

A Reflection on Naturalism and Symbolism as a Vehicle for Expressing Realism in Contemporary Literature

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ABSTRACT

Article type: Research Article	The school of realism is one of the European literary schools. What is certain is that poets with a rational and realistic attitude were the real architects of people's lives in socio-political events, in order to raise the level of awareness and achieve the individual and social demands of their time, and their poetic language is often mixed with symbols and allegories. They use the combination of art and reality to address the poetic mission of highlighting the hidden realities of society and awakening humanity. Symbolic poetry does not mean that the poet seeks help from symbols in expressing some of the concepts within the poem; symbolic poetry is poetry whose semantic life is shaped in its entirety by symbols. Persian poetry is equipped with extensive symbolic possibilities. This possibility does not limit the word "night" in modern poetry to night and its antonyms, but rather encompasses many concepts such as darkness, light, morning, dawn, fog, cloud, autumn, winter, spring, and the like. This symbolic network was expanded by poets after Nima and provided a great tradition in the field of political imagery in poetry. This article, by examining and analyzing the aforementioned sources in prominent and influential contemporary figures based on the theory of evaluative and critical discourse analysis, aims to shed more light on the issue of realism and the influence of this school in the contemporary poetry flow by deepening the structure of naturalism and symbolism, and to analyze the influence and influence of the aforementioned schools in order to find out which contemporary poet has benefited the most from this art.
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Introduction

The Realist school of literature marks a pivotal shift from the idealism and individualistic imagination of Romanticism toward a focus on rationality, objective observation, and the critique of socio-political conditions. Realist literature is rooted in the belief that the writer has a responsibility to engage with the reality of their time. In the context of contemporary Persian poetry—often categorized as Nimaic or “New Poetry”—this realist approach is deeply intertwined with symbolism and naturalism. Poets such as Nima Yushij, Akhavan Sales, Ahmad Shamlu, and Shafiei Kadkani serve as “children of their time,” utilizing the poetic medium not merely for aesthetic expression but as a tool for awakening, social commitment, and the articulation of hidden realities. This study explores the theoretical synergy between naturalism and symbolism, investigating how these schools function as necessary vehicles for expressing social realism within the restrictive political landscapes of contemporary Iran.

Method

This research employs a descriptive-analytical methodology rooted in comparative literary studies and critical discourse analysis. The study examines the foundational characteristics of Realism, Naturalism, and Symbolism within Western literary history and assesses their application in contemporary Persian poetry. By analyzing the works of representative poets—specifically Nima Yushij, Akhavan Sales, Sohrab Sepehri, Forough Farrokhzad, Ahmad Shamlu, Shafiei Kadkani, Ghaisar Aminpour, and Fereydoon Moshiri—the research evaluates how these poets utilized symbolic language, social commitment, and naturalistic imagery to bypass censorship and articulate socio-political grievances.

Results

The analysis reveals several critical findings regarding the “intertwining” of literary schools in contemporary Persian poetry:

1. **The Function of Symbolism and Naturalism:** Symbolism in Nimaic poetry is not merely an artistic choice but a strategic necessity. Given the prevalence of political suppression and the lack of freedom of expression, poets utilized symbolic language and allegory to discuss freedom, tyranny, and social decay without

incurring direct state repercussions. Simultaneously, naturalism provides the “concrete” reality-the tangible, everyday objects and environments-that anchors these symbols in the reader’s lived experience.

۲. **Poetic Typologies of Commitment:**

- **Highly Committed/Sociologically Engaged:** Ahmad Shamlu, Nima Yushij, Akhavan Sales, and Shafiei Kadkani demonstrate the highest degree of social commitment. Shamlu acts as the “sociologist of poetry,” actively using symbolic and naturalistic tropes to expose the “wounds” of society. Akhavan’s poetry reflects a tragic socio-political realism, often colored by a sense of loss after the 1953 coup.
- **Internal/Personal Focus:** Forough Farrokhzad’s use of these schools is more introspective, focusing on personal pain and existential dread, with social critique present but less direct.
- **Nature-Oriented/Escapist:** Sohrab Sepehri retreats into nature, often attempting to detach from political responsibility, though occasionally revealing glimpses of social indifference that he critiques.
- **Balanced/Generalist:** Poets like Ghaisar Aminpour and Fereydoon Moshiri occupy a middle ground, blending socio-political commentary with broader life themes, maintaining a balance between aesthetic beauty and ethical commitment.

Conclusion

The study concludes that contemporary Persian “New Poetry” (Nimaic poetry) successfully integrates Naturalism and Symbolism to serve the overarching goal of Realism. By masking critical discourse in symbolic veils, these poets navigated the “heavy atmosphere” of political censorship, ensuring that social realism remained accessible yet artistically rich. The research affirms that the degree of social commitment varies among these poets, with Shamlu, Nima, Akhavan, and Shafiei Kadkani standing out as the most prominent figures who consistently utilized these literary schools to voice the struggles, demands, and collective identity of their society. In these works, naturalistic imagery does not merely depict



the physical world; it creates a “theatre of reality” where the societal and political implications are laid bare.