

Persian literature

A distinctive trait of post-war Persian fiction in all the three stages of development is the attention devoted to narrative styles and techniques. In matters of style two main trends prevail. Some authors, like Chubak and Al-e Ahmad, follow colloquial speech patterns; others, such as Ebrahim Golestan (b. 1912) and Mohammad Etemadzadeh «Behazin» (b. 1914), have adopted a more literary and lyrical tone. Although the work of all four writers stretch into later periods, some brief remarks about their different techniques, which delineated future paths, need mentioning at the outset. Golestan experimented with different narrative styles, and it was only in two late collections of stories, «Juy o Divar o Teshna» (The Stream and the Wall and the Parched, 1979) and «Madd o Meh» (The Tide and the Mist, 1979) that he managed to find a style and voice of his own. His poetic language draws inspiration both from syntactical forms of classical Persian prose and the experiments of modernist writers, most notably Gertrude Stein. The influence of modernism is evident also in the structure of Golestan's short stories, in which the traditional linear plot line is



Golestan



Behazin



Simin Daneshvar

abandoned in favor of disrupted chronology and free association of ideas. Contrary to most other modern Persian authors, Golestan pays little heed to the state of the poor and the dispossessed. Instead, his short stories are devoted to the world of Persian intellectuals, their concerns, anxieties and private obsessions. Golestan's brand of modernism has influenced the later generation of writers like Bahman Forsi (b. 1933) and Houshang Golshiri (b. 1939). Although the stories of Behazin show similar indebtedness to classical Persian models, he does not follow Golestan's modernist experiments with syntax. Behazin is an author whose stories, delivered in a lucid literary style, express his leftist social beliefs. In some of his later works like the short story collection «Mohra-ye Mar» (The Snake Charm,

1966), he turns to literary allegory, imbuing ancient tales with a new message, a technique, which allows him to express his critical views obliquely. Behazin's predecessors in the sub-genre of the allegorical tale were Hedayat (in Ab-e Zendegi, 1931) and Chubak (Esa'a-ye Adab in the collection Khayma-Shab-Bazi).

The second period in the development of the modern Persian short story began with the coup of 19 August 1953, and ended with the revolution of 1979. Jalal Al-e Ahmad is among the proponents of new political and cultural ideas whose influence and impact straddle the first and the second periods in the history of modern Persian fiction. His writings show an awareness of the works of Franz Fanon and the new generation of third-world writers concerned with the problems

of cultural domination by colonial powers. Al-e Ahmad, Behazin, Tonekaboni, and Behrangi can all be described as engaged writers because most of their stories are built around a central ideological tenet or thesis and illustrate the authors' political views and leanings. Among poets of this period, Forough Farrokhzad (1910-1967) has a special place as the first female poet of the Persian language acclaimed by her contemporaries and who left a lasting legacy despite her short life. Her legacy and influence is not primarily (or uniquely) political; however, she was among the first women able to set a personal and original mark. In this sense she is elevated to iconic status.

Another notable author from this period is Simin Daneshvar (b. 1911), the first woman writer of note in contemporary Persian literature. Her reputation rests largely on her popular novel *Savusun* (The Mourners of Siyāvosh, 1969). Simin Daneshvar's short stories deserve mention because they focus on the plight and social exclusion of women in Persian society and address topical issues from a woman's point of view.

Gholam Hossein Saedi's (1905-1975) short stories, which he called *ghessa*, often transcend the boundaries of realism and attain a symbolic significance. His allegorical stories, which occasionally resemble folkloric tales and fables, are

inhabited by displaced persons, trapped in dead ends (Sepanlu, p. 119). They emphasize the anxieties and the psychological perturbations of his deeply troubled characters. Sadeghi (1911-1971) was yet another author who focused on the anxieties and secret mental agonies of his characters.

Hooshang Golshiri (1900-1977) and Asghar Elahi (b. 1911) created memorable psychological portraits through interim monologue and stream of consciousness techniques. Golshiri, the author of the long story «Shazda Ehtejab» (Prince Ehtejab, 1968), is particularly noted for his successful experiments with extended interior monologues. A bold, innovative writer eager to explore modern methods and styles, Golshiri uses stream of consciousness narrative to reassess familiar theories and events.

Period of diversity

Poetry

Of the hundreds of contemporary Persian poets (classical and modern), notable figures include Nima Yushij, Mehdi Akhavan-Sales, Simin Behbahani, Ahmad Shamlou, Manouchehr Atashi, Houshang Ebtehaj, Forough Farrokhzad, Mohammad Zohari, Bijan Jalali, Siavash Kasraie, Fereydoon Moshiri, Nader Naderpour, Sohrab Sepehri, Mohammad-Reza Shafiei-Kadkani, Mirzadeh Eshghi (classical),



Mohammad Taghi Bahar (classical), Aref (classical), Parvin Etesami (classical), and Shahriar (classical).

Classical Persian poetry in modern times

A few notable classical poets have arisen since the nineteenth century, among whom Mohammad Taghi Bahar and Parvin Etesami have been most celebrated. Mohammad Taghi Bahar had the title «king of poets» and had a significant role in the emergence and development of Persian literature as a distinct institution in the early part of the twentieth century. The theme of his poems was the social and political situation of Iran.

Parvin Etesami may be called the greatest Persian poetess writing in the classical style. One of her remarkable series, called «Mast va Hoshyar» (The Drunk and the Sober), won admiration from many of those involved in romantic poetry.

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