



HONARMANDI, HASAN

HONARMANDI, HASAN (Ḥasan Honarmandi, b. Ṭāleqān, 2 Farvardin 1307 Š./22 March 1928; d. Paris, 26 Šahrivar 1381 Š./17 September 2002), poet, translator, and literary scholar.

Hasan Honarmandi moved to Sāri with his family after the death of his father Šams-ʿAli Honarmandi in 1932. He attended the [Teacher Training School](#) in the same city. Upon graduation in 1946, he received a teaching position at the Ministry of Education in Tehran and continued his secondary education at Rāzi High School, graduating in 1949. He went to France in 1951 to study medicine but due to financial hardships had to return to Iran in 1953, and he resumed his teaching career at the Ministry of Education (Honarmandi, 1971, p.1).

Honarmandi's early poems appeared in the literary journals of the period, including the monthly journal *Soḡan*. His translation of *Les nourritures terrestres* (1897), and *Les nouvelles nourritures* (1935), noted novels by André Gide (1869-1951), appeared in 1956 in one volume as *Mā'edahā-ye zamini and Mā'edahā-ye tāza*. They were followed by the publication in 1965 of Gide's *Les faux-monnayeurs*, as *Sekka-zanān*. His studies on modernist literary movements in France led to the publication of a collection of late 19th- and early 20th-century French poems, entitled *Az romāntism tā surre'ālism: barresi-e mohemtarin šivahā-ye adabi-e Farānseh az šad sāl-e piš tā konun* (From romanticism to surrealism: an examination of the most important French literary movements over the past one hundred year) in 1957. His translations, often rendered in prose and at times in *čāhārpāra* (foursome),



earned the appreciation of contemporary poets and literary scholars with a modernist bent (Šāmlu, p. 215; Aḳavān-e Tāleṭ, p. 178; Zarrinkub, 1988, pp. 670-71).

Harās (Fear), Honarmandi's first collection of poetry, was published in 1958. Most of the collection's poems are permeated with the darkest shades of solitude and fear of death, on the one hand, and they shimmer in the explicit praise of corporeal love, wine, and opium, on the other. These themes had dominated the period's literary production, and had already found expression in the poetry of [Fereydun Tavallali](#), Noṣrat Raḥmāni, Mehdi Aḳavān-e Tāleṭ, among others, causing several critics to express discontent and dismay (Khanlari, pp. 471-74).

*Šabhā čō gorg dar pas-e divār-e ruzhā
Ārām kofta-and o dahān bāz karda-and
Bar marg-e man ke zezema-ye šobḥ-e rowšanam
Āhanghā-ye šum-e kohan sāz karda-and (Harās, 1969, p. 66)*

“Nights like wolves beyond the walls of day
Lie silently, their jaws open
Onto my death, I the murmur of the light of dawn
They play old ill-omened songs.”

After receiving his Bachelor's degree in French language and literature from Tehran University in 1963, Honarmandi left for France, where he completed his doctoral work in comparative literature at the University of Paris (Honarmandi, 1970, pp. 9-16). Upon his return Honarmandi joined the Department of Foreign Languages at Tehran University and was assigned to teach French and comparative literature (Honarmandi, 1970, 332-35). During this period, which lasted roughly ten years, in addition to his academic duties he also served as a member of *Soḳan's* editorial board.

The expanded edition of *Az romāntism tā surre'ālism* was published as *Bonyād-e še'er-e now dar Farānseh va peyvand-e ān bā še'r-e fārsi* (The origins of modern French poetry and its connections to Persian poetry) in 1971. He also contributed to the comparative study of French and Persian literature in Iran. His doctoral dissertation entitled *André Gide et la littérature persane*;



recherche sur les sources de l'oeuvre de Gide appeared in Persian translation as *Andre Gide va adabiyāt-e fārsi*, in 1973, demonstrating Gide's indebtedness to such Persian poets as *Khayyam*, Sa'di, *Hafez*, and Manuĉehri.

Honarmandi's later poems exhibit his gradual departure from the traditional strictures and rhymes of Persian poetry (see '*Arūz*'), as well as *ĉahārpāra*, which was still popular among the more traditional of the modern poets (Šafī'i-Kadkani, p. 130). In the second edition of *Harās*, which consists of a selection from the first edition and a collection of newer verse, his work is more in line with Nimaic poetry.

Man basta-ye to-am ...

Bā kuh o šahr-e tow

Rig-e dorošt-e tow rig ast o la'l nist

Ammā sorud-e Rudaki ārad be yād-e man (Harās, 1969, p. 236)

"I am bound to you ...

To your mountains and your cities

Your pebble, however large, is a pebble, not a ruby

But it evokes songs of Rudaki to my memory."

Solitude, anxiety, and death imbue most of the collection's poems with a quality and tone reminiscent of the French romantic poets, whose works he had studied in France and had translated into Persian. Nonetheless, his familiarity with traditional poetry is discernible in much of his verse. Many poems in the revised edition exhibit a blend of classical and modern imageries ("Pāyān" in *Harās*, 1969, pp. 233-38).

The conflicted encounter of East and West finds occasional expressions in the second edition of *Harās* and broadens its system of signification (*Harās*, 1969, pp. 223, 226-28). The collection also includes poems charged with socio-political motifs and ideas ("Esteqlāl-e Aljazāyer," pp. 146-47; "Qatl yā tars-e Lumumba," pp. 188-89).

Honarmandi's *Daftar-e andišahā-ye kām* (The book of immature thoughts), and *Šerhā-ye āsān*, (Easy poems), both published in Tehran in 1972, consist of Honarmandi's prose poems, a hybrid genre popularized in France in the



nineteen century as a reaction to traditional uses of verse in poetry. Honarmandi's poems in prose, however, while at times blurring the lines of poetry and bordering aphorism (*Daftar-e andiśahā-ye kām*, 1972, pp. 71-72), fail to conjure up the quality and elegance of his Nimaic poems. During this period Honarmandi also cooperated with Radio Tehran in writing and broadcasting the programs *Šedā-ye šā'er* (1960), as well as *Safari dar rekāb-e andiśa* (1968-69), in which he delineated the influence of Persian poetry on French literature in a series of radio talks. The series was later published as *Safari dar rekāb-e andiśa: az Jāmi tā Ārāgon* (A voyage with ideas: from Jami to Aragon, Tehran, 1972).

Honarmandi's poetry could be best categorized under the general rubric of the *Soḡan* school of poetry, whose followers held a position between the traditionalists and the followers of the Nimā Yušij (1896-1959); it was well received by scholars of Persian literature who advocated a sustained balance between the old and new in Persian poetry (Haštrudi, pp. 47-55; Zarrinkub, 1993, pp. 238-39). The radical modernists, on the other hand, blamed him for what they held as his over-engagement with personal concerns at the expense of socio-political issues (Dastġeyb, pp. 108-12) and for the limited boundaries of his poetical repertoire (Hoquqi, pp. 279-80).

Retired in 1977, Honarmandi traveled to Paris to continue his research in Arabic literature, a field with which he had acquired an acquaintance in his youth, translating, at times, texts into Persian. In 1979 he received a certificate of proficiency in Arabic from the Institute of Islamic Studies of the University of Paris. From 1980 through the summer of 1985 he taught Persian language and literature at the University of Aljazeera. He returned to Iran in 1985. His repeated efforts to ensure financial support from Tehran University to continue his comparative research on Persian, French, and Arabic languages proved futile.

In 1989 he moved to Paris, struggling to stay engaged in cultural and research activities (Āzarm, p. 196). He never married and lived in a small apartment in Paris. He committed suicide by ingesting sleeping pills and drinking cognac, and was interred in Thiais Cemetery in Paris.



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