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ENGLISH IV. TRANSLATIONS OF MODERN PERSIAN LITERATURE
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Modernist literature in Persia can be said to develop gradually throughout the 19th century, but for English readers it begins abruptly, shortly after the Constitutional revolution, with the translations of Edward Browne. The poems translated in his *Press and Poetry* (1914) added to the occasional poems included in his previous work *The Persian Revolution* (1910), document the power of poetry during that movement and make possible a direct insight into the aspirations of the constitutional movement. Later, the fourth volume of Browne's *Literary History of Persia* (1924) would introduce the influential writing of ʿAlī-Akbar Dehḵodā with two satires from his Čarand parand with Persian texts and English translations. The translations of Dehḵodā could be considered the climax of Browne's four-volume history, and the last major translation of a contemporary Persian writer for another generation. Successors to Browne did not appear soon, and important poems of the period that followed, such as the oeuvre of Parvīn Eʿteṣāmī, would wait until 1955 to be translated in brief excerpts (Rahman, pp. 73-85), and thirty more years for book-length treatment.

The innovations in Persian fiction and poetry, which took place during the twenties and thirties (the fiction of Moḥammad-ʿAlī Jamālzāda, Bozorg ʿAlawī, and Ṣādeq Hedāyat and the break with traditional verse forms initiated by Nīmā Yūšīj), did not begin to reach western readers until after the Second World War. Henry D. G. Law, in the introduction to a special issue of the British magazine *Life and Letters* devoted to Persian writing (1949), points out that travel books about Persia were popular, but that there was very little access to the voices of Persians speaking for themselves (p. 196). His anthology of translations from a rather eclectic group of writers (Ṣādeq Čūbak, Jalāl Āl-e Aḥmad, Fereydūn Tawallalī, Parvīz Nātel Ḵānlarī, and Moḥammad Ḥejāzī) included the only English versions of Hedāyat's writing made during his life-time.

Hedāyat's *Būf-e kūr* (q.v.; 1936), in the translation by Desmond P. Costello (Hedāyat, 1957), is perhaps the only work of Persian in this century to have been read and reviewed widely outside the realm of specialist discourse. Costello was not a specialist in Persian, but a diplomat in the New Zealand embassy in Moscow (1944-1950), later a teacher of Russian at the University of Manchester (editor of the second edition of *The Oxford Book of Russian Verse*), who took up Persian on his own. The translation is remarkable for a distinct narrative voice, lexically inventive, and smoothly assimilated to the rhythms of English prose. Translations of Hedāyat's short stories have been well represented in periodicals for years, and since then anthologies by Sīāvoš Dāneš, Carol L. Sayers, and Ehsan Yarshater (Hedāyat 1972, 1979, and 1984) have made the greater part of his fiction available. G. M. Wickens' 1979 translation of Hedāyat's other novel, *Ḥājī Āqā*, exemplifies a contrasting principle of translation from that we see in Costello's *Blind Owl*. Wickens's is a scholarly version, perhaps inevitably because *Ḥājī Āqā* is a work whose satirical thrust relies on specific historical and social references. The result is a students' edition with eighty-three footnotes and the pagination of Persian editions noted in the margins (Costello's *Blind Owl* by comparison has fourteen footnotes.)

For many years Kamshad's *Modern Persian Prose Literature* occupied a privileged place among studies of Persian contemporary writing. It was a major work of literary history summing up a body of texts almost unrepresented in English or American critical literature, in its way a list of suggestions for future translators. The treatment of Bozorg ʿAlawī in that book is particularly telling because texts of his writings were rare both in Iran and

in libraries in the U. S. ʿAlawī went into exile in East Germany in 1953, and effectively disappeared from the literary scene until 1979, although his critical work in German was available. His Persian works were banned in Persia under the shah and often disappeared from American university libraries at the hands of admirers or perhaps of unofficial censors. The novelist Donné Raffat broke the silence by locating ʿAlawī in East Germany and publishing extensive interviews as a companion piece to a translation of ʿAlawī's 1941 short-story collection, *Waraq-pārahā-ye zendān* (Scrap papers from prison).

Sometimes political pressures have made it impossible for a book to appear in Persian at all, and the English translation appears in place of the original. Such has been the case with *King of the Benighted* (*Šāh-e sīāhpūšān*) by a Persian novelist who published it under the pseudonym Manuchehr Irani.

Whereas translation from classical Persian is faced with the dilemma of representing unfamiliar esthetic systems, translators of contemporary writing have tended to prefer works which are bending nearer to European esthetic norms. This tendency is justified by the fact that so many writers of substance, notably Hedāyat and Čūbak, strove to strip away ornament, to make the styles of Persian more universally accessible. This process indeed has made them more translatable. One casualty, however, was the writing of Moḥammad-ʿAlī Jamālzāda, who despite his important position as the innovator of Persian fiction, wrote with a verbal exuberance that relies on specific colloquial turns of phrase for its effect, often a considerable challenge to translation. This is why—although the preface of his ground-breaking *Yak-ī būd, yak-ī nabūd* (1922) was translated in 1974—the collection had to wait until 1985 for an unusually inventive team of translators, Heshmat Moayyad and Paul Sprachman, to devise English equivalents for that idiosyncratic linguistic experiment.

Another casualty is satire. English readers still have very little way to know that Persia is home to an extensive and powerful tradition of satire and humor. Satire tends to be so specific in its targets, so often colloquial or formally self-conscious, that it demands commentary and footnotes as well as translation. Indeed Hedāyat, who pioneered the plain style in Persian, also developed a satirical voice in *Tūp-e morvārīd* and the pieces collected under the titles *Vaḡ vaḡ sāhāb* and *Velangārī*, which is a challenge to potential translators. Along with Wickens' translation of *Ḥājī Āqā*, the passages from satirical works translated in Hasan Javadi's 1988 study of Persian satire are among the few works which counter the trend to leave satire untranslated. A

collection of short comic essays by Hādī Ḵorsandī, the humorist who edited the London-based humor magazine *As´ágar Āqā* in the 1980s, appeared under the title *The Ayatollah and I* (1987) and offers a rare example of translated satire aimed at a general readership.

The short story genre, with its plain style and compression, has developed into the most accessible and translatable of forms and also one of the most widely practiced. For this reason, a comprehensive anthology of short stories has a particular importance as an introduction to Persian culture as a whole. Of the available anthologies Moayyad's *Stories from Iran* presents the widest historical and thematic range.

The traditional image of an indigenous translator, English or American, introducing a writer from another (Persian) culture oversimplifies the modern situation, where bicultural writers and scholars abound who write with equal facility in Persian and English. The poet Ṭāhera Ṣaffārzāda's *Dīvān* includes poems in English. Scholars in Persia have made considerable contributions, even when their writing is "accented." The translations of Hedāyat by Sīāvoš Dāneš in *Ṣādeq's Omnibus* and the anonymous English version of Faṣīḥ's *Ṯorayyā dar egmāʾ* catch some of the exuberance of the original in a way that may be inaccessible to a native speaker.

Taqī Modarressī, who writes effective fiction in both English and in Persian, may represent a special category in which it is difficult to speak of an original and a translation: *The Pilgrim's Rules of Etiquette* is not so much a translation of his Persian *Ādāb-e zīārat* as a separate work emerging from the same creative process.

A curious phenomenon has been the tendency for certain works to be translated in multiple English versions. Hedāyat's *Blind Owl*, since Costello, has had two additional translations. (Iraj Bashiri's study *Hedayat's Ivory Tower* includes a new translation of *Būf-e kūr*, and a revised version appears in a 1984 anthology of Hedāyat's works). M. R. Ghanoonparvar's translation of Sīmīn Dānešvar's *Savošūn* was followed directly by another version under the title *A Persian Requiem* by Roxane Zand. Āl-e Aḥmad's *ḡarbzadegī*, unmistakably a key text in the self-definition of Persian culture, was legally unavailable in Persia until 1979 and has since been translated three times, as *Weststruckness*, *Occidentosis*, and *Plagued by the West*. The neologism of the title is famously resistant to translation, so much so that an English-speaking reader may not recognize them as the same book.

The poet whose work has undergone the most extensive retranslation is Forūḡ Farroḵzād, whose highly personal poetry perhaps of all modern Persian writers most transcends its culture-specific features. The lyric esthetic system she devised invests visual scenes with intense emotion in ways that are eminently available to transfer. For this reason she is the most frequently anthologized of modern Persian poets, and the American reader has available three book-length translations of her poetry, as well as a selection in Ahmad Karimi-

Hakkak's *Anthology of Modern Persian Poetry*, translated with the collaboration of Janet Rodney (pp. 137-59). Even when a famous phrase from "Tawallod-ī dīgar" ("Man / parī-e kūček-e ḡamgīnī-rā/mīšenāsam ke dar oqyānūs-ī maskan dārad . . .") reappears clothed in an utterly different vocabulary, the mood remains intact: "I / know a sad little fairy/who takes abode in the ocean" (Javadi and Sallé); "I know a sad little nymph / who lives in the sea" (Kessler and Banani); "I know a small sad mermaid / who lives/in an ocean" (Martin); "I know / a sad little fairy / whose home is in an ocean" (Karimi-Hakkak and Rodney).

With the exception of Farroḵzād, modernist Persian poetry is underrepresented in English translation because the issues of modernist poetic style operate so often in an unstated dialogue with the themes and rhythms of Persian classical tradition. The esthetic focus in Persian is rarely the "information" of the poem.

Reżā Barāhenī during the early 1970s gained a reputation in the United States as a particularly visible opponent of the Pahlavi regime, and during that period a collection of prison poems entitled *Ẓell Allāh* appeared first in Persian and then in English translations by the author, in consultation with a series of anglophone collaborators. The importance of the pair of books, beyond their historical interest, is that they are useful to future translators as a compendium of inventive solutions.

The opening volume of the Modern Persian Literature Series was, appropriately, Karimi-Hakkak's *Anthology of Modern Persian Poetry* (1978), a work which remains the most complete introduction to the field, an equivalent in poetry of Moayyad's *Stories from Iran* in prose. Additional book-length collections of two major poets, Nāder Nāderpūr and Sohrāb Sepehrī, take the process a step further.

The Modern Persian Literature Series is the most prolific sponsor of translated work in Persian, but there are others. The remarkable increase in translation of the 1980s is in part a result of the diaspora of Persians abroad. It evidences a critical mass of readers willing to support publishing companies which specialize in Persian themes—Mage in Washington, D. C., Mazda in Costa Mesa, Calif., Kalimát Press in Los Angeles, and Divan Press in Berkeley.

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