



FICTION, II(D)

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ii(d). THE POST-REVOLUTIONARY SHORT STORY

As an independent genre, rather than as a novel in miniature, the post-revolutionary short story is marked by its formal sophistication and has carved out a distinct and experimental space of its own in fiction. The immediacy of the genre was exploited in recording the experiences of revolution and war as they unfolded, and brought the short story added significance (Taqīzāda and Elāhī, eds., pp. 1-18; Qarīb, ed., I, p. 66).

A comprehensive list of post-revolutionary short stories, more diversified than their predecessors in theme, language, aesthetic structure, and diagnosis of social and political malaise, is beyond the scope of the present survey, and only major trends will be referred to. It is important, for example, to single out the resonance of the female voice in the literary production of the post-revolutionary period. In addition to collections by women writers of the previous generation, such as *Be kī salām konam?* (Whom shall I greet? 1980) and *Az parandahā-ye mohājer bepors* (Ask the birds of passage, 1997) by Sīmīn Dānešvar, and *Zanān bedūn-e mardān* (Women without men, 1987), a collection of interconnected stories, by Šahrnūš Pārsīpūr, a host of younger women writers have appeared on the scene, eager to experiment and create a style of their own. Special mention should be made of *Kanīzū* (1989) and *Sīrīā Sīrīā* (1993) by Monīrū Ravānīpūr; the immediately successful *Rāz-e kūchak* (The little secret, 1993) by Farḡonda Āqāyī (b. 1956); the terse and well-



wrought stories of Ṭāhera ‘Alawī (b. 1959), in her collection, *Zan dar Bād* (Woman in the wind, 1998), and the fable-like writings of Ferešta Mawlavī (b. 1943) such as *Nāranj o toranj* (The bitter orange and the bergamot, 1992), which through the use of magical realism transforms traditional folk tales. Two collections of short stories by Zoyā Pīrẓād (b. 1953), *Meṭl-e hama-ye ‘ašrhā* (Like all other afternoons, 1991) and *Ṭa‘m-e gas-e kormālū* (The astringent taste of persimmon, 1997), show a remarkable talent in depicting sketches of urban alienation and its effect on marital relationships in a factual manner, tinged with understated humor (Samī‘ī; Darvīšīān; Šambayātī).

The influence of psychological and psychoanalytical theories on narrative techniques is evident in collections like *Dīgar Sīāvaš-ī namānda* (The likes of Sīāvaš are no more, 1990) by Ašḡar Elāhī (b. 1944), *Jāma ba kūnāb* (The blood-drenched robe, 1989) and *Tālār-e Ṭarabkāna* (The hall of merriment, 1992) by Rezā Jūlā‘ī (b. 1950). In most of his stories Jūlā‘ī returns to the turbulent final years of the Qajar era. *Āh! Estānbol* (Oh! Istanbul, 1990) by Rezā Farroḡ-fāl (b. 1953), is a compassionate depiction of intellectual life in third world countries, consumed by anxiety, horror, and alienation (Jūlā‘ī). Amīr Ḥasan Čeheltan’s (b. 1956) two collections of short stories *Dīgar kas-ī šedāy-am nazad* (Nobody called me anymore, Tehran, 1992, and, with some additions, Uppsala, Sweden, 1993) and *Čizī ba fardā namānda ast* (Tomorrow is right around the corner, 1998) are distinguished by their skillful depiction of the inner thoughts of the characters with considerable economy and often by implication rather than direct description. Mention should be made of *Sīāsanbū* (1989), a collection of well structured interconnected stories by Moḡammad-Rezā Šafdarī (b. 1954), and the short stories of Ašḡar ‘Abd-Allāhī (b. 1955), singled out for the way their diction is enriched by the use of allegorical imagery. Also deserving mention are the two collection of the fable-like stories, *Hīčkāk o Āḡābājī* (Hitchcock and Āḡābājī, 1995) by Behnām Dayyānī (b. 1945) and *Yūzpalangān-ī ke bā man davīda-and* (The cheetahs which have run with me, 1994), a collection of interconnected stories by Bīžan Najdī (1942-1997). Dayyānī resorts to a simple narrative style in most of the stories in this collection which displays the contrast between tradition and modernity by playing the consciousness of an old woman against that of a young man, who narrates the stories and also happens to be a cinema afficionado. *Yūzpalangān-ī ke bā man davīda-and*, although Najdī’s only work of fiction, enjoyed a warm reception by literary critics for its fresh perspective on issues and its poetical language (Qāsemī; Ḥabībī; Tīragol). The above mentioned experiments in narration should not imply a demise of social realism as a major influence on literary



production.

The term *farhang* or *adabiyāt-e jang* or *jabha* i.e., literature of war or the war front, is used to describe the literature written by younger writers who have come of age in the post-revolutionary period and tell of their experiences at the front in the war with Iraq (see bibliography). Many writers, including Hūšang Āšūrzāda (b. 1944) and Moḥammad Moḥammad ‘Alī (b. 1950), have published important collections of social realist short stories, concerned with the themes of war, displacement, and life in the refugee camps. Moḥammad ‘Alī already enjoyed some recognition because of his previous works, including two novels, *Ra’d o barq-e bī bārān* (Dry thunder, 1991) and *Naqš-e panhān* (Hidden design, 1991). His latest collection of short stories, *Čašm-e sevvom* (The third eye), was published in 1994.

The tribal life of the Qašqā’ī and the beauty of their region are evoked in two collections of mainly autobiographical stories by Moḥammad Bahman-Beygī (b. 1920), *Boḵārā-ye man, īl-e man* (My Shangrila, my tribe, 1989) and *Agar Qaraqāj nabūd* (Had there been no Qaraqāj, 1995). His stories are narrated eloquently and with recourse to traditional modes of story telling (Behmand).

The short stories of Hūšang Morādī Kermānī (b. 1944), usually directed to an adolescent audience, have earned the author international recognition and prestigious literary awards. *Qeššahā-ye Majīd* (Majīd’s stories, 1979), couched in a seemingly effortless diction with stark but evocative imagery, was successfully serialized on Persian television in the 1980s. *Ķomra* (The jar, 1989), was the screenplay for a film with the same title directed by Ebrāhīm Forūzeš, which was well-received in international film festivals. *Bačē-hā-ye qālībāf* (Carpet-weaving children, 1980), depicting with first-hand experience the misery, hunger, and tragic and abused life of rug-weaving children in a Kermān village, stand in sharp contrast with his sunny and buoyant stories about the boy Majīd. It and *Mošt bar pūst* (Punch on the skin, 1992) have been translated into several languages and praised by critics for their aesthetic qualities.

Post-revolutionary fiction, including the short story, is marked by dynamic experimentation with techniques of narration, choice of plot, imagery, and structure. In line with recent tendencies in most modern literatures, modern Persian fiction expresses doubts, uncertainty, anxiety, tension, paradox, and dilemmas; it tells of beginnings and not of ends. Almost a century old, modern Persian fiction has remained receptive to external influences and follows



trends and styles as they appear elsewhere, stream of consciousness techniques and magical realism being cases in point. From a fictionalized remembrance of the nation's idealized past, to a portrayal of imbalances and injustices, and to the depiction of the hardships of war and revolution, Persian fiction has remained a vehicle for change as well as testament to its painful process.

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