



BEHAZIN

BEHAZIN (Maḥmud E'temādzāda, better known as Behādin, b. Rašt, 14 January 1915; d. Tehran, 31 May 2006; [FIGURE 1](#)), noted translator, editor, fiction writer, and active Marxist, who, in different stages of his literary career, assumed other pseudonyms: Nowruz 'Alī Āzād, and Hormoz Malekdād.

Behazin's father was a middle class merchant. He grew up, in his own words, "in the midst of war and revolution." (Behazin, 1992, vol.1, p. 17) His father was driven to bankruptcy due to the suspension of trade with Russia during the World War I, and the [JANGALI MOVEMENT](#) in [GILĀN](#), led by Mirza Kučak Khan Jangali, that took shape during the period of political unrest brought about by the World War I and the occupation of Iran by the foreign Forces. To make a living the family moved to Mashad in 1927, where Behazin completed the first three years of his secondary school education, and developed a lasting interest in classical Persian literature, Sufi poetry in particular. In *Az har dari* (From here and there, 1992), an autobiographical account of his turbulent life, Behazin speaks of the unfortunate convergence of family misfortune and the hardships visited upon the region in these years.

Later, Behazin attended [DĀR AL-FONŪN](#) and Tadayyon High Schools in Tehran. In September 1932 he traveled to France to study engineering on a government scholarship. "Shortly thereafter, he left one sponsor, the Ministry of Education, for another, the Iranian Navy, which supported his studies at the Brest Naval Engineering and Architecture College" (Hillmann, 1976, p. 99). In his autobiographical novel, *Az ān su-ye divār* (From the other side of the wall, 1972), Behazin writes of his life in France, his failed relationship with a young



French woman, and his fascination with Western literature, in particular, works of Honoré de Balzac, Romain Rolland, and Nietzsche that affected his subsequent writings and translations. (For a discussion on how Nietzsche's influence shaped Behazin's life and thought, see: Dastgeib, p. 22).

In January 1938, Behazin returned to Iran to serve in the navy and was posted in [Korramšahr](#), where he found ample leisure time to pursue his literary interests. In July 1941 he was transferred to Bandar Pahlavi (see [ANZALĪ](#)) in northern Iran. During the bombardment of that port by the Allied forces in September 1941, Behazin was injured and his left arm had to be amputated. He received a medical discharge from the navy and was transferred to the Ministry of Education, and was appointed as a secondary school teacher of physics and mathematics. The indelible impact of this traumatic experience has marked several of his stories, as well as his memoirs. In 1942 he married, and took a job at the National Library in May 1945 with the help of Ḥasan Šahid-Nurā'i, a close friend of [Šādeq Hedāyat](#) (1903-1951), noted Persian fiction writer (Behazin, 1992, vol. 1, p. 49).

Behazin started his literary career in 1943 with the publication of his work in [DĀRYĀ](#), a Tehran daily journal owned and published by [Ḥasan Arsanjāni](#) (1922-69), a radical lawyer and politician, and [ĀŽĪR](#), a leftist newspaper published in Tehran by Sayyed Ja'far Pišavari (Behazin, 1992, vol. 1, pp. 41-43). He used the pseudonym Behazin, because as a military officer he was not allowed to publish under his own name. He came to critical notice with the publication of his first collection of short stories, *Parākanda* (Scattered pieces, 1944), and the appearance of his short stories and translations in the prestigious literary periodical *Soḵan* (1943-4, nos. 1, 5, 7, 9, 11, and 12). His second collection of short stories, entitled *Be su-ye mardom* (Towards people), appeared in 1948.

In these years Iran's Communist Tudeh Party had gained ground among the youth and intellectual communities (see [COMMUNISM](#)). Already familiar with Marxist literature in French translation, Behazin joined the Party and, unlike many of his compatriots who grappled with ambivalence and divided loyalties to the Party in their later years, he remained loyal to it and its policies for the rest of his life (Behazin, 1992, vol. 1, pp. 38-39).

In 1946 he participated in the First Congress of the Iranian Writers, a gathering with predominantly leftist sympathies sponsored by the Perso-Soviet Society of Cultural Relations (Anjoman-e ravābeṭ-e farhangi-e Irān va

Etteḥād-e Jamāhir-e Šowravi). Later that year, in Aḥmad Qavām's government, which included a number of ministers from the Tudeh Party, he was appointed Assistant Director General of Education in the province of GILĀN. Concerned over unrest and rioting in the region, however, he returned to Tehran several weeks later to resume his previous post in the National Library (Behazin, 1992, p. 118).

Behazin's first novella, *Doktar-e ra'ayat* (The peasant's daughter), was published in 1951, and like most of his fictional narratives, was set in the Caspian region. A tale of class struggle during the first decades of the 20th century, it typifies Behazin's leftist views (Heshmat Moayyad, p. 87). As argued by a commentator, "It presents the author's fantasy of the coming of social revolution and justice through the title character's (implausible) hopefulness and her break from the serf class to enter the working class after years of oppression at the hands of the Gilāni landlord class in the 1910s." (Hillmann, 1987, p. 79; see also Mir'ābedini, I, pp. 154-55) Preceding *Bozorg 'Alavi's* (1904-1997) *ČAŠMHĀYAŠ* (1952; see FICTION, ii(b). *The Novel*), *Doktar-e ra'ayat* earned Behazin high critical acclaim as a social realist writer. *Parviz Kānlari* praised his studied choice of words and his lyrical language, at times conjuring up a genuine *ghazal* but did not find him well versed in stylistic innovations and in giving characters their own idiosyncratic language (Kānlari, p. 164). Later critics considered the book a turning point in the genre of the social novel in Persia (Golširi, p. 296), and appreciated the parallels drawn in the novel between the turbulent outside world and the troubled inner worlds of its characters as a significant development in the representation of history in the Persian novel (Sepānlu, p.154).

After the fall of Mošaddeq in 1953 (see *COUP D'ETAT OF 1332 Š./1953*) Behazin spent two months in prison and faced financial difficulty. Being banned from teaching, he turned to translation to make a living. The works translated by Behazin were carefully selected from the works written to advocate "social justice, freedom and equality" (Behazin, 2002, p. 6). His indebtedness to classical Persian literature and his studied effort to stay loyal to the original text and to convey, to the extent possible, the author's original narrative style in a clear and flowing language, soon earned him critical acclaim. As *Hušang Golširi* (1938-2000) and other critics have noted, Behazin's translations played a significant role in the Persian readership's familiarity with the works of such outstanding Western literary figures as Shakespeare, Balzac, Rolland, Shokholov, among others (Golširi, p. 296). 'Abd-al-Ḥosayn Zarrinkub (*Soḡan*,



November 1955, p. 846-48), *Sirus Parhām* (*Sokkan*, April 1957, p. 92-96), and 'Abd-al-Raḥim Aḥmadi (*Sokkan*, September 1958, p. 54-58), praised his translations for their accuracy and eloquence. *Jean-Christophe*, a highly acclaimed novel by Romain Rolland (1866-1944), the French Nobel laureate (1915), and *Quiet Flows the Don* (1926-1940), the most-read work of Soviet fiction which won Mikhail Sholokhov (1905-1984), the 1965 Nobel Prize in Literature, rendered from French and Russian, respectively, are among his most noted translations (For Behazin's translations see below).

Behazin also published one collection of essays and three collections of short stories between 1955 and 1972. By developing a metaphoric language to escape the censorship, he created a distance that not only subdued his expression of his political, social, or ideological messages, but also enabled him to write about human problems in a manner that carried no political import. In the title story of his third collection, *Mohra-ye mār* (Lit. The snake charm, 1965; tr. by Judith Wilks as "The Snake's Stone, 1991), that earned him high recognition (Heshmat Moayyad, p. 87), Behazin adopted biblical and ancient themes, and skillfully loaded them with multi-layered socio-political meanings. His studied strategy of tight-rope at the border of the ruling establishment's tolerance (Behazin, 1992 vol. 1, p. 76), not only "enabled him to avoid direct involvement with the system," in the 1970s, but also helped him "to retain a positive reputation among readers independent from the establishment." (Yarshater, 1988, p. 300)

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, either as the editor of literary journals *Şadaf* (1957-58), *Ketāb-e hafta* (1963), and *Payām-e novin* (1965-67), or as a contributing writer to *Enteqād-e ketāb* (1955), and *Ānāhitā* (1960), Behazin tried to counter the personal and political disenchantment and the palpable sense of loss that had dominated the literary circles after the gradual ebbing of intellectual hopes following the 1953 coup (Taqizāda, p. 80).

Behazin was among the founding members of the Writer's Association of Iran (*Kānun-e nevisandegān-e Irān*, 1968), and collaborated with Jalāl Āl-e Aḥmad (1923-1969) in drafting its charter in defense and protection of the professional interests of authors. After Jalal Al-e Ahmad, and a few others declined nomination for the Association's executive board membership, Simin Dānešvar (Simin Dānešvar, 1921), Nāder Nāderpur (1929-2000), Siāvaš Kasrā'i (1926-96), and Dariush Ashuri (b. 1938) were elected as members of the first executive board of the Writers' Association (Karimi Hakkak, p. 195). Behazin also delivered the first in the series of lectures organized by the Association. In

his lecture, entitled “The Writer and Freedom,” he expressed his view that literature should be committed to advancing social changes otherwise it was unworthy of being called literature (Iftekharrudin, p. 83).

However, it did not take long for Behazin, who was a loyal member of the Tudeh Party, and Al-e Ahmad, who had left the Party in protest and joined the Third Force (Niru-ye sevvom), to lead two divergent factions in the Association. The tension drove the Association into chaotic episodes of internal fighting (Behazin, 1992, vol. 1, pp. 13-15; Karimi Hakkak, pp. 192-95).

Unsuccessful in initiating a collective action within the framework of the Writers' Association Behazin and 54 other writers, in June 1970, signed a statement to protest the arrest of the leftist writer Fereyduṅ Tonekāboni. The protest earned Behazin a four-month spell in Tehran's Qaṣr prison. Behazin went on to write about this experience with graphic detail and objectivity in his prison memoir entitled *Mehmān-e in āqāyān* (A guest of these gentlemen, Germany, 1976). Representing a departure from the classical genre of prison poetry (ḥabsiyāt), the work distinguishes him, along side [Ali Dashti](#) (1894-1982), Bozorg 'Alavi, and some others, as the pioneers of modern prison literature in Iran, a genre popularized in post-revolutionary Persian literature.

In 1975, he traveled to France for medical reasons. He also visited Germany, where he met with Bābak Amir-Ḳosravi, Nur-al-Din Kiānuri, [Maryam Firuz](#) (1914-2008), [Iraj Eskandari](#) (1907-1985), and Eḥsān Ṭabari, the exiled leading members of the Tudeh Party. The meetings and the publication of two of his works, *Kāva* (1976, Koln, Germany), a play in which ancient Persian mythological figures advocate political objectives of the Tudeh Party; and his prison memoir, *Mehmān-e in āqāyān*, reinforced his ties to the Party (Behazin, 1992, vol. 2, pp. 10-16). He returned to Iran in October 1977.

During the Revolution of 1979, Behazin was a leading voice for the Tudeh Party (Heshmat Moayyad, p. 87; Karimi Hakkak, p. 218). He joined the writers, poets, playwrights, critics, and translators who spoke at the German Cultural Institute's nights of lectures and poetry readings, held between 10 and 19 October 1977 (see [GOETHE INSTITUTE](#)). Behazin spoke on the tenth night of the event. The speeches and poems were later edited by Nāṣer Mo'adden and published as a book entitled *Dah šab* (Ten nights) in 1978. He also published several open letters under the pseudonym Nowruz 'Ali Āzād, calling for the solidarity of the political parties and human rights activists, regardless of their diverse political tendencies. He failed, however, to achieve the support of the



nationalist and religious groups (Behazin, 1993, vol. 2, pp. 50-61).

In October 1978 he founded the Democratic Alliance of the People of Iran (Etteḥād-e demokrātik-e mardom-e Irān), through which the Tudeh Party actively participated in the revolutionary movement (Behazin, 1992, vol. II, pp. 175-78). He also published the ideological literary journals *Etteḥād-e mardom* (The Alliance of the People), and *Sowgand* (Oath).

Although an influential member of the Writers' Association of Iran, he was not elected to its executive board in 1979. In November 1979 when the Association's board, consisting of Moḥsen Yalfāni, Bāqer Parhām, Ahmad Shamlu (Aḥmad Šāmlu, 1925-2000), Gholam-Hosayn Sa'edi (SA'EDI, Gholam-Hosayn; 1936-1986), and Esmā'il Kho'i (Esmā'il Kho'i; 1938) decided to launch nights of poetry reading in defense of freedom, Behazin disagreed, arguing that a gathering of this nature would impede the fruition of the Islamic Revolution. Either with the intent, or under the guise, of curbing the Tudeh Party's influence over the Association, the Association's executive board suspended the memberships of Behazin, Siavash Kasra'i, Hušang Ebteḥāj, Fereyduṅ Tonekāboni, and Moḥammad Taqī Borumand (Karimi Hakkak, pp. 218-21; see also Bāqer Parhām's series of article, entitled "Ḥezb-e Tudeh va kānun-e nevisandegān-e Iran," *Ketāb-e jom'a*, no. 25 onwards). Their suspension was confirmed in the Association's General Assembly of January 1980 by a vote of 81 to 42. A large number of writers resigned from the Association, 36 of whom established the Iranian Writers' and Artists' Council (Šowrā-ye nevisandegān va honarmandān-e Irān), and appointed Behazin secretary and spokesperson. They also published a journal by the same name. Years later, in November 2000, the suspension was declared non-democratic by the General Assembly of the Association, and the membership of the dismissed members, including Behazin, was reinstated (Musā'i, 2002, p. 11; Moktāri, pp. 9-12).

In 1982, during a period of political unrest, Behazin and several other Tudeh Party leaders were arrested, and Behazin was sent to Evin prison, where he was incarcerated from 1982 to 1989. He writes of these years in his memoir *Bār-e digar, va in bār* (One more time, and this time; apparently unpublished, although there are purported versions of it online, e.g., www.iran-archive.com/node/4746; Musā'i, 2006, p. 23). Following his release, Behazin led a secluded life. He suffered a stroke in 2000 and died in Ārād Hospital in 2006.

Behazin's writings echo his views of literature as a guiding light, and the writer as an enlightened member of society leading the way to a better world. Although some commentators criticized the lyrical tone of his style, reminiscent, in their views, of the melodramatic prose of the 19th century French novelists, others praised his language as "rich and expressive, with marked lyrical tendencies" (Yarshater, p. 54), and as a good example of simple, yet elegant and gracious Persian prose (Kamshad, p. 130). As contended by some critics, however, the techniques of narration in his stories are subdued by the politically laden ideas (Kubichkova, p. 716), and fail to rise to the level of the deft precision of the language and beauty of his prose. (Šafī'i Kadkani, p. 478; Kamshad, p. 267; Miršādeqi, p. 645).

While Behazin never in fact surrendered "the painful drive" of being a creative writer (Behazin, 1992, vol. 1, p. 75), he was better noted as a translator, and is likely to be remembered as such.

Selected Works:

Collections of short stories:

Be su-ye mardom (Towards people, 1948). "Bām-e sarā-ye Ḥāj Ḥasan" of this collection is translated into English as the "Roof of Hajj Hasan's Shop," by Stephen L. McFarland and Mehrdad Bavarian, in M. C. Hillmann, ed. *Major Voices in Contemporary Persian Literature, Literature East and West* 20, Austin, Tex., 1976.

Māngedim o Koršidčehr (Moon-face and sun-face, 1990, [Figure 2](#)).

Mohra-ye mār (lit. The snake charm, 1965). The title story of the collection is translated into English by Judith Wilks as "The Snake's Stone," in *Stories from Iran: A Chicago Anthology 1921-1991*, ed. Mansur.

Heshmat Moayyad, Washington D.C., 1991, pp. 89-97.

Parākanda (Scattered pieces, 1944); "Gurestān-e Hengām," (lit. Hengam Island Graveyard), of this collection is translated into English by Stephen L. McFarland and Mehrdad Bavarian as "The Graveyard of Time" in M. C. Hillmann, ed. *Major Voices in Contemporary Persian Literature, Literature East and West* 20, Austin, Tex., 1976.

Šahr-e kodā (The city of God), 1970.



Sāyahā-ye bāg (The shadows of the garden, 1998).

Novels:

Az ān su-ye divār (From the other side of the wall, 1972, under the pseudonym Dr. Hormoz Malekdād).

Doḡtar-e ra‘yat (The peasant’s daughter, 1952).

Two chapters of Behazin’s unfinished novel entitled “*Ḳānevāda-ye Aminzādegān*” (The Aminzadegan family) were published in *Ṣadaf* in 1958.

Other Books:

Az har dari (From here and there, [Figure 1](#)), an autobiography in six volumes, of which the first and second volumes were published in 1992 and 1993, respectively, and the remaining four are not published yet (Musā‘i, 2002, p. 83).

Bar daryākenār-e maṭnavi: did o daryāft (Along the shoreline of *Mathnavi*: a reading, 1989).

Gavāhi-e češm o guš (Witnessed by eyes and ears, 1980).

Goftār dar āzādi (On freedom, 1978).

Mehmān-e in āqāyān (A guest of these gentlemen, prison memoir, 1978).

Naqš-e parand (Design in silk, 1955), a collection of brief essays and sketches, tr. into Russian by L.S. Peisikov, Moscow, 1961.

Qāli-e Irān (Persian carpet, 1965).

Selected Translations:

Honoré de Balzac, *La peau de chagrin* (1830), *Čarm-e sāgari*, 1956.

Idem, *Le Père Goriot* (1835), *Bābā Goriot*, 1956.

Idem, *Le lys dans la vallée* (1835), as *Zanbaq-e darra*, 1957.

Idem, *La Cousine Bette* (1846), as *Doḡtar ‘amu Bette*, 1961.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust* (1806), 1997.



Romain Rolland, (1904-12) in 4 vol. 1957.

Idem, *Le Jeu de l'amour et de la mort* (1925), as *Bāzi-e ‘ešq o marg*, 1975.

William Shakespeare, *Othello* (1603), 1958.

Idem, *Hamlet* (1509), 1965.

Idem, *King Lear*, as *Shah Lear* (1608), 1998.

Mikhail Shokholov, *Quiet Flows the Don* (1934), as *Don-e ārām*, 4 vols. 1965.

Behazin has also published a play *Kāva* (1976, Germany). He is the author of many commentaries on social and political issues, as well as several unpublished works, including an allegorical story “*Marg-e Simorgh*,” (The death of Simorgh) and several short story collections.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

M. A. Behādin, “Pāsokī be porsešhā-ye dusti now-yāfta,” *Gilān-e mā* 3/4, Fall 2003.

Idem, *Az har dari* (From here and there), vol. 1, 1992; vol. 2, 1993; rep. in one vol. Tehran, 2004.

Moḥammad Behtui, “Goftegu’i bā Behādin,” *Čistā* 21/1, Mehr 1382 Š./2003.

‘Abd-al-‘Ali Dastgāyb, *Naqd-e ātār-e Behādin* (A review of Behazin’s works), Tehran, 1979.

Hušang Golširi, *Bāḡ dar bāḡ* (A garden within the garden), Tehran, 1999.

Mansur Heshmat Moayyad, ed. *Stories from Iran: A Chicago Anthology 1921-1991*, Washington D.C., 1991.

Michael C. Hillmann, ed. *Major Voices in Contemporary Persian Literature, Literature East and West* 20, Austin, Tex., 1976.



Idem, "Iranian Nationalism and Modernist Persian Literature," in idem, ed. *Essays on Nationalism and Asian Literatures, Literature East and West* 23, Austin, Tex., 1987, pp. 69-89.

Idem, "Persian Prose Fiction (1921-1977): An Iranian Mirror and Conscience," in Ehsan Yarshater, ed. *Persian Literature*, 1988, pp. 291-317.

Hasan Kamshad, *Modern Persian prose Literature*, Cambridge, 1966; repr. Bethesda, Md., 1996 (The book is also published in Persian as *Pāyagoḏārān-e naṭr-e novin-e Fārsi*, Tehran, 2005).

Parviz Nātel Kānlari, "Naṭr-e Fārsi dar dawra-ye aḳir," *Noḳostin kongera-ye nevisandegān-e Irān* (First congress of Iranian writers) Tehran, 1947.

Ahmad Karimi Hakkak, "Protest and Perish: A History of the Writer's Association of Iran," *Iranian Studies* 18, 1985, pp. 189-229.

Vera Kubichkova, "Persian Literature of the 20th Century," in Jan Rypka, ed. *History of Iranian Literature*, 1968, pp. 353-410 (The book is translated into Persian by Abu'l-Qāsem Serry, as *Tāriḳ-e adabiyāt-e Irān*, Tehran, 2003).

Ḥassan Mir'ābedini, *Sad sāl dāstān nevisi dar Irān* (A hundred years of fiction writing in Iran), 3 vols., Tehran, 1987-2004.

Jamāl Miršādeqi, *Adabiyāt-e dāstāni: qeṣṣa, dāstān-e kutāh, romān*, (Fiction writing: story, short story, and novel), Tehran, 1981.

Nāṣer Mo'adḏen, *Dah šab* (Ten nights), Tehran, 1978.

Moḥammad Moḳāri,° *Ensān dar še'r-e mo'āṣer* (Persian poetry and the representation of the Persian self), Tehran, 2nd ed. 1999.

Behzād Musā'i, "Goftagu bā Maḥmud E'temādzāda," *Payām-e šomāl* 5/37-38, Āḏar & Dey 1381 Š./2002.

Idem, "Sālšomār-e zendagi va āṭār-e Behāḏin," *Payām-e šomāl* 5/37-38, Āḏar & Dey 1381 Š./2002.

Idem, "Kodāhāfez nasl-e kākestari," *Gilāvā* 15/89, Tir & Mordād 1385 Š./2006.

Bāqer Parhām, "Ḥezb-e tuda va kānun-e nevisandegān-e Irān," *Ketāb-e jom'a* 25, Bahman 1358 Š./1979, and subsequent issues, 1359 Š./1980.

Rivanne Sandler, "The Virtuous Complaint: Iranian Short Fiction of 1960s-1970s," in *Postmodern Approaches to the Short Story*, ed. Farhat Iftekharudin et al., Connecticut and London, 2003.

Moḥammad Rezā Šafi'i Kadkani, "Adabiyāt-e Irān az ruzegār-e Jāmi tā be emruz," in *History of Persian Literature from the Beginning of the Islamic Period to the Present Day*, ed. G. Morrison et al., Leiden, 1981, tr. by Ya'qub Āžand, as *Tāriḳ-e adabiyāt-e Irān az āgāz tā be emruz*, Tehran, 2001.

Moḥammad 'Ali Sepānlu, *Nevisandegān-e pišrow-e Irān* (The pioneers of fiction writing in Iran), Tehran, 1983.

Šafdar Taqizāda, "Sardabir-e našriyahā-ye adabi," *Payām-e šomāl* 5/37-8, Āḍar and Dey 1381 Š./2002.

Ehsan Yarshater, ed. *Persian Literature*, New York, 1988.

Idem, "The Modern Literary Idiom," in idem, ed. *Iran Faces the Seventies*, New York, 1971, pp. 284-320; repr. *Critical Perspectives on Modern Persian Literature*, ed. Thomas M. Ricks, 1984, pp. 42-62.