the drama of revelation—of fakery and forgery laid bare,” has suggested that instead, scholars should consider “the ethical problem that arises when there is, strictly speaking, no ‘original’ language or text on which the translation is based [...] the identity of what a translation *is* is tested, for if a translation is not a form of textual predicate, then what is it?”²¹⁸ Dobrenko gives us one answer to that question: when the line between translation and original is blurred,

²¹⁵ Walter Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator,” trans. Harry Zohn, in *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida*, eds. Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 75.

²¹⁶ KB2, 144.

²¹⁷ The phenomenon of the Soviet bilingual text, based on progressively blurred linguistic-cultural boundaries, is tonally unlike the transgressive linguistic liminalities that scholars have associated with patrolled political and cultural borders in, for example, Chicano or Palestinian and Israeli literature. Cf. Lital Levy, *Poetic Trespass: Writing between Hebrew and Arabic in Israel/Palestine* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).

²¹⁸ Apter, *Translation Zone*, 212.

conditions are favorable for enforced panegyric and the suppression of authorial individuality. These were certainly features of Soviet literature, and, at least in the former case, of Lāhūtī's own literary career. Soviet russophone poetics, like Soviet russophone politics, frequently ventriloquized its interlocutors, rendering them mute and tractable in the process. But just as often, multinational literary relations were philologically and interpersonally deep, rather than shallow.

As Shafī‘ī Kadkanī notes, use of dialogue is “one of the most important peculiarities of Lāhūtī’s way of writing [...] there are few of his poems, even his traditional ghazals, where we do not come face to face with an instance of dialogue.”²¹⁹ In fact, the month after his death, he had his first publication in *Druzhba narodov* since before the death of Stalin, a 1954 dialogue ghazal. In each couplet, the speaker addresses the beloved, and receives no reply (Persian *radīf*: “—mīgūyam.—namīgūyad.”; Russian: “—govoriu. Otveta net.”).²²⁰ The translation was, of course, by Banu. In the final couplet, the speaker observes that the beloved kills them with contrariness but revives them with a glance, and asks whether the beloved behaves this way *with others*: in Persian “bā bīgānah,” in Russian “s chuzhim.” In both languages, the word suggests the foreign, as in the “foreign words” [*chuzhie slova*]—or for that matter “someone else’s words”—for which Arsenii Tarkovskii complains that he has sold his best years. To this question, the silent interlocutor finally responds with an indignant denial, the ghazal’s punch-line: in Persian “—nah!... mīgūyad”; in Russian “Otvet: —O net!” Here, there is no question of difference between the poem’s existences in two languages. As we turn the ghazal over, the

²¹⁹ Shafī‘ī Kadkanī, *Bā chirāgh va āyīnah*, 426.

²²⁰ K2, 371; Abul’kasim Lakhuti; “Gazel’,” trans. Ts. Banu, *Druzhba narodov* 4 (1957): 60-61.

silent partner is now the poet, now the poet-translator.²²¹ One thing is certain: such a translation could not be made to or from a foreign language.

In 1963, Anna Akhmatova paid a visit to Banu's home. As their son Giv later recalled, Akhmatova recited some of her verses, and Banu recited her own translations of Lāhūtī's ghazals addressed to her. As a final instance of the kind of doubled speech typical of bilingual, bifurcated Lāhūtī's late style, I cite two couplets of one of the ghazals (written in 1953) as they were recited, together with the Persian text and Akhmatova's comment.

man zindah-am bih 'ishq-i tu dar shi'r-i jāvidān
ān-rā bukun tarannum-u bar murdanam namūy [...]
tā dil buvad, bih majlis-i šāhibdilān buvad
'ishq-i man-u vafā-yi tu mawzū'-i guftugūy.

No vechno budu zhit' v stikhakh, tebia prevoznosiashchikh.
Povtoriai, no ty rydat' nad grobom ne dolzhna [...]
Kogda umru—pridut druz'ia, zaviazhetsia beseda,
I pamiat'iu moei sogreetsia ona.²²²

According to Giv, Akhmatova replied, “Yes... it’s powerful... a very powerful poem. Genuinely universal [*obshchechelovecheskoe*]. And the prophecy at the end: you see, it came to pass!”²²³

²²¹ Only in Russian is gender indicated; Banu makes the addressee female.

²²² K2, 363. Translation of Persian: “I am alive through my love of you in eternal poetry/ Repeat it, and don’t weep over my death [...] As long as there’s a heart, in the gathering of the pure-hearted/ My love and your faithfulness will be a topic of conversation.” Russian: “But I will live forever in verses that exalt you./ Repeat them, but there’s no need to weep at my grave./ When I die, friends will come, and a conversation will begin/ And it will be warmed by my memory.”

²²³ Giv Lakhuti, “‘Liubvi moei,’” 83.

Epilogue: A View of the Representative from Revolution's End

When Lāhūtī passed away in 1957, the literary international was on the brink of a complete transformation, consisting of interconnected processes of decentralization, expansion, and integration. De-Stalinization was already beginning to delegate more real authority to the Soviet republics and provinces, and one result was an increasing nationalization of cultural institutions that transformed Central Asian literary culture, perhaps amounting to a second-world decolonization.¹ Third-world decolonization, the establishment of numerous new nation states, brought to power non-European national elites interested in cultural exchanges with the Soviet Union, including in Persianate South Asia. For the first time since the 1920s the Soviet Union established its own new cultural institutions specifically for non-European international cooperation, such as the Soviet African-Asian Solidarity Committee (SKSSAA). Soviet cultural bureaucrats, such as the Tajik writer and long-term head of SKSSAA Mīrzā Tūrsūnzādah, attempted to maintain control of their international organizations and maximize Soviet influence in other such organizations, with limited success.² Following the Sino-Soviet split, a gradually increasing proportion of young leftists in South and West Asia turned to non-Soviet models and partners for revolution.³ Finally, Soviet-aligned cultural institutions outside of the West now

¹ Artemy Kalinovsky describes the Thaw as a period of decolonization in the Soviet East. For his reading of Tajik culture in this period, see Kalinovsky, *Laboratory of Socialist Development: Cold War Politics and Decolonization in Soviet Tajikistan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), 43-66. As he points out, the next generation of Soviet Eastern intelligentsia “share much in common with other postcolonial elites”: 43.

² Masha Kirasirova gives an account of these efforts, “Eastern International,” 313-391; see also Djagalev, “People’s Republic of Letters,” 96-138.

³ This was true for many Iranian leftists, who experienced the 1930s-50s as a long series of Soviet betrayals and overreaches. On the reorientations and splits that followed the 1953 coup, see Maziar Behrooz, *Rebels with a Cause: The Failure of the Left in Iran*, 2nd ed. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), 1-47.

competed not with colonial empires, but with civil society counterparts from the first world, peer organizations such as a much-expanded International PEN and the new Congress for Cultural Freedom (the latter co-founded and funded by the CIA).⁴ The multinational and international publics that Lāhūtī had addressed were increasingly fractured. In 1952, Lāhūtī published poems in solidarity with North Korea and Nasser's new Egypt, but within five years of his death, the former was aligned with China against Khrushchev and the latter, while friendly to the Soviets, was a leading nation of the Non-Aligned Movement.⁵

But the institutions of this new world literature owed much to Soviet multinational and international models. Just as Iranians in the 1940s learned from the publishing houses and jubilees of Central Asia and held their own Writers' Congress, decolonizing nations drew on the Soviet example in myriad ways as they sought to reshape traditions of verbal arts into national literary canons usable in educational systems. When third-world writers spoke on behalf of their countries and recited occasional poems at international meetings, they followed a program of representation that had first operated in the Soviet multinational space and at events such as the 1935 Congress for the Defense of Culture. Western Cold War programs sought to catch up to Soviet successes in the translation and dissemination of literary works.⁶

For writers in the decolonizing world, this meant many of the same opportunities and risks that had produced Lāhūtī's strange career. Poets learned to speak as the representatives of nations, and were recognized as such by a vast international reading public. They produced

⁴ Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: The New Press, 2000).

⁵ Lohutī, K3, 139-141.

⁶ Andrew N. Rubin, *Archives of Authority: Empire, Culture, and the Cold War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012); for a case study, Esmaeil Haddadian-Moghaddam, "The Cultural Cold War and the Circulation of World Literature: Insights from Franklin Book Programs in Tehran," *Journal of World Literature* 1, no. 3 (2016): 371-390.

occasional poems addressed to the similarly positioned writers whom they met at international events, and thereby established, between one representative and another, bilateral cultural relations. If they did not write in a European language, this fact decreased their chance of discovery. If they were discovered in translation all the same, their international audiences presumed to judge the poetic value of their work on the basis of translations, and often translations of translations. Particularly if they wrote in preexisting non-European genres, or engaged closely with those genres, they might be respected as representatives, but fundamentally misunderstood as poets.

Still, Lāhūtī should not be seen only as a cautionary tale from the literary international. I will conclude with an instance of what a tactically successful poem looks like under such conditions. This is a poem fairly traditional in its execution, and so plain and declarative that it does not yield much more in rereadings. Its variety of inimitable simplicity (*al-sahl al-mumtani*) is difficult for me to convey in accurate translation. Its success, however, is not limited to the context of its composition.

Another context, then: in Kabul in May 1978, only weeks after the coup that brought a Soviet-aligned government to power in Afghanistan, the nation's most famous pop star, Ahmad Zāhir, gave a concert in one of the city's main movie theaters. At the time, his relations with the new government were increasingly hostile, and in June he would die under circumstances that generated numerous conspiracy theories. A conference attendee recalls, "he came out onto the stage, all alone, and took the microphone in his hand. His immortal, dawn-bringing voice rang out through the entire hall."⁷

⁷ Malālī Mūsā Nizām, "Zindagī ākhir sar āyad, bandagī darkār nīst," *Āryānā Afghānistān ānlāyn*, June 17, 2016, [http://www.arianafghanistan.com/UploadCenter/m_nezam_Zendagi_akher_sar_aiad.pdf](http://www.arianafghanistan.com/UploadCenter/m_nezam Zendagi_akher_sar_aiad.pdf).

zindagī ākhir sar āyad, bandagī darkār nēst
bandagī gar sharṭ bāshad, zindagī darkār nēst (x2; repeat after each *bayt*)
bā ḥaqārat gar bibārad (x2) bar sarat bārān-i durr,
āsmān-rā gū: biraw, bārandagī darkār nēst
gar fishār-i dushmanān ābat kunad, miskīn mashaw,
mard bāsh, ay khastah-dil, sharmandagī darkār nēst
zindagī āzādī-yi insān-u istiqlāl-i ū-st
bahr-i āzādī jadal kun, bandagī dar kār nēst

Since life comes to an end, there's no need for servitude
If on the condition of servitude, there's no need for life
If pearls rain down on your head as you are humiliated
Say to the heavens, begone, there's no need for such rain
If the pressure of enemies dissolves you, don't abase yourself
Be a man, weary-hearted one, there's no need to be ashamed
A human's life is his freedom and independence
Struggle for freedom, there's no need for servitude⁸

In 2009, while teaching in the Tajik autonomous region of Badakhshan, in a town on the Afghan border, I bought a MP3 CD of Zāhir's songs at the market, at a colleague's recommendation. As a result, I believe that this was the first poem by Lāhūtī that I ever heard, although I only realized this later.

As Persian poetry entered the multi-tradition Babel of world literature, some of Lāhūtī's political poems did not travel as well as he hoped. Some of them, by contrast, traveled very well indeed, and farther than he could have imagined. The chain of transmission by which Lāhūtī's ghazal passed through the Persianate space, and ultimately took on such a form and meaning, marks out milestones for the transformation of politics and poetic practices in the last years of the literary international. Lāhūtī wrote the poem in February 1930, in the first months after his return to Moscow from Tajikistan, just before his rise to prominence as a Soviet poet began. The ghazal fits with his earlier published Soviet poems that mourn his exile from Iran and express

⁸ Song transcribed from another performance, Ahmad Zāhir, 4th live (*majlisī*) album, track 10, with the addition of the ghazal's final *bayt*, which Nizām specifically recalls from the performance that she witnessed. The full poem is in K2, 34.

bitterness at the political situation there, but it was first published in 1942 as a song of the Second World War, an occasion that permitted Soviet publishers and critics to read it unambiguously as a rejection of *fascist* servitude.⁹ As Soviet agitational efforts in Afghanistan accelerated over the course of the 1970s, just as before in Iran, Lāhūtī's verses were sold in Kabul bookstores and went out over the airwaves of Persian-language Radio Moscow. Given this prominence, it is unsurprising that well before the Soviet invasion, Zāhir was performing Lāhūtī's love ghazals in his concerts—in fact, through the singer's entire discography, Lāhūtī is only second to Rūmī for the number of poems adapted and performed.¹⁰ As Zāhir's concerts took on a political edge in the final years of his life, he began to draw on Lāhūtī's civic lyrics, including this one.

The return of Zāhir's song to Tajikistan is another exemplary case of the reconfiguration of Persianate revolutionary literature in the late Cold War. When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in December 1979 in support of its post-coup Communist government, Central Asians, especially Tajiks and Uzbeks, disproportionately took up roles as translators and cultural advisors in the Red Army.¹¹ In a sense, this was the extrapolation to the Soviet Persianate masses of the cultural intermediary role previously played only by elite representatives such as Lāhūtī. The resulting wartime cultural exchange brought new artistic models not only to Afghanistan,

⁹ The poem was first published in *Surudhoi musallah* (Stalinabad: 1942), which I have been unable to locate but which likely included sheet music, like other wartime collections of Lāhūtī's song lyrics, such as *Lohutī, Surudhoi jangi vatanī* (Stalinabad: Nashriëti davlatii nazdi SKKh RSS Tojikiston, 1943). I have not determined whether the melody used by Zāhir came from this earlier version. For the full publication history, see *K2*, 312.

¹⁰ The only other poet who contributed nearly so many lyrics to Zāhir's repertory was the modern Iranian poet Furūgh Farrukhzād. Muhammad Hārūn Khurāsānī, ed., *Ṣadā-yi qarn: majmū‘ah-i āhang ‘hā-yi surūdah shudah-i zindah-yād Ahmad Zāhir* (Kabul: Sa‘īd, 1387 [2009]).

¹¹ For a case study of a Tajik advisor, Timothy Nunan, *Humanitarian Invasion: Global Development in Cold War Afghanistan* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 171–175.

but also to Central Asia, as soldiers returned home with cassettes and records of Afghan popular music.¹² The cult of Aḥmad Zāhir entered Central Asian opposition culture in the late 1980s. One young poet, Farzānah, addressed verses to the people of Afghanistan that referred to the singer's spilt blood.¹³ The emergence of this new model of the rebel Persian poet coincided with an increasing ambivalence among Tajik writers about Lāhūtī, as a model of both how to write and how to be a poet.¹⁴

And yet, Zāhir's defiant epideictic use of this ghazal to address the Afghan people reframed at least some listeners' interpretation of Lāhūtī's own program of representation, to serve a vision of the past in which the Soviet project had always been unambiguously colonial but Lāhūtī was still a righteous rebel. The 1978 concert attendee concludes her recollections with "the deep significance of this immortal poem," which listeners must "have fully understood": that Lāhūtī produced his ghazal "in loathing for the suffocation and dependence that he, too, had experienced under similar conditions of Soviet occupation and subjugation in a country like Afghanistan, in Tajikistan."¹⁵

There is no need for an aesopian reading of Lāhūtī's intention in composing such a ghazal in the 20th century, which provided enough collective experiences of oppression to give new power to a well-phrased declaration of defiance over and over again. Above all, the poem's lives are a testament to the continued durability and portability of traditional Persianate verse

¹² Sultān Ḥamad, "Maḥbūbiyat va ma'rūfiyat-i Aḥmad Zāhir dar Tājikistān; khāṭirahhā'ī az ān dawrān," BBC Persian, June 13, 2016, http://www.bbc.com/persian/afghanistan/2016/06/160613_130_ea_soltan_hamd_ahmad_zahir_birthday_anniversary [sic].

¹³ Cf. Farzona, *Shabokhuni barq* (Dushanbe: Adib, 1989), 16-17.

¹⁴ Bāzār Šābir and Mu'min Qanā'at express such ambivalence in interviews qtd. in Gabrielle Van den Berg, "Perceptions of Poetry: Some Examples of Late 20th Century Tajik Poetry," *Oriente Moderno* n.s. 22, no. 1 (2003): 41-42.

¹⁵ Nizām, "Zindagī ākhir sar īyad."

forms, the success with which they can still be repurposed for new media, new occasions, and new types of poetic personae. This, too, should be kept in mind when we take stock of the loss and gain entailed in the fundamental transformation of the relationship between Persianate cultures and their shared texts, the reformation enacted by the generation of Persianate writers and intellectuals who learned to read and recite in traditional settings and went on to institutionalize national literatures. It is they who preserved the literary tradition in a more powerful and convincing way than their intentional act of institutionalization: they showed us how many new things that tradition still could do.

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