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Parvīn Dawlatābādī: The Poet of the Literary Elite

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Figure 1. Photo of the young Parvīn Dawlatābādī (Courtesy of Shīvā Dawlatābādī, taken February 7, 1955 in Paris).

The Life and Works of Dawlatābādī¹

Parvīn Dawlatābādī was born in Ahmadābād district, Isfahān in 1303/1924 (see Figure 2). Her mother, Fakhr-i Gītī or Fakhriyah Khānum Dawlatābādī (1282–1362/1903–1983), was the headmistress of Nāmūs where Parvīn was enrolled. After her family

moved to Tehran, she continued her education in other schools such as Nawrūz, Nūr and Sidāqat, and Nūrbakhsh. Her father, Hisām al-Dīn Dawlatābādī (1282–1364/1903–1985), was a poet and a representative of the people of Isfahān for several years; subsequently, he was appointed as the mayor of Tehran.



Figure 2: A copy of Parvīn Dawlatābādī’s identity card (Courtesy of Shīvā Dawlatābādī).

Dawlatābādī continued her education in Tehran’s College of Fine Arts in order to study music and sculpture, but after a visit to Amīnābād’s municipality nursery, she left the university to work full time there. For many years she worked at the nursery without pay and brought hope and love to the children with her poems. Later on, she was employed by the National Iranian Oil Company and worked to help improve the literacy of the company’s workers. Dawlatābādī started writing poetry from her early youth and her first poems were published in Payk magazine.² Parvīn is usually considered a children’s poet, but between the years 1349–1401/1970–2022 numerous works of hers in different poetic genres have been published.³ For instance, *Manzūr-i khiradmand* (The Sage’s intention, 1367/1988), a rare study on Jahān Malik Khātūn (AH 724–795/1324–1393), a contemporary poet of Hāfiz (AH 725–791/1325–1389), was also written by Parvīn Dawlatābādī.⁴

¹“Originally written in Persian, this article is translated by the editorial team of Women Poets Iranica.” Simin Behbahani called Parvīn Dawlatābādī the poet of the literary elite because of her companionship with the intelligentsia and the literati. See: Simīn Bihbahānī, “Yād-i Parvīn Dawlatābādī” [In memory of Parvīn Dawlatābādī], *Bukhārā* 14, no. 82 (Murdād-Sharīvar 1390/August-September 2011): 621.

²These biographical details are drawn variously from: Rizā Bayāt, “Dawlatābādī, Parvīn,” in *Dānīshnāmah-yi jahān-i Islām* [Encyclopedia of the world of Islam], vol. 82 (1392/2013), 365–66; the authors’ interview with Shīvā Dawlatābādī (sister of Parvīn), *Tīr* 2, 1402/ June 28, 2023; ‘Abidī, *Bih raghm-i panjirih’hā-yi bastah: Shi’r-i mu’āsir-i zanān* [In spite of closed windows: Poetry of contemporary women] (Tehran: Kitāb-i Nādīr, 1380/2001), 45. Some claim that Dawlatābādī started writing poetry when she was fourteen years old and that she published more than five hundred poems in *Payk* Magazine. See: Nūshāfarīn Ansārī, “Lālāyikhvān-i kūdakān-i dīrūz: Bih

bahānah-yi hashtumīn sāl-i dar-guzasht-i Parvīn Dawlatābādī” [Children’s lullabies singer: On the eighth anniversary of the death of Parvīn Dawlatābādī], *Irān* (Tehran), no. 6191, Farvardīn 29, 1395/ April 17, 2016, 24. It is worth noting that the poems of Dawlatābādī published in *Payk* have also been published in her book *Bar qāyiq-i abr’hā Majmū’ah-yi shi’r barāyi kūdakān va naw-javānān* [On the boat of clouds: Collections of poems for children and youth] and there are not five hundred of them. See: Parvīn Dawlatābādī, *Bar*

qāyiq-i abr'hā: Majmū'ah-yi shi'r barāyi kūdakān va navjavānān (Shiraz: Rāhgushā, 1378/1997). Apparently, Dawlatābādī also studied with the famous literary man, Nizām Vafā. See: Ghazal Tājbaksh, Zan, Shi'r va andīshah [Woman, poetry and thought] Tehran: Rushangarān va Mutali'āt-i Zanān, 1378/1999, 91. In a letter to Mahīn Hishmatī, Dawlatābādī wrote on her time in Aminābād and cooperation with Ziā' al-Dīn Jināb, stating: "With Jināb... we attended to the nursery in Aminābād in 1332 [1953]. Every morning at seven we would go to Aminābād; he would return to the city at noon, and I would return late in the evening." See "Ziā' al-Dīn Jināb," Kāvah 67 (Spring 1357/1978): 60

³Dawlatābādī's poetry books include: Shūrāb: Barguzīdah-yi shi'r [Brackish water: Selected poems], (1349/1970); Ātash va āb: Barguzīdah-yi shi'r [Fire and water: Selected poetry], (1353/1974); Mihrtāb: Guzīdah-i ash'ār [Love shine: Selected poems], (1378/1999); Shahr-i sangī: Guzīdah-yi ghazal'hā, masnavī'hā va chahār-pārih'hā, va ash'ār-i naw [The Stone city: Selected ghazals, masnavī, couplets and new poetry], (1382/2003); Dar bulūrīn jāmah-i angūr [Within the crystal garment of the Grape], (1382/2003); Hilāl-i nuqrahī [The silver crescent], (1382/2003). Shi'r-i gul-i bādām: Majmū'ih-yi ghazal [Poetry of almond blossoms: Collection of ghazals] won the poetry award of Shurā-yi Kitāb-i Kūdak [The Children's Book Council] in 1378/1997. See Bayāt, "Dawlatābādī,

Dawlatābādī, who chose the pen name of "Parī," first gained fame through writing ghazal and, in the second half of her life, she wrote several masnavīs. She died in Tehran on Farvardīn 27, 1387/ April 15, 2008, aged 84, after a period of illness. It is worth mentioning that Dawlatābādī only used her pen name of "Parī" up to the early 1340s/1960s and later on one cannot find any sign of this pen name in her poetry. "Parī" has some similarity to her own name, helping her to maintain her poetical identity since her first name has somehow put her under the great shadow of another contemporary famous poet, Parvīn I'tisāmī.

In 1327/1948, Parvīn Dawlatābādī wrote an introduction to Javād Fāzil's (1295–1340/1916–1961) novel, Āy ārizū-yi man (O, my wish, n.d.), the content of which shows her attention to the deplorable condition of Iranian women. She states,

Reading Āy ārizū-yi man, unwantedly you will find yourself in the depths of [the] stormy soul of a woman.... The sweet story of "Parī" who leaves the tumultuous Tehran to follow her wish sitting upon the wings of dreams talking to you of great Europe is one of the thousand scenes of the real life of our women that the darkness of fear and the rays of hope are shown in its shade and the flame of sighs and smile of happiness and flood of tears and rivers of blood amid its lines represent the reality of mental and social life of our people.... Our women... whether in the power and greatness of civilization and modernity of today or under the black and deadly veil which is the shroud of their life and the grave of their wishes, all have bright hearts and emotions and the influences of those having broken down some barriers sometimes afflicted with permissiveness and the regrets of these being silenced by the darkness of the veil silencing their souls, both create art.... The thoughts of women in real and permanent scenes of our life are boring and cause heartbreaking facts the gist of that the young and sensitive [Fāzil] has produced in his book offering it to the society in which even if the backwardness of women and the deprivation of the population is of no use, at least it produces suitable atmosphere



for the artists to think deeper... to burn more, to write more delicately... and maybe the happiness of tomorrow is laid upon the ashes of grief.⁵

Although, Dawlatābādī is a contemporary poet from a well-known family, many researchers and media sources have committed gross errors in narrating her life, education, and cultural endeavors. Obviously, they have confused her life story with that of Mahdukht Dawlatābādī.⁶

Another noteworthy point about Parvīn Dawlatābādī relates to her poems printed in different magazines throughout the years. Publication of her poems over many decades (from the 1330s to the 1380s/the 1950s to the 2000s), show the attention of the media and magazines to her poetry. It is worth noting that I have tracked down over thirty poems by Parvīn Dawlatābādī which were published in various journals over the years, including: Yaghmā,⁷ Rawshanfīkr,⁸ Kāvah,⁹ Vahīd,¹⁰ Āmūzish va parvarish (Ta‘līm va tarbiyat),¹¹ Chīstā,¹² Bukhārā,¹³ etc.¹⁴ Parvīn Dawlatābādī is also one of the few poets that literary individuals and outstanding modern poets such as Shāmlū (1304–1999/1925–2000) have dedicated a poem to.¹⁵

The reason for such praise is probably the intertextual status of Dawlatābādī in Persian poetry.¹⁶

The masnavī “Az tāk tā sāghar” (From vine to wineglass) was the last poem of Dawlatābādī which was printed in Āvīn magazine but never published in any of her books. She composed this masnavī toward the end of her life.¹⁷ Notably, there are several manuscripts of Dawlatābādī’s that are not included in her published books. For example, a photo of one her unpublished handwritten poems that was sent to the author follows below (see Figure 3).

Parvīn,” 365–66. She also won the second round of Parvīn I’tisāmī’s award. See Ramazān Ibrāhīmzādah Gurjī, “Rūy-dād’hā-yi farhangī” [Cultural events], Kayhān-i Farhangī 245 (Isfand 1386/March 2007): 77. Some of her other books of children’s poetry include: Gul rā bishinās kūdak-i man. [Know the flower my child], (1370/1991); Qissah-i murgh-i surkh-i pākūtāh [The Tale of the red short-legged chicken in verse], (1370/1991); Bar qāy-iq-i abr’hā (1374/1995); Gul āmad va gul āmad [Flowers have appeared, adaptation of Hanz Christian Anderson’s Little Ida’s Flower], (1372/1993); Bāz ham bahār āmad [Spring came again], (n.d.); Asb-i chūbi [Wooden horse], (1395/2016); and Khānah-i muqavvā’ī [Cardboard house], (1379/2000). Sūdābah Amīnī has also published a selection of Dawlatābādī’s poems entitled Sukhan az sitārah guftan [Talking of the stars], (1401/2022).

⁵Note that these are the estimated birth and death dates of Khātūn, and that there are many different opinions on the birth date of Hāfiz.

⁶Refer to the introduction of Javād Fāzil’s, Āy ārizū-yi man [O, my wish] (Tehran: Kānūn-i Ma’rifat, n.d.), 1.

⁷For instance, Nāsir Takmīl Humāyūn (1315–1401/1936–2022) states that Hisām al-Dīn (Dawlatābādī’s father) was the cousin of Hāj Mirzā Yahyā Dawlatābādī (1241–1318/1862–1939) and Siddiqah Dawlatābādī (1261–1340/1882–1961) and that he was interested in Musaddiq’s movement. See Nāsir Takmīl Humāyūn, “Bih yād-i Parvīn Dawlatābādī” [In memory of Parvīn Dawlatābādī], Bukhārā

15, no. 86 (Farvardīn-Urdūbi-hisht 1391/April-May 2012): 689–98. Almost all of what Takmil Humāyūn has presented in this paper is incorrect. First, Hāj Mirzā Mahdī (father of Hisām al-Dīn) is not the brother of Hāj Mirza Hādī (1247–1326/1868–1947) but he is his son, and he is also a brother to Yahyā Dawlatābādī, see: Yahyā Dawlatābādī, Hayāt-i Yahyā [Yahyā's life] (2nd repr. ed., Tehran: 'Attār, 1362/1983), 1:344. For the second claim, it must be said that, at least according to an essay by Hisām al-Dīn himself, he was always against Musaddīq. See Hisām al-Dīn Dawlatābādī, "Siyāsat va talāsh" [Politics and effort], Vahīd (Khātirāt) 26 (Āzar 1352/December 1973): 19–22. It is also worth mentioning that Simin Behbahani who was a friend of Dawlatābādī from a young age has incorrectly named "Parvīn Dawlatābādī" as the niece of Siddīqah Dawlatābādī even though, as it was mentioned above, Siddīqah is the aunt of Dawlatābādī's father. See: Simin Bihbahānī, "Yād-i Parvīn Dawlatābādī," 620. Such mistakes about Dawlatābādī are not limited to the media or scholarly essays as some books have also mentioned incorrect information on very public issues such as her birth date. For example, the writer of Sukhan-i ahl-i dīl [The Conversation of the Wise] mentions 1314/1935 as the year of her birth, see Sa'īd Niyāz Kirmānī, Sukhan-i ahl-i dīl: Sharh-i ahvāl va āsār-i gūyandīgān-i buzurg-i zabān-i Fārsī az āghāz tā imrūz [The Conversation of the wise: Biography of great writers of Persian language from the

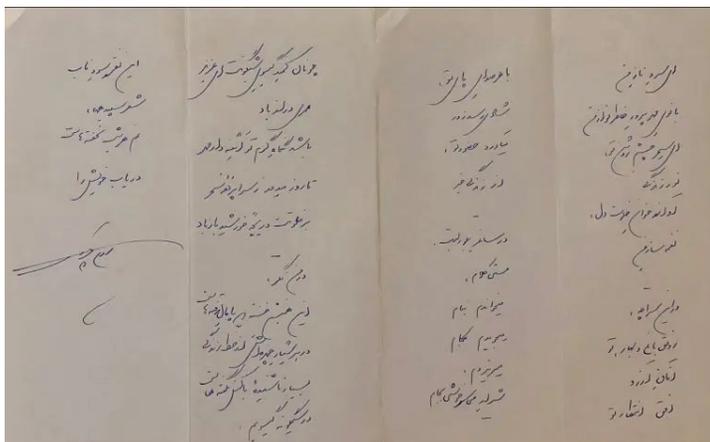


Figure 3: Dawlatābādī wrote this untitled poem for her sister Shīvā on 3 September 1981 (Courtesy of Shīvā Dawlatābādī).

Besides these unpublished manuscripts, Dawlatābādī has a very important unpublished poem entitled "Sangsār" (Stoning to death) that was composed in the early days of the Revolution (probably 1978 or 1979). The only version of this poem available is an audio cassette recording of Dawlatābādī's voice reading the poem aloud that I was able to listen to courtesy of the family. In this outstanding and highly critical narrative poem, she questions the inhuman and ugly act of stoning a person to death. A part of the poem is provided here:

Woman,

As a green tree yielding to autumn,

Accepting destiny of death,

To the calm vision of destruction

So as the furies do not make excuses

Woman with the cascade of dark tresses covering her shoulder



I am waiting for the verdict of hangman

An unclean hand emerged at last

A cry came out of the unfeeling throats

As if life ended

The cascade of hair was cut off

The hair was cut to brand her shame

Branded with deceit and pretense¹⁸

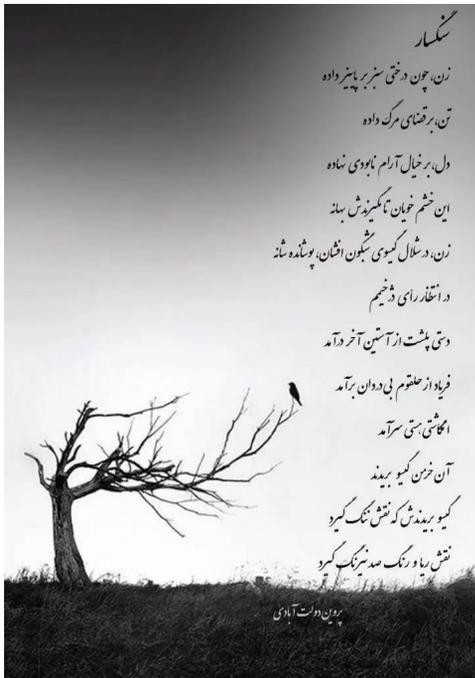


Figure 4: The poem “Sangsār” (Stoning to Death) by Parvīn Dawlatābādī

Intertextuality in the Poetry of Parvīn Dawlatābādī

beginning to now] (Tehran: Pāzhang, 1367/1988), 124; Niyāz Kirmānī has probably repeated the mistake of Mushīr Salīmī. See ‘Alī Akbar Mushīr Salīmī, Zanān-i sukhanvar [Women Writers] (Tehran: ‘Ilmī, 1337/1956), 1: 118. Another mistake of Takmīl Humāyūn concerns the education and services of Parvīn Dawlatābādī. He states that she studied educational psychology in Britain and America. He also considers her to be one of the founders of The Children’s Book Council and an editor of children’s books (Franklin Publications). See, Takmīl Humāyūn, “Bih yād-i Parvīn Dawlatābādī,” 691. Obviously, he has confused Dawlatābādī’s life with that of Mahdukht Dawlatābādī and what he attributes to Parvīn Dawlatābādī is mostly derived from Mahdukht’s Dawlatābādī’s career. According to Irān Newspaper, Nūshāfārīn Ansārī (then editor of The Children’s Book Council) in an interview with an ISNA reporter states that Parvīn Dawlatābādī was not a member of The Children’s Book Council (Iran) and that the similarity of the surnames has been the cause of this mistake. In fact, Mahdukht Dawlatābādī had been a member of the Children’s book council. See, “Shā’irī dar āghūsh-i kūdakān: Yāzdash sāl pas az marg-i Parvīn Dawlatābādī” [A poet in the arms of children: Eleven years after the death of Parvīn Dawlatābādī], Irān (Tehran), no. 7037, Farvardīn 28, 1398/April 17, 2019, 24; also see, Melissa Mī’mār, “Asad Allāh Sha’bānī: Parvīn Dawlatābādī khudash rā mādar-i hamah-yi kūdakān mīdānist,” Khabarguzārī-yi kitāb-i Irān [Iran Book News Agency], Farvardīn 27, 1399 /15 April 2020. Although what Takmīl Humāyūn has

attributed to Dawlatābādī is not exact, it seems that she pursued other activities in publishing and establishing libraries for children with Dr. Khānlarī. Pūrān Sārimī claims: “at that time [Ismā‘īl Sārimī] published his works alongside Dr. Khānlarī and with the help of Dr. Khānlarī, Zahrā Khānlarī and the contemporary esteemed poet, Parvīn Dawlatābādī, established Sukhan Library.” See Pūrān Sārimī, “Yādī az Ismā‘īl Sārimī: Mardī az tabār-i ‘ishq va shu‘ūr va shi‘r” [Remembering Ismā‘īl Sārimī, A man of love, understanding and poetry], *Āzmā* 58 (Khurdād 1387/ June 2008): 12. Ismā‘īl Sārimī was the husband of Parvīn Dawlatābādī. See also: Suhaylā Haqiqat (Dawlatābādī) “Yād va yādbūd: Mādar-i zamīn” [Remembering: Mother earth], *Bukhārā* 66 (Murdād-Shahrivar 1387/August-September 2008): 548–50. Media, newspapers, and writers have not been able to provide an exact narrative of her life and have made mistakes. For example, in a piece on Dawlatābādī’s death, I’timād Newspaper claimed that she had her education in America, see “Parvīn Dawlatābādī : Marg-i shā‘ir-i jumjumak barg-i khazūn,” [Parvīn Dawlatābādī : Death of the poet of falling autumn leaves], I’timād (Tehran), no. 1652, Farvardīn 28, 1387/April 16, 2008, 20. Further, the BBC website and some other media have committed the same mistake and published essays saying that Dawlatābādī had a PhD in early childhood education from America, see “Parvīn Dawlatābādī, shā‘ir-i shi‘r-i kūdak Darguzasht,” *Tārnama-yi BBC Fārsī*, [Webpage of Persian BBC] accessed

Parvīn Dawlatābādī’s poetry, with its dialogic status that seems to have one foot in tradition and one foot in literary revival, has a very clear and undeniable intertextual relationship with poets before and after her. On the one hand, her knowledge and engagement with classical literature and, on the other hand, her poetical language which speaks of the modern world, lead to a very new and original combination.

For instance, Dawlatābādī’s poetry has an amazing intertextual relationship with Hāfiz. According to Hāfiz scholars, he benefited the most from the literature that came before him; thus, he transformed into the very essence of Persian poetry and culture.¹⁹ The relationship of Dawlatābādī’s poetry to the poetry of Hāfiz cannot be reduced to mere influence or reception of his poetry; even when she is following ghazals of Rūmī (AH 604–672/1207–1273), Sa‘dī (AH 585–690/1189–1291), and others, one can hear the voice of Hāfiz through musical combinations, using internal as well as external music and making paradoxes that reveal the philosophical and ontological contradictions of human beings.²⁰ It must be noted that such intertextuality is not a look at the past; in recreating many combinations, Dawlatābādī has paved the way for modern poets to use classical arrangements in their poetry.

For example, in her book, *Manzūr-i khiradmand* (The Sage’s intention), she has endeavored to find those ghazals that represent a literary dialogue between Jahān Malik Khātūn and Hāfiz; she has, consciously or unconsciously, joined in a dialogue with Hāfiz and other poets, though it is not pure imitation. Dawlatābādī comments on Jahān Malik Khātūn, “Topics, rhythms, rhymes and alignment shows her undeniable attention to [the] ghazals of Hāfiz and it is probable that in the gatherings and literary meetings of her uncle, Shāh Abū Ishāq, [she] had met and, in some cases, they had composed their ghazal as a form of conversation or answer.”²¹

Some examples of such intertextual relations are discussed here



with regards to semantic and conceptual links of these poems. As I stated before, some of Dawlatābādī's ghazals represent her poetical link to Hāfiz and other poets. In 1350/1971, for instance, she writes:

As I was humbled in the tavern of love

I found a wealth of happiness and drunkenness²²

Which reminds one of Hāfiz:

As I was tamed in the tavern of love

Sadness welcomes me at every breath²³

And Safā-yi Isfahānī (AH 1269–1322/1853–1904) says:

As I was humbled in the tavern of love

I had wonderful place and wonderful dignity²⁴

One point must be noted here that neither Dawlatābādī nor Safā have attained the paradox of Hāfiz in the second hemistich, that is the welcoming sadness. Though later on, Dawlatābādī used this poetical technique in at least a few of her outstanding poems.

Sometimes Dawlatābādī's poem reminds one of those written by others, like Shahrīyār (1285–1367/1906–1988), due to the rhyme or the external music used. For instance, Dawlatābādī writes:

Why do you open this empty tavern?

Why such weariness with those afflicted with toil?²⁵

Which reminds one of the famous ghazal of Shahrīyār:

October 23, 2023, <https://bbc.in/3eNfdAK>. "Parvīn Dawlatābādī bunyānguzār-i shi'r-i kūdak-i Īrān darguzasht," *Tārnamā-yi kânūn-i zanān-i Īrānī* [Webpage of The center of Iranian women], Farvardīn 27, 1387/April 15, 2008.

²²For instance, see Parvīn Dawlatābādī, "Chang-i gham" [Lyre of grief], *Yaghmā* 11 (Farvardīn 1328/April 1949): 6.

²³For instance, see Parvīn Dawlatābādī, "Sang-i sabūr" [Patient stone], *Rawshanfīkr* 110 (Shahrīvar 16, 1334/September 8, 1955): 14; "Nashud" [Did not happen], *Rawshanfīkr* 112 (Shahrīvar 30, 1334/September 22, 1955), 14; "Jām-i mudām" ["Constant cup"], *Rawshanfīkr* 113 (Mīhr 16, 1334/September 29, 1955): 22; "Khākistar-i dard" [Ashes of pain], *Rawshanfīkr* 114 (Mīhr 13, 1334/October 6, 1955): 14; "Kulāh-i ātashīn" [Fiery hat], *Rawshanfīkr* 116 (Mīhr 27, 1334/October 20, 1955): 14; "Ashk-i bīhingām" [Sudden tears], *Rawshanfīkr*, no. 122 (Āzar 9, 1334/December 1, 1955): 14; "Sāghar-i andūh" [Cup of pain], *Rawshanfīkr* 125 (Āzar 30, 1334/December 22, 1955): 14; "Dunyā-yi qissah'hā" [World of tales], *Rawshanfīkr* 134 (Isfand 3, 1334/February 23, 1956): 16; "Rusvā" [Disgraced], *Rawshanfīkr* 137 (Farvardīn 2, 1335/March 23, 1956): 27.

²⁴For instance, see: Parvīn Dawlatābādī, "Yik lahzah bīsh nīst" [Not more than a moment], *Kāvah* (Munich) 3, (Khurdād 1342/June 1963): 74–75; "Nawrūz," *Kāvah* (Munich) 1 (Farvardīn 1342/April 1963): 51.

²⁵For instance, see: Parvīn Dawlatābādī, "Shabnamī bas ast" [A dewdrop is enough],

Vahid 5, no. 49 (Day 1346/
January 1968): 2.

¹¹For instance, see: Parvīn Dawlatābādī, “Surūd-i subhgāhī” [Morning Song], *Āmūzish va parvarish*, (Ta’līm va tarbiyat) 47, no. 321 (Mihir 1356/October 1977): 167–68.

¹²For instance, see: Parvīn Dawlatābādī, “Shi’r” [Poem] (Untitled). *Chistā* 202–3 (Ābān–Āzar 1382/November–December 2003): 256.

¹³For instance, see: Parvīn Dawlatābādī, “Biyā ...” [Come...], *Bukhārā* 37 (Murdad 1383/July 2004): 263.

¹⁴For a list of some of Dawlatābādī’s poems published in magazines, please see the master bibliography for this article. Also, in the early 1330s/1950s, *Rawshanfikir* magazine published a report on Dawlatābādī accompanied with her photo. See: “Shā’ir-i pursūz va gudāz” [Poet of pain and suffering], *Rawshanfikir* 61 (1 Mihir 1333/23 September 1954), 25.

¹⁵For example, Jalāl al-Dīn Humā’ī, the famous scholar (1278–1359/1899–1980), dedicated a poem to Dawlatābādī: O, heart if you are clear-eyed and you defer to taste and literature See in the horizon of poetry shining like the sun is Parvīn among the stars. See Parvīn Dawlatābādī, *Introduction to Mihrtāb* (Tehran: Tūs, 1378/1999), 1. Date of composition of this poem is 1326/1947. *Shāmlū*, in the collection of *Bāgh-i āyīnah* [Garden of mirrors], also has ded-

You came at last, oh, precious but why now?

Why now, O fickle, that I have fallen down?²⁶

Sometimes Dawlatābādī uses a combination with traces of classical poetry. For example, she says:

Did not go after the drunk for the sake of night-lovers

Challenge with the victorious drains our strength²⁷

The compound word “night-lover” reminds us of Rūmī’s:

Since I am a page to the sun, I will talk of the sun

Night I am not, nor night-lover to narrate sleep²⁸

Or another line in which Dawlatābādī says:

The eye became the sea and the heart was on fire

Oh, for the lonely calm of the dead²⁹

It seems that the expression of the eye becoming the sea [crying] is under the influence of the following distich:

Will cry as the sea and throw patience to the desert

And impatiently face danger in the desert.³⁰

Further, sometimes trace of Hāfiz’ poetry is too explicit to be ignored—

I am in pain of life, where is the tavern

Tell me where is the happy song³¹



—which immediately reminds one of Hāfiz:

No sleep at night thinking every night

Intoxicated for [a] hundred nights, where is the tavern³²

Dawlatābādī in another place says:

My life is tied to a strand of hair that you know

I am enslaved to hair you know³³

That is a reminder again of Hāfiz:

I love you dear and I know that you know

You who can see not having seen and read not yet written³⁴

And of course, the poem of Hāfiz has an intertextual link with the famous opening lines of Laylī and Majnūn by Nizāmī Ganjavī (AH 535–612/1141–1209):³⁵

You know the unwritten tale

You read the unwritten letter³⁶

And in another place, Dawlatābādī says:

The ford is closed and the insane has lost it

Kissing the mirage for the thirst³⁷

And Hāfiz says:

Cleaned and watered the front of the house of magi
the sitting sage invites young and old³⁸

icated a poem entitled “Tarh” [Plot] to Parvīn Dawlatābādī: Night with bloody throat has sung late The sea sitting cold A bough Screams Toward light In the darkness of the jungle. See: Ahmad Shāmlū, *Majmū’ah-yi āsār*, vol. 1 shi’r/hā 1323–1378 [Collected works, vol. 1, Poems 1944–1999] (4th repr. ed., Tehran: Nigāh, 1382/2003), 344–45. Another famous poet, Ra’dī Āzarakhshī (1288–1378/1909–1999), has dedicated a poem to Dawlatābādī opening with “Ra’dī read the ghazal by the pen of Parvīn / Said we are drunk by this pure wine,” see: Ghulām ‘Alī Ra’dī Āzarakhshī, “Khāb-i āshuftah” [Disturbed sleep], *Vahīd* 40 (Farvardīn 1346/ April 1967), 294. Shahriyār has also a ghazal entitled “Intizār” [Waiting] with the opening distich, “O you the shining star did not come again tonight / O, you dawn of the night of separation did not come again tonight.” There is another line in this ghazal worth noting: “You are the divan of Hāfiz and I am mad for you / But you fairy did not come to see the divan.” Shīvā Dawlatābādī claims Shahriyār dedicated this line to her sister, Parvīn Dawlatābādī, and that the Dawlatābādī herself always referred to it; see: Author’s interview with Shīvā Dawlatābādī, *Tīr* 7, 1402/June 28, 2023. However, in the older or the later editions of *Dīvān-i Shahriyār* it is not mentioned that he dedicated this line to Dawlatābādī, see for example: Muhammad Husayn Shahriyār, *Dīvān-i Shahriyār* (31st repr. ed., Tehran: Nigāh, 1387/2008), 1:390; Muhammad Husayn Shahriyār, *Dīvān-i Shahriyār* (Tehran: Sa’dī Tabrīz, 1346/1967), 146. My further research in some journals that have published the poem showed it was not dedicated to Dawlatābādī nor

anyone else, see for example: Muhammad Husayn Shahriyār, “Intizār” [Waiting], *Āshuṭah* 8, no. 27 (Tīr 17, 1333/July 8, 1954): 28.

¹⁶Some critics have considered Dawlatābādī belonging to the moderate modern poets such as Tavallālī, Khānlarī and Gulchīn Gīlānī or think that she has followed these poets. See: ‘Ābidī, *Bih raghm-i pañjīri-h’hā-yi bastah*, 47; *Ismā’il Nūrī* ‘Alā, *Suvar va asbāb dar shi’r-i imrūz-i Irān* [Image and technique in Iran’s modern poetry] (Tehran: Bāmdād, 1348/1969), 151–52. In fact, this moderate modernism has put her in a position of inter-dialogue with modern and classical poetry.

¹⁷See: Parvīn Dawlatābādī, “Az tāk tā sāghar,” *Āvīn* 5, no. 20 (Spring and Summer 1386/2007), 17–18. Dawlatābādī’s view regarding vine, cup, and wine is completely mystical; this mystical interpretation can be compared to the rationalistic critical approach of Īraj Mīrzā in his poem “Sharāb” [“Wine”] where he begins with “I wish the vine dries up and God / keeps humans from this evil.” See Īraj Mīrzā, *Dīvān-i Īraj Mīrzā*, ed. Muhammad Ja’far Mahjūb (3rd repr. ed., Tehran: n.p., 1353/1974), 164.

¹⁸I was informed of this poem and permitted to listen to it in an interview with Shīvā Dawlatābādī. Interview with Shīvā Dawlatābādī (sister of Parvīn Dawlatābādī) Tīr 7, 1402/June 28, 2023.

Dawlatābādī states in another place:

Do not leave me as I am world-weary

Breath a moment of kindness and show me love³⁹

And Hāfiz says:

If you do not caress me as a lyre

Kiss me like playing the reed⁴⁰

Dolwatabadi says:

No fear if I prayed to the clay of the wine jar

The call of euphoria drops from this clay⁴¹

And Hāfiz says:

Blossomed is the red rose; and intoxicated is the nightingale

(And given is) the invitation to merriment— O Lovers, wine-worshipping!⁴²

Dawlatābādī writes in another part:

Forgive the drunk to the honor of the beloved

Do not ask where the flame of this wickless candle⁴³

And Hāfiz says:

Do not look at me, the drunk, with pity

The honor of the righteous will not be defiled thus⁴⁴



Dawlatābādī writes in another part:

Where is the mirage of life, where the thirsty soul?

Where is the sāqī [cup-bearer] of sadness, my ancient acquaintance⁴⁵

And Hāfiz says:

The rectitude of work, — where? and, I ruined (wanting in rectitude)—where?

Behold the distance of the Path, —from where (rectitude) to (ruin)—where?⁴⁶

Sometimes she inserts a hemistich of Hāfiz with some change in her own poem:

Do not pain the afflicted by the approved wine

There is no other forbidden in our religion⁴⁷

And Hāfiz says:

Do not inflict pain and do as you like

There is no other sin in our religion⁴⁸

In 1968, Dawlatābādī quotes a hemistich of a ghazal by Sa‘dī, that is, “for the rightful love between us” and wrote a ghazal beginning with:⁴⁹

Our secret the eternal mystery between
The flame of eternal love is the life of you and I

and finishes with:

¹⁹Concerning the intertextual relationship of poetry of Hāfiz with poets before him and the influences he gained from others, see, Bahā al-Dīn Khurramshāhī, *Zihn va zabān-i Hāfiz* [Mind and language of Hāfiz] (7th repr. ed., Tehran: Nāhīd, 1380/2001); and Bahā al-Dīn Khurramshāhī, *Hāfiz-nāmah* [The book of Hāfiz], 2 vols. (14th repr. ed., Tehran: ‘Ilmī va Farhangī, 1383/2004).

²⁰The birth date of Sa‘dī is approximate.

²¹Parvīn Dawlatābādī, *Manzūr-i khiradmand: Barraši-yi ahvāl va guzīdah-yi ash‘ār-i Jahān Malik Khātūn* [The sage’s intention: A biography and selection of poetry of Jahān Malik Khātūn] (n.p.: Gawhar, 1367/1988), 36.

²²Dawlatābādī, *Mihrtāb*, 7.

²³Khvājah Shams al-Dīn Muhammad Hāfiz, *Dīvān-i Hāfiz*, ed. Parvīz Nātil Khānlārī (Tehran: Khvārazmī, 1362/1983), 1:636.

²⁴Safā-yi Isfahānī, *Dīvān-i Hakīm Safā-yi Isfahānī*, ed. Ahmad Suhaylī Khvānsārī (Tehran: Shirkat Nasabī-yi Hāj Muhammad Husayn Iqbāl va Shurakā’, 1337/1958), 279.

²⁵Dawlatābādī, *Mihrtāb*, 5.

²⁶Shahriyār, *Dīvān-i Shahriyār*, 1:79.

²⁷Dawlatābādī, *Mihrtāb*, 9.

²⁸Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Muhammad Mawlavī Rūmī, *Kulliyāt-i Shams-i Tabrīzī*, ed., Badī‘ al-Zamān Furūzānfar (14th repr. ed., Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1376/1997), 614.

²⁹Dawlatābādī, *Mihrtāb*, 97.

³⁰Hāfiz, *Dīvān-i Hāfiz*, 1:696.

³¹Dawlatābādī, *Mihrtāb*, 19.

³²Hāfiz, *Dīvān-i Hāfiz*, 1:68.
‘Irāqī, Sa‘dī, Nāsir-i Bukhārāyī and Salmān-i Sāvajī have ghazals with the same rhythm and rhyme. See, *Khurramshāhī, Hāfiz-nāmah* 1:198. They show the continuation and intertextual relationship of subject and music of classical and contemporary poetry.

³³Dawlatābādī, *Mihrtāb*, 121.

³⁴Hāfiz, *Dīvān-i Hāfiz*, 1:946.

³⁵Date of birth and death of Nizāmī Ganjavī is approximate.

³⁶See, *Khurramshāhī, Hāfiz-nāmah*, 2:1215.

³⁷Dawlatābādī, *Hilāl-i nuqrahī*, 182.

³⁸Hāfiz, *Dīvān-i Hāfiz*, 1:842.

³⁹Dawlatābādī, *Hilāl-i nuqrahī* 134.

⁴⁰Hāfiz, *Dīvān-i Hāfiz*, 1:670.

⁴¹Dawlatābādī, *Hilāl-i nuqrahī*, 64.

⁴²H. Wilburforce-Clarke, trans. and ed., *The Dīvān-i Hāfiz* (Bethesda, MD: Ibex, 1997), 109.

⁴³Dawlatābādī, *Hilāl-i nuqrahī*, 38.

⁴⁴Khvājah Shams al-Dīn Muhammad Hāfiz, *Hāfiz bi sa‘y-i Sāyah*, ed. Sāyah [Hūshang Ibtihāj], (6th repr. ed., Tehran: Kārnāmah, 1378/1999), 294. Khānlarī has preferred it as:

Help this sad and impatient heart of Pari

for the rightful love between us.⁵⁰

The language of Dawlatābādī in this ghazal follows that classical language intermingled with a little mysticism common in the jargon of previous poets. However, Hushang Ibtihāj (1306–1401/1927–2022) had used the same music of Sa‘dī’s poetry in a more modern and personal frame composing a poem without the mystical idioms of the ancient poets gaining more popularity,

What secret we have will not be in the open

As long as eyes play the courtship letters⁵¹

Sometimes Dawlatābādī uses classical combinations successfully but there are better samples from other poets. For example, she writes:

No path to the mosque to undo the rosary of one hundred beads

Tear it from my throat to utter no faith I have⁵²

If out of two different readings we choose the personification of the rosary as the throat, her combination is one step ahead of Furūghī Bastāmī (AH 1213–1274/1798–1857). Furūghī Bastāmī says:

The hermit and the rosary of one hundred beads and dawn invocation

I and drinking the cup and insanity⁵³

Furūghī’s poem reminds one of Hāfiz with regards to topic, “Hermit and conceit and prayer and me and drunkenness and hope...” but he has not personified the rosary as Dawlatābādī



has done.⁵⁴ Farrukhī Yazdī (1268–1318/1889–1939) has used this descriptive composition (i.e., rosary of one hundred beads), personifying it accompanied with a sharp and critical irony towards the deceitful which exerts more artistic influence:

Nothing left of Shaykh’s porous rosary

As I counted [a] rosary of one hundred beads⁵⁵

In 1342/1963 Dawlatābādī writes—

Every night sleep does not come to my eyes

Tresses of night carry me to insanity⁵⁶

[hamah shab khvāb bar in didah harām ast marā

nuktah pardāz-i junūn gisū-yi shām ast marā]

—which reminds one of the following poem by Khāqānī (AH 520–595/1126–1198):

O beloved give me to the line of Baghdād, a cup of wine

Pour me Again to Baghdād in the cup⁵⁷

[Jām-i may tā khat-i Baghdād dih ay yār marā

Bāz ham dar khat-i Baghdād fikan bāz marā]

Shafī‘ī Kadkanī, influenced by the same rhythm and the alignment of marā, composed the poem entitled “Hazārah-yi duvum āhū-yi kūhī” (The Second Millenium of Mountain Deer) in Nīmā’ī form: “Where does this image on the wall take me to?” [Tā kojā mībarad in naqsh-i bih dīvār marā].⁵⁸

Sometimes Dawlatābādī takes a famous composition from clas-

“Absolve me in my pitiful drunkenness / The honor of the righteous will not be defiled thus.” See, Hāfiz, *Dīvān-i Hāfiz*, 1:451.

⁴⁵Parvīn Dawlatābādī, *Shūrāb: Barguzīdah-yi shi‘r* [Brackish water: Selected poems] (Tehran: n.p., 1349/1970), 31.

⁴⁶H. Wilburforce-Clarke, ed. and trans., *Dīvān-i Hāfiz*, 51.

⁴⁷Dawlatābādī, *Hilāl-i nuqrah’ī*, 51.

⁴⁸Hāfiz, *Dīvān-i Hāfiz*, 1:168.

⁴⁹See Muslih ibn ‘Abd Allāh Sa’dī, *Kulliyāt-i Sa’dī* [Complete works of Sa’dī], ed. Muhammad ‘Alī Furūghī (12th repr. ed., Tehran, Amīr Kabīr, 1381/2002), 546.

⁵⁰Dawlatābādī, *Mihrtāb*, 21.

⁵¹Ibtihāj composed this poem in 1924. See H.A. Sāyih [Hūshang Ibtihāj], *Āyanah dar āyanah* [Mirror within mirror], comp. Muhammad Rizā Shafī‘ī Kadkanī (2nd repr. ed., Tehran: Chishmah, 1969/1990), 39.

⁵²Dawlatābādī, *Shūrāb*, 35.

⁵³Furūghī Bastāmī, *Dīvān-i Furūghī Bastāmī*, intro. Eadward Brown, Rizā Qulīkhān Hidāyat, Asad āllāh Mirzā Qājār, ed. Husayn Nakha‘ī (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1336/1957), 189

⁵⁴Hāfiz, *Dīvān-i Hāfiz*, 1:324.

⁵⁵Muhammad Farrukhī Yazdī, *Dīvān-i Farrukhī Yazdī*, ed. Husayn Masarrat, intro. Muhammad ‘Alī Islāmī Nudūshan (Tehran: Qatrah, 1980/2001), 72.

⁵⁶Dawlatābādī, *Mihrtāb*, 10. Note the similar rhyme scheme

of these lines (in bold) by Dawlatābādī and the following lines by Khāqānī highlighted in the bracketed transliterations.

⁵⁷Afzal al-Dīn Badī ibn ‘Alī Najjār Khāqānī Shirvānī, *Dīvān-i Khāqānī-yi Shirvānī*, ed. Ziyā al-Dīn Sajjādī (7th repr. ed., Tehran: Zavvār, 1382/2003), 39.

⁵⁸Shafī‘ī Kadkanī, besides inserting a part of this hemistich by Khāqānī (i.e., I wish for “magi’s alley again” [Kū-yi mughān ast dīgar bār marā]), has also used a hemistich of Rūdakī: “One sent me a messenger in secret.” This poem alludes to many mythical stories and historical events so it is harmonious with the subject which is a look at the past. See: Muhammad Rizā Shafī‘ī Kadkanī, *Hazārah-yi duvvui āhū-yi kūhī* [The second millennium of mountain deer] (Tehran: Sukhan, 1378/1997), 19–21.

⁵⁹Dawlatābādī, *Mihrtāb*, 57.

⁶⁰Sīmīn Bihbahānī, *Jā-yi pā tā Āzādī* [Footprints till freedom] (Tehran: Nilūfar, 1377/1998), 269.

⁶¹Dawlatābādī, *Mihrtāb*, 57.

⁶²Rūmī, *Kulliyāt-i Shams-i Tabrizī*, 243.

sical poetry and embeds it successfully in her ghazal that can be found in the poetry of other poets. In 1348/1969 she writes:

The heart lost that passion little by little,

Finally, it happened to me as you know⁵⁹

Her old friend, Simin Behbahani (1306–1993/1927–2014), another famous poet, has also used the term “as you know” that Dawlatābādī had borrowed from Sa’dī:

O friend, not being young to play recklessly

Or tell tales as you know, O friend⁶⁰

In some cases, it is obvious that Dawlatābādī is composing a poem copying the ancients, such as:

Spring is coming bringing tidings of the beloved

Giving magnificence to the old place⁶¹

This is clearly an imitation of Rūmī’s famous ghazal:

Sprinkle the path, behold the beloved is coming

Tidings to the garden, scent of spring is coming⁶²

However, the most complex and intertwined relations of her poetry occur when following another poet; in this, the footprints of Hāfiz are found.

For example, in a ghazal she says:

Like dust on the road, I fell and passed out

Forgot myself and forgot the self⁶³



This poem reminds one of Sa‘dī’s:

⁶³Dawlatābādī, Mihrtāb, 73.

O beloved, you entered and lost self

⁶⁴Sa‘dī, Kulliyāt-i Sa‘dī, 549.

As if I moved from this world to the other⁶⁴

⁶⁵Dawlatābādī, Mihrtāb, 74.

A few verses later, Dawlatābādī says:

⁶⁶Hāfiz, Divān-i Hāfiz, 1:822.

Like a breeze after the solitude of a flower

⁶⁷Dawlatābādī, Mihrtāb, 73.

I was lost in the petals of a bud⁶⁵

“Petals of a bud” is a reminder to a verse by Hāfiz:

Curl of the violet is your musk scented tress

Petals of the bud disgrace your pleasant smile⁶⁶

Though there is a classical atmosphere, she creates unique imagery as in the same ghazal:

Spilled the blood of evening into the veins of night

So, at the end of life, I tell the story of the dawn⁶⁷

But the most interesting intertextual relationship of Dawlatābādī is probably the similarity between one of her ghazals with a poem of Shafī‘ī Kadkanī. Dawlatābādī has a poem entitled “Faryād-i khāmūsh” (Silent cry) beginning with:

I am a candle and cannot hide the self-burning fire

Like a butterfly burn[s] and cannot talk⁶⁸

The date of composing this poem in Dawlatābādī’s biggest collection is not mentioned. She had published it in her first book, Shūrāb, the date of publication is 1350/1971 and “Faryād-i

⁶⁸Dawlatābādī, *Mihrtāb*, 79.

⁶⁹Dawlatābādī, *Shūrāb*, 2.

⁷⁰Muhammad Rizā Shafī‘ī Kadkanī, *Zimzimah’hā* (Mashhad: Amīr Kabīr, 1344/1965), 26.

⁷¹Kadkanī, *Zimzimah’hā*, 8–9.

⁷²See: Mushīr Salīmī, *Zanān-i sukhavar*, 1:118.

khāmūsh” is the first poem.⁶⁹ Shafī‘ī Kadkanī has published a selection of his ghazals entitled *Zimzimah’hā* (Murmurs) in 1344/1965 and has a ghazal in this book beginning with:

I have something to tell you and I cannot

Cannot hide this hidden pain⁷⁰

These two poems have the same alignments and the rhyme scheme is the same. The rhymes in Shafī‘ī Kadkanī poem are: guftan, nahuftan, giriftan, raftan, khuftan, shikuftan, and guftan, and that of Dawlatābādī’s poems are: nahuftan, raftan, suftan, shikuftan, and naguftan. In the introduction to *Zimzimah’hā*, Shafī‘ī Kadkanī states that he has composed these ghazals between the years 1339 to 1344 (1960 to 1965) claiming that he has followed the great composers of ghazals but does not consider himself equal to them.⁷¹ In those years, Parvīn Dawlatābādī had not yet published a book but, as it was mentioned before, her poems were printed in different journals and she was so famous that magazines interviewed her, even the writer of *Zanān-i sukhavar* (Women writers) has commented on her poems.⁷² As well, there is a handwritten paper from Dawlatābādī’s father who dedicated a poem to her with the same rhyme and rhythm in *Mihr* 1349 /October 1970 (see Figure 4).



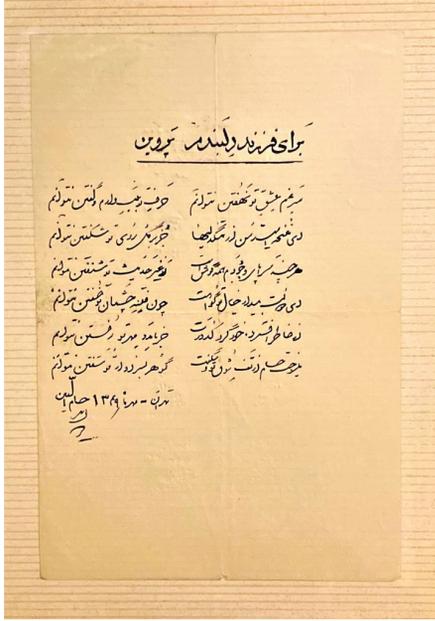


Figure 5: A handwritten note from Hisām al-Dīn Dawlatābādī, Parvīn Dawlatābādī's father (Courtesy of Shivā Dawlatābādī, circa. September 1970).

Since Shūrāb was published in Isfand 1349/ March 1971, it is possible that she has answered her father's poem; hence, the date of composing this poem must be 1349/1971. The other possibility is that Dawlatābādī previously had composed the poem and printed it in a magazine. In fact, it might be that Hisām al-Dīn Dawlatābādī under the influence had chosen the rhyme and rhythm for composing this poem in order to show his love to her. Thus, on the one hand, with the fame of Dawlatābādī from the 1320s/1950s, one may say that it is possible that her poem was published before Shafī'i's poem in a magazine and he has followed her.⁷³ On the other hand, in an interview toward the end of Dawlatābādī's life, when asked about her favorite modern poets, she replied that she considers the poetry of Shafī'i Kadkanī remarkable and says that she has always paid attention to his poetry.⁷⁴ Since I have not found this poem searching in Persian magazines, Shafī'i's poem takes precedence based on the date of publication of the book.

⁷³Though Shafī'i Kadkanī was very young in 1344/1965, it seems that he was more or less well-known among literary people due to literary activities and publishing essays in journals such as Hīrmand. If we accept the writer of the introduction to Dīvān as Rahī Mu'ayyirī, the well-known poet of the 1340s/1960s, Rahī had dedicated a copy of his first poetry book to Shafī'i Kadkan with this phrase: "to my dear friend, learned poet, Mr. Shafī'i Kadkanī (Sirishk)." See Rahī Mu'ayyirī, Dīvān-i kāmīl-i Rahī Mu'ayyirī, [The complete works of Rahī Mu'ayyirī], ed. Kiyūmars Kayvān (Tehran: Majīd, 1378/1999), 23.

⁷⁴Lidā Vā'iz, "Yād: dīdār bā Parvīn Dawlatābādī" [Memory: Meeting Parvīn Dawlatābādī] Rūdakī 23 (Urdībihis-ht-Khurdād 1387/May-June 2008): 184.

⁷⁵Dawlatābādī, Mihrtāb, 90.

⁷⁶Reza Saberi, *The Poems of Hāfiz: Translated from Persian*, (New York: University Press of America, 1996), 56.

As it was mentioned before, Dawlatābādī 's ghazals have a complex intertextual relationship with the ghazals of Hāfiz so much so that even when she is not using the rhyme scheme or the rhythm, the voice of Hāfiz is still heard. For example, she writes:

Do not scare me of wound on this body of afflicted by pick of sorrow

In your grasp we are the same song and music that we were⁷⁵

[Az zakhmah matarsān tan-i īn zakhmī-yi gham rā

Dar chang-i tu ān rūd u surūdīm ki būdīm]

Hāfiz has used the same words, chang and rūd and others, in his poems, but anybody familiar with the ghazals of Hāfiz understands that the Hafizian semantic and phonetic relationship of zakhm–zakhmah and rūd–surūd and the double meaning of chang (lyre-clutch) as well as the alignment of ki būdīm (combination of kih and the past tense of the verb ast) with rhymes such as nabūdīm and namūdīm and the musical combination of the verb plus kih is a reminder of the alignment nīst kih nīst in the poem of Hāfiz:

There is no vision which is not brightened by the radiance of your face

There is no eye which is not indebted to the dust of your door⁷⁶

[rawshan az partaw-i rūyat nazarī nīst kih nīst

mīnat-i khāk-i darat bar basarī nīst kih nīst]

Or in other instances where Dawlatābādī has used a verb twice reminding one of ghazals of Shams:



We do not have beloved in city, do not have

⁷⁷Dawlatābādī, Mihrtāb, 91.

We have nothing in your city, nothing⁷⁷

⁷⁸Rūmī, Kulliyāt-i Shams-i Tabrizī, 274, 566.

Her technique brings to mind poems such as “let us go, let us go to the rose garden...” and “O you who have gone to hajj, where are you, where are you.”⁷⁸

⁷⁹Dawlatābādī, Hilāl-i nuqrahī, 115.

In another instance, Dawlatābādī says:

⁸⁰Rūmī, Kulliyāt-i Shams-i Tabrizī, 538.

Open the door, open the door, I have come drunk and singing ghazals

⁸¹Dawlatābādī, Mihrtāb, 120.

am thirsty, for a sip of water⁷⁹

And Rūmī says,

I returned, I returned, I returned from the city of the beloved

It took thousands of years for me to talk⁸⁰

Though Dawlatābādī has been mostly influenced by Hāfīz, the famous compositions of Sa‘dī can be found more or less in her poetry, too. For example, she says:

If the pure Sufi drinks to music of lyre and nay

Do not tell our story in the two worlds except by him

[sūfī-yi sāfī ar kishad bādah bih bāng-i chang u nay

qissah-yi mā magū magū ba-du jahān bih ghayr-i vay]

You blow and nothing grows in my garden

nobody blames the month of Day⁸¹

⁸²Sa'dī. *Kulliyāt-i Sa'dī*, 634.

⁸³Sa'dī. *Kulliyāt-i Sa'dī*, 561.

⁸⁴Muhammad Rizā Shafī'ī Kadkanī, *Īn kīmiyā-yi hastī* [This elixir of life] (Tehran: Sukhan, 1398/2019), 3:99–101.

[mīdamī u namīdamad bār ū barī bih bāgh-i man

tuhmat-i bargurīz rā kas nanihad bih dūsh-i day]

Beside “sūfī-i sāfī” of the famous hemistich, “Sufī will not be purified till he drinks a cup...” another verse comes to mind:⁸²

The heavy separation of the friends sitting upon my heart

you go and the camel does not accept the litter⁸³

I believe that Dawlatābādī, in one of her best Nīmā'ī poems, gains the spiritual music of Hāfīz. Muhammad Rizā Shafī'ī Kadkanī comments, for instance, on the spiritual music of Hāfīz:

In fact, it can be said that the artistic evolution of Hāfīz is more in the spiritual music than the form. For example, paying attention to this verse proves my statement:

“Although the *khirqah* of renunciation and the cup of wine do not go together/I am devising all these plans to please you” [Rizā Sābirī, 313] in which the perfect art of Hāfīz is presented, in this verse the spiritual music is seen more than the form. His creativity is in linking two opposing images “*khirqah-i zuhd*” and “*jām-i may*” and his art is to put together two contradicting elements in building a society and in fact, displays a contradictory society and puts to action an impossibility and by tying two opposing things he makes his poetry attractive and full of spiritual music reaching the peak of art.⁸⁴

Dawlatābādī, in the poem *Zindigī īn ast* (This is life) composed in 1362/1983, uses the same artistic opposition and creates a paradoxical image that from the point of ontology and philosophy represents contradictory images that most human beings have experienced:

This is life,



Sweetness in poison and poison in sweetness

⁸⁵Dawlatābādī, Mihrtāb, 245.

In a bright hope a dark shadow has fallen

To close the not yet opened road

Breaking closed doors

Going to toward the future under the back cover of night

Throwing the bright day to the depth of longest night

This is life.

This is it,

To sleep under the white of the moonlight

To sit on the silver wings of clouds in a dream

To break the locks of castles of pain and suffering

To untie with desire

The strings, even if made of the golden rays of the sun

To be alive, to live, to be free⁸⁵

⁸⁶In the 1320s/1950s, Rawshanfibr magazine asked poets such as Forough Farrokhzad, Simin Behbahani, Sāyih and others why they wrote poetry. Sāyih's answer is more like fiery leftist manifestos of that time, especially when he says, "I will sing my song in the heart of this small city and will take this song which is the story of pain and glorious war of humans to the farthest stars in the sky amid the destroyed walls of this bloody night." See, "Chirā shi'r mīgūyid?" [Why do you write poetry?], Rawshanfibr 113 (Mihir 6, 1334/September 24, 1955): 16.

⁸⁷Some poems of Dawlatābādī also show intertextuality with poems of others which cannot be brought forth here due to limitations of the paper.

⁸⁸In a poem following Sa'dī's famous ghazal composed in 1353/1974 she writes: Tyranny breeds tyranny leading to more sorrow upon our bodies burning with injustice from the pride of [the] lucky No path left for me to the dawn as dawn does not shine from the night of the tyrants See: Dawlatābādī, Mihrtāb, 94.



Figure 6: The poem "Zindigī in ast" (This is life) by Parvīn Dawlatābādī

This paradoxical image and acceptance of life's contradictions brings about artistic pleasure and opens a worldview to the reader which offers more logical than political and ideological views.⁸⁶ In other words, understanding the ironic fact of being has been the concern of many thinkers.⁸⁷

The Poetical Self of Parvīn Dawlatābādī

The poetical self of Parvīn Dawlatābādī has an unbreakable link with the subjects she has presented in her poetry. One of these subjects is sorrow; in fact, sorrow, sometimes personal and sometime as philosophical despair, is present all over her divan. On the other hand, due to another aspect of her art, that is, her poetry for children, she cannot be considered a poet of despair. Dawlatābādī does not tackle political issues, but a faint voice of reaction to the problems of society can be heard in between her poems though in a classical language.⁸⁸

Mysticism and mystical motifs of grape and vine are also domi-

nant in her *divan*. Kāmyār ‘Ābidī considers her mysticism due to her knowledge of classical poetry and writes: “Her comprehensive mastery of classical poetic language is undeniable. Most of her poems are biographical which sometimes leads to repeating literary traditions of poetry with influence or imitation. Maybe that is the reason there are traces of mystical thought in her *ghazals*.”⁸⁹ If, on the one hand, one is to accept ‘Ābidī’s view, one must say that the mystical voice of Dawlatābādī’s poetry as a contemporary woman does not have originality and it is just echoing poets of the past. On the other hand, there is a history of mystical tendencies in the poetry of women of the Qājār era and one can consider her mysticism as the continuation of that poetical tradition.⁹⁰ ‘Ābidī himself accepts the poetical self and independent language of Dawlatābādī and writes: “Maybe we can follow the continuation of the ideas and stages of Parvīn I’tisāmī in the poetry of Parvīn Dawlatābādī. Of course, in the poetry of Parvīn I’tisāmī the humane aspect is mixed with the ethical aspect and in the poetry of Parvīn Dawlatābādī it is the poetical self which expands.”⁹¹

Relatedly, Farzaneh Milani considers Parvīn Dawlatābādī as well as Zandukht Shīrāzī (1288–1331/1909–1951), Zhālah Isfahānī (1330–1386/1921–2007), Simin Behbahani, Lawbat Shaybānī (1930–?), Mahīn Iskandarī (1302–1357/1923–1978), Forough Farrokhzād (1313–1345/1934–1966), and Tāhirah Saffārzādah (1315–1387/1936–2008) as women who spoke of their inner emotions and even of men. According to Mīlānī, these women are not tied up with stereotypes and each, in different ways, was in search of a voice in a society which was enclosed by walls and *hijab*.⁹²

As it was mentioned, sorrow was one of the major themes of Dawlatābādī’s poetry and, even with a cursory look at her writing, one can find examples:

Pari in your barren life cry unfortunate tears

⁸⁹Kāmyār ‘Ābidī, “Kārnāmah-i shi’r 1378” [Report of poetry 1999], *Kitāb-i māh-i adabiyāt* 36 (Mīhr 1379/ October 2000): 30. Some have considered Dawlatābādī a Sufi and mystical poet. See: Murtaẓā Mudarrisi Chahārdahī, “Varaqī az tārikh va ‘irfān-i mu’āsir” [A page from contemporary history and mysticism of Iran], *Armaghān* 36, no. 9 (Āzar 1346/ December 1967): 471–72.

⁹⁰Banafshah Hijāzī, *Tazkirah-yi andarūnī: Sharh-i ahvāl va shi’r-i shā’irān-i zan dar asr-i Qājār tā Pahlavī-yi avval* [The inner memoir: Biography and poetry of women poets from Qājār to first Pahlavi era] (Tehran: Qasidāh Sarā, 1382/2003), 23.

⁹¹Kāmyār ‘Ābidī, “Shā’ir-i insāndūst: Bih yād-i Parvīn Dawlatābādī” [Human-loving poet: Remembering Parvīn Dawlatābādī], *Andīshah va hunar* 10, no. 17 (Spring 1388/2009), 15–17.

⁹²Farzaneh Milani, *Veils and Words: Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers*, (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1992), 127.

⁹³Dawlatābādī, *Mihrtāb*, 15.

⁹⁴Dawlatābādī, *Mihrtāb*, 99.

⁹⁵Dawlatābādī, *Bar qāyiq-i abr'hā*, 23.

⁹⁶Dawlatābādī, *Bar qāyiq-i abr'hā*, 33.

⁹⁷Dawlatābādī, *Bar qāyiq-i abr'hā*, 64.

⁹⁸Dawlatābādī, *Bar qāyiq-i abr'hā*, 79.

⁹⁹Dawlatābādī, *Bar qāyiq-i abr'hā*, 74.

¹⁰⁰In her children's poetry, Dawlatābādī uses element and motifs from nature and has paid less attention to religious themes. See: "Zahrā Ustādžādāh, "Barrasī-yi muhtāvā-yi ash'ār-i Parvīn Dawlatābādī Bar qāyiq-i abr'hā va Gul-i bādām" [Content analysis of Parvīn Dawlatābādī's poems for children, On the boat of clouds and Almond blossoms], *Majalah-yi mutālī'āt-i adabiyāt-i kūdak-i dānishgāh-i Shīrāz* 3, no.2 (Fall and Winter 1392/2013): 2; and Kīmīyā Amīnī, "Tajallī-i shā'irānah-yi bād: Vākāvī-yi ash'ār-i Parvīn Dawlatābādī va ta'sīr va irtibāt-i ān bar tafakkur va burūndād isti'dād'hā-yi nahuftah-yi kūdakān" [Poetical manifestation of wind: Analysis of Parvīn Dawlatābādī's poetry and its effect and link with thinking and output of hidden talents of children], *Naqd-i kitab: Kūdak va naw-jvān* 3 no. 11 (Fall 1395/2016): 75–100. It is noteworthy to add that Dawlatābādī's poetry for children has been popular and used to be published in children's textbooks. For example,

Like tulips I will do ablution with my heart's blood⁹³

And as she herself says, her personal language is rooted in pain and suffering:

I am that teller of tales, the tired bound bird

Who learned to speak from my sorrows

Springs of sadness erupt from within my heart

I am drunk by my own bitter wine⁹⁴

If we want to draw an outline of a system of thought and the poetic persona of Parvīn Dawlatābādī, the collection of poems she has composed for children will not allow one to consider her generally as a sad and desperate poet. In contrast to her adult or usual poetry, there is plenty of love and hope in her poetry for children. So much so that if we put the two kinds of poetry side by side, Dawlatābādī looks like a very kind mother who hides her sorrow from her children. In other words, the happiness and hope that abound in her children's poetry will adjust the sorrowful poetry for grown up readers. She writes:

Our hearts are full of hope

Our eyes shine like the sun

If spring, it is our happy life

Life is under our firm steps

Red blood runs in the veins of humans

We love the manifestation of being⁹⁵

In her poetry for children, she does not build an imaginary



world without pain and suffering and hardship; she believes that though there is hardship and many autumns and winters in the world, spring and happiness will finally arrive.

For example, in one of her poems she portrays the hard and difficult elements of nature and talks of a small swallow caught up with the cold in winter that finally finds water and shelter in a house and:

When spring comes, it will fly

will fill the house with songs⁹⁶

In her children's poetry, however, hope comes after hardship as she talks of the warmth of the house after the cold:

Sing with the hot fire of the night

song of brightness of [the] house⁹⁷

And the migrating swallows come back again:

Again, the swallow comes signing

Again, makes a nest here⁹⁸

And life is a song of happiness and freedom in the end:

Dear life is happiness

its song [a] poem of freedom⁹⁹

Frequently, there is a third-person narrator who talks wisely in her poems for children, but these poems are early instances of poetry for children. They are not devoid of imagery and lovely tales; she has even used syllabic rhythms in children's poetry which undoubtedly has opened a path for the next generations of poets.¹⁰⁰

the poem "Again the swallow comes signing" was published in the Farsi book for fourth graders in the 1360's/1980's. See: Akbar Qarahdāghī, *Yād-i shīrīn-i shi'r'hā-yi dabistān* [Sweet memory of primary school poems] (Tehran: Bihjat, 1390/2011), 136. Apparently, from 1379 to 1380/2000 to 2001, her poems have not been published in primary school books. See: Jamāl al-Dīn Akramī, "Digardīsī-yi nātamām-i parvānah-yi bih nām-i Fārsī-yi avval-i dabistān" [Incomplete metamorphosis of a butterfly called Farsi for first grade], *Kitāb-i māh-i kūdak va nawjavān* 47 (Shahrivar 1380/September 2001), 68.

¹⁰¹Vā'iz, "Yād: Dīdār bā Parvīn Dawlatābādī," 183.

¹⁰²Such interpretation is not without a past in contemporary Persian culture. In the Bahār magazine, an anonymous writer published a piece trying to conduct a dialogue with the discourse of patriarchy in order to create a new plan. We read in this piece: "Was created from the left side of woman to be equal with her, was taken from under the arm and hand of the man to keep and protect her. Was created from the nearest place to the heart." See "Chirā zan az dandah-yi mard khalq shud?" [Why was woman created from the rib of man?], Bahār 1, no.2 (Jumādā al-Ūlā 11, AH 1328/21 May 1910), 65. It seems this is under the influence of some Biblical interpretations. Such interpretation is not without a past in contemporary Persian culture. In the Bahār magazine, an anonymous writer published a piece trying to conduct a dialogue with the discourse of patriarchy in order to create a new plan. We read in this

piece: "Was created from the left side of woman to be equal with her, was taken from under the arm and hand of the man to keep and protect her. Was created from the nearest place to the heart." See "Chirā zan az dandah-yi mard khalq shud?" [Why was woman created from the rib of man?], Bahār 1, no.2 (Jumādā al-Ūlā 11, AH 1328/21 May 1910), 65. It seems this is under the influence of some Biblical interpretations.

¹⁰³Furough in her poem "Isyān" [Rebellion] says: But you man, you selfish creature don't say this is shameful, this poem is shame Do you know how for these angry beings the cage is too tight, too tight See: Furūgh Farrukhzād, Dīvan-i Furūgh Farrukhzād (Mashhad: Nikā, 1381/2002), 35–36. Even this apparently sharp view of Furūgh Farrukhzad can be considered as a dialogue with the concept of traditional manhood which has for years vanquished the voice of women. After the publication of her Asīr collection of poetry, many attacked Furūgh Farrukhzad for why she has talked of her inner feelings, and Sa'īd Nafīsī was one of the few who supported Forough Farrokhzad and wrote: "I read Forough Farrokhzad's collection Asīr carefully—I had heard about commotion about her language. More than anything I admire this young and capable poet who has freely expressed her emotions. I do not understand what their problem is? The rabble who sells beet roots running around shouting about what is not in his merchandise but a young poet cannot say what is in

The other aspect of Dawlatābādī's poetic persona can be found in a poem which is a continuation of a tradition of contemporary women poets having a dialogue with the concept of man. Towards the end of Dawlatābādī's life, when she was asked in an interview how much of her poetry is feminine, she answers:

A poet's poem is created through the process of her personal life. Is it possible for a woman to compose poetry which is not feminine? Anyway, the poet describes her thoughts and personal life. Now some female poets express themselves in a more feminine way and some in a lesser way. But maybe my poetry is not feminine in the way you asked.

Life asked me to add a little

Creation found the secret of being in my body

Told him to know the favor of life is with us

To be a woman is not demeaning, it is eminent

It is ironical to say woman deceived Adam

Woman was the light of knowledge, gave light to the world

Woman was the first word for freedom

Was the threshold of dignity, for the godly solitude¹⁰¹

The verses Dawlatābādī mentioned are from one of her poems entitled "Zan va zamīn" (Woman and earth). The title shows that she had the discourse of tradition and the mythological world of Iran in mind; with the allusions to Adam and Eve and a new interpretation of this story, she has a kind of dialogue with the traditional man giving a new definition of femininity.¹⁰²

Maybe she did not rise against the concept of masculinity like



Forough did.¹⁰³ However, continuing in this poem, like other female poets who talk of man when they want to explain themselves, she begins a dialogue with the concept of man and states that woman, like man, is a human, and man has come from the cradle of the same woman whom they have disregarded for many years.¹⁰⁴ Finally, this conversation reaches concepts such as woman, man, pain, and cure, painting an aspect of a contemporary human looking for equality for the readers. It must be admitted that in Dawlatābādī's poem—maybe due to the dominance and influence of classical poetry—woman is more often described as a mother:

My kind hand became the cradle of being
giving birth to men and mothers, cause for greatness

If I respect you, like a man, your body
the pain of life is with you, cure is with me

I am woman, earth, soil, used to being humble

Call me god, eternal love mother.¹⁰⁵

her heart?" See; Sa'īd Naftī, "Az shā'irān chih tavaqqū' dārid?" [What do you expect from poets?], *Rawshanfikr* 108 (Shahrivar 2, 1334/ August 25, 1955), 7. An interesting example of woman's voices can be seen in the deleting some of the poems of female poets, usually done by their family. Parvīn I'tisāmī has a poem confirming unveiling entitled "Ganj-i 'iffat" (Treasure of virtue); some of its verses were deleted from her *divan* by her brother Abū al-Fath I'tisāmī, probably due to a fear of being taunted by the clergy. One of the verses states: "The eye and the heart need veiling but of chastity / The rotten veil was not the basis of being a Muslim." See: Jalāl Matīnī, "Nāmah'hā-yi Parvīn I'tisāmī va chand nuktaḥ dar bārah-yi dīvān-i shi'r va zindigī-yi vay" [Letters of Parvīn I'tisāmī and a few points about her life and poems], *Īrānshināsī* 13, no. 1 (Spring 1980/2001): 8–13. Dawlatābādī has entitled her poem "Ganj-i 'iffat" and in a way has accepted this traditional expression but has entered into a dialogue with it, offering a new picture not accompanied with veiling and covering. She has focused instead on the heart and purity of behavior but apparently a large section of the population did not have the strength to face an intellectual dialogue on this matter.

¹⁰⁴This conversation regarding the concept of femininity and masculinity can be seen in the poetry of others such as 'Ālam Tāj Qā'im Maqāmī (1262–1325/1883–1946) who says: I am no man, but to prove my suitability my man-like though cause commotion You brother, if woman is not like man in form see the masculine in meaning from my face See: Hijāzī, *Tazkirah-yi andarūnī*,

25. It is as if to produce a female voice, the poet has considered man as a human being by desexualizing it; thus, her female ideas are man-like or human-like and has thus gained independence. Comparatively, Nīmtāj Salmāsi (1285/1368/1906–1989) states: Iranians who wish for godly grandeur Must first search their Kāvah Must be a big man and a bigger determination to solve problems with his power ... the curtain of 'ajam is torn by your zeal Bring it so women can repair. See: Mushīr Salīmī, *Zanān-i sukhavar*, 2:378. First, she says you bring a man to solve the problem; then she says men have lost zeal which belongs to patriarchal discourse and now women must repair the torn curtains of zeal!

¹⁰⁵Dawlatābādī, Mihrtāb, 175–76.



Figure 7: A photo of Parvīn Dawlatābādī in her old age (Courtesy of Shīvā Dawlatābādī, circa. 1370s/1990s).

